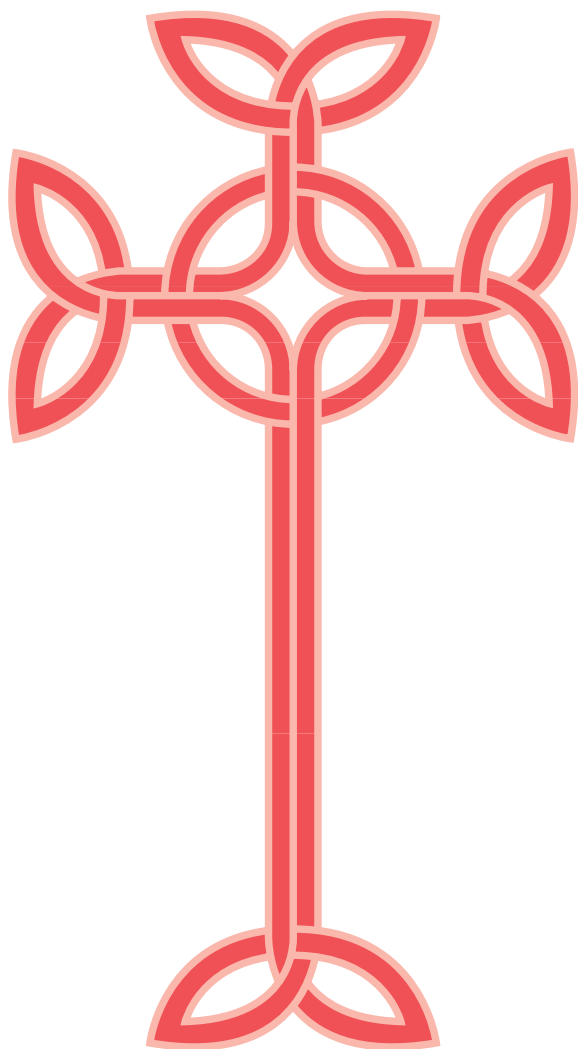


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF THE PARISH OF
HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING



St. Michael
AND ALL ANGELS

SEPTEMBER 2026

£1

SIGNPOST

THE PARISH CHURCH OF HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

MINISTRY TEAM

Rector

Rev'd John Barron,
The Rectory, 5 Lingfield, Houghton-le-Spring,
Tyne & Wear, DH5 5QA.
Tel: (0191) 584 7657

We enjoy and benefit from the ministry of a number of retired clergy at St Michael's.

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Rev'd Susan Elsey
Tel: 07557 125274
Email: revsuelsey@gmail.com

Readers

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Tel: (0191) 584 5642

Mrs. Anne Clappison (Reader)
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Church Wardens

Mrs. Rita Turnbull
Tel: (0191) 584 1954

Mr. Simon Hardy
Tel: 07854 411884

Assistant Church Warden

Mr. Brian Scott
Tel: 07778 577898

Officers of the Parochial Church Council

Angela Slater (Secretary)
Tel: (0191) 584 2036

Mrs. Susan Bradley (Treasurer)
Tel: (0191) 584 1455

Organist & Director of Music

Mr. George Peebles
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Mr. David Turnbull
Tel: (0191) 584 1954

Safeguarding

Alison Young (Safeguarding Officer)
Tel: 07532 036026

Mrs. Kathleen Close (DBS Officer)
Tel: (0191) 584 0353

Space4

76 Newbottle Street
Next to Houghton Library
Twitter @space4
Facebook houghtonspace4
Tel: (0191) 512 0676

Church Website

Our website contains information on most aspects of church life.
www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk

The Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust

Contact: Mr. George Peebles, Membership
Secretary on 07941 507724
Email: georgepeebles@talktalk.com for information and application forms.

St Michaels and All Angels Mothers Union

The Mothers Union meets on the last Monday of every month at 2pm in the Kepier Hall.

We welcome new members with open arms and if you require any further information please contact:-

Joan Beattie Tel: (0191) 512 6032

Sheila Wynne Tel: 07916 629043

Anne Todd Tel: (0191) 584 1032

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers

Contact: Sheila Wynne, Tel: 07916629043

Beavers, Cubs and Scouts

Contact: Steve Gibson, Tel: 07507 161366
Website: www.1sthoughtonscouts.org.uk

REGULAR SERVICES

Our pattern of services at St Michael and All Angels over a 'normal' week:

Sun	8.30am	A shorter 'said' service of Communion.
Sun	10am	Parish Communion (a 'sung' service, with 'Young Church') (1st Sunday is 'All-age Communion').
Sun	6pm	Evening Service: 1st Sun 'Engage' – contemporary music & themed service; 2nd Sun 'Choral Evensong' – a traditional service led by our choir; 3rd Sun 'Service of Light' – a relaxed sung service; 4th Sun 'Celtic Eucharist' – 'Iona' style Communion.
Tues	7pm	Holy Communion (4th Sunday, during winter)
Thur	10am	Holy Communion with Hymns (& refreshments afterwards).

We hold a quieter service of Holy Communion on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Our Young Church takes place during the 10am Sunday Holy Communion on the 2nd and 3rd Sunday of the month, with our All Age Service aim for the Young members of the congregation to be a part of on the 1st Sunday of the month.

Contact Information

Our website and Facebook page contain details of how to join others online for worship. We send regular updates via our church distribution list – please call us or email us if you know someone who would like to receive our email updates.

