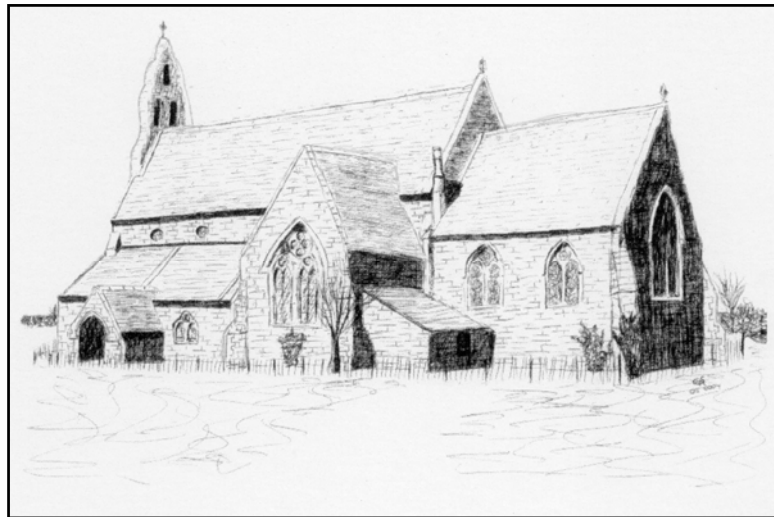




APRIL 2010



St Michael's Messenger

The Newsletter of St Michael and All Angels, Park Road, Abingdon.

A Journey to Ordination

My religious family background is unusual; my father was a child Jewish refugee in 1933 and my mother a member of the Church of England. I was baptised as a child and brought up in a Christian environment. I attended Sunday school in Kingston upon Thames and became a member of the local Church scouts. Even though my father was not a practising Jew, I learned much about the Jewish faith and customs from my grandmother. I remember at this time, perhaps aged 11, starting to pray a lot for my family, and trying to reconcile my Christian faith with my father and grandmother's Judaism.

At thirteen, I was sent to boarding school. My first form master was the Assistant Chaplain, an Evangelical, who taught me to use the Bible as a guide to action as well as faith. He encouraged me to attend the Scripture Union meetings, but I never found them as spiritually fulfilling as Chapel services. In my first term I asked if I could be Confirmed. The Senior Chaplain's preparation had a very profound effect on me; I started to appreciate the nature of discipleship as a journey in the company of Christ, rather than adherence to a strict set of rules by which to be judged and to judge others.

In my second or third year, my form master was the Revd David Connor, latterly Bishop of Lynn and Dean of Windsor. He became an important spiritual mentor, and along with another elderly chaplain, encouraged me to join in A-level RS classes even though I was not taking the exam. In this way I found I was getting powerful and sympathetic spiritual guidance throughout my adolescence, as well as great intellectual stimulation. In the sixth-form I felt some sort of vocation to become either a priest or a doctor; I finally settled on Medicine and went to St. Thomas's Hospital. While in London I attended the Chapels Royal at Hampton Court and St James's because I knew some of the choir and clergy. However, I was deeply unhappy about the career choice I had made, and missed a friend who was studying in Bristol. So I gave up Medicine and went to read Physiology at Bristol, taking first a BSc and then a PhD.

Over the next seven years in Bristol, I attended a number of churches: first Christ Church, Clifton, a student-focused evangelical church where James Jones (now Bishop of Liverpool) was then just a curate; next Redland Parish Church, which is closely associated with Trinity Theological College, and finally the Anglo-catholic church of All Saints,

Clifton, noted for its John Piper Window and being the subject of a John Betjeman poem.

Over these years I found my faith deepening. At Redland I threw myself into parish life, leading intercessions, helping with the music and youth groups, and volunteering for work with a shelter for homeless people. It was at Redland that I met through mutual friends my wife-to-be, Rachel, who was an undergraduate at Oxford but attended Redland during the holidays. In a relatively short time we decided together that, while the scriptural teaching at Redland was strong, we regretted the infrequency of the Eucharist. So we joined the congregation and choir of All Saints, Clifton. The superb preaching, excellent music and inclusive liturgy were very supportive of our faith. I no longer found professing myself a Christian faintly embarrassing.

