

The LINK

SEPTEMBER 2023



**The Parish Church of
St Michael Braintree
www.stmichaelsbtree.co.uk**

ST MICHAEL'S IN SEPTEMBER

Dear Friends,

Firstly, I wanted to thank all who joined us for the “**God Loves You Tour**” event at the ExCeL Centre in London at the end of August. For me, it very much lived up to expectations with over 10,000 people gathering for some inspirational gospel music and a timeless message of hope, in God’s love, from Franklin Graham (Billy Graham’s son). Do please be praying for all who responded to the message.

In addition to our usual services, events and groups we have a number of things happening during September.

On **Sat 9th Sept**, we have the second of our **walks in the countryside** with David Birch & Ade Odupitan.

On **Sun 10th Sept**, we have **Rt Revd Dr Rob Munro, Bishop of Ebbsfleet** with us at the 10am service. There will be a lunch (please sign up for it) and opportunity to meet Bishop Rob. He will be Confirming our candidates at a 6pm service at St Mary’s Church, Henham.

Also on **Sun 10th Sept**, **Junior Church** restarts, and we will be starting a **new crèche** (for children under 3 years) in the main hall. All the children & young people, including those in the crèche, will start in church at 10am and go out together for their groups a short way into the service.

On **Mon 11th Sept, 7.30pm** we are inviting anyone **18-30 years** to join us for an “ice cream factory” in the small hall to update one another on what you will be doing and to explore the possibility of starting an 18-30s group.

On **Sat 16th Sept**, Women@StMichael's will be having a **Saturday School** learning together about the wonder of the resurrection.

On **Sat 23rd Sept**, there will be a **Men's Breakfast**, with Stephen Bailey speaking on the title, "Collared by God!"

Details of all of these events, and other things that are happening, will be on the weekly Notice Sheet. I hope you will be able to join us for some of these things.

Wishing you every blessing,

Nigel



MISSION OF THE MONTH

CROSSLINKS

THE KRALOVIS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, CROSSLINKS & US

St Michael's Braintree has a link with the Kralovi family. Jirka and Keira and their family live in Olomouc. This is a large city in the east of the Czech Republic. It is also a university town.

STUDENTS IN LONDON

This summer Jirka brought a group of Christians students to the Cornhill Training Course in the city of London. This is encouraging because like the UK, the countries of central Europe have jettisoned their Christian past. So, here were a group of Christian students called by Jesus Christ to trust and serve him in a modern secular society. God still grows Christians in secular countries, in nations that have turned their backs on him.

HOW DO THEY MANAGE IT?

If it is not enough to tell students about Jesus Christ, the Kralovis play a leading role in their local church life. The congregation is new. It began as a small group meeting on Sundays. Gradually they are growing. Their church life sounds a little like ours. For instance, the congregation had a weekend away. Like us, they have used the Hope Explored course – only in Czech! Unlike us in flat Essex, they went climbing. It doesn't take much imagination to grasp how busy the Kralovis are! Please pray that they will have all the energy they need and the wisdom to help both students and neighbours to hear about Jesus Christ.

NEW CHRISTIANS

Back to Cornhill in the city of London. Men and women in Olomouc are coming to know Christ. As we pray for our friends the Kralovis, it would be good to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for those who have come to know him, praying that others too will find the Lord Jesus Christ and go from strength to strength as they mature in him.

Thank the Lord Jesus too for Crosslinks who support the Kralovis.

Stephen Bailey - St Michael's rep for Crosslinks

COMING SECOND IS NOT BAD

The Lionesses just missed being World Champions by one goal. Second in the world of women's football is not that bad. But the look on the players' faces suggested that they had been knocked out in the first round! But, to borrow a phrase from another era, the girls 'done good'!

TRAINING & HARD WORK

The women didn't get to the final except by hard training and practise. As we know, they had to be physically strong (have you kicked a soccer ball lately?). They had to have the stamina to run for ninety minutes-sometimes more (have you tried running for an hour and a half, putting in every so often a sprint?). Have you listened intently to hear about your part in the team's tactics? Or studied how your opponents' play?

A PICTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Maybe there are pictures of the Christian life in how a team plays in order to win the World Cup. After all the Apostle Paul thinks of the Christian life as a race (2 Timothy 4:7). We used to sing

'There's a fight to be fought'
'There's a race to be won'

And it is a popular idea to think that if we live a half decent life then the generous God will reward us with heaven.

FAITH

If Paul thinks of the Christian life like an athletic contest, notice his next remark. He writes to Timothy at the end of his life, *'I have kept the faith'*.

Like the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, faith is important to St. Paul. We don't earn God's forgiveness by the good things we do. We receive God forgiveness by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Trusting in the Lord Jesus means recognising the fact we have a badness within us, which produces the wrong things we think and do. And that means that God cannot welcome us but has to reject us.