Find us online at:

website: www.stmichaels.hls.org.uk

facebook: www.facebook.com/stmichaels.hls

The Parish Office is open between 9am & 3pm on a Tuesday and 9am & 2pm Thursday. You can contact us on Tel: (0191) 512 1769. On occasions, when we need to close the 'physical' office, you can contact us between these times on Mob: 07707 043 395. You can also contact us on email or message us during the week and we will respond during opening hours:

Email: stmichaels.hls@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmichaels.hls

Website: www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk

For urgent issues contact Rev'd John Barron on (0191) 584 7657.

If you'd like your child to be a part of Young Church contact Clare our Young Church leader at stmichaels.youngchurch@btinternet.com

To make an appointment for 'Vestry hour' to book baptisms and weddings call the Church Office or email us. Vestry Hour usually takes place on a Monday between 6 – 7pm. You will be able to talk to the team about all your Wedding and Christening needs, whether that is booking dates, finding prices or finding out the process in more details.

ABOUT SIGNPOST

Signpost is the magazine of the Parish Church of St. Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring. In addition to providing information about the life of the church, it also aims to reflect the interests of the broader community and to provide a source of local news and a forum in which matters of common concern can be raised. The Editors welcome comments and suggestions, and invite contributions. Items to be included in Signpost should be submitted to the Editors by 10th of the month (end of 1st week of the month for memorials) to ensure inclusion in the next issue. It should be noted, however, that the Editors cannot guarantee to publish material and wish to point out that items included do not necessarily reflect their views nor those of the Parochial Church Council. Editor: Malcolm Foster, Tel: 07860 250 300. Distribution: Joan Bond, Tel: (0191) 584 1031.

Circulation: 300 copies per month.

Space4

At our community project, our aim is to provide 'Space4 everyone to flourish!'

We run out of our 'Hub' (next to the library) on Newbottle Street and the Kepier Hall (behind church). You can find us on our Space4 Facebook page: www.facebook.com/HoughtonSpace4/

There's lots going on throughout the week and all are welcome:

Mon	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Tues	10am-12noon	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
	3.30pm-5pm	Tuesday Treat
Wed	10am-1pm	Drop in & Craft Group (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Thur	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Fri	10am-12noon	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall)
	10am-1pm	Drop in (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
	2pm-4pm	Cake & Chat (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)
Sat	2pm-4pm	Monthly Saturday Group (Space4 Hub, Newbottle Street)

Other events are advertised on Facebook and in the buildings.

Our Community Foodstore is open on a Tuesday and Friday: it is for anyone in the community who wants to use it, for a donation.

Rector's Letter

It has been a wonderfully busy summer here at St Michael and All Angels our being involved in lots of children's work through our community project and in our wider church life. Over the last couple of months, we have celebrated eight Baptisms. That is eight families gathering around the font, carrying their newest, most precious arrivals into our historic church, trusting us with one of the most important moments of their lives. Whenever I meet with parents to prepare for these services, I love to ask them: Why? What is it that brings them to our doors in a society that so often tells us we don't need faith anymore? The answers are always deeply revealing. Many speak of a longing for community—a desire for their child to be anchored in something bigger than themselves. Others talk about guidance, hoping the church will help their children learn the right things to do in life. And

then, there is one reason that always catches my attention: protection. I find that fascinating. Beneath the bravado of modern life, there is an instinctual vulnerability in parenting. We want to wrap our children in something safe, shielding them from the anxieties of the world.



Our response to all of this—the search for community, a moral compass, or a spiritual shield—is to point to the font as a profound sign of God's deep, relentless love for us. Baptism isn't a magical charm; it is a visible, water-soaked declaration of a love so radical that the Creator of the universe was willing to be born into the mess of this world for our sake, and to walk all the way to the cross

for us. My greatest hope is that every family who crosses our threshold experiences at least a small glint of that astonishing love in the warmth of the welcome we give them. This season has been particularly special because our new Curate, Reverend Sue, has been shadowing me during our August services. In the coming months, she will step up to the joy of conducting her own first Baptisms. Having Sue alongside me has been a brilliant catalyst. Seeing the service through her fresh eyes has prompted me to think anew: how do we take this beautiful starting point and encourage these families to develop a fuller relationship with Christ? How do we invite them beyond the font and into a lifelong journey of righteousness—which simply means living in a right, vibrant relationship with God? We don't want Baptism to be the end of the story, but the very first chapter of a life lived in the light. Jesus understood this deep, instinctual draw better than anyone. When others tried to hold the crowds back, he offered radical inclusion, saying:

Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs.

Mark 10:14

Loving God, we give you thanks for every child brought to the waters of Baptism. Bless them, their parents, and their Godparents, that they may know the profound depth of your love and protection. And bless all of us in this community, that we might continuously grow deeper in our relationship with you, becoming reflections of your welcome to everyone we meet. Amen.

With my prayers and very best wishes.

25th Anniversary of 9/11

Twenty-five years ago, on Tuesday, 11th September 2001, terrorist attacks demolished the Twin Towers in New York. They killed 2,996 people and injured more than 6,000. Events like 9/11 raise the inevitable question: Why does God allow such suffering to take place?

There are no easy answers to this question! We cannot fully understand why such things happen, although we live in a fallen world, where people make real choices. Yet the Bible affirms that God identifies with our suffering, supremely when Jesus experienced suffering and death.

