



# New Forest Edge Churches: Bransgore, Burley, Hinton, Sopley and Thorney Hill

## Services

8am Bransgore  
9am Hinton  
10.30am Burley  
11am Sopley  
3pm Thorney Hill  
4pm Bransgore



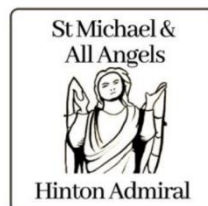
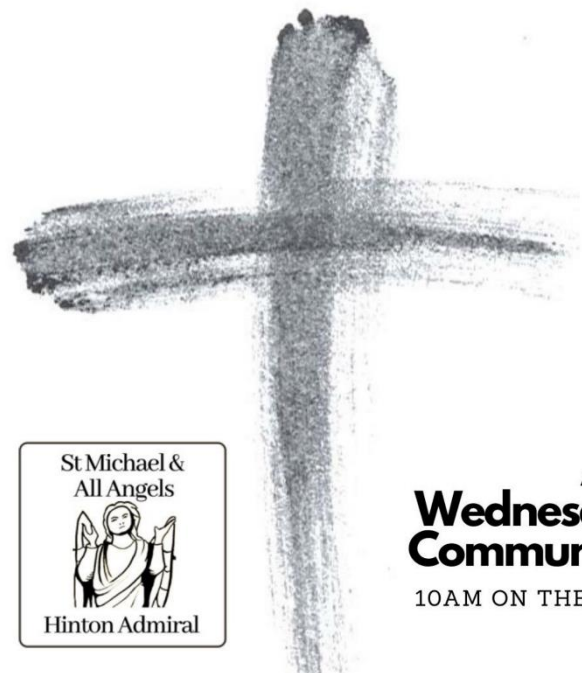
News for the 12th of February  
SEXAGESIMA

## Small people Big questions

26th Feb-26th Mar

- Who made God?
- Where is God?
- Why is God a man?
- Who is Jesus' real dad?
- Where is heaven and what are people doing in it?

Five Lent talks at Sunday services



Ash  
Wednesday  
Communion

10AM ON THE 22ND  
FEB



# Time Together

FOOD AND FRIENDSHIP,  
EVERY OTHER THURSDAY  
AT 12-2PM




## Sunday Night Prayers

Every week on Zoom: 7.30pm



Praying for our communities and the world

792 2620 5159 UCDqe4

# LIGHT LUNCH

With friends and neighbours  
Begins 12.00,  
2nd Feb




## Forthcoming Social Events



**Pancake Supper:**  
6.30pm 21st Feb.  
£10. Call 01425 273552

**Coffee Morning:**  
10.30-12.30 18th Mar. 'Rainbow's End', Park Road

# APCM DATES

Hinton - 26th April at 7.30pm  
Bransgore - 28th April at 7.30pm

## **So, what exactly happened at General Synod?**

There's an excellent shop in the middle of Cambridge where one can watch fudge being made. It's very entertaining and smells delicious, but it's also very dangerous as vats of boiling sugar are poured out onto marble surfaces. The General Synod (a legislative body with devolved power from Parliament to govern the CofE, of which your vicar is a member) was making fudge this week. Please don't believe the newspaper headlines.

**We did not discuss using gender-neutral language for God**, as reported in the Times, Mail and Telegraph. One very eccentric vicar asked a question about this, that's all.

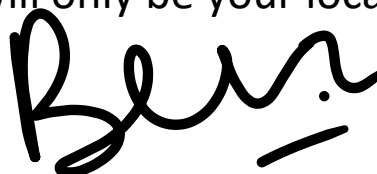
**We did not agree to bless same-sex marriages** either, though it's easy to get that impression. The Bishops proposed to explore the possibility of informal prayers of dedication for gay couples. They insist that the prayers are to bless the *people*, but make no comment on their *relationship*. It's a fudge. Same-sex couples should and do feel insulted by this attempt to look like something is being offered which, in fact, is not. At the same time, the Bishops affirmed that the traditional idea of marriage has not been changed, despite appearances. The trouble for them is one of maths. Synod is about 45% mainstream and 45% progressive on this issue and many others. There aren't the numbers of votes to keep things as they are or to change things, so a fudge was prepared. For eight hours, mainstream and progressive amendments to the measure were put forwards and defeated, like a boxing match between two equally strong and equally tireless opponents.

The fact of the matter is that there are **two distinct movements within the Church of England today**. There is a mainstream movement which stands with the teaching of the Bible, the history of the Church and the belief of Christians throughout the world: this movement has on its side the vast majority of young Christians and the largest churches in the country. There is also a progressive movement which takes its lead

from society and social media and which has the vast majority of senior clergy in the Church of England in its ranks. We disagree on almost every matter because our fundamental values are so different. The time has come to settle these differences in an amicable and loving way. By the end of the debate, a clear theme emerged and was noted by the Archbishop of York. We need to formally recognise that there are two ways of being Anglican in England. Work will now be done to bring this forward.

**Will we be having same-sex blessings here?** Like the majority of Christians throughout the world, I want everyone, gay or straight, to be deeply loved in our churches. I'm not convinced, though, that a case has been made to move away from the teaching of Jesus on this matter: that marriage is intended to be the life-long union of one man and one woman. I will pray for you and with you whoever you are, but I don't want to collude with the dishonesty of offering a blessing service that's not actually a blessing. The prayers are not yet legal (and probably never will be, since new prayers require a 66% majority of votes in Synod), so my understanding is that I wouldn't be able to offer a gay couple a blessing service yet, even if I was convinced of the need to change. Clergy have been offered a conscience clause in the eventual legislation so that no vicar or Church can be forced to offer (or not offer) same-sex blessings.

**Should I stop giving to my local Church** if I'm unhappy about the direction of the national Church? A number of people have expressed dismay to me privately on this. Your kind and much-appreciated giving to our churches goes directly and exclusively to our churches. From that giving, your elected PCC members decide how much to pay towards the Diocese of Winchester, mostly to cover the cost of having a vicar. None of your giving goes towards paying Bishops or towards the Synod, so if you change your giving it will only be your local Church which suffers. Please pray for the Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.