



St Michael's - a 'Major Parish Church'



... and what it means for us

Each Sunday, before our morning service, some slides include messaging about St Michael's: who we are, and what we seek to be and do. I sometimes wonder if those slides are noticed. Are they read? Do people understand and agree with them?

I've particularly been thinking about this since last Thursday, when Rachel, Isobel and I took an early morning train to York for a conference entitled '**A Future for Major Parish Churches**'.



Hosted by '**The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture**' (part of the University of York), we were treated to quality input from a range of agencies and organisations addressing some of the common peculiarities and demands of churches such as St Michael's.

For me one of the best presentations was by Diana Evans, Head of Places of Worship at Historic England. She totally challenged my view of Historic England, from being an organisation that says 'you can't do that!' to one wanting to support us in our mutual concern for our special heritage.

It was Diana who recognised that much of the nation's rich heritage is incidentally cared for by teams of volunteers – often called church members! To help her understand the sector, it was she who devised the category of **Major Parish Church** – a specific designation for large, historically-significant churches in the [Church of England](#) that play a key role in their communities.

Their key characteristics are:

- ◆ **Large size**
MPCs are typically very large buildings, with a footprint exceeding 1000 square meters.
- ◆ **Exceptional significance**
MPCs are Grade I, II*, or (exceptionally) Grade II listed, indicating their historic and architectural importance.
- ◆ **Role beyond the typical parish church**
MPCs often have roles and functions that extend beyond that of a standard parish church, serving as community hubs or cultural centres.
- ◆ **Civic, Cultural, and Economic Contribution**
MPCs make a significant impact on their local area through various activities and events.

Do you recognise how St Michael's fits the bill? St Michael's is one of around 320 designated MPCs in England, and one of only six in the Diocese of Chester.

One description used was of Major Parish Churches as 'little cathedrals' – ie. all the opportunities afforded by the public just walking in (for the stillness, for prayer, for the beauty, architecture, café, concerts and more) – but with the shoestring resources (people and finance) of an ordinary parish church.

So, as well as the informative and helpful input (much of which we'll be sharing with the Church Council and CC Teams in the near future), it was simply good to be amongst leaders and administrators of similar churches who 'just get it!' – who know and understand the opportunities and challenges of being a Major Parish Church.

But so what? Where might this lead us?



Continued over page

Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God,
send down upon your Church
the riches of your Spirit,
and kindle in all who minister the gospel
your countless gifts of grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Continued from previous page

Firstly, I think it's important for us as the worshipping community based at St Michael's to realise that **being designated an MPC doesn't mean we are somehow more important** than a local church elsewhere which happens to sit on the outskirts of a town, with maybe a 1960's-build church and hall, or a small village church with an even longer history to Norman times. The worshipping communities at each will have their particular ministries according to their geographical location, the local population and relevant cultural or social opportunities. Theirs and ours are equally crucial, but will undoubtedly look a whole lot different.

The primary role for every Christian is to glorify God through a life of faith, obedience, and love. What that looks like will be very different on a housing estate, in a rural community, or in the centre of a market town.

What's key is each church recognising its own God-given **vocation or 'calling'**. Each worshipping community is called to live out its true identity, and, like it or not, **St Michael's IS a Town Centre Church**. (*Incidentally, if you don't like it, then please can we have a chat sometime soon?!*)

I still think this is excellently summed up in our 'Purpose Statement' developed five years ago. It is as relevant now as then:

Daily, since the conference in York, I have been pondering how much St Michael's is living out **our calling**. Over the years, I and the Church Council have done a lot to help us know Who we are as a church and what our particular ministry is.

But I wonder how much this has permeated to our membership and how many in our congregations have fully got on board, internalised and owned our unique identity?

I know it can be hard to memorise things, but can I encourage you to remembering what our calling is? Then, in living it out, I am confident that not only will St Michael's have a future but it will be a wonderful, flourishing one.

