

As easy as eating Ice cream – and as much fun!



How do you think we should engage as a church with the community? Before you read on, what would your answer be?

Now answer truthfully: do you think many people 'out there' believe in prayer? If people don't come to church, are they likely to believe it's worth praying? What do you think?

Please read on: Towards the end of June a few of us began visiting homes in the parish, following the practice of many other churches in this country. We have now been 'prayer visiting' four times so far this summer. The idea is to ask people in the parish if they want us to pray for someone or a situation. Complicated? Scary?

We always deliver a letter of introduction to about 100 houses and follow this up with an early evening visit two or three days later. The letter states that the visitors will be from Bromley Parish Church and that as Christians we believe in the power of prayer. The invitation is for people to fill out a little card with a prayer request. The next step is to actually pray for these people and situations

There are several important principles here. We are not cold calling, we have a good reason to call as the local church, and we state in the letter that people are welcome to say 'no thank you' if they wish. In addition, we are not evangelising, we are collecting prayer requests, exactly as the letter says.

Our first expedition was on Wednesday 29 June to Bromley Gardens and Ridley

Road. The group comprised Alan, Mike, Amanda, Nick, Alison and myself. We had little idea of what to expect, but going out in pairs seemed fun! Out of 100 houses, among which there were a number out, 15 people gave us a prayer request. Surprising?

Two weeks later three of us received 14 replies from another 100 houses, including two requests for follow-up visits.

Four weeks later, right in the middle of the holiday period when many people were away, Gerald, Margaret and Janet joined us. Together we covered 85 houses with 17 replies. On 17 August we then went to all homes in Recreation Road and Martin's Road with a further 18 requests received.

Looking at the results of our visiting, I am inclined to say this indicates a much greater spiritual awareness than I would have imagined. We have enjoyed some good conversations and no-one has been rude! Some residents have been really impressed by the fact of receiving a visit. There seem to be plenty of people who are more than happy for us to pray on their behalf. Just think of the paralytic lowered through the roof of the house: 'when Jesus saw their faith...'

Some of you have been particularly praying for us as we have been out visiting – thank you for this. Many of the prayer requests are long-term situations and we need to continue to pray for these people. A summary of our visiting so far can be found at the back of church. Perhaps you could take on a handful of situations and people to pray for regularly.

Lastly, do we as a church believe that PRAYER CHANGES THINGS?

Mark Newman