

Owing to Covid 19, it will probably be impractical to print & distribute a paper copy of this magazine.

This electronic version can be found at

<http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/magazine.htm>

It can also be emailed to all those who may be interested. Please feel free to forward to whomsoever.

It is possible that there will be no services either in St John's Church Halling or St Michael's Church Cuxton or the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling during the month of July. Many of you like to look at the readings we would have had and are singing the hymns at home. See below. A sermon for each week will be found at <http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/teaching.htm>. National worship material is available <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>. There are also TV and radio broadcast services.

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton that were Planned			
5 th July Trinity 4	9.30 Family Communion	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 vv 15-25 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-29 p976	SoF 555 Thou Didst Leave Thy 379 Majesty 44 Blessed Assurance 50 Break Thou the Bread 559 To God Be the Glory
12 th July Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	A&M 101 O Worship the King Psalm 65 172 Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken 263 Lord Enthroned in Heavenly Splendour 149 Ye Servants of God
19 th July Trinity 6	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP	Romans 6 vv 3-11 Matthew 5 vv 20-26
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979	SoF 425 How Great Thou Art 1 x 2 (with SA) Abba Father 39 Beneath the Cross of 148 Guide Me O Thou 139 God of Grace & God of
26 th July Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	A&M 199 Immortal Invisible Psalm 119 vv 129-136 122 How Sweet the Name 266 We Hail Thy Presence 194 King of Glory
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling that were Planned			
5th July Trinity 4	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 8 vv 18-23 p1135 Luke 6 vv 36-42 p1034	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 vv 15-25 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-29 p976	A&MR 191 (2nd tune) Conquering Kings 349 Just as I am Psalm 145 199 Thou Art the Way 330 Thine For Ever 266 Thou Whose Almighty
12th July Trinity 5	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	MP 187 Praise My Soul 60 Freely, Freely Psalm 65 249 Turn Your Eyes 149 Love Divine 281 You Shall Go Out
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	I Samuel 16 vv 1-23 p287 Matthew 5 vv 33-48 p969	

19th July Trinity 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979	So F 445 O Praise Ye the Lord 488 Rock of Ages Psalm 86 510 Spirit of the Living God 147 Great is Thy Faithfulness 135 God is Working His
26th July Trinity 7	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	EH 440 Praise to the Lord the 456 Teach Me My God & Psalm 119 vv 129-136 467 Through All the 431 O Thou Who Camest 434 Oft in Danger
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
1st July	Amos 5 vv 14-24 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	2nd July	Amos 7 vv 10-17 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
8th July	Hosea 10 vv 1-12 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	9th July	Hosea 11 vv 1-9 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
15th July S Swithun	Isaiah 10 vv 5-16 Matthew 11 vv 25027	16th July	Isaiah 26 vv 7-19 Matthew 11 vv 28-30
22nd July S Mary Magdalene	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 John 20 vv 1-18	23rd July	Jeremiah 2 vv 1-13 Matthew 13 vv 10-17
29th July	Jeremiah 15 vv 10-21 Matthew 13 vv 4-46	30th July	Jeremiah 18 vv 1-6 Matthew 13 vv 47-53

Copy Date August Magazine: 8.30 am 10th July Rectory.

Nuggets from the *Expository Times* (April 2020)

Anon: An education is that which remains when a person has forgotten all that he ever learnt.

Karl Barth (on Romans 9¹⁻⁵): God, who is distinguished qualitatively from men and from everything human, and must never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or conceive, or worship, as God; God, who confronts all human disturbance with an unconditional command “Halt”, and all human rest with an equally unconditional command “Advance”, God the “Yes” in our “No” and the “No” in our “Yes”.

David Kibble: We have our Bible and our Biblicists, we have our churches with their bureaucracies and their innate conservatism, we have our nervousness and suspicion of those who suggest new things, new directions, new thoughts. And when the outriders of faith say that the Spirit is leading them and the church into new territory where there are no maps and few signposts, we are afraid of the risk.

St Augustine: There are three features of preaching: to teach, to delight, and to move.

Joseph D Small (in contrast to what we ought to be): The church we see and experience is not **one** but divided; it is not **holy** but conformed to the world; it is not **catholic** (ie universal) but fractured; and it is not **apostolic** but domesticated by culture.(My emphases.)

Joseph D Small: Because Christian hope does not emerge from the church’s need but from God’s abundance, hope is not a last-resort response to ecclesiastical, communal, or personal deficit. Hope is confidence in the overflowing love of God.

Humour

Why couldn’t the leopard play hide and seek?

Because he was always spotted.

Why did the teddy bear decline dessert?

Because he was stuffed.

Which words starts and ends with e, but only has one letter in it?

Envelope.

How much space to you need to grow fungi?

As mushroom as possible.

What’s the difference between a guitar & a fish?

You can tune a guitar, but you can’t tuna fish.

Confused About the Lockdown Rules?

