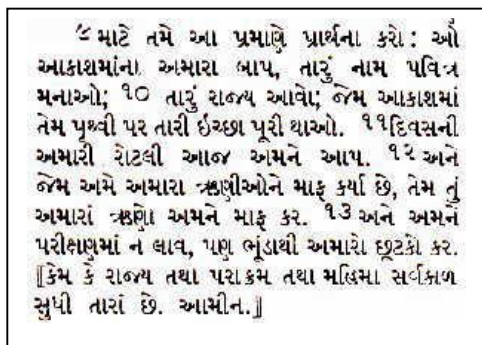


## St Nicholas Tooting

There has been a Christian presence in Tooting since the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Today the community is very mixed. The church has responded to its changing context in a variety of ways. Its website proclaims boldly "Our priority is to know Jesus Christ and proclaim him as Lord of all."



Once a month the church runs a stall in the market which gives out Christian literature in, Urdu, Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Arabic, Polish, Russian and English. There is a growing Polish community in this part of South West London.

About two years ago the church decided that with two ESOL qualified members of the congregation and some willing volunteers that they could offer English classes. A term of ten evening classes lasting an hour and a quarter each costs £25 which includes a well known and respected text book. The first session is free and students tend to drop in and out around other commitments. They are not yet offering classes for complete beginners but may do in future. Students are attracted by a large banner on the church railings, locally distributed fliers and word of mouth. The church website also has details and makes it clear that although offered by the church, the classes have no religious content. Classes are open to all adults regardless of culture or faith. The primary purpose of the English classes is to offer something for which there is a need in the community.



Related social activities have explained Christmas and Easter to some of the students, and the friendships that have been formed give the church the opportunity to share the gospel. The classes have been a step towards building a more multicultural church.

An increasing number of churches either rent space to commercial language schools or support the teaching of English as a second language as a way of meeting a community need. Any church might identify those within its membership fluent in other languages who can translate Christian teaching materials. Using worship material from a variety of cultures builds inclusivity. Making use of the gifts within a church community to serve the surrounding parish is part of building a confident Christian presence. See also stories about starting ethno-linguistic congregations in the [Praying and Worshipping](#) pages.