

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
August 6 th The Transfiguration	9.30 Family Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040
August 13 th Trinity 9	9.30 Holy Communion	1 Kings 19 vv 4-8 p361 Ephesians 4 v25 – 5v2 p1176 John 6 vv 35-51 p1070
August 20 th Trinity 10	9.30 Holy Communion	Proverbs 9 vv 1-6 p642 Ephesians 5 vv 15-20 p1176 John 6 vv 51-58 p1071
August 27 th Trinity 11	9.30 Holy Communion	Joshua 24 vv 1-18 p240 Ephesians 6 vv 10-20 p1177 John 6 vv 56-69 p1071
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
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 & Holy Baptism	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 2 Peter 1 vv 16-19 p1222 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040
August 13 th Trinity 9	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	1 Kings 19 vv 4-8 p361 Ephesians 4 v25 – 5v2 p1176 John 6 vv 35-51 p1070
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Job 39 v1 – 40 v4 p539 Hebrews 12 vv 1-17 p1210
August 20 th Trinity 10	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Proverbs 9 vv 1-6 p642 Ephesians 5 vv 15-20 p1176 John 6 vv 51-58 p1071
August 27 th Trinity 11	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Joshua 24 vv 1-18 p240 Ephesians 6 vv 10-20 p1177 John 6 vv 56-69 p1071

Copy Date September Magazine 11th August 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 from 27th April.

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

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

Quizzical

September 15th teams are invited from all over for the Strood Deanery Area Christian Aid Quiz. This will take place at Frindsbury. On October 14th, we are holding our next Parish Quiz in the Church Hall. Again, all comers welcome!

Heartfelt Thanks

We came back to my beloved Cuxton to attend our grandson Jack Fryer's 4th birthday party on Saturday 17th June held at the Church hall. Whilst the party was in full swing our little 14 month old granddaughter "escaped" from the hall (dressed as a pink fairy) and toddled down church path and ultimately stood on the yellow lines in the MIDDLE of the road. Fortunately this story has a happy ending as a good Samaritan plucked Katie from the path of the traffic and returned her to the arms of her horrified daddy, our son Robert.

There were apparently two men, one who stopped the traffic and one who rescued Katie. We don't know who they are, only that possibly they live on Rochester Rd and that one or both work for Rugby Portland, but we would like to thank both of them for undoubtedly saving our precious little granddaughter's life. So if anybody knows these men, shake their hands, pat them on the back, buy them a pint, but most of all pass on a heartfelt thank you from Jan and Roger Fryer because they are Heroes in our eyes. The angels were certainly watching over Katie on Saturday weren't they?

Jan Fryer.



Vicars as Matchmakers

Give me a man in love: he understands what I mean. Give me a man who yearns: give me a man who is hungry: give me a man travelling in the desert, who

is thirsty and sighing for the spring of the eternal country. Give me that sort of man; he knows what I mean. But if I talk to a cold man, he does not know what I am talking about.

St Augustine of Hippo.

Can you remember being in love? It was the dominating passion of your life. You just wanted to be with your lover. You spent your leisure hours together as much as you could. You rushed home from school or work. You thought about her when you were apart. You might even have given up the odd football game. When you were really passionate about somebody, that passion consumed every other interest. You hardly noticed her faults. You even went shopping with her. You certainly didn't complain about her. You wouldn't tolerate anyone else being rude to her and you would cling to her with a fierce loyalty no matter what.

Even when the relationship matured from that first flush of enthusiasm, you were still there for her. She still came first. You didn't think she should take second place to your other interests. In a healthy marriage, your wife comes before your career, your leisure interests, even football. There is no place for selfishness in marriage because in love you give yourself utterly to the other and find your true self in self-giving love. Passion matures; it doesn't cool if love is genuine.

And this is where I and so many of the clergy fail. Our task is to be matchmakers, to introduce people to God so that they will fall deeply in love with Him, so that they become passionate about God, so that they burn with ardour for Him. Empty pews are a sign of our failure to do that.

We tinker around with peripheral things – what time the service is, what day of the week, what hymns and prayers we have. We worry about what people will like, who may get upset, whether people get on with the clergy and other members of the congregation.

We worry about the way society has changed so that there are so many other things to do on Sunday. We feel baffled that people would rather do sport or go shopping or even have a lie in than come to Church.

But all that is beside the point. If people only come to Church because they feel comfortable there, because they like the services we have, enjoy singing hymns, like the vicar and other members of the congregation and the service is held at a convenient time when they haven't got anything better to do, then they too are missing the point.

