

# VICAR'S LETTER

## *The view from the study.*

Looking back to last year, it seems remarkable that we postponed the 'Lancashire Evening' from March to October, fully expecting we could have an autumn gathering: a reminder, if needed, that with the ongoing pandemic nothing can be taken for granted. I was reflecting on such matters on the Sunday of the Annual Meetings. It could have been a depressing moment, but I was feeling greatly inspired by the presence of a congregation numbering over 40 – the largest we have safely accommodated so far in this era of 'hands-face-space'.

It is so heartening to observe the continued flow of people in and out of church on Sundays and Thursdays in recent times: people taking tentative steps back into the pews, as well as new faces who have begun appearing even in the strange times we have been enduring. I know there are other old friends who continue to stay away for all sorts of good reasons to do with minimising the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus: this is equally heartening. Each of us has to make a judgment about being in church and do what we feel right in all integrity.

It seems hard to believe, but one day we will get the all-clear to return in larger numbers to the churches of our land. But I repeat what I said on the day of the Annual Meetings: we don't need to rush headlong to recreate everything we once had. Let us use the current time of waiting to reflect on what we have lost, but also what we might have learned about ourselves and our life as a Church. Let's take time to lament, reflecting on what has been lost and bringing that before God in prayer; let's take time also to give thanks for whatever we have learned from the pandemic and the restrictions on our familiar activities. Then let us take time to think about the way forward, to think about rebuilding for the future, not for the past.

A while ago I raised the point about us seeking to be a 'so that' church, not a 'because' church. As we rebuild, keep asking the question: are we doing this *because* it is what we did before; or are we doing it *so that* we can grow together, serve our community and give glory to God?

Much of what happens in the coming months may look familiar, but there needs to be room for the unfamiliar and the risky too. If that feels unsettling, remember that Jesus was considered unfamiliar and decidedly risky by the establishment of his day!

Every blessing,

*Neil.*

## **Annual Meetings**

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May we held the Annual Meeting of Parishioners (for the election of churchwardens) and Annual Parochial Church Meeting (for the election of members of the Parochial Church Council and receiving the annual report).

I am pleased to report that Anthony Cowell and Mark Lamberty have been re-elected as Churchwardens.

Jon Eccles was newly elected to the PCC while John Cowell and David Hindle were re-elected following completion of their previous 3-year terms of office. The full list of PCC members is as follows:

Rev Neil Salt (chair)

Anthony Cowell (Churchwarden) Mark Lamberty (Churchwarden)

Hazel Cliff, John Cowell, Nellie Cowell (Deanery Synod), Jon Eccles, Kerry Giddins, David Hindle, Sarah Jones, Bernard Mackley, Julie Mitton, Jenny Soper (Co-opted as Parish Safeguarding Officer), Simon Taylor (Treasurer), Jayne Woollam (Deanery Synod)

Liz Emmott continues to serve as PCC secretary

Vacancies remain for 4 elected members of PCC and 1 Deanery synod rep.

We also still require a new treasurer. Please speak with me or the churchwardens if you are interested in discussing this further.

Thank you to all who serve on PCC and Deanery Synod. As was noted at the annual meeting, it would be impossible to thank everyone for all their contributions to the life of St Michael's. So much goes on unseen, but every prayer, every offering, every action in the service of Christ remains precious to him and invaluable in the mission of his church.

*Neil.*

### **Bishop Philip - "Chip in to Mereside"**

Are you familiar with Mereside – a deprived housing estate on the edge of Blackpool? It's just off Jn 4 of the M55, the two landmarks being the huge Tesco store and the windmill standing beside the main road. Some time ago the parish church closed, but more recently a new church venture has been established on the estate, under the name of Freedom Church, led by Rev'd Linda Tomkinson and her Church Army Evangelist husband, Pete. Currently the church is seeking to refurbish the former church hall as a new worship and community centre for the people of Mereside.

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June Bishop Philip will be passing through Grimsargh in the early stages of a 53 km sponsored walk from Chipping to Mereside, in support of the plans at Mereside. The Bishop will be calling in at St Michael's around 9.30am for 15 minutes of prayer. If you are free and would like to offer your support by joining Bishop Philip in prayer, you are welcome to come along.

Bishop Philip, who has a national role as Chair of the Archbishops' Estates Evangelism Task Force, said: 'Freedom Church, on one of the most deprived estates in the country, cheers my heart with the outstanding service it offers to the community and in the confidence with which it proclaims the Gospel. Their big problem is that they have no building. They meet in a small community centre which they have now outgrown. This enormously limits what Freedom Church is able to put on midweek, while the church as a whole will never feel established or permanent until it has its own place to meet.'

You might wish to support the fund-raising effort for the people of Mereside, which can be done on line at: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/chipintomereside2021](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/chipintomereside2021)

Please speak with me if you would like to help but have no online access.

Many thanks, Neil.

### **The Registration of Marriage**

On 4<sup>th</sup> May a significant change to the marriage registration system came into effect, ending the tradition of signing the registers that has been part of the ritual of a church wedding since 1837.

