

Copy for March 2018 *Link Up*
Abridge Evangelical Free Church

Dear Friends,

Easter is earlier this year than last, and somehow the flowers in our gardens and hedgerows seem to have anticipated this. As I write this letter on Shrove Tuesday, in addition to snowdrops, there are primroses, crocuses and daffodils in full bloom beside me. And birds have already begun nest-building. Of course the shops managed to get in even earlier, and alongside the ever-available Hot Cross buns, Easter Eggs were spotted immediately after Christmas!

With this in mind I thought it might be appropriate to share a few thoughts to enrich your celebration of Easter, whatever you might be doing and wherever you plan to be. Easter combines at least two strands of history. The earlier is the age-old fascination with the seasons of the year, and the miracle that around this time of year the earth moves once again from the dark nights of winter into the lengthening days of spring and summer. We are so used to it that we don't think of it as a miracle: our diaries plan for it years in advance, and British Summer Time is based on the assumption that the rotation of the earth is predictable and reliable.

The other strand is the Christian festival that marks something quite different, and yet with a common element. Whereas the seasons come and go, and have done for millennia, this festival celebrates a unique event in history. It is a singularity. Just over two thousand years ago something happened that has been changing the world ever since. A man called Jesus, who had been loved by ordinary people wherever he went, who taught like no one else, and who healed people, was cruelly executed just outside the capital city of his country. Because his land was under the control of the Romans, the method of execution was crucifixion. Sadly he was not the only good person to be executed, as

you will know if you look at today's paper or watch the news on television.

But then something happened that shocked and revolutionised the lives of those who knew him. They discovered that the tomb in which he had been laid was empty, and then one by one they met the risen Jesus. They were as surprised and troubled by this as anyone else would have been. But they could not and would not deny it. And that was the beginning of the Christian faith, the Christian way of living.

In the seasons of the Christian calendar Advent comes first, then Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, and Easter. But it was Easter Day and the discovery of the empty tomb that set everything going. Not only is Easter Day always on a Sunday, but that is the preferred day of Christian worship each week. Why? Because that was the day when people first met the risen Lord Jesus.

Many Christians choose to gather early on Easter Day to watch the first rays of the rising sun. It is a way of marking the dawn of a whole new era. And it also chimes with the miracle of the turning of winter into spring. The two miracles go together beautifully.

We may not see the first rays of sun on Easter Day, but all over the world churches will be open to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If you are able to join us in worship at one of the local churches, you will be warmly welcomed. If not, on behalf of the fellowship I wish you a very happy Easter.

Keith