

Jesus - his early followers

The disciples continued to meet, gathering frequently to pray. They chose someone to replace one of their number who, having betrayed Jesus, committed suicide. Seven weeks after that first Easter Day the disciples, still rather cautious, were all together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise like a strong wind and what looked like tongues of fire and they were filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This was the special help Jesus had promised and from that day (called 'Pentecost' or 'Whitsun') the disciples moved out into the community with conviction and confidence. Initially, the disciples spoke of Jesus to their fellow Jews but with the conversion of a man called Saul (later called Paul) the message was taken all around the Mediterranean - the good news really was for everyone! These small groups of believers, often gathering in fear for their reputation (if not their lives) became the first churches - the group meeting in Antioch (present day 'Antakya' in Turkey) being called 'Christians' for the first time.

Jesus - his followers today

For nearly two thousand years people all over the world have been gathering in churches to sing, pray and hear about Jesus Christ. Down through the years, together in church, they have also been eating a small piece of bread and drinking a small amount of wine as he encouraged us to do at his last supper before he was arrested. This is called 'The Eucharist' or 'The Holy Communion' or 'The Lord's Supper' or 'The Mass'. Christians believe that in the

Eucharist Jesus grants us communion with himself.

In Orpington there are many kinds of churches that, whilst they do things rather differently, all come under the banner of 'The Christian Church'. Throughout the world these 'many kinds' run into hundreds who, for the most part, live peacefully one with another and with other religious groupings who do not regard Jesus Christ in the same way. All Saints' Church, Bark Hart Road, is part of the Church of England (which is part of the world-wide Anglican Communion)

As Christians we seek to learn more about God - God as Father, God in Jesus Christ, and God as the Holy Spirit. We hope that within our walls you might not only feel that God is near but also discover more about the gifts he has given you; we also aim to serve our community and the world in which we live. You are welcome as together as we discover what it means to be a Christian in the world today. We are all pilgrims on a journey - do join us!

With thanks to the Rev'd Alan Mustoe (a former vicar of All Saints'), author of this leaflet, for permission to reproduce it

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

the Church
and the Christian faith?

This leaflet is designed to help an enquirer gain an idea of what the Church and the Christian faith are all about.

All over the world there are buildings - each called a 'church' - where people gather to worship Jesus, a man whose followers believe is God 'in human form'. The early followers called Jesus 'the Christ' (which means 'the anointed one') and today we have come to use 'Christ' as Jesus' surname.

The word 'Church' means 'that which is called out', suggesting that those who come to church are responding to the call of Jesus to step out of an ordinary and into a special way of life. We are told in the Bible (the special, holy book of the Church) that his followers came to be called 'Christians' and below is an attempt to 'tell the story'.

If, having read this leaflet, you would like to know more, please contact
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Bark Hart Road, Orpington, BR6 0QD, Mon,
Tue, Thu, Fri - 9.30am - 12.30pm

or come along to one of the services at All Saints':
Sundays - 8am, 9.30am, 6.30pm;
Wednesdays - 10am;. Saturdays 9.30 am

Jesus - born in Bethlehem

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town a few miles from Jerusalem, about two thousand years ago - we are not sure of the date. He was born into a land occupied by Roman troops and a people that were waiting for someone special to be born to 'save' them, in every sense of the word. After Jesus became famous his early followers collected together stories about his birth including those that are so popular today and which we hear about at Christmas - Mary and Joseph, the Angel Gabriel, the Shepherds and the Wise Men.

Jesus - his teaching

Jesus taught us that God, who made everything, should be thought of as we might think of a loving father - in his language he used the word 'abba' which we translate as 'daddy'. Whilst this was not totally new he brought this aspect of God to the fore and encouraged us to talk to God in this loving and friendly way. This 'talking' requires not only imagination but also a belief that God is listening. It also requires that we wait for an answer (which will come or occur to us) in our daily lives.

Jesus also taught us that we should treat other people as we would like them to treat us. Again, this was not totally new but Jesus gave it a fresh perspective, teaching that we should treat one another in loving and charitable way; indeed, we should be loving and charitable even to those who are un-loving and un-charitable. After all, this is how God our Father treats us.

Jesus - the miracles

Jesus not only amazed people with his words but also by his deeds. He came into the limelight in his early thirties speaking in a way that made people listen and acting in a way that, at times, seemed nothing short of miraculous. The majority of these stories are about healing but a few relate to food, drink and nature. It is clear that Jesus made an amazing and lasting impression, not least of all upon those who were pushed to the fringe of society because of their illness and infirmity. It was as he travelled the length and breadth of that country that he touched the lives of ordinary men and women in a miraculous way.

Jesus - his death

Jesus came to realise that if he continued to speak and act in the way he did it would not be long before the religious authorities intervened. Appealing to the poor and powerless his teaching undermined the authority of the rich and powerful and, enlisting the help of the occupying forces of Rome, Jesus was arrested, tried, found guilty and executed. He was charged with taking God's name in vain (called 'blasphemy' and punishable by death according to religious law in those days) but as the Romans prohibited this religious punishment charges of acting unlawfully towards the state were introduced. Strangely, the crowds were turned against Jesus and the authorities, bowing to public pressure, permitted the execution by crucifixion. His friends, helpless and terrified, scattered.

Christians believe that in the way Jesus died God showed his love and forgiving attitude towards us all, just as a loving father might forgive his wayward children, and so the Friday of his death came to be known as Good Friday.

Jesus - his Resurrection

On the Sunday after the execution (now called 'Easter Day') something amazing happened; the body of Jesus 'went missing'. Initially, Jesus' friends feared interference by the authorities for Jesus had implied that his death would not be the end of the matter. But then Jesus appeared; first to Mary from Magdala, then to a couple of his followers, finally to all his disciples. Gradually they came to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead and this 'rising' on Easter Day came to be called 'The Resurrection'. Over a number of weeks the Bible tells us that Jesus appeared and disappeared - coming to eat with his disciples, walking, talking, helping them to fish, even cooking breakfast. They did not always immediately recognise him and their emotions were mixed; they were scared, overjoyed, puzzled - perhaps all at the same time! Eventually, calling his disciples together, Jesus left his disciples for the last time. However, on this special day (now called 'Ascension Day') he assured them that he would always be with them and that they would receive a special kind of help to continue the work he had begun.