Shortly after getting married, I took a temporary position at my old school where I again helped out in Chapel with music. After a year, we moved to a Scottish boarding school where the chaplain invited me to preach. He encouraged me to continue in this ministry as he was particularly pleased to have a scientist preach as a committed Christian. In 1997, I was appointed Head of Biology at Radley and successive college chaplains have welcomed my ministry. It was during an interregnum that I was asked to assist more formally in Chapel and I began to sense my vocation to the ordained ministry more deeply than ever before, particularly as I assisted at the Eucharist.

For me the institution of the Holy Eucharist by Jesus at the Last Supper is his continuing gift to his Church binding us together as his Body. Its power to evangelize is extraordinary. My father, who had arrived in England as a small Jewish boy, spent his adult life attending Christian services with his family, but, like Nicodemus, he never seemed to 'get it' and so was never baptized. That is, not until Easter Day 2000 when for some inexplicable reason he got up from his pew and took Communion. Like Nicodemus, he did not believe until he held the Body of Christ in his hands. He was soon baptised, and later confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford on the Easter Eve that Bishop Richard told me I had been accepted for ordination training. But that's another story...

Simon Thorn

Simon will be ordained priest on 27th June. He will be the celebrant at the morning Mass at St Michael's on Sunday 4th July. Please remember him in your prayers.

Christmas Fair

As our 2009 Christmas Fair was so successful, the Church Council has agreed to hold another one this year on Saturday 20th November. I know it seems a bit early to be thinking of Christmas at the moment, but I would really appreciate your thoughts on how we can make it even more successful this year. If you have any suggestions or ideas please let me know, or if you know of anyone who would like a table at the fair please put them in touch with me. We hope again to donate 10% of the profits to charity.

Eileen Duckett

The Christian Aid Sponsored Walk

Almost as long as we have lived in Abingdon there has been evidence of the activity of Christian Aid. Christian Aid Week was often marked by a banner across Stert Street, and the New Year's Day Walk was, and still is, a major event in the year. I well remember seeing clergy like Andrew King and Peter Silva taking part, and not forgetting Declan Lang who characteristically left us all in his wake!

As ever this year, about a hundred people from the Abingdon churches turned out to start from St. Helen's Church. We were really pleased that the day dawned clear, sunny and frosty, as the surfaces were wet from heavy rain, but happily frozen! Having chosen this year to go south for a change, we knew that paths to Drayton could be particularly clayey and very sticky feet might arrive at Drayton Church Hall!

The route took us via the Ock Path to the beautiful Ock Mill, thence over the Canal site. From here a path took us to the edge of the A34, and a glimpse beyond of that huge open and empty land that Thames Water covets. Back then to Drayton, where the people of St Peter's Church generously entertained us. After refreshments we took the route which brought us back past the Town's refuse dumps to Wilsham Road, so back to St. Helen's along the Thames bank (is there a finer waterfront anywhere in the Kingdom?).

Jane Cadogan, John Enticott and John's nine-year-old grandson Andrew, who was accompanied by his sister Sarah and his cousins Sian and Carys, represented St. Michael's. The children's parents came too! Their sponsor money totalled £350 and we would like to express our grateful thanks to all those who sponsored us.

John Enticott

Epiphany Postponed

On 6th January the snow was deep and crisp and dangerous to walk or drive on so the St Michael's traditional evening service was postponed to the following Sunday morning. On Sunday 10th January, the snow was very much the same but at least with a morning service we could see where we were going and a surprising number of intrepid people were present. The advantage of having this service on a Sunday morning was that more people than usual could watch and take part in the ceremonies. The celebrant was The Revd Timothy Fernyhough with The Revd Dr Simon Thorn assisting. ♦

A conversation with a friend

Me: 'I feel rather guilty that the Wise Men made what must have been a hazardous journey of hundreds of miles to reach Bethlehem, whereas I am relieved that I am not being expected to walk the short distance from my house to St Michael's in the snow.'

Friend: 'Ah - but they had camels.'

Well, it's a thought!



