

St. Michael and All Angels

Anglican Church

The Diocese of Saldanha Bay



Our Mission

To honour God by proclaiming His Word in a spirit filled church, nurturing leadership, holistic growth, missions and care groups in a Discipling Environment

Address: Letchworth Drive, Edgemoed Cape Town, 7441

Phones: (021) 558-4139 or 558-8628, Fax (021) 558-0881,

E-mail: edgemoedanglican@telkomsa.net **Website:** www.stmichaelsedgemoed.org.za

RECTOR: The Revd Canon David Mills

24th March 2017

TO: ALL THE MEMBERS OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, EDGEMOED

A PASTORAL LETTER – LENT 2017

Dear Friends,

Greetings in our Lord's Name. I do hope that you are having a special time of Lent and that this season will be meaningful and precious to you. In the year 390 CE an intrepid nun by the name of Egeria travelled from her convent in Spain to the Holy Land. This must have taken many months and been challenging in a many ways. What for us and especially church historians is of great value is that she kept a diary of her experiences. The entries in this diary, particularly regarding her time in Jerusalem over Lent and during the time of Holy Week and celebration of our Lord's Resurrection, is of particular interest.

On Holy Saturday processions were held through the streets of Jerusalem, recalling our Lord's *Via Dolorosa*, or 'Way of Suffering', en route to Golgotha and His crucifixion. The period which we now know as Lent, which is modelled on the 40 days and nights that Jesus spent in the desert, was by then used as by the Jerusalem Church as time of preparation for those to be baptised at Easter, as well as a rigorous test of the genuineness of the faith those, who had under the pressure of persecution abandoned our Lord, and were now seeking re-admission to Holy Communion. Known as 'apostates' these people, following thorough preparation during Lent, were re-admitted to membership of the church at the service of Holy Communion on Easter Day.

In recalling our Lord's time of suffering and self-denial in the desert, we are challenged to use Lent as a time of personal self-denial - that said, however, in more recent times it has been the custom of many not only to give up something for Lent, but to take on an extra responsibility, or work of service. For example, fasting each week and donating the money that is saved in this way to a deserving cause at the end of Lent.

This year the Bishop has asked us to follow the Diocesan Lent Course, which all the parish Home Cells are doing. In addition, we have a group meeting at the church every Wednesday evening at 19h30. The Lenten Bible Study Course focuses on reflections by the Bishop on his 2014 Pilgrimage and extracts from the Diocesan Vision Statement – a very different form of study for many, I'm sure. Thanks to our Home Cell leaders for embracing this - I look forward to feedback on the experience after Easter.

Our recent annual Vestry meeting – on this occasion two reports were tabled, apart from the Budget and Audited Accounts, being the Churchwardens' and Rector's Reports. These are included with this email to the parish, for the wider information of our community and for those unable to join us at the Vestry meeting. Our warm congratulations to those elected to serve as Parish Councillors and Churchwardens – I look forward to our shared ministry of leadership in the parish and wider Archdeaconry. This year we have a slightly bigger Parish Council, which is of course augmented by the Assistant Clergy and parish Ordinands. I am pleased about this as, in my opinion, a bigger Parish Council offers more opportunity for greater shared leadership in ministry.

Formation of Teenage Discipleship Groups – so often the cry is heard, "The Church is doing nothing about ministry to younger people!" This, praise God, cannot be said to be true of St Michael's Edgemoor – we take this ministry very seriously indeed and the formation of ***Teenage Discipleship Groups*** is major component of the initiatives underway in regard to the ministry to and support of our young people.

That said, however, we need your support – when I say your support, ***I mean especially that of our parents*** – our young people cannot get to church without your assistance – you, as their parents, therefore play a pivotal role in ensuring that your whole family shares in the celebration of being God's Eucharistic people, week by week.

Holy Week and the commemoration of our Lord's passion is the culmination of our Lenten Journey – it is the time when, on Palm Sunday, having given public witness to our following in the way of Christ, we consciously enter into a profound time of prayer, vigil and reflection, on what it meant for Jesus to suffer, die and rise again to bring us into new life and eternal salvation.

While we are holding services on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of Holy Week and would love to see you on all these occasions, it is especially important to please join us on ***Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day***.

The details of Holy Week services at St Michael's are given through the enclosed poster and will also of course be published in our Pew News from Sunday 26th March onwards.

***A service for the healing of Hearts, Minds and Memories: Sunday 2nd April 2017:
09h00 Combined Holy Communion Service***

As many will know the parish of St Michael's has gone through some very challenging and tough times over past years. Since arriving and getting involved in ministry, as your rector, I have been reminded of this reality quite often, through ministry in our parish community.

Through prayer and discernment I believe that it would be right, as part of our preparation for Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the glorious celebration of Easter, for us to hold a service for the healing of ***hearts, minds and memories***. ***This will thus take place in the context of our 09h00 Combined Service on Sunday 2nd April 2017.***

Healing of hearts, minds and memories will form the special theme for this service, thereby influencing the worship songs chosen, prayers offered and the sermon, after

which there will be an invitation to come to the altar. Those coming forward will be offered ministry through (if they wish) the anointing with Holy Oil, laying on of hands

and prayer for the healing of hearts, minds and memories. The clergy, assisted by members of our ***Parish Healing Ministry Team***, will minister to those who come forward to the altar rail at that time.

I am hoping that this will pave the way for us, as the whole parish family of St Michael's, to move forward from the hurts and distresses of the past. My prayer is that God will lead and empower us to move ahead with joy and praise, into the solemn and deeply moving time of Holy week, coming to the momentous celebration of our Lord's Resurrection in Easter.

Please make a special effort to attend this service on Sunday 2nd April 2017, even if you do not feel the need to receive prayer for healing. Your praying presence in the congregation will be deeply appreciated, as this ministry unfolds. Songs chosen appropriately will be sung during the ministry taking place at the altar rail.

Yours in Christ,
Revd David Mills

The Revd Canon David Mills
Rector: St Michael and All Angels, Edgemoor
Dean of Studies and Canon Theologian
5 de Hoop Crescent
Edgemoor 7441
Tel Home: 021 5597898
Tel Office: 021 6558 3149
Email: deanofstudies@live.com

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