Empty pews are a sign of our failure as clergy, not because we haven't managed to put on the service people want at the time they want it, but because we have failed to make the match, so to introduce God to our parishioners that they fall deeply in love with Him and become inseparable from Him.

If people loved God like that, we'd be fighting them off. The churchyards at Cuxton and Halling before the Parish Communion would be like an airport arrivals lounge when a famous pop group are about to land. We wouldn't be wondering how to persuade people to turn out for Ascension Day or whether they might come if we sang more new hymns or if we went back to the traditional service people say they miss. We wouldn't be able to keep people away.

That is the real failure, the failure to get people to love God with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength. Any ideas what we can do about it?

*We love the place O God,
wherein thine honour dwells.*

*Jesu, the very thought of thee
with sweetness fills my breast.*

*Lord thy word abideth, and our footsteps guideth,
who its truth believeth, light and joy receiveth.*

*My God, and is thy table spread,
And doth thy cup with love o'erflow,
Thither be all thy children led,
And let them all thy sweetness know.*

A Thought

Anselm's method was to invite his monks to begin from what they themselves knew of the good, and to climb upwards in their thought to higher and higher goods until they began to glimpse, not God, himself, for he is ultimately beyond human comprehension, but a clearer idea of what he must be like.*

Only Joking

From the Carmelite news: A pilgrim to Palestine paid a visit to the sea of Galilee and, while he was admiring the peaceful scene and imagining the great miracles of Jesus, he was approached by a man offering him a boat trip out into the sea. Thinking this was probably going to be his one and only visit he asked how much it would cost. "100 pounds," came the reply. When he protested he was told that, after all, this was the sea of Galilee and that this was where Jesus had walked on the water, "Well", he said, "At that price I'm not surprised he walked!"



Mission to Seafarers

Sea Sunday (which we kept 9th July) is the day when we are asked to think about seafarers on whom we depend for many of the things that we use, wear or eat every day. It is also an opportunity to remember the Church's outreach to them through The Mission to Seafarers, which this year celebrates its 150th anniversary. It would be difficult to over-estimate the importance of seafarers to us as individuals, and to the global economy. Every year, their ships carry a tonne of cargo for every man, woman and child on our planet. In fact, they help to make the world to go round. Yet, it is very easy to forget about their contribution to our wellbeing when they spend so much of their lives isolated at sea. It has always been thus. When The Mission to Seafarers started its work in 1856, seafarers were regarded as outcasts and lived harsh, dangerous and isolated lives. Ships may have changed considerably since then, but seafarers still lose their lives in shipping casualties, and piracy is a major problem in some parts of the world. Chaplains regularly report cases of non-payment of wages, stranded and abandoned crews, and problems relating to safety and living conditions. These are in addition to the traditional difficulties that seafarers have always faced, such as long periods away from their homes and families, and isolation from amenities ashore that the rest of us can take for granted. In fact, more efficient cargo-handling techniques allowing ships to load and unload in a matter of hours, and security measures put in place in ports following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, mean that seafarers are more isolated than ever they were in the C19th. So the work of The Mission to Seafarers is needed as much as ever. Today, the Mission is at work in 230 ports worldwide caring for the practical and spiritual welfare of seafarers of all races and creeds, visiting them on their ships, offering them a welcome, visiting them in hospital, and taking up justice and welfare issues on their behalf. In over 100 ports it also runs centres where seafarers can relax away from their ships, find friendship, help with any problems and, most important of all, use the telephone or email facilities to keep in touch with their families.

This work is vital but we can't do it without prayers and support. So please remember seafarers and The Mission to Seafarers' care for them over 150 years. For more information visit www.missiontoseafarers.org or contact Gillian Ennis on 020 7248 5202 or email her at gillian@missiontoseafarers.org

St. Michaels Draw for June: £5 to Mary Moran, drawn by Emma Suranyi, £5 to John Bogg, drawn by Grace Pierce
St John's Draw: £5 each to Miss J Thorne (23), Mrs Knell (31), Mrs Homewood (36), Mr Parris (54), Mrs Tower (145) – drawn by Miss L Thorne.

Mediaeval Principals of Government

"As a litmus test for the legitimacy of all government, temporal as well as ecclesiastical, the common good became the measure by which the exercise of authority should be judged. For a ruler to secure his private interest rather than the common good identified that ruler as a tyrant. Failure to secure the common good was therefore to be corrected, ideally by counsel, but, if necessary, by disobedience, resistance, and ultimately deposition. This applied to both pope and king"* . Maybe we can still learn from the Middle Ages! RIK.

