

## From the Vicarage,

Last month I wrote of the unusual snowfalls which affected all of our lives. How quickly the seasons change, for now, just one month later, Spring is much in evidence. The Spring flowers are out, our lawns need their first cut, and for the gardeners among us it's that happy but busy season of preparing beds and planting seeds. It's such an encouraging time of year with evidence of new life all around us. We have Easter in April this year and about now our regular Easter leaflet giving details of all our events across the three villages, will drop through your letterbox. With Easter past, then I guess many of us begin to look forward to summer holidays once again. Whether you're the sort of person who gains much pleasure from careful planning of these times, or one who throws a few things into a suitcase and drives off, not quite sure where to until you get there, there's certainly excitement in the air.



We've all been shocked and saddened recently to hear of more violence in Northern Ireland, just when we thought at last it had all settled down and the stability for which people longed for such a long time had arrived. I have been intrigued by the title of the group responsible for this latest wave of unrest – 'The Real I.R.A.' Was the other group not real in some way? I've no doubt it was real enough for those who were victims of their violence. The people they killed were just as dead, their relatives just as devastated. But then, our world has a strange view of what is and what isn't reality. I never cease to be amazed by the range of so-called 'reality' t.v. programmes these days in which people are put into situations that are anything but 'real', and then subjected to 'goldfish bowl'; scrutiny by the public at large. How 'real' is that?

Coming back to Easter, this is where I find genuine reality. Every year there does seem to be something new to say from that old and very familiar story. Later this year I shall be celebrating twenty-five years since ordination and in all that time I've never been stuck for something to say at Easter. This is not just an old story rehearsed boringly year upon year. I have now a 'stock' of something over 1500 sermons and still God gives me new things week upon week. When I sit down to prepare I don't always have a clear idea of what the message is to be, but with prayer as the most vital ingredient I am always given something to say from the God who longs to share His nature and His ways with us. That's as true of Easter time as it is of any other. I have no idea yet what God has to say to us this Easter – He hasn't told me yet, but I have no doubt that He will and I look forward with eager anticipation to receiving this year's message from the very throne of heaven. I hope you do too.

I do so hope that you will come and share this wonderful festival with us. If Easter for you means no more than hot cross buns, chocolate eggs, gardening and d.i.y., then you are surely being sold severely short. It is the deception our age, and the media in particular, that that is what our bank holiday times are about. There is so much more to celebrate, especially in this year when so much is depressing in our world. So, as I've written in that circular leaflet, come and have a good time with us this Easter. There is always a very warm welcome at all of our three churches and we love to see new faces. I promise that you won't feel strange and on the outside for very long.

With very best wishes,

Chris Pearson