Mark

Revd Martin Stephens

Our calling as St Michael's is ...

to worship God;
to share the gospel of Jesus Christ;
to welcome all who come;
and
to contribute to the flourishing
of the Macclesfield community.



Music@Mike's

Thursday 24th July 1.15pm

Our final concert of the summer season features a duo from Cheshire Chamber Collective: Nicola Bright on violin and Julian Davis on piano.

Entry is free; donations to St Michael's and the Hospice are welcomed.

The Angel at my Table café will be open for light refreshments.



Summer Sundays at St Mike's

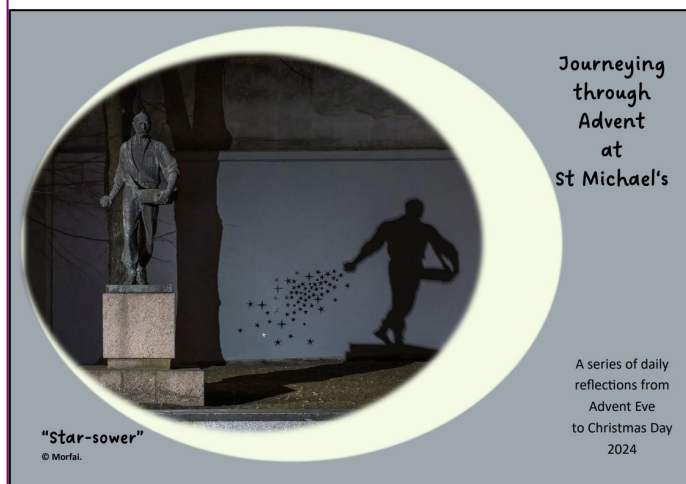
Our Sunday morning service starts at 10am and during the service the younger people and children have a parallel worship experience in our Youth Centre. During the school summer holidays we do something a little different and we would like to invite older people in the church to come and see what the children are learning, to join in and maybe tell your story of faith. *Tricia*

Here is our plan and dates for the school summer holidays:

Date	Theme	Bible reading
July 27 th	Getting Lost. Safe places	Luke 2.41-52
Aug 3 rd	Churchyard exploration. Eco-Church.	Psalms 1.
Aug 10 th	How can we deal with challenges in our lives?	Luke 8:22-25
Aug 17 th	No-one is excluded.	Luke 15:1-6, 19:1-10
Aug 24 th	Standing Firm. Asking Jesus for help.	Luke 7.1-9
Aug 31 st	Who do we turn to when we need help?	Luke 5.17-25

**The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
and give you peace.**

Advent Calendar: Contributors Needed



"Oh no! She's not banging on about this **already**, is she?!" I hear you cry. Yes indeed, I am.

Many of you will have experienced the St Michael's Advent Calendar which we produce in-house (to a superb standard!), using written reflections and images submitted by members of the church family. The calendar provides an opportunity for a brief time of quiet thought and contemplation for each day of Advent (interpreted rather loosely and secularly as 1st-24th December!) in the busy run-up to You Know What.

I need to draw up a list of volunteers for the 2025 calendar by mid-August. It would be really lovely if we had some new 'voices' this year in addition to our excellent regular contributors.

Please email me (lynne.norbron@gmail.com) or speak to me personally if you feel you could help. The more contributors, the greater the breadth of thinking and depth of meaning we can each take from the calendar. I am happy to send you a more comprehensive idea of what is involved if you are interested.

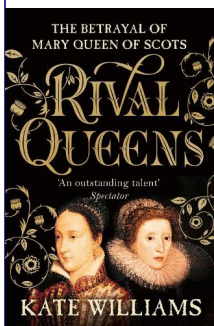
If you haven't seen either of our previous calendars and don't know the sort of thing we are looking for, I have put a copy of last year's on the noticeboard at the back of church.

Lynne

PS we are getting famous – a church in Norfolk is using our past editions so that they can do something similar. Of course, we filched the idea ourselves from Germany, via Heike!

