

The Benefice of St. James
with St. Michael and St. Augustine
Beckenham



BENEFICE NEWS
February 2026

The Benefice of St James with
St Michael and St Augustine Beckenham
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
and a member of the Richborough Family



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JAMES
St James's Ave, Elmers End, Beckenham

 StJamesElmersEnd

SUNDAY WORSHIP

9.15am
Sung Parish Mass
followed by refreshments

Confessions by appointment or after Mass on Saturday

WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Tuesday - 7.00pm
Thursday - 10.30am
followed by refreshments
Saturday - 9.30am

**THE PARISH CHURCH OF
ST MICHAEL WITH ST AUGUSTINE**
Ravenscroft Road, Beckenham



 stmichaelbeckenham

SUNDAY WORSHIP

11.00am
Sung Parish Mass
followed by refreshments

Confessions by appointment or after Mass on Friday

WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Wednesday - 10.00am
followed by refreshments
Friday - 7.00pm

For Solemnities and Major Feast Day see The Benefice Diary on page 8

www.stjamesandstmichael.org.uk

From the Vicarage



Dear Friends,

As we step into February, I find myself looking back with real gratitude for the Christmas season we have just shared. It was such a joy to see so many people gathered in our churches across the benefice, familiar faces, returning faces, and new ones too, all coming together to celebrate Christmas. There was a depth of warmth and hope in our celebrations this year, and it was truly encouraging to see attendance up across all but one of our services.

January has also given us moments of fresh beginnings. Our first Messy Church at St James was a delight. As we explored the Feast of Candlemas, we reflected on Christ as the Light of the world who comes into our darkness. There was something quietly beautiful about watching children and adults enjoying food, being creative by designing candles, and sharing laughter along the way. My prayer is that this new venture will continue to grow and blessing to both our church and our local community. Our first Messy Church at St Michael takes place on 1st February, so if you missed out at St James's why not join us at St Michael's!

February also brings us to the threshold of Lent—a season that calls us to slow down, to listen, and to make room for God once again. Lent is never about burden but about opportunity: the chance to reset our hearts, rediscover grace, and walk with Christ toward the hope of Easter. I hope and pray that, however you choose to mark this season, you will find moments of quiet renewal and gentle blessing.

With my prayers and every blessing,

Russell

Christmas Services in the Benefice

We were blessed in the run up to Christmas to welcome so many people into our churches for the various services, starting with our Advent Carols at St. James's on 30 November, Christingle and Crib Services at both churches, Cafe Carols at St. Michael's, Nine Lessons and Carols at St. James's, and masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in both churches. Our thanks to Fr. Russell for all his hard work over this period, and to all those who came along to support the services.

On Gaudete Sunday our Archdeacon Allie preached at both services, another Christmas bonus for us.

In addition to the church services, our churches also welcomed schools and preschools for their Christmas performances. St. James's also hosted the Service of Remembrance organised by our local funeral directors, Albert Parr & Sons, and attended by those families who were approaching the first Christmas without a loved one.

New Year Meal at St. James's

Over the last years our new year party has given way to an evening meal. No more drawing, no more rummaging through pockets and handbags looking for items which we may be carrying, no more relay races or passing an orange from person to person under your chin. These were fun, but as we're all getting on a sit down meal has become a more suitable way of celebrating the new year. And the 2026 new year dinner was no exception. Thanks to Fern for cooking a most tasty chicken pie for us this year, followed by pineapple sponge. And there were seconds available, which were taken up by several hardy folk. Fern did all the food preparation, but we must not forget the rest of the Internal Affairs & Social Committee, those who set up, served and helped clear up afterwards. And, of course, all those who attended and supported the event.

Music for February



1st February 2026 - Candlemas

Introit: NEH 234 Christ, whose glory fills the skies
Offertory: NEH 338 At the name of Jesus
Communion: NEH 44 Faithful vigil ended
Final: CH 113 Christ triumphant

8th February 2026 - 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introit: CH 301 Immortal, invisible
Offertory: CH 398 Love divine, all loves excelling
Communion: CH 348 Lead, kindly light
Final: CH 738 Thou whose almighty word

15th February 2026 - 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introit: CH 215 God is love, his the care
Offertory: CH 379 Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour
Communion: NEH 313 Therefore O Father, we thy humble servants
Final: CH 745 To God be the glory

18th February 2026 - Ash Wednesday

Introit: NEH 67 Forty days and forty nights
Offertory: NEH 63 All ye who seek a comfort sure
Communion: NEH 72 My faith looks up to thee
Final: NEH 74 O for a heart to praise my God

22nd February 2026 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Introit: NEH 67 Forty days and forty nights
Offertory: NEH 65 Christian, dost thou see them
Communion: NEH 83 Glory be to Jesus
Final: NEH 64 Be thou my guardian and my guide

St James's Wall Garden

For many years, Barbara and Arnjali have been maintaining the various bays of the Wall Garden around the Church.