It is on the Cross that God knows what it is to lose a loved one in an unjust attack. *'I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the Cross. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?'* (John Stott). What does this mean? We cannot know why God allows evil and suffering to continue, but we do know that He does love and care for us: *'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'* (John 3:16). God loved us enough to fully engage with the mess of the world.

We also can view such events in the light of resurrection. Jesus said: *'I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in Me will live'* (John 11:25). Resurrection points to the restoration for us of the life we lost. New heavens and new earth point to a world and relationships restored and perfected! In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam Gamgee exclaims: *'Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead! Is everything sad going to come untrue?'* The answer of the Bible is Yes!

Epiousios *The Lord's Prayer*

In our reading of the Lord's Prayer, we usually say 'give us today our daily (epiousios) bread', but that doesn't tell the whole story of what this could mean. The word is used nowhere else in the Greek language, so how did the early Christian communities understand it?

Solution One *Epiousios refers to time*

1. Today or daily
2. Tomorrow (give us today our bread for tomorrow)

Solution Two *Epiousios refers to an amount*

3. Just enough to keep us alive
4. The bread we need

Each of these four options is found in the early church. The oldest Syriac Gospel from the 4th Century says: "Give us today the bread that doesn't run out." This covers all the options above, referring to 'time' or 'amount', plus leaving space to think about daily bread as a spiritual option (Jesus is the bread of life).

A sample of some more modern versions gives us a variety of translations for Matthew 6:10-11.

David Bentley Hart NT: 'give to us today bread for the day ahead'

Good News Bible: 'give us today the food we need'

The Message: 'keep us alive with three square meals'

References:

Jewish Annotated New Testament

Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes by
Kenneth E Bailey

What God won't ask

God won't ask what kind of car you drove; He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

God won't ask how big your house was; He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet; He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.

God won't ask what your highest salary was; He'll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.

God won't ask what your job title was; He'll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.

God won't ask how many friends you had; He'll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.

God won't ask in what neighbourhood you lived; He'll ask how you treated your neighbours.

Those new Royal Mail solar-powered digital post-boxes

Royal Mail has converted about 3,500 of the old trusty red post-boxes into digital affairs, out of the 115,000 post-boxes in the country.

The new solar-powered digital post-boxes feature a solar panel roof, a built-in barcode scanner, and an extra-large drawer that accepts parcels up to shoebox size.

The idea is that the solar panels on top capture sunlight to power the digital scanner and automated drawer mechanism. So, then all you have to do is to scan the 2D barcode on your

pre-paid parcel label, using the box's scanner to automatically open the large drawer.

The traditional letter slot remains, for regular stamped mail.

As for proof of posting? You use the Royal Mail app on your phone to track and request confirmation when you drop off an item.

If you don't want to download an app or use a printer, the good news is that you can still send your parcels as before, at a post office counter.

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Email: kim@hettontowntrust.co.uk



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Contact: The Clubhouse 0191 584 1460

Email: houghtonrugbyclub@outlook.com

A Journey of Faith, Hope, and Action: Bishop Rick Visits St Michael's and Space4



When the new Bishop of Durham, Bishop Rick, joined us recently for a dedicated visit to St Michael & All Angels and our Space4 project, the day began exactly where our journey as a parish always starts: in prayer. Gathering in the church, we prayed the Gilpin Prayer, asking God to inspire us with the same spirit of generosity, scholarship, and integrity that defined Bernard Gilpin centuries

ago. Rev'd Judith shared something of the recent history of the project and church before our Churchwarden and Minister-in-training Simon shared so powerfully Gilpin's story and our church's historic calling to mission not as a static history lesson; but a lived, contemporary reality that shapes how we serve our community today.

From our historic church building, our journey moved directly out into the heart of our community. At Kepier Hall, Bishop Rick spent time at our Community Foodstore. Here, our Space4 Manager Justine helped demonstrate that our work goes far beyond handing out emergency provisions. Rooted in the Five Marks of Mission, our approach prioritises dignity, respect and giving people agency. He heard how we work to address the root causes of local poverty through broad-based Community Organising rather than simply patching over symptoms.



Walking together down the High Street offered an honest, unvarnished look at the realities facing Houghton le Spring today. We walked and talked through the daily issues our neighbours navigate: the cost of living crisis, business closures, youth isolation, and local social pressures. Yet, walking with Bishop Rick, it was clear

how deeply our church's presence is woven into the daily life of this town, offering a tangible sign of God's love and active transformation.

Arriving at the Space4 Hub, the energy was palpable. Over a warm cup of tea and bacon sandwiches, Bishop Rick met with staff, volunteers, and local residents to hear first-hand how Space4 transforms lives. We celebrated the incredible reach of our summer children's events and participated in a powerful community listening session. The day was also a wonderful showcase for emerging

leadership across our parish. Becky moved us with inspirational personal stories, Philippa shared how we are organising for growth while leading our prayers, and Claire, Beth, Judith and Simon demonstrated extraordinary dedication and leadership throughout the visit.

By the time we reached our evaluation at the end of the visit, many of us felt thoroughly tired, but immensely proud, pleased, and deeply listened to. The team overwhelmingly scored the visit between an 8 and 10 out of 10 in meeting our main objectives. Most encouraging of all, Bishop Rick gave the day a full 10



out of 10, sharing that he felt genuinely impressed and "inspired" by the vibrant blend of faith and action he witnessed. Bishop Rick left with much to hold in prayer as we explore giving Community Organising and community-led growth greater focus across the diocese. Our fundamental takeaway was a recognition of the commitment of our church in the present to work with our community to share the Good News and challenge poverty, build community and grow church. William Cecil, the Lord Chancellor in Gilpin's day, visited his garden and famously described it as 'a little slice of the Kingdom'. We hope we shared something of that 'little slice' in our day with our new Bishop in his new visit to us.