A PRICE TO PAY

Putting it another way, there is a price to pay for this bad heart we all have and the wrong words, thoughts and actions that we all do. That's why our Lord Jesus Christ said he came to pay that price (Mark 10:45).

Trust in Jesus Christ means praying to him something like this...

'Lord Jesus I am unclean. My heart is a spring of wrong things. You died to pay the penalty for them. Please forgive me and welcome me home.'

THE TEAM THAT WINS IN THE FINAL

After the final whistle, medals were given to the winners. God has a 'final whistle'. Our 'match' our 'game' will come to a close. God will look to see if we trusted Jesus Christ rather than how we rate our good works.

Stephen Bailey

A ROCHA – AN UPDATE

As a church, we at St Michael's support the work of A Rocha, a Christian charity that encourages us to care better for God's creation.

Please keep up to date with their excellent websites:

<https://arocha.org/en/>

<https://arocha.org.uk/>

To find out more about their work and projects, and volunteering opportunities. There are many interesting reads about the work of A Rocha at home and abroad and I encourage you to read them.

To whet your appetite here is an on-going project from France, about an incredible little bird (wingspan 70cm) with stunning bright blue plumage which travels 6000km each year from south of the Sahara to southern Europe to raise their young.

Conservation of the European Roller in France



In the Vallee des Baux, A Rocha France has been leading the way for many years to protect one of the most beautiful birds in Europe. The European Roller *Coracias garrulus* has stunning azure plumage and a wingspan of 70 cm. Every year they fly 6,000 km from southern Africa across the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea to southern and eastern Europe to nest and raise their young.

Once very abundant, the roller has declined by more than 20%, and is now near-threatened with extinction. Protected at the European level by the Birds Directive, its trade has also been banned globally by the CITES Convention, which regulates the trade in endangered species, since 2014.

An indicator species for good agricultural practices

The roller is an excellent bioindicator of sustainable agriculture. It uses natural cavities created by woodpeckers for nesting. Its need for large insects for food is not compatible with insecticide-intensive agriculture. Its use of wooded areas for nesting and open areas for hunting make it an indicator of agricultural mosaics. A charismatic and easily spotted species, its presence is accompanied by that of many other declining species that share the same ecological needs, such as the Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, and shrikes.

A Rocha's contribution to the presence of the European Roller

Since 2002, A Rocha France has set up a network of 50 nest boxes, planted hedges and installed perches in the Vallée des Baux de Provence. Our expertise on best practice for European Roller conservation is now recognized at the national level, thanks to the support of the Ministry of the Environment since 2010, and work is extending across France. At an international level, we have participated in several conferences, helped to co-write the European Species Action Plan for the conservation of the roller and developed partnerships with several universities and laboratories.

Our Scientific Manager, Timothée Schwartz, has written a doctoral thesis on the European Roller in partnership with the Tour du Valat Foundation and the Centre for Functional and Evolutionary Ecology.

His work focuses on comparing artificial and natural shelters to give recommendations for good conservation practice. This work is also relevant to other threatened species that use artificial shelters: reptiles such as the Ocellated Lizard, bats and other birds.

[Download the report comparing artificial nest boxes and natural cavities used by the roller](#)



[Read more about the project on the A Rocha France website](#)

[Watch a video of the European Roller](#)

Ann Mahood

SUNFLOWER TIME IN CHURCH HOUSE GARDEN



Have you caught a glimpse of the sunflowers on the wild flower bank in Church House garden? We know sunflowers aren't a wild flower, but they are a great food source, with nectar for bees and Autumn seed for birds, and the bank is the sunniest spot in the garden. Please pass on our thanks to members of Junior Church who sowed seed back in April, and Ken Sillett who donated the seeds.



The wildflower bank is in the process of being developed. After the initial clearance of brambles and nettles at a work-party last year, the cow parsley, green alkanet, ground elder and annual wild geranium flowered beautifully in Spring along with the bluebells. However, these had swamped everything else so are being thinned. The green alkanet in particular, pictured right, though the flowers are loved by bees, is extremely invasive, so needs rigorous controlling so it doesn't take over the whole garden! In their places other wildflowers are being added, including feverfew, wild chicory, and mullein, with more varieties to follow once the seedlings grow large enough to plant out.

We hope you have been enjoying the colour throughout the whole garden. We aim to also make the whole garden an oasis for wildlife in the middle of the town. We believe that it is part of our Christian Mission to care for God's creation, by developing a habitat that will sustain a wide variety of creatures.