Now they wish to concentrate their efforts on the 2 bays nearest to the Main Doors.

So, now there is an opportunity for others to care for one (or more) bays...as they think fit...



Each bay is roughly 14ft long, a variable 1 ft wide and 1 1/2 ft high- so can be managed by most...

If you're interested, have a word with Geoff

Warm Spaces

The two churches are open during the week for anyone to pop in for refreshments, a chat, and maybe even some games in a warm friendly atmosphere. St. Michael's Church will be open on Wednesday mornings after mass 10.30 – 12.30, and St. James's after mass on Thursdays 11 – 12.30. Everyone is welcome to come along.

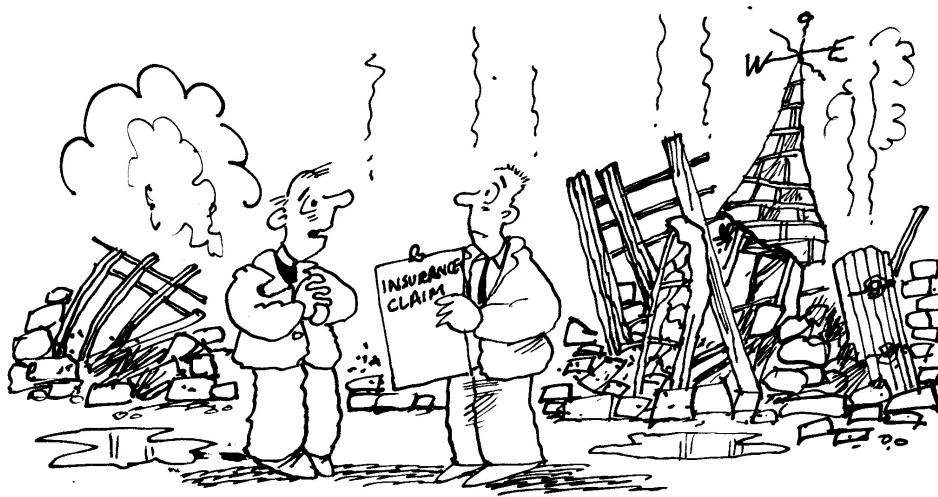


St. Michael's Epiphany Lunch

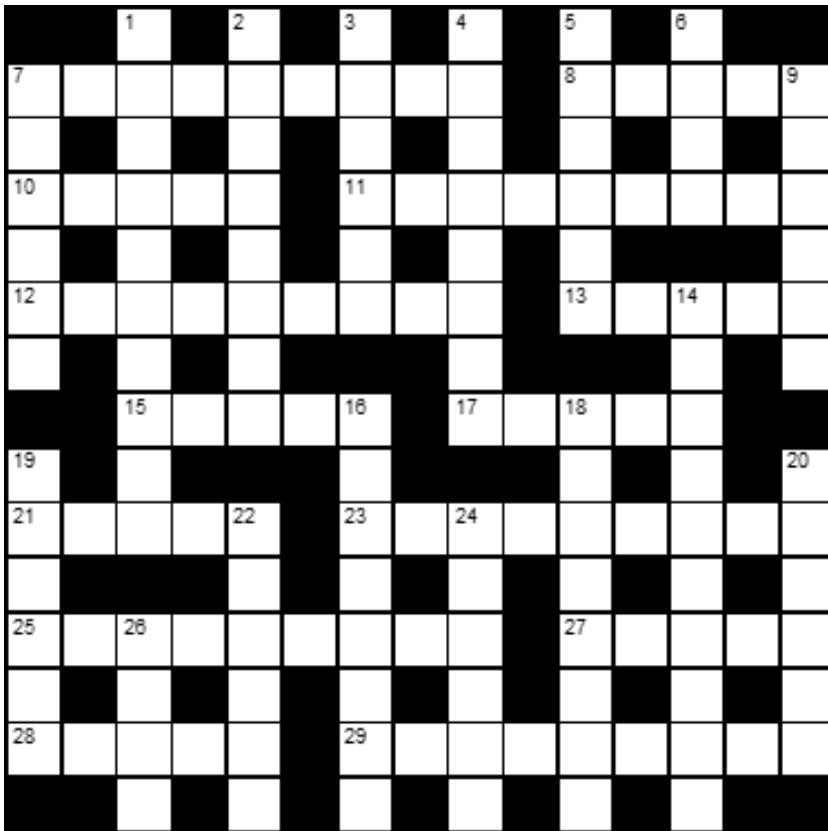
Our thanks go to Fr. Russell who cooked more than enough cottage pie for the Epiphany lunch at St. Michael's on 4 January. A selection of desserts brought by the congregation was on offer. A very pleasant way to spend a Sunday lunchtime. Thanks also to all those who set up and tidied up afterwards.

