

Hello

When I started work at Church House on St George's Day 2018 as part of the Gift Aid Lite scheme, I was warmly welcomed into a small but growing team. The scheme supports over 190 churches to maximise their tax efficient giving, and to process their Gift Aid claims before they are sent to HMRC. The diocese had successfully secured funding to transform the Gift Aid Lite scheme so it could start using an internet-based software system, and train Gift Aid Secretaries to input their church's giving directly into it. Two new members of staff were recruited, including me, but at its centre was a highly experienced member of staff, Sue Warren, Diocesan Gift Aid Advisor.

Over the last three years the team has trained over 130 churches to successfully use the new software, and organised a giving conference attended by churches from across the diocese, and further afield. Additionally, we've launched new giving methods including Contactless and Chip and PIN devices, and online donations. The pandemic has provided many challenges, but like many organisations we've adapted to it, and have delivered a number of well attended online webinars to train church volunteers.

The one constant over 33 years within the Gift Aid Lite team (as it is now called) has been Sue Warren. On Friday 27th February she retired, so we celebrated the occasion online with a gathering of people from across the UK. Sue also received a personal email from the Archbishop of York thanking her for over 40 years of service to the Church of England (having worked for a further 10 years at the Diocese of Salisbury).

We knew this day was coming for the last few months, and it has felt like our workplace has gone through a Lent-like period, as we've been planning, reflecting, and praying in preparation. The main outcome has been a new giving strategy, which has been written in partnership with many churches from across the diocese. This has been approved by Bishop's Council, and is being presented to Diocesan Synod for their approval at their meeting at the end of March. It will be publicly launched after Easter.

Sue's boots will be hard to fill, but recruitment processes have taken place and new appointments made. A new colleague, Liam, started work two weeks ago as Gift Aid and Giving Support Officer, and fortunately he's had the time to meet regularly with Sue online during this period. The diocese successfully applied for external funding for a new post of Diocesan Giving Advisor, and I'm delighted to have been appointed to this role.

During her leaving speech, Sue kindly said she was delighted to be passing the baton onto two wonderful colleagues who would continue to care for generosity and thankfulness across the diocese. So, no pressure then!

The last few weeks have left me with a mixture of emotions and feelings, including excitement and trepidation as I will be the person responsible for the success of the new strategy I've helped to develop and write. However, I also have feelings of sadness and loss for a friend and colleague who has helped and supported me enormously over the last three years. This hasn't been helped by our inability to see each other in person for the last 12 months. Sue has plans, following her wedding to Andy, to relocate to Anglesey for a happy and lengthy retirement on that beautiful island. I'm looking forward to meeting up with her there, but I really hope we'll have the opportunity to get together before that for a celebratory drink, and a big hug!

Blessings

Paul

Paul Bailey

Reopening of our church building for Holy Communion services

Good news! Our church building will be reopening for socially distanced Holy Communion services each week, starting on Sunday 21st March at 10.15 a.m. An emergency PCC Meeting on Tuesday 23rd February took the decision to reopen from that date onwards.

Lent and Easter outreach activities

A number of activities are being organised in partnership with local churches, coordinated by Flixton Fellowship, with the theme of 'God is weeping with us'. Rev Huw has 10 posters/prayer cards for Lent for these activities. They are free to the first 10 households, please contact him directly if you are interested.

You can also find attached to this newsletter two files containing a poster, and prayer diary (the latter is formatted to be printed as an A5 booklet).

Additionally, two short personal reflective films have been recorded so far and have been added to our YouTube channel. The details are shown below:

- My Story of Tears and Hope, by Rev Huw Thomas, is available to watch from 4 p.m. on Sunday 28th February at <https://youtu.be/aupYb4pa3q4> (and on our Facebook page too)
- My Story of Tears and Hope, by Simon Wrigley, is available to watch now at <https://youtu.be/8zvcSo1mEos>

Fair Trade Easter eggs and products

Hilary Thomas (Rev Huw's mum) is taking orders for Fairtrade Easter Eggs, particularly the Real Easter Egg, which is not only Fairtrade chocolate and delicious but also has a story-activity book in it telling the Easter story. It is the only Easter egg which refers to the real meaning of Easter, and they are £4.00 each.

You can also order Divine eggs - milk or plain chocolate - £4.50 (or large ones at £9.00), and these don't have the booklet in them.

Finally, a great gift to put in the post to someone are the Easter Blessings chocolate bars. This is a large bar of chocolate with an attractive Easter picture on, and they cost £3.00.

If you are interested in ordering items please contact Rev Huw Thomas. He'd be grateful if you could get your orders in as soon as possible, as stocks start to run low quite quickly sometimes. Apparently, this year the supermarkets are not stocking these (and certain other eggs) after having a bad Easter sales-wise last year.

You can also order a variety of other Fairtrade goods in stock, such as coffee, chocolate (large and small bars, milk and plain), tea bags, biscuits, rice etc.

Confirmation service at St Michael's

With plenty of advance notice, we are pleased to announce a confirmation service will be held at St Michael's Church on Sunday 19th September at 6 p.m. with Bishop Mark Middleton.

Sunday morning services – Zoom, Facebook Live and YouTube

Our online service this weekend is being held on the second Sunday of Lent. It will be taking place at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday 28th February, and Rev Cath Faulkner is leading.

