

A few words from the Vicar

Easter is a very special time of year.

And I don't mean it's a special time of year because of all the Easter Eggs we consume! I've nothing against Easter Eggs. I quite like them in fact (yum, yum). It's just that Easter is much more important than that. Easter is special because Christians worldwide celebrate the events surrounding, and the eternal consequences of, Jesus' death and resurrection.

No wonder. The events of that first Easter are *the* pivotal point in human history; things have never been the same since. That first Easter was, and is, God's love in action and the consequences have reverberated throughout history.

Jesus died and rose again so that all of us can enjoy a close, personal relationship with God, without worrying about our eternal future. In his love for us, God has liberated us from the burden of guilt and freed us to make a positive difference in this world in whatever way we can. We are freed to be instruments of God's love in the world.

So, how are we celebrating the Easter story this year?

On Palm Sunday (9th April) there will be a joint procession, followed by a joint service with Ainsworth Methodists. We assemble in the Methodist churchyard ready to begin a short act of worship at 10.30am. Then, with Palm Crosses held high and led by two donkeys (no rude comments please!) we will process along the pavement to Christ Church, where we will complete our worship.

Palm Sunday is a joyful occasion when we recall the ecstatic welcome given to Jesus by the people of Jerusalem when he rode into town on a donkey's colt.

This is followed by our Holy Week devotions (7.30pm Monday – Wednesday, 10th to 12th April). These are short, reflective

services during which we ponder upon the events leading up to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Refreshments and Hot Cross buns are served at the end of the Wednesday evening service.

Then at 7.30pm on Maundy Thursday we have our last Communion before Easter. This service takes us through the Last Supper and, just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, I will wash the feet of a couple of willing volunteers. At the end of the service the mood music darkens as we move into Gethsemane; the sanctuary is stripped; the lights are switched off; and we leave in darkness and silence.

On Good Friday at 10.30am we have a traditional service during which the Passion Gospel is read. At 2pm we have a reflective service, when we ponder upon the meaning of the words uttered by Jesus from the Cross.

On Easter Saturday (7.30pm) we have our Easter Vigil. The service begins in darkness. Then, later, we light the candles and switch on all the lights before celebrating the first Communion of Easter.

On Easter Day, we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection, beginning with a Dawn Service (6am) near the lychgate (followed by a light breakfast). As usual, we then have our BCP Communion at 8am.

Finally, we gather for our Easter Communion service (10.30am), during which we refresh our Baptismal vows. There might even be some egg-shaped goodies for the children!

Whether you are a regular, attend occasionally or have never worshipped with us before, you are warmly invited to attend any or all our Easter services. Come and join us, you are always assured of a warm welcome here at Christ Church.

Every Blessing

Dave