

'Love Bade Me Welcome'

- **Lenten meditations on the themes of openness, generosity and hospitality**

Christ Church at 12.30 on Tuesday lunchtimes

11, 18, 25 March & 1 & 15 April
[NB no session on 8 April]

Good Shepherd at 7.30 on Wednesday evenings

12, 19, & 26 March, 2 & 9 April

Meditations by Rev Phil Wootton will be held in the chancel of each church, and last for about 30 minutes. Tea/coffee available afterwards for those who wish.

The decision to open Christ Church during the daytime gives the theme of 'openness' a particular immediacy: the meditations are written with this in mind, but their themes apply much more widely to the life of the individual Christian and to the Church.

Session 1: *An Open Invitation* (11 & 12 March)

To introduce our themes we reflect on George Herbert's poem, *Love (III)*, which gives the course its title. It reminds us to start with God's welcome to us, which we learn more about by studying Jesus' Parable of the Banquet in Matthew 22.

Session 2: *An Open Table* (18 & 19 March)

Genesis 18 gives a picture of the hospitality of the desert extended by Abraham to three travellers who turn out to be angels. 'The Hospitality of Abraham' is also an icon through which the mystery of the Trinity is evoked, and we reflect on how we are drawn in to the company of the Lord's table.

Session 3: *Open Doors* (25 & 26 March)

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' Those familiar words in Revelation addressed to the lukewarm church in Laodicea are balanced with his proclamation as the divine door-keeper for the church in Philadelphia. We consider what these ideas might mean for us today.

Session 4: *Open Ears* (1 & 2 April)

'Let anyone who has ears to hear, hear.' Christ calls for open ears that will listen, and he healed the deaf so they might hear. Christian tradition has valued regimes of silence for better listening, and we reflect on how good listening has a part of the hospitality of the heart.

Session 5: *Open Church* (15 and 9 April)

The Gospels describe Jesus playing the host in other people's houses. Monastic communities over the centuries have attempted to welcome the poor and the outsider, as well as their own members. We consider what this may have to say to open, and open-hearted, churches today.

Everyone is, of course, most welcome to each session, whether you can come every time or just on one or two occasions.

