

Your Monthly Update from Earley St Peter's – April 2024

Thought for the Month *from the Revd Kate Wakeman-Toogood*

Henri Nouwen, a 20th-century priest and theologian, wrote, "If there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality. It is one of the richest biblical terms that can deepen and broaden our insight in our relationships to our fellow human beings."

The word 'hospitality' is one that may conjure up different images for different people, but in Christian life we can recognise it as something that we often strive to offer people, both individually and as a church. Here at Earley St Peter's, there is a genuine warm sense of welcome at our services and we encourage people to gather together after the service for fellowship. This is something we do well, but understanding hospitality from a Christian perspective is broader than being a welcoming church, although this of course is important. As always it is helpful to look at what the Bible says. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus tells people that when they hold a banquet, they should not invite their closest friends, or their richest acquaintances or the important people in society, but rather should invite the poor and those who are marginalised by society. In Jesus' day it would have been the lame or the blind, people who had to beg for food and who were seen as the lowest in society. Jesus modelled this in his ministry by frequently spending time with people who were often seen as outcasts or 'other': lepers, tax collectors and people from foreign lands, such as the Samaritan Woman.

We can always challenge ourselves as to how we can be better at offering hospitality more widely than our immediate circle of family and friends. Jesus told us that our neighbour isn't necessarily the person who lives near us or who is similar to us, but that we are to broaden our definition of the word neighbour to include all of humanity.

Hebrews 13: 2 is another key verse when we think of Christian hospitality. It says 'do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it'. This verse has echoes of two passages from the book of Genesis where first Abraham and Sarah in chapter 18, and then Lot in chapter 19, show hospitality to angels without realising they are doing so. It is an important message about the way we treat others. Some people may encounter angels unknowingly, but most of us regularly encounter people we don't know and we have no idea what is going on in their lives. I am not suggesting that inviting strangers into our homes is the way to offer hospitality in our community, but there is definitely something important about reminding ourselves that church is both what happens in the building and what happens outside the building too. The outreach of the church is so important, both locally and further afield, and we can offer hospitality by showing love and compassion through supporting charities, organising community events and ensuring that we show the love of Jesus, not just in church or to those we know, but in our interactions with all people. A word of hope or even a warm smile can make such a difference to someone. Also, it is important that we pray for people, including people we don't know. This is another aspect of our calling as Christians.

As I said at the start of this reflection, at Earley St Peter's we are very good at being welcoming, in our various services and also in the many groups that take place. I want to end by mentioning one new aspect of our hospitality which comes in the form of our drop-in mornings. Every Tuesday from 9-10.30am and every Wednesday from 9-10am, beginning on 9th April, the church will be open for people to look around, pray, or have a hot drink in our new coffee area. We also have a small library of Christian books which people are free to use any time.

With love and prayers, Kate.

Services and Events in April

We meet every weekday morning at 8.45am in the church for Morning Prayer. All welcome.

Tuesday 2nd April	11am	Holy Communion (please note change of time)
Saturday 6th April	8am	Men's Breakfast
Sunday 7th April	8am	Holy Communion <i>Readings: Acts 4.32-35; John 20.19-end</i>
	10am	Bread & Wine <i>Readings: Acts 4.32-35; John 20.19-end</i>
	6.30pm	Evening Worship Questions and cake with Kate (see below)
Tuesday 9th April	9.am	Church drop-in (see below)
	11am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 10th April	9am	Church drop-in
Thursday 11th April	10am	Thursday@10 – coffee and chat
Friday 12th April	9.30am	Church cleaning
Saturday 13th April	7pm	Quiz (see below)
Sunday 14th April	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Zephaniah 3.14-end; Acts 3.12-19; Luke 24.36b-48</i>
		Children's Church
	6.30pm	Evensong <i>Readings: Psalm 142; Deuteronomy 7.7-13; Revelation 2.1-11</i>
Tuesday 16th April	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 17th April	9am	Church drop-in
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
Sunday 21st April	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Genesis 7.1-15, 11-18, 9.8-13; Acts 4.5-12; John 10.11-18</i>
		Children's Church
	12pm	Baptism of Sofia and Teddy Taylor
	6.30pm	Reflective Communion <i>Readings: Exodus 16.4-15; John 6.30-40</i>
Tuesday 23rd April	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 24th April	9.am	Church drop-in
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
Thursday 25th April	10am	Thursday@10 – Kate Wakeman-Toogood, 'My Faith Journey'
Sunday 28th April	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Genesis 22.1-18; Acts 8.26-end; John 15.1-8</i>

Children's Church
Inspiration Group
6.30pm Evensong
Readings: Psalm 96; Isaiah 60.1-14; Revelation 3.1-13

Tuesday 30th April 9am Church drop-in
 11am Holy Communion

Midweek Communion will take place at 11am every Tuesday (please note the change of time)

Church drop-in: From 9th April, the church will be open every Tuesday from 9am to 10.30am and every Wednesday from 9am to 10am. Everybody is very welcome to come for a hot drink, quiet reflection or to use the new library.

