



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

April 2024

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

Dear Friends

Easter is without doubt the most important season in the Church year and Easter Sunday is the most special day of the year. The resurrection of Jesus Christ – the Son of God – changed the world in an unprecedented way. The timing and traditions of Easter are interesting to note.

The timing of Easter is linked to the Passover festival which celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. This feast lasts for 7 days from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April. According to Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), who used the Hebrew lunar calendar for his research, the resurrection is likely to have occurred on Sunday 5 April 33AD. Modern scholars continue to believe that this date could be accurate. Yet our dates for the celebration of Easter vary according to the moon.

Officially, Easter Day falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring equinox. But the precise calculations are very complicated and involve something called an "ecclesiastical full moon" which is not the same as the moon in the sky! The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22 March, which last fell in 1818 and will not happen again until 2285. The latest is 25 April which happened in 1943 and is next due in 2038.

The name "Easter" comes from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in "Eostur-Monath". Eostre's sacred animal was a hare – hence the link with the Easter bunny! Easter eggs are also a symbol of fertility and rebirth, and can also portray the empty tomb of Jesus. Alternatively, since eggs were historically forbidden in Lent, we can easily see how decorating and eating them became a practical way of celebrating the season – particularly when coated in chocolate!

Whatever the meanings or traditions associated with Easter, the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of our Christian faith. Our greeting of "Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed, Alleluia" is a time-honoured proclamation of this wonderful truth. May the risen Christ lead and guide you as we seek to follow him in our lives.

With every blessing,