Candlemass Anticipated

Our celebrations for Candlemass were brought forward this year to Sunday 31st January and were combined with a Family Service. It was a pleasure to have so many of our baptism families with us for the occasion that brought our Christmas celebrations to a close. In welcoming them, Fr Norman explained that during the service, the congregation moved to different areas of the church and invited parents to allow small children to move around at the back. St Michael's now offers such large inviting uncluttered areas, that it is hardly surprising that toddlers cannot resist practising their newly acquired skills. To add to the family atmosphere, 15-year-old Vicky Berry, read the lesson. ♦

Mothering Sunday

It was a joy to be able to welcome so many families to our Mothering Sunday service on 14th March and to have such a crowded church.

Invitations (designed by Emma Berry) had been sent by Cicely Bilverstone to many of the families whose children have been baptised at St Michael's over the past few years. We also had Adam Crask a newly baptised baby, to welcome.

The children clearly enjoyed going up to collect the posies to give to their mothers and thanks to the hard work of Dorothy Robins and Mary Beadle in



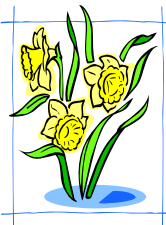
The children collect their posies from Ramon and David.



Cicely, Vicky and Teresa get ready to cut the simnel cakes.

making them, there were plenty of posies over for others in the congregation.

At the end of the service as many as could, crowded outside the west door to watch Fr Norman bless the hydrangea given by her family in memory of Nellie Woodley. It was good to see that it has shrugged off the harsh winter and has lots of new leaf buds on it. Our thanks to Cicely for making three splendid simnel cakes which were served after the service. ♦



Welcome to April

We have shivered through January's ice and snow
And short gloomy days,
We have splashed through February's chilly rains,
Her flowing dykes and muddy ways.

We were blown by the moody winds of March –
Then, days were getting long,
Now at last, at last, April is here
And birds fill the air with song.

Winter has died, but the earth is alive,
Watered now by a more gentle rain,
Flowers lift their heads to the strengthening sun,
And trees and hedgerows are leafy again

Doris Dowling



Lent , Holy Week and Easter 2010

The season of Lent began for the three churches of the central cluster with a united service for Ash Wednesday at St Helen's.

On Wednesday evenings during Lent we held our customary Said Mass with Stations of the Cross. Fr Henry Kirk gave a particularly inspiring commentary on the first seven Stations as he meditated on the actual pictures, giving us an insight, from his own perspective, on details, expressions and gestures etc many of which had previously passed unnoticed by those walking with him that evening.

On the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week we had the opportunity to unite together again at St Nicolas' Church for the office of Sung Compline. Maundy Thursday saw us back at St Michael's for Sung Mass with Stripping of the Altar and Vigil until midnight.



The Chapel of Repose on Maundy Thursday.

On Good Friday morning, following on from her very popular Crib Service on Christmas Eve, Jennifer Small led a congregation of 21 adults and 12 children in a service entitled Jesus and the Cross. Starting with the story of the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (illustrated by a large and vivid flannel graph picture) she led the children through the birth, childhood and manhood of Jesus before reaching Palm Sunday and the events of the days leading up to and culminating in his crucifixion. There

were plenty of opportunities for the children to participate, including processing several times up and down the aisles waving branches of grasses and helping Jennifer to illustrate the story with pictures and associated objects such as a beautiful handmade crown of thorns, a stone to seal the tomb and



4 large nails. Her commentary throughout was accessible to the children but contained much for the adults to meditate on also.

The Good Friday Liturgy was held at 2pm in St Michael's when we were joined by members of the choir and congregation of St Helen's and on Saturday evening we welcomed Fr John Barton as celebrant at our Vigil service and Easter Ceremonies, together with the Revd Richard Bittleston, who sang the Exultet and members of the congregation of Trinity Church.

Carol Bowman

The Churchyard

The churchyard has recently been given a minor makeover in an effort to make it easier to maintain. The rose garden at the east end of the church has been mulched with bark chippings and the grass area has been extended to the end of the flowerbed. At the west end, the beds either side of the door have been cleared and edged with grey granite sets and the macadam has been weeded and renewed as necessary. The cost of this work was paid for from money raised at last year's Christmas Fair. We are grateful to Geoff Cross, who does our hedge cutting, for undertaking this work for us.

