

Animals take centre stage for Rogation

WORSHIPPERS from Shalfleet enjoyed a morning with real animals for Rogation Sunday.

St Michael and All Angels Church was full for the traditional service to celebrate this ancient festival, which involves thanking God for the provision of crops.

Tractors were parked on the grass outside the church hall, and a dog, chicken and rabbit were in church for the service, while a goat waited outside.

The service began in the side chapel, in front of the tapestry with the poppies, before moving to the font where the Paschal Candle was lit, the font filled from suitably agricultural watering cans and the congregation heard their first lesson.

They then moved over to the Wade window for the second lesson, before going up to the chancel for Communion, where a delicious home made loaf took



Left: guitarists Michael Croft and Ella Simpson lead worship outside: right: Isabelle Minchin and Kate Bradshaw with the rabbit

the place of the more normal wafers and the rabbit went up for a blessing.

After Communion, worshippers processed out into the glorious sunshine to sing *All things bright and beautiful*, played

by Michael and Ella on their guitars.

They then moved over to the hall to join up with the tractors, the ancient farm equipment, and the goat, where there was a final hymn and blessing.

After the service there were

some delicious refreshments, thanks to the New Inn in the village.

More than 60 people from across the village and beyond tucked in to cake, brownies, sausage rolls and a glass or two.

Churchwarden Nick Oulton

said: "It was a great way of bringing the village together whether they had been to church or not.

"Many thanks, as always, to the Rev Val Hards for organising the service and to everyone who helped to make it such a success."



**Jesus said:
I came to
cast fire on
the earth,
and would
that it were
already
kindled!**

Lk 12:49 (ESV)

Enjoy a relaxing holiday

HOLIDAYS were originally 'Holy Days'. The year was punctuated by religious festivals which gave shape to people's lives, and cemented together their Christian faith and their day to day existence.

Not only were Christmas, Easter and Whitsun times when families gathered and celebrated, but other social and cultural events were focussed on the annual round of faith.

Preparing and sowing the crops, various stages of harvesting and fairs – such as the annual St Bartholomew's Day fairs at the end of August – gave life structure and meaning.

We cannot of course go back to a time when most people's lives were dominated and shaped by Christian faith, but we can ask what shapes and gives meaning to lives in 21st century, apparently secular, Britain.

Well one thing is holidays! Many of us save up time and money and put a huge amount of emotional investment into



**the last
word**

by the Very Rev David Brindley
Dean of Portsmouth Cathedral

having a good break, and hope it will recharge our batteries for another years, or at least for a few weeks.

Sometimes it works and we have a wonderfully relaxing time on a hot beach or looking at ruins (my favourite!) Other times it rains, or the car breaks down, or the children all get chicken pox, and we return home thinking it's a whole year until we can repeat the experience!

Other highlights shape and give meaning to our lives too. Sporting events are for some people really important –

Pompey winning promotion a few weeks ago brought huge joy to most people in Portsmouth; the uncertainty about the aftermath of the General Election and the questions over Brexit are events on a different level as they will in some way affect us all - and the effect may be long lasting, not just a week or two of euphoria or regret.

Human beings seek meaning and structure – holidays and Holy Days are all important and wherever you are on holiday this summer I hope you find it relaxing and recharging.