

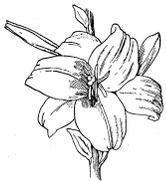
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
April 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mothering Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	James 5 vv 1-20 p1216 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
	11.00 Family Communion	I Samuel 16 vv 1-13 p287 Ephesians 5 vv 8-14 p1176 John 9 vv 1-41 p1075
April 10 <sup>th</sup> Passion Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
	5.30 Evening Prayer <b>St John's</b>	Lamentations 3 vv 19-33 p826 Matthew 20 vv 17-34 p988
April 17 <sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Matthew 27 vv 11-54 p998
April 21 <sup>st</sup> Maundy Thursday	9.30 am Holy Communion.	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 pp1081
April 22 <sup>nd</sup> Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	
April 23 <sup>rd</sup> Holy Saturday	11.30 pm Easter Vigil	Genesis 1 v1 – 2v4 p3 Genesis 7 vv 1-5 & 11-18, 8 vv 6-18, & 9 vv 8-13 p8 Exodus 14 vv 10-31 & 15 vv 20-21 p71 Romans 6 vv 3-11 p1133 Matthew 28 vv 1-10 p1000
April 24 <sup>th</sup> Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 John 20 vv 1-8 p1089
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 Matthew 28 vv 1-10 p1000
May 1 <sup>st</sup> Easter 2 400 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AV (tomorrow)	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Daniel 6 vv 1-23 p890 Mark 15 vv 14-16 v8 p1023
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism All readings from Authorised Version today.	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
April 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mothering Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	I Samuel 16 vv 1-13 p287 Ephesians 5 vv 8-14 p1176 John 9 vv 1-41 p1075
April 10 <sup>th</sup> Passion Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
April 17 <sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion (procession from hall)	Matthew 21 vv 1-11 p988 Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Matthew 26 vv 14 – 27 vv 65 p966
April 21 <sup>st</sup> Maundy Thursday	7.30 am Holy Communion 7.30 pm Passover Meal in Church Hall..	Exodus 12 vv 1-14 I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 pp1081
April 22 <sup>nd</sup> Good Friday	10.00 Family Service Offices 8.45 am & 5.00 pm	23 <sup>rd</sup> April Holy Saturday Offices 8.45 am & 5.00 pm
April 24 <sup>th</sup> Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 Matthew 28 vv 1-10 p1000
May 1 <sup>st</sup> Easter 2 400 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AV (tomorrow)	9.30 Family Communion All readings from Authorised Version today.	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
	6.30 pm Evensong to celebrate 110 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cuxton (now Cuxton & Halling) Mothers' Union. Preacher Rev'd Kenneth Clark, Vicar of Stone and Archdeaconry Chaplain.	

Holy Communion in Easter Week daily at 9.30 am at St Michael's except Thursday at St John's.

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On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of each month also at 2.00. **Saints Alive!** (formerly Sunday School) is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays). **After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's. **Copy Date** May Magazine: 8<sup>th</sup> April 8.30 am Rectory.

Wednesday Communion 9.30 am St Michael's		Thursday Communion 9.30 am St John's	
6 <sup>th</sup> April	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 5 vv 17-30	7 <sup>th</sup> April	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-47
13 <sup>th</sup> April	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 31-42	14 <sup>th</sup> April	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
20 <sup>th</sup> April	Hebrews 12 vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	21 <sup>st</sup> April Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 pp1081
27 <sup>th</sup> April	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-35	28 <sup>th</sup> April	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48



### A Christian Allegory

There once was a beautiful kingdom. The landscape was benign. There were all kinds of birds and animals. The weather was always perfect. There was plenty to eat and drink. The laws were just and merciful. No-one was expected to work hard. Everything was taken care of by a wise and good king.

But one day the inhabitants of the kingdom grew restive. Maybe life was just too easy. Maybe they were greedy for things that their king didn't provide. Perhaps they didn't feel sufficiently challenged by life in this primeval Utopia. Perhaps they felt that they needed to be free, free to reject their king's good gifts, free to make mistakes, free to grow and to progress, to be independent, to be masters of their own destiny. Anyway, whatever the reason, they constructed for themselves a ship and set sail away from the beautiful kingdom.

After many weeks of hard sailing, they finally disembarked on an uninhabited island. Here the soil was poor. There were few animals. The climate was uncertain. They worked hard, but often they were cold and hungry. What was worse was that they stopped co-operating with one another. They forgot the just and merciful laws they had learned in the kingdom. It was every man for himself. Life was much harder than it might have been because they wouldn't work together. They refused to share with one another.