Prayer for September

Dear Lord, September – the
month of new starts!

New terms, new groups, new
friends, new hopes, every year.

Lord, be with us!

Lord, thank you for the new
start you offer us when we put
our trust in Jesus. A new start
that we make once – and then
can renew every day.

Every time we falter, you pick
us up. Every time we come
back to you, you forgive us
and accept us.

Thank you, Lord, for never
letting us down, for never
leaving or forsaking us, that
new starts with you are always
possible, not just in September.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals

- 11 Aug Norman Lindsay Age 94
Houghton-le-Spring
18 Aug Raymond Carter Age 90
Houghton-le-Spring

Baptisms

- 23 Aug Noelle Tate
23 Aug Noah Harper
23 Aug Daisy Hibbert
23 Aug Ava Brown

Church Bonus Ball Scheme

I am pleased to announce that from
1st January to 30th June 2026 the
Bonus Ball scheme has raised the
much needed sum of

£752

for church funds.

Thank you to everyone for your
continued support.

We currently have one number (26)
vacant and anyone interested in
joining the scheme can reach me on
07778577898 for further details.

Thank you
Brian Scott

Saint for September

29th September – Michael and All Angels

Michael is an archangel, whose name means ‘who is like unto God?’ He makes various appearances throughout the Bible, from the book of Daniel to the Book of Revelation.

In Daniel, he is ‘one of the princes’ of the heavenly host, and the special guardian of Israel. In Revelation, he is the principal fighter of the heavenly battle against the devil.

From early times, Michael’s cult was strong in the British Isles. Churches at Malmesbury (Wiltshire), Clive (Gloucestershire) and Stanmer (East Sussex) were dedicated to him.

Bede mentions him. St Michael’s Mount in Cornwall was believed to commemorate a vision there in the 8th century. By the end of the Middle Ages, Michael had 686 English churches dedicated to him.

In art Michael is often depicted as slaying the dragon, as in the 14th century East Anglican Psalters, or in Epstein’s famous sculpture at Coventry cathedral.

Or he is found (in medieval art) as weighing souls, as at Chaldon (Surrey), Swalcliffe (Oxon.), Eaton Bishop (Hereford and Worcester), and Martham in Suffolk. Michael’s most famous shrine in western Europe is Mont-Saint-Michel, where a Benedictine abbey was founded in the 10th century.

The ‘All Angels’ bit of this feast-day was added in 1969 when Gabriel and Raphael were included in with Michael.

A true musical delight

It was a full house for this year's summer concert, which took place in church on the evening of Sunday, August 2. Now an annual event, it is always popular, and the 2026 edition attracted music-lovers from Houghton and beyond, including those who were there to support the performers.

The evening began with a rousing hymn, *Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer*, which got everyone in the spirit; then we were treated to three organ pieces by the legendary George Peebles, who went on to accompany others throughout the concert. He was joined by fellow accompanist Graham Brown on the piano, who's solo, Rachmaninoff's

famous theme from *Brief Encounter*, reminded us of his immense talent and how lucky we are to have him as a regular performer.

Talent was, in fact, a byword for the evening, with so much of it in abundance. The first half featured young musicians Francesca Mensforth, Lucy Hodges, Mimi Maddison and Britney Braimah, who amazed with their proficiency and confidence, while singer Chloe Stanton, at just 18, rivalled anyone you'd see on the West End stage.

The line-up was completed by performer and Gilpin Singers leader Laura Fildes, whose rendition of *One Moment In Time* was up to her usual standard, and the church choir, who gave us a couple of stirring numbers.



There were more singing solos in the second half, from Rector John, Michael Beck and Simon Hardy demonstrating a wide range of musical genres and each well-executed and engaging, and summer concert stalwarts Stuart and David Clappison brought their usual impressive guitar playing. No evening of music would be complete without the Gilpin Singers, who followed their success in their own recent summer concert with *You Are the Reason*, *Hold On* and *I Softly Sing*. The night ended fittingly with everyone joining in with *I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing*. If only music could have such a transformative effect as it did on the audience.

Sarah Millington

New report explores young adult journeys to faith in the Church of England

Young adults are coming to faith in a range of different ways, some very different from previous generations, according to a new report.

New research commissioned by the Church of England uncovers how growing spiritual curiosity among young adults has led to a range of unexpected routes by which they are discovering Christian faith and finding community in Church of England churches.

‘Understanding Young Adult Journeys to Faith in the Church of England’ draws on in-depth interviews with 30 young adults aged 18 to 30 who began attending Church of England churches for the first time within the five years following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conducted by Theos think tank and recently published, the research explores how Generation Z is engaging with Christianity in new ways amongst a changing cultural context.

The report identifies several recurring themes in their paths to interaction with faith and the Church of England.

Social media often served as an initial point of contact, introducing young adults to Christian ideas through podcasts, testimonies, debates, influencers and online content.

For many, this led to deeper exploration through reading the Bible, engaging with theology and asking wider questions about meaning, purpose and truth, often before attending church for the first time.