* from "The Mediaeval Theologians" edited by G R Evans.

Bible Study

It has been decided that all the Bible Studies will be at 7.30 pm on the last Wednesday of the month. Everyone is welcome to all of them although one each quarter is designated "Mothers' Union".

Friends of Kent Churches Cycle Ride

This takes place on 9th September. Please take part or sponsor someone who is. Details and entry forms from Rector.

Social Events

August 1st from 10.00 Coffee Morning, 15^H, Foxglove Row, Vicarage Road. More details, call 240889 or just turn up.

August 8th: Barbecue Lunch at 95, Pilgrims Road. Contact 241599.

August 16th from 3.00 Afternoon Tea, 73, Charles Drive. Details 724997 or just turn up.

August 24th: Cheese & Wine Evening at Rectory, 7.00. Details 717134 or just turn up.

September 15th 7.30 Deanery Area Quiz for Christian Aid at Frindsbury Parish Hall. Bookings 243223.

October 14th: 7.30 Parish Quiz, Church Hall. Bookings 717134.

December 9th: Christmas Coffee Morning Church Hall 10.00. Details 724997 or just turn up.

Also on December 9th we are hoping to have a **Homespun Evening Entertainment**. If you think you might be part of this, please speak to the Rector, John Bogg or Peter Crundwell. We'll arrange a few get togethers to plan the event at times to be announced.



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 contact Shirley Crundwell if you would like to go. 724997



Halling WI

Well Halling W.I. will not be 39 again. At our June meeting we celebrated our 39th birthday. Our president, Mary Fennimore was on vacation so Jean Mattingly took over proceedings. She welcomed Jenny Edmed, County treasurer and Mavis Kirby, County Vice Chairman (or one of them) and members and guests from other institutes in the District.

As usual a mountainous amount of Food had been prepared by the committee and the tables had been decorated with lovely arrangements by Evelyn, she has a Fantastic Flair For Flowers and Foliage. Once again Evelyn has been chosen to decorate the tables in the W.I. tent at the County Show. Well done Evelyn.

After our Feast, we were entertained by R.A.T.S, not the brown kind, but the Rainham Amateur Theatre Society. They are a dying breed, we could do with more groups like them, it was so nice to see a couple of young school girls among their

ranks, they were very good singers. They sang. We joined in and it ended a very good party.

July meeting is all about Recycling, and the competition letter, you may have guessed is F for Freddie.

Betty Head, Ann Hayward and myself recently attended the Annual Conference of the National Federation of W.I.s held at Cardiff, you really don't know what a grand organization you belong to until you have attended at least one of these conferences. It is such an experience.

Some members attended the District Conference held at Larkfield, our County chairman, Janet Jones, was in the chair and we were entertained by a retired local doctor, Dr John Brown, he was very amusing. Kingshill W.I. once again won the competition "Africa on a Table top".

Next year will be Halling W.I's Ruby anniversary, it is hard to believe we have been going so long and am now the oldest organization in the village Let's hope it will remain so. Phyllis.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

25 th June	Georgia Nicole Summer Cheshire	William Road
2 nd July	Ellie Olivia Soave	Demelza Close
9 th July	Ryan John Chalker	Bush Road
16 th July	Caegan Luke Davies	James Road

Weddings:

16 th June	Earl Bryan Bournier & Hayley Janice Gore	Cuxton
17 th June	Terence Edward Crowdy & Sarah Lear	Cuxton
14 th July	Matthew Ian Riggall & Jodie Cronk	Cuxton
15 th July	Paul Arthur Ellis & Patti Mattison	Cuxton

Funeral:

10 th July	Baby Nicolas John Kalli	Halling
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Cuxton WI

Our July meeting was held on a very warm night and several members were away on holiday. So numbers were down a bit. There was quite a lot of business to get through, including the report from our delegate at the AGM in Cardiff. Both resolutions were carried by a massive majority. We were pleased to hear that we won third place in the *Out of Africa* competition at the District Conference and our entry was on show for all to see. We had a very full trading stall with some beautiful glassware and china brought by one of our members. *Flower of the Month* was won by Shirley Houlan with a perfect white lily.

Our speaker, Stella Redman, gave a talk, mostly in poetic form, which she had written herself about *A Woman's Work*. This being housework, cooking, bringing up a family etc. She was very amusing and her poetry extremely well written, although when she was booked we did not realise it would be poetry; we had already had a poetry speaker earlier in the year.