Our thanks to Jane Cadogan who has now taken over responsibility for maintaining the areas either side of the west door and to Krissie Hartley-Morris who continues to care for the other two beds at this end of the church and the one by the sacristy door. Krissi also provides the planters that brighten up the porch. Our intention is to make the outside of our church as attractive and welcoming as the newly re-ordered interior.

Jane Duce

St Michael's Fellowship: From the Greek Islands

I gave two talks in February based on holidays in Greek islands in the Aegean. In the first I recalled how a certain famous man had said that a good holiday needed the elements of “sun, sand, sea and civilisation” and so it had proved both on Thassos and on Samos!

Thassos is the northernmost island and a short crossing to the mainland of Macedonia. At Golden Beach, we enjoyed its very long, sandy beach and gently shelving clear-water swimming. As we lazed on a sun bed, the beautiful mountain named after the prophet Elijah sheltered us behind while in front we could gaze out to sea where we could make out the outline of Samothraki. It's called Samothrace in Acts where we read that the Apostle Paul sailed by it. On the further Asian shore, he had heard the call “come over to Macedonia and help us”.

We were particularly pleased to be able to join a day excursion to Philippi on the mainland and follow in his footsteps in a small way. We landed at Kavala, called Neapolis in Paul's day, where outside the church there is a mosaic depicting his arrival. Philippi is about 8 miles inland, and a major Greek and Roman City. Although in ruins now, there is plenty of evidence of its Roman past, and we could also see ruins of a Christian capital - indeed there was a party of Catholic Christians celebrating Mass in the ruins of a basilica church!

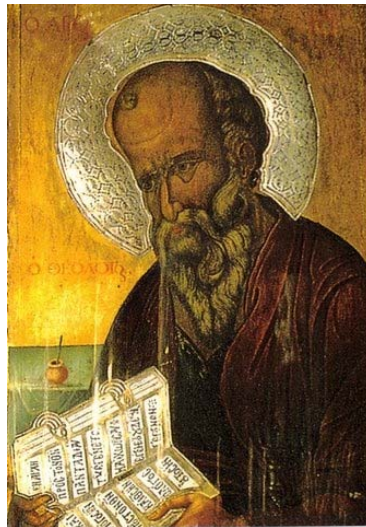
Paul made his first converts here, outstanding among whom was the influential businesswoman, Lydia. After his imprisonment, Paul was able to use her house for his missionary work in the area and had clearly from his Epistle been very happy there. It's probably no coincidence that the first Christian hymn we have is that in his letter to the Philippians. (see Phil. 2, 5-11) Finally we visited the site outside the town which traditionally is where Paul's first European converts were baptised. Here, near the modern octagonal Baptistry, we obtained a little ikon of Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, who is to many a key figure in the story of women's ministry in the Church.



The second talk was on Samos and Patmos

Samos is the island of Pythagoras. At the harbour is a sculpture of the famous triangle through which we all learnt his name. Our stay was in the west where the beach of Ormos looks south. This protected us from the fierce Melteme wind which whips up a surf on the northern shore and sometimes out to sea. Looking south, however, we were looking towards the Isle of Patmos famous in Christian history. Ephesus on the nearby Asian shore was just out of reach (regrettably), but we could reach Patmos by excursion boat from Pythagorion.

From that harbour, the first land you see close by is that of Asia, now Turkish and Islamic (the story of how this came about is a tragic one – see de Berniere's "Birds without Wings"). After 30 miles of sailing we finally arrived at little Patmos crowned by its huge Turkish castle. Half way up that hill we were taken to the monastery of the Apocalypse where our guide gave us his spiel. "*We are Orthodox Christians here (unlike those on the Asian shore, he implies!); we cross ourselves 3 fingers together symbolising the Trinity, like so! Here is the cave where John Theologos was imprisoned, and had his visions to be written down by his scribe Procharas. James and John as you know were the sons of Zebedeus!*" Inside we did indeed see the cave of the Revelation, including the hole in the rock-wall where John is said to have laid his head. (He did eventually get away, traditionally ending his days at Ephesus).



The Revelation, the last book of our Bible, is a difficult book to understand, but it does include gems that have entered into our Christian consciousness as well as our language. We read some of them out at the meeting. In one of them John sees "a new heaven and a new earth and no more sea". On our way back to Samos we began to appreciate the meaning of this as that fierce Melteme blew up and our rather small boat was given a buffeting. Some members of the party were heartily alarmed and some seasick!