Personal relationships were consistently found to play a significant role, with encouragement, invitations or stories from teachers, chaplains, friends, partners, clergy and church members often helping young people move from curiosity to attending church.

Community and a sense of belonging also emerged as a common experience of church, with many participants citing this as one of the reasons they continued attending and became more involved.

Young people interviewed as part of the research were drawn to a wide range of Anglican traditions, including cathedrals, Anglo-Catholic and contemporary evangelical churches.

Across traditions, they reported being engaged by the “authenticity” and “seriousness” of worship, and valuing “confidence, consistency and depth” in the churches they had chosen to attend.

The Month Ahead... September

1	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		1.15 pm	'Light' – Drop In Bereavement Group (The Hub, Newbottle Street)
		3.30 pm	Family Fun (Kepier Hall)
2	Wed	10.00 am	Space4 Mums (Hub, Newbottle Street)
3	Thur	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
4	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 12 noon)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
5	Sat	11.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street, until 1.00 pm)
6	Sun	Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Service of Light (in Church)
7	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, aNewbottle Street)
		2.30 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 4.30 pm)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
		7.00 pm	Rehearsal for Baptism Families
8	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		3.30 pm	Family Fun (Kepier Hall)
9	Wed	10.00 am	Space4 Mums (Hub, Newbottle Street)
10	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
11	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 12 noon)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
13	Sun	Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Choral Evensong (in Church)
14	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		2.30 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 4.30 pm)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)

15	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		3.30 pm	Family Fun (Kepier Hall)
16	Wed	10.00 am	Space4 Mums (Hub, Newbottle Street)
17	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
18	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 12 noon)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
20	Sun	Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	'All-In' Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		6.00 pm	Reflective Service (in Church)
21	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		2.30 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 4.30 pm)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
22	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		3.30 pm	Family Fun (Kepier Hall)
		7.00 pm	Holy Communion (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		7.30 pm	PCC (Hub, Newbottle Street)
23	Wed	10.00 am	Space4 Mums (Hub, Newbottle Street)
24	Thur	10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice (Choir Vestry)
25	Fri	9.30 am	Stay & Play (Kepier Hall, until 11.15 am)
		9.30 am	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 12 noon)
		2.00 pm	Cake & Chat (Hub, Newbottle Street)
27	Sun	Patronal Festival	
		8.30 am	Holy Communion (in Church)
		10.00 am	Holy Communion (in Church & Facebook)
		12.00 noon	Baptisms
		1.00 pm	Baptisms
		6.00 pm	Celtic Eucharist (in Church)
28	Mon	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		2.30 pm	Community Food Store (Kepier Hall, until 4.30 pm)
		6.00 pm	Vestry hour (call Parish Office for appointment)
29	Tues	10.00 am	Drop-in (Hub, Newbottle Street)
		3.30 pm	Family Fun (Kepier Hall)
30	Wed	10.00 am	Space4 Mums (Hub, Newbottle Street)

Remembering Buddy Holly

Ninety years ago, on 7th September 1936, Buddy Holly, the American rock and roll singer, was born Charles Hardin Holley in Lubbock, Texas. His career was cut short when he was killed in a plane crash in 1959 – an event remembered as “the day the music died”.

Holly was raised by a devout Southern Baptist family and was baptised at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in his hometown. His widely recognised talent as a musician and singer led him into the emerging country rock scene, where performers were often exploited by those working behind the scenes. His influence has been acknowledged by many top singers and guitarists, including Bob Dylan, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton.

The plane crash happened during a poorly organised winter tour of the Mid West where the buses supplied were hopelessly inadequate in terms of reliability and heating. Temperatures well below freezing led Holly to hire a small private plane to take three of them to the next venue. The inexperienced pilot crashed the plane shortly after take-off near Clear Lake, Iowa, killing everyone on board: himself, Holly, J P “The Big Bopper” Richardson, who was given his seat because he was suffering from flu, and Ritchie Valens, who won it on a coin toss.

Holly’s pregnant wife Elena heard of his death on the radio, and the shock of it led to a miscarriage. This resulted in the convention of not broadcasting the sudden death of anyone without close relatives being informed. The disaster was immortalised by singer/songwriter Don McLean, who said he had idolised Holly and felt his death marked a watershed between the innocence of the 1950s and the changes brought about by the Vietnam generation. His song, *The Day the Music Died*, was a long and brilliant solo performance.

Join the Macmillan’s World’s Biggest Coffee Morning on 25th September

Why not consider attending – or even hosting – a Macmillan Coffee Morning? Many are going to be held soon, on 25th September, but you can hold one whenever you like.

About 50,000 coffee morning events are held around the country each year. The first Coffee Morning happened in 1990. It was a small affair with a simple idea: guests would get together for coffee and donate the cost of their drink to Macmillan. It was so effective that Macmillan did it again the next year - only this time nationally.

Since then, the tradition has grown, until now an estimated 1.2 million coffee mornings have been held since the tradition first began. These days, Coffee Mornings come in all shapes and sizes. They can range from small home gatherings to large corporate events; school fundraisers to a gathering with a local community group. But they all have one thing in common - they raise vital funds to support the almost 3.5 million people in the UK living with cancer.

More details at: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk>

Religious persecution on the rise worldwide

More countries are persecuting people for their faith.

So reports the Pew Research Center in the USA. Its most recent annual study of religious freedom shows that the number of countries with *high or very high levels* of social hostilities involving religion rose sharply in 2023 (the latest year for which data is available).

