



## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there...

Indeed! Let us hope that the cold has passed at last. Nowadays we cannot bank on it, the weather seems to have a mind of its own. Those of us of a certain age can remember the 'Great Winter Of 1962-63', the lowest temperature recorded was 22.2 (-8). It seemed to drag on for months. It snowed, thawed a bit, and snowed again, it seemed endless. In April we were still negotiating great heaps of now blackened snow piled by the roadside on our way to school. But now Spring is here!

Our observance of 'Easter'; the death and resurrection of Jesus, is a spring event as we know it occurred during the Feast of the Passover (or Pesach in Hebrew) which is one of the most important festivals in the Jewish year. It is

a Spring festival that begins on the 15th day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar.

The date of Easter changes each year because it is based on the lunar cycle. Easter Sunday always falls on the Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring equinox in March. We now use the solar, Gregorian calendar rather than a lunar one, which means the full moon occurs on different dates each year, and therefore so does Easter.

The Spring equinox was thought to be the day of the creation of the world and light was created on the fourth day.

Working forward nine months from this is the 25th of December which was subsequently observed as the commemoration of Christ's birth although not observed as such until the 9th century AD. Some parts of the church dated Christ's birth from his baptism which is why the 6th January is also observed. The early church was dismissive of birth days considering the date of death more important, the true 'birthday'.

This dispels the idea of Christmas being placed over a pagan festival which the early church avoided. For us in the northern hemisphere this allows the wonderful Christmas images of the light of Christ coming into the world during the darkest months.

A few years ago, my Australian friend came for a visit. I was so keen she came in April and May so that she could experience an English spring. These are surely the most beautiful of months with the vivid green of the new leaves on the trees. I lived then in Devon and many Devon lanes are

tree lined and thickly canopied; it was like driving down a tunnel of greenness. We can easily become so used to the everyday scene that we barely see it. It takes someone to look with new eyes to awaken us to what is around us. I can remember her delight and – even wonder – at walking through a bluebell wood. Pictures can never do that justice for you need the perfume of the flowers to enhance the moment. It is the freshness and newness of this time that makes it special.

No wonder so much of the Easter commercial paraphernalia moves around chicks, baby rabbits, spring flowers and EGGS! Spring is all about newness, new birth, new life.

For the Church, the celebrations of the renewal of creation in the Spring find their completion in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. This has always been the foundational message that the followers of Jesus proclaimed and still proclaim today. That God in Christ intersected our world; time and eternity met and crossed.

The story of these events takes up a whole third of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, a fifth of the Gospel according to Luke, and almost half of the Gospel according to John. Jesus' death and resurrection is the most important message of the Church - a message that has changed the lives of thousands.

Spring lifts our hearts as we see another year, another rebirth of the life around us from the darkness of the winter days. It makes us 'feel better' and we need that lift in our world at this time.

'Now the queen of seasons, bright with the day of splendour,  
With the royal feast of feast, comes it joy to render' - St John  
of Damascus