

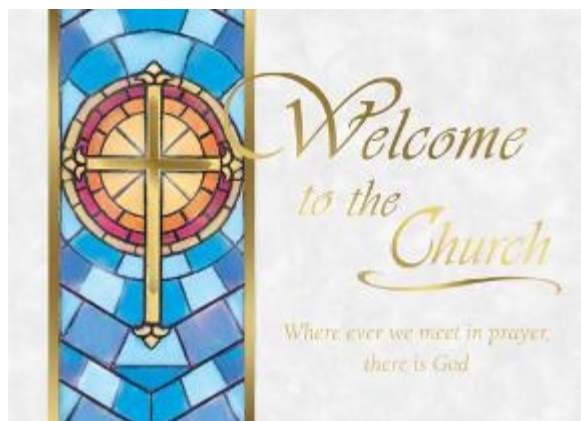


MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF  
St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, RUNCORN.  
[www.runcornstmichaels.org.uk](http://www.runcornstmichaels.org.uk)

ISSUE 168

DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024

# Growing Together



In GROWING TOGETHER THIS MONTH:  
HUMOUR NEWS

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER & JANUARY  
PUZZLE PAGE CELEBRATIONS

## Vicar's Message

**"Be still and know that I am God"**

- Psalm 46:10

One thing that has concerned me within the world around, and indeed within the church, is the growing number of people who express exhaustion, fatigue, and burn out due to the pace of present-day life, I feel very strongly that this is a message even the most disciplined of us need to hear occasionally, the message of priority and of rest.

My friends, we are not meant to be living the life most of us live. Life is developing faster than we can keep up with. By way of demands in society, technology, financial pressure, media, and family. All of these things add a constant drip effect of stress into our spiritual pot of life. If we don't empty this pot on our own terms it will one day overflow and we will need help mopping up the mess.



I remember whilst at the last clergy conference, I joined a prayer painting class where I found myself in a room with other people and some acrylic paints. "Paint" I was told, just Paint, "it doesn't matter what it looks like". So I painted without thinking, and the end result was the picture you see here. "Ahhh", said a voice over me, "I can tell you already what's happening here, your pot is near overflowing" I left that prayer session conscious I needed to spend more time emptying my pot of water out before it became too late.

So, how do we empty the pot that is our lives? Well, it's actually quite simple in one sense, yet difficult in another. Difficult because it requires bravery to admit we have taken too much on, to admit we are possibly our own worst enemy at times, and bravery to admit we need help. But it is easy in the sense that in order to empty our pot of water before it overflows we just need to do one simple thing, love God by putting him first daily.

The raw truth is that if we don't put God first, or at least prioritise him at some point in the day we are essentially saying that others or the pursuit of self-ambition is more important than God. If we go through the day tending to the affairs of others first, or perhaps tending to our jobs we will naturally put God second. God is never to come second, that's why he is the first commandment.

Don't get me wrong, helping others is a very noble task and is part of our calling, and our jobs do require attending to as well. However it's about making sure you have time with God without distraction, after all, the commandments are clear...

**"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength"**

The second is...

**"love your neighbour as yourself"**

You see, when we love God, we wish to spend time with him daily. When we spend time with him daily, rest flows automatically from there. And with rest comes the renewal of life.

My friends, as advent approaches, we already see things getting busier. We plan for Christmas in our homes and in church, and we fall into the trap of thinking we must be busy this time of year, God is offering you something countercultural. Jesus was often busy, but he always prioritised God, and always retreated from the world's affairs in prayer and to seek time with God.

Don't be busy, be still.

*With every blessing, George*





# DECEMBER CHURCH SERVICES



**Sunday 3rd December (1st Sunday of Advent)**

8.30am Holy Communion  
10.00am Café Style Church

**Wednesday 6th December**

10.00am Holy Communion

**Sunday 10th December (2nd Sunday of Advent)**

10.00am Holy Communion

**Wednesday 13th December**

10.00am Holy Communion



**Sunday 17th December (3rd Sunday of Advent)**

10.00am Holy Communion

**4.00pm 9 Lessons and Carols**



**Wednesday 20th December**

10.00am Holy Communion

**Friday 22nd December (Christingle)**

6.00pm to start at 6.30pm



**Sunday 24th December (Christmas Eve)**

10.00am Holy Communion

**11.00pm Holy Communion**



**Monday 25th December (Christmas Day)**

8.45am Holy Communion

10.00am Family Holy Communion

**Wednesday 27th December**

**PLEASE NOTE THERE IS NO SERVICE TODAY**

**Sunday 31st December (1st Sunday of Christmas)**

10.00am Holy Communion

## THANK YOU!

Wendy Sefton would like to thank the people who have helped some young person, who might not get anything this Christmas to get a shoe box. We did slightly better than last year and they collected **23 boxes** from church, plus some people did their boxes on line. So again, a **BIG THANK YOU** from Wendy Sefton



