

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
July 2 nd Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 13 vv 1-10 p1140 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
	11.00 Holy Communion Preacher Max Homewood of Mission Aviation Fellowship.	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 2 Corinthians 8 vv 7-24 p1163 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007
July 9 th Trinity 4 Sea Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 2 Corinthians 12 vv 2-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Jeremiah 20 vv 1-11 p779 Romans 14 vv 1-7 p1140
Wednesday July 12 th Silver Jubilee of Rector's Priesting	7.30 pm Holy Communion Preacher: Ven Paul Wright	Ephesians 4 vv 4-16 p1175 John 17 vv 1-26 p1085
July 16 th Trinity 5	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 2 Corinthians 12 vv 2-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
July 23 rd Trinity 6	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 20 vv 1-11 p779 Romans 14 vv 1-7 p1140
July 30 th Trinity 7	11.00 United Parish Eucharist	Ephesians 4 vv 4-16 p1175 John 17 vv 1-26 p1085
August 6 th The Transfiguration	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall (Trinity 8)	Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070
	11.00 Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 2 Peter 1 vv 16-19 p1222 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
July 2 nd Trinity 3 Preacher Max Homewood of Mission Aviation Fellowship.	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007
July 9 th Trinity 4 Sea Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 2 Corinthians 12 vv 2-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
July 16 th Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 3-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008
July 23 rd Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 23 vv 1-6 p782 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174 Mark 6 vv 30-56 p1009
August 6 th The Transfiguration	9.30 Family Communion with opportunity for healing.	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040

25th Anniversary of My Ordination to the Priesthood.

I am celebrating this on the 12th July this year with a service of Holy Communion at 7.30 pm at the Church of St John the Baptist Halling. The preacher will be the Venerable Paul Wright, Archdeacon of Bromley. After the service, you are invited to partake of refreshments with me in the south aisle. I am looking forward to welcoming friends and family from other areas, people whose friendship I have valued for many years. I hope too that friends from the parish will join this celebration, not only regular worshippers, but all my friends in the two villages. (I have been giving out invitation cards, but please do not think that you are not welcome if you have not received one. I hope to see all my friends there! Roger.)

There will be no 9.30 service at St Michael's on 12th July

Copy Date August Magazine: 14th July 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45

Sunday School is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays).

After School Club, Thursdays @ St John's.

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> and

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>



Assisted Suicide

Fifty years ago, suicide was a crime and attempted suicides could be punished by law. One hundred and fifty years ago attempted suicides were revived and then hung. The Church taught that suicide was a sin and that, because there was no opportunity for repentance, it must lead straight to hell. Suicides were not to be buried on consecrated ground. All this seems very harsh to us. Most of us think that people who want to commit suicide should be treated with compassion, not threatened with punishment. Surely, we think, God understands what drives a person to suicide and is more than ready to forgive. We would never question a suicide's right to burial in the churchyard. In fact, there is evidence that, even centuries ago, vicars and other people were more compassionate than the law theoretically demanded.

Why this harshness with suicides? Strangely, this firmness has its roots in respect for life. Human life is sacred and it is not up to us to take a life, even our own. Our life belongs to God and it is His prerogative to decide when to take it back. Suicide is considered to come under the commandment *Thou shalt not kill*. We must not take life, even our own, because actually all life belongs to God.

Traditionally, the principal exceptions to *Thou shalt not kill* were killing in war, killing in self defence or executing serious criminals. People who attacked others or who committed serious crimes (especially murder) were considered to have forfeited their right to live. Christians have always been uncomfortable even with these exceptions. Do we have the right to take human life even when the person is very wicked? Surely, judgment belongs to God and God's nature is to forgive. Who are we to condemn others? We are all sinners and there, but for the grace of God, go I. Anyway, if we kill someone in war or as a punishment, there is no going back if it turns out that we are wrong. Jesus forgave the penitent thief on the cross and told us to turn the other cheek.

