

Your Monthly Update from Earley St Peter's – April 2025

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

Quite soon after Lent started, I was speaking to a friend of mine who is a priest. I have always considered him wise; a rare and helpful combination of pastoral and practical, prayerful and measured. I casually mentioned what I had given up for Lent to which he replied, "Will that bring you closer to God?" I thought for a moment and the answer was "No". Of course, any sort of abstinence or discipline has the potential to bring us closer to God, but not necessarily. For example, somebody may give up chocolate as a means of losing weight, or give up cigarettes as a positive health decision. Somebody else might give up take away in order to save money, or give up social media in order to read more books. None of these things would necessarily bring the person closer to God, particularly if that wasn't their primary intention. These things *could* bring someone closer to God in unexpected ways, despite their initial intention, as God can work through all things, but my friend had a good point about my intentions for Lent.

Amusingly, after I had told him that I didn't think it would bring me closer to God, he asked me why on earth I would give it up, particularly as it was something I enjoyed! The truth is that fasting or giving things up for Lent isn't just about removing enjoyment from our lives, no more than it is about giving something up to lose weight or save money. There are lots of legitimate reasons to abstain from things, but Lent is about something more than that. It led to a helpful discussion and a decision that I would give something else up instead, and use the time I gain to do a Bible study, which hopefully *would* bring me closer to God.

This exchange got me thinking about how as Christians we do need to keep a check on our motivations and intentions. We're warned about this in the Bible, how it can look like we're doing something good but if our hearts do not have the right intentions, then we need to be cautious. Two people can do exactly the same thing, for example pray loudly in public, one with the intention of wanting others to notice how devout they are and the other through a genuine desire to connect with God in that way so that others around them would also come to know God. The truth is that only God knows the intentions of our hearts, which is why we should always try to be aware of what our own motivations are and also why it is so important not to judge others.

Something that arises from this is how we understand the way that people behave in worship. For example, some people make the sign of the cross in church and others don't. Some people make the sign of the cross at a number of points in a service, whereas someone else may make the sign of the cross on only one or two occasions. When it comes to our actions in church, kneeling or sitting, making the sign of the cross or not, touching the chalice when we receive the wine or not, there is usually no right or wrong. I don't believe it's helpful to get caught up in what others are doing, because what matters is the way we express ourselves when we relate to God. If a symbolic action has a meaning for us, and brings us closer to God, then it is a helpful aid for our worship. If we use gestures or symbolic actions in worship and we're not sure why we're doing it, or if we're only doing it because someone told us to or because that's what everybody else seems to do, then it's worth asking the question "Is this bringing me closer to God?"

I am very expressive in worship, frequently using symbolic actions such as making the sign of the cross or genuflecting, so I'm not writing this to discourage people and it has actually led me to develop an idea that I have had for a while; that is to have a Teaching Communion Service. This is essentially a normal service of Holy Communion but instead of a sermon, different parts of the service will have a short explanation about what they mean, how they originated, and the different ways that Christians may express themselves during this part of the service. In the past few weeks, two different people from church have asked me very specific questions about why people do things the way they do during a service of Holy Communion, and in one case I was asked which is the "right way", to which I replied that there is no right or wrong way. My plan is to lead a

service like this in the next couple of months and I genuinely hope that people find it useful. It will not be a 'this is *how* we do it' explanation, rather the opposite as the aim is for people to understand *why* we do certain things and why there are differences in Christian practice. It will come with an invitation for people to ask me questions in a follow-up study session at a later date.

I hope that this reflection invites you to think about how you engage with God and how you can grow closer to him, whether by making changes, doing new things, or carrying on as you are but with a deeper awareness of why you engage with God in the ways that you do. We all have things to learn and develop, so there will be ways for all of us to grow closer to God by thinking about the intentions of our hearts and the ways in which we pray and worship.

Life in all its fullness

These are the most recent details of our upcoming study groups and training sessions. This will not be posted in every monthly bulletin, but please do check our notice boards, social media and website for more details and updates.

Life in all its fullness: developing as a community

- 5th April 5 - First Aid Training
- 12th April - Safeguarding Training: Foundation level. 10am-12pm

Please note: You must have completed the Basic level training in order to do this. Priority will be given to those for whom this level is mandatory due to their role

- 3rd May - 'Leading Prayers of Intercession' workshop
- 28th June - Messy Church Leader Training
- 12th July - Holiday Club Leader Training
- 6th September - Being Mental Health Aware

All sessions will be from 2-4pm in the church hall (Winch room), unless specified otherwise. Please note, some of these courses will have a limited capacity.