The colony might have been wiped out all together if it hadn't been for the fact that every so often they found things washed up on the beach. One month it might be a wrecked ship with a cargo of grain or dried fruit or even barrels of ale. Another month, a raft would turn up with battered copies of books from an obviously great library. From these the colonists would learn how to build simple machines, bridges and musical instruments. One particularly harsh Winter an enormous consignment of fleeces was found washed up in an obscure inlet.

They couldn't explain where these things had come from. So they turned to religion for an explanation. They worshipped these cargoes as gods or they worshipped the unseen gods who had sent them the cargoes. Some of the colonists preferred to worship what they themselves had made. They needed, they thought, no gods or God save what they themselves could achieve. In time, these religious differences furnished further excuses to fall out with one another and to fight. When there was a dearth and no cargo appeared mysteriously on the shore, they would sacrifice one of their animals. If there was still no cargo, sometimes they would sacrifice a child.

Had they but known it, these anonymous gifts were sent by their king. Unwilling to invade the freedom which was so important to them, he sent them what appeared to be flotsam and jetsam, telling his captains to drop these useful gifts over the side many miles from shore so that it not be seen where they came from.

Somehow, however, there were always a few colonists who realised where the good things must be coming from and somehow messages got back to the good and wise king in his kingdom that things were far from right in the colony.

Every so often the king decided to send the colonists a messenger. Life might be tough on the island, the messenger would say, but it could be much better if the islanders reverted to the just and merciful laws promulgated in the kingdom. If they worked together, if they shared the good things they produced with one another, there would be so much more to go round and everyone would have enough.

Sometimes these messengers were honoured, especially if they came when times were particularly harsh, when the harvest had failed, storms darkened the heavens and sickness ravaged the hovels the colonists called their homes. In these circumstances, the messengers might be listened to and their wise words acted upon. Then things would begin to improve as people started to work together for the common good. Even so, once the crisis was over, the messengers' words would usually be archived and forgotten.

More often than not, however, the king's messengers were ignored. The whole point of the rebellion was to prove that the islanders were self-sufficient. They did not need the king, his laws or his gifts of material goods. They were happier and freer fending for themselves. So what if life was nasty, brutish and short? At least it was living.

Some of the messengers received a commission to promise a return to Utopia. Not only would the colonists be happier and more prosperous on the island if they obeyed the good king's wise laws, but one day they might return to the good land they had left behind. One day, they foresaw, a messenger would come with a special commission to bring the exiles home.

These messengers were often especially badly treated – not only ignored, but openly abused, sometimes tortured and occasionally killed. But they had a further message. The sacrifice of animals or even of human beings could not win the favour of those powerful beings beyond the island. Mostly the existence of those beings was nothing more than a myth. They didn't exist. So they couldn't do anything to save the islanders. Neither could the islanders save themselves by the works of their own hands. Somehow, however, the martyrdom of the true king's servants, their voluntary offering of themselves in self-sacrificial love, would bear witness to the powerful love of the king who would forgive the colonists' rebellion against him and restore everything they had lost through their disobedience and folly if only they would let him.

At last the king knew that the time for which he had been preparing had come. It was time to go to the island himself in the person of his son. No different apparently from any of the islanders, he joined in the life of the colony as one of them. He taught them what the law really meant. He set the colonists an example. He explained the message of the messengers whom he had sent to the island in the course of many long years. A few of the islanders accepted him though they did not understand him. The majority, however, rejected the king's son, as they had rejected the king. As the king had foreseen they would, the islanders made a sacrifice of his son.

And yet the son was not dead. His death had fulfilled everything necessary to undo the colonists' alienation from their king. He returned to the kingdom which he had never left and yet he remained on the island to strengthen with his presence those who had put their trust in the king's son.

True freedom, it turned out, was the freedom to be yourself. Freedom was not to be found in adolescent rebellion against authority. In order to be free you needed to be free from greed and lust and selfishness and indifference and hatred and all those things which destroy. A free man or woman or child is one who embraces freely such things as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

This is life in the kingdom once a man or woman acknowledges his kinship with the king. To this life the islanders will indeed one day return. Or at least those who accept the message of the son will one day so return. In the meantime they can live the life of the kingdom as long as they remain on the island. For the

faithful islanders this will be a foretaste of the life to come and for the so far faithless islanders it will be a witness to what life truly is in the kingdom and what life would be for them too if only they would accept it as their king's good gift.

#### Donations in Memory of Eileen Knight

Thank you all for your generosity in memory of my mother. I am very grateful for your continued prayers and all your other support at this difficult time. Donations in my mother's memory have amounted to £350 for the Wisdom Hospice and £843.15 for our parish church. She would be very pleased. Thank you all.  
Roger.

