

ST MICHAEL'S  
UNITING CHURCH



# ST MICHAEL'S DAY 2021

## LAMENT, HEALING AND HOPE





## MARGARET'S MESSAGE

In years past, St Michael's Day was a festive occasion marked by sharing breakfast, gathering in procession, and joining in beautiful worship.

This year, we celebrate and we recognise the challenges we face – responding to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on health, mental well-being, business and employment, and on the social fabric of our city and our church.

More than ever, we seek hope that will sustain us as we dream of renewing connections and rebuilding community.

Stories told in the St Michael's Day Online Gathering and in this booklet, remind us that we are not alone. We journey in community, accompanied by the Spirit, calling us forth into a new day.

With this hope, and in this faith, we may indeed delight in this day.

Happy St Michael's Day 2021!





## LAMENT, HEALING AND HOPE

Naming the hard stuff, giving thanks for the healing  
found in kindness and connection,  
living into our hope for St Michael's future and for the  
well-being of our communities and our world.

Voices from our community as we journey on together  
(even while we are apart).





The theme for St Michael's Day 2021, "Lament, healing and hope" emerged from many conversations – among members of the Church Council – and among some of the members of the Contact and Care network and the people with whom they have been conversing and connecting over the past eighteen months.

In this time of pandemic, we have learned what matters most. Common threads emerged, weaving concerns and insights into a new tapestry.

*Vulnerability and resilience.*

*Kindness, connectedness, humanity and spirituality.*

We named what really matters for us as a church.

*Being courageously inclusive and progressive.*

*Finding inspiration to nourish the spirit.*

*Showing compassion. Seeking justice and peace.*

Our hope for the future of our church community is grounded in what we have found in ourselves during the pandemic, and in who we have become as an online and 'in person' church.

# LAMENT

*Asked about resilience and kindness, people first spoke of their struggles.*

*Our spiritual tradition recognises the power of naming loss and pain in lament.*

Health issues, medical treatment and appointments, that demanded focus and energy.

Family issues in various guises: mental health crises, deaths, with funerals via live stream.

'Sick of not going anywhere!' Inability to get around.

Missing personal contact: seeing, touching, hugging, talking, laughing.

Entering slow mode; a bit bored, a bit of reading, a bit of gardening, a bit of walking,

'Struggle Days'! Lockdown is difficult, other human beings, face to face contacts cut out:

living alone during the lockdowns has been

particularly lonely, regular activities cancelled,

anxiety, fear, helplessness, loss of connection, less money, jobs gone, trips and holidays cancelled.

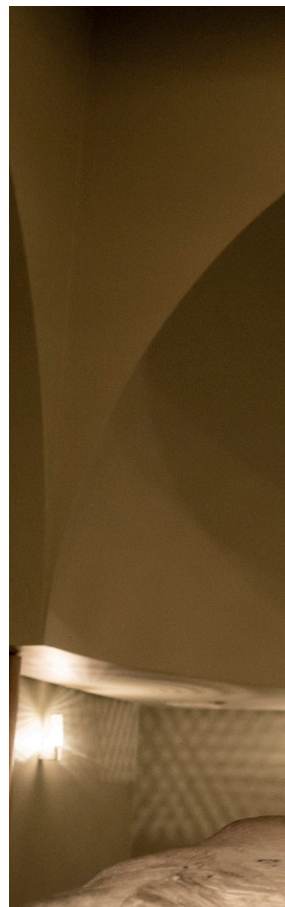
Over-watching news, over-reading Covid information, yelling at the television and politicians.

So tired! 'Angry about COVID (shouting!) - it's a real mess!'

Frustrated and angry with people who don't do the right thing.

Sudden lockdowns mean confronting 'the not knowing', the uncertainty of life.

Not able to return to St Michael's until Delta is under control. Missing the singing





# HEALING

*In being shown kindness, in experiencing connection, we develop resilience;  
so in turn we may offer kindness and connection to others.  
Through connecting, kindness and gratitude, we are made whole.*

## *RESILIENCE AND COPING*

Some art; some creativity;  
knitting for charity; mask making  
for others.

Watching the Olympic Games,  
inspired by the organisation and  
unity seen in the village,  
Joy!

Ahmed Kelly, at his second  
Paralympic Games, winning  
silver, recalling him as a boy  
visiting St Michael's with his  
mum, Moira Kelly.

A birthday in a nursing home  
celebrated by caring staff and  
other residents.

Driving to places with beautiful  
views, sitting soaking in the  
vistas.

In an aged care residence:  
watching St Michael's online  
service at 10am every Sunday:  
Five regulars, two in  
wheelchairs. Staff willingly  
assist.

Wonderful music and reflections!  
Physiotherapist supervised  
exercises, activities.

A library in the residence.