No longer will the happy couple and their two witnesses sign their names in the familiar green register books, nor will the vicar issue them with a certificate at the end of the service. Instead there will be a 'marriage document' to sign in church, which is then sent to the registrar for the details to be entered into an electronic marriage register. Couples married in church seeking a subsequent copy of their marriage certificate will now have to apply not to the vicar, but to the registrar.

Another change is the recording of mothers' names in the electronic register, and indeed there is the facility to add names of step-parents. Additionally, although the legal requirement remains two witnesses, up to six witnesses may be named on the document.

What does not change, however, is the provision for the solemnisation of marriage in your parish church, and the tradition of calling banns before a wedding can take place also continues.

On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May we marked this change with a prayer at the end of the service to bless the current registers and the marriages recorded in them, before the books were officially closed.

## **Covid-safe Services**

In order to maintain our services in a safe manner, please remember the basics:

- social distancing (both in the church and outside)
- hand hygiene (use sanitiser)
- face coverings to be worn in church (covering mouth *and* nose)

It is also important that we all keep an eye on our own health, so if you are unwell, and especially showing symptoms of Covid-19, you should be self-isolating and seeking medical advice. If you have been advised to self-isolate due to contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, you must not attend church.

Some people have been coming to services but not receiving communion – this is perfectly acceptable if you are concerned about any risk of hand contact. We are using wafers instead of bread in order to minimise hand contact with the sacrament. In getting the communion wafers ready, my hands are always washed and sanitised before touching them, a face covering is worn, and then the wafers remain covered during the service. They are only uncovered again when my face covering has been put back on and hands sanitised again. A spoon is normally used to offer the bread to each communicant. This mitigates the theoretical risk of passing on the coronavirus through contact with the bread.

Ours is quite a small church with narrow aisles and various pinch points, so please do give due regard to keeping your distance at all times.

We hope that restrictions will further ease later in June, but the recent rise in cases around Blackburn & Darwen and other parts of the north-west means this is not as certain as anticipated. Please adhere to the rules and make no assumptions about the rest of the summer until further government advice is issued in the coming weeks.

## **Confirmation**

We look forward to celebrating the much-delayed confirmation service on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June at 4.30pm. With ongoing Coronavirus restrictions, this is likely to be family only, but please remember all those being confirmed in your prayers: Joe Barker, Rob Blatcher, Holly Dewhurst, Josh Holt, Theo Rae, Beth Rowland and Livvy Smith.

## **Your Magazine**

Thank you to all who have renewed their subscriptions. The cost is now £6 for 10 issues.

We will be **combining the Dec and Jan issues**, so the magazine will reduce to 10 editions a year, rather than 11 at present.

If you wish to contribute items for the magazine, please send them to Bernard Mackley or Nellie Cowell. Anyone willing to help with the distribution of the magazine, please speak to Nellie.

You may be aware that the diocesan newsletter (The See) is no longer produced, but from this issue, we are offering a new insert: 'The Sign', published by The Church Times / Hymns Ancient and Modern. This will feature a range of articles of interest to readers of the parish magazine.

## **Website**

Thanks to Bernard Mackley, we now have a new website. You can find it at:

[www.e-voice.org.uk/grimsarghstmichael](http://www.e-voice.org.uk/grimsarghstmichael)

It is live but still under development. The previous website is now closed, though it will redirect to our new one for a while.

Please remember also that we have a new facebook page. The previous one was a closed group, but this is accessible to all (please do bear this in mind if you make any comments on the page). Thank you to Jayne Woollam for managing our facebook presence.

## MU at 90

It was a great pleasure to see members of the Mothers' Union in church on Ascension Day, marking the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of our branch. It is a pity that celebrations had to remain muted, but it really is worth giving thanks for all that the MU represents in our parish.

For 90 years it has provided a place where members can come together for mutual support, to worship together and to learn together. Like the Church as a whole, the MU does not exist for its own benefit, so it is always encouraging to see how our branch gets involved in supporting the wider work of the MU in outreach and service around the world.

Sadly, several branches in Preston deanery have closed in recent years, so I am thankful that ours continues to flourish. In this anniversary year, let us give thanks for all who have contributed to the work of the MU here over the last 9 decades and for all who are part of the organisation today. A very Happy Birthday to all our members!

### **Congratulations...**

To Councillor Ron Woollam, on his recent election to the County Council, representing the Preston Rural North ward.

Also to James Eccleston, on his appointment as head teacher at St Paul's CE Primary School, Farington Moss.

Our prayers are with both in the new roles and responsibilities they are about to undertake

### **MOTHERS' UNION**

At the Ascension Day service we remembered Jesus' ascension with communion and then celebrated the Grimsargh Mothers Union 90th birthday. It was a little different this year due to Covid restrictions but it was lovely to see familiar faces (behind masks of course!) and to be together again. Hopefully, God willing, we will soon be able to join each other in a normal meeting. At the end everyone received a special surprise 'going home' present (kindly created by Liz Emmot) with a piece of delicious cake (made by Neil Holden)

A very big thank you Liz (and Liz's sister, Meg, who helped her) and Neil

Included in the handmade bag was a small wooden cross made from olive wood from the Holy Land, together with two cards. One explained how the caring cross is designed to fit comfortably in the palm of your hand as an aid to prayer and a spiritual companion to all ages. The other card is a poem 'I carry a cross in my pocket' printed on it. It reminds of us of the price Jesus paid for us on the cross and the peace and comfort He offers us if we will let him be the Lord of our lives.