**What would you like for Christmas?**

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas. The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"



## BIBLE READINGS FOR DECEMBER & JANUARY

**Sunday 3rd December**

Isaiah 64: 1-9

Mark 13: 24-end

**Sunday 10th December**

Isaiah 40: 1-11

Mark 1: 1-8

**Sunday 17th December**

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-end

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

**Sunday 24th December**

2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16

Luke 1: 26-38

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Luke 2: 1-14

**Monday 25th December**

Isaiah 52: 7-10

John 1: 1-14

**Sunday 31st December**

Isaiah 61: 10- 62: 3

Luke 2: 15-21



**Wednesday 3rd January**

Psalms 98: 2-7

John 1: 29-34

**Sunday 7th January**

Ephesians 3: 1-12

Matthew 2: 1-12

**Sunday 14th January**

1 Samuel 3: 1-10

John 1: 43-end

**Sunday 21st January**

Genesis 14: 17-20

John 2: 1-11

**Wednesday 24th January**

Acts 9: 1-22

Matthew 19: 27-end

**Sunday 28th January**

Hebrews 2: 14-end

Luke 2: 22-40

# CHURCH SERVICES FOR JANUARY

## Sunday 7th January (Epiphany)

8.30am Holy Communion

10.00am Café Style Church



## Wednesday 10th January

10.00am Holy Communion

## Sunday 14th January (2nd Sunday of Epiphany)

10.00am Holy Communion

## Wednesday 17th January

10.00am Holy Communion

## Sunday 21st January (3rd Sunday of Epiphany)

10.00am Holy Communion

## Wednesday 24th January

10.00am Holy Communion

## Sunday 28th January (Candlemas)

10.00am Holy Communion

## Wednesday 31st January

10.00am Holy Communion

## Christmas Prayer 2023

Almighty Father,

Thank you for your indescribable gift of Jesus – the Light of the world. Thank you that He brought light and life to all who received Him during His life on earth and that He still brings light and life to all who receive Him.

Lord, how this broken world needs your light today. As we rejoice and give thanks for Christmas, we pray that the light of Jesus will pierce the darkness of self-interest and hatred – and change the hearts of those who do not love you or their neighbours.

We pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit you will deliver your people from evil, and that Your kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. Thank you, Father, that because of Jesus, light will *always* shine in the darkness and the darkness will *never* be able to extinguish it.

Glory and thanks and praise to You Father God, this Christmas and always. In Jesus' saving and powerful name. Amen.

*By Daphne Kitching*

## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS December Birthdays



Congratulations to Lisa Littler whose birthday is on December 2nd, to Alex Crombie whose birthday is on December 5th, to Colin Keam whose birthday is on December 7th, to Ruth Lawton whose birthday is on December 9th, Angela Keam whose birthday is on December 10th, to Graham Aylett whose birthday is on December 12th and to Gerald Cook whose birthday is on December 24th.

## January Birthdays

Congratulations to Dave Crowther whose birthday is on January 13th, to Jim Goffin whose birthday is on January 22nd, and to Roy Barlow whose birthday is on January 24th.



## Fundraising Committee

Thank you for your support over the recent events, especially at our monthly Tea & Toasts. On a bright note, with your help and support, you have helped the Maintenance Appeal Committee raise over **£200,000 since September 2005.**

If you have any new ideas for the Maintenance Appeal Committee to use, or if you want to join us, please approach anyone on the committee.

Thank you for your continuing support. The Maintenance Appeal Committee would like to wish everyone

**A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
A  
PROSPEROUS 2024**

### Drink tea or coffee each day – and keep old age weakness away!

Recent research has found that drinking coffee or tea in midlife may help keep you stronger in later life. A study at the National University of Singapore concluded that higher caffeine intake is associated with lower odds of physical frailty in old age, regardless of the source of the caffeine. Physical frailty in old age was defined as having at least two of the following: weight loss, exhaustion, slowness and weakness. The scientists also measured handgrip strength and the time taken to complete a timed up-and-go (TUG) test. In addition to caffeine, coffee and tea contain rich bioactive polyphenols, which have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These have been associated with reduced risk for diseases that increase frailty, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and neurodegenerative disease.