You'll be able to sing three beautiful hymns – 'Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us', 'Just as I am, without one plea', and 'At the name of Jesus'.

You'll be able to participate in this service via Zoom using your electronic device, mobile phone or landline. This service will also be available to watch via a simultaneous broadcast using Facebook Live, and later on in the day via our YouTube channel. The service is accessible by a PowerPoint presentation which is shared on the screen.

If you'd like to receive the Zoom details, please subscribe to the full version of our fortnightly newsletter www.stmichaelsflixton.org/emailnewslettersandaskingforhelp

Our online coffee mornings

The next one takes place on Saturday 6th March starting at 11 a.m. Rev Fiona Jenkinson will be talking about her two roles as a nurse and chaplain at The Christie Hospital.

Lasting for no longer than an hour, they are an opportunity for a drink, a snack, and a chat with people outside of your own household. They are being held on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

If you'd like to receive the Zoom details, please subscribe to the full version of our fortnightly newsletter www.stmichaelsflixton.org/emailnewslettersandaskingforhelp

Friday night prayer with Rev Fiona

Rev Fiona's night prayer services are taking place on a weekly basis at 9 p.m. each Friday. You can watch live, and comment if you wish, by visiting our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/StMichaelsFlixton

You can watch previous week's recordings on our [YouTube channel](#).

Ash Wednesday service

If you missed our Ash Wednesday service a recording of it is available on our YouTube channel.

https://youtu.be/3_TNJLG1M0E

Sticky Wicket Supplies

Sticky Wicket Supplies is Flixton's food bank. Based at Flixton Cricket Club, they are providing food and essential supplies, such as toiletries, to the people of M41. Anyone is welcome to visit if they are in genuine need.

All donations are welcomed. Full details of their latest requirements, and opening times, are available on their Facebook page, as shown below. You can also drop off supplies at St Michael's Vicarage, as Rev Huw is volunteering there each Wednesday.

www.facebook.com/stickywicketsupplies

Latest coronavirus information and how this affects services being held inside St Michael's Church building

Rev Huw has requested that you all regularly 'keep an eye on' the latest advice being issued by The Diocese of Manchester and The Church of England on the current coronavirus situation. You can do this in the following ways:

- [Diocese website](#)
- [Diocese Facebook page](#)
- [Diocese Twitter page](#)

- [Church of England website](#)
- [Church of England Facebook page](#)
- [Church of England Twitter page](#)

Our Online Church

We have already been sharing our services and prayers on our web and social media sites. If you don't know how to find these, please use the links below:

- www.stmichaelsflixton.org
- www.facebook.com/StMichaelsFlixton
- <https://twitter.com/StMichaelsFlix>
- www.instagram.com/stmichaelschurc_hflixton
- [St Michael's You Tube Channel](#)
(please encourage family and friends
to subscribe to this)

Not using social media?

If you aren't a confident user of a computer, laptop, tablet or phone when accessing information on the internet, and you don't use social media, then please [start by visiting the Church's website](#). Special sections have been created to help our congregation and the wider Flixton community, and [they can be found in the section called Online Church](#).

In the Online Church section, you can access a [copy of the service booklets](#) we are using during our online services, find links to [online information to help you to stay physically and mentally healthy during this period](#), and a page to [subscribe to receive this newsletter by entering your email address](#). You can in the News section watch [our recorded services and prayers via YouTube](#) option, and also see our social media posts (without having your own accounts) in the [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) page links.

Please continue to support St Michael's Church

Whilst self-isolating or socially distancing, you can still support our beautiful Grade II* listed building and churchyard in a variety of ways, as follows:

1. Online donations can be made at www.stmichaelsflixton.org/support-us
2. Please remember to use easyfundraising every time you shop online! Over 4,000 shops and sites will donate, so you can raise FREE donations for us no matter what you're buying. They even have fair trade retailers who work with easyfundraising as well. These donations really help us out, so please sign up if you haven't yet. It's easy and free! You can get started at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stmichaelsflix/?utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_medium=email&utm_content=en-n2
If you want to find out how easyfundraising works, please visit our website page at www.stmichaelsflixton.org/easy-fundraising
3. If you have an Amazon account, please make your purchases using AmazonSmile instead. It is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.co.uk. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to St Michael's Church. A full explanation on how you can 'convert' your existing Amazon account into an AmazonSmile one that supports St Michael's can be found here www.stmichaelsflixton.org/shop
If you do need to set up an AmazonSmile account please click here to get started <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1134769-0>
4. You raise money for us by searching on the web. If you use easysearch as your search engine you can raise £20 a year for St Michael's by completing 10

searches a day. To get started visit <http://stmichaelsflix.easysearch.org.uk/> and save it as one of your internet browser's bookmarks.

Using and setting up Zoom

Zoom can be found by visiting their website <https://zoom.us> and clicking on the 'sign up it's free' button'. Once you have completed this process, please follow the steps on the image shown on the next page.

Alternatively, online help and guidance is available via [Zoom](#) or [Gadgets Now](#). Zoom can be used via your computer, tablet, or mobile phone, and mobile/landline phones (for audio only), and there is a downloadable app to use as well.

