

St Michael's Church of England High School

A Church of England Academy

Headteacher: Mrs Rachel Rongong BA (Hons) PGCE NPQH

Growing in Body, Mind and Spirit



5th December 2025

Dear Parents / Carers,

What a busy week we have had at St Michael's, with so much to celebrate once again. As we approach the final two weeks of the half term, I'd like to just take a moment to say thank you to all of Team St Michael's. Against a national back drop of illness, coupled with dark nights and short days, throughout it all, things here are different; staff pull together, pupils keep working hard and we feel the support of our community, and for this we are so grateful.

Last weekend we were delighted to host a brilliant event here at school, celebrating the power of music in education. We welcomed Sir Lindsay Hoyle, our local MP and Speaker of the House of Commons, who stepped into his famous role to chair a lively debate led by talented pupils from the Lancashire Music Hub. Mrs Hooley, Deputy Headteacher, was thrilled to be able to attend, and she very much enjoyed the spirited debate focusing on the importance of music in the school curriculum. Following this, guests were treated to a fantastic brass band concert featuring gifted musicians from across Lancashire; the event was a resounding success.

Monday, of course, was the day of our St Michael's Advent journey, connecting our Church of England primary schools. I've written a report about this at the end of this week's letter, as I want to focus first on celebrating all the other fabulous things that have happened at school in recent days.

This week's Worship took us through the wardrobe and into the world of one of our tutorial patrons, C. S. Lewis. Expertly led by 03 Lewis tutorial and Miss Bristow, we heard how 'imagination' was deeply connected to Lewis' faith and how the journey he went on to get there was anything but simple. Lewis didn't come to faith easily, struggling after the death of his mother when he was a child. We learnt how his friendship with Tolkien had been key to him discovering God, as he described Christianity as, 'a story like other myths, except it really happened'. Lewis wrote many well-known books, including some of my favourites- the Narnia series, which are full of echoes of the Christian faith. It was a really uplifting start to the week.



On Tuesday, St Michael's hosted a careers Fair, welcoming more than 40 colleges, universities, employers, apprenticeship providers, and volunteer agencies. Our pupils had the invaluable opportunity to engage with experts, ask questions, and explore a wide range of post 16 education, training and career pathways. Year 10 and 11 students attended during the school day, and we were delighted to welcome more than 100 parents of Years 9-11 after school to the event. The enthusiasm and curiosity shown by our pupils was fantastic and it was clear they left feeling inspired

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about their future options. A huge thank you to all the organisations and individuals who generously gave their time to share their knowledge and expertise - your support makes a real difference.

Throughout the season of Advent, we have the privilege of celebrating Eucharist each Wednesday and this week we were delighted to welcome Rev Sam Nichol from Brindle St James to lead our service. Taking place at lunchtime, it was wonderful to see so many pupils who chose to come and participate, showing such great respect. At this busy time of year, these moments of pause are so needed and so appreciated. We will have another opportunity next week, so do encourage your child to join us, if they wish.



On Wednesday evening our Archbishop of York pupils were beavering away with preparations for our Community Christmas Party. It is now an annual tradition that the raspberries and strawberries grown in our garden are made into jam to be gifted at the party. Mrs Ferson and Mr Sharrock supervised the pupils as they

zested and juiced lemons, added sugar and simmered the fruit – the smell was delicious! There will also be a raffle at the Christmas Party and if you would like to donate a prize they would be very gratefully received and can be left at the school office.

Thursday evening was possibly the highlight of the week, as we welcomed, our former Headteacher, Mrs Jayne Jenks back to school to join us for our Awards Evening. Mrs Jenks retired last Christmas, and it was wonderful that she could be with us for the evening as Principal Guest, to celebrate with our previous Year 11 pupils. What a celebration, and a real privilege that so many of our previous pupils and their families attended. We are very proud of their achievements and more importantly, the inspiring young people they have become. They and their families will always be a part of Team St Michael's, and we look forward to hearing from them in the years to come.



I'm not sure the sport ever stops at St Michael's! This week's news was sent over by Mr Holden,

Our Year 10 indoor cricket team delivered an excellent performance this week finishing as runners up in the Chorley tournament. After a win against Bishop Rawstorne in the semi-finals, they narrowly missed out in a close final against Holy Cross. It was a fantastic night with some good cricket on show throughout.

The Under 16s basketball team have put themselves in a strong position to qualify from the group stage of the Lancashire Cup, following a series of positive results this week, including an impressive victory against All Hallows. They complete their group fixtures tonight with a home game against Hutton Grammar knowing that a win will seal their passage through into the last 16 of the competition.