Life in all its fullness: learning and growing

Lent 2025

- **Journeying through Lent with Luke: A short service with reflection/discussion.**
Tuesdays in Lent (11th March – 8th April): 11am-12pm and 7.30-8.30pm in church.
- **Holy Week and Easter in Art: Led by Richard Miller**
Three sessions looking at how, over many years, art has told the story of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection.
 - Session 1: Monday 31st March 1.30-3pm and Wednesday 2nd April 7-8.30pm
 - Session 2: Monday 7th April 1.30-3pm and Thursday 10th April 7-8.30pm
 - Session 3: Monday 14th April 1.30-3pm and Wednesday 16th April 7-8.30pm

Confirmation Preparation Classes for Adults 7-8pm in the Fowler Room (separate classes for adults and young people aged 11-17)

Wednesday 2nd April

Wednesday 9th April

Thursday 24th April

Wednesday 30th April

Monday 12th May

Saturday 17th May 1-2.30pm in church for a final session, rehearsal and refreshments, finishing with a prayer activity.

The Confirmation service will take place on Sunday 18th May and will be conducted by the new Bishop of Reading.

Who's who in the Old Testament?

Following on from our Women in the Bible sessions last year, this course looks in more detail at some more Biblical figures.

- Melchizedek: Tuesday 3rd June (7-8.30pm) and Thursday 5th June (12.30-2pm)
- Elijah: Tuesday 17th June (7-8.30pm) and Thursday 19th June (12.30-2pm)
- TBC: Tuesday 8th July (7-8.30pm) and Thursday 10th July (12.30-2pm)
- TBC: Tuesday 15th July (7-8.30pm) and Friday 17th July (12.30-2pm)

Eve in Art: Led by Richard Miller

Tuesday 9th September

The session will take place from 1-3pm and will be repeated from 7-9pm.

'Introduction to Matthew's Gospel' *In preparation for the new church liturgical year (Year A).*

Session 1: Saturday 15th November 2-4pm

Session 2: Saturday 22nd November 2-4pm

Services and Events in April

We meet every weekday morning at 8.45am (Fridays at 8.30am) in the church for Morning Prayer. All welcome.

Tuesday 1st April	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Journeying through Lent with Luke: A short service with reflection/discussion.
	7.30pm	Journeying through Lent with Luke: A short service with reflection/discussion.
Wednesday 2nd April	10.15am	Tots and Teddies
	7pm	Confirmation class
	7pm	Holy Week and Easter in Art
Saturday 5th April	2pm	Training: First Aid
	7pm	Quiz (see below)
Sunday 6th April	8am	Holy Communion
	Readings: 2 Corinthians 5.16-end; Luke 15.1-3, 11b-end	
	10am	Bread & Wine
	Reading: John 12.1-8	
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
	Readings: 2 Chronicles 35.1-6, 10-16; Luke 22.1-13	
Monday 7th April	9am	Church open
	1.30pm	Holy Week and Easter in Art
Tuesday 8th April	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Journeying through Lent with Luke: A short service with reflection/discussion.
	7.30pm	Journeying through Lent with Luke: A short service with reflection/discussion.

Wednesday 9th April	9am 7pm	Church open Confirmation class
Thursday 10th April	10am 7pm	Thursday@10 – coffee and chat Holy Week and Easter in Art
Friday 11th April	9.30am	Church cleaning
Saturday 12th April	2pm	Training: safeguarding (foundation level)
Sunday 13th April	10am 6.30pm	Parish Communion for Palm Sunday with Song School <i>Readings: Isaiah 50.4-9a; Philippians 2.5-11; Luke 23.1-49</i> Children's Church Inspiration Group Choral Evensong <i>Readings: Isaiah 5.1-7; Luke 20.9-19</i>
Monday 14th April	9am 1.30pm 7.30pm	Church open Holy Week and Easter in Art Holy Communion
Tuesday 15th April	9am 11am 7.30pm	Church drop-in Holy Communion Stations of the Cross
Wednesday 16th April	9am 11am 7pm	Church open Holy Communion Holy Week and Easter in Art
Thursday 17th April	7.30pm	Holy Communion for Maundy Thursday with Song School
Friday 18th April	10.45am 12pm 2pm	Good Friday activities Good Friday all-age service Last Hour
Saturday 19th April	7.30pm	Easter Vigil
Sunday 20th April	10am 6.30pm	Parish Communion for Easter Day with Song School Festal Evensong <i>Readings: 1 Corinthians 15.1-11; John 20.19-23</i>
Tuesday 22nd April	9am	Church drop-in
Wednesday 23rd April	9am 10.15am 7.30pm	Church open Tots & Teddies PCC
Thursday 24th April	10am 7pm	Thursday@10 – coffee and chat Confirmation class
Saturday 26th April at back of church	8am	Men's breakfast with speaker from the Met Office. Sign-up sheet
Sunday 27th April	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Acts 5.27-32; Revelation 1.4-8; John 20.19-end</i>