Birthday wishes to the birthday girls this month.

It was lovely to chat to them all and to find out a little more about them.

Ann Blatcher (June 4th ) Ann was born in Hove, near Brighton. She moved around a lot when she was growing up. Then, when she got married continued to live in various different places - Kenya and Australia!

Joan Buxton (June 13th) Joan was born in Samlesbury and has lived in the area all her life. At one time she ran the Craven Heifer Pub in Chaigley. She thought the Mothers' Union birthday cake was really tasty!

Catherine Robinson (June 13th) Catherine was born in Scotland. She now lives in Ribbleton. She has two daughters in Preston. Catherine is kept young by helping them with child care!

Christine Yates (June 16th) Christine also has lived in Australia for some time. When she returned to England she came to Grimsargh as she had always wanted to live in the Ribble Valley!

*Cont on pg 15*



## Now available

Special 2021 Limited Edition Wood Pen £3.00 With velvet pouch £3.50



All proceeds to church funds

Wording on pen St. Michael's Church Grimsargh 2021 'Be strong and courageous for the Lord your God is with you'

Love Ruth

## **SCHOOL REPORT**

We are now well into the summer term and are thoroughly enjoying having our school community back together again. We still face Government restrictions and we are still operating in our separate class bubbles but we have enjoyed some lovely sunny weather, although not this past week, and we are feeling positive about the remainder of this school year. As I write this message, we have just entered stage 3 of the Government's roadmap and so are able to access some indoor facilities as well as being able to see a small group of people indoors and meet with larger groups outdoors.

We have planned our induction evening with our new starters and will be meeting outdoors under some newly purchased cover- by way of a new gazebo and event shelter! We are also planning and hoping to hold a sports week at school and are excited to give our year 6s the send off they deserve as they approach their final weeks with us at primary school. Our year 6 children are off to Borwick Hall towards the end of the academic year which will be a fantastic trip for them and the perfect way to enjoy themselves, together before we finish for summer.

Some of our other classes have organised educational visits too and visitors to come into school to lead activities with the children- one of which is the visit of Creepy Crawly Roadshow into our reception class!

On behalf of our school staff, I hope our school community continues to support each other and remains safe.

Kind Regards

Mr Stuart Booth

Headteacher



Year 6 sculptures for Ascension and Pentecost displayed in church

# JIGSAW CLUB

For the children of St Michael's, Grimsargh.

This month sees the long awaited Confirmation service for some of our past members. Several of these children attended JIGSAW club since they were in Reception, and Josh attended when JIGSAW club first started! It has been a pleasure to have been a part of these children's journeys as they have grown and developed into the wonderful young people that they are. I look forward to continuing to see them flourishing in our church family!



Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." [Joshua 1:9](#)

## CHURCH COLLECTIONS

|       |      |         |                    |
|-------|------|---------|--------------------|
| April | 25th | £113.81 |                    |
| May   | 2nd  | £85.00  |                    |
| May   | 9th  | £173.00 |                    |
| May   | 13th | £330.00 | Ascension Day (MU) |
| May   | 16th | £201.40 |                    |

## FLOWER ROTA

|      |      |        |
|------|------|--------|
| June | 6th  | Vacant |
| June | 13th | Vacant |
| June | 20th | Vacant |
| June | 27th | Vacant |

## SIDESPERSIONS, READERS AND COFFEE ROTAS

|           | 8.30am | 10.00am | Communion<br>Assistant | Readers             | Coffee |
|-----------|--------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| June 6th  |        |         |                        | N Cowell<br>Vicar   |        |
| June 13th |        |         |                        | M Lamberty<br>Vicar |        |
| June 20th |        |         |                        | D Rusling<br>Vicar  |        |
| June 27th |        |         |                        | B Holt<br>Vicar     |        |

## ST MICHAEL'S DIARY DATES FOR JUNE

*The coronavirus situation may change again - apologies for any sudden alterations*

**3rd** 11.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

**6th** **1st Sunday after Trinity**  
10.00am Holy Communion

**10th** 11.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

**13th** **2nd Sunday after Trinity**  
10.00am Holy Communion

**17th** 11.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

**18th** 9.30am Prayers with Bishop Philip (see feature 'Chip in to Mereside')

**20th** **3rd Sunday after Trinity**  
10.00am Holy Communion

**24th** **Birth of John the Baptist**  
11.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

**27th** **4th Sunday after Trinity**  
10.00am Holy Communion

**DEADLINE for the July magazine 15th June.**  
**Articles to be sent to Mrs Cowell and/or B Mackley**