

Friends

May Day is a European Festival of ancient origins marking the beginning of summer, usually celebrated on May 1st, around halfway between the Northern Hemispheres spring equinox (20/21st March) and the midsummer solstice (June 21st). Popular traditions include dancing round a Maypole, Morris dancing, gathering flowers and washing one's face in the morning dew to improve the complexion. When I was a teenager at boarding school, it was traditional to anticipate the rising bell (7am) by the fourth years going round the school at 6am with pots and pans and anything else that would make a loud noise in order to wake everyone up. We would then gather around what had once been a spring, but was now a tiny dribble coming through a valve onto the cricket pitch. I remember the first time I took part at the age of 11, standing watching this tiny little spigot with its little dribble of water and thinking "What on earth are we doing"? But tradition is a wonderful thing and it became a part of all the other things that we did and valued.

For us in the church, this time of year is building towards two things: for all Christians, the Feast of Pentecost, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church in a very special way; and for Methodists, Aldersgate Sunday, from when John Wesley dates his conversion.

Other traditions, like the first lawn-mow of the year, spring cleaning and changing over from winter to summer wardrobes, may not be absolutely associated with a particular date, but will happen around now.

It's interesting to wonder what this time of year would have meant for Jesus in the 32 years prior to crucifixion. He would have eaten the Passover meal with family and friends, have heard the old familiar stories and then perhaps in those last two or three years, the knowledge would have started to grow upon him that next year, or the year after that, the Angel of Death would not pass over, or at least, would not pass over him, and nothing would ever be the same again. Yet after, utter joy; just as there was freedom from slavery for the ancient tribes of Israel, there was resurrection and freedom and the hope for eternity for all people.

God bless, Vicci