#### Annual Meetings 2011

The Vestry Meeting to elect churchwardens and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to do everything else will take place at St John's Church Halling at 10.00am on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April. Everyone whose name is on the church electoral roll or the register of local government electors in the parish is entitled to be present and vote at the Vestry Meeting. This meeting will choose four churchwardens (two for each church) who must be nominated on the appropriate form prior to the meeting. They must be at least 21 years of age, communicant members of the Church of England and on the electoral roll.

The APCM is for those on the parish electoral roll. It has to elect three representatives to deanery synod and ten (five each from Cuxton and Halling) to the PCC – at least one of whom we desperately hope will be able and willing to act as treasurer. You have until 10<sup>th</sup> April to sign up with Peter Crundwell for the Electoral Roll. To be on the Electoral Roll you must be baptised, at least 16 years old and a regular worshipper and/or resident in the parish. Anyone on the electoral roll may stand for PCC with the exception that those over eighteen must have been on the roll for at least six months. (This is a relatively new requirement reflecting the fact that the Church of England has its share of bureaucrats with nothing better to do with their time than to complicate the lives of the rest of us!) Deanery Synod members must be on the electoral roll and at least eighteen years old but I cannot find any requirement that they must have been on the roll for any set length of time prior to election. Candidates for both these roles and for the role of sidesmen may be nominated at the meeting or in advance. Roger.

#### Black and Green Humour

During the worst of the Blitz in 1940 when Germany was bombing our cities we were, tit for tat, bombing theirs, a "cockney sparrow" made the following observation. "The RAF might as well bomb Britain and the Luftwaffe bomb Germany. It would save fuel!"

#### Bons Mots

- After the Second World War it was said that Britain was morally great but economically bankrupt.
- Sixty years later, in 2005, it could be argued that Britain was economically great but morally bankrupt.
- Six years later, in 2011 Britain might well be said to be economically bankrupt as a consequence of the moral bankruptcy of its social, political and financial institutions.
- Could it be that, at some future date, a return to moral greatness might lead to a return to economic greatness?
- Would economic greatness necessarily then corrupt public and personal morality so that the circle would inevitably go round again?

#### Wilde Rabbit Pye – Another Look

A correspondent observes that school dinners were not served at Cuxton until after the War and that Mrs Pye was never involved in serving them. Mrs Rabbit did become the school cook. Other members of the school community with culinary names were pupils called Cook and Baker. Mrs Wilde became the school secretary when Miss Matson was the headmistress. She handed over to Mrs Ledger when Miss Skinner took over the headship. She in turn handed over to Mrs Ralph and she to Mrs Rogers, who continues in the office. Miss Matson had taught my mother at Gordon Road Strood before she came to Cuxton. Many readers will have known, know or have heard of all these people. The influence people have lasts a very long time.  
Roger.

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

27<sup>th</sup> February

Brandon Taylor Williams

Foxglove Row

Aiden James Williams

Foxglove Row

6<sup>th</sup> March

Daniel Paul Foreman

Chatham

### Funeral:

23<sup>rd</sup> February

Colin Martin (89)

May Street

### Something to Ponder

My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?

אלי אלי למה עזבתני

*Christ became the atheist, the one without God so that men might return to God.*

Raniero Cantalamessa.

### Recommended Reading

The best book on prayer I have come across is *God on Mute* by Pete Greig. I found it in Cuxton Library. Prayer is one of the most basic things we do as human beings, but sometimes our prayers apparently go unanswered even though they are unselfish prayers for good things for other people – like healing from a horrible disease. Why is it that God doesn't answer these prayers the way we would like? Some people blame us for not having enough faith – which can be a cruel and unfair thing to do. Other people conclude that God can't or won't help us or that there is no God. All these responses are wrong. There are no easy answers but Pete Greig is the most helpful I have come across. Roger.

### Thanks For Your Support In Paying Our Debts

Donations continue to come in towards paying off our parish share debt. The hope is that every adult in the parish will donate £5 to keep us financially viable. So far we have collected £1,321. So there is still a long way to go, but thanks to all those who have donated so far. Any further donations please to rector, treasurer or churchwardens. Any cheques should be payable to *Cuxton and Halling PCC*. If you can *Gift Aid* your donation, that adds about 25% to its value. Our financial situation is truly terrifying. Roger.

### Another Cause for Celebration

2011 is 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible. 2012 is the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer. I am hoping to celebrate with a BCP Communion service on St Bartholomew's Day (24<sup>th</sup> August) next year. This was the day on which it came into general use.

There are three reasons to celebrate the publication of the Book of Common Prayer.

- The first is that we have an English prayer book at all. Before \*Cranmer, the services were all in Latin, which many people did not understand.
- The second is that Cranmer's BCP retained the best of the Catholic tradition and effectively proclaimed the best doctrinal insights of the protestant Reformation.
- The third is that the English of the BCP is both beautiful and memorable so that it has had a profound effect on the faith of English speaking people throughout the world for the last three centuries and formed the basis for all the various revised and modernised prayer books of all the churches in the Anglican Communion.

