



MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE
PARISH CHURCH OF
St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, RUNCORN.
www.runcornstmichaels.org.uk

ISSUE 179

FEBRUARY 2025

Growing Together



In GROWING TOGETHER THIS MONTH:
HUMOUR NEWS

PUZZLE PAGE

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY
CELEBRATIONS

Vicars Message

"to love Christ before all else"

(Rule of St Benedict 4.21)



In my office at home I have a prayer corner with an icon of Christ Pantocrator. It is a replica of the Icon dating back to the 6th century and it sits in my sacred space of which I return to daily. At the Top of this icon is the Greek Letters IC XC, which are the first two letters of the words Jesus *and* Christ. Often these Icons have an additional set of letters NI *and* KA which means "Conquers". Essentially these Greek Icons have an inscription that says "Jesus Christ Conquers", and for those of us who hold Icons at the heart of our devotional practices we have in these icons before us, a constant reminder to turn to Jesus Christ daily. This is the reason why I have this specific Icon in my office because, each day I need to be reminded that my focus should be upon Jesus Christ and not on the world around me. This is more important now than ever.

Being a Vicar has changed rapidly over the past few years and the clergy of the early days of the church right up to the late 90s would probably not recognise or comprehend how much the role has changed as now our focus is additionally on a wider variety of areas such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Buildings and property and more. It is a very different role which can (if not careful) take over the calling of being a priest which is first and foremost why we as clergy are here. Yes the PCC has oversight too, but it is the Vicar who leads and is answerable, and in some ways although this is mostly all new in a parish setting, I wonder how new this is within a monastic setting?

In the Rule of St Benedict, Benedict essentially gives his guidance on caring for, disciplining and maintaining the monastery with what is essentially is PCC (The Chapter) and people in Key Roles. The monasteries at their height would have been far busier than we see now and with the additional 7 or 8 prayer times a day! However, in amongst the business of monastic life they never forgot the one core principle of why they were here and that was to love Christ Before all else. That was it, its in the Rule of St Benedict in Black and white and has been since the 5th century. But this is not new to the monastic movement because the desert fathers and mothers held to the same principle and right back to the disciples we see that they Loved Christ deeply. All of the above held Jesus at their core and this is what I am writing to you all about today, this being keeping Jesus at the centre of your monastery.

Those who attend St Michaels know that I talk often about keeping Christ central and in turn I do comment about how fundraising is important and building ventures are important but our over all priority is spiritual growth which comes with bible study, prayer and worship. Without rooting ourselves in Jesus Christ we will not grow, and we will essentially bear fruit that the gardener will throw away because without Christ we can do nothing (Johns 15). This my friends is an essential reminder to us all from those who attend one Sunday occasionally to those who practically live in the building. From those who through age or disability cannot attend to those who attend regularly our reminder should always be to keep Jesus Christ Central. It is my hope as we go forward as a church, as we grow we never forget the true reason we are here and that is to Love Christ before all else.

Amen

With every blessing,

Rev'd George



FEBRUARY CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 2nd February (CANDLEMAS)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Café Style Church



Wednesday 5th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 9th February (4th Sunday before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 12th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 16th February (3rd Sunday before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 19th February

10.00am Holy Communion



Sunday 23rd February (2nd Sunday before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 26th February

10.00am Holy Communion



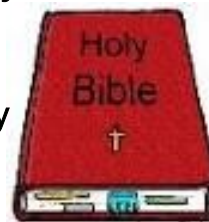
BIBLE READINGS FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday 2nd February

