

NEWSLETTER

January 2026

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,

From the Vicarage: New Light for a New Year

Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, the "New Year" isn't quite so new anymore. We are halfway through January; the festive leftovers are a distant memory, the nights are still stubbornly long, and—if you are anything like me—some of those ambitious resolutions made on January 1st might already be feeling a little frayed at the edges.

There is a particular kind of quietness that descends in mid-January. The world tells us we should be "hitting the ground running," yet the natural world is still deep in its winter sleep.

A Season of Revealing

In the church calendar, we are currently still in the season of **Epiphany**. The word itself means "manifestation" or "revealing." It's the time we remember the Magi following the star to find the Christ-child. What I love about their story is that they didn't find the light instantly; they had to journey through the dark, trusting that the light was leading them somewhere meaningful.

Perhaps that is a better metaphor for our year than a list of strict resolutions. Rather than forcing ourselves to be "perfect" or "different," we can simply ask:

Where is the light leading us this year?

Grace for the Journey

If you've already stumbled on a goal you set for yourself, or if the cold weather is making you feel a little weary, remember that our faith is not built on our own willpower, but on **God's grace**.

Lamentations 3:22-23 reminds us:

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning."

Not just new every January, but new **every single morning**. If you need to start your year "over" today, you have the permission and the grace to do so.

....continued

Looking Ahead

As a parish, we have much to look forward to in 2026. Over the coming weeks, we will be:

- **Preparing** for the season of Lent (which arrives sooner than we think!). February the 18th is Ash Wednesday and we will hold a service at 8.00 pm in Church and on Zoom to mark the beginning of Lent.
- **“Come and See”** – This year’s Lent Course focuses on the Eucharist or Holy Communion – come and discover more about the central focus of Christian worship. You can get a taste for this course at www.oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see

Our Curate Andy will have another article in this Newsletter giving more details of the course.

Whatever this year holds for you—whether it is a season of change or a season of quiet waiting—know that you do not walk it alone. This church family is here to walk alongside you.

May the light of Christ continue to brighten your path as the days slowly, surely, begin to lengthen.

With best regards

Rev'd Ainsley



For me Lent is a time of contemplation and preparation for Easter. The busyness of Christmas has passed and New Year's resolutions have come and gone - or perhaps, like me, you've given up on making them in the first place? The days are beginning to feel a little longer as I walk the dogs without needing LED collars and it feels like it's time to look forward and get on with living 2026.

A Lent course, where for a few weeks we gather together to chat, learn and share about things of faith, is a great opportunity. This year at St Michael's we are going to spend some time using the Diocese Come and See course to look at **Holy Communion**. Holy Communion (otherwise known as The Eucharist) is something we celebrate every Sunday but this familiarity can sometimes mean we are on auto-pilot. This Lent is an opportunity to look and think afresh and what this celebration means.

You can sign up for a daily email at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see/> and will also have access to the videos we will use as a starter for the conversation. But you don't need to sign up to come along!

We are meeting on Thursday evenings at 7:30pm at Jesus Hospital in Bray, and on Friday afternoons at 2:30pm at the Church hall behind St Michael's Church. You don't need to commit to coming every week. If after your first time you decide it's not for you, then there is no pressure to continue! Ideally if you could drop me an email at andymed256@gmail.com that will help with just knowing numbers to make sure I have enough snacks, but please do come along even if you have not let me know!

Thursday Evenings:

Jesus Hospital, SL6 2AN - all at 7:30pm (till around 9pm):
19th February, 26th February, 5th March,
12th March, 19th March and 26th March

Friday Afternoons:

St Michael's Church Hall, SL6 2AA - all at 2:30pm (till around 4pm)
20th February, 27th February, 6th March,
13th March, 20th March and 27th March

I hope you can make it, and that we can enjoy learning and sharing together!

Take care & God Bless,
Rev'd Andy Medicott

NEWS FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

In addition to his efforts as our Parish Administrator, Richard Severn has been the PCC treasurer for the last five years. The Parochial Church Council, to give its full title, has financial responsibility for everything at St Michael's, apart from clergy stipends, and the treasurer's role encompasses everything involving money from paying bills and analysing income to keeping detailed records to the high standards required of a registered charity. Richard feels that the time has come to hand these duties onto someone else, although we are delighted that he wishes to continue as our administrator.

On behalf of the PCC and everyone connected with the church, I want to congratulate Richard on the splendid job he has done, and to express our sincere gratitude for his dedication to the task. I am so glad that he is continuing to be an important part of the St Michael's family.

It is with pleasure that we can announce that the new treasurer is to be Marney Nicholls. Marney and her family have been part of the church scene for several years, and she has graciously agreed to take up the treasurer's task. We all wish her well, and I am confident that her financial background will stand her in very good stead. The days of simply signing cheques to make payments are now long behind us, and it will take a little while for the transition to be fully implemented. Once the process is complete, Marney's contact details will appear in future newsletters.

It is only right to mention two other key members of the finance team; Jasvir Banks has an important role in providing the second sign-off to bank payments, a task she carries out with diligence and timeliness, as well as dealing with wedding fees on behalf of the PCC; Vicki Henley receives, in the strictest confidence, Parish Giving Scheme payments, and processes our claims for Gift Aid. Vicki refused to allow moving house to the north of Scotland to interfere with her work! We thank them both for all that they do. I assist from time to time where necessary.

Jim Tucker



Music at Bray begins on Sunday [8th February](#)
with an organ recital by JOEL COLYER,
Director of Music at St Francis Church, Welwyn Garden City

News from the Maggie Ross, Captain of the Bell Tower

On Saturday 30 January 1926, the first peal at Bray was rung. At the time, there were only 6 bells; the six largest bells were cast at various times between 1612 and 1914 and the treble and second in 1948.

