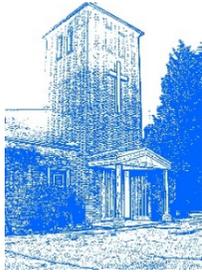


Welcome to St. Anne's

We are a Christian community within the Church of England serving the people of Chingford Hatch. Now that introduction sounds a bit dry! Serving the people of



Chingford Hatch! But that is what we do. A great religious thinker, George Fox, in the early 17th century said that Christianity is 'not a notion but a way.' And this is how we approach the business of being Christian in our day and age. Our Parish centre is a community centre which has a variety of groups meeting, few of which are specifically religious. This is because we believe in the value of community, of our fractured human family coming together, doing stuff together and flourishing. Chingford Hatch day is a good example of what we are here for. We meet on Sunday for worship because we find in the story of Jesus inspiration and meaning that can be lived out in our day to day lives. We do not demand that everyone who walks through the church doors believes the same things nor do we demand that regular parishioners all believe in the same way. In fact, the word 'Christianity' is a misnomer.

There are Christianities, a variety of ways of being Christian. And many of those ways are well represented here at St. Anne's. What unites us is a vision of how life can be; in the strapline developed by Christian Aid; '*We believe in life before death.*' We find this vision in the gospels, especially in the sermon on the mount (Matthew chapter 5 - if you want to look it up).

Faith

Deep within the Christian story is the idea that God - *and there is more than one way to understand the term 'God'* - entered



human history, as a man, a person just like the rest of us. Jesus didn't come to tell us that we had all got it wrong and that if we don't change our ways, we will all be going to hell. I for one don't believe there is such a place. Jesus demonstrated in words and action that we are, all of us, loved and loveable. God, far from the score keeper in the sky, loves us all more than we can love ourselves or each other. Everyone matters. At St. Anne's we live this out by being a radically inclusive community -

everyone is welcome, no one is excluded, and we firmly resist and oppose any discrimination based on colour, gender, age, faith, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc. In our reading of the Bible there is one family - the human family and if one part suffers, we all do. Our response to suffering at home or anywhere in the world is not to build a wall but a bigger table. We support the local Eat or Heat foodbank and as a community we do what we can to support and help all those we can who are in any way hurt by what life throws at us. We also, as equals, work with the other great faith traditions which give light to the world. Because we believe that by working together and sharing our sacred stories, we are slowly building a more tolerant, compassionate and understanding world in which people discover their humanity is prior to their beliefs.

Hope

The Christian faith is often caricatured as the religion which likes to say 'no'. This is not true. We are a people of hope who say a resounding 'yes' to life. Not only is



there hope for what happens after death there is a divine optimism which runs through all we think and do. We recognise that if we treated each other as brother, sister, friend and treated all life as sacred, then we would not consider people to be objects whose value lies solely in what they have to offer. For us, what makes the human person sacred and of infinite value is not *what* they are but *that* they are. We also recognise that sometimes we do not live up to that ideal - that is what 'sin' is, being less than we could be. At present we are belatedly re-discovering our connection to the natural world in which we have evolved. As such we support the radical change of thinking and action necessary to reverse the damage caused by climate change. We believe in the basic goodness of all that exists and that we are called to care for the environment not destroy it out of greed. The foundation of Christian ethics can be summed up in one word: 'Love'. Love of neighbour, love of the world, love of self and of course love of God. This love is the ground of our hope, our optimism.

Love



St. Paul, writing to the infant church in Corinth, way back in the 50's of the first century in the common era said:

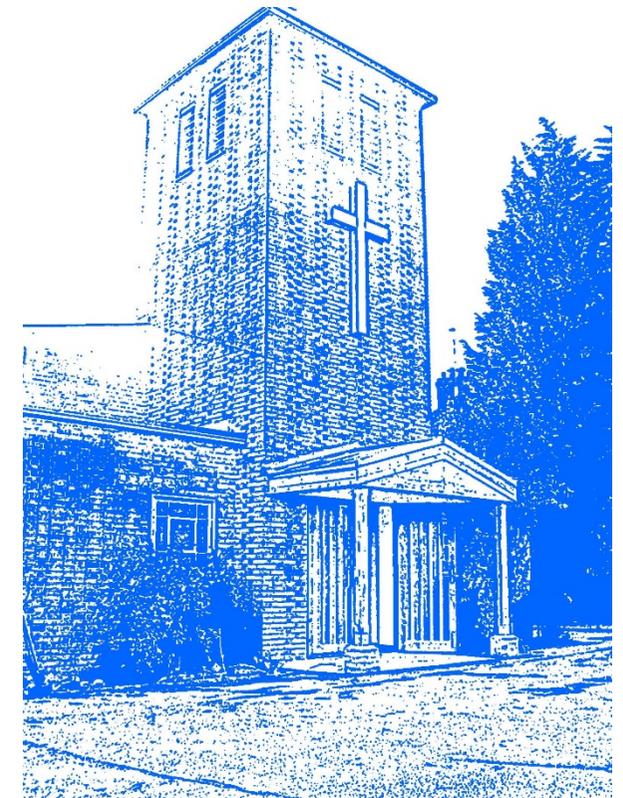
'Now we have faith, hope and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.'

The Christian way is one of forgiveness, compassion, inclusion and understanding. I know as an institution the worldwide church has not always practiced that as it should, nevertheless it is the way of Jesus. God is defined only once in the New Testament, by St. John in his first letter.

'God is love. Those who live in love, live in God and God in them.'

This is the heart of the matter - no matter what your beliefs are, if there be not love then it is not the Christian way. As a community trying our best to walk the Christian way, we have discovered that visitors are invariably struck by the warmth, humour and kindness present in St. Anne's. We are not perfect, no one is, but we try, because love is at the root of why we are here.

And there is always room for one more....



**Welcome to
St Anne's**