The Richborough Family News

Tuesday 31st March	Chrism Mass (12noon) Rochester Cathedral
Thursday 23rd April	St George Bickley (7.30pm) Patronal with Bishop Luke
Wednesday 6th May	St John's Higham (7.30pm) Preacher - Fr Jeremy Sheehy
Sunday 21st June	St John's Sevenoaks (4pm) Patronal Festival with Bishop Luke
Sunday 26th July	St James's Elmers End (5pm) Patronal Festival with Bishop Luke
Saturday 29th August	Aylesford Pilgrimage (12noon) Celebrant and Preacher Bishop Luke
Sunday 27th September	St Michael's Beckenham (5pm) Patronal Festival - Bishop Lindsey Urwin
Saturday 17th October	Richborough Festival - Canterbury



Puzzles (Solutions next month)



Across

- 7 After the beginning of February it's just unpleasant (9)
- 8 Conscious boxer is very English (5)
- 10 Start before eight get ill negligently at first (5)
- 11 Looking into IQ ruining eccentric (9)
- 12 Do away with by editing a timeline (9)
- 13 Something terrible among Warsaw fullbacks (5)
- 15 Mean and drunk (5)
- 17 Set back about papers may cause waves (5)
- 21 Unedited version gets a French trim (5)
- 23 Mad nun in game could become inconsequential (9)
- 25 We blogged about being bandy (9)
- 27 Card on vehicle (5)
- 28 Fight about iron may be found on the altar (5)
- 29 Guy or Leon may study nerves (9)

Down

- 1 Fish island, I see texted about language (10)
- 2 Series of links, not one, with some spice is shifting (8)
- 3 Place of Blixen's farm (6)
- 4 Inaccurately quote Len and be expressive (8)
- 5 Film with Irishman and Ian out of order (6)
- 6 The first couple in high finance may hear the music (2-2)
- 7 Great light was legendary (6)
- 9 Overwhelm elf who eats wild gnu (6)
- 14 Pole for a perch? (7,3)
- 16 Discordant bell in basket makes for plodding (8)
- 18 Mongrels run away from meadow goldenrods and finds unrequired workers (8)
- 19 Daily at the front causes atmospheric phenomenon (6)
- 20 After time, clubs in New York means business (6)
- 22 A possible explanation for Conservative inhaling helium (6)
- 24 Moderate spiritualist? (6)
- 26 Leaders of Women's Institute forever expecting a partner (4)

Sudoku

8			5		1	6		
		6						
1	9	7			2	5		
3		8		6				
				7		4	2	
	5	9			1	6	4	
					9			
	2	1		6		8		

The Benefice Diary

Sunday 1st February	Messy Church (St Michael) (4pm)
Sunday 15th February	Messy Church (St James) (4pm)
Wednesday 18th February	Ash Wednesday (10am Mass at St Michael's & 7.30pm St James)
Saturday 25th April	Themed evening meal (St James)
Saturday 27th June	Barbecue (St James)
10th - 12th July	Walsingham Pilgrimage

St James's Fellowship

Another wonderful Christmas party at the beginning of December when we were treated to a musical afternoon thanks to Penny. She sang all the old favourite Christmas songs. Everyone came along dressed for the event in Christmas jumpers and other bling, ready to join in the fun, which we did with gusto. This was followed by a sumptuous festive tea with sandwiches and cakes. For this our thanks go to Fern, who catered so plentifully for us all.



Please come along to the Guild Room on 6 February for our next meeting. The programme is 'work in progress', and we shall let you have details via the pew sheet.

