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A Matter of Faith: St. Barnabas Church

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The world's largest religion, Christianity, is based on the life and teachings of Jesus. The origins of Christianity dates back to AD 30-33 in Jerusalem. The belief that God is one eternal and supreme being led billions of people to follow this religion. 53% of England's population in 2018 were identified as followers of Christianity. There are thousands of churches around England that follow different principles with some of them being, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Church of England and the list goes on.

Epsom and Ewell alone accommodates 29 churches that observe worshippers on a regular basis. The diverse followers practice their religion wholeheartedly. St Barnabas Church in Epsom believes in one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The hundred-year-old building welcomes people from any age, race, gender and religion for worship and in their innovative sessions such as *Alpha* and *Barneys*. Alpha course is more focused on young people with curious minds who want to explore the big questions of life, faith and meanings. This free session is open for all and helps people understand the Christian faith in a friendly, open, and relaxed environment. Barney's session targets babies, toddlers and their parents and carers. The session involves lots of toys, songs, bible stories and refreshments for all which is an innovative way to connect little ones with church and God.

According to Christians, Jesus Christ came in human form to teach people to love God and love their neighbour. Churches aim to spread this teaching through their Sunday prayers. Associating itself with Epsom primary schools, St Barnabas Church takes informal lessons either in schools or church itself where they educate young ones about the Christian faith and belief. Harry Lamaison, deacon of the church, says: "We're currently exploring the ways we can engage with the local community and its evolving process. We have links with charity organisations such as Love Me Love My Mind and Sunny Bank Trust which helps people with their mental health issues and offer solutions for the same." The church has linked itself to offer help and support from people who are dealing with mental health issues, breakdown of a relationship or a shock from death in a family.

St Barnabas follows one of the greatest messages of Jesus Christ "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices." Church extends its hands to people in the community who are going through financial hardships by providing advice on how they can plan their expenditure and savings. Advice is offered by a financial adviser and is often done by setting up a private meeting with the person. St Paul's Howell Hill and St Barnabas are working in partnership towards making the local community better by offering support to families in need. The local community is encouraged to take part in church activities that help in bringing the neighbourhood closer and stronger.

To support each other is what God has taught us all. How do we support each other is the big question. The church helps anyone in need and is looking forward to collaborating with local artists who are often unnoticed. Combining prayers with artists is a great way to promote local talent and to draw the attention of locals towards the church. With musicians, dancers and other artists, prayers can be more fun for youngsters as well. Moreover, the church also gives out space for weddings, birth or death. A nominal fee is charged for decorations and upkeep of the church. Artists can also take part in these functions as per people's choice.

Sunday prayers are the heart of any church, where worshippers gather and worship for the betterment of their lives. Any religious establishment is incomplete without people and followers. Growing westernisation has kept many apart from the creator of the world. Remembering that god even once a day gives no harm and helping others is an act of God. Every culture or religion tells us how humans should live in harmony and respect each other's decisions. Be it Jesus *Christ*, *Allah* or *Bhagwan*, all of them are with us, teaching the way of life and how to achieve peace in life.

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