Some of us went to another poetry event at Ryarsh recently, when we listened to a lady who had published her own books of poetry and told us of how she got inspiration for her poems from

everyday happenings. We rounded off the afternoon with a cream tea.

Quite a few of us went to Halling WI's birthday meeting and, as usual, we had a great evening. The buffet was excellent and we really enjoyed the entertainment. Halling always manage to find some good entertainment!!

The Walking Group took the bus to Kingshill. After getting off at the wrong stop, we eventually arrived at the Golf Club where we were treated to coffee by one of our husbands. It took us ages to find the footpath we were aiming for, but, after a long walk through part of the estate (very pleasant and beautifully kept), we found it and then we walked, and walked, no sign of the end, so through a hole in a fence and emerged by a building site where we were directed to the bus stop. This was another ten minute walk. So it was with relief we finally arrived at West Malling for a well-earned lunch!! We must have walked four miles, but it was quite an adventure! Next walk is along the towpath by the *Malta* to Maidstone, which will be uneventful, we hope.

Next WI meeting is Thursday 3rd August – Bob Ogley *Spirit of Invicta*. Ann Harris.

The Hunger Site

Every time you click on the Hunger Site you feed a hungry person. It costs you nothing, but, every time anyone accesses the site, advertisers and sponsors make a donation to charities providing relief to 30 of the world's poorest countries. www.thehungersite.com

Silver Jubilee: I'm writing this in eager anticipation. Full report next month. Roger.

Nature Notes June 2006

On the first day of the month, most of the country was warm and sunny, but here it was overcast and chilly with drizzle brought on northwest winds. In the afternoon, I walked to the village, returning through part of Six acre Wood where herb Robert, herb bennet and cow parsley bloomed. There was a short glimpse of the sun before grey cloud covered the sky again and a chill remained in the air. We enjoyed warm sunshine on the 3rd. The skies were blue and birdsong filled the air. In the evening, while we were out in the garden, Murphy spied a squirrel chomping elm leaves on the embankment. His barking did not drive it away. A slight breeze swayed the branches of the trees and I enjoyed listening to a blackbird's song. On the 4th, the sun shone through a hazy blue sky, keeping temperatures lower than the previous day but still very pleasant. We went to Addington from where I took Murphy along the lane where speedwell, ground ivy, pink campion and white campion bloomed on the banks. I also saw a solitary bluebell. The horse chestnut spikes were fading and tiny conker shells had formed. From time to time, high grey cloud sauntered across the sky, and then bright sunshine returned. As we walked back along the road, I could hear the songs of great tits and chiff chaffs and I watched a pair of great tits flying among ash tree branches. They were possibly hunting for food to feed their young. Cow parsley has lasted longer this year because of the coolness of the spring.

The following afternoon, when the sun shone gloriously, I went up to Church Fields to gather elder flowers from which to make cordial. I then continued up to Mays Wood and returned through Six acre Wood.

The following day was sunny and very humid with breezes from the southeast. Eleanor Wells came to visit Murphy and they had great fun together in the garden. We all enjoyed our time together. The 8th was extremely hot so we stayed at home and I played with Murphy in the garden in the cool of the evening. I heard a greenfinch and a chaffinch calling from the trees and watched a robin collecting bread from the bird table. The evening air was full of the fragrance of elderflower. As the moon rose, light grey cloud crept across the sky from the northwest and jackdaws, calling loudly, roosted in the trees. Blackbirds "pinked" in the shrubs. I watched a heron as it flew over the house the next day. The hot weather continued and by Sunday 11th, humidity levels were high. While I was reading in the garden, a tiny yellow black spotted ladybird, known as the 22-spotted ladybird, landed on my paper. It was followed by a tiny spider, which crawled up my arm. In the evening, I listened to beautiful birdsong and breathed in the fragrance of elderflower. The evening sky was brushed with high cloud, which was tinged with gold from the setting sun, and then the jackdaws flew in, as the sky became a salmon pink. It was very hot on the 12th when in the evening; I watched damselflies hovering over the pond and the surrounding buttercups. Some welcome rain fell during the next few days. On the 15th I took Murphy to the Brookland Lakes where a pair of swans with two cygnets and parent coots with five youngsters

