



St Michael's Messenger

March 2022

Letter from the Vicarage

Despite the horrors of war raging in Europe and the very clear reminder that this gives us of the continual battle of good verses evil, I hope that your

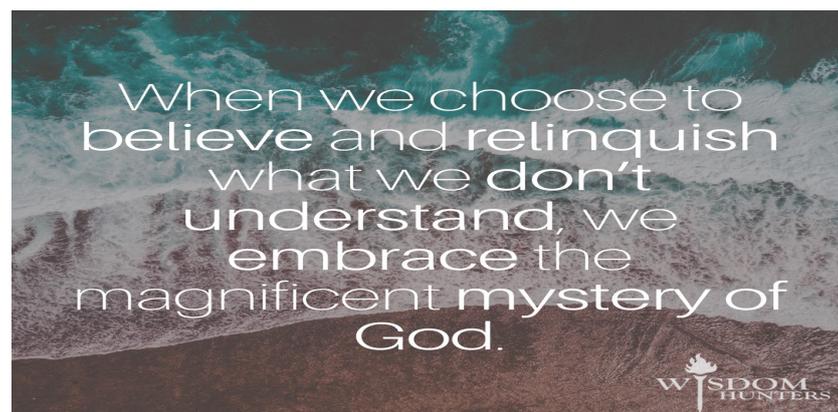
Lenten journey has been enriching and also challenging for you in equal measure.

Lent is a time to slow down, to reflect on our walk with Jesus over the last twelve months, preparing ourselves to receive him as risen Saviour at Easter.

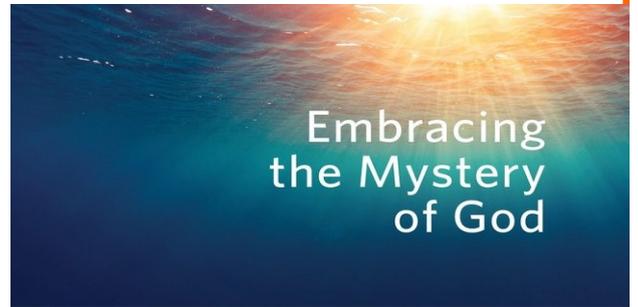
Rowan Williams once said of Lent that 'The self-denial involved in the period of Lent isn't about just giving up chocolates or beer; it's about trying to give up a certain set of pictures of God which are burned into our own selfish wants.'

However desperately we might try to conjure up images and perspectives of God to give justification to the decisions that we make and the people who we become as a result of these decisions, God is totally other. So other is God, so beyond our capacity to form an accurate view or image of him that it is impossible to do so. We may think that we have God neatly boxed in the thinking of our hearts but God is so far beyond our capacity to think that it is an impossibility. We may believe that we have God worked out, that we can reduce his presence into a size that we can handle but when this happens we restrict the possibilities of life that God wants us to experience; we hem ourselves in by the boundaries of our thinking.

Theologians state that it is easier to describe what God isn't rather than what God is. For example we can say with some confidence that God isn't nasty, vengeful, moody etc. And it



is being able to hold the understandings of God that we have against the light, to sift those which let light pass from those that block the light which is central to a life giving discipline during Lent.



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When we slow down, when we take time to be with God in prayer or out in God's creation, when we remind ourselves of all that we take for granted then we can start to sift out all the stale and inaccurate pictures that we have, those that block God's presence for working itself out more fully in our life. It's a bit like spring cleaning, removing the dust and detritus that dims the radiance of something, chucking out that which we don't need any more, moving things around to change the feel of the spaces in which we live.

In your Lenten discipline may you be able to grab hold of the Kingdom of God more fully this year and in so doing find it reshaping your vision of what truly matters. We can see all too readily what happens when the forces of evil try to gain a foothold in the world. It takes a clear view of an alternate life, a picture of goodness and flourishing to provide the impetus to challenge and the defeat all that seeks to restrict life.

Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves to discern what is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the

Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out and throw it away so as to live more fully in the resurrected life, the life of the Kingdom.

Fr. Alex French



St. Michael's Web Site :

www.smaaa.church



Giving in Lent.....

Our Lenten donations this year will go to the Food Bank in Sparkhill. We are constantly aware of the great need all around us and our donations are very much appreciated and necessary. Please put your donations into the box in the Narthex - Thank You.





Noel's Tapestries

St. Michael's has acquired and displayed many varied pieces of art over the years and in January this year we were happy to unveil two new additions. These are two tapestries which were produced in cross stitch by the late Noel Worrall, for many years a member of our congregation. Each one took many hours to complete and the standard of work is very high indeed. The tapestries were originally donated by Audrey Worrall as items to decorate our meeting room but were considered to be much better suited to be on show in church.

A Faculty was applied for and granted almost 2 years ago but Covid and lockdown restrictions prevented any movement on this until mid 2021. They were eventually rehung and framed professionally by Whitworth's Framing and blessed by Fr. Alex French on Sunday January 23rd 2022.

PS .

Food for thought !