## Prince of Peace Advent Bible Study

As we enter a very special time of year have you ever given any thought as to who the Prince of Peace is and what this actually means for us today?



Please do Join us for our Advent Bible study  
Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December  
1pm

Free refreshments and Mince Pies provided

At St Michael and All Angels  
Greenway Road, Runcorn,  
WA7 5BS

St Michaels is a warm and friendly environment to  
grow and explore faith and life. All are most welcome  
no matter if you have read the Bible for years or have  
never even opened the cover !

### Everyday Christmas

(Malachi 4:2, Matthew 1:23)

Light a candle,  
Look into the light,  
Pray.

*Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings*  
As the flame rises,  
Smooth, bright,  
Know the comfort of Christ

In the carol speaking  
Afresh.  
Bringing Jesus  
Into heart and prayer.  
Emmanuel, God with us.  
Light of the world,  
Out of the stable  
Into our situations.  
Because of Jesus  
Christmas is everyday.  
The Lord is here.  
Hallelujah.

*By Daphne Kitching*



### Activities at St Michael's Church

#### St Michael's Maintenance Appeal Committee

Tea & Toast in the Meeting Room **Next Tea & Toast is on 6th January & 3rd February**

**@ 10.00am to 12.00 noon Admission: £2.00**

#### Crafters Group

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



#### VML

Sing-along sessions on Tuesday nights @ **7.00pm** in the Meeting Room. So come along have a



## The story behind the hymn: O Come, All ye Faithful

Nobody knows who wrote this well-loved Christmas carol. It was originally a Latin Christmas hymn, 'Adeste Fidelis'. It seems to have first 'surfaced' in English due to a John Francis Wade, who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and who made his living copying manuscripts and, sometimes, music by hand. Wade was a Roman Catholic, and all services in the church at that time were conducted in Latin, and so he knew the language well. The story goes that in about 1750 he slipped this hymn into a manuscript he was copying for the English Roman Catholic College in Lisbon, Portugal. 35 years later, in 1785, it turned up in the Portuguese Chapel in London, where it became known as the 'Portuguese Hymn'. From there, the hymn appears to have 'travelled' across to the Margaret Chapel in London's West End. Young William Ewart Gladstone, who later became British Prime Minister, greatly appreciated the services at this church. He said that the congregation were "the most devout and happy that I have ever seen." The minister at that time was Frederick Oakley, one of the leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Oxford Movement, who was later to convert to Roman Catholicism. Oakley believed strongly in the power of religious symbols and fine music, and before he bade farewell to the Margaret Chapel, he introduced this hymn to the congregation. Having started as 'Adeste Fidelis', and been for a while 'The Portuguese Hymn', this hymn soon became known – and loved worldwide – as 'O Come, All Ye Faithful'.

*O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;*

*O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ, the Lord!*

*Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;*

Old age, believe me, is a good and pleasant time. It is true that you are gently shouldered off the stage, but then you are given such a comfortable front stall as spectator, and, if you really have played your part, you are more content to sit down and watch. – *Jane Harrison*

800 years ago, on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1223  
St Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene, in Greccio, Italy, after visiting Jesus' birthplace in the Holy Land. It proved enormously popular and inspired other communities to stage their own nativity scenes.

20 years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 that using a handheld mobile phone while driving became illegal in the UK.



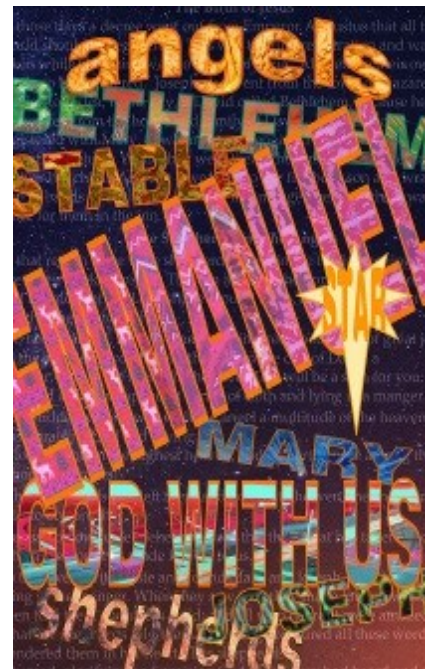
## We have welcomed the following into the Church Family through Baptism

