

## **Your Monthly Update from Earley St Peter's – May 2025**

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

I'm sure most of us are familiar with the phrase 'can't see the wood for the trees.' There are many different reasons and ways that we don't see or fully appreciate what is in front of us. Perhaps we are so focused on individual components, that we fail to see the bigger picture. Perhaps it's the other way round; that we are looking at the whole but not paying enough attention to the finer details, or subtleties. Another issue we face is that familiarity can sometimes lead to complacency, for example, when we do or say something so many times it can lose its meaning, or we can fail to see things from different or new perspectives.

For these reasons, I think it's often worth revisiting things that we are familiar with, or exploring things that we would like to understand better. One example, in a church setting, is taking a step back from something familiar and looking at it in more detail, such as The Lord's Prayer or one of the Creeds. Taking a step back from something familiar enables us to see it afresh, and in some cases to change the angle or vantage point from which we view it.

It is also healthy, I believe, to listen to new and different perspectives, including on those things that we feel familiar with. This is not necessarily with a goal of changing what we like or dislike, what we believe or disbelieve, but different voices give us a wider context and perspective. Sometimes we may be challenged, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. An example would be the different types of theology that have developed over more recent years, often from people who, in the past, would not have had a platform from which their voices could be heard.

Our study groups in the parish are varied so that people have the opportunity to explore or re-explore the familiar, as well as looking at some topics which may be new to many people. I'd like to share an experience that I had during Lent at one of the 'Easter and Art' study sessions. As vicar, I often lead our study groups, and so I really appreciate having the opportunity to attend sessions led by other people, as I love to learn. Most of the paintings that we looked at were new to me, with a few familiar ones that I recognised, but there was one painting in particular that I saw in a completely new light. It was a painting that I had seen many times and that I would have said I am familiar with, but during this session my eyes were opened to see it in a completely new way.

The painting was the Café Terrace painting by Van Gogh; a painting that I have always been particularly drawn to. What I discovered is that this picture is a depiction of the Last Supper. Despite seeing the picture numerous times over the years, it was only this Lent that I saw its deeper meaning. The painting had always drawn me in, but suddenly it was drawing me into an entirely different context. The waiter in white, Jesus, serving eleven guests, all seated at tables. A twelfth café guest seen sneaking out of the door. This revelation blew my mind! To others, the Last Supper imagery may always have been obvious, but for me, I saw something from a different perspective, and this had a deep impact on me.

God can speak to us in unexpected ways and one such way is by surprising us with new insight or understanding in the familiar, whether that be a well-known prayer, the words of a hymn, a familiar scripture or, as in my case, a well-loved painting. I would encourage us all to have inquiring minds, either by deepening our understanding of what we know, or by exploring new things (or both!)

## 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*

- 3rd May - 'Leading Prayers of Intercession' workshop - **POSTPONED**
- 17th May – Spirituality and Prayer afternoon (in church)
- 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.*

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

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)

### **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 May**

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

Saturday 3rd May                          2pm                          Training: Leading Prayers of Intercession - **POSTPONED**

Sunday 4th May                          8am                          Holy Communion  
    Readings: Acts 9.1-6; John 21.1-19  
    10am                          Bread & Wine

Reading: *John 21.1-19*  
 6.30pm Evening Worship  
 Readings: *Isaiah 38.9-20; John 11.27-44*  
 Questions and Cake

Tuesday 6th May	9am 11am	Church drop-in Holy Communion
Wednesday 7th May	9am 10.15am	Church open Tots & Teddies
Thursday 8th May	10am	Thursday@10 – coffee and chat
Friday 9th May	9.30am	Church cleaning
Sunday 11th May	10am  11.15am 6.30pm	Parish Communion for Palm Sunday with Song School <i>Readings: Acts 9.36-end; Revelation 7.9-end; John 10.22-30</i> Children's Church Inspiration Group Annual Meetings (see below) Choral Evensong <i>Readings: Isaiah 63.7-14; Luke 24.36-49</i>
Monday 12th May	9am 7pm	Church open Confirmation class
Tuesday 13th May	9am 11am	Church drop-in Holy Communion
Wednesday 14th May	9am 10.15am	Church open Tots & Teddies
Saturday 17th May	1pm 2pm	Confirmation class and rehearsal Training: Spirituality and Prayer afternoon
Sunday 18th May	10am  6.30pm	Parish Communion with Confirmation <i>Readings: Ephesians 4.1-6; John 21.15-19</i> Children's Church Reflective Communion <i>Readings: Acts 11.1-18; John 13.31-35</i> Questions and Cake
Monday 19th May	9am	Church open
Tuesday 20th May	9am 11am	Church drop-in Holy Communion
Wednesday 21st May	9am 10.15am	Church open Tots & Teddies
Thursday 22nd May	10am	Thursday@10 – Geraint Thomas: 'Victorian Inventors'
Sunday 25th May	10am	Parish Communion <i>Readings: Acts 16.9-15; Revelation 21.10, 22-22.5; John 14.23-29</i> Children's Church Inspiration Group

6.30pm Choral Evensong  
Readings: Acts 16.9-15, John 5.1-9

Tuesday 27th May	9am	Church drop-in
	11am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 28th May	9am	Church open
	10.15am	Tots & Teddies
Thursday 29th May	7.30pm	Ascension Day service

**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. The annual reports for the meetings are attached to this email or available from our website [here](#).

**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)

### 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 35th 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. See attached poster for details.

Tickets will be available from Maggie Nunn after the 10am services from 11th May onwards. Advance purchase helpful for catering purposes.