It is respect for human life which has made the Church oppose abortion and even contraception. Again, the thought is that life is a gift from God

and that we should treat life with great reverence. If freely available contraception facilitates casual sex, it devalues a great mystery. Most defences of abortion depend on the assumption that an embryo or a foetus does not possess all or some of the rights which pertain to a human life. That is why parliament, from time to time, debates the age at which abortion is permissible. Does the growing embryo or foetus acquire fully human status at conception, when it acquires its primitive streak, when the unborn child quickens, at 20 weeks, 24 weeks or birth?* It seems hard to believe that a fertilised egg has the same rights as an adult human being, but, if it has not, when does it acquire them? And can a human being lose those rights to life either through moral turpitude or because they have lost consciousness or personality through dementia or some other kind of accident or disease?† These questions regarding the rights of the embryo or foetus also impact on questions such as whether it is permissible to use embryos for research or for the treatment of disease in others.

The Christian faith, then, treats life as sacred. All life is God's gift. Human beings are made in the image of God. Jesus died for every one of us and, therefore, every one of us is entitled to be valued as we value the Son of God.

In our secular or multicultural society it is often claimed (and many Christians seem prepared to go along with this) that religion is a private matter and that the laws by which society seeks to regulate itself cannot be derived from any one religion. Human beings have to work out for themselves what is right independently of any God or religious belief. I am not sure how one goes about deciding what is right apart from any notion of God. There is no universally agreed secular ethic.

* Doctors used to think that a possible definition might depend on the date at which the foetus is viable outside the womb, but improved care of premature babies brings this date earlier and earlier. I can see no theoretical reason why babies conceived in vitro might not one day be brought to maturity in an incubator and never be placed in a living womb at all.

† Some secular ethicists believe that rights come with consciousness and intelligence and that, therefore, a three year old chimpanzee has a greater right to life than a human baby.

According to the Christian faith, God is the Creator, Designer and Sustainer of everything. Human beings are made in His image. All justice, ethics, morality, universally applicable natural law, must inhere in Him and His Will. This is either true or it is not true. If it is true, it determines how we act in every area of our lives – public as well as private - and how we counsel other people to act. If it is not true, I should like to know what absolute truth is, if indeed there is such a thing.

It is worth thinking, however, if there are reasons apart from religious reasons, why previous generations have insisted on such a respect for life that contraception, abortion and suicide have been regarded as absolutely unacceptable. There are two reasons: the good of society as a whole and our individual security. Taking the latter first, we like to think that everybody respects our right to life. We will not be murdered so that we can be robbed. We'll be fed if we can't work, looked after if we're ill. If we hope for these things for ourselves, we have to make these universal laws from which everybody is entitled to benefit. There is also the good of society. If we could not trust people to respect one another's rights (supremely the right to life) we could never build a society, co-operating together for the common good. Furthermore, especially when life was a good deal more precarious than it is now, when the challenge was not the threat of over population, but the extinction of the tribe, society could not stand the cost of people opting out through suicide. One of the highest suicide rates in modern society is among young men. Society cannot afford to have the very people, whose health and vigour are needed to build and defend civilisation, choosing to opt out by ending their own lives when their own personal circumstances look bleak.

And these social controls work. Traditional catholic societies have fewer suicides than traditional protestant societies. Christendom has fewer suicides than, say, Japanese society where to take one's own life is seen as the honourable way out of a dishonourable situation. Christians and Jews do not generally become suicide bombers. Culture, as well as individual choice, affects the decision whether or not to die at one's own hand.

There is a cost, however. Strong disapproval of suicide puts unbearable pressure on the suicidal and on the families of suicides. Our Christian faith must make us compassionate. The problem, as always, is to be compassionate towards the person who is going wrong without seeming to support the wrongness.

The specific issue before Parliament at the moment has recently been the question of the assisted suicide of the terminally ill. As the law stands at present, it is not a crime to take your own life. It is, however, a crime to assist someone to commit suicide. This is true whether you are a friend or family member or a doctor. This means that a person who has chosen to die but does not have the capacity or the means to kill himself is helpless. A compassionate friend or doctor cannot assist the would be suicide without committing a crime.

Some people feel that if they have a terminal illness and face unbearable pain or excruciating indignity then they should be allowed to choose to die and that other people, if willing, should be allowed to help them. Given our society's emphasis on personal freedom and choice[‡], for some people it is hard to see why we should refuse. If other people disapprove of suicide, for religious or secular reasons, how does that give them the right to tell me that I must endure my illness until nature takes its course, rather than take action to bring my suffering to an end?

