

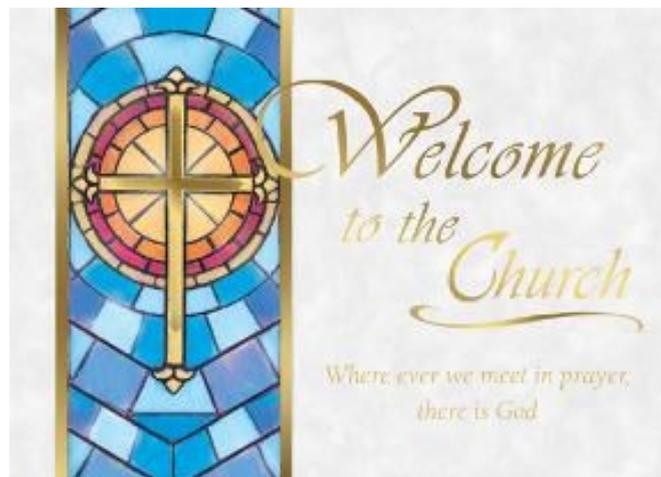


MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE
PARISH CHURCH OF
St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, RUNCORN.
www.runcornstmichaels.org.uk

ISSUE 189

FEBRUARY 2026

GROWING TOGETHER



In GROWING TOGETHER THIS MONTH:
HUMOUR NEWS

PUZZLE PAGE

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY/ MARCH
CELEBRATIONS

Vicars Message

One Body but Many Parts

"There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ" ~ *1 Corinthians 12:12-13*



Dear friends,

I write this Vicar's Message at the risk of offending someone in doing so, yet I have always maintained that if my ordination was permitted on the grounds that I would speak only words to keep people comfortable, and not challenge, then my Ordination would not be true to the spirit of the Gospel. Indeed, the Gospel is as much about challenging as it is about encouraging. It is here I open with a couple of statements I hear somewhat regularly through the year about people and their love for St Michaels...

"This is our family church" ... "We love this Church" ...and..." It would be a shame if anything ever happens to this church"

My response in all of these statements about your Parish church and your connection to it is always along the lines of...

" Well, if this is your family church, where have you been?"

My friends, a new year begins with a new message, and this is simple and somewhat hard hitting. If this is your family church, if you consider yourself to be a Christian, and that St Michaels is such an important part of your heritage and history then, why don't we see you here more regularly?

Now, I need to be crystal clear that this message is not aimed at the isolated, elderly, infirm or those with difficult home or working circumstances in any way shape or form. My heart truly goes out to each and every one of you. This is aimed at those who could be here more regularly but for some reason don't feel that their faith or family church is high on their priority list. My friends, for those who feel that they are able to make a more regular commitment but see more obstacles NOT to attend, I'd like to just point out to you the reason this is so important from both a practical and a spiritual sense. Practically, your church needs you. Spiritually, you need your church. Your Parish Church needs you because as many parts make up one body, we must be willing to be part of an active worshipping community seeking to support its mission and ministry. This can not be done from the armchair. Spiritually, you need the church in your life to help your own discipleship growth. It is by walking with each other, praying with each other, and loving each other, do we grow with each other and with Christ. Can you be a Christian and walk this journey alone? Well yes,. However, I would argue that this should be reserved for only the direst circumstances in life such as my friend who is working in a town abroad where he will be executed if the locals found out he was a Christian. You need the Church and the Church needs you.

Finally I need to address a comment that came my way during the latter part of 2025, this being that

"The church (the wider church) is a mess, and I don't think I want anything to do with it"

My friends, if this is where you are then I truly hear you. The wider church in many ways is a mess and I assure you that there are even clergy out there who struggle with this. However, the Church is a family and like every family you have the Alcohol dependant uncle who nobody talks to, the sister who went off the rails 10 years ago and brought shame to the family, and the father who nobody talks to anymore. Not one family has a perfect history, this is the same with the church. Therefore, if you are refusing to step back into St Michaels because of something the Vicar did 20 years ago, or because of an argument over the quality of communion wine etc, then I ask you, respectfully, please make contact with me so I can help you through this and bring you back to your spiritual family because my friends the last thing you or I want to hear when we kneel before Jesus is "Depart from me, for I didn't know you" (Matt 7)

My friends, this is difficult and hard hitting, and I welcome your response should you feel the need to share or express your thoughts in any way. I want to reassure you that this message is sent with only the purest of intentions for you and your Parish Church, and that I am here to help and guide if needed. We are many parts (you) to one body (St Michaels). Your Church needs you and you need your Church.

