



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

May 2019

### **Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton**

Dear Friends

We celebrated Easter on 21 April and the season continues for 50 days. My favourite service among the cycle of worship during Holy Week and Easter is the 8pm Easter Vigil and Eucharist on Holy Saturday. This is partly because we begin in the Hall garden which itself is such an articulate sermon: here we are among budding flowers, watered earth, and the memorials of friends gone on before. But mainly, it feels appropriate to be outside the confines of the building to celebrate the Resurrection!

The point with the Resurrection is not that there is a reversal of death: Jesus did not just pop back to his friends as if to say, "Sorry folks, it was all a bad dream I was kidding really." This would have conflated the joy of Easter with the much less complicated celebrations of Palm Sunday. On Palm Sunday we commemorated Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and the end of his public ministry. The celebration and hope then, though real, was about a particular time and place and a particular set of political and economic agendas. Finally, Rome might fall! Finally, the Messiah might sit on the throne of David and restore the temple to a seat of civil power! As we know, these hopes did not work out. Even the temple itself was destroyed (but for the one 'wailing' wall, still standing) a few years later.

Resurrection is about something else and it is far more durable. Remember, even his closest friends did not recognise the resurrected Jesus until he revealed himself. Resurrection is not just about restoration, it is something entirely new and not necessarily easy to see in the moment itself. I am convinced our lives together in church prove this: how many times do we after the fact look at a particular event, or season in church life, and say, "did not our hearts burn within us?" These are the words of the disciples in Luke 24 after Jesus had disappeared from them at the Emmaus table, asking each other how they could have missed noticing it was he with whom they walked.

"Did not our hearts burn within us" when we have had laughter at one of our courses or Bible studies? Did not our hearts burn within us to work in the Winter Night Shelter, or hear the St Mark's Centre abuzz with different activities? Do not our hearts burn within us to see one another grow, and change and the life of the church develop with us? As we move forward, new life will look very different than the old, and may not always be able to be planned in advance. Nonetheless, it does happen, and our fellowship and our intention for a renewal in the coming years makes this an exciting time.

We are a resurrection people. Now let's just hope for sunshine during these 50 days of Easter!

With my best wishes