"The angel showed me the river..of life flowing from the throne of God.. on either side is the tree of life.. and the leaves of the tree are for

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Church in Abingdon is representative of a number of branches of Christianity, though one of the major branches, the churches of the Orthodox East do not have a presence in the town. That said, Orthodoxy is represented in Oxford, and the Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius has its office at 1, Canterbury Road, which is also the address of the Orthodox Parish of the Annunciation. It was by accident that I discovered that the Fellowship had organised a celebration of the Liturgy for Unity on Saturday 23rd January, and fortunately I was able to attend.

The Liturgy followed the pattern of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and was celebrated by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware assisted by Fr Stephen Platt, the General Secretary of the Fellowship. Some of you may remember that Metropolitan Kallistos preached at St Michael's in the late 1970s (when he was Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies at Oxford University and a Fellow of Pembroke College).

The church in Canterbury Road follows the octagonal architectural style and is a very intimate worship space. The Liturgy was beautifully celebrated with much movement, incense and superb singing.

Metropolitan Kallistos in his sermon reminded us that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a week, not of discussion groups, coffee parties and the like, but a week of prayer. He spoke of the three levels of prayer in the Orthodox tradition – of the mouth, the mind and the heart; and that prayer is not about words but about relationship – our relationship to God, prayer is life and life is prayer.

Anglicans present could not take communion, our church not being in communion with the Orthodox churches, but instead before the Orthodox received communion we said together a prayer written by Father Sergius Bulgakov, a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian who was one of the founders of the Fellowship.

O Jesus Christ,
our Lord and Saviour,
Thou hast promised
to abide with us always.
Thou dost call all Christians
to draw near and partake
of Thy Body and Blood.
But our sin has divided us
and we have no power to partake
of Thy Holy Eucharist together.

We confess this our sin
and we pray Thee, forgive us
and help us to serve
the ways of reconciliation
according to Thy Will.
Kindle our hearts with the fire
of the Holy Spirit,
Give us the spirit of wisdom and
of faith,
of daring and of patience,
of humility and of firmness,
of love and of repentance,
Through the prayers of
the most blessed Mother of God,
St Alban and St Sergius,
and of all the saints. Amen.

Though Anglicans could not share communion with the Orthodox, all were invited to share the anti-doran – (meaning in Greek, “instead of the gift”) unconsecrated bread left over from the altar loaves that was not consecrated, to kiss the Cross of Christ and to receive a blessing from the Metropolitan.

If you haven't experienced an Orthodox service, Vespers is sung at Canterbury Road on Saturday evenings at 5.30 pm and the Liturgy (usually in Slavonic and English) on Sundays at 10.30 am.

David Duce

Church Opening

It is planned to open St Michael's again on Saturday afternoons during the summer months from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. starting on 1st May except on the following dates when there will be weddings.

3rd July: 7th August: 14th August.

On 24th July there is a booking for a circle dancing day but the circle dancers will be happy for people to come in and watch.

The church-opening rota will be co-ordinated by Jane Duce who would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to join the current team of stewards. We need to have two people on at a time for health and safety

Memories of Eileen Stockley

Eileen died suddenly in hospital on 16th February at the age of 77. Her funeral was held at St Michael and All Angels on 3rd March and was conducted by The Rev Canon Norman Brown. The affection in which Eileen was held was evident from the congregation of well over a hundred who came to say goodbye to her. Below is printed the loving tribute to Eileen given by Glynne Butt. I think we could repeat the remark made by Fr Peter Doll after the funeral service of another member of St Michael's – 'we gave her a good send off'.



Eileen didn't have acquaintances. Eileen had friends. Whether you knew her through church, through Bingo or through Keep Fit, whether you were a neighbour or someone who met her at the bus stop, dealt with her money in the bank or served her with a cabbage in the market, you were Eileen's friend. We are all here this morning because we had the good fortune to be one of Eileen's friends and it is a very special privilege to say a few words on behalf of us all.