(Someone sent this in May, but don't take it too seriously. Check the government's current advice and the current regulations and please act responsibly, as I'm sure you all do!)

- * 4, 5 and 11 year olds can go to school but university students who have paid for the tuition they haven't had and the accommodation they aren't living in, can't go to university.
- * I can go to school with many children that I'm not related to but can't see three children that I am related to.
- * I can sit in a park, but not tomorrow or Tuesday but by Wednesday that'll be fine.
- * I can meet one person from another household for a chat or to sunbathe but not run with them as that is a sport.
- * I can work all day with my colleagues but I can't sit in their garden for a chat after work.
- * I can now do unlimited exercise when quite frankly just doing an hour a day felt like I was some kind of fitness guru. I can think of lots of other things that I would like to be unlimited.
- * I can drive to other destinations although which destinations is unclear.
- * The buses are still running past my house but I shouldn't get on one. We should just let empty buses drive around so bus drivers aren't doing nothing.
- * It will soon be time to quarantine people coming into the country by air... but not yet. It's too soon. And not ever if you're coming from France because... well, I don't do know why, actually. Because the French version of corona virus wouldn't come to the UK maybe.
- * Our youngest children go back to school first because... they are notoriously good at not touching things they shouldn't, maintain personal space at all times and never randomly lick you.
- * We are somewhere in between 3.5 and 4.5 on a five point scale where 5 is all of the virus and 1 is none of the virus but 2,3 and 4 can be anything you'd like it to be really. Some of the virus? A bit of the virus? Just enough virus to see off those over 70s who were told to self isolate but now we've realised that they've done that a bit too well despite us offloading corona virus patients into care homes and now we are claiming that was never said in the first place, even though it's in writing in the stay at home guidance.
- * The slogan isn't stay at home any more. So we don't have to say at home. Except we do. Unless we can't. In which case we should go out. But there will be fines if we break the rules. So don't do that.

Don't forget...

Stay alert... which Robert Jenrick has explained actually means Stay home as much as possible. Obviously.

Control the virus. Well, I can't even control my dog and I can actually see her. Plus I know a bit about dogs and very little about controlling viruses.

Save lives. Always preferable to not saving lives, I'd say, so I'll try my best with that one, although hopefully I don't need telling to do that. I know I'm bragging now but not NOT saving lives is something I do every day.

So there you are. If you're the weirdo wanting unlimited exercise then enjoy. But not until Wednesday. Obviously.

From the Registers

Funeral:

19th May

Roy Underdown

Scholey Close

Psalm 146. *Lauda, anima mea*

PRAISE the Lord, O my soul; while I live will I praise the Lord : yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God.

2. O put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man : for there is no help in them.
3. For when the breath of man goeth forth he shall turn again to his earth : and then all his thoughts perish.
4. Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help : and whose hope is in the Lord his God;
5. Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is : who keepeth his promise for ever;
6. Who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong : who feedeth the hungry.
7. The Lord looseth men out of prison : the Lord giveth sight to the blind.
8. The Lord helpeth them that are fallen : the Lord careth for the righteous.
9. The Lord careth for the strangers, he defendeth the fatherless and widow : as for the way of the ungodly, he turneth it upside down.
10. The Lord thy God, O Sion, shall be King for evermore : and throughout all generations.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.



Keeping in Touch

He is no longer with us, but I used to visit a man in North Halling who had worked on the classic ocean liners, which used to connect us with America and Canada across the Atlantic, South America, and, via the Suez Canal or round the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn, with Australia and New Zealand and Asian destinations such as the Indian subcontinent and China. These vessels were famous and an object of national pride with a lot of public interest in their construction (when the United Kingdom was one of the world's leading ship-building nations), their launching and their plying the seven seas, conveying in luxurious accommodation leading politicians, wealthy businessmen and the stars of stage and screen, and, in rather less comfortable conditions, humbler folk and, often in steerage, emigrants hoping to make a new life in the lands of empire and commonwealth. There was the Queen Mary. There were the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Elizabeth II and the Canberra, which I believe was the ship on which my informant served for much of his career. In times of war, some of these great ships were refitted as hospital ships or troop transports, their speed being considered sufficient to outrun enemy submarines.

I was once told this story about how the Queen Mary acquired her name. It may or may not be true! Cunard had a habit of giving their ships names ending in ia, such as the *Mauritania* and the *Lusitania*. They wanted to call their latest and most prestigious liner the *Queen Victoria*. So the boss of Cunard went and asked King George V if they could name their new ship after England's greatest queen. King George replied, "My wife would be delighted."

Coming back to the stories related by our former neighbour, he told me that this prestigious liner trade came to an end in a few very short years when jumbo jets came into service. The fastest liners took days to reach America and weeks to get to the far flung outposts of empire. Even the cheapest fares would have stretched the budgets of most working people and first class was beyond the reach of all but the very rich.