There was still time to award Gold Stamps this week, of course. We celebrated pupils in Year 7 for their work in RE (assessments and book reviews linking stories with Christian values), a Year 9 pupil for work in art, some exceptional attainment in science for Year 8, and Year 7 pupils who supported with week's wonderful worship. It is so important to take time to recognise these accomplishments; well done to them all.

This weekend the activities continue, as on Saturday pupils will continue their fundraising efforts for props and costumes for our production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. If you are out shopping, they will be donning Santa hats and packing shopping bags at Tesco in Horwich between 9.30am and

3pm; do go along to support them. Rehearsals are now almost daily occurrences, and we are becoming familiar with the strains of Truly Scrumptious and Toots Sweets drifting from the Hall. You will be able to join us between Wednesday 4th and Saturday 7th February 2026 to see the production, details of tickets will go out in the New Year.

We have a number of events coming up that I'd really encourage you to attend. The first of these is our community carol service next Wednesday at 6:30pm. We'd really love to see you at St Peter's Church, it's going to be a lovely evening, so do come along. Also advance notice that we close early for the holidays on Friday 19th December (1:00pm), so do ensure you have plans in place.

Have a great weekend, whatever you may be doing.

With kind regards,



Mrs Rachel Rongong
Headteacher



Important Dates

Saturday 6 th December	Pupils bag packing at Tesco in Horwich fundraising for production 10.30am-3.30pm
Wednesday 10 th December	Community Carol Service at St Peter's Church 6.30pm – all welcome
Thursday 11 th December	School Christmas Lunch
Saturday 13 th December	Hughes and Armstrong Choirs carol singing 10.30am-12.30 Chorley town centre and 1.30-3pm Morrisons
Tuesday 16 th December	Community Christmas Party - 12-1.15pm in school – please book
Friday 19 th December	End of Michaelmas Term – school closes 1pm – buses will collect at this time
Monday 5 th January 2026	Start of Lent Term

Advent Adventures - a Christmas Journey

I'd been watching the weather forecast for about a week, praying that the predicted torrential rain would pass over more quickly than anticipated, hopefully granting us a dry day on 1st December; unfortunately, it wasn't to be. So, on Monday morning, the support team (including Father Paul Robinson, Chair of our governors' Ethos, Staffing and Wellbeing Committee) loaded up Fr Paul's car with raincoats, snacks and St Michael's umbrellas; all that might be needed for a long and very wet day. Spirits high, Mr White, Simon and members of Hughes Choir piled on to the school minibus and shortly after 8:00am, we were on the road and heading towards our first stop, **Brinscall St John CE Primary School**.

It was barely light when we arrived, but we received a warm welcome from Headteacher Mrs Owen, staff and Rev Ben Clayton, as pupils who attend breakfast club filed into the hall. Hughes choir sang a beautiful rendition of 'O little town of Bethlehem' and 'Silent Night' and many of us felt a little

emotional as the first prayer of blessing was read, and the next handed over, before it was time to get back in the car to drive to school number two.

Originally, we had planned to start the Advent run from Brinscall, but the late addition of an extra school meant that we needed to delay running until Brindle, to make sure we could fit everything into the school day. The warm car ride was particularly appreciated though, as I knew it wasn't going to be quite so comfortable later on.

What a reception we got at **Brindle St James CE Primary School** from Acting Headteacher Mr Draper, Rev Sam Nicol, Rev David Ward, staff and pupils. Pupils handed over the next prayer of blessing and a handmade Christmas decoration for the tree for our next school and pupils held up signs with words of encouragement before singing Shakira's Try Everything (I won't give up) back to Hughes choir; what a brilliant sense of community! Sadly, I couldn't stop for longer, because now it was time to officially start running.

The rain held off for the 2.5 miles to **Clayton-Le-Woods CE Primary School**, where Headteacher Mrs Bashora was waiting in the school hall with lots of pupils and parents too. Hughes squeezed in to sing again, and blessings were shared before it was time for the off again, this time for a short 1.5 mile leg through the Cuerdon Valley to **Whittle le Woods CE Primary School**, where Headteacher Mrs Metcalfe was gathered with pupils, staff and Rev Philip Venables to greet us on arrival. The enthusiasm of all was contagious and I was even more encouraged to have two staff runners ready and waiting to join me on the next leg. Thanks to Mr Cummings and Mr Brooks for their excellent company as we embraced the 1.7 miles to **Trinity CE/Methodist Primary School** in Buckshaw Village.

Another rousing reception awaited us as so many staff and pupils were gathered in the school hall. Hughes were singing their hearts out once again, and messages and blessings shared. Time for a photo with Deputy Headteacher Mrs Corrigan before heading back out on the road and the 1.5 miles to **Euxton CE Primary School**.