Malachi 3:1-5
Luke 2: 22-40

Sunday 9th February

Isaiah 6: 1-8, (9-13)
Luke 5:1-11

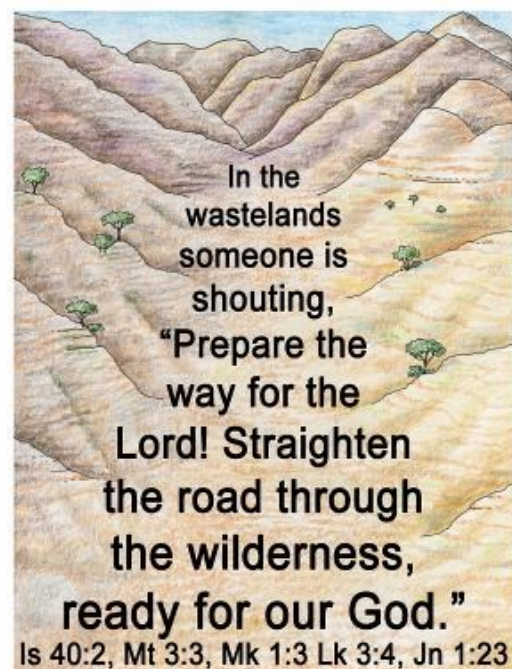


Sunday 16th February

Jeremiah 17: 5-10
Luke 6: 17-26

Sunday 23rd February

Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-end
Luke 8: 22-25



MARCH CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 2nd March (Sunday before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Café Style Church



Wednesday 5th March (Ash Wednesday)

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 9th March (1st Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 12th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 16th March (2nd Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 19th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 23rd March (3rd Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 26th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 30th March (Mothering Sunday)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

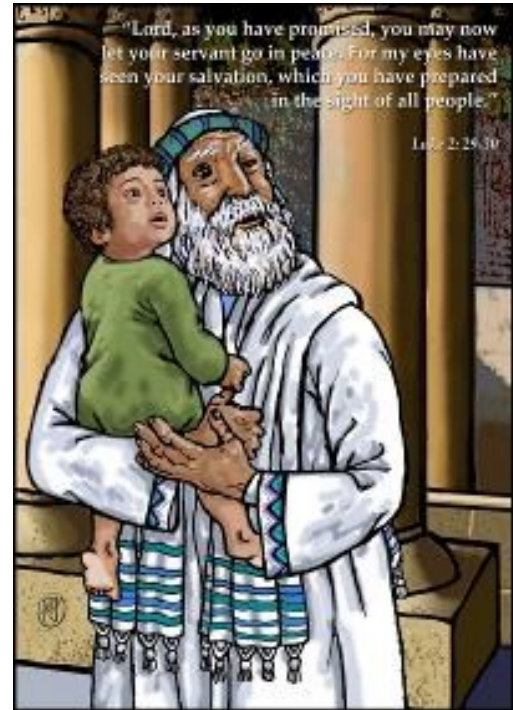
Community Christmas Tree Festival

Back in December again we held our annual Christmas Tree Festival/ Grand Draw. In total, we had **20 trees** decorated by church congregation members, schools, community groups and local businesses. This year the numbers were down slightly on last year, but we had **144 adults and 98 children** who came along to visit the festival and over the 4 days we raised a staggering **£3,266.80p** for the church. Father Christmas was in attendance again with his very own elf as you can see from the photograph. Our vicar George and committee, would like to give a big **THANK YOU** to everyone who decorated a tree, manned a stall, the kitchen or even on the door.



Carols around the Christmas Tree

This annual event took place on Saturday 14th December in church and was attended by **135 Adults & Children**. Everyone enjoyed singing traditional Christmas Carols, and listening to the choir of Pewithall School who made the night with their excellent singing as always.



- **Activities at St Michael's Church**
- **St Michael's Maintenance Appeal Committee**
- **Tea & Toast in the Church Hall**
- **Next Tea & Toast is on 1st March & 5th April**
- **@ 10.00am to 12.00 noon**
- **Admission: £2.00**

- **Crafters Group**
- **Crafters Group meets in the Church Hall every Tuesday from 10.00am to 12noon.**
- **Everyone welcome, especially newcomers.**

- **VML**
- **Sing-along sessions on Tuesday nights @ 7.00pm in the Church Hall. So come along have a cuppa and a sing-along for just £2.**



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

February Birthdays



Congratulations to Nora Dean whose birthday is on February 9th and to Helen Owen whose birthday is on February 24th.