There are at least three major difficulties with this step of allowing assisted suicide.

1. It would effectively say that each individual's life is his own to do with whatever he pleases. It would be to say that we do not have a responsibility to other people or to God. It would be to say that we did not have to consider the effects on society of our own individual death or of a general right to die at a time of our own choosing. We would be abandoning the idea that God might be giving us an opportunity to grow through suffering. We would be neglecting the

[‡] Actually, I would dispute that we have more choices than people had in the past, just different ones. I can now swear on TV, for example, but I can't take my dog on the beach. The opposite was true fifty years ago.

opportunity our pain gives others to care for us.

2. Even if we conceded the principle of the individual's right to choose to end his own life *in extremis*, there are plenty of practical difficulties. Doctors get it wrong. Some people diagnosed as terminally ill recover and live long useful lives. We get it wrong ourselves. We do sometimes come through pain so bad that we wished to die at the time and are then very glad we did not. We might say that we would not want to live if we became demented or paralysed or whatever, but, when the time came, we might have changed our minds, but be unable to unwrite the "living will" which asked our doctors to end our lives. Our decision to die might be very distressing to our families and friends or our doctors and nurses who have devoted their lives to caring for the sick. Our families may not agree among themselves about our decision to end it all. If we thought that it had become acceptable to assist the deaths of the seriously ill, we might be afraid to seek medical help if we so much as suspected we had anything seriously wrong with us.
3. Once we concede the principle of euthanasia it is not likely to stop at a few extreme cases. Those who changed the abortion law thought it would only affect a very small number of people in desperate circumstances. In fact, of course, there are now thousands of abortions carried out each year for quite

trivial reasons. Once we accept that things are not black and white, but only shades of grey, one situation shades into another and what was once taboo quickly becomes commonplace. It is not hard to imagine a situation in which the frail elderly or the terminally sick felt obliged to choose euthanasia for fear of becoming a burden. Hard pressed health authorities might well conclude that those who are dying anyway should be encouraged to accept an early departure to free up beds for those who have a real chance of recovery. That is the logic of Utilitarianism – the greatest good of the greatest number – which underlies so much of the moral debate in our nation. Families might come too quickly to the conclusion that, if Granny appears to have no quality of life, the kindest thing would be to end it.

We have become used to treating moral absolutes as impressive fictions invented by priests as a means of restricting the legitimate freedoms of others. In fact, moral absolutes reflect the nature of God, which is the nature of the Universe and, despite all the difficulties, it is when we try to conform our conduct to these absolutes (the greatest of which is love) that we do the best for individuals and for society as a whole. I believe we would be very unwise to write into statute the right to an assisted suicide. The very best thing we can do is to provide the best care humanly possible for those who are in great pain or distress.

Roger.

Go Wild in Kent with KMBRC!

The Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) in partnership with Kent County Council is pleased to announce the second annual Big Recording Weekend on the 5th and 6th August 2006 at Shorne Wood Country Park, just off the A2 near Gravesend. 'Kent goes Wild!' is a free event aiming to engage and inspire adults and children to take pride and *take part* in their local environment. Over the weekend, the public will have the chance to see, participate in and learn about surveying for a wide range of wildlife species including small mammals, reptiles, moths, dragonflies and bats. Kent county species experts will be present to identify specimens, photos and wildlife artefacts and to chat with the general public.

'Kent Goes Wild' aims to:

- § Increase the public's awareness of wildlife and wildlife recording;
- § Promote Kent's biological and geological recording groups;
- § Promote Natural Heritage and increase the list of species recorded at Shorne Wood Country Park.

'Kent Goes Wild!' is an eclectic celebration of biological recording at all levels, which helps to protect the county's wildlife and safeguard the countryside in the Garden of England. For further information go to www.kmbrc.org.uk/kentgoeswild or call KMBRC on 01622 685646/780.



Cuxton WI

At our June meeting we celebrated our 61st Birthday. President Dorothy Drew welcomed members and guests and gave out birthdays for the month. After several short matters of business, we all sat down to a Finger Buffet set out on each table. The food looked most appetising and for dessert we had a selection of fresh cream cakes, party size. After clearing away, we were entertained by a group of Oriental Dancers, who performed various dances. Their costumes were extremely colourful and covered in sequins with fringes of metal discs which jingled as they moved. We had a break for tea and coffee and the dancers performed three more dances, this time in costumes they had made themselves, the other costumes coming from Egypt. We were invited to put on jingly bells and join in the last dance. A first no-one was brave enough, but eventually quite a few members joined in. It was quite an easy dance, performed in a circle, and great fun!