glided on the rippling water. Damselflies hovered over the grasses, which with the surrounding nettles were long. Upright hedge parsley grew tall along the banks and the scent of privet filled the air. A variety of flowers bloomed, the highlight being a bee orchid, and I listened to the songs of nightingales, a cuckoo and chiff chaff. In the evening of the 17th we took Murphy to Addington where rabbits large and small scuttled across the road at our approach and poppies bloomed along the verges while birdsong filled the air. I gazed at a slender silver birch tree where catkins hung in profusion. As we returned home I watched the setting sun glowing from a clear sky. Several cool days followed and as I walked, I was aware of uniform greenness, darker coloured leaves and very few flowers. The 22nd was warm when I took Murphy again to the Brookland Lakes. Swans and a cormorant glided on the water. Along the way I watched a tortoiseshell butterfly and a red admiral butterfly in all their beauty. Wild cherries had ripened and brambles were in full flower. Privet, hedge cranesbill, cut leaved cranesbill, ox eye daisies creeping buttercups, knapweed, thistle, self heal, vetch, agrimony, St Johns wort common centaury, milkwort and a pyramidal orchid were in bloom. Hips and haws had formed. The following day I listened to our resident chaffinch trilling in the holly tree and a magpie chattering in a conifer. In the garden, the next day, I watched a pigeon collecting twigs then later, a song thrush singing loudly as it perched on a branch of a dead elm. Its beautiful song continued for at least an hour. On the morning of the 26th, we walked from Halling by the river then across the heath where wild flowers bloomed in profusion and in beautiful colours. Purple and pink goats rue, ragwort, ox eye daisies, mallow and teasels still in bud adorned the riverside path while pyramidal orchids, St Johns wort, evening primroses, vervain, mallow, vipers bugloss, common centaury and bedstraw bloomed. I heard nightingales, a cuckoo, blackbirds and finches as we made our way down the track taking us to the dyke where I then heard reed warblers. Gulls called as they circled over the river. Murphy enjoyed himself running along the dyke and back. As we returned I saw yellow stonecrop, elderflowers, and carpets of mint which filled the air with its fragrance. On our way back across the heath, I saw rabbits and a mangy fox. Needless to say, I steered Murphy well away from that. The following day we went to the Snodland Lakes where elderberries hips, haws and spindleberries had formed. Midge danced on the air and damselflies hovered over the reeds. I found figwort in a hedge and nearby meadow brown butterflies hovered. In the evening of the 29th, I watched a chaffinch bathing in the pond then a handsome mistlethrush standing on the stones edging the pond. It pondered awhile before flying off over the railway cutting. The final day of the month was hot so we walked in the shade of the trees in Trosley Country Park and from where we experienced some beautiful views. We are halfway through the year.

Elizabeth Summers



Dickens' Country Protection Society - Windmills on the Mind

With concern over energy supplies, it was only a matter of time before requests were made to erect windmills on houses. Windmills are, of course, not new in rural areas, but the idea of placing them on houses represents a new challenge. The Society has been concerned recently with two applications for 6' windmills on houses. We would like to hear your views on the subject.

Kay Roots.

“Our Lady of the Meadow”, Dode

Below the holy hill
Where mankind often climb'd
To view the known world spread below.
In hollow, wooded place,
Protected from Nature's sublime'd
And sometimes terrifying force
Lies Dode

Quiet, forgotten plot
Hidden from the daily grind -
A place the world has left behind.
The black death's persistent
And unrelenting forces
Advanced and, un-resistant,
Drained Dode

The village gone, perished, demised
The church, the only building still, survived
From Rufus' reign; it witnessed hist'ry
Passing by without due ceremony.
On man-made mound God's monument
Mounts a guard upon the testament
Site, where ancient's met and moot and
Wrangled 'til their tribune was at an end.

Who has stood. as have I ,
In the hollow below th'wood?
The vixen crying to her cubs
As moon is up and full.
And just as a breath of breeze
Strokes one's cheek, the ancients stir again
In Dode.

The long-ear'd owl shrieks out;
Hunts in flight in Luxon Wood;
The sound stirs sentiment in one's
Perceiving mind; ritual,
Pre-Christian, again performed
As one glimpses before, in mind,
Old Dode

If you would onward go with me
And walk again these hidden valleys
Left alone in time except by Nature.
Whose bounteous gift still is to nurture
The church itself is very small
Untouched by a revival or recall
To overly enhance its structure,
Or change its fabric or its furniture

But keep it as it was
When Norman hand decreed
It built upon its man-made mound
Next to the holy well..
It has slept five hundred years
'til now, when modern use occurs,
Has Dode!

And so, throughout the days
That are to come in this place;
Will it survive the calling of
All those in present rhyme
Whose interest and peace
Need quenching once and for all time
At Dode!