Eileen never talked about her family and early life. The little I knew came from asking questions, but they drew only brief and reluctant answers. Eileen was born in Bournemouth and was taken into care at an early age. She grew up in a children's home in Birmingham during the war and by her mid-teens had been sent to the nuns at Alton Convent to be trained in domestic work. From there she came into the care of the Wantage Sisters at St. Helen's and was assigned to work at the Manor prep. School.

Life was far from easy and these years of living in institutions, however benign, inevitably shaped Eileen. She had a great respect for authority; she often needed reassurance that a decision she had taken, however trivial, was the right one, and she accepted direction from others with humility, 'Thank you for telling me,' she used to say. Her abilities were often underestimated - a former employer for instance was unaware that she could read - and I suspect that independence of thought and action were not actively encouraged.

So when Eileen and her friend Jean moved into a flat of their own in the 1970s, the adjustment must have been huge. It was not without its problems, but they rose to the challenge and Jean's early death a few years later was therefore all the more tragic. It was judged that Eileen would be unable to cope on her own and she moved to the more sheltered environment of Stowford House. But within a few years, changes in social policy saw her adjusting once again to life in a flat of her own. At first, she spent most of her time helping out at Stowford, still valuing its support and security and the company it offered, but gradually she began to blossom and her final move to

Trendall Place seven years ago began for Eileen what she regarded as the happiest period of her life.

I first got to know her when I took on St. Michael's choir in the 1970s. Eileen loved singing and was already a member. In those early days, we had a choir club after our Friday practice and Eileen joined in with enthusiasm, playing silly games, going ice skating or following a Treasure Hunt in the park. The children loved her, perhaps recognising in her a childlike simplicity with which they could identify. A photograph of a barbeque from that time shows the adults together on one side and a smiling Eileen in the midst of the children.

St. Michael's became the focus of Eileen's life and her loyalty and dedication were outstanding. She helped with St. John's Guild for the Blind and she served for many years as verger for weddings and funerals. It was Eileen's practice to arrive perhaps two hours before the scheduled time of a wedding or funeral to make sure that the church was open and just to be there to welcome anyone who arrived early or who perhaps needed a cup of tea after a long journey. While she waited, she sat in the vestry, trade-mark puzzle-book open on her knee, sometimes tucking into the fish and chips she had brought along for her lunch. Serving others came naturally. Anyone who coughed at a funeral might find a nudge at their elbow and a proffered glass of water and if there was ever washing up to be done, Eileen was the first to head for the sink.

Eileen loved people. She was never happier than when surrounded by friends and she was cheerfully grateful for any small demonstration of care or kindness friends showed her. 'You're an angel', she would say. Her natural generosity was such that it even needed gentle curbing at times. After a lunch at a garden centre to celebrate her birthday, I found her queuing at the till to buy ME a present. Eileen was a regular at Bingo, and seemed to enjoy more than the usual share of success. 'I was lucky again last night' she would say with a satisfied smile.

More recently, her circle of friends widened to include Val and the Keep Fit group. Their Wednesday afternoon sessions were not to be missed and even when she was no longer able to join in the exercises, attendance was still de rigeur. The surprise birthday lunch her Keep Fit friends organised just a few weeks ago, gave her enormous pleasure and she was overwhelmed by all the cards and gifts she received.

The other constant in her life was another Eileen, her social worker and carer for many years and they developed a close relationship. She relied

Continued overleaf

hugely on Eileen and, in her turn, the other Eileen gave in generous measure far more than her job officially required.

But perhaps the highlights of life for Eileen were her holidays. They were eagerly anticipated, much photographed and a source of reminiscences for months afterwards. She was well-travelled - from the seaside resorts of England to the Channel Islands, Austria, Italy, and the Holy Land. Her holiday stories were legendary. When standing in a slow-moving queue at German immigration, she chided the over-zealous official in loud tones. 'It's alright dear,' she called out 'we're all British.'

One added bonus of holidays for Eileen was being able to have a proper bath – her own house offered only a shower – and she would rise early to luxuriate in oceans of bubbles before announcing to the entire dining room at breakfast, 'I've had me bath.' Perhaps because she was slightly deaf, Eileen never mastered the whisper!