During the coffee break, a competition for a decorated hat was held and members paraded up and down the hall while the dancers judged them. There were quite a few entries and the winner was Ann Harris.

The Walking Group took the train to London and walked along the South Bank as far as Southwark, where they visited the Cathedral. They looked in at Tate Modern, but work was going on for a forthcoming Constable exhibition. At the Globe, a play was in progress. So no joy there either! However, it was a sunny day, although very cold, and they had lunch in a Greek Restaurant, which was much enjoyed, especially the chips! After lunch, they walked over the "Wobbly Bridge" and found the Salvation Army Headquarters, where they enjoyed coffee and cake in the café at reasonable prices and in the most attractive and relaxing surroundings. It can be thoroughly recommended if you are in that area.

The Poetry Group went to see Pam Ayres at the Central Hall, which was packed to capacity. They enjoyed a great evening listening to her poems, some new ones, and her anecdotes of her life as a teenager. As usual we didn't stop laughing. She is so clever at seeing the funny side of normal things!!

We are looking forward to various coming events, including the District Conference and a Garden Party and a Poetry Afternoon at Ryarsh.

Ann Harris.

Halling Bell Ringers

We rang for the Queen's Birthday on April 21st and David Irwin was made a member of the KCACR which makes six members from Halling. We have also had a number of visiting teams ringing at our tower. So we seem to be on the map again.

Two of our ringers walked the Moonwalk in London over night May 20th/21st, 26 miles. Well done Janet Homewood and Julie Hodwett. (Also well done Peter Silver for staying up all night with them and serving in Church the next day! RIK).

We could do with a few more ringers. Anyone interested, please turn up St John's Wednesday evenings at 7.00 pm or ring me.
Silver 242658.

Peter

Dickens' Country Protection Society

We should like to thank everybody who took part in the Barn Dance in May. A good time was had by all. Thanks especially to the organisers. It is with mixed feelings that the Society says "Good bye" to Eileen and Ken who are moving to Dorset. Their invaluable contribution will be much missed but we wish them well in their new abode. Mrs Yorwarth is the new treasurer. Enjoy the Summer now the warm weather has come and help us to protect the environment from inappropriate development.

Kay Rootes.



Nature Notes May 2006

Rain was falling on the morning of the 1st, but eventually the clouds dispersed to give a pleasant sunny day with southwest breezes blowing. In the afternoon, I walked through Six-acre Wood, which was bedecked with celandines, dandelions and wild garlic mustard. I heard the songs of a great tit, blackbird and song thrush. Hornbeam catkins were strewn across the path and dog's mercury bloomed near to where I watched a squirrel darting up a branch. Cow parsley flowers were gradually unfurling. White and red deadnettle bloomed, while along the edge of the oil seed rape, speedwell, fumitory and field pansies lifted their tiny heads to the sky. Bluebells could be seen in the woodland and on the edge wayfaring tree flowers were in bud. I walked down to Purty's Shaw between shoulder high oil seed rape flowers. Wild cherry petals floated down to the grass where clumps of stitchwort looked beautiful in white. Peacock butterflies and a bumblebee had settled on the rapeseed flowers. I found wood anemones and the first herb robert flowers. Then I saw the first ash leaves. A magpie flew across the field and a sparrow hawk hovered overhead.

