

### Milestone Birthdays

Quite a few of you know that I celebrated my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday last November. They even put it in the paper. Thank you all of you who joined in the celebrations. Thank you also for the greetings and presents I received and the donations to the church which people made to mark the occasion. These amounted to more than £600. Thank you indeed.

We make a lot of these milestone birthdays. You even see banners beside the road congratulating birthday boys and girls, though some are a bit worrying. "Happy 30<sup>th</sup>, Grandma," always gives pause for thought and arithmetic.

But birthdays seem to bring mixed feelings. There is a sense of celebration at getting so far, but also, perhaps, some anxiety about getting older and nearer to life's inevitable end. Children and young people tend to boast about their advancing years. Older people might try to conceal how old they are and may even pretend to be younger. You never, we are told, ask a lady her age. Very old people sometimes start boasting again about how old they are. "Have you lived here all your life?" the traveller asked the centenarian. "Not yet, young man," came the reply.

A young person getting older grows stronger and becomes more independent. Experience hopefully brings wisdom. On the other hand, physical fitness peaks around about thirty years of age and, as they say, there's no fool like an old fool.

Mixed feelings about age. When I was a student back in the 1970s, I had a trendsetter flatmate who used to accuse me of dressing like a middle aged country clergyman. Now I am a middle aged country clergyman, I tend to dress like a 1970s student. (I've still got some of the same clothes.) I feel flattered when people say I don't look my age, but I assume it is mere flattery, because I am never challenged to produce ID when I purchase age related products. Maybe shopkeepers and bar staff know that you have to be 23 to be ordained and the dog collar, therefore, is proof enough of age.

Young men used to try to look more mature by dressing like their dads. Now dads dress like teenagers. Fifty years ago, old people dressed to look their age, but those days are well gone. I'll keep silent on the subject of women's fashion – a subject beyond my comprehension.

You can understand teenagers exaggerating their age if they want to get into the pictures or to buy a drink and I suppose you can imagine why people on dating websites may knock a few years off – though I can't see much future in a relationship which starts off with a lie.

When you think about it, it is odd either to boast about your age or to try to conceal it as if you were ashamed of how old you are. Age is just a measure of time. It's not something you can do anything about. I am sixty because I was born in 1954. That is neither to my credit nor to my shame.

All this makes me think of Psalm 90 – a psalm we sometimes use at funerals. The hymn *O God our Help in Ages Past* is based on it. Our lives are lived out in time, but we live our lives in time under the eternal providence of the eternal God. It is psalm 90 which says, *the days of our age are three score years and ten* (70 for those of you brought up on the new mathematics). Whatever happens to us in this life is in the Hands of God. We can pray to Him and trust Him. We can confess our sins to Him in the assurance of forgiveness. We should thank Him for all the blessings we receive. But, much more than this, not only can we trust God for our time bound life on earth – how ever short or long that may be; we can trust God for our eternity. It is all a matter of faithfulness – God's faithfulness to us and our faith in Him.

### Easter Services.

Maundy Thursday (2<sup>nd</sup> April): Holy Communion at St John's 9.30 am;

Good Friday (3<sup>rd</sup> April): Family Service at St Michael's (Cuxton) 10.00; Three Hour Devotion 12.00 St John's.

Easter Day (5<sup>th</sup> April): Holy Communion 8.00 Jubilee Hall, 9.30 St Michael's, 11.00 St John's.