In Christ

Rev'd George

FEBRUARY CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 1st February (CANDLEMAS)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Café Church



Wednesday 4th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 8th February (2nd Sunday before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 11th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 15th February (Sunday next before Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 18th February (Ash Wednesday)

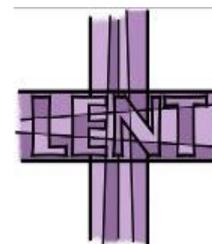
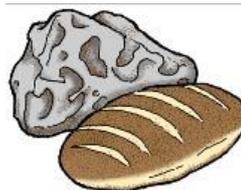
10.00am Holy Communion
7.00pm Holy Communion

Sunday 22nd February (1st Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 25th February

10.00am Holy Communion



MARCH CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 1st March (2nd Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Café Church



Wednesday 4th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 8th March (3rd Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 11th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 15th March (Mothering Sunday)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 18th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 22nd March (5th Sunday of Lent)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 25th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 29th March (Palm Sunday)

8.30am Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion



Monday 30th March

3.00pm Meditation Service

Tuesday 31st March

3.00pm Meditation Service

Prayer of thanks for Candlemas and the Presentation at the Temple

Dear Lord,

The shortest month, the snowdrop month! February brings those beautiful, hopeful little flowers, also called Candlemas Bells. Thank You, Lord, for the beauty and the hope.

Thank You for the reminder of when Jesus was presented at the temple as a baby. Thank You for Simeon recognising in that vulnerable baby the promised Saviour of all the world.

Oh Lord, how this world needs to hear afresh that message of salvation. Open eyes to see You and to know You. Open ears to hear Your message of hope and reconciliation. Open hearts to receive Your love and to share it, for the sake of all the suffering people of the World.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Community Christmas Tree Festival 2025

Back in December again we held our Annual Christmas Tree Festival/ Grand Draw. In total, we had **21 trees** decorated by church congregation members, schools, community groups and local businesses. This year the numbers were down slightly on last year, but we had **164 adults and 65 children** who came along to visit the festival, and over the 4 days we raised a staggering **£3,161.00p** for the church. Father Christmas was in attendance again with his very own elf as you can see from the photograph. Our vicar Revd George and the committee, would like to give a huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who decorated a tree, manned a stall, helped in the kitchen or even on the door.



Carols around the Christmas Tree 2025

This annual event took place on Saturday 6th December in church and was attended by **105 Adults & 31 Children**. Everyone enjoyed singing traditional Christmas Carols, and listening to the choir of Pewithall School who made the night with their excellent singing as always.



Christingle 2025

On Friday 19th December 2025 we held our Christingle Service and around 85 Adults and children attended the service. Everyone had made their Christingles before the service. It was nice to see quite a few new faces and regulars coming to this service.



Activities at St Michael's Church

- **St Michael's Maintenance Appeal Committee**
- Tea & Toast in the Church Hall
- Next Tea & Toast is on 7th February & 7th March
- @ 10.00am to 12.00 noon Admission: £2.00



- **Community Café**
- In the Church Hall every Wednesday from 12.30pm—3.30pm. A place to relax, have a natter, try some crafts and of course a cup Tea or Coffee.

- **Crafters Group**
- Crafters Group meets in the Church Hall every Tuesday from 10.00am to 12noon.
- Everyone welcome, especially newcomers.

- **VML**
- Sing-along sessions on Tuesday nights @ 7.00pm in the Church Hall. So come along have a cuppa and a sing-along for just £2.