The following day brought a chilly easterly wind but there was some warmth from the sun as we walked with Murphy at Addington. Doves foot cranesbill bloomed in the grass and red deadnettle, dandelions, shepherds purse, white deadnettle and daisies were also in flower. Silver birch trees had burst into leaf and their slender branches swayed in the breeze. A westerly breeze the next day brought warmth, bright sunshine and blue skies. On the 4th we took Murphy to Halling, from where we walked by the river to the heath and down the track where we heard the nightingale's song. It was beautiful. Vetch, daisies, black medick, buttercups, dove's foot cranesbill, ground ivy, white and red deadnettle and wild strawberry flowers bloomed. Flowers also adorned blackthorn, wild cherry and the wayfaring tree. Meadow brown, white and brimstone butterflies hovered over grasses and shrubs. Clumps of forget-me-nots and green alkanet adorned the field behind the heath. Slender silver birches in fresh leaf swayed in the warm westerly breeze, which rippled the river where the tide was ebbing. It was a beautiful warm day on the 5th when we went to Camer Park where bluebells in the woodland were bursting into flower and cow parsley was gradually unfurling. Ladys smock raised delicate pink heads to the sky, horse chestnuts were full of flowers in bud and field maples and an ash had burst their buds to reveal delicate leaves. I heard a woodpecker and various birds' songs. The following Sunday we took Murphy to woodland at Addington where carpets of beautiful bluebells filled the air with their delicate fragrance. Carpets of ground ivy were scattered along the edges of the footpath then on the open heath land I found common storksbill, doves foot cranesbill, white deadnettle, bugloss and forget-me-nots. The sun shone brightly and it was pleasantly warm. After several warm days we found that a frog had taken up residence in our pond. We have never had any frogspawn.

On the 13th I walked, in the morning, across Church Fields where cow parsley, may blossom and golden buttercups bloomed. I proceeded into Mays Wood where the lacy cow parsley was almost shoulder high and where clumps of white stitchwort bloomed and the wood anemones and celandines had been replaced by bluebells. Along the edge leading to Dean Valley, I found yellow archangel and herb Robert. Along by the deep yellow oilseed rape flowers, speedwell bloomed. I heard, in the distance, the cuckoo's call. The next day I went on a group walk to Ranscombe and surrounding areas. The weather was overcast and cool but that did not spoil the enjoyment of the walk. I saw flowers familiar to me and some I had not seen before. The hedgerows and trees were a fresh spring green and may blossom bloomed on hawthorn branches like snow. In the woodland carpets of beautiful bluebells filled the air with their heady perfume. I also noticed old tree trunks which had fallen to the ground and which were now excellent habitation for insects and small creatures. On the 15th I sat in the garden enjoying the sunshine and watching clouds being driven across the sky by a southeasterly wind and the swaying of the sycamore trees on the embankment. A bee hovered over the comfrey flowers; a magpie flew into the shrubs and later, a male blackbird hopped along the edge of the pond before having a bath. The drought continued.

In Camer Park, on the 15th, horse chestnut petals were being blown by a westerly wind onto the damp grass and snow like may blossom hung on the hawthorn branches. Lacy, tall cow parsley adorned the paths' verges and large areas of woodland where bluebells bloomed. Rain fell during the afternoon. The 19th was a cool, blustery day when I walked with a friend across Church Fields where may blossom, in all its beauty, filled the row of hawthorns opposite a field of golden buttercups. Cow parsley adorned the paths in Mays Wood where bugle, yellow archangel, ramsons, sanicle and bluebells, now fading, bloomed. A speckled wood butterfly hovered over the undergrowth. We walked down the warren where bugle, wild strawberry, buttercups, ground ivy and milkwort were to be seen. We came back along Pilgrim's Road, which was fringed with cow parsley. The following day I watched and listened to a chaffinch as it perched on our roof. On Sunday 21st I walked the Lost Landscapes route with a group of people. The skies were overcast and eventually rain fell but it did not detract from our enjoyment of the natural beauty around us. I saw, among various flowers, some beautiful lady orchids.

On the 23rd, when we went to Addington with Murphy, I saw that the strong westerly wind of the previous day had blown twigs and small branches to the ground. Heavy showers fell during the afternoon with more much needed rain forecast. We had experienced several cool, cloudy days. Then on the Thursday 25th, the sun shone warmly. A friend I'd made on the recent walk to Ranscombe came with me across the fields and through the woods to Dean Valley and over to Bush. We found all the familiar flowers, watched a peacock butterfly with its wings outstretched on the path in front of us, a

brimstone butterfly hovering over the rapeseed flowers and bees collecting pollen. The 28th was warm and sunny when I took Murphy for a walk while David was watching cricket. We took the path by the stream bordered by tall nettles, pink campion, cow parsley, forget-me-nots and deep blue speedwell. Ground ivy carpeted the opposite field and pink may blossom petals lay on the nettles. I heard a woodpecker's call and watched rabbits darting across the heath, which was

adorned with golden gorse flowers, speedwell, ground ivy and common storks bill. A fox suddenly appeared from behind a gorse bush and I know that Murphy was alerted to the scent but I kept a tight hold on him. As we returned to the cricket field, I was aware of copper beech leaves glowing in the sunlight. The month ended with cold winds. Was summer ever coming to the South East? Elizabeth Summers.

