



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

October 2018

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

Dear Friends

**The School of Life**

At the time of writing, the summer holidays have ended and the weather is changing. People of all ages, pupils and teachers, are embarking on a new school year - some for the first time; others returning after the summer holidays or perhaps moving on to different schools or colleges. They may be happy and excited, perhaps uncertain and apprehensive, but for each of them it will be a time of new experiences and new opportunities, and through teaching and hard work, new skills will be developed and existing abilities improved.

But education and training are not simply about academic achievement or career development. Each one of us is part of a wider society, family and neighbourhood, schools and the places where we work or spend our spare time. Here we learn social interaction and develop inter-personal skills such as conversation and listening, patience and tolerance. We grow in relationship with those around us; working together and growing in mutual understanding. Each person has their individual personality and brings their own abilities to a shared enterprise which will benefit the community as a whole.

Years ago, many adults went to school, often on Sundays, the only work-free day, where they were able to develop basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as receive Christian teaching. Today's equivalent to Sunday Schools no longer teaches fundamental literacy skills and can happen on any day of the week, but these too are places of learning. Through short courses and one-off presentations, in discussion groups and house-groups, over a cup of coffee in church or at home, we can find opportunities to talk about our faith, and to deepen our understanding by sharing our stories and listening to one another.

Training and education are not quite the same thing. Training develops the skills we need for specific tasks, but education equips us for life, a life that we live in relationship with one another and with God. Through the teaching and example of Jesus we learn how to become fully human and to discern God's purpose for our lives. Each individual is enabled by God's grace to use their own particular abilities for the benefit of all, so that we can live in love and harmony with one another and grow in relationship with Jesus Christ. Education is for the benefit of all, not what we get from it ourselves – we all learn together and from each other.

As the new school year gets underway, we pray for God's blessing on all who teach and learn, and we rejoice that God will never take a holiday or a half-term break. He promises to be with us at all times and in all places until our school of life is over, and he brings us to share with him in the life and light of his eternal kingdom.

So why not try going to a home group this term, and/or coming to the Discipleship Explored sessions on Wednesday evenings and repeated on Thursday mornings. These groups and courses are simply what the Church has always offered and are there for our benefit and the building up of our faith in this community.

With my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manton', written in a cursive style.