American Indian Spirituality

There are hundreds of American Indian languages and not one of them has a word for religion. They can teach us a lot. If you study the history of the human race, it seems that the earliest cultures believed in God or gods, a spiritual realm beyond this one. This anthropological finding ties in with the Christian Bible. In the Bible we are taught that God made the human race and that human beings related to Him. Humanity did not invent God. God made us and we alienated ourselves from Him through rebellion. The Bible tells how God won back His people from their self-imposed alienation. We are privileged in that we have God's revelation of Himself in the Law and the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible and, above all, in Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh. Nevertheless I believe that we Western Christians can learn a lot from the peoples who were once disrespectfully called “redskins”. There are hundreds of American Indian languages and not one of them has a word for religion.

The American Indians did not need a word for religion, because religion, the realm of the spirit, permeated the whole of their life and culture. Every animal, every bird, every flower, every rock, even, partook of the nature of the divine. Human beings and human culture were caught up in the reality of the Great Spirit Who creates everything, fulfils everything and is above everything. Communion with ultimate reality, the spiritual reality which fills the cosmic, was the essence of life for the American Indian. They can teach us a lot, but we should have known it already. We don't

read our Bibles enough. We don't read them with an open mind. We don't know enough of the history of our Church. If we did read our Bibles and the Christian tradition we would know that we are descended from people for whom God was everything. It is not that we do not have a religion in the sense of a system of values which defines our existence and underpins the values of our culture. We do have such a religion and its name is materialism. Our gods are silver and gold. In our society, spiritual values have been banished to the reservation. We should revisit the reservation and rediscover our own authentic spirituality. Remember what the psalmist says of people who have lost contact with the living God and sold themselves to idols:

As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold: the work of men's hands. They have mouths, and speak not: eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, and yet they hear not: neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like them: and so are all they that put their trust in them. (Ps 136 vv 15-19).

Let's start with words. The Indians had no word for religion, because they didn't need one, but words are very important in Indian culture. Words are powerful. Our voices require our breath. As in the Bible, breath is conceived of as bound up with life and spirit. Words should be used sparingly and reverently. In western culture we are in danger of seeing words as nothing more than a means of imparting information or a way of filling up the silence we are so much afraid of. But we ought to know that they are more than that. A person's career may be demolished by a newspaper headline. In the Bible, heaven and earth are created by the Word of God. The Law is God's Word given to His people through Moses – spoken and written. The ten commandments are the ten words. The prophets are bearers of the word of God, the word which not only announces what God is doing, but also puts His Will into effect. It is the Word of God which does not return to Him void. In the New Testament James reminds us of the power of the tongue. People who bless God and curse men made in His image are the worst kind of hypocrites. We treasure the Bible as the Word of God. Supremely, Jesus is God's Word made flesh. Words matter. The Word defines everything.

From words, we go on to names. For the American Indian, names are sacred. They are not spoken carelessly. In some tribes, individuals have their own secret name. I was very interested in the following words of a Navajo¹: It has been said by some researchers into Navajo religion that we have no Supreme God, because He is not named. That is not so. The Supreme Being is not named because He is unknowable. He is simply the Unknown Power. We worship Him through His Creation. We feel too insignificant to approach directly in prayer that Great Power that is incomprehensible to man. Nature feeds our soul's inspiration and so we approach Him through that part of Him which is close to us and within the reach of human understanding. We believe that this great unknown power is everywhere in His Creation. The various forms of Creation have some of this spirit within them. As every form has some of the intelligent spirit of the Creator, we cannot but reverence all parts of the creation.

Come back with me, please, to the Christian Bible. Our God's Name is too holy to pronounce except by the high priest in the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. Jesus is the Name above every name. The third commandment is not to take the LORD's Name in vain. We gave the animals their names. Abram, Simon and Saul took new names when they fulfilled their God-given vocations. We are named in our baptism. In Revelation Jesus promises a new name to those who remain faithful through persecution and temptation. It hurts a lot to be called names. In our materialist society, the Name of God has become an expletive. It makes you think.

Those words of the Navajo bring me on to the Indian's reverence for nature. Everything is seen as partaking of the divine spirit – inanimate things, as well as animals and plants. Prayer goes into gathering, building and especially hunting. The quarry has to be treated with great respect. If we do not reverence the world and especially the creatures who give up their lives so that we may eat their meat and wear their skins, there will come a time when the world is barren and there is nothing left to sustain human life. If we selfishly exploit the cosmos, we will destroy it and ourselves. Again, there are biblical parallels. The ancient Israelites were farmers rather than hunters, but some of the same principles apply. The blood of any animal killed for food or hide is poured out on the ground. The blood is the life and the life belongs to God. There are times when fields are left fallow. Areas are left to be gleaned by the poor. Corn, grapes and olives, flocks and herds are the gifts of God. If we want to enjoy them, we must not greedily exploit them for ourselves alone. We offer them back to God in thanksgiving. We respect nature's need to regenerate. We share with the less blessed.