Prayer for February 2025

Dear Lord,

February can be a trying month, but there are special associations too and we thank you for the hope they bring. In February we remember how Jesus was taken, as a baby, to the Temple. Simeon took Him in his arms and by the power of the Holy Spirit, recognised Him as the Saviour you had sent as a light, to bring revelation to the whole world. And how this world needs your light and revelation in this new year, 2025. Lord – as we notice more light in the lengthening days of this month, as we see the promise of the Spring in the bobbing heads of the beautiful snowdrops – help us most of all to recognise Jesus as our Light and to trust in Him as our Lord and Saviour.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of each new day.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



...are you late with your 'Vicar's Letter' again, dear?

The new trend of clapping in church

Some people are beginning to clap in church, if they are pleased with something. For tired vicars and timid curates, having a sermon greeted with warm clapping might be an encouragement, if also a complete surprise. But the applauding of sermons, or applause at the end of services, also reveals a dark side: churchgoing has now declined to such a degree in the UK, that even the knowledge of 'how to behave' in church is fading. That leaves some people unaware that in the UK, aside from a few 'mega churches' where American style singing, dancing and clapping is the norm, applause is not something we 'do' in church. As one vicar puts it: "I think it has to do with cultural expectations. People are less and less familiar with acts of worship directed to God. Instead, they have a sense of a performance."

Look !!!!!

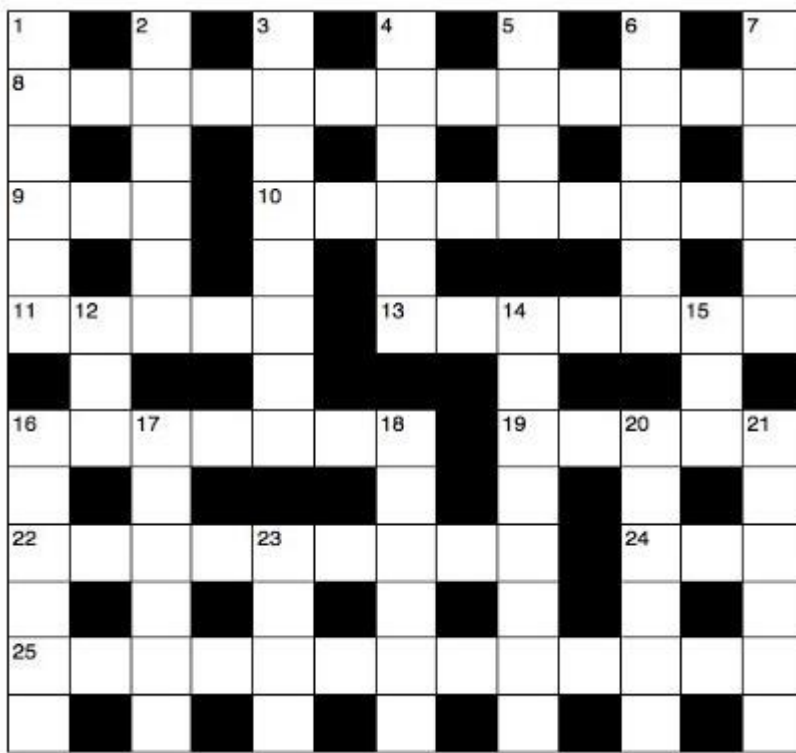
On Sunday 5th January after the Café Church service the congregation were met by this family outside of church, they were a bit shy to come in. One of congregation who saw them, said that the one on the right was a likeness of him.