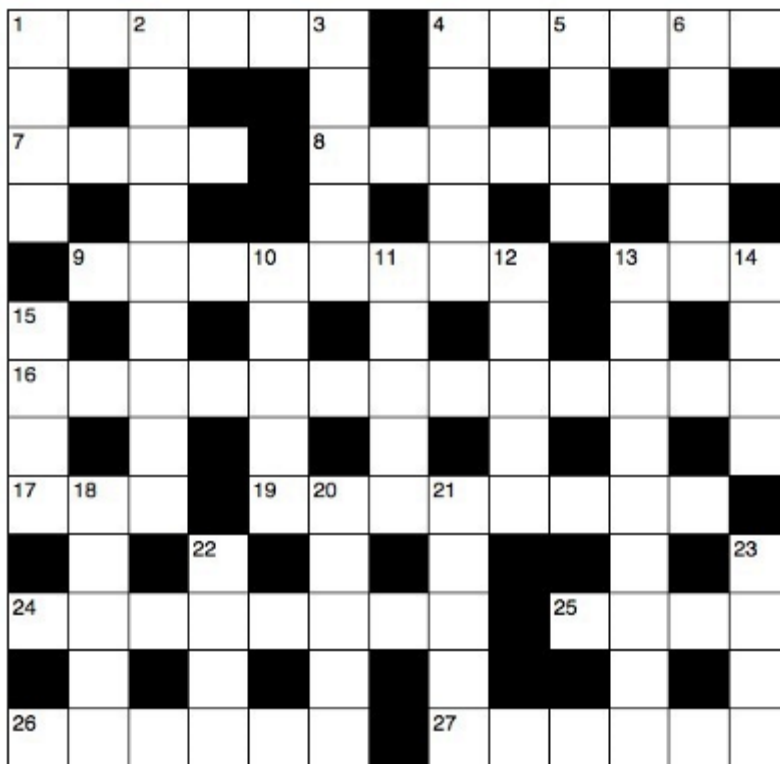


Recently we welcomed **one child** George William Robinson (26th November) into the Church Family. Please pray for George that he may grow up to love and follow Christ. Please pray for his parents and Godparents, and pray that they may seek to know Christ and to worship.



This is the baptism from 26th November





## CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

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

### Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

### Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)



November  
Crossword answer

### ROLL OF HONOUR

Three people got the  
crossword  
answer and they were

Jim & Shelagh Goffin,  
Margaret Myers  
&  
Wendy Sefton



"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."

### A simple way to reduce your risk of a heart attack

This is so easy that most of us can do it at home: simply climb about five flights of stairs a day. So says a recent study, published in the journal *Atherosclerosis*. It found that climbing stairs on a regular basis may reduce the risk of strokes, blood clots, and heart attacks by as much as 20 per cent. Climbing stairs is also good for burning fat. This is because you use your largest muscle groups, and so burn more calories. For example – stair climbing burns 23 per cent more calories than running; 250 per cent more calories than swimming, 63 per cent more than cycling, and a staggering 400 per cent more than walking at about three km/h. As one biomechanics coach explained: "You can take the steps as fast – or slow – as you like, and still see benefits. That's because the muscles are contracting and shortening under tension as they push the floor away." Climbing stairs is easier on the knees and hips than running, because there is less shock through the body.

### What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Genesis

This is the first of a new series aimed at providing an overview of the Bible. This month we consider the first book, Genesis.

As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In chapters 1-11, it records the creation of the heavens and the earth and human beings; marriage and family; sin's effect on society and the world. The following chapters record God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see God establishing a people called to bless the world, as He blesses them. The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, so that he can relate to God in a personal way: *'God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'* (1:27). However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of human beings and the created order. By creating people with free will, God risked the possibility that they might reject Him. This is inherent in His love for human beings. In Genesis, God enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendents (circumcision), pledging His love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond to Him in faith. It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. Without a sense of the centrality of God's place in our lives, we can never get our lives right.

### New Year Prayer 2024

Lord,  
We stand on the threshold of a new year. Some of us are excited, some of us are fearful. We don't know what 2024 will bring, but we know that there will be ups and downs, joy and sadness mixed in with the months.

As we step into this new year, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you; to know for certain that, whatever happens, you will be in it with us, not watching from the side-lines, but right in the middle of it with us. Help us to put our trust in what Jesus did on the cross, maybe for the first time, maybe as a New Year re-commitment, so that we will know that nothing can separate us from you. Let the storm rage, let the sun shine – we are safe! In the name of the risen, living Lord Jesus. Amen.

