



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

February 2019

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

Dear Friends

We are already a month into 2019 and so much seems to have happened. As we journey through the year I'm sure we all have our own hopes and plans, and possibly some fears over what lies ahead. At the time of writing there is utter confusion over BREXIT and what this means, when it might happen, and so many other questions. I guess that as you read this nothing will have been resolved, engendering anxiety and fear for the future.

Some of our hopes and fears for the future, whether personal or for the whole community, may be realised, others may not. The unexpected may happen and bring us sorrow or joy. The expected may happen in ways we do not anticipate. The truth and joy of the Christian faith is the knowledge that in the midst of everything God is with us.

Questions we should often ask ourselves include: where is our focus? What will we value the most? Where will we spend our time and energy? What will we forget? And what will we remember? What will motivate us this year? Our family... our personal ambitions... our relationship with God... our desire for social justice... growth in God's kingdom...?

Church historian and theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan says, "Tradition is the living faith of dead people to which we must add our chapter while we have the gift of life... Traditionalism is the dead faith of living people who fear that if anything changes then the whole enterprise will crumble."

We can all be guilty of sometimes being too interested in maintaining the status quo, of following traditionalism, which eventually leads to a joyless faith, an empty church, a hopeless world. We see changes in the way we do things in church from using new media in worship, to new services such as the new Family Service on the First Sunday at 4pm. Some changes we may embrace enthusiastically, but other changes we may grumble about. But in all this at St Mark's we are following our tradition and not traditionalism.

Since its foundation in 1860, St Mark's has constantly changed and evolved and is stronger for this. My research into the history of the church bears that out – if you haven't read my book, copies are still available from the office at £7.50 a copy. We can all learn from our tradition and history, but we must guard against sliding into traditionalism.

As we travel through this year may we seek after God's own heart. The tradition of Anglicanism means we are called to add our chapter to the history of our faith as we look at all times and in all places to share the Good News of Jesus Christ who declared "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

With my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.