



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

May 2026

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

Dear Friends

After the darkness of winter, we may be hoping that May will herald a time of warmth, growth, sunshine, and new life. In the church year, after the leanness of Lent, and the sombre days of Holy Week, Eastertide is a time of hope in the church. Christ is risen and this is a season of joy and celebration. It is a time of anticipation, listening for the return of the cuckoo, swallow, and turtle dove; of seeing in profusion the clouds of May blossom, the unfolding of leaves; and of giving attention in detail to the butterfly, moth and bee.

For the ancient Celts, 1<sup>st</sup> May marked the beginning of summer when they took their livestock up to the hills to graze again after spending winter in the valleys. And Rogationtide falls in May, when traditionally the crops and animals and the work of the land were blessed in church and visited in a procession of the congregation. This was often accompanied with "the beating of the bounds", walking the parish boundary to preserve the community memory of its locations and borders, followed by ale and feasting. It sometimes led to disagreements between neighbouring parishes and occasionally to violent confrontation. One sixteenth century priest complained, "These solemn and accustomable processions and supplications be nowe grown into a right foule and detestable abuse."

These days, with digital mapping of parish boundaries, there are no disagreements! In our own parish, we still "beat the bounds" on Rogation Sunday, which this year falls on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. We leave from outside the Church at 2pm. All are welcome, but it does involve walking to the top of Reigate Hill so you need to be able to manage this! The boundary passes through the car park at the top of Wray Lane where ice creams and hot drinks are available. We usually take about 2½ hours, and dogs are also welcome.

When we walk the roads, lanes and footpaths through the fields to the top of Reigate Hill to mark the bounds of our beautiful parish, open to the scents, sights and sounds of Spring, this giving attention can lead to wonder, and wonder is like prayer. We are still in the season of Eastertide (which runs through to Pentecost on 24<sup>th</sup> May), so may this season bring us hope, and bring blessing on crops, vines, fruit trees, on sheep and cattle, and on all who live and work here.

With every blessing,