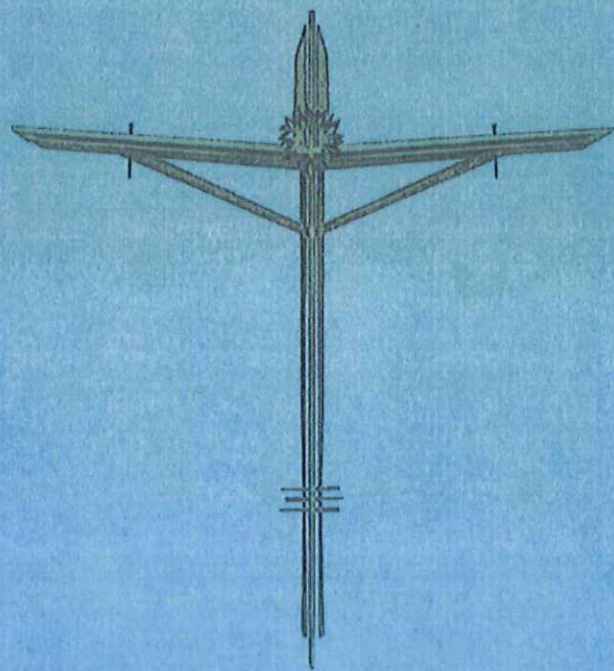




Welcome to
St Francis' Church
Parish of Westborough
Guildford



Celebrating
the Christian Year

St Francis of Assisi

Our church is dedicated to St Francis who was born in Assisi, Italy. As a young man, he turned his back on his wealth and committed his life to God. His followers became known as Franciscans. St Francis is perhaps best known for his love of animals. We hold a Pet Service, with a blessing of animals, on the Sunday nearest to his feast day, 4 October.



Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

*O Lord, make us instruments of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred, may we bring love.
Where there is injury, forgiveness.
Where there is discord, harmony.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
May we ourselves seek to understand,
rather than to be understood.
To console, rather than to be consoled
To love, rather than to be loved.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in forgiving, that we are forgiven.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

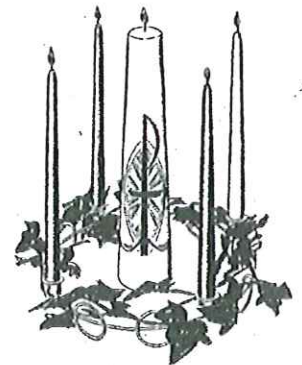
The Christian Year

The Christian year is divided into festivals which remind us of the life of Jesus. It begins with the season of **Advent**, at the very end of November, which is a period of preparation for the coming of Christ (**Christmas**), and then moves through the story of His life to the important focus of **Holy Week** and **Easter**. After celebrating the resurrection and **ascension** of Jesus, the story focuses on the founding of the Church itself, with the coming of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost**, before settling down for a period of teaching and consolidation of faith during the weeks of **Trinity**.

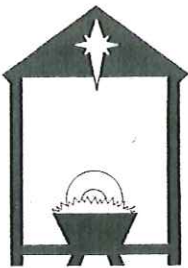


Advent

Advent Sunday signifies the start of the church year - a kind of "New Year's Day" in the Christian Church. Advent is the start of the four week period immediately before Christmas when the Church celebrates the first coming of Christ and anticipates His second coming. At St Francis' Church we light one candle on our Advent wreath on each of the four Sundays.



Christmas



At **Christmas**, we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God as a baby at Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. At St Francis' Church we hold a Crib service and midnight Holy Communion service on Christmas Eve, and then Holy Communion service on Christmas day.



Lent



Beginning on **Ash Wednesday** and ending on **Holy Saturday**, **Lent** (derived from the old English word meaning 'lengthen') is observed in spring, when the days begin to get longer. The **forty days of Lent** are marked by fasting, from both food and festivities, before the celebrations of Easter. Lent is observed by many Christians as a season for reflection and preparation through prayer and penance, reflecting Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days in preparation for his ministry. The last week of Lent begins with **Palm Sunday** which celebrates when Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Passover and crowds laid palms at His feet.



The Easter Story

Easter is the story of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem before his death. Easter is the most important festival in the Christian year. Jesus' resurrection is at the centre of the Christian faith. Jesus died for the sins of humanity and by coming back to life promises eternal life for all those who believe in him.

Maundy Thursday



Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples before His death. At St Francis' we share a simple supper at our Maundy Thursday service in remembrance of the bread and wine Jesus shared with his disciples.

Good Friday

On **Good Friday**, we reflect on the day when Jesus was crucified on a cross. At St Francis' we hold two services on Good Friday. During our 'Walk of Witness' we process behind a cross around the local streets pausing for prayers and hymns on the way (then return to church for hot cross buns). The 'Meditation at the Cross' is a reflective service held in the afternoon with prayers and meditations on Jesus' ultimate sacrifice.



Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday is the Saturday before Easter, the last day of Lent and is the day when Christ's body lay in His tomb.

Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. At St Francis' Church we gather for a sunrise service outdoors to welcome the new dawn and then go back to church for breakfast together! The Easter Communion service is a particularly joyful service – He is risen, Alleluia!



Ascension

Ascension Day celebrates Jesus' ascension to heaven after he was resurrected on Easter Day. During the forty days which followed the first Easter, Jesus appeared many times to His followers. **Ascension Day** marks the last appearance of Jesus to the disciples before He ascended into heaven.



Pentecost



Pentecost (from the Greek meaning fiftieth) is celebrated on the Sunday which falls 50 days after Easter. Before ascending, Jesus told his disciples that he would always be with them, and promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit and is recognised as the **birth of the Christian Church**. The Apostle Peter preached a sermon which resulted in 3,000 people becoming believers.



Trinity

Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost, celebrates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the three Persons of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday marks the beginning of teaching and consolidation of faith in the Christian church.



Why do some festival dates change each year?

The Christian calendar grew from the Jewish and Roman calendars.

In their distant past, the Jews were a nomadic people who often travelled at night. The moon was of great importance to them, and they based their calendar on its phases. The first great Christian festivals sprang from Jewish ones.

The Christian Church grew and expanded under the Roman Empire which followed a calendar controlled by the sun. When the Church began to introduce festivals of its very own, not based on the Jewish ones, they fixed them on dates already in the Roman calendar. The Christian calendar is thus a dual one, with 'fixed' feasts based on the Roman 'solar' calendar, and 'moveable' ones based on the Jewish 'lunar' calendar.