Walks around the block.

Enjoying the trees and birds.

Used to being alone, yet  
not lonely ...

Beautiful music, YouTube  
concerts and travelogues,  
wallowing in wonderful books!  
Remembering places visited,  
times and friendships gone by.

Acknowledging that there are  
others worse off than us.

A need to have empathy and  
humour and not wanting to be  
seen as 'a poor old thing'!

Deep gratitude for helpers and  
carers and grateful for good  
health care.

A workplace decision to  
take things a day at a time is  
resilience.

The workplace feels safe - very  
clean, masks, social distancing:  
happy to be able to work online.  
Wonderful walks close to home,  
where you could walk peacefully  
- previously unknown creeks:  
bird hides, ducks and other  
water birds. This feeds our souls  
and keeps our bodies fit.

Spring is coming, sunny days  
will lift spirits, gardens will  
flourish, birds will sing.

Vaccinations bring some sense  
of comfort.





## CONNECTING

Communication: Long phone chats, sharing via Facebook, FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, email.

Sharing that which would not have been discussed face-to-face, enabled by being one step removed, feelings of privilege to have participated.

Zoom Groups: St Michael's Zoom Searchers: enriching - reflecting on Truth, Justice, Compassion; Peace.

St Michael's Zoom Cuppas – relaxed, inclusive chatting and being - with. Wonderful support, encouragement and spiritual nourishment in Zoom programs – offering reflections and meditations on the different seasons of the year, knowing that the seasons continue regardless of pandemics, that one day all will be well.

Our Zoom group each week is helpful. We discuss all kinds of things, how we feel, what we are doing. It keeps us in touch with friends from St Michael's.



## KINDNESS

‘The Manager of our Independent Living Units regularly delivers afternoon tea to each resident’.

A country town Foodbank announced it couldn’t take further donations: storage areas were full!

Meeting and talking with friendly people in the street.

Checking on neighbours, preparing food and delivering it - helping with shopping, preparing a meal for someone on their own; sending or giving ‘care parcels’.

DVD and book exchanges with neighbours, when libraries have been closed.

Supporting others experiencing challenging times.

## GRATITUDE

Reminded by a friend to 'stay steady': an encouragement to share that 'steadiness' with others.

'Gratitude for many phone calls from family and friends, which help brighten my days.

I was really moved by a card I received from neighbours (a young couple) – "we are sending our love to you, especially during the lockdowns" – gestures by thoughtful people meant so much to me.'

'At the beginning of the pandemic we were approached by neighbours, whom we seldom see, to say they were happy to shop, or do anything else for us, we really appreciated their gesture.'

Finding some treats on the doorstep - a few sausage rolls, lemons, cupcakes.

'Neighbours call out across our street to see how each other is going. One neighbour gave us a container of her beautiful soup, when I was injured a few weeks ago. I was able to bake biscuits for another neighbour when she was injured. I love the fact that our neighbours are caring for each other.'

Last but not least: 'Emergency Rations', a box of goodies sent by priority mail with love.



# HOPE

*"Yet hope is necessary, for the one who hopes and sees the possibilities climbs towards the summit, ..."*

*Hazrat Inayat Khan (Sufi)*

'Keeping in touch seems to be the key to feeling hope.'

By maintaining the connections with each other through phone calls, emails, cards and letters, Zoom chats, the many kindnesses shown, the loving and the giving; the people of St Michael's are being 'held in hope' for the day we can freely come together again.

Hope walks beside us, our companion when we are lonely, our comforter when we are sad, our peace when we are angry and frustrated. Hope gives us the ability to see that there is a future ahead for us.

We hold to hope in the scientists that they will continue to deliver us safe vaccines so that we may safely and freely move about in our communities again.

We hold to hope in our political leaders that they will lead us through and out of this pandemic to an economic recovery.

We hold to hope in our faith leaders that they will continue to walk with us and offer us nourishment for our hearts and minds and spirits.

We will gather once more around the Table of Remembrance and share the bread and wine.

We will sing without masks and we will surely raise the roof.

We will share the Peace with handshakes firm and hugs that bless.

We will walk along St Michael's Walk and gather in the hall for cuppas and conversation.

We will meditate, discuss poetry, ponder theology, we will, we will.

**HOPE** says it will be so. Amen.



There is Always Hope by Banksy







*In Essence...*

*We made space for naming the struggle.*

*The effort of sustained coping wears  
thin and is tiring.*

*Despite Covid and lockdowns, we can find  
and hold one another in the fluid spaces  
between selves.*

*A sense of community support, connection,  
care and kindness that built resilience,  
enabling flourishing despite all that has been.*

*A rich blessing to be shared with the re-emerging  
St Michael's Community.*

Many thanks to the people who have contributed  
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September 2021

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