What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Job

'Why does God allow suffering?' This is a frequently asked question of Christians, because we believe in a God who is both good and powerful and it is explored in the book of Job. This book is part of the wisdom literature, along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Job was both wealthy and righteous, yet he experienced catastrophic suffering, losing all his wealth, children and health. This is portrayed as a result of Satan's challenge to God, testing whether Job's devotion to God was dependent on his circumstances or not. The main body of the book (3:1-42:6) consists of dialogues between Job, his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) and God. Job and his friends assume that God is almighty and just, and that no human being is wholly innocent. In the three cycles of speeches they wrestle with the reasons for Job's suffering, remembering his morally upright character. Finally, all are silenced by God, as He speaks Himself (chs 38-42). He points out that Job knows very little about the universe when he reflects on God's power. Job confesses his lack of understanding and weakness, but then goes on to confess his confidence and trust in God. This puts suffering in a right perspective. Job is not condemned, and the book ends with the restoration of his family and possessions.

The importance of this book is that it realistically addresses the painful questions of life, without offering simplistic answers. It focuses on *how* we should respond to suffering, rather than on *why* God allows suffering: '***Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.***'(1:21)



CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

See how you get on with this crossword. There is no prize, but whoever gets it back to the Editor by February 22nd will be entered on a Roll of Honour in the next edition of *Growing Together*.

Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
- 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
- 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
- 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
- 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
- 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
- 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
- 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
- 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1)
- 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
- 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
- 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
- 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
- 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
- 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
- 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
- 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
- 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
- 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
- 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
- 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
- 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
- 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
- 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
- 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

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**Crossword answer
December/January**

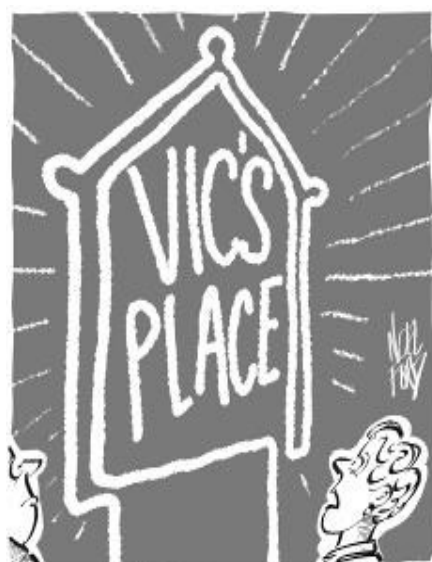
ROLL OF HONOUR
Three people got the crossword answer and they were
**Jim & Shelagh Goffin,
Wendy Sefton
& Margaret Myers**

13th February: Modomnoc and the bees of Ireland

Legend tells us that it was St Modomnoc who first brought bees to Ireland, in the early 540s AD. Although it's more likely that the bees had drifted over from Britain after the last Ice Age all by themselves, certainly Modomnoc did his bit to help them. Modomnoc was a 6th century abbot, probably one of the royal O'Neill family of Ireland. When he sailed over to Wales to study under St David in his Pembrokeshire monastery of Menevia, he was given the duty of caring for the bees of the monastery. This he did so well that the bees must have grown very fond of him, because when he was setting sail to return to Ireland, a swarm of his bees settled on his ship and went back with him. Thus apiculture – and hopefully lots of honey – was introduced to Ireland. Even the Martyrology of Oegus the Culdee (c800) records that it was "in a little boat from the east over the pure-coloured sea my Domnoc brought ... the gifted race of Ireland's bees." In time, Modomnoc, and presumably his bees, settled in Tibberaghny (Co. Kilkenny). Today, there are about 3,500 – 4,000 beekeepers in Ireland.



Technically, the Parish Share is a voluntary contribution



"It may well attract more young folk to join the congregation but I still prefer the old church notice board"

National Nest Box Week – 14th to 21st February

Where can family-minded birds raise their young these days? As our gardens and parklands become smaller and tidier, too many natural nest sites – such as holes in trees, old buildings and unkempt hedgerows – are rapidly disappearing. No wonder that our sparrows, greenfinches and swifts are in precipitous decline, and that one in four of our UK bird species are now under serious threat. This makes it more important than ever to care for our remaining birds. By feeding, providing water and putting up nest boxes we can give them a safe space to raise their chicks. The National Nest Box Week initiative encourages bird conservation across the UK, and it's easy to get involved, whether you're a teacher, part of a local wildlife group, or just wanting to boost the bird numbers in your own garden.