The mallow bushes, lavender, buddleia, golden rod and poppies have attracted lots of bees, hoverflies and butterflies (red admiral, large whites, small whites and holly blues). There has been a good population of ladybirds, especially on the Lychnis. We've been seeing blackbirds, robins, wren, crows and jackdaws, not to mention wood pigeons, plus a squirrel. The garden is full of life. If you spot anything different, please do let us know or add it to list on the notice board just inside church house.

Estelle and Jonathan Wicks - On behalf of the Eco church group

FARMING SEASONS

August has delivered and there have been eventually some good warm dry spells which have enabled the harvest to go smoothly. The wheat yields look good and now everything has been gathered in successfully. Already, the cultivations for next year's crop have started and the moisture in the soil has helped these start well.



Often when a crop has been harvested it is good to cultivate the soil soon afterwards and create what we call a stale seed bed. This allows volunteer cereals and weeds to grow which we can destroy before we finally drill the new wheat crop

in October. It is much easier and less expensive to kill as many weeds as possible before the new crop goes in.

Next year's oilseed rape has already been drilled and the small plants have germinated. For these we need rain to help them grow quickly away from pests such as cabbage stem flea beetle, which eats the leaves and can kill the plant! This insect has become resistant to our pesticides and the chemical we once used has now been banned making this crop increasingly difficult to grow so the right weather after drilling is essential.

Away from the farming last Saturday we as a family joined the St Michael's coach trip to see the Franklin Graham, '*God Loves You Tour*', at Excel London. Like last year, the event was attended by thousands of Christians and the music and worship was fantastic. Franklin's talk was based on the Prodigal Son and he explained how we are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness. He also talked about the importance of marriage.

Adam Grove-Smith

Women@StMichael's

An extra Saturday School on

Saturday September 16th 2023

9.30am – 1.00pm in St Michael's Church House.

Time to reflect on the Resurrection

Resurrection is for Life not just for Easter

**There will be...Interviews, Songs, Talks, Reflection,
Discussion, Refreshments.**

And: A Sale of Second Hand Christian Books

(If you have a Christian book that you have read and would like to pass on, bring it on the day with, if possible, a note to say why you have found it helpful!)

Cost for the morning: £3.00.

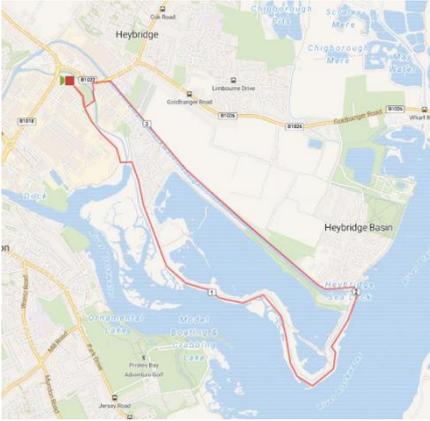
You are welcome to bring a packed lunch and enjoy more time together at the end of the morning.

For further details or to book a place, please contact Jennifer Bailey (01376 619347).

Women@StMichael's future events:

- ❖ **Saturday 14th October** Coffee morning & Sale of Preloved Ladies' and Children's Clothes in aid of Operation Christmas Child. Church House, 10.00am to 1.00pm.
- ❖ **Friday 24th November** Christmas Evening. St Michael's School Hall 7.00 to 9.30pm.

WALK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE



Join us on Saturday, 9th September for our walk in the countryside - a walk around Heybridge Basin/Canal. David Birch will be our guide. Everyone is welcome to join in - just turn up! Please meet at 10.30am to set-off at 10.45am. Parking will be at the rear of the Heybridge Industrial Estate (postcode: CM9 4ER) - please use the visitor car park or park outside unit 7 (we have permission!). There will be an opportunity for refreshments when we reach Heybridge Basin.

Speak to David Birch or Ade Odupitan for more information. Lifts can be arranged if required.



Meeting Point in What3words is [///example.reassured.animal](https://www.what3words.com/?w3w=example.reassured.animal)

On behalf of the St Michael's Eco Church team

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” (1 John 3:16)

One Sunday, believers arrived at a house church in the Soviet Union in small groups throughout the day so as not to arouse the suspicion of KGB informers. They began by singing a hymn quietly. Suddenly, in walked two soldiers with loaded weapons at the ready.

One shouted, "If you wish to renounce your commitment to Jesus Christ, leave now!" Two or three quickly left, then another. After a few more seconds, two more. "This is your last chance. Either turn against your faith in Christ," he ordered, "or stay and suffer the consequences."

