

The Rectory, 1 Rectory Close, Fryerning Lane, Ingatestone,  
CM40DB  
01277352562 [patrick.sherring@fryerningparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:patrick.sherring@fryerningparishchurch.org.uk)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a wonderful that we have great crowds of people celebrating Christmas in the church. Many of my clergy colleagues also reported vast numbers at services. Everyone is delighted to see so many people acknowledging why the birth of Jesus is so important. The same is not usually true about the size of congregations at Easter. Yes we do have good numbers, but not enormous crowds. Yet Easter, along with Christmas and the even less acknowledged Pentecost (Whit Sunday) are all essential to understanding the Christian faith, and all should be widely celebrated.

Over recent years we have developed a pattern for our Good Friday services. I can understand why some people shy away from these, as no-one really likes to focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. Yet as Christians we believe that it demonstrates his great love for us that he was prepared to suffer and die as he did. We should be truly thankful and want to acknowledge that reality. At Fryerning we have a service of hymns and meditations from noon to 1 p.m. In Ingatestone our time begins at the Catholic Church at noon with a traditional service of The Stations of the Cross. This follows through Jesus journey to the cross, using images, prayers and readings. I feel that the most important remembrance that we undertake is **The March of Witness**. We gather at the Catholic Church for about 12.40 and then walk to the Parish Church, stopping briefly at the Elim Church and United Reformed Church before coming to the Parish Church, carrying the large cross. It has been noticeable in recent years that there has been an increase in numbers attending and a considerable lowering of the age profile. If you are free and only want to mark Good Friday with one of our range of events, please come along to the March of Witness and show everyone why Good Friday matters to you. We also have a service at 1 p.m. that is suitable for everyone. The service at 2

features readings, prayers and hymns and short talks from all the ministers in the village from across the denominations. This too is a very special event.

It would be wonderful to see as many people at our Easter Day celebrations as at Christmas Eve. This is our great time to celebrate that the impossible has happened, that Jesus has overcome death. This may be harder for some of us to believe, but it is at the heart of our faith. As we grow older and inevitably lose more of those people who have been part of our past, so the significance of Jesus victory should become more real to us about others and ultimately ourselves. Please be with us to celebrate the wonderful Good News. If you are away on holiday, be brave enough to go and celebrate with the local Christian community, be it in Britain or elsewhere.

This year the celebrations of Easter by the Orthodox Church will be much later than ours and I will have the good fortune to be in Jerusalem for the celebrations. I always find the celebrations of Easter very moving. Staying in a complex between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 1996 for three weeks was one of the most memorable times of my life. I am sure that the same will be true this year, with the added dimension of attending services to celebrate all aspects of Holy Week. I will be staying in the Anglican Cathedral of St. George.

Elsewhere in this magazine are reminders of our Gift day at Ingatestone Parish Church on Easter Saturday, 10-4 and of my sabbatical. I will be giving a Gift Aided contribution of £500 on Easter Saturday. I see this as both a thank you to God for all of the amazing things he has done for me, together with a statement about the importance of improving the church for both now and the future. I also feel that that I try to put to God's use the gifts and abilities that he has given to me. Whilst in Jerusalem and on the rest of the sabbatical I will be reflecting on how we as Christians use the gifts God gives us to help others as we grow in Christian communities and reach out in love to our wider community.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*