\*Tudor Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was the author of most of the BCP, producing two editions in 1549 and 1552. The English Prayer Book was temporarily abolished under Mary I and reintroduced by Elizabeth I with a few fairly minor alterations. The prayer book was abolished under Cromwell and brought back into use with the Restoration of King Charles II in 1662 with a few modifications and updates. This is substantially the BCP we have today, supplemented and complemented since the 1960s with various alternative and additional services which coalesced in the Book of Common Worship, from which most of our Sunday services are now taken.

St John's Draw: £25 to Mrs Fallows (184) & £10 each to Mrs Court (150) and Mr Silver (77) – drawn by Mrs Carter.

Church Hall February draw : £5 to Shirley Crundwell, drawn by Dave Maxwell

## Forthcoming Attractions 2011

12th April: Celebration 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dedication of Church Hall.

15<sup>th</sup> April Christian Aid Supper Halling Church 7.30pm.

21<sup>st</sup> April: Passover Supper in Church Hall 7.30pm.

25<sup>th</sup> April: Easter Egg Hunt Rectory Garden 2.00 pm.

1<sup>st</sup> May: 6.30 pm Evensong to celebrate 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cuxton (now Cuxton & Halling) Mothers' Union. Preacher Rev'd Kenneth Clark, Vicar of Stone and Archdeaconry Chaplain.

25<sup>th</sup> May: 7.30 pm Pastor Norman Hopkins of Waterford House Evangelical Church to speak on 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible at St John's. (Pastor Hopkins has already attracted notice as a speaker at Halling Historical Society.)

24<sup>th</sup> June (Nativity of St John the Baptist): 7.30 pm Confirmation and Patronal Festival Eucharist at Halling.

25<sup>th</sup> June: 7.30 pm Brook Orchestra Concert at St John's  
{Also this weekend a Halling Exhibition is planned to take place in the church.}

26<sup>th</sup> June: Andrew Daunton-Feare preaches at 11.00 service at Halling and gives a slide presentation of his work, also at St John's. Event to include tea.

9<sup>th</sup> July: Parish Barbecue\* (if legally possible and without hassle from Medway Council).

August 4<sup>th</sup>: 7.30 pm Concert by Mean Time (early music group) at St Michael's. (It is hoped that parishioners will be found to offer group members overnight hospitality.)

September 29<sup>th</sup> Michaelmas: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist with Rt Rev'd James Langstaff our new diocesan bishop.

15<sup>th</sup> October: Quiz in Church Hall.

### \*Three Cheers for Lord Clement-Jones

Lord Clement-Jones has introduced into the House of Lords a bill to exempt gatherings of fewer than 200 people from the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003. According to the BBC, the bill has government support. So it has a good chance of passing into Law. I should not be surprised if it also had support from the opposition. I am sure that, when the last Labour Government gave local councils greater powers to regulate and prohibit social events, they were thinking about massive illegal raves and town centres blighted by binge drinking. I do not think that they intended these powers to be used against church barbecues, pub singsongs and children's parties!

Something similar happened with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). This gave councils powers of surveillance similar to the police and the security services as part of the fight against terrorism and other serious crime. In practice, of course, councils used these powers to carry out surveillance on small children suspected of attending a nursery outside their catchment area and householders suspected of putting out their dustbins on the wrong day. These powers too, thankfully, the government is taking away from councils.

You could write to our MP, Mark Reckless, at House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA and express your support for Lord Clement-Jones sensible legislation.

**Christian Aid**

A Division of The British Council of Churches



Halling's **Lent Lunch** for Christian Aid will be on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April at 12.00 at St John's. (Cuxton's **Lent Lunch** on Ash Wednesday raised £77.30.)  
The **Deanery Christian Aid Supper** is at St John's at 7.00 for 7.30 pm on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April.



## Cade Quintet

After an interval of 18 years we are delighted to welcome back the Cade Quintet to perform at St Michael's Church Cuxton on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May at 7.30 pm.



### Halling WI

We started our February meeting by remembering in our thoughts, Eileen.

Every member is sorely missed. We don't like empty chairs, but on the brighter side we had another new member, not to take her place but to keep the numbers up. After *Jerusalem*, the January minutes were read and signed and the correspondence was dealt with an invitation from the Halling Gardeners to join them at their next meeting on 21st March to hear Tom Hart Dyke speak about his passion for collecting plants from around the World which he now grows in his "World Garden" at Lullingstone Castle. Sadly he lost some of his plants in this winter's bad weather. Home Economics days are on 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> April at Ditton and the Annual Council meeting at Tunbridge Wells is on 16th March. There was a thank you letter and update, with some photographs of the Christmas boxes appeal from Blythswood care, such a lot of happy faces.

