

FROM THE VICARAGE

DR. MICHAEL HAMILTON OBE

17th February 1923 – 17th November 2019

Dr Michael Hamilton, a Feering resident for over thirty years, died on Sunday 17th November, having reached the grand age of 96. Michael was a senior heart consultant for many years, practising in mid and north Essex, based mainly at Chelmsford and Maldon. He began training as a young man in his twenties so it can rightly be said that he was there at the birth of the National Health Service in 1945.

Michael had a remarkably full and productive life and helped thousands of patients during his many decades in the NHS, saving many lives in his time. He had a fund of wonderfully funny, entertaining and often enlightening stories from a lifetime's work. He was justly proud of what he had achieved but there was a genuine sense of humility about him too – he happily told stories against himself, and it's not going too far to say that he saw his work as the living out of a vocation of service to others. For his services to medicine he was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and then an OBE in the 1987 New Year's Honours.

For many years Michael was a regular worshipper at the early Sunday morning Communion service, first at Feering Church and then at St Mary's Kelvedon. By the time I arrived in 2014 he was no longer able to attend, so I and others would bring Communion to him. He was a man of genuine faith and I know how much it meant for him to receive Communion. He was a kind, gentle, thoughtful and funny man, and I was privileged to have known him. He was also known and loved by many in our two villages and will be much missed.

Michael's funeral will be in All Saints' Feering, although the date had not been confirmed at the time of going to print. We will inform everyone as soon as we know.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord,
and let light perpetual shine upon him.
May he rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Last month it was almost as if the weather knew by instinct that it was November – the temperature dropped very quickly when the month began. Along with the clocks changing, it seemed by the time Remembrance Sunday was past that autumn had gone and winter was already upon us.

Such wintry weather makes our Advent preparations and Christmas celebrations that much more welcome. We have the usual packed December in the Benefice, with all services and events in both churches listed nearby! Along with all of these, there will also be a Christingle service at Feering Primary School on Monday 9th December and the annual school Carol Service in church on Wednesday 18th December.

I'm pleased to report that Feering will again have a tree at St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival – you may know that we are fundraising for the alterations to our organ through our 'Sponsor a Pipe' campaign. We will be highlighting this via our tree, which will be decorated by many little organ pipes of very varied design! If you've never been to the Christmas Tree Festival, then I do urge you to go: it is one of the highlights of the year in our two villages.

There's also something new at St Mary's on Saturday 21st December: a '**Blue Christmas' Service at 4.00 pm**. Noting the weather isn't trivial: some dread the winter months and the shorter, darker days; many dread Christmas itself. For too many people it's a very difficult time indeed, due to loneliness, illness, bereavement or family breakdown, to name just a few reasons.

'Blue Christmas' (also known as 'Quiet Christmas') services have increased over the last few years. They are quiet, reflective services which face the difficulty and pain the season can bring, yet still offer the light and hope of Christmas. We're offering a short 30-40 minute service, with time to sit and reflect, and light a candle if you wish. There will be readings, prayers and some of the quieter, more reflective carols, but there will be no pressure to sing if you'd rather just sit and be.

We chose Saturday 21st as it's the shortest day of the year. The often the enforced jollity of our modern consumer-led, commercialized Christmas can be a real burden for some. This service is meant to be different: still clearly an act of worship but purposefully different from the usual Christmas celebrations. Those who came to our 'In Loving Memory' bereavement service back in November may find it particularly helpful, but it's not exclusive. If you find Christmas a strain at times, even if it doesn't make you feel 'blue', then this may be right for you.

The Christmas story itself isn't unalloyed joy – the birth itself must have been very difficult and painful for Mary (no hospitals or anaesthetic in those days!); there is real fear and terror in the holy family's hurried flight into Egypt to escape the murderous wrath of King Herod, unleashed without pity on the hapless children of Bethlehem. In our own day we have seen too many young children maimed and killed in that part of the world.

Mary, Joseph and the Christ-child knew what it was to be at the mercy of powerful forces beyond their control – forced to go and register in Bethlehem, at the other end of the country to Nazareth, and then having to flee to Egypt to escape Herod. Yet the God revealed in the infant Christ is still the God who comes to, gets intimately involved with and caught up in the mess of the world as it is, and who seeks to save and redeem it. The adult Jesus himself was at the mercy of powerful and violent forces as he went to the cross, but through his whole story the love of God for our broken world shines through. May you sense that love and be illumined by that light in this winter dark.

With every blessing for Advent, Christmas, and for the New Year,

From your Parish Priest,

Simon

Tel. 01376 573701 Email: simongarwood@simonliz62.plus.com

The Vicarage, Church Street, Kelvedon, CO5 9AL

From the Parish Registers, November 2019

Wedding *We send our congratulations to:*

8 November – Katherine Louise Morgan and David Jonathan Cosey

Baptism *We send our congratulations to the parents and family of:*

10 November – Freddie Samuel Walkden

Funeral *We offer our prayers and condolences to the families and friends of:*

CHURCH SERVICES for DECEMBER 2019

SUNDAY 1ST DECEMBER – *Advent Sunday*

9.30 am Sung Holy Communion
4.00 pm Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* at Feeringbury Manor

SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER – *The Second Sunday of Advent*

9.30 am Sung Holy Communion

SUNDAY 15TH DECEMBER – *The Third Sunday of Advent*

9.30 am Sung Holy Communion
4.00 pm Christingle Service

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER – *The Fourth Sunday of Advent*

9.30 am Sung Holy Communion

CHRISTMAS EVE, TUESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

6.00 pm Carol Service

NB There is no service at All Saints' on Christmas Day

SUNDAY 29TH DECEMBER – *The First Sunday of Christmas*

9.30 am United Benefice Holy Communion Service

SUNDAY 5TH JANUARY 2020 - *The Epiphany*

9.30 am Sung Holy Communion

CHRISTMAS SERVICES and EVENTS at ST MARY'S KELVEDON

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL – SATURDAY 7TH & SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER

Church open Saturday 11.00 am - 6.00 pm & Sunday 11.00 am - 5.00 pm
The Festival ends with a short closing service on Sunday at 5.00 pm

SATURDAY 21ST DECEMBER

4.00 pm 'Blue Christmas' Service

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER

6.00 pm Carol Service

CHRISTMAS EVE

4.00 pm & 6.00 pm Crib Services

The 4.00 pm service is mainly aimed at families with younger children

The 6.00 pm service is mainly aimed at older children and adults and includes carols by candlelight

11.30 pm Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.00 am Christmas Communion Service