Among the reasons are increases in the harassment of religious minorities and worldwide reverberations of Hamas' October 7th attack on southern Israel and Israel's military response in Gaza.

In 2023, 55 countries had elevated (high or very high) levels of social hostilities involving religion.

Pew Center monitors a total of 198 countries and territories around the world. After categorising incidents that have been publicly reported by the U.S. State Department, the United Nations and other international organisations, the Pew Center rates each country on two scales, ranging from 0 to 10 points.

The **Government Restrictions Index** (GRI) captures various ways that government officials, laws and policies can impinge on religious freedom. In 2023, 58 countries had high or very high levels of government restrictions on religion. Among them were China, Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Syria and Uzbekistan.

The **Social Hostilities Index** (SHI) captures various kinds of harassment and violence by private individuals and nongovernmental organisations (including terrorist groups) that are motivated by religion or that target religious communities. Among the countries with very high SHI scores in 2023 were Nigeria, India, Israel, Syria, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Among the religious groups, Christians faced persecution in the most countries: incidents were recorded in 165 nations.

Overall, Pew has estimated that 78 per cent of the world's population were living in countries experiencing high or very high levels of government restrictions on religion, or religion-related social hostilities, or both.

Nigeria retains the world's highest social-hostilities score.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award celebrates 70 years: 1956 - 2026

It was back in February of 1956 that Buckingham Palace released a press announcement outlining plans for a trial period of 'The Duke of Edinburgh's Award'.

It was the post-war era, and His Royal Highness wanted to help boys bridge the gap between leaving formal education at 15 and starting National Service at 18. He also wanted them to build self-confidence and a sense of purpose to support them into their future. A youth programme, he believed, would improve their skills and equip them to make valuable contributions to their communities and society.

In 1956, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award pilot was launched to national voluntary youth organisations. It soon expanded to include Local Education Authorities, the Armed Forces and some schools across the UK.

After the first year, 7,000 boys had started a programme and 1,000 Awards had been achieved. Girls were allowed to join the programme in 1958. Since that first year, millions have joined the DofE Award programme. The DofE continued to evolve, and programmes took on their current format of Volunteering, Physical, Skills, Expedition, and Residential at Gold level in 1980.

In 2020, DofE participants stepped up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The volunteering efforts of 330,000 young people equated to an investment of almost £8.5 million in a time of need. The DofE says: "It hasn't been the easiest few years for young people. From the ongoing aftermath of the pandemic to the anxieties of the cost-of-living crisis, the future doesn't always feel certain.

"But, in seven decades of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), we've learnt one thing: never doubt what young people can do. Time and time again, we've seen that when young people are given the chance to prove to themselves what they're capable of, there's no limit to what they can achieve. We're here to celebrate and champion every young person. To provide a safe environment of support and challenge that grows as they do.

"Whatever their ability, interest or background, DofE offers young people the chance to strive for achievement, overcome obstacles, and set their minds to a personal challenge. Because when you prove to yourself that you're ready for anything, nothing can hold you back. Our Founder HRH Prince Philip once said: 'There is more in you than you might think.' And, here at the DofE, we help you realise that."

Prince Philip passed away in April 2021, but his legacy thrives thanks to the tireless support of the new Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward.

More info at: <https://www.dofe.org>

Hornby trains and Dinky toys

It was also 90 years ago, on 21st September 1936, that Frank Hornby, the British inventor, died. He is remembered for the immensely popular Meccano, Hornby Model Railways and Dinky Toys.

Hornby was born into a Liverpool working-class family and was said to have been inspired by the industry in the city. He was brought up as a Methodist and was interested in music, having a strong tenor voice. He met his future wife, Clara, when they were members of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society choir: they married in 1887 and had three children.

To amuse his two sons he constructed a model crane using perforated strips of metal held together with nuts and bolts. It could be dismantled and the parts used to build other things: this formed the basis of Meccano, which when refined proved hugely popular.

After the first world war he turned his attention to the construction of toy trains, powered by clockwork. At first these were made from kits, but it was not long before they were sold as ready-made train sets – a perfect children's toy. Dinky toys started as an accessory but soon developed into big-sellers in their own right.

Later Hornby, who was described as polite and a “keen observer of morality”, became a Conservative MP for Everton. In his youth he joined the anti-alcohol Band of Hope and set up a number of groups and clubs dedicated to the improvement of society. He was a great believer in determination and the ability to overcome setbacks.

This enabled him to become not only a visionary but a practical creator in toy development and production. His persistence in adapting his original ideas and making them workable brought him deserved success in producing three of the most popular lines of toys in the 20th century.

Organ Donation Week – 22nd to 27th September

More than 8,000 people in the UK are hoping for a life-saving organ transplant.

The primary organs that can be donated for transplant include the kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, pancreas, and small bowel (intestines).

This month's annual Organ Donation Week will once again raise awareness of the need for transplants, and buildings and landmarks across the UK will light up pink in support. The hope is to inspire people to sign-up on the NHS Organ Donor Register, and to encourage families to talk about their donation choices.

The NHS says that "Everyone has a choice as to whether or not they want to become an organ donor after they die. And if you choose to donate, you can choose to donate either some or all of your organs.

"By registering to become an organ donor you have the option to donate organs such as your heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas and small bowel. All of these forms of donation can greatly enhance or even save the life of someone in need." The NHS stresses that families are always consulted, making clear wishes vital despite opt-out laws.