Yet again, pupils and staff were ready for our arrival, (all thanks to the brilliant admin behind the scenes, with the support crew calling each school to warn them we were on our way). After conveying the next blessing, cheers erupted as Mrs MacDonald zipped up her waterproof to join me on the run to **Christ Church Charnock Richard CE Primary School**. A slightly longer 2.5 mile run to get there, so I was glad of the company and the chance to chat that made the time fly by.

The greetings just kept on coming; by now I knew the drill. What a joy to see Headteacher Mrs Brooks, so many children ready to offer encouragement and staff who buoyed us on with their infectious positivity! At Christ Church I collected Mrs Calvert for the next leg who chatted cheerfully and was so forgiving when I (momentarily!) led her the wrong way. It was raining heavily at this point, so I was very appreciative not to be on my own.

By the time we arrived at **Coppull Parish CE Primary School** 1.3 miles later, Hughes were ready and waiting to sing, and so too was Headteacher, Mrs Bird and our Diocesan Director of Education, Iain Parks, who we had somehow cajoled into running the next leg. After addressing those gathered we headed towards the door, collecting two members of staff who were also accompanying us on the route. These moments of connection made the day so very special, so thank you to Iain, Mrs Davison and Mrs Littler for your time and support, especially as this section was particularly wet.

Coppull St John's CE Primary School was 1.3 miles away, and as we approached our destination, we saw Headteacher, Miss Stone and pupils lined up against the fence cheering us across the line. Prayers were read in the rain, a quick snack and drink and then onwards to the longest leg (3.8 miles) which I was running solo. It was headphones in and tunes on, as I settled into the slightly longer run. I hadn't recced this part of the route prior to the day and after a couple

of miles, found myself in deep mud, wading through a river. After finally reaching dry ground, I realised my planned route then ran across private land and I had no choice but to call in the support team to drive me the mile around to get me back on track- lessons learnt!

Adlington St Paul's CE Primary School was next on the list and members of the School Council were waiting for us with Headteacher Mr Houghton. Time for photos and exchange of blessings, then back on the road for the 2.2 miles to **St George's CE Primary School**. As I neared St George's, the theme tune, to Chariots of Fire blasted out to greet me, and I was ushered to the school radio station where snacks galore awaited. Greetings from Rev Peter Smith at St George's Church, blessings exchanged and a brief interview, 'live on air' before Headteacher Mr Purcell laced up his trainers and headed out with me for the 1.1 miles to **All Saints Primary School** as 'Eye of the Tiger' bid us farewell. A joyous leg for sure!

All Saints welcomed us in with open arms, the atmosphere really lifting our spirits despite the less than perfect weather conditions. Fr Jordan Bentliff, staff and pupils greeted in the hall and blessings were passed from one school to another. Fr Mike Print then took on the mantle of support runner for the remainder of the day. We were also delighted to have Mr Marsden, an ex St Michael's pupil and member of staff join us for this 1.8 mile stretch to **St James' CE Primary School**.

I can't begin to tell you what an impact it had, seeing the effort that each school had made to gather and greet us. St James' too had gone to such an effort, offering me cookies and candy floss on arrival (just what was needed!); thank you so much to Headteacher Mrs Greenway, staff and pupils, at this stage your encouragement meant more than ever. The school was a frenzy of activity; the beautiful nativity scene in the reception area was set and the hall was full of stalls ahead of the Christmas Fair. Following a sugar refuel, Fr Mike and I headed out for the 0.8 miles to **St Peter's CE Primary School**, where once again we had an outdoor reception committee. Pupils lined up at the fence to cheer us on, paying no heed to the rain still falling! Having now crossed 20 miles on my feet, it was just what was needed. We exchanged beautiful blessings and collected the final support runner, Mr Gorton, who accompanied us for the next 0.8 miles to **St Laurence's CE Primary School**.

Hughes choir had been back at school for some of the afternoon stint, so to see them all waiting with Headteacher, Mrs Marquis, pupils and staff at St Laurence's was really moving. As the final blessings were shared, we heard, 'O little town of Bethlehem' for the last time as we left to run the last 0.3 miles back to **St Michael's** to close the loop and complete our Advent journey.

Thanks to every school that welcomed us, the Diocesan Board of Education, Hughes Choir, who sang magnificently throughout the day and, of course to the amazing support team.

Hebrews 12:1 so aptly says, *'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,'*

A magical start to this holy season of Advent, 23 miles run, relationships strengthened, and community built. For us this is just the beginning of a wonderful new chapter; we do not journey alone.