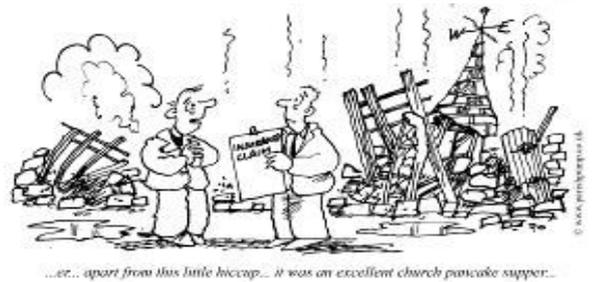


BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

February Birthdays



Congratulations to Nora Dean whose birthday is on February 9th and to Helen Owen whose birthday is on February 24th.



Could we offer a Warm Welcome Space at our church?

Hundreds of churches across the country joined in again last month (January) to support the first anniversary of the national Warm Welcome Spaces campaign. Warm Welcome Spaces is described by the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown as "a chain of hope... the heartbeat of local communities." The scheme was first launched during the crisis of escalating gas bills. It has now expanded into offering not only a warm place of shelter, but also food, activities, free Wi-Fi connection, clothes-swaps, and some other services. Last year 485 C of E buildings were among the 5,000 venues which signed up to the campaign. 400 of these churches are also part of the Church Urban Fund's Places of Welcome Scheme. One C of E church, which has been feeding about 60 people a week, explained: "We were exploring how we could reach out into the community, and we saw this need. It really is a way of expressing what our Christian faith is: the love and the care of Jesus."

More info at: <https://www.warmwelcome.uk>



The Nicene Creed: Trinitarian Faith

In the last of our series on the Nicene Creed, we want to ask about its significance today. The original Creed dates from 325 AD, but was expanded at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Over the last months we have seen how the Creed provides a 'big picture' of who God is and challenges our commitment to Him. Its value can be seen in three main areas:

The Nicene Creed stresses the need to believe the right thing:

Sadly, we often hear Christian leaders and churches denying the essential articles of the Christian Faith. To be a part of orthodox Christianity, we must believe in what is affirmed in the Nicene Creed. *'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures'* (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).

The Nicene Creed affirms the importance of the Trinity:

Generally, Christians give little thought to the Trinity, and many churches rarely teach on the subject. However, by regularly reciting the Nicene Creed, people are reminded of the doctrine about the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It protects the truth about the Trinity, especially in opposition to Arianism, which sees Jesus as the first and greatest of God's creatures, but not the same as God the Father.

To be a Christian is to be baptised in the triune name and to worship God, who is three persons in one Godhead: *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'* (Matthew 28:19).

The Nicene Creed focuses on God's salvation:

At the heart of the Nicene Creed is the good news that Jesus came down from heaven *'for our salvation'*. It understands Christianity as essentially being about sin and salvation, judgment and forgiveness, and new life in Jesus Christ.

This theme is very relevant at Christmas, when we celebrate the baby born in Bethlehem as our Saviour. As the angels said to the shepherds: *'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'* (Luke 2:11,12).

MESSAGE FROM THE AYLETTTS.

Here is an update on what's been happening since we visited Runcorn at the beginning of June.



Graham & Nicola are mission partners with Interserve. Graham serves as General Secretary of The Increase Association, or 'Increase'. Increase's member organisations are national programmes around Asia that serve local churches, helping them to help believers to live as Christ's disciples.

In July, around thirty key Increase people, nearly all volunteers, met for training and planning in Malaysia. We were both able to travel to this gathering together, which was great! The aim was to look at how Increase member organizations could help churches equip their members as whole-life disciples, not only knowing more about Jesus, but living for Jesus and living more like Jesus 24/7. We were joined for some of that time by Michael Ortiz, the Director of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education – which was quite a privilege!

At that same gathering, we also began to think about and pray for someone to step into Graham's role late in 2026. First, we are looking for two people to join the team who have that potential, and now, as of early December, we've had some good people applying. Please pray that God will shine his spotlight on the best people! It's not going to be an easy decision!

Part of Graham's role is to represent Increase, and in August, he was one of the speakers at the Asia Theological Association's General Assembly in Taiwan. Graham, and Jessy Jaison from South India, spoke on Leadership formation for discipling and equipping all God's people. This was a very special opportunity to commend church-based training to leaders of Bible colleges and seminaries.

