

## Your Monthly Update from Earley St Peter's – December 2024

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

At the point of writing this reflection, I haven't written my Christmas sermons yet. I don't want to give away too much of a spoiler as to what my Christmas Day sermon might be, but one example I've used before in various forms, and may use again, is to look at how we can learn from the different characters in the Nativity story. There was a trend of memes on social media a few years ago, in the form of cartoon drawings where various characters, often called Bob or Bill, pointed out really obvious things. They took the opportunity to highlight some of the quirks and idiosyncrasies of human behaviour, and the strap line was often 'Be like Bob!' Despite being light-hearted, they definitely contained truths that were both humorous and challenging.

At Christmas time we can think about the characters in the Nativity story in a similar way. What do they highlight to us about human behaviour and what can we learn from them? Can we 'Be like the shepherds' or 'Be like Mary'? Or can we at the very least look at the qualities of their characters and ask ourselves how we can be *more* like them?

I think with the Nativity story, we can get caught up with describing the characters in terms of their function and the specific role they play. For example, the Magi as gift givers, or the shepherds looking up, seeing the angels and hurrying to Bethlehem, or Mary and Joseph as 'mum and dad', and so on. It can be a little like this in our lives too, where people are described by their function, or who they are in relation to someone else. For me it would be 'Kate the vicar', or 'Kate, N's mum' or 'Kate from Birmingham' etc. Of course, all these things are true, as are the descriptions of the Nativity characters, but by describing someone in this way, it can be easy to focus only on their function and not on the qualities of a person; who they *are* rather than what they *do*.

In the Nativity, these qualities of character would have been what enabled them to carry out their role and would have also been part of the reason why God chose them for that specific purpose. I won't go through them all now and potentially spoil my Christmas sermon, but I would encourage us all to think about how these people, many of them ordinary people, became such significant parts of this extraordinary story and what we can learn from them. It's also important to remember that when we encounter people, we shouldn't be quick to categorise them in groups, because of what they do, where they're from, how educated they are or who they're related to, but think about those qualities that make them who they are, and remember that God made each of us, uniquely and lovingly, with differing gifts and qualities, and we can all learn from one another.

## Services and Events in December

We meet every weekday morning at 8.45am (Thursdays at 8.35am) in the church for Morning Prayer. All welcome.

Sunday 1st December	8am	Holy Communion <i>Readings: Jeremiah 33.14-16; Luke 21.25-36</i>
	10am	Bread & Wine <i>Reading: Luke 21.25-36</i>
	6.30pm	Advent Carol Service with Song School
Tuesday 3rd December	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
	12pm	Board Games and Lunch
Wednesday 4th December	9am	Church drop-in
	10.15am	Tots and Teddies
	7.30pm	PCC
Sunday 8th December	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Malachi 3.1-4; Philippians 1.3-11; Luke 3.1-6</i>
		Children's Church Inspiration Group
	6.30pm	Choral Evensong <i>Readings: Isaiah 40.1-11; Luke 1.1-25</i>
Tuesday 10th December	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
	1pm	Advent talk (see below)
Wednesday 11th December	9am	Church drop-in
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
	7pm	Advent talk (see below)
Thursday 12th December	10am	Thursday@10: mince pies and music
Friday 13th December	9.30am	Church cleaning
Sunday 15th December	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Zephaniah 3.14-20; Philippians 4.4-7; Luke 3.7-18</i>
		Children's Church
	3pm	Christmas crafts, Christingle-making and refreshments
	4pm	Christingle service
	6.30pm	Questions and Cake
Tuesday 17th December	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
	1pm	Advent talk (see below)
Wednesday 18th December	9am	Church drop-in
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
	7pm	Advent talk (see below)
Sunday 22nd December	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Micah 5.2-5a; Hebrews 10.5-10; Luke 1.39-45</i>
		Children's Church

	6.30pm	Inspiration Group Service of Nine Lessons and Carols with Song School
Tuesday 24th December	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
	3pm	Crib service
	10.30pm	Carols from the Choir
	11pm	Midnight Eucharist
		<i>Readings: Isaiah 52.7-10; Hebrews 1.1-4; John 1.1-14</i>
Wednesday 25th December	10am	Festival Family Eucharist
		<i>Readings: Isaiah 9.2-7; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-14</i>
Sunday 29th December	10am	Parish Communion
		<i>Readings: 1 Samuel 2.18-20, 26; Colossians 3.12-17; Luke 2.41-52</i>

**Advent 2024 – Exploring Religious Art:** During Advent, we will be holding study sessions looking at various pieces of religious art, led by Richard Miller. The dates are:

Tuesday 10th December, 1-3pm (including a refreshment break)

Wednesday 11th December, 7-9pm (including a refreshment break)

Tuesday 17th December, 1-3pm (including a refreshment break)

Wednesday 18th December, 7-9pm (including a refreshment break)

**Advent Sunday,** 1st December - last chance this year to buy Mama Nunn Preserves for consumption or gifts. Frilly hats available! New lines include two kinds of cranberry sauce (one with port) and Rusty Nail marmalade (whisky and Drambuie!). Many lines available to try on your toast when warming up with refreshments after the morning's Bread & Wine service.

**Confirmation course:** The Parish's Confirmation Service will be on Sunday 18th May 2025 at 10am.

Confirmation classes will be run for adults and separately for young people, which are likely to be in the 6 - 7 weeks running up to the service. There will be details nearer to the time.

If you or your child would like to be confirmed, please can you email Kate ([vicar@earleystpeters.org.uk](mailto:vicar@earleystpeters.org.uk)).

Children can be confirmed from school year 6 upwards.

**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. Please donate if you are able in the box at the back of church. Our continued support is still very much needed.

More information here: [www.woodleyfoodbank.org](http://www.woodleyfoodbank.org)