Our speaker for the evening was Ann Carter, her subject, "The other side of Venice", no, not the Indian Ocean, but the less touristy places of the city. Ann is passionate about Venice. She told us about and showed us with her slides many less

well known areas of the place but they all had watery streets. She reprimanded me; they are canals she said. The canals are crossed with many bridges, some famous ones, like the Rialto bridge but many less photographed ones. The constant damp plays havoc with the buildings, but very few people ever get drowned, and according to Ann, St Mark is buried in Venice.

Ann judged our competitions. Gemma Graves won the Flower of the Month with her Snowdrop, not the one from Sylvia Mitchell which won last month's Flower of the Month. We had quite a few fairies in our monthly competition, even some fairy liquid, but Sylvia's photograph of her little niece dressed in a pink frilly fairy frock Ann chose as the first. The competition for March, a decorated matchbox. First you have to find the matchbox, but any size will do. Our speaker for March will be Mr Spears his subject, "South Antarctica". You can't get much lower than that, and it will be chilly. Very wet in Venice this month. Very cold in South Antarctica next month. When are we going to some where WARM? Why not come and join us at the Jubilee Hall on the third Tuesday of the month at 7-15pm. We make a very good cup of Yorkshire tea. Phyllis.

### Bluebell Wood Charity Walk

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April 10.00 am Upper Halling.

After the success of our previous walks in the last three years we have raised almost £10,000 for the Eve Appeal. Approximately 6.5 km or 4.2 miles. Approximately 2.5 hrs. Please bring your own refreshments. Meet at Browdens Road car park, opposite Jubilee Hall. A bus leaves Lower Halling (fire station) at 9.13 and returns from Browdens Rd at 13.20, 14.20 & 15.15. Sponsorship forms and enquiries Pat Lawry 016334 240892. Cheques payable to The Eve Appeal. Registered charity number 1091708.



### Thought-Provoking

Research by Rabbi Dr R Brenner into the religious beliefs of holocaust survivors found that for nearly 50% experience of the camps made no difference to their faith. They didn't expect God to save them. 11% of holocaust survivors lost their faith, though many seemed more angry with God than inclined to deny His existence. The statistic that amazed me was that 5% of his survey had been atheists when they went into the camps and found God there. If this figure is representative, as many as 177,000 people may have come to faith in God through being incarcerated in the Nazi death camps.

### 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Church Hall

April 12<sup>th</sup> marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of our church hall at Cuxton. We hope to celebrate this with an evening filled with fun and fellowship from 7.00 onwards. There will be a short talk about how it all began, followed by entertainment and a sing-along. Also included will be some light refreshments. Please be there if you can. You will find a warm welcome.



### 1<sup>st</sup> May Evensong at St Michael's

This is going to be a very special service as it will be celebrating the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of our Mothers' Union branch in Cuxton, which was in May 1901, just 25 years after Mary Sumner started the Mothers' Union by inviting some young mothers to her rectory home to teach some hints about being a Christian mother, as well as basic rules of motherhood. Halling's branch commencement came shortly afterwards and of course we are now a combined branch. You are ALL INVITED to join us for this CELEBRATION SERVICE and for refreshments in the hall afterwards. The Rev'd Ken Clark, our Diocesan Chaplain, will be our preacher and we hope to include an enrolment in the service too. We also hope to welcome any past members who have moved away and anyone who feels they have a connection to the MU through relatives who were once members. Please put the date in your diaries and come and share with us. You will be most welcome.

Shirley Crundwell.

### **Nature Notes February 2011**

The first day of the month is bright but chilly with a few glimpses of the sun. The great spotted woodpecker pays a visit to the feeders. I listen to birdsong in the garden where green shoots are emerging heralding the demise of Winter and the beginning of Spring.

The next day is grey and damp but not too cold. Long tailed tits are making regular visits to the garden. On 3<sup>rd</sup> the sun shines brightly from a blue sky brushed with high cloud. The birds sing and the sun is warm on my face. As we drive to Cobtree Manor Park with Murphy, I see plenty of catkins, a sure sign of Spring and the new life which it brings. We walk among the trees and I see tight buds on their slender twigs. The early morning of the next day is damp then strong winds blow throughout the day. In the late afternoon I listen to the rooks as they fly home to roost in the trees near the river.

Strong winds have been blowing through the night and continue into the next day. We drive to Bluewater with Murphy and I see beautiful catkins and pussy willow. The wind from the west drives grey clouds across the sky. Snowdrops and crocuses are blooming in the garden. As I walk to church the next day, I look up at the sky to see billowing grey clouds racing across the sky in the strong west wind. Clumps of beautiful snowdrops bloom in the churchyard. The wind does not abate and there is dampness in the air.