The Christian tradition does distinguish the secular from the sacred. We are given dominion over creation. Cultures which worship the whole of Nature as sacred are unable to experiment on nature, to create sciences and technology. Until the white man came, the American Indian still lived in the stone age. We have felt free to exploit nature, to engage in commercial farming, to dig mineral ores out of the rocks, to build highways and cities, in short, to establish a technological society. We have conquered many diseases. We have created an abundance of food which the

¹ Cited in "The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian" by Joseph Epes Brown

American Indian could never have imagined. We can travel all around the world in a day or two. Our civilised society makes possible a literate culture with books and computers and highly sophisticated art and music.

And yet you can't see the stars for the streetlights. You can't hear the silence for the hum of the traffic. Motorways scythe through woods and fields. The atmosphere is polluted by summer smog. We are afraid of global warming, the exhaustion of our reserves of fossil fuels, the rising tide of refuse. We believe that our present lifestyle is unsustainable, yet we are so addicted to it that we cannot bring ourselves to take any serious action. We are caught up in a cycle. We have persuaded ourselves that we cannot live without satisfying our demand for consumer goods, yet, the more we consume, the more we want. Isaiah asked people several centuries before Christ *Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?* They couldn't answer him then. We can't answer him now, but we don't draw the obvious conclusion! Are we happier with all our consumer goods than other people are and have been without them? Do we feel more satisfied or fulfilled? I can't answer that question, but I do know this. I can remember my grandparents marvelling at the beauty and intricacy of an ordinary English garden flower. They weren't New Age weirdoes. They were just ordinary people with their eyes open to the world around them. When, however, I cruised in Glacier Bay on the coasts of Alaska a few years ago (something my grandparents could never have dreamed of doing) we were surrounded by mountains and enormous wonderful glaciers, there were hundreds of seals and seabirds, and some of the people on our ship wouldn't even come out of the hairdressing salon to see them. Spoiled or what?

There is actually a strong tradition which says that indulging the body actually makes it much more difficult to commune with the reality of the spirit, with ultimate reality. There is a very strong tradition in Christianity of fasting and mortification of the flesh, of spending time alone with God, in order to enjoy a more intense and immediate experience of the Divine. American Indians fast and mortify the flesh and go on retreat to meet the spirits, but we don't anymore. Again, it makes you think. For the American Indian, reality is the realm of the spirit. We only inhabit the realm of the spirit perfectly when we leave the flesh behind us at our death. This insight ought not to be at all strange to us Christians! But do we live and die as if we believed it? Are the elderly respected for the wisdom they have accrued in this life and their nearness to the next or do we treat people as a waste of space when they are too old to produce much or consume?

I was very interested to read that a common religious symbol among the Indians is the cross in a ring. This is very much a Christian symbol. For us it means eternal life. The Cross of Jesus brings us life. (Indians are well aware of the redemptive power of sacrifice.) The ring signifies eternity. In Indian culture, the ring stands for the cosmos, for the eternal cycle of reality. The four arms of the cross are the blessings which flow from each of the four winds. At the centre is humanity. As Christians we share this sense that human beings are at the heart of the cosmos, blessed and enriched by the spiritual and material creation. More elaborately, three rings with crosses are depicted one on top of the other joined by a vertical pole through the centre of each. Now the lowest ring is the physical world of plants and animals and inanimate things. The top circle is the realm of the spirit. The central pole and the middle ring both represent the human race. We partake of both the animal and the spiritual and, in some sense, link the two. Compare the Hebrew Bible. God makes man of the dust of the earth and breathes into him the breath of life, the divine spirit. Adam, standing for the whole human race, is both *of the earthy, earthy*, and the son of God. Jesus, the second Adam, the perfect man, the epitome of what it is to be human, is both human and God. He became man so that we should become divine.

We must press on. Peace pipes. Everybody has heard of the Indian peace pipe, but, I for one had not realised how sacred they are. The bowl and stem join heaven and earth. The breath of the smokers is life or spirit. There are special prayers as the pipe is filled, each grain of tobacco representing a different aspect of creation. In some tribes, after smoking the peace pipe, the smokers proclaim, *We are all related*. All those who have taken part in the rite are related to one another and also to the whole created order. Compare this ancient prayer which Christians have used at Holy Communion: *As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now reunited on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered from the corners of the earth into your kingdom*.