In September, Nicola was in Hungary, to help lead the first part of a nine-month programme for people serving in cross-cultural mission, called 'Journey Deeper'. The aim of this programme is to help participants to grow deeper in their own relationship with God, and to be refreshed in their vision and calling. This was the first time Nicola was leading the process, and praise God, it went very well!

In October, Graham had a very wonderful week returning to Mongolia for the thirtieth anniversary of the church-based training programme he worked with from 1999 until 2013. It was very encouraging to meet old friends again, and to hear the stories of what God is doing! After that, Graham was again in Malaysia, this time for an Increase workshop bringing together leaders from Increase-connected organizations serving Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and Mongolians.

In November, we have based ourselves in the Netherlands with our daughter and family, as they welcomed their second child – a precious grand-daughter for us! We are all very thankful for her safe arrival!

Looking ahead, there will be a lot of change for the Increase Association, and any time of change needs lots of wisdom and grace =- please pray for that!

But most of all, please pray for the Increase member organizations. Of our thirty one member organizations, twenty are serving in countries that are among the sixty most challenging and hostile contexts for Christians. They need our prayers!

Thank you so much for your interest, support and prayers, which are greatly appreciated. If you would like to receive news by email, on a regular basis, or if you would like to consider joining our support team, please email Graham at:

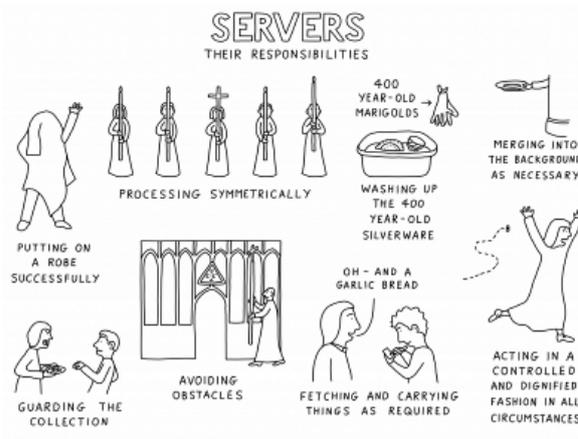
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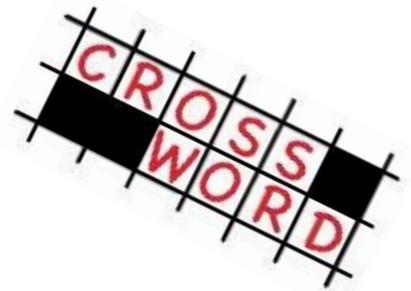
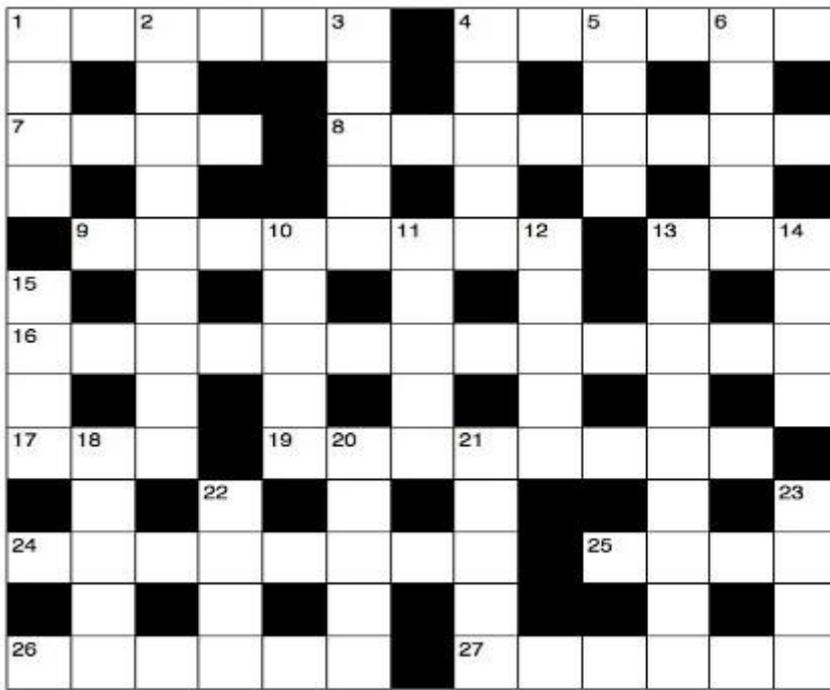
Wishing you all Happy New Year!
Graham & Nicola