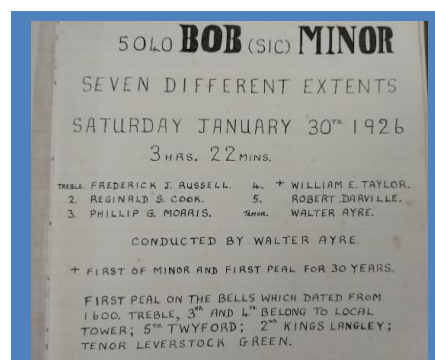
The 24cwt ring of 6 will have been strenuous to ring. The bells had been installed in a strangely designed steel frame and the frame movement made the bells difficult to ring. The bells were rehung in a new frame in 1985 by Whitechapel Bellfoundry who also retuned the bells and supplied many new fittings.

The bells now sound better, the tower movement has been reduced due to the new frame, and the bells are easier to handle. However, they remain BIG, and therefore require a good technique to ring them well.

To commemorate the centenary of the first peal in 1926, we will be attempting a peal on Saturday January 31st 2026. To date, there have been 87 peals rung at Bray, and, since the augmentation in 1948, all of them have been on the full ring of eight bells. For historical authenticity, we will be aiming to recreate the efforts of the 1926 band by ringing the heaviest six bells. The peal will start at 10am and, if successful, should last about 3h15.

To demonstrate the progressive (or maybe ambitious? or plain deluded?) nature of our band, we will be attempting a more complex set of methods than our predecessors a century ago. Of the many Surprise Minor methods available to ring, there is a special subset of 41 that are considered the standard Surprise Minor methods. Until as recently as 2012 you had to ring 7200 changes (well over 4 hours) if you wanted to ring an all-the-work peal in the spliced 41, due to the technical difficulties of splicing some of the methods together. Clever ringing composers have now made a standard length peal of 5040 changes available for ringing 41 Surprise Minor, and this is what we will be attempting on Saturday 31st. If successful, it will be an impressive feat of stamina, strength and concentration.

Please do come along and listen if you're interested. The ringing should be of a high standard and will of course be commemorating a very special anniversary. Despite the aspirational nature of this particular performance, we remain a very grounded band and continue to teach ringers all the time, so have a steady stream of learners. We are always happy to welcome new people, so do come along on a Monday evening 7:30-9 to find out more if you're interested.



Jim Tucker
Music at Bray
St Michael's Church
High Street Bray



Dear Jim and everyone at St Michael's Church and Music at Bray,

From everyone here at Alexander Devine Children's Hospice Service, a huge heartfelt thank you for your continued support with your Community Carols event. It was such a warm, fun and festive event and I would like to thank the congregation for their generosity as well as Music at Bray for your kind donation of £217, bringing the total raised to a wonderful £1,100. The support of local churches like yours is helping us light up little lives for children, just like Grace, giving her and her family the care and opportunities they deserve.

Grace was born with a rare genetic condition called Treacher-Collins Syndrome. When she was just four days old, she was fitted with a tracheostomy to open her windpipe and help her breathe. For over a year, the family cared for Grace on their own, until their local community nurse referred them to Alexander Devine. Now, Grace has just turned four and requires 24/7 care to support her breathing and eating. Whilst being supported by Alexander Devine, she has grown to become a cheeky and confident personality running around the hospice!

"The hospice is like Grace's home away from home. Even before arriving, her face lights up when we reach the gate and she knows she's here for day care. She walks in, puts her stuff down and it's like she's home. From respite care, to hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, music therapy, to the opportunities and support it provides for Grace's siblings – it is all amazing. It means so much to so many families, who would be lost without this support."
Georgina, Grace's Mum.

We are currently supporting over 200 babies, children and young people, and our children's hospice service is free of charge for all the families we support. This financial year it is costing us over £3.4 million to run our specialist hospice service. Just 15% of our income is from government funding, so we rely almost entirely on the generosity of supporters such as yourselves.

Thank you, as always, for being such a cherished part of the Alexander Devine community.

Best wishes, **Zoe Mitton**
Community Fundraiser

CONTACT LIST

The Vicar: Rev. Canon Ainsley Swift 633113
Curate: Rev'd Andy Medicott andymed256@gmail.com
For general enquiries (Christenings, Weddings etc) in the first instance please contact our Parish Administrator, Richard Severn: 01628 633113 stmichaelsbray@gmail.com

The Churchwardens:

Helen Pearson 07979 756409
Lynn Olney 07966906092

Deputy Churchwardens:

Jim Tucker 673685
Lee Brunning 07770 836011
Mary Wiles 635000

Sacristan & Lay Funeral Minister:

Lynda Jones 635178
Verger: Jim Tucker 673685

Parochial Church Council:

Hon Secretary:

Katrin Brunning: katrin.brunning@btinternet.com

Hon Treasurer:

Richard Severn richarddb7@outlook.com

Gift Aid Officer :

Vicki Henley
vicki@henleyclan.co.uk

Electoral Roll Officer:

Penny Murray

Director of Music:

Oliver Gooch

Assistant Director of Music:

Lindsay Bramley

Parish Safeguarding Officer/Sunday School:

Natasha Teeder 674469

Bellringers:

Tower Captain:

Maggie Ross
maggieross@live.co.uk

Friends of St. Michael's

Lynda Jones 635178
Church Flowers: Maggie Jans 07774484308

Holyport School Headteacher:

Mrs Amanda Featherstone 627743
<https://www.holyportprimaryschool.co.uk>

Braywood School Headteacher:

Mrs Annie Cole 623660
<https://braywood-ce.eschools.co.uk>