Assistant Churchwardens: We wish to recruit more people to join our team of Assistant Churchwardens. To find out more about this role, please speak to Ann Sheen or Clive Nunn.

Donations: As we approach the end of the financial year, you may wish to know how much you have donated via the envelope scheme or by Standing Order. If you need this, please email mundayann1946@gmail.com, text 0789 999 2305 or leave a letter for me at the back of church.
Ann Munday

Children and Young people news and update: I am delighted to announce that from the summer term onwards, the Inspiration Group (for secondary school-aged children) will meet regularly twice a month, on the second and fourth Sundays. This group runs in the church hall from 10am with the group then joining the main church congregation later in the service. The first session will be on 28th April. Children's Church will continue to run every Sunday morning, except for the first Sunday of the month.

The new group, 'Questions and cake with Kate', got off to a great start in March with 12 young people attending and will continue on the first Sunday of every month at 6.30pm in the hall. The group is for any young person from year 6 up to year 11. It is an opportunity to play games, get to know one another, relax and also to ask some of the questions about life and faith that perhaps you haven't been able to ask before. There will be refreshments and I hope it will be environment which is fun but also a place where young people can explore their faith in an informal way.

The dates for future sessions are 7th April, 5th May, 2nd June and 7th July. *Kate*

Use of technology: We would like to begin a conversation about ideas for better use of technology in our church and hall. If you would be interested in contributing, please contact the parish office.

Electoral Roll: The Electoral Roll will be revised by the PCC beginning on 18th April. Please check the list in the black folder at the back of the church to ensure that you are on the Roll and that your address is correct. If you are not on the Roll, but wish to be, application forms are in the same folder. Completed forms should be returned to this folder. No applications to be on the Roll will be accepted between 18th April and the APCM on 12th May. The only exception is that a person whose 16th birthday falls in this period may apply and will then be enrolled on their birthday. A notice of eligibility will be displayed on the board in the lobby. The revised Electoral Roll will be displayed on this board from 28th April until the APCM.

Annual Meetings: The Annual Meetings will take place in the Church Hall on 12th May at 11.15am. At the Annual Meeting of Parishioners we elect the two Churchwardens, and this is followed immediately by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) at which we elect the Deanery Synod reps and PCC members. This year we will be electing one Deanery Synod rep and four PCC members. Anyone who has been on the Electoral Roll for six months or longer is eligible to stand for these posts. Nomination forms for all the roles are in folders at the back of the church. Completed forms should be returned to the relevant folder any time before the meetings.

Congratulations and all best wishes to David Jordan on recently reaching his 90th birthday. He celebrated with friends and family.

Pastoral support: Our pastoral team will be happy to hear if you, or anybody you know, would welcome a phone call or visit. Please contact the parish of office (0118 9668575) or Mary Brooke (0118 926 2153)

Food Bank donations: Thank you for all your support to our local food bank with donations of tins, cartons, dried goods with a long shelf life and also personal hygiene items. Everything as always is received with thanks and appreciation. Our continued support is still very much needed.

More information here: www.woodleyfoodbank.org

Dates for your diary

13th April, 7pm: Quiz in the church hall in aid of church funds with a contribution to Alexander Devine Hospice. Tickets £7 each. To book, contact davidweversham@talktalk.net or speak to Helen Price.

11th May, 7pm: Concert of Sacred Choral Music by the Erleigh Cantors (directed by Ian Westley) in aid of Earley St Peter's Church and Alexander Devine Children's Hospice. The Erleigh Cantors have been pleased to support our church and Alexander Devine for the last few years by putting on an annual May concert, and last year's concert made over £1,000. The themes of this year's concert are the month of May and music associated with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. (Suggestions for an eye-catching concert would be most welcome!) Please make a note in your diary and more information will be available in future newsletters. Thank you. *Maggie*