A Sonnet - St Lawrence, Upper Halling

St Lawrence stands four-square beside the way
 Where pilgrims on to Becket's tomb would pray,
 And broke their journey, so to quench a thirst
 Or thus partake of some repast. But first,
 To save themselves for journey's onward flight,
 Its lancet window held a welcome light
 That beckon'd all to be at rest and peace
 And come within its walls, all troubles cease!
 No grid-iron here, no martyr's gruesome death,
 Save saint's good name that once on Romans' breath
 Has down the years inspired the godly man
 and woman. Many lifetimes has it span
 Until, suppress'd by act of government,
 It ceased to be, but not in spirit spent!

JGB



Mayday Playschool
 Summer 2 newsletter

It seems quite impossible that this is the last term of our school year. How time flies! Already this term, we have enjoyed a world cup week. The children have made flags of all the countries participating and studied a world map to locate these countries. We have decorated biscuits with St Georges flag and look forward to having our faces painted England style tomorrow! Children and Aunties have all come to playschool in their football shirts- very patriotic we have looked too! For the rest of this term, we look forward to celebrating American Independence Day with pom poms, muffins, pop corn and fizzy pop - yum! Our colour week will be sunshine yellow, when all our activities will be centred around the colour yellow. We also look forward to a mini sports day and conclusion of term with a graduation ceremony and 'good bye' party for our school leavers.

Our rising fives have enjoyed their first visit to school with their parents. They met Miss Jones and staff, enjoyed a tour of the school and tried on school uniform. They are now looking forward to their more formal visits, which commence at the end of June. Our weekly visits to school to use the large P.E. equipment has made this move to school nice and easy for the children as they are already familiar with the building. We are sure that the children will now make a smooth transition in to school and we shall ensure that they are supported at all of their visits to school by a playschool Auntie.

This week we said 'goodbye' to 'Auntie' Pauline. Auntie Pauline has been a voluntary permanent helper with us for the last few years. She started coming to help us when her grandson Harvey, who is now happily at school in Mays Class, was at playschool and she stayed with us when Harvey went to school! Her loyalty and commitment has been invaluable to us at Mayday Playschool and she will be missed greatly by staff

and children alike. Auntie Pauline has left us to care for her new grandson. We look forward to welcoming her back when he is old enough to join us at playschool!

We are fortunate at Mayday playschool to have a number of mums who work voluntary on a permanent basis, offering us one day a week of their time. We are immensely grateful for this support and always welcome our parents if they want to stay for a session to help or indeed if they are just in need of a coffee. We feel that this is conducive to our family centred environment and 'open door' policy.

That's about all our news for now. Our term concludes on 21st July 2006. In the meantime, we look forward to more of this beautiful weather and much fun and friendship in our last few weeks together before the long summer holidays.

Mayday Aunties

Real Spirituality – A Sermon For Trinity Sunday
Isaiah 6 vv 1-8, Romans 8 vv 12-17, John 3 vv 1-17

I promised you a sermon on ἀναγωγή *anagogy*. It is an ugly word with a beautiful meaning. *Anagogy* is the process of God leading us up into Himself.

In one sense you can say quite a lot about God. Look at the wonders of the Universe. They are the creation of God and they tell us something about the wonder of their Creator. Use your own mind. Contemplate the mystery of God. Meditate prayerfully and thoughtfully. You learn something of the mystery of God. Read the works of other people – spiritual guides and philosophers, including non-Christians because God has made Himself known to sincere seekers after the truth in many different ways. Read the Bible, that collection of uniquely inspired books through which God has made Himself known to Jews, Christians and the world.

Experience God in private prayer. Experience Him in public worship Experience Him in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the other Sacraments.