Poor hearing might also explain, at least in part, why she got some words only approximately correct! To Eileen, the holiday Jacuzzi was the 'oozy' and she once told me that a neighbour had to be careful about her sugar intake because she suffered from 'Ryvitas.' One of Eileen's favourite Easter hymns began with the line 'the strike is o'er' and several of her St. Michael's friends answered happily to names that were not quite their own. Eileen herself didn't always know what she had said that was so funny, but she always joined in the laughter, pleased to have given us pleasure. She had a great capacity for happiness.

I have often retold the story about her romance with a 'fitter' at a holiday camp. I asked her what sort of fitter he was. 'You know', she said, 'a fitter.' Well - a gas fitter? A kitchen fitter? A double glazing fitter? 'No,' she said with a touch of impatience. 'You know, he has fits.'

In the last year, as her health declined, life became increasingly difficult for Eileen, but that independent spirit, honed by years of living alone still burned strong. She had only recently agreed to have some domestic help and she dreaded the idea of ever having to leave her home and garden. With characteristic courage, she doggedly continued her Monday morning bus trip to the market, to Boots to collect her many tablets and to Stroll-In to buy whatever took her fancy that week. She was an optimist, still hopeful of a recovery in her health almost to the end.

On hearing the news of Eileen's death, a former priest at St. Michael's wrote these words: 'A wonderful character and a faithful servant. God grant us grace to be likewise.'

May she rest in peace and rise in the glory of her Lord.

Amen.

A Letter of Gratitude

In the last issue of St Michael's Messenger Fr Norman noted that during an interregnum congregations can be reduced by up to 22% but that at St Michael's the congregation and church activities had held up and even expanded.

Whilst this undoubtedly reflects the faithfulness of our congregation and the leadership of those with particular responsibilities, we also owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to all the priests, mostly old friends of St Michael's who have led our services during this long interregnum and particularly to Fr Norman.

He has given himself unstintingly to provide spiritual and pastoral care for us all, so much so that we have come to see him as in effect our parish priest! He has presided at our Masses, and at a range of other services, with deep spirituality, preached thought-provoking sermons (which take a lot of time and reflection to prepare) and made himself readily available to anyone who wished to discuss a problem or concern.

In all this he has been wholeheartedly supported by Rebecca – and they are supposed to be relaxing in well-earned retirement!

There will no doubt be a time formally to thank Fr Norman and Rebecca and all those who have supported us so well, but we feel we should record now our deep and sincere gratitude to them for all their spiritual care and warm friendship.

Pat and Hugh Ashton

New in the Church Room

At the standing committee meeting on 17th December Keith Bowman reported that the radiators in the Church Room were giving cause for concern, they were rusting and likely to 'blow' and cause flooding. It was agreed that these should be replaced as soon as possible.

The work was carried out in early January and we now have three shiny, efficient new radiators. At the same time, the radiator that had been in the corner on the south side has been moved further along the wall so that it is not blocked by the stack of folding tables. ♦

Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union meet in St Helen's Church Centre at 8.00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month.

11th May: Ken Smith will talk about Sobell House Hospice.

8th June: Wave of Prayer lead by Jenny Kelsey.

Traidcraft

Many thanks to all of you who have supported the church Traidcraft stall over the past year.

Since the retirement of Chris Caddy earlier in the year, St Helen's, St Nicolas' and St Michael's have joined together to become the 'central church cluster' for Fairtrade. Jan Lawrence (St Nicolas') does the sterling job of ordering and delivering our goods.

It is good to see more and more fairly traded goods in our supermarkets and I would recommend we buy them. Nevertheless, I would ask you to consider buying from Traidcraft direct or from our stall in church as Traidcraft do go 'the extra mile' in that they always support the growers should they have a poor harvest.

I urge you, then, to think back over a past campaign when we were asked to spend a minimum of £2 a month on goods from the church stall. This can make a big difference to the Third-world farmers and their communities.

Congratulations to Vicky Berry

In January we had news that one of our younger parishioners, Vicky Berry, had been selected to attend the 22nd World Scout and Guide Jamboree, which is to be held in Sweden during the summer of 2011. The World Jamborees are held every four years.