Each year in the UK nearly 4,000 organ transplants are performed, using organs from around 2,300 actual organ donors (including both deceased and living donors.)

For more info, or to register your own decision, visit the NHS Organ Donation website at:

<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>

Football ministry programme kicks off

Free football clubs for children will be launched in churches as part of a new outreach programme.

Thirty churches across the country will be supported to start free football sessions for children as community outreach, with a focus on those in low-income areas and estates.

The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) will invest more than £320k to enable Ambassadors Football, a sports ministry charity, to facilitate the programme by training churches to coach accessible football activities.

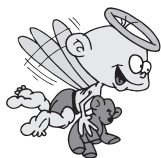
Each session will be run by trained volunteers from the church and will include training drills and matches, as well as 'team talks' in breaktimes, and closing with a prayer.

The team talks will explore themes, such as teamwork or sacrifice, and how they relate to football, life and what Jesus said, as well as closing in prayer.

Several of England's football clubs reportedly started in churches, including Everton, Manchester City, Aston Villa and Tottenham Hotspurs.

This new programme builds on existing work by Ambassadors Football, through which 42 churches already run community football outreach projects, with an average attendance of 22 children.

Half of the projects are located in low-income areas, and 70% of the participants do not otherwise attend church.

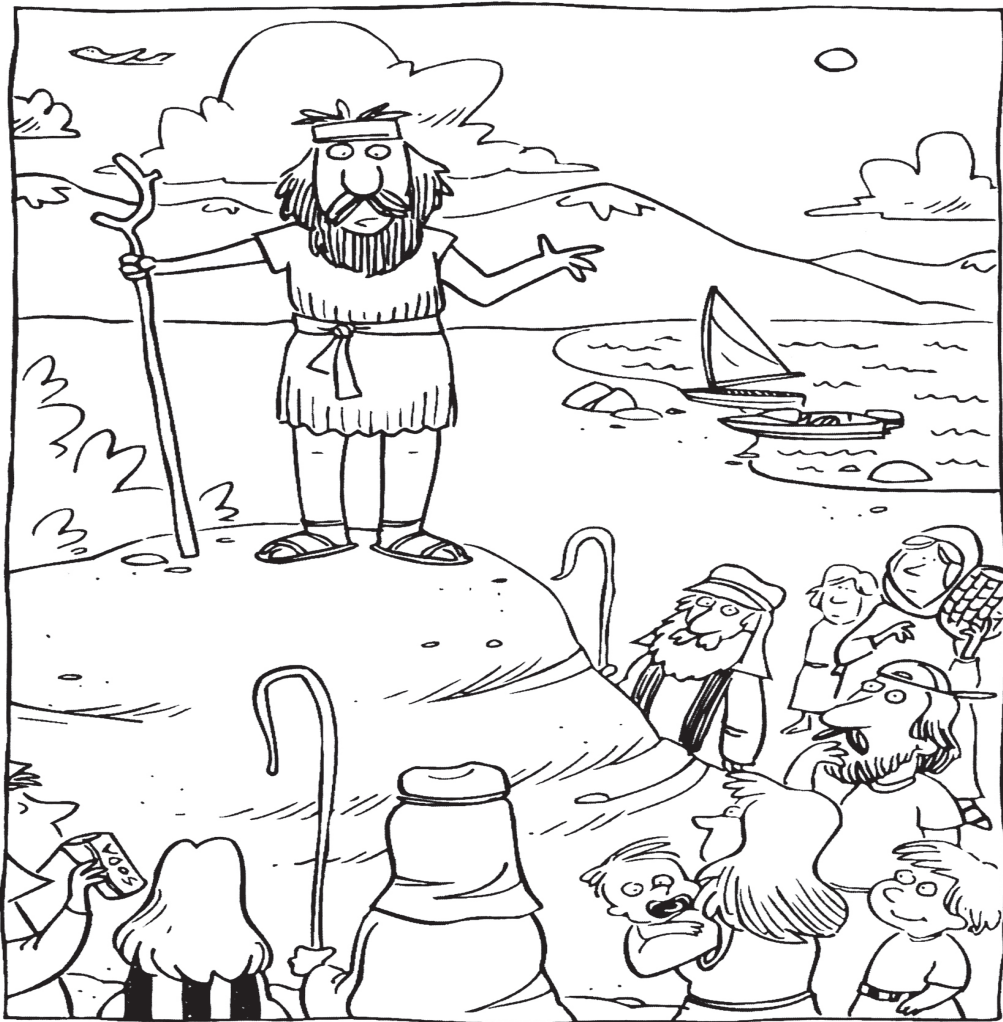


Michael's Angels

Matthew 3

Get Ready!

John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus. Find five things wrong with this picture. You can read about John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7-12.



Government consultation on weddings proposes greater flexibility and cheaper options

Couples will soon be able to marry almost anywhere, including forests, beaches, cruise ships at sea, canal boats, and at home, under Government proposals that “shift the focus from bricks and mortar to people and promises”.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is to consult on plans to allow “authorised officiants” of any religion or belief to conduct weddings, in what are being described as the most radical changes to marriage law in England and Wales since the 19th century.

The Government says, however, that the “permanence” of marriage will be strengthened by enabling more questioning of candidates before their weddings.

“To protect against forced, predatory and sham marriages, couples must complete a two-stage process, including in-person interview, to verify their identity and demonstrate eligibility to marry.”