My Holiday Book Review (by Garrie Naden)

One of the great joys of going on my summer holiday with Adrian to the small Greek island of Kimolos is having plenty of time to read. In fact, in those two and a half weeks, I probably read more than in the rest of the year put together (a sad admission). This year I prepared well by gathering a small collection of five books to take with me. Initially these went into my carry-on suitcase, but pushed it over the 8kg limit, so they were squashed into my handbag instead.

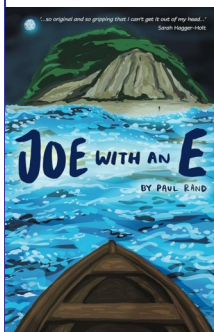


Top of the pile was **'Rival Queens' by Kate Williams**, so that was what I started with on the flight over.

What a brilliant read. I loved it! Hard for me to summarise better than the back cover. "Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I of England. Two powerful monarchs on a single island. Threatened by voices who believed no woman could govern. Surrounded by sycophants, spies, and detractors. Accosted for their dominions, their favour, and their bodies. Besieged by secret plots, devastating betrayals, and a terrible final act. Only one queen could survive. To rule all."

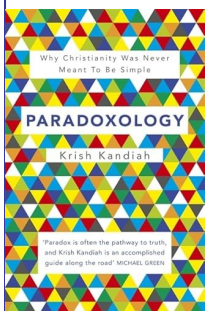
My knowledge of this period in history was hazy to say the least, and mostly long forgotten. But even if you know it well, this book brings it all to life in vivid, gripping, and spectacular fashion, and would be enjoyed whatever your historical knowledge is.

The book is written by a woman about two women which I think adds considerable insight. What miserable existences the aristocracy led in the second half of the 16th century. Not that I am suggesting this misery was confined to that period. Everyone wanted power, did whatever they could to gain it, and when they had it, lived in perpetual paranoia and fear of losing it. I was surprised to learn, or relearn, that despite the deep intensity of their decades-long relationship, the two queens never actually met, Elizabeth resolutely refusing to meet Mary at any time. Rating 5 stars.



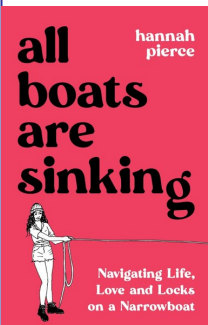
Next, **'Joe with an E' by Paul Rand**. Paul is a work colleague who I have only known for a few months. This is his first novel. What a great debut! Joe is born into a neut (ral) society, but is an anomaly. He is a boy. His differences must remain hidden, including having to spell his name as J-O-H to cover the real spelling. As he grows up, his parents have to send him to an island hideaway with other anomalies. The book gets you thinking about gender, identity, family and belonging whilst following a gripping escape adventure. My guess

would be that you've never read a story like this before. I certainly hadn't. I am looking forward to reading the sequel, Them and Us. Rating 5 stars.

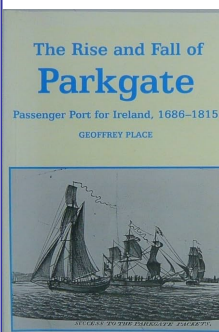


Third book, **'Paradoxology' by Krish Kandiah**. Krish is one of the presenters of Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* on the 'Today' programme. I enjoy his three minutes of thought-provoking monologue and thought his book might also be enjoyable. It isn't exactly a relaxing holiday read though. It is challenging and for me definitely in the category of the more you read and learn, the more you realise how much you don't know. The book is "an intelligent, rigorous examination of the paradoxes that lie at the heart of the Christian faith", claiming that the paradoxes that seem to undermine belief actually lie at the heart of a vibrant faith. I don't really know how to do proper justice to 300 pages in a few lines. Suffice to say, a lot of what I read was eye-opening and helpful, helpful in the sense of providing reassurance that many questions and doubts I and many others have about my faith are perfectly normal. I, and

we, as Christians and churches often avoid the difficult questions, the hard parts of the Bible, preferring a nice brand of religion that fits our lifestyle without being too demanding. It takes a degree of guts, perhaps a leap of faith, to explore difficult questions that risk weakening our faith. But this book showed, for me at least, that the opposite is true. Be brave. Give the book a read. Five stars.