Children's Church
Inspiration Group
12pm Baptism of Ronan Rogers-Hawkins
6.30pm Reflective Communion
Reading: John 15.18-21

Monday 28th April	9am	Church open
Tuesday 29th April	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 30th April	9am	Church open
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
	7pm	Confirmation class

Mama Nunn Preserves in aid of Alexander Devine Children's Hospice (£10,300+ raised so far):
Worshippers at the Bread & Wine services will know there is usually a chance to 'try before you buy' when enjoying refreshments afterwards. Do head over to Maggie's preserves table on Sunday 6th April to see what is currently available.

If you don't attend Bread & Wine services but would like to place an order, please contact Maggie (WhatsApp 07946 620560 or email maggie.nunn@btinternet.com) and she'll send you a current stock list and arrange delivery.

Electoral Roll revision: We are required to undertake a full revision of the Electoral Roll before the Annual Meetings on 11th May. This means that everybody who is on the current Electoral Roll will be taken off and will have to re-apply to be listed on the new Electoral Roll. **Nobody will be automatically added to the new Electoral Roll, so you must apply if you want to be on it.** You can apply by:

- filling in the form on paper: the form is available at the back of church and you can return the form to the Electoral Roll folder there.
- filling in the form online at this link: <https://earleystpeters.churchsuite.com/forms/lpxfmsqn> - link also in the email to which this newsletter is attached.
- filling in the form by scanning this QR code:



Please check when filling in the form that you are eligible to be on the Electoral Roll. People who are not on the current Electoral Roll are welcome to apply to be listed on the new one if they meet the criteria given on the form. **The deadline for applications is 17th April 2025.** If you have any questions, please speak to Niran Perera, our Electoral Roll Officer.

Annual Meetings: The Annual Meetings will take place in the Church Hall on 11th 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 there are five vacancies on PCC: we already have some nominations, but we are looking for one or two

new people. There is also one vacancy on the Deanery Synod. Anyone who has been on the Electoral Roll for six months or longer is eligible to stand. 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.

My ChurchSuite: Lots of people have now logged into My ChurchSuite and are enjoying exploring what it offers, including church emails, rotas, contact details and information about events. If you haven't already logged in, do take a look! If you didn't receive log-in details, or would like a reminder of how to log in, please contact admin@earleystpeters.org.uk.

The Art of Easter – images for Lent: There will be three sessions in the church hall to help us prepare for Easter:

Mondays 31st March, 7th April, 14th April – 1.30-3pm

Wednesday 2nd April, 7-8.30pm

Thursday 10th April, 7-8.30pm

Wednesday 16th April, 7-8.30pm

In these sessions, Richard Miller will talk about the Journey of Jesus through Holy Week as portrayed in religious art, and will include the arrival in Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, the trial, crucifixion and resurrection. Come to some, or come to all, afternoons or evenings! Join us to find meaning and inspiration! No need to book, but you may wish to sign up via My ChurchSuite so that the dates are saved for you and easy to see.

Quiz Night, 5th April at 7pm: In aid of Alexander Devine Children's Hospice. To reserve a place, contact davidweversham@talktalk.net

Confirmation course and service: It has now been confirmed that Bishop Mary, the new bishop of Reading, will be taking the confirmation service on 18th May. We already have the names of a number of people who would like to be confirmed but it isn't too late to add your name. Could you email Kate if you are an adult wanting to be confirmed, and John if the candidate is a child (school year 6 and 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

Dates for your diary

7th June, 7pm: Erleigh Cantors chamber choir concert in aid of Alexander Devine Children's Hospice and church funds. Do please make a note of this date in your diary. For several years this popular local chamber choir has entertained us with an annual concert, raising great sums to be shared between church funds and Alexander Devine Children's Hospice.

This year it's the choir's 30th anniversary and the guest soloist will be renowned Reading trumpeter, Mark Kesel. The programme will include a new work for choir and trumpet, commissioned to celebrate this milestone, as well as pieces for a *capella* choir/choir and organ.

Further details regarding the programme and ticket prices will be included in the May and June newsletters, and in weekly bulletins nearer the time.