In a sense we can know quite a bit about God both in terms of head knowledge, the facts we could enumerate, and of heart knowledge, that personal knowledge we have of God as we might have of another human being as Father, friend, even lover.

Today is Trinity Sunday. God the Father is revealed, He is apparent both in nature and revelation. Supremely He makes Himself known through God the Son – Jesus, both the second person of the Holy Trinity and the child of Mary – and the Holy Spirit, God with us, God within us and God among us. With Jesus we know God as *Abba, Father*, because God's Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen Christ resides in our hearts.

Yet, in another sense, we do not really know God at all. Everything we think we know of God is bound to be inadequate. We think we have grasped something of the truth, but then we realise. God is infinitely more. He is the Creator of the Universe but He is infinitely more than that. He is the One we talk to in prayer and He is infinitely more than that. He is present with us in public worship but He is infinitely more than that. He is with us in the pages of the Bible and He is infinitely more than that.

Now this is where it gets hard. What we know of God in Jesus falls so far short of the reality that the most profound spiritual guides say that it is as if we knew nothing. Likewise, what the Holy Spirit reveals to us is such a small portion of the immensity of God that is as if we knew nothing.

We rightly think of God as Father, Judge, Creator, as good, just, merciful, yet these words are such a pale reflection of God's light, a candle lit from the sun, that their light is totally swallowed up in His brilliance. If God's worth is infinite, our worship is insignificant. Human words, even good words,

reflect the limitations of our thought. Our thoughts are so limited with regard to God, that our words must be wrong, that they are as nothing.

This is the hard part, but there is relief – anagogy. God is drawing us onwards and upwards. He is drawing us up into Himself. The initiative is His. The power is His. It is by His grace that we are saved. As we are drawn into Him, it becomes increasingly clear that God is in everything and everything is in Him. He truly is Father, Judge, Creator, good, just, merciful. He epitomises these things. He epitomises everything. All things find their fulfilment in Him.

Which brings us to the mystery of the Word made flesh. In Jesus the divine nature and human nature are united in one person. Humanity is caught up into Deity. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are redeemed; we are saved; we are restored in God’s image; we come into our inheritance as the children of God. Our humanity is caught up in His divinity. We become one with Him and He with us.

Today I am preaching on the hard Greek word anagogy. Nineteen years ago, you may remember, I preached on another hard Greek word - θεοποιησις theopoiesis. It means making human beings divine and it is part of the same process as anagogy. Through the shedding of Christ’s Blood, everything that divides us from God is washed away. We are one with Him and He with us. We are led up into the fullness of God. We are made divine.

In Jesus, the human and the divine nature meet. In Christ, the human and the divine nature meet in us. We have God’s Holy Spirit.

Please grant me one more hard Greek word - περιχορησις perichoresis. This is a dance around. Can you think of the three persons of the Holy Trinity as united in an eternal dance of love? They hold hands, change places, cross in and out of one another, perpetually together, eternally one in infinite love and bliss. Now think of us caught up in this perichoresis, this eternal dance of the Holy Trinity. Led up into God by God, anagogy, transformed into His Nature, theopoiesis, we are caught up into that eternal unity of the Holy Trinity, perichoresis.

How can this be? Well it is all of God. He leads us up into Himself, but I am sure that we have to co-operate. He has given us free will to choose Him or reject Him. Will we let Him take us by the hand? Will we let Him lead us up into Himself? As St Paul says, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”



www.themothersunion.org

Family Festival in Rochester Cathedral

celebrating 130 years of Mothers' Union

Wednesday 9th August

10 for 10.30 until 2.45

Activities for all ages to include: puppets, singing, hand bells, clown, brass rubbing, story telling, face painting.

Worship to be led by our MU Chaplain – Rev’d Michael Skinner.

Please bring packed lunch. Drinks available.

Cost £5 per family. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Halling Cemetery

As previously explained, Halling Parish Council no longer feel able to pay for the grass to be cut. This means that we fall back on the very limited resources of the Church. We have almost spent the money allocated for grass cutting this year. So, now what happens?

For several years, Cuxton people have donated money for the cutting of St Michael’s Churchyard and this has worked very well. If anyone is prepared to help towards the cost of cutting Halling Cemetery, please give donations to the churchwardens. Any cheques should be made payable to Cuxton & Halling PCC.