Book 4, **'All Boats Are Sinking' by Hannah Pierce**. After all the brainwork of book 3, this was perfect. Four years in the life of early 30-something Hannah as she buys a narrowboat to live on in London, continuously cruising, a tough life unlike when I did it, luxuriating on a residential mooring with electricity, tap, and elsan (look it up). Then she ventures all the way to Todmorden. There was hardly a stretch of canal that she covered that I hadn't cruised on in the past, mostly multiple times, so it provoked great memories for me. But the book was funny, entertaining, emotional, and ultimately about what is really important in life. You don't need to have been anywhere near a narrowboat to enjoy this book. Highly recommended. 5 stars.



Book 5, **'The Rise and Fall of Parkgate, Passenger Port for Ireland, 1686-1815'**. Parkgate is near Neston, on the Wirral, and for this period was a bustling port, mainly for passengers to and from Dublin, but also some trade. The book covers other ports, including Chester, Holyhead, and Liverpool, and includes some references to mail carriage and routes, which was my specific reason for reading the book. It is extremely well researched and written by Geoffrey Place, providing fascinating insights into the social history of the period, including the mass

transport back and forth of poor Irish labourers engaged in seasonal work on English farms, and the movement of troops (and King William III in 1690) to fight in Ireland. Only sailing boats were used during this period, their design and build improved over time, nonetheless the crossing of the Irish Sea was often perilous because of high winds, delaying departures by days or weeks, or worse still, causing ships and lives to be lost. Superb. Rating, you've guessed it, 5 stars.

25 stars for 5 books, I choose well

Garrie

Ed. I think we've learned quite a lot about Garrie from this eclectic mix of books!

Emergency Evacuation Practice



In order to comply with our legal obligations under the Fire Regulations, we have to carry out a Fire Evacuation practice. We intend to do this at the end of our Sunday service within the next few weeks. It will be announced at the beginning of the service that we intend to carry it out on that day.

At the end of the service, the Fire Alarm will be activated to show everyone what it sounds like. Everyone will then be asked to leave in an orderly fashion via one of the available exits. Anyone with mobility issues will be assisted if required by one of the Wardens and Welcomers. Refreshments will then be available as normal once the Evacuation is complete.

Steve Bradbury (Health and Safety Adviser)

LET'S: 20th July

This Sunday (20th July) is 'Let's Eat Together' Sunday.

Bring some food and eat with others, maybe sharing if you wish.

Newcomers are especially welcome: don't worry if you haven't any food - there's usually plenty.



Eco-tip

Read a challenging book! There are lots of good books in various genres which will both entertain you and make you think about the climate and nature crises we are living through. Here are 2 ideas:

'One Garden Against the World' by Kate Bradbury - a call to action to all of us to do more for wildlife and more for the climate. Starting with our own gardens!

'Saving Us' by Katharine Hayhoe - a climate scientist's case for hope and healing in a divided world

Both are available from all good bookshops or online from Abe or Hive. You don't have to buy from Amazon!

If you read Kate Bradbury's book you could join the Scoop and Scales Book Club to discuss it; 7.30pm on Monday 15th September (part of the Season of Creation)



Cricket

The next home game for the church cricket team is on Wednesday 23rd July 6.15pm at Kerridge CC on Clarke Lane. Spectators welcome.



Silk Brass

Enormous thanks to Silk Brass who recently gave a concert in aid of our lighting project: **£817.46** was raised.

Be Generous

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. *2 Corinthians 9:7*

GIVING

WHY I DO NOT CONTRIBUTE



THE CHURCH HAS PLENTY OF MONEY



WE CAN'T AFFORD IT



I GIVE MY TIME AND TALENTS INSTEAD



CHURCH ISN'T THE PLACE TO TALK ABOUT MONEY



DOESN'T THE GOVERNMENT PAY FOR IT?