For our 6 March meeting we shall be supporting the World Day of Prayer which will be held at St. Mary's Church, Shortlands at 11 a.m. This year's service has been planned by women in Nigeria, and will focus on Matthew 11, v 28-30, where Jesus invites us to find rest amidst life's burdens.

Poetry Corner

Flame of a Candle

By Nigel Beeton

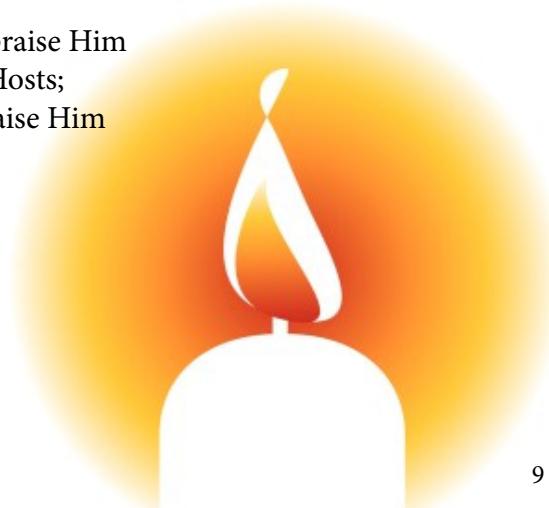
See the candle flame a-burning
See its flick'ring, dancing light;
See how it, the darkness spurning
Burns throughout the darkest night.

Light of faith, of God reminding
As His Spirit, long ago
Lit the first apostles, finding
Faith within the Spirit's glow.

Light of life – God's life eternal
Won through Christ's atoning death
Sparing us from Hell, infernal
Granting us His living breath!

Light of hope, in God victorious
For we know that He will win
When we'll see His flames of glorious
Vict'ry o'er the pow'r of sin!

Light your candle, kneel and praise Him
Kneel and praise the Lord of Hosts;
Let your prayers and praises raise Him
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.



News from 9th Penge and Beckenham North Scout Group



The Beavers, Cubs and Scouts all enjoyed some memorable activities towards the end of the year, with the St James's Christingle church service being a highlight for everyone. Thank you to Fr. Russell for making it such a fun and engaging service. The leaders also organised a Silent Disco as an end of term treat, which was a brilliant & fun way to round off the year.

2026 has started with welcoming 6 new starters into our group, and we are very happy to have the new boys & girls plus their families in our little Scouting community.

We will soon be taking 20 lucky children into London for a day trip to the RAF Museum in Hendon, where we will make & test a rocket plane plus ride on a Typhoon flight simulator. Navigating trains and tubes (plus a walk at the other end!) is always nerve-wracking but our leaders are well trained, so fingers crossed all goes well. Watch this space!

Also coming up this month, our Scouts and Beavers are both welcoming the London Ambulance Service for training sessions in first aid. The children will all earn their 'Emergency Aid' badges by learning what to do if someone is unconscious or bleeding or choking, and has a burn or an asthma attack ...such vital life skills to learn. Hopefully skills not needed for the RAF Museum trip!

Church bulletin notices that did not come out quite right...

Any church member aged over 18 can join our lay ministry programme. It requires a minimal amount of training and time. The first course is six weekly classes of about 200 hours each Tuesday night.

The Seniors group will have a picnic on Saturday. Each person is asked to bring either a friend or a vegetable in a covered dish.

Church Jumble Sale: All welcome. We can offer a gents three-speed bicycle, and two ladies for sale, in good running order.”

Our first Messy Church on 18th January was a joyful time of exploring Jesus as the Light of the World and making candles to remind us to shine with His light.



If you missed it, there are more chances to join in:

St Michael's – Sunday 1st February at 4pm

Lent Messy Church:

St James – Sunday 15th February at 4pm

St Michael's – Sunday 1st March at 4pm

All families are warmly welcome—come along, get creative, and grow in faith together!



St James's Quiz Night

Saturday 14 March

6.30 p.m. for a prompt 7.00 p.m. start

St. James's Church Hall

Teams of up to 8 people

Tickets £8 from Jan 07939 088820

Beginning of Lent – Ash Wednesday

Lent begins this year on Ash Wednesday, 18th February.

We will be holding two Masses to mark the day:

10:00am – Said Mass at St Michael's

7:30pm – Sung Mass at St James's

Many of us fast during Lent. It seems that the kind of fast you undertake may be connected to your denomination. A recent survey found the following:

94% Black Majority Churchgoers give up all food for a set time.

85% of Orthodox churchgoers cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

83% of Pentecostal churches give up all food for a set time.