For the Indian, there is sacred time. Things are not so much past, present and future, as eternally real. When myths are recited, they are describing and affirming the way things are. The present is eternal. Eternity is always present. We have this in our heritage too. Jews keeping the Passover are not so much memorialising the events of three millennia ago as affirming that they, today, are the people whom God has redeemed. In the same way, the Christian Communion service is not a memorial service for Jesus; it is an affirmation that we are His redeemed people in the eternal present.

We used to have our sacred time, the year revolving around the feasts of the Church, celebrations of eternal truths. Gradually, the year has been secularised. Instead of holy days, we were given bank holidays which had to be on Mondays in order not to disrupt industrial production. Whitsun disappeared as a holiday. Easter looks like being sacrificed as a national holiday. The school year has been restructured in order more efficiently to train the producers and consumers of tomorrow's materialist society. Sacred time is reduced to two bank holidays and a commercial opportunity for the chocolate industry. Secular society is doing its very best to get the Christ out of Christmas and to ensure that only the gods of silver and gold are worshipped at the Winterval Festival.

And Sunday! I wish I had more time to talk about the loss of Sunday as a sacred day, sacrificed now to Mammon. Forget about the spiritual. Confine church to the reservation. Let a million cars drive to the out of town shopping centres, polluting the air with their fumes, and let millions of people buy goods that they don't need in a world groaning under the strain of exploitation, in which millions do not even have enough to eat, goods that will finish up in land fill sites or at best partially recycled into more consumer dross. And why? Because a society which has fallen out with its spiritual inheritance gets bored if it can't shop.

As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver and gold: the work of men's hands. They have mouths, and speak not: eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, and yet they hear not: neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like them: and so are all they that put their trust in them. (Ps 136 vv 15-19).

Sacred space. The wigwam is round. In the encampment, the wigwams are pitched in a circle. The circle is the cosmic cycle. The fire is the power of the Great Spirit. The pole is virility. The painted symbols signify the unity of Creation – spiritual and material and man's place in the providential order. In the same way, the Israelite Tabernacle in the wilderness was based on the heavenly pattern God showed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Temple at Jerusalem was built to the same plan. So are our traditional mediaeval churches – three spaces of increasing holiness: nave, chancel and sanctuary. In the church we do not swear, gossip or malign other people. We do not carry weapons. We respect the silence. We are especially reverent as we approach the holy table in the sanctuary. We are attentive to God's Word from lectern and pulpit. The sanctity of our religious buildings sets the standard for the way we ought to behave in the world.

I hope I have been able to convince you that the American Indians have something of great value to teach us, the primacy of the spiritual. It is something we ought always to have known. It is there in our own tradition, but we have neglected that tradition. Indian societies pass on their beliefs by word of mouth from generation to generation. Tradition is rooted in the wisdom of antiquity. It also grows, changes and adapts. If we are bound by the past, we cannot live in a changing world. If we think we are so much smarter than everyone who went before us that we can forget our tradition, we are in for a pretty arid time. Moslems learn Arabic so that they can read and memorise the Koran. Pious Jews do the same for the Hebrew Bible. Each generation learns, lives by and adapts the tradition and passes it on to its children. We're making a pretty poor job of learning, living by, adapting and passing on our Christian tradition. We've consigned our spiritual heritage to the reservation and adapted ourselves to the materialist religion of the C21 west, bowing down to the gods of silver and gold. The question is, what are we going to do about it? RIK.



Christian Aid

Thank you to everyone who collected and donated in Christian Aid Week this year. We made £1,725.10! Don't forget the quiz at Frindsbury for Christian Aid on 15th September (7.00 for 7.30). After more than 20 years service, Mary Acott has given up her role as Christian Aid co-ordinator for this parish. This means we need someone next year to take the names of potential collectors and supply them with envelopes etc. Christian Aid is literally a matter of life and death to some people and it would be tragic if no-one took on Mary's job. If you are prepared to consider it, I am sure Mary will explain what is involved. RIK.

Strawberry Teas

These took place in my garden during the month of June and were most successful. The weather was perfect and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I would like to thank those people who supported me. Thelma Partridge.

Lastly: A man bred a six legged turkey so that in large families everyone could have a leg. He never sold any, though. He couldn't catch them!