In the afternoon of 7<sup>th</sup> I walk with Murphy in Cobtree Manor Park where I see a shrub covered in tiny pink flowers but I cannot identify it. The 8th is a beautiful day with golden sunshine beaming down from a blue sky and it really feels like Spring. On 10<sup>th</sup> grey skies

empty their rain on me as I walk in Cobtree Manor Park with Murphy. As I walk round the perimeter of the park I am aware of the shrubs glistening in the rain. On our way home I see golden gorse at the roundabout leading on to the motorway. It looks beautiful as it brightens the scene.

For several days the skies are grey and rain falls then on 14<sup>th</sup> the sun shines again and fluffy white clouds drift across the sky from the west. We walk in Cobtree Manor Park where the ground is sodden and very slippery. Clumps of snowdrops bloom beneath the trees. In the evening, the setting sun brings golden light to the sky and the garden. The sun shines brightly from a blue sky as I walk along the edge of the churchyard where I see my first celandine with its golden petals open to the sky. When I walk home, I feel some of the sun's warmth on my face. In the afternoon I watch a wren as it hops among the bare jasmine branches on one of the garden walls. The next day mating is in the air as I watch a male wood pigeon chasing a female around the garden. More damp grey days follow and the air is cold.

On 21<sup>st</sup> I see newly burst elder leaves as I walk with Murphy in the park. Despite so many grey days, my spirits are lifted by the strident calls of great tits for they herald the coming of Spring. As rain falls on 23<sup>rd</sup> I am intrigued by a great spotted woodpecker as it clings to one of the feeders but makes no attempt to eat. This continues for quite a while until, eventually, it does start pecking at the nuts. Daffodils are in bud in the garden. The sun shines warmly the next day when I walk with Murphy in the park. We walk along some of the leaf strewn paths. At home, in the garden, David alerts me to a bumble bee gathering

nectar from the winter flowering heather. The setting sun brings a salmon pink glow to the sky. The bare branches of trees are still as statues.

Heavy rain falls again on 26<sup>th</sup> and the garden is very soggy. The skies clear as the light fades. The 27<sup>th</sup> is bright and quite chilly. I walk to church, noticing primroses growing in the grass. Celandines bloom along the roadside verge across from my home. The last day of the month is cold and grey and when I go

*Among the taller wood with ivy hung,  
The old fox plays and dances round her young.  
She snuffs and barks if any passes by  
And swings her tail and turns prepared to fly.  
The horseman hurries by, she bolts to see,  
And turns agen, from danger never free.  
If any stands, she runs among the poles  
And barks and snaps and drives them in the holes.*



## EASTER EGG HUNT

All are welcome to join us for the annual St. Michael's and St. John's Easter Egg Hunt, which will be held on Easter Monday (25th April) in the rectory garden at St. Michael's, starting at 2 pm. After the thrill of searching for those eggs in the garden, why not come up to the church hall where there will be children's craft activities as well as refreshments for all and a raffle. You are also warmly invited to come and have a look inside the church, where you can view the Easter Garden or perhaps light a candle for a loved one. There will be further activities for children going on inside the church. Cost for all activities only £2 per child.

### Colin Martin (1921 – 2011)) RIP

Colin's farewell was attended by close family and many local cricketers of all generations. He was born in May Street Cuxton and ended his days in the same house. Colin gained a place at the famous Dockyard School from Rochester Tech. He then became respected electrical draughtsman at Chatham Dockyard.

His passion was always cricket and he served Frindsbury CC both on and off the field for over 60 years. He also played for Cuxton Social CC on Sundays early in his career. A local player of very nearly county standard. DAH.

### Putting the Church of England Right A Sermon for Ash Wednesday 2011

These are challenging times for the Church of God. Shabaz Bhatti, a Christian minister in the government in Pakistan, was murdered last Wednesday for standing up for the rights of religious believers. We ought to remember that Christians in other countries still face persecution and even martyrdom for our faith. This is particularly true in the Middle East at the present because long-established indigenous Christian Churches bear the brunt of their compatriots' resentment at what they believe to be the unwarranted interference of the supposedly Christian West in the affairs of Moslem nations. But Christians are persecuted in many places – wherever there are totalitarian governments which fear the expression of ideologies other than their own. This is true, for example, in China, Burma, North Korea and, ironically, in Zimbabwe - ironically because President Robert Mugabe claims to be a Christian. He sat next to Prince Charles at the funeral of Pope John Paul II.

Yet the persecuted Church is often the healthy Church. Persecuted churches are firm in their faith. They grow. They resist persecution by loving their enemies and praying for their persecutors and they grow both in the quality of their Christian life and in their numbers.

out to feed the birds drizzle is falling. In the afternoon, I walk along Pilgrims road where I see clumps of snowdrops on the banks. I watch rooks circling above the trees and they caw loudly as they prepare to roost.

