

Crowland Abbey

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PRIEST IN CHARGE



I Happy New Year!

You're probably thinking, "that's it, the vicar's off his trolley"... Call the Bishop!

Well, November 1st marks the Celtic New Year celebration called Samhain (pronounced sow-en), and since I am half-Welsh, I feel I can claim on that side of my ancestry.

The concept of 'New Year' is quite an odd idea when you think about it. The church's year starts on Advent Sunday, this year on 30th November (the day before Advent Calendars start); our normal calendar starts on January 1st (but only since 1752, before which it was 25th March!); the financial new year starts in April - the 6th I believe (that one always confuses me I must confess); schools start early in September, as does the Methodist Church year. And that doesn't include the many other cultures which celebrate New Year at other times.

The time of year that is 'New Year' is significant in what it says about the worldview of the particular culture. The Celts divided the year into two halves, summer and winter. New Year begins with winter, an idea that has some logic, especially within a primitive farming-based tradition. Life is a cycle from sleep to waking, from planting to growing and ripening, from the womb to the world, from darkness to light... from death to life.

This coming Sunday, as I write this, we will celebrate our Harvest Festival. Harvest has traditionally been a closing - "All is safely gathered in..." Then the time to pause, to rest... almost to hibernate, until New Life started again.

And during this time of rest, the 'seed' of the birth of our Saviour is planted, germinates in the great Easter events, comes to full fruition in the great outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and is harvested in the lives of the believers in the period which the church intriguingly calls 'Ordinary' Time (the growing time) - our summer.

So, in this time of a darkening world, perhaps both literally and metaphorically, let us hold fast to that promise of light, and growth... and life, in all its abundance.

Mark, Priest in Charge of Crowland