

A Message from Chris



Dear Church Family,

Every month has its own character. March begins with St David's Day on 1 March, and ends as British Summer Time begins on the last Sunday of March. Yes, Spring is sprung! And mid-month there is St Patrick's Day on 17th, another Christian evangelist, this time to the Irish. And, as any of you Shakespeare scholars will know, Julius Caesar ignored the warning to 'Beware the Ides of March' (the time when traditionally in Roman times, debts were settled) and in the play two Acts later, and in reality, he lost his life in a planned assassination on 15 March, 44 BC.

The Romans also had a name for the first day of every month. It was known as the *Kalends*. It's from this word that our word *calendar* is derived. In fact, our modern calendar is very much like the one that Julius Caesar enacted the year before his death. It had 365 days and 12 months each year. It even took into account the fact that Earth's orbit around the sun isn't a whole number of days, by adding a leap day every few years.

Easter, however, is a 'moveable feast' and by virtue of that Lent, Holy Week and Easter move each year against a table you can find in the Book of Common Prayer. This year, the month of March fits neatly into our remaining time in Lent, with Mothering Sunday on 14 March (mid-way of Lent) and Holy Week beginning after Palm Sunday on 28 March.

We have a golden opportunity to use this month of March to walk at a different pace, ready to be surprised, not just by the unpredictable weather, but by a God of surprises. It was on Good Friday, after a really powerful Lent and Holy Week pilgrimage in 1993, that God spoke to me about my calling to ordination.

Pete in his sermon on Sunday talked about being at a crossroads as a church, and as individuals. We look forward, but also left and right, and back too. But God has charted the right way for all of us, and it might not be the most obvious direction. Be open to the movement of God's Spirit in our worship, study, and your prayer time. And don't fear – he has a great plan for each and every one of us. Just trust in him, as Jesus trusted in his Father, 'not my will, but yours be done'.

We will get to the end of the month where Jesus used those words, in the garden called Gethsemane, which mean 'to be crushed'. This was where the olives were crushed in the presses to release the olive oil. Sometimes we need to allow God to press us to release his gifts in us. As we hopefully come out of lockdown, only God knows what he has in store for us, but it will be a good and fruitful plan.

Be open, surprised and blessed, this month of Lent,

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