THE MAGIC BANK ACCOUNT

Imagine that you had won the following *PRIZE* in a contest:
Every day your bank would deposit £86,400 in your private account for your use.
However, this prize has rules as follows:

1. Everything that you didn't spend during each day would be taken away from you.
2. You may not simply transfer money into some other account.
3. You may only spend it.
4. Each day upon awakening, you find the bank has credited your account with another £86,400, just for that day.
5. The bank can, and will, end the game without warning at any time, it can say, "Game Over!" It can close the account, and you will not receive a new one.

What would you do?

Perhaps you would buy anything and everything you wanted, not only for yourself, but for all the people you love and care for. Even for people you don't know, because you couldn't possibly spend it all on yourself? You would try to spend every penny, and use it all, because you knew it would be replenished in the morning, right?

ACTUALLY, THIS GAME IS REAL!

Each of us is already a winner of this *PRIZE*. We just can't seem to see it. The PRIZE is "TIME"

1. Each morning we awaken to Receive 86,400 seconds 'As a gift of Life'.
2. And when we go to sleep at Night, any remaining time is not credited to us.
3. What we haven't used up that day is forever lost.
4. Yesterday is gone forever.
5. Each day your account is refilled, but the bank can dissolve it at any time without warning...

So, what will you do with your 86,400 seconds?

Those seconds are worth so much...

More than the same amount in money.

Think about it and remember to enjoy and use wisely every second of your life, because time races by so much quicker than you think.

So take care of yourself... be happy, love deeply and enjoy life! Here's wishing you a wonderful and beautiful day.

"Don't complain about growing old Some people don't get the privilege!"

A Journey Through Lent



On Ash Wednesday we began our solemn journey to Easter with the rather beautiful and Solemn ritual of Ash Wednesday. There is something very spiritually satisfying and cleansing about the purple drapes and the signing of the cross on our foreheads with ash, and the chance to dedicate the next six weeks to think more deeply about our faith in God and what it means to us. Fortunately the service was on Zoom for those of us who could not manage to be physically present, not as satisfying as actually being there but at least enabling us to take part.

God himself means many things to most of us: He is our friend in times of need, our Redeemer as he forgives our shortcomings and God and King high above all who we will one day meet face to face. Something that maybe we don't think about very often amid the busyness of life. God is in fact an immense and glorious mystery to us, and when we do put our minds to serious thoughts about Him it almost hurts to stretch our minds to try to contemplate the immensity that is God.

Lent gives us the chance to contemplate all these things. We can use a good book with thoughts for each day: *Bread for the Journey* is a favourite one by Henri J Nouwen. We can use a little book of prayer, a deep thinking weighty book, or just something simple that we can think about at odd moments. It really doesn't matter except that we do it!

Lent also gives us the chance to give a little bit more. Maybe like me you have direct debits going out to your favourite charities, but in Lent we have the chance to offer a bit more to those in need, by our prayers of course especially for the people of the Ukraine and those in desperate need, but practically too. There will be a collection for the Food Bank in a box in the Narthex to help feed those locally in need. Lent really focuses our Faith in God and His love for all people, and encourages us to enjoy the closeness of God as our friend and our Redeemer, but also to extend that love out into the community around us.

And then there is the chance to fast or at least refrain from some of those treats that have become a habit. Why not use the money spent on them for some food to put in the box?

Whatever you choose to do this Lent, may it be a time of closeness to God, and a chance to make the forty days of Lent a special time. We think about Jesus as he fasted in the wilderness after his baptism, a time when he resisted the devil's temptations and fasted and prayed about his future ministry and His road to the cross. Lent is solemn, but the word solemn, means celebration as well as formal, impressive, and serious. In other words something very special! May your Lent be very special with our Lord.!

Congratulations and our happy birthday wishes go to those with Birthdays recently :

January : Benda Wyatt, Petra Thompson, Connor Wyatt .

February : Frances Perrigo ,Eileen Simons, Maria Vargas.

March : Janet Morgan, Jane Clarke ,John Knott.

Please let me know if there are any I do not include. For any articles etc. for the Messenger please contact me on faithheron@yahoo.co.uk.



Have you a story, a favourite poem, anecdote or holiday memory you can share in the Messenger ? Give them to me on an email, a document or just a piece of paper ! All contributions welcome. Faith.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who mourn at this time. We ask God's blessing on those whose funerals have taken place this year
Donald Tustin aged 85 and Lilly Baldock aged 91.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory.



Congratulation to Kimberley Wood and her family on her Baptism.
May she be aware of God's presence with her as she goes through life.

Easter & Holy Week Services

Sunday 10th April .	9.30 am	Palm Sunday with procession
Monday 11th April	8pm	Compline and Reflection on Zoom. See notices for the link
Tuesday 12th April	8pm	Compline and Reflection on Zoom
Wednesday 13th April	8pm	Compline and Reflection on Zoom
Thursday 14th April	7.30pm	Mass of the Lords Supper followed by Vigil and Compline at 10pm.
Friday 15th April	10am	Stations of the Cross
Friday 15th April	7.30pm	Good Friday Liturgy . Veneration of the Cross
Saturday 16th April	7.30pm	Service of Light
Sunday 17th April	9.30am	Easter Day

Knit and Natter !

Come and Join our lively chatty group ! Other crafts Welcome , not just knitters ! We meet every Wednesday from 2-4pm . Tea and Coffee available.
For more information please ask Faith or Veronica or a member of the Social Committee. All Welcome !