I GIVE TO OTHER CHARITIES



WHAT I COULD GIVE WOULDN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE



THE MONEY WON'T BE WELL-SPENT



OUR VICAR DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE PAID



SOMEONE UPSET ME ONCE

CartoonChurch.com

Reminders (notices already publicised)

New Prayer Opportunity

Each Thursday from 17th July Tricia A. is planning to be in the Savage Family Chapel from 7.00pm to pray each week.



If you would like to join her please let her know or just turn up. She will probably have to lock the front door so you could be locked out of church - which is not a good plan!

She's also planning to go for a drink afterwards!

Thanks,

Tricia

Open Garden

Please note that there will be an Open Garden event at Two Trees, 55 Byrons Lane on Sunday 20th July, 12 noon to 4.00pm (poster attached with the newsletter).



Dogs welcome!

This is in aid of the East Cheshire Hospice.

Admission £5.00 including tea and cake.

Other events include a book swap and raffle, (Unfortunately the garden is not suitable for wheelchairs)



Sustainable Church Flowers - Training

Anne K will be leading a session on Tuesday 2nd September 7.30-9.00pm at St Michael's, if anyone would like to come along.

Please speak to Anne directly or contact her via email at kitieanne@btinternet.com

Do you need to hire a space?

- Meeting rooms with various facilities & sizes to meet your needs
- Our large, beautiful Worship Area for concerts and presentations with giant screen & AV system

Contact the office to tour the spaces and find out costs.

Tel: 01625 421984

Email Elaine: bookings@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk

St Michael & All Angels Church, Market Place, Macclesfield, SK10 1DY

Visit to Styal Prison



Four of us (Anne K., Martin B., Esther and Lynne) visited Styal Prison just over a week ago, where we spent several hours meeting with some of the prisoners, and being shown round by Mike, one of the Chaplains there.

We had a very meaningful and moving time, learning so much about the work undertaken in the prison, the issues and needs of the women, and the problems which afflict so many of them as they are helped to turn their lives around.

As we hope the church family is aware, St Mike's has long-established links with the prison and we have supported it in many ways, with our weekly prayers (offered formally at *Start the Week*), through fundraising (more on this later) and with our ongoing communication with chaplains. We distribute the prison's prayer letter through the Bulletin when we receive it and this always makes us aware of the many challenges, stresses and positives within prison life.

Our visit showed us what transformational work can and does happen for some of the inmates, and how much our support is valued. We visited workshops (for example a centre where old televisions are recycled, and another where new clothing from big-name stores is re-branded and sent to needy communities in Africa). We were also made aware of the very many support services deployed to assist with the health, education, training and rehabilitation generally of the offenders.

We were pleased to spend our first 30-40 minutes with two women, both inmates, whose Christian testimony, given so articulately and powerfully, was humbling.

We are committed to maintaining our links and will keep everyone informed of any areas in which you can get involved!

How you can help

Prayer – please remember the entire Styal community in your regular prayers: inmates, prison officers, support staff, volunteers, etc

Money – as always! Many of you will know that we have requested donations each year for the last few years for 'journals' – i.e. notebooks in which the women can jot down their thoughts, keep a diary or sometimes write poetry and reflections. These are extremely valued and are therapeutic – as the two with whom we spoke made clear.

If you feel that you can contribute financially towards supporting the women at Styal, please see Lynne or Anne K. We will probably have a big 'push' on this in the autumn – so watch out! Each notebook costs a few pounds (it must be of a specific design, so we need to buy the actual books ourselves). In the past we have managed to send around 100+ notebooks at a time through your great generosity, and their distribution apparently brings much pleasure.

Our morning service on 12th October (Prison Sunday) will focus specifically on our links with Styal.



