

NEWSLETTER

January 2025

from the Church of St. Michael's Bray



The Parish Church of Bray with Braywood, Holyport & Moneyrow Green, Fifield, Touchen End and Oakley Green

website: www.braystmichael.co.uk



Dear Friends,

***A last look back to Christmas and a first look towards
Lent,
Holy Week and Easter.***

Happy New Year!

We are coming up to the Feast of Candlemas which falls on Sunday the 2nd of February. Candlemas (also known as The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple) recalls the story of Jesus, still a baby, being taken to the Temple to be dedicated to the Lord by his parents (a little bit like a Christening today, but no water). There they meet Simeon and Anna and we hear Simeon's Song, his response to recognising the Messiah, which many of you will know as the Nunc Dimittis, "Now Lord let your servant depart in peace..." from the service of Evensong which is still sung every day of the year at churches and Cathedrals around the world.

Candlemas is sometimes described as "A last look back to Christmas and a first look towards Lent, Holy Week and Easter" and is a pivotal moment in the story of Jesus, as we have a hint at the suffering to come in Simeon's words to Mary "and a sword will pierce your own soul..."

Looking back to Christmas in terms of numbers attending and feedback received we had a very wonderful and successful time. The Advent Carols, Christingle, Community Carols, Christmas Carols and Crib Service all had great attendance and wonderful feedback. The choir did an excellent job at all the services and lots of people commented how wonderful it had been. The Carol Service was exceptionally well attended this year. Our Midnight Mass and Christmas Day services also draw good numbers. A strong indicator that things are on a good trajectory. Many thanks to those who helped organise, publicise, execute and attended!

Looking forward to Lent we will keep Ash Wednesday, 5th March, with a Eucharist with ashing at 8.00 pm in church (and on Zoom). On the Sunday Evenings of Lent, we will have a service, on Zoom only, of Compline (Night Prayer) at 9.00 pm as well as our normal services.

With very best regards,

Ainsley

BLESSINGS

Visitors to St Michaels could well be excused for not noticing the circular rose bed situated midway along the footpath that leads from the Yew tree to the North East corner of the church towards the vicarage. It was given to the church originally by the Bray Mother's Union (now defunct) in 1991 but until recently had sadly become rather unsightly with an alien spread of weeds; the roses after all these years mere twigs poking out of the ground.

However, back in November all changed and the plot completely transformed at no cost to St Michaels. The bed dug over and the circle reduced in size to ease on-going maintenance with the redundant area seeded to grow into the adjacent grass. New roses, appropriately named 'Blessings', were planted in fresh compost and augmented by a 'host' of spring bulbs left over from the All-Souls service on 3rd November.



All that remains is the original plaque rightly denoting, in lasting perpetuity, the original gift of the Bray Mother's Union

In time the new salmon pink blooms will stand out as a living sentinel overlooking the ever-increasing headstones of so many loved ones whose ashes are interred at Bray.

Graham Chamberlain

Sunday School at St. Michael's

I was delighted to re-start Sunday School last year. It runs on the first and third Sundays on the month. Numbers are at the moment small but the children regularly attend.



The children study a variety of bible stories, prayers and the life of the church. We roughly following the theme of the sermon or more often base our study on the Gospel reading. Over the course of a year we build on what we have learnt which will, as time passes, ensure that the children cover all 4 Gospels over three years just as you do in Church.

Sessions cover a variety of activities from colouring to games and problem solving.

Natasha Teeder

Cakes, Cookies and Traybakes

“Every year, DofE inspires hundreds of thousands of young people, from all walks of life, to explore who they are, grow in confidence and develop the skills they need to successfully navigate life. We help them build lifelong belief in themselves, supporting them to take on their own challenges, follow their passions, and discover talents they never knew they had.”

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Website

I have fond memories of working toward the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award when I was a teenager... many years ago! Now it is my daughter's turn.

Thank you everyone who has helped my daughter Emma in her “skill” section.

She (without me suggesting it) chose to bake for the church community of St Michael's. She's managed three months of baking, different cakes, cookies and traybakes for us after the service!

As a cook, seeing the container come back empty each time (apart from a piece set aside for her so she didn't miss out), is a great compliment. But it is the heartfelt words many have asked me to pass on to her which have especially made her smile; the smile of satisfaction knowing she's made something others have enjoyed. It has certainly helped her to grow in confidence.



But the work continues.... Now she is working on the physical activity section (weight-lifting) and has completed her community volunteering (parkrun) and later this year will do an overnight group expedition. Plenty more opportunity for her to discover more about herself!

It's great to know the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is showing young people that life skills do not have to be learnt from TikTok or Snapchat but in doing things for, and working with, other people! Thank you for being part of Emma's journey

Andy Medlicott

GENEROUS GIVING UPDATE



The first newsletter of 2025 is the appropriate place to extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who has donated to the funds of St Michael's in 2024; regularly or occasionally, through the Parish Giving or Standing Order schemes, by cash or by use of the contactless "Goodbox" machine. All have contributed to the finance essential to the running of the church, and all are greatly appreciated by the Parochial Church Council.

Regular payments, mainly through Parish Giving, amounted for the year to just short of £44,000, an increase over 2023 of almost 10%, an excellent result set against the financial background facing everyone. Coupled with careful management of expenditure, this put church general funding in a much healthier state than for some time. Work on the fabric of the church is funded differently, however, and there are some significant challenges to be faced in the near future.

It is very pleasing to report that we now have no fewer than 60 members of the Parish Giving Scheme, with a number of new members since the last Generous Giving Sunday. If you are kind enough to give regularly but are not yet a member of the scheme, I would encourage you to consider joining now. Do ask me for further details, you will find it very convenient and simple.

Finally, I must congratulate Vicki Henley on her mastery of the Gift Aid system, for which a move to far-off Scotland has failed to dampen her enthusiasm. To the amount received from giving, we added during 2024 over £14,000 in Gift Aid from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, with more to come soon, and I am extremely grateful to Vicki for all that she does.

Jim Tucker



Sunday Afternoon Recitals at 3.00pm

9 February

**Ashley Solano Hernández
(piano)**

Young British-Columbian pianist composer makes his debut with Chopin, Ravel and his own *Sonata No 1 'Echoes of Dreams'*

9 March

**Andrew Garrido
(piano)**

Charismatic young pianist presents a Romantic programme to include Fauré and Grieg

6 April

**Alex McChrystal
(piano)**

Award-winning emerging pianist presents Liszt *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude* and Ravel *Miroirs*

Retiring Collection and Afternoon Tea

CONTACT LIST

The Vicar: Rev. Canon Ainsley Swift 633113
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For general enquiries (Christenings, Weddings etc) in the first instance please contact our Parish Administrator, Richard Severn: 01628 633113 stmichaelsbray@gmail.com"

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Mrs Susan Calvert 623660

<https://braywood-ce.eschools.co.uk>