79% of Roman Catholics cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

76% of New Churches give up all food for a set time.

57% of C of E cut out specific foods and/or drinks

30% or less of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

Solutions to Novembers Puzzles

Across: 1 Precis, 4 Satrap, 9 Spat, 10 Abandoning, 11 Priorities, 12 Tong, 13 Extra, 14 Gadabout, 16 Air fryer, 19 Samoa, 21 Abel, 22 Eliminated, 24 Troopships, 25 Ugly, 26 Hassle, 27 Advent.

Down: 1 Paper, 2 Eats out, 3 Imaginary, 5 Aides, 6 Ring tab, 7 Peninsula, 8 Baking, 13 Edinburgh, 15 Dismissed, 17 Fellows, 18 Raisin, 20 Measure, 22 Easel, 23 Éclat.

5	4	9	6	2	3	1	8	7
7	1	3	9	5	8	6	2	4
8	6	2	4	1	7	5	9	3
2	7	1	8	3	5	4	6	9
6	3	4	7	9	1	2	5	8
9	5	8	2	4	6	3	7	1
4	2	7	1	6	9	8	3	5
1	8	5	3	7	2	9	4	6
3	9	6	5	8	4	7	1	2

St. Valentine's Day

We all know that Valentine's Day is celebrated annually on 14 February, honouring a martyr named Valentine. Over the years this has become a commercial celebration of love. How much about St. Valentine and the customs associated with him do you know?

1. Valentine was the name given to which kind of early Christian?
2. According to *Legenda Aurea*, or *The Golden Legend*, a fictional work written by Jacobus de Voragine around 1260 AD, who wrote the very first Valentine's message on the eve of his execution?
3. Whom did the fictional St. Valentine send his message to?
4. As well as being the unofficial patron saint of love, what occupation is St Valentine also believed to be patron of?
5. For what was the fictional St. Valentine being executed?
6. What had St. Valentine allegedly done for his jailer's daughter?
7. Who was the legendary Benedictine monk who invented champagne?
8. Which was Shakespeare's most romantic play?
9. What kind of flowers are traditionally given to symbolise love?
10. What other gift sometimes accompanies the flowers?
11. Which Roman god was either depicted as a plump cherub with a bow and arrow, or as a handsome teenager?
12. Which Roman goddess was his mother?
13. If you're quick to show your feelings, where do you wear your heart?
14. In Japan, what do women give men on Valentine's Day?
15. Today we associate love with the heart, but this wasn't always the case. In mediaeval times which internal organ was believed to cause love?
16. Which Shakespeare play features Valentine and Proteus?
17. What is the approximate date of the first Valentine ever sent?
18. Who led the Chicago gangsters behind the St Valentine's Day Massacre in 1929?
19. What was the name of the small heart-shaped sweets manufactured by Swizzel, which had short romantic messages printed on them?
20. In the 18th century sailors used to give their wives and girlfriends a 'busk Valentine'. What was this?

DIRECTORY

Vicar:	Fr. Russell Stagg SSC	020 8402 2712 07526 621232
Email: vicar@stjamesandstmichael.org.uk		
Churchwardens:		
St. James's	Gwen Binnie	020 8650 0342
St. Michael's	Matthieu Philippault	07838 146467
	Email: office.stmichaelbeckenham@gmail.com	
Benefice Administrator	Jo Perry	07838 146467
	Email: office.stjamesbeckenham@gmail.com	
	Email: office.stmichaelbeckenham@gmail.com	
Hall bookings	Jo Perry	07838 146467
St. James's Fellowship	First Friday of each month Guild Room 2.00pm-3.30pm	
Brownie Guides	6th Beckenham Tuesday in the Hall 6.15pm-7.45pm Alison Mansfield	020 8658 1680
Guides	6th Beckenham Friday in the Hall 7pm-8.30pm Alison Mansfield	020 8658 1680
Beavers	Thursday in the Lecture Room 6.30pm-7.45pm Claudia Gotor-Pedreros	claudiagotor@gmail.com
Cub Scouts	Thursday in the Hall 6.30pm-7.45pm Sue Guckian	sueguckian@gmail.com
Scouts	Thursday in the Hall 7.45pm-9.00pm Jaime Griffiths	jaimegriffiths@hotmail.co.uk
All Beaver/Cub/Scout enquiries to Group Scout Leader 9thpbnbeavers@gmail.com		
Pre-School	Jenny Strudwick	020 8249 8386