Visit: <https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/birds/national-nest-box-week-how-to-help-birds-in-your-garden>

The Alpha Course

Alpha

If you are new to church or you have been coming to church a long time and you think an Alpha Course is for you. Then put your name on the sheet please at the back of church (if you come church) or if not, and you would like to register on the course email Revd George Roach at vicar.smaaruncorn@gmail.com

Write your own Valentine this year

If you are going to send a Valentine this year, why not write your own? Most poetry – and especially romantic poetry – comes from the heart. It is a way of expressing your emotions, often saying things that you would otherwise be too shy to say. And if you've ever felt the need to write a poem about something you feel deeply – you've already crossed the starting line! So – how do you start? Inspiration may come from looking at the world around you, in scribbling down your initial thoughts about your loved one... and then mixing them all together. For instance, a rock is solid, dependable, weathered, even! Does that remind you of your loved one? On the other hand, a flower is fragrant, delicate – and fleeting. Does that remind you of your someone?

"As this magazine went to press, we received the sad news that Walter Yule had passed away. Please hold his family in your thoughts and prayers at this sad time.



February
2025



Please Pray



Please remember the following people in your prayers throughout this month.

Graham & Nicola Aylett George Done
Gerald Cook Helen Browne

Also please remember in your prayers anyone that you know who are home housebound or in hospital.

If you would like us to pray for someone close to you let the Pastoral Care Team know and they could visit someone at home don't hesitate to let them know.

....and the recently bereaved, especially any families known to you

Sheila Beswick



Middle aged? Don't skip breakfast!

If you skip breakfast in your middle age, it can make you fatter and unhealthy. Instead, a recent study advises that having a well-balanced breakfast helps manage daily calorie intake and lower cholesterol, BMI and waist size. Breakfast "serves the critical role of breaking the extended fasting period from sleep." NHS guidelines recommend 2,000 calories a day for women and 2,500 for men. Breakfast should account for a quarter of this: 500 calories for women and 625 calories for men. The study was carried out at the Hospital del Mar Research Institute in Barcelona. It disregarded the 'full English' breakfast as being too full of saturated fat levels. Instead, it recommends cereals, protein, a healthy fat source, fruits and vegetables.

INFORMATION

Revd George Roach
01928 832734

Email: vicar.smaaruncorn@gmail.com
Not on a Friday

Churchwardens

Robbie Littler 07722 470940
Rosemary Lunt 01928 569863

e-mail:
warden@runcornstmichaels.org.uk

If you want to book a wedding, baptism or funeral please phone this number 07718133018 and ask for Robbie

In praise of the humble egg



We love eggs. On average, we eat at least two of them each week, which makes eggs one of Britain's most popular foods. Eggs are exceptionally good for you - high in protein, containing all the essential amino acids, rich in the B vitamins, vitamin D and A, and choline, and a source of healthy fats. Eggs are also filling, and with 7.5g of protein in less than 80 calories

per egg, there are few other foods that can match them for so much protein per gram. They are also inexpensive and easy to cook. Experts recommend eating one or two eggs a day, and choosing a low-fat way of cooking them, by boiling or poaching. Cooking them in butter is a bit lower in fat than frying them in olive oil. Free-range eggs generally contain more vitamin D.

How many minutes of walking might help you avoid a heart attack?

It seems that keeping your heart reasonably healthy may not take a lot of time. Researchers at the University of Sydney have found a link between short but intense bursts of activity and a significant drop in heart disease among people who otherwise engage in little activity. Sedentary women who did just 3.4 minutes of "vigorous intermittent" exercise, such as brisk walking or climbing the stairs, each day, suffered 67 per cent fewer cases of heart failure, with an overall reduction in heart disease of 45 per cent, compared to those not exercising at all. Sedentary men who did 2.3 minutes of exercise, which could include carrying heavy shopping or heavy garden work, saw an 11 per cent reduction in heart attacks and strokes.