Nature is soon to bring new life to the world, so I have chosen "The Vixen" by John Clare as my poem for this month. Elizabeth Summers.

*The shepherd sees them and the boy goes by  
And gets a stick and progs the hole to try.  
They get all still and lie in safety sure,  
And out again when everything's secure,  
And start and snap at blackbirds bouncing by  
To fight and catch the great white butterfly.*

Whereas in this country we have completely different problems. The Church is becoming marginalised. Twice lately – once in the case of a bed and breakfast hotel, once in the case of a willingness to become foster parents – Christian people have effectively been told by the courts that the teachings of their religion are irrelevant. The assumption is that we live in a secular society. Religion is something we are free to practise in private, but it must be allowed, it seems, to have no bearing on the way our affairs are conducted in the public domain.

As the state takes more and more control of the way we all live (admittedly for what it believes to be good reasons), it becomes harder and harder to offer anything distinctive, whether we are a Church, a charity or an interest group. Some people are quite worried that, under some pressure from government, the Church of England is adopting terms and conditions for its clergy more like those of secular employment than those implied by a vocation to sacred ministry. I refer in particular to the Clergy Discipline Measure and Common Tenure.

It is probably still true that the majority of people in this country continue to call themselves Christians, but most of them curiously seem to see little need to belong to the Church. The result is, in contrast to the Church in countries where she is persecuted, that our Church in England sometimes feels like she is dying.

Among those of us who are committed to the Church, there seems to be an inability to come to a common mind. There are actually three possible answers to the questions should Christian hoteliers be allowed to reserve double beds for married heterosexual couples and should Christian foster parents be compelled to tell their charges that homosexual lifestyles are as acceptable morally as heterosexual life styles?

1. You can believe that homosexual practices are always sinful and that Christians not only have a right but also a duty to discourage them.
2. You can believe that practising homosexuals have the same rights as married couples and that no-one therefore should be allowed to discriminate against them.
3. You can believe that practising homosexuals have their own rights and that people who believe homosexuality to be wrong also have their own rights and that the beliefs of both ought to be respected equally.

There are bodies of people within the Church (as in the world outside the Church) who hold all three of these views and there is a danger that, far from coming to a common mind, or even respecting our differences, the Church of England and the Anglican Communion could split on the issue of homosexuality, as we could split on the issue of women bishops. Indeed some people have already left the Church of England and joined the Roman Catholic Church. Differences on these two issues – homosexuality and the ordination of women – reflect deeper differences within the Church on questions of authority. Does the Bible reveal God's Will? Does God make Himself known through the ongoing but centuries old tradition of the Church? Do we discern God's Will in and through our contemporary culture? The Church of England has always answered *Yes* to all three: Scripture, Tradition and Reason – a threefold cord which is not easily broken. But in what proportion do we weigh these three ingredients as we seek a recipe capable of sustaining us with unity, integrity and authenticity? Must we obey the Bible as it stands? Or do we read the Bible as part of a wider tradition – the faith and order of God's Church all over the world and through two millennia? Or must we interpret both Scripture and Church Tradition in the light of humanity's current understanding of itself and of God? We can't agree and we don't seem to love God sufficiently to love one another whatever our differences.

We seem to inhabit a marginalised Church, a declining Church and a divided Church. So what do we do about it? Where do we start? We might despair if we didn't know God. But we do know God. He promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His Church. We can trust God. So what do we do about it? Where do we start?

Well there is only one place we can start. It is a very appropriate place for the beginning of Lent. We can only start with ourselves. And what can we do? We can pray. We might start by telling God what the problems are. Look at this parish. The big looming problem at the moment for some of us is *Who is going to be our next parish treasurer?* More generally, we face a financial crisis. Our income is considerably less than our liabilities and we have no reserves in our general fund. We are too few in number. We don't seem to be very good at sharing the faith with our neighbours. Tell God what the problems are. It won't hurt Him. He knows. Tell Him what's wrong with the Church of England and indeed what's wrong with the Church in general. Telling God isn't telling Him what He doesn't know already, but it might help us to clarify our own ideas about things and prayer does change things!

Once we've told God what's wrong with the Church, it shouldn't be too hard to tell Him what's wrong with other people. They don't put enough in the collection plate. They won't volunteer for the jobs that need doing. They don't come to Church when they've got something else on. They don't support our social and fund-raising events. People don't share their faith with others. They don't send their children to Sunday School. They're not good citizens. They don't support community initiatives. They gossip. They don't take care of unpopular people in distress. The government and the council impose too many regulations. The Diocese imposes too high a quota. It's

not too difficult to tell God what's wrong with other people. He knows anyway. When we've had a good moan about them, we might even think of praying for them. Prayer changes people.

