



THE MESSENGER

The weekly review of the Parish of

St Michael and All Angels

Watford

ADVENT 3
13 December 2020

CHURCH REOPENING FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

Welcome back to St Michael's. At 9.30am there is a eucharist with congregation in Church, music but no singing. Tier 2 restriction indicate no interacting with anyone outside your household whilst in the Church.

There will be a limit of 40 people, and hygiene, social distancing, and track and trace will be in place, but most importantly, we are here! The service will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel "St Michaels Church Watford" for those who are unable to attend physically. Following the service, St Michael's will remain open for private prayer until 12.00noon.

There is a Homily from Fr Geoff on the back page.

For your prayers this week:

- The Church:** Church Schools in our Diocese.
The Parish of Datchworth in our Diocese.
The Diocese of the Falkland Islands, Timothy Thornton its Bishop and all its people.
- The World:** All those working to help refugees.
All migrants (Thursday is International Migrants' Day).
All those working to deliver and administer COVID-19 Vaccine.
- The Community and Parish:** All those who will be spending Christmas alone or in isolation.
All our children and young people.
Members of our Church family separated from family and friends.
- The Ill and the Housebound:** Especially Christopher Bilson, Janet Chandler, Audrey Dixon, Cynthia Dixon, Claire Dunning, Fr Robert Featherstone, Jemima Hill, Blossom Hutchinson, Mary Kearns, Keith Levinson, Craig McKay, Lisa Mills, Sylvia Obeng, Dorcas Ochola, Brian Rees, Christina Simon, Catherine Stone, Adelaide Tonkin, Peter White; and all who care for them.
- The Departed:** David Powell (Myrtle's husband).
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Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you:

grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,

that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

FIRST READING Isaiah 61.1–4, 8–11

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The servant of the LORD said:

- ¹ The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
- ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;
- ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
- ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
- ⁸ For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
- ⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
- ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

SECOND READING I Thessalonians 5.16–24

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians.

- My brothers and sisters,
16 Rejoice always,
17 pray without ceasing,
18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
19 Do not quench the Spirit.
20 Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything;
21 hold fast to what is good;
22 abstain from every form of evil.
23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL John 1.6–8, 19–28

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.
8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.
19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’
20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’
21 And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’
22 Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’
23 He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.
24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.
25 They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’
26 John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,
27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’
28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

HOMILY

In our Gospel, John the Baptist refuses to identify himself with one of the expected figures of Jewish tradition. Instead, he points away from himself towards the Messiah who is to come. The Church's role is to point away from itself, and towards Jesus. The Church is like a window. If we concentrate on the window, we see how imperfect it is. If we look through it, we see the glory beyond.

Love and prayers *Fr Geoff*

St Michael's Church is now open for private prayer on Wednesdays, 10.00am – 12.00 noon, and Sundays 10.45am – 12 noon. Hygiene and social distancing procedures are in operation for your protection. All very welcome.

MANY THANKS to all who contributed to our Gift Day yesterday. We will let you know what was raised as soon as we have the figures.

THERE WILL BE AN OPEN-AIR CAROL SERVICE on the triangle outside the Church on Sunday 20th December at 4.00pm. As it is open-air, we will be allowed to sing! Mulled wine and mince pies will not be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own! You may need to bring a torch to see the words.

If you would like to donate to St Michael's during the pandemic, there is also a JustGiving page at:
<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/stmichaelandallangels>