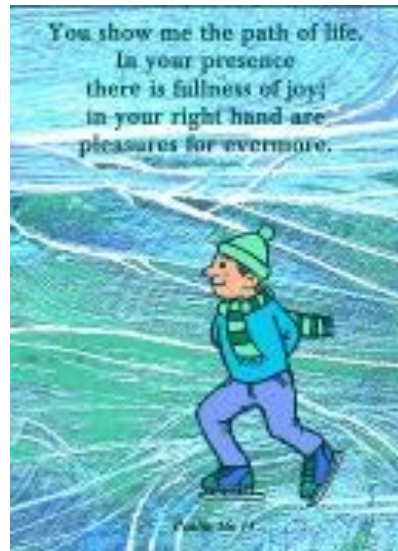
by Daphne Kitching





## A simple way to help cut your risk of diabetes

A recent study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine has found that your risk of diabetes falls for every kilometre per hour faster that you walk on average. Put simply, if you walk at a pace of 3km per hour (1.86 mph) you may lower your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by at least 15 per cent. If you can walk briskly at a speed of 5km to 6km an hour (3.1 to 3.7mph) than you may cut the risk by 24 per cent. A lack of exercise and being overweight are among the factors that increase the risk of diabetes as someone gets older.



## Why you might want to eat 8 strawberries a day

Strawberries are better for you than you probably know. They provide 100 per cent of the recommended daily vitamin C amount in a single cup serving, and they also contain heart-healthy nutrients such as folate, potassium, fibre, phytosterols and polyphenols.

A recent study has found that eating about eight of them a day for three months can improve your mood, help your memory, and lower any symptoms of depression. The study was carried out at the University of Cincinnati's Academic Health Centre.



## Visiting other churches

*'... this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord ... (Psalm 27:4)*

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is this month (**18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January**), so it's probably a good time to meet with other local Christians – or at least to visit one of their churches. And when visiting other churches, it's fun to have a good nose around. Fewer churches seem to have guides nowadays, and probably not many are open every day. But when you next visit a church, why not look beyond the building itself and its monuments which show the history of the place? Try to discover *what is going on there now*.

**First**, ask yourself how easy it is to find out the following information:  
What are the services in the church, and when are they held?  
Who is who, and how do you contact people?  
Are the photos and notices up to date?

**Secondly**, is there a church magazine? They can be the lifeblood of the church and community, keeping people in touch with each other. Also, as church magazines can be delivered door to door each month, they are an excellent way of reaching out to local non-churchy people, reminding them that they will always be welcome.

**Thirdly**, why not keep an eye out for any good ideas that the church has got – and pinch them for our own church? This can work the other way, too – if you see something that does NOT work, make a note of that as well.

Above all, try and 'get a feeling' for what the church is really like to attend. Would you want to belong there? Some churches, like people, feel welcoming and alive, while sadly others seem to be struggling and downright gloomy. Whether it is 'high' or 'low' is not as important as whether it is welcoming and caring. And what about our own church? How about inviting a non-church friend to come along and tell you their honest first impressions of our church? We might be pleasantly surprised!



**The  
Prince  
of  
Peace**

**December 2023  
& January 2024**



*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

**Joan Hillon**



**A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A  
PROSPEROUS 2024  
FROM GEORGE & JEANETTE ROACH  
AND FAMILY,  
THE CHURCHWARDENS,  
CHRIS CHALLONER AND ROSEMARY LUNT,  
AND TO ALL THE PEOPLE  
WHO READ OUR CHURCH MAGAZINE.**



### Turn your love

... Turn your love to Him, who in His love  
Upon a cross, our souls to save today,  
First died, then rose, and sits in heaven above;  
And now will fail no-one, I dare to say,  
That will His holy heart upon Him lay!  
And since He best to love is, and most meek,  
Why should we feigned love go to seek?

*By Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400)*

### Let nothing disturb thee

Let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee;  
All things are passing; God never changeth;  
Patient endurance  
Attaineth to all things;  
Who God possesseth  
In nothing is wanting  
Alone God sufficeth.

*By St Teresa of Avila*

## INFORMATION

**Revd George Roach  
01928 832734**

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

### Churchwardens

**Chris Challoner    01928 715830**

**Rosemary Lunt    01928 569863**

**e-mail:**

**warden@runcornstmichaels.org.uk**

**If you want to book  
a wedding, baptism or funeral  
please phone this number**

**07722470940**

**and ask for Robbie**

## VML



If you have some time to yourself on a Tuesday afternoon, why not tune into the VML Radio Show on HCR 92.3 FM.



**Tickets will be on sale soon, please see  
Robbie for tickets or pay on the door.**