Vicky is one of four guides from Oxfordshire selected for the trip. The selection was done via two events, one of which was a weekend and interview in London which about 40 guides attended. Vicky and her sister Emma are members of the Radley Guide Company. For Vicky this will be an incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunity meeting people from across the world and

taking part in amazing adventures and experiences. During their time there the girls will be meeting local families who will act as hosts en route to the event.

We wish Vicky well with her preparations over the coming months. May

Congratulations to Fr Joe

Congratulations to The Revd Dr Joe Kennedy who has been appointed an honorary canon at Wakefield Cathedral. Fr Joe was curate at St Michael's from summer 2003 to summer 2005. From St Michael's he went to Selwyn College Cambridge as chaplain and is now Principal of the College of the Resurrection at Mirfield. ♦

Fabric

At this time there is nothing further to report on phase two of the reordering as the process has now had to be put on hold until the appointment of a new team vicar.

The congregation will be aware that the organ has been suffering while we have been basking in the welcome warmth provided by our new heating system. We have been receiving expert guidance which has already resulted in a noticeable improvement and we are currently optimistic that the problems can be overcome.

Carol Bowman

Dates for your Diary

9th – 16th May: Christian Aid Week. Market Place Sale on 8th May and United Service on 9th May at Trinity Church.

13th May: Ascension Day Sung Mass at 7.30 p.m.

20th May: St Michael's Fellowship at 2.15 p.m. Talk about The Home Farm Trust

6th June: Trinity Sunday Combined Service for St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas' at St Helen's Church at 10.00 a.m.

17th June: St Michael's Fellowship at 2.15 p.m. Talk by Cicely Bilverstone.

26th June: Three Choirs Concert at 7.00 p.m. at Trinity Church in aid of Christian Aid.

End Piece

Did St Michael's break any records on 17th January for the proportion of clergy in the congregation at a normal Sunday Mass? The Revd Professor Canon John Barton was the celebrant and in the congregation were: The Revd Canon Norman Brown, The Revd Henry Kirk, The Revd Christopher Seaman, The Revd Dr Paul Sheppey and The Revd Dr Simon Thorn. It makes one think there ought to be a collective noun for clergy. There doesn't appear to be one with the exception of convocation.

A blessing of clergy sounds fitting but surprisingly has already been assigned to the mythical unicorn.

A cluster of clergy glides well off the tongue but unfortunately has been earmarked for antelope and porcupine fish.

A parade of clergy sounds nicely dignified but the clergy would have to share that with elephants.

Back in 1995, a group from St Michael's went on a pilgrimage to Glastonbury and seeing the procession of clergy there, also pondered this question. They came up with 'enrobement'.

There are however, collective nouns for certain groups of clergy. A chapter of canons is familiar of course but a bench or Psalter of bishops, a decanter or decorum of deans and a prudence of vicars may be less familiar. ♦

From the Registers

Baptisms

24 January Conner Jay Lornie
21 February Adam Thomas Crask

Funerals

21 January Ann Elizabeth Elbrow
29 January Ronald Giles
3 March Eileen Stockley
8 March Eileen Joyce Ward

Useful Information

Team Rector:

The Revd Dr Charles Miller Telephone: 520144

Honorary Assistant Priest:

The Revd Canon Norman Brown Telephone: 553454

Churchwardens:

Mrs Carol Bowman Telephone: 528962

Mrs Jean Hercus Telephone: 527822

Regular services at St Michael's

Sung Mass or Family Mass (1st Sunday of month)
Sundays at 9.30 a.m.

Said Mass followed by light lunch
Thursdays at 1.00 p.m.

(except for the 3rd Thursday in the month when it is a Healing Mass followed by light lunch)

Evening prayer (lay-led) Sundays at 4.00 p.m.

Mass of Our Lady 1st Saturday in the month at 9.00 a.m.

For enquiries about weddings, baptisms and funerals

please contact Mrs Linda Barker at the Parish Office.

Times of opening are: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays
9.00 a.m. – 2.15 p.m. Telephone: 520144.

For enquiries about booking St Michael's church or the church room

please contact John Enticott Telephone: 523282.

Web site: <http://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk>

St Michael's Messenger was designed in 'Publisher' by Anne Gould.
It was compiled by Lois Rennells with advice and assistance from Carol Bowman,
David and Jane Duce and Jean Hercus. It was printed in the Church Office by Linda