Anglican banns of marriage would continue “as an important part of the established Church”, the document says.

It continues: “The Government agrees with the Law Commission’s recommendation that Anglican weddings should continue to be conducted as they are now. It recognises the unique role of the Church of England and the Church [in] Wales in relation to marriage and has no plans to alter... these roles.”

The MoJ says that the proposals will reduce costs. The average wedding in England costs more than £20,000 and venue hire alone typically costs around £6,000 - before any food.

About 470,000 people marry in England and Wales each year. Anglican weddings are generally required to take place in a church or chapel, although they can take place in a private home by special licence.

Hard Times

There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small. Psalm 104:25

Do you remember rock? I do not mean the music, but the confectionary sticks sold at seaside resorts. They were pink cylinders about a foot long and an inch wide with a white centre and had the name of the place in letters. They were covered in film and had a small label with a picture of the place on. It is sometimes referred to now as Rock Candy which does not seem right. They were hard as, well, hard as rock and very difficult to break up to eat. Real teeth breakers.

One source says it started at fairgrounds in the 19th Century, when sugar was plentiful and inexpensive. It was not brightly coloured or lettered in those days, but it was of similar shape and size as it is today.

Ben Bullock was an ex-miner from Burnley, who conceived the idea whilst holidaying in Blackpool. He began producing sticks of brightly coloured lettered candy at his Yorkshire-based sweet factory in 1887. He sent his first batch of lettered rock to retailers in Blackpool, where it was well received. Other sources say a Victorian character by the name of Dynamite Dick, who came from either Morecombe or Blackpool.

It takes a lot of skill to make it. I think it is still available on sale to eat or keep as a souvenir.



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

LIGHT

LIGHT is a mutual support group for anyone who is finding bereavement hard to bear.

Come and chat with us over a cup of tea at

Space4

on the first Tuesday of the month from

1.15pm to 2.30pm

*We are located below the library on
Newbottle Street.*

*Enter through the automatic doors and you
will find us to the right of the library escalator.*



Saint Matthew

– *called just as he was*

This month we remember Matthew's call to be an apostle of Jesus and ask what it means for us to follow Christ.

Jesus calls us where we are:

'Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.' (Matthew 9:9).

It was just an ordinary day at Matthew's tax booth, when Jesus called him. He simply got up and followed! Despite Matthew's past, his occupation and what people thought of him, Jesus still called him. Are we ready to follow when Jesus calls us into a relationship with Himself?

Jesus comes to where we are:

'While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' (10,11).

Jesus went to Matthew's home and ate with tax collectors and sinners, demonstrating that He meets people where they are, despite their sin and shame. The Pharisees avoided sinners, because they believed only the perfect could have access to God. When God is at work in the lives of those we don't expect, allow Jesus to open our hearts to embrace what He is doing.

Jesus comforts us where we are:

'On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.' (12).

Jesus came to save sinners and to give hope to the hopeless. The Pharisees were so committed to keeping the law, that they had forgotten God's heart of compassion. However, Jesus reminded them that they were witnessing God's love in action. In what ways can we express compassion towards others, especially those outside the community of faith?

How often should you change your sheets?

Ever wonder that?

When the question was put to various sleep coaches and sheet manufacturers, they came up with a variety of things to consider.

Once a week is thought to be good practise by many, but no more than twice a week, or you risk putting unnecessary wear and tear on your bedlinen.

Do you bath at night or in the morning? It matters, because that determines how much dust and sweat you will be taking to bed with you each night.

Do your pets sleep with you? In that case you may wish to change your bedding more than once a week. They may be leaving the odd flea, tick and certainly some fur in your bed.

Do you have allergies? If they include dust mites, it may be worth changing your bed every three to four days. Allergy UK advises a 60 degree wash to kill dust mites.

And finally, don't rush to make your bed each morning. Instead, pull back the sheets, open the window, and give it some time to air.

Can't sleep? Could these drinks be keeping you awake?

Sleep experts suggest the following possible suspects:

Alcohol. It interferes with the way your brain shuts down for the night. It can disrupt the deeper, more restorative level of sleep that you need.

Hot chocolate. Here it is the added sugar that is the problem. It gives you an energy boost that you don't need at bedtime!

Tea or coffee in the afternoon. Caffeine stays in your system for at least five hours.

That glass of water by your bed. It will probably wake you up in the night. Instead, consider increasing your liquid intake earlier in the day.

But if you really want a drink at bedtime, here are three that might help:

Chamomile tea has an antioxidant called apigenin, which promotes sleepiness.

Warm milk contains tryptophan, an amino acid that helps produce serotonin and melatonin.

And peppermint tea soothes your digestive system.

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MEMORIALS

We hope this system will help us to meet requests for memorials more efficiently.

Should you wish for a loved one to be remembered on their anniversary in the weekly prayers read during the Sunday services, please complete the slip opposite.

Cut out the slip and place it in the intercessions box at least one week prior to the Sunday for remembrance.

If you are unable to get to church, please post the slip to the Church Administrator: Mrs Philippa Elsey, Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels, The Broadway, Houghton-le-Spring.

MEMORIAL REQUEST

Name of person to be remembered:

.....

Request made by:

.....

.....

.....

Date for memorial:

Sunday,

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St Michael and All Angels Church

Friday October 9th

7.30pm to 11pm



Tickets £10, school-age children £5
from the Church Office or Rita Turnbull 07531 269090

Licensed Bar & food available