Matthew 25: ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

CHURCH NOTICE BOARDS

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS



CartoonChurch.com

God's Assurance - Something to Ponder

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

There is a Chinese story of an old farmer who had an old horse for tilling his fields. One day the horse escaped into the hills and, when all the farmer's neighbours sympathised with the old man over his misfortune, the farmer replied, "Misfortune? Good fortune? Who knows?"

A week later, the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills, and this time the neighbours congratulated the farmer on his good fortune. His reply was, "Good fortune? Misfortune? Who knows?"

Then, when the farmer's son was attempting to tame one of the wild horses, he fell off its back and broke his leg. Everyone thought this very bad misfortune. But not the farmer, whose only reaction was, "Misfortune? Good fortune? Who knows?"

Some weeks later, the army marched into the village and conscripted every able-bodied youth they found there. When they saw the farmer's son with his broken leg, they let him off.

Now, was that good fortune or misfortune? Who knows?

Everything that seems on the surface to be an evil may be a good in disguise. And everything that seems good on the surface may really be an evil. So we are wise when we leave it to God to decide what is good fortune and what is misfortune, and thank Him that all things turn out for good with those who love Him. Then we shall share something of that marvellous mystical vision of Julian of Norwich, who uttered what is the loveliest and most consoling sentence I have ever read:

'And all things shall be well, and all things shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.'

Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana; A Way to God*



Join us for *Worship*



Sunday Worship

20th July 2025

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

10:00am: Holy Communion

Celebrant & Speaker: Revd Martin Stephens

Bible reading: Colossians 1:15-28

Please use the link below to stream this
(and previous services) on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@stmikesmacclesfield>

Start the Week

Every Monday from 7.30am in church
Morning Prayer at 8.30 am in church and also on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/stmikesmacclesfield>

Wednesday Morning Prayer Group

Alternate Wednesdays at 10:30 am in the Savage Chapel
lasting 30-40 minutes.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 23rd July

Thursday Morning Worship 10:30am (35-40 mins)

Our midweek services follow the order from
the Book of Common Prayer (traditional language) and
alternate between Morning Prayer and Holy Communion

24th July: Morning Prayer
31st July: Holy Communion

Thursday Homegroup

Meeting for Bible study and prayer –
morning and evening groups

Please contact Eve & David Budgett (431606)
or David Mayers (420716) for more information



Contemplative Prayer

Friday mornings from 9.20-9.50.

An opportunity for quiet prayer followed by a cuppa and chat.

Compline/Night Prayer

Every Friday

Topic: Night Prayer | Time: 8.30 pm

Join Zoom Meeting; [https://](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)

[us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)

[pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)

Meeting ID: 756 7694 7476 Passcode: compline



Share your Photos with St Mike's Church Family



If you have any photographs of recent activities you have been involved in which you would like including in the weekly bulletin/newsletter or in the Church Family News slot in Sunday services, please use this number to WhatsApp them to the relevant people:

+44 7579 820265

You can, of course, also email pictures and text to stmikesnotices@gmail.com

How to contact the office...



Phone: Landline: 01625 421984

Email addresses:

- **Isobel** clergypa@maccteam.org.uk for ministry issues
- **Elaine** bookings@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk for bookings and building matters
- **Bulletin/Newsletter** stmikesnotices@gmail.com
- **Printing** maccteamprinting@gmail.com
- **Safeguarding** see box below

Postal Address: The Office, St Michael's Church, Market Place, Macclesfield, SK10 1DY

Elaine's office hours are *usually* Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9:30am – 1:30 pm

Isobel's Office hours are *usually* Monday & Wednesday 9.00-2.45; and Thursday 9.00 - 1.00 & Friday 8.30 - 1.00

Safeguarding Contact Information



If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact the St Michael's Safeguarding Officer, Katie Wilcock:

Phone: 07435 568 729

Email: safeguarding@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk



SCAN ME

Donating to St Michael's is easy!

Scan this QR Code or use the **contactless donation** point in the Welcome Area



Email any prayer requests to:

prayer@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk

Your request will be circulated confidentially to a limited group of people who will pray for you.