After Eden

Adam was out walking with his sons Cain and Abel. As they passed by the ruins of the Garden of Eden, one of the boys asked, "Father, what's that place?" Adam replied, "Boys, that's where your mother ate us out of house and home."





CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

See how you get on with this crossword. There is no prize, but whoever gets it back to the Editor by February 22nd will be entered on a Roll of Honour in the next edition of *Growing Together*.

Across

- 1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)
- 4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)
- 7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
- 8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
- 9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
- 13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
- 16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)
- 17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)
- 19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will praise you' (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)
- 24 Simon had (anag.) (8)
- 25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)
- 26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)
- 27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)

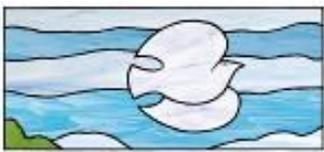
Down

- 1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)
- 2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)
- 3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)
- 4 Belief (5)
- 5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)
- 6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)
- 10 A seer (anag.) (5)
- 11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)
- 12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark 1:6) (5)
- 13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)
- 14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of 16 Across, — and Dolls (4)
- 15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19)(4)
- 18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)
- 20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)
- 21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)
- 22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)
- 23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)



**Crossword answer
December/January**

ROLL OF HONOUR
Two people got the crossword answer and they were
Jim & Shelagh Goffin & Wendy Sefton



February
2026



Please Pray



Please remember the following people in your prayers throughout this month.

Graham & Nicola Aylett

Barbara Done

Helen Browne

Also please remember in your prayers anyone that you know who are housebound or in hospital.

If you would like us to pray for someone close to you then let the Pastoral Care Team or vicar know.

....and the recently bereaved, especially any families known to you

George Done

IN MEMORY

In February 2025, the following people had their funerals at St Michael's. They will never be forgotten, because we still have the memories of that person and they are always with you/us. So please remember these people in your prayers and thoughts.

Vera Parkinson

Joan Fletcher

Cameron Perry

Gerald Cook



INFORMATION

Revd George Roach

01928 832734

Email: vicar.smaaruncorn@gmail.com

Not on a Tuesday

Churchwardens

Chris Challoner 01928 761704

Robbie Littler 07718 133018

Also if there is a Safeguarding issue please email Duncan Prince on safeguardingsmaa@gmail.com

If you want to book a wedding, baptism or funeral please phone this number 07718 133018 and ask for Robbie

Or can go to our website: www.runcornstmichaels.com

The Seven Deadly Sins: Greed

'How much money is enough? Just a little bit more.' (John D Rockefeller).

In the second of our series on the Seven Deadly Sins, we are looking at greed. It is the overwhelming desire for *more and more* in our lives. In our consumer culture it can be hard to tell the difference between needs and wants - e.g. buying a new laptop or shoes for different occasions? We need to ask the question:

How much is enough?

Jesus was approached by a man who wanted Him to settle a dispute about family inheritance. He said, *'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'* (Luke 12:15). Jesus goes on to tell the story of a rich farmer who builds bigger and bigger barns, but whose life is unexpectedly cut short by death. He concludes: *'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.'* (21).

How do we overcome greed and become *'rich towards God'*? Paul writes: *'I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.'* (Philippians 4:13). Overcoming greed involves learning to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves, in need or plenty. Paul is not saying that there is anything wrong with having food, money or possessions, but these cannot be the primary source of our contentment. The secret of contentment is found in a transforming relationship with Jesus: *'I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.'* (13).

He is the one who enables us to overcome greed and know riches.

'Contentment makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor.' (Benjamin Franklin).

God denies a Christian nothing but with a design to give him something better. - Richard Cecil