Two more slipped out into the night. No one else moved. Parents with children trembling beside them looked down reassuringly, fully expecting to be gunned down or imprisoned. The other soldier closed the door, looked back at those who stood against the wall, and said, "Keep your hands up – but this time in praise to our Lord Jesus Christ. We, too, are Christians. We were sent to another house church several weeks ago to arrest a group of believers. "The other soldier interrupted," But, instead, we were converted! We have learned by experience, however, that unless people are willing to die for their faith, they cannot be fully trusted. "(From "Living Above the Level of Mediocrity," by Chuck Swindoll).

Wow. Can you imagine being faced with a decision to run or die for our faith? We are living in a day where this could very well become reality! But how many of us would be willing to stand?

Let's start deepening our relationship with the Lord today because when you come to a place where you are willing to die for the Lord - then how much easier is it to live for Him!

Supplied from "The Worthy Brief" by Peter Schaad

COFFEE CHAT WITH ROGER COOKE



Third Monday coffee and conversation

I shall be in the Quadrant cafe on **Monday 18th September** at **10.30am** so if you'd like to join me you'd be very welcome!

Looking forward to seeing you.

Roger Cooke

MEETING POINT - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Meeting Point will be meeting from September 6th until October 18th and then November 8th until December 13th. October 25th and November 1st are half term.

BELFRY BULLETIN

With this report covering the holiday season, service and practice attendance have been sparse. Nonetheless we have had some good ringing with some interesting methods to ring.

The tower was visited on Thursday 10th August by Roland Taylor of the bat Conservation Trust to inspect the bat population at St. Michael's, - so far we have had no feedback from this visit.

We have hosted three ringing events recently.

On Saturday 19th August 2023, the Northern District of the Essex Association held their Advanced Practice at St. Michael's, which gives the District members the opportunity to ring methods they wouldn't have get the opportunity to ring in their home Towers.

On Monday 21st August, 23 members of the Cambridge University Guild came to ring as part of their summer ringing weekend. The day before, Tuesday 20th August, the Golden Oldies were the visitors for their monthly meeting - 18 members enjoyed ringing at St. Michael's and were very complimentary about the refurbishment of the bells and the ringing chamber.

AWAY FROM THE TOWER

On the morning of Monday 1st August, Peter rang a Quarter Peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major with the Golden Oldies. In the evening, Debbie and Bradley rang a Hand bell Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Major with their Hand bell group. This was the 1st QP on the refurbished hand bells. Peter rang for 2 weddings, first at Black Notley and then at Witham.

Peter Smith

SEPTEMBER DIARY
www.stmichaelsbtree.co.uk

Our YouTube services can be accessed through the “St Michael’s
– Worship on the Web” YouTube channel and are generally
updated during the week after the Sunday service

2 Saturday

9:00am Church House Work Party – Autumn cleanup

3 Sunday

9:00am Next Plus Breakfast (14-18s)

10:00am Church Family Worship

4:00pm Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

6:30pm Evening Worship

4 Monday

7:30pm Bell Ringing

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

6 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point

7 Thursday

10-12noon Coffee@StMichael’s in church

10 Sunday

9:00am Next Plus Breakfast (14-18s)

10:00am Junior Church (3-14s)

10:00am Morning Worship with Bishop Rob Munro, Bishop of
Ebbsfleet, followed by lunch

6:00pm Confirmation Service @St Mary’s Church, Henham

6:30pm Evening Worship @St Michaels

11 Monday

7:30pm Bell Ringing

7:30pm 18-30s age group (Small Hall)

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

12 Tuesday

1:15 - 2:45pm Tiddlywinks

8.00-9.00pm First Priority Prayer Meeting

13 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point

14 Thursday

7:30pm Rose Hill Bible Study @Rose Hill

16 Saturday

9:30am - 1:00pm Women@StMichael's - Saturday School
(Church House)

17 Sunday

9:00am Next Plus Breakfast (14-18s)

10:00am Junior Church (3-14s)

10:00am Holy Communion

6:30pm All-Age Tonight

18 Monday

10:30am Coffee Chat with Roger Cooke @Quadrant

7:30pm Bell Ringing

7:30pm White Horse Tavern (Church House)

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

19 Tuesday

1:15 - 2:45pm Tiddlywinks

20 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point

21 Thursday

7:30pm Rose Hill Bible Study @Rose Hill

23 Saturday

8:30am Men's Breakfast @The Mullberry Tree

24 Sunday

9:00am Next Plus Breakfast (14-18s)

10:00am Junior Church (3-14s)

10:00am Morning Worship

6:30pm Holy Communion

25 Monday

7:30pm Bell Ringing

7:30pm White Horse Tavern (Church House)

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

26 Tuesday

1:15 - 2:45pm Tiddlywinks

27 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point

28 Thursday

2:00pm Oasis@StMichaels: informal bereavement support group (Small Hall)

7:30pm Rose Hill Bible Study @Rose Hill