You can see where this is going. There is only one place to start and Lent is a good place to start. In the light of our prayers for the Church and the world we can examine ourselves. How much do I love God? As much as Shabaz Bhatti does? How much do I love my fellow Christians? As much as Jesus loves me? How much do I truly love my neighbour? It starts to get very uncomfortable when we examine ourselves in the light of our prayers for the Church and for the world, because, if we sincerely want what God wants for His Church, if we sincerely long for a world in which there is peace and justice and mercy, we have to ask ourselves what is our part in God's plan? Thinking like this leads us to what I believe is called radical repentance, repentance at the very root of our being. Pray for the Church and the world. Pray for other people. Pray openly to God and let Him reveal to you the person He really wants you to be. Let Him reveal to you how He wants you to use your time and your talents, your money and all the rich resources with which He has blessed you.

Many of us have grown a carapace, a transparent carapace. We can see the truth of the Gospel, but it can't touch us. We've said these words so often. We've sung these hymns. We've read these Bible stories. We know them so well in our heads, but do they touch our hearts? *We offer you our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.* If that transparent carapace is dissolved in the tears of repentance, there is a tremendous vulnerability first of all to despair because we recognise just how inadequate we are. But we ought not to despair. Christ's cross is *a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.* We have fallen a very long way but the reach of God's love is infinitely longer. In our penitence, we are restored to our rightful place as His children. We ought not to despair, but we do remain vulnerable once the carapace has been dissolved away; we remain vulnerable with Christ to the desperate needs of the Church and the world. In that vulnerability *we offer* with Him *our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice.* In Him we are set free – free from the demands of the world such as power, position and material prosperity, to meet the needs of the world, its need for love and faith and hope, its need for God.

I don't know what the future is for myself, for this Church here in Cuxton and Halling, for the Church in England or for the world, but I do know that the future is in the Hands of God and that, if I am to take my place in that future, I have to place myself in the Hands of God, to repent and to believe. And that's what you have to do and what we all have to do. And this Lent is as good a time as any to take our next step or even our first step on the road that leads to life, to repent and to believe.

#### Life in Cuxton & Halling

A lady from Social Services was visiting Aunty and was surprised to hear that our rector, Roger Knight, pays home visits to give Holy Communion. "Of all my visits in Medway, that is a first for me!" she remarked. Aunt and I went on to say that we have a friendly postman who takes the trouble to leave parcels with neighbours and a milkman who delivers three times a week.

In fact the villages of Cuxton and Halling both have shops, pubs, a primary school, a post office and a railway station. We have the river in front of us and woods behind. What more could we want?

There is a service every Sunday in both churches and we have a rector who administers Communion in your home. God bless you Roger. Jenny.

#### West Kent Downs Countryside Trust

The trust was formed almost ten years ago to acquire and bring under one management the parts of Cobham Woods known as the Leisure Plots. This area of woodland (about 110 acres) was sold in the 1970s into private ownership and this fragmentation eventually led to decline through misuse and neglect.

It became apparent that the site should be managed as a whole to protect the varied habitats and return the woodland to a favourable condition. The Trust was set up to do this and had the area cleared of car wrecks and general fly tipping.

Thanks to the efforts of its membership, who have participated in conservation tasks, fund raising projects and events, the Trust now owns a sizable number of plots which it now manages.

However, there is more to be done. So please do consider joining the Trust. Membership gives you the opportunity to share in an organisation which is suitable for all the families and which helps conserve and encourage appreciation of our beautiful local countryside.

To find out more please contact Roger Savage on 01634 723027 or visit our website [www.wkdct.org.uk](http://www.wkdct.org.uk) Thank you. Hilary Savage.



### Max's Tail Piece

It's certainly a beautiful day today. It started frosty, but the sun is shining and it feels quite warm. Spring is springing. Flowers are blooming. Birds are singing. And the woodland paths are dry. So Master can take me out and bring me indoors clean and without having to dry my bedding after I have dried myself off in it!

Yesterday was a busy day. We had our usual morning walk early. We went to Church. We took Home Communion to a lady who now finds it difficult to get out and about. Then we walked to Halling for the two children's services we have on a Thursday afternoon. Master prefers not to leave me alone when he can avoid it. And quite right too. I don't like being on my own and what are best friends for? Then, in the evening, there was a meeting of the Parochial Church Council. I was exhausted by the time we got in and not sorry he went to bed after putting me in my basket.

Today he went for a run. So I missed out on my morning walk. I'm hoping there might be a chance of one later, but it depends on how busy he is and how energetic he feels. The latter can no longer be guaranteed owing to advancing years!

Max, the Rectory Spaniel.