So, even in the fifties and sixties, if your family emigrated, you did not really expect to see them again very soon, very often or perhaps ever. International telephone calls were awkward and not entirely reliable and very expensive. You kept in touch by letter. Until airmail became general, this could take weeks from Australia and still takes days even by 'plane. You still see last posting dates for Christmas displayed in post

offices long before 25th December for cards and presents and whether by sea or by air.

The advent of modern jet airliners made it possible to visit other continents just for a holiday because they were much quicker than the liners and because, relatively speaking, they were more economical. You could not only get the news of your loved ones through the mail. You could go and see them face to face, hear their voices, and give them a hug. It was suddenly much easier to keep in touch, even literally.

In the last two or three decades, the internet has made international telephone conversations easy and cheap, even free. Services such as Skype make it possible to see your family and friends on the other side of the world. You can watch your grandchildren grow up, see them playing in their gardens, performing in the school concert and graduating from university. It is so much easier to keep in touch, even if not literally.

Communication, the ability to stay in touch, has improved for most of the world's history: the invention of writing, the Roman roads, the coming of canals and railways, more seaworthy ships with better navigational aids, semaphore, telegraph, telephone, planes, trains and automobiles, but I think that there always has been a sense of belonging even when distances have been insuperable and mail services and electronic communications non-existent. Even when you couldn't keep in touch with your family in Australia, you still loved them. You still cared for them and they for you. Christians have always felt at one with Christians throughout the world even when there was very little chance of meeting those who lived outside your village. Christians on earth have always felt at one with the saints in heaven. S Paul talks about being with the Corinthian Christians in spirit, even while absent in body. Jesus is present with us everywhere, especially where Christians are gathered together in His Name, especially in Holy Communion. We can be in touch, in fellowship with people who are not physically present. Yet Jesus gave us the physical elements of the bread and wine to assure us of His Presence in Holy Communion. So, how necessary is touch? How important is it to be in the same place as family, friends, colleagues,

customers, other human beings in general and to touch them?

Some powerful people in the Church of England are apparently questioning whether we need so many parishes with so many churches and so many clergy. It is hard to maintain the parish system in a country where so few people attend or support the Church. Four times as many people have been tuning into online and broadcast services since lockdown than ordinarily attend church each Sunday. Could we not enjoy Christian fellowship virtually from the comfort of our own homes? Might we not actually reach out to more people that way than by holding services people don't go to?

When television first came out, people started to ask why they should stand outside in the cold and wet to watch Gillingham lose to Tranmere Rovers when they could see Arsenal beat Spurs sitting on their own sofas in the warm and dry? And yet, apparently, despite being able to hear the nation's greatest preachers online broadcast from some of our most famous churches with fine music cleverly contrived despite social distancing, many people are still preferring to join in with what their own vicar is doing in their own parish.

And this is what I have been thinking about. How important is it actually to touch physically or at least to be present with people in the same place? And do places matter?

I think place is much more important to some people than it is to others. I'm someone for whom place matters a lot. I can't visit the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre without resenting the fact that its construction (and that of the surrounding thousands of houses) required the destruction of beautiful woods which were full of bluebells in the springtime and good quality agricultural land where cattle grazed and crops grew. I remember once on a long walk from Orpington on a hot, dry day, the person I was with commented on how I seemed to acquire a new lease of life when we came to Southfleet and Betsham where I grew up even though we did not stop there. It was like when Hercules wrestled Atlas. Every time he touched his Mother Earth, his strength came back to him. I'm not likely to become an emigrant. I know that there are others in Halling and Cuxton

who feel as I do about the places themselves. There are, of course, others for whom place matters much less. They can happily settle and make new lives for themselves anywhere, though I do notice that quite a lot of people who move away as young adults come home when they are older. Most people still die within twenty miles of where they were born.

But, what about sacred space? A lot of people have been troubled about the closure of our church buildings. It is not only people who regularly take part in public worship who ask me when they will be open again. Some people do like to pray in church alone even if they don't attend services. Some, I think, just like to know that there is a building they can think of as the House of God at the heart of their community, a building consecrated for worship. Church buildings help a lot of people (though not all) to feel that they are in touch with God. Some people, of course, don't believe in God. People who do believe in God are well aware that He is everywhere and that He does not (particularly) dwell in buildings made by human hands. He is always with us wherever we are. We can always talk to Him in prayer whatever we are doing.

And yet, there have been quite a lot of complaints that services have had to be live-streamed from clergy kitchens during lockdown because the archbishops forbade us to enter church buildings for prayer even on our own (though, interestingly, they encouraged us to go in there regularly to make sure the buildings were OK). It is probably the case that the archbishops and bishops exceeded their authority when they told us that we rectors and vicars cannot pray in our own churches, threatening action under the notorious Clergy Discipline Measure. They are, of course, right when they say that we do not need these buildings. The Church in the New Testament owned no buildings and *it is our duty and our joy to worship God at all times and in all places* (as both our prayer books say).

I'm entertaining a tempting thought that I might take the archbishops at their word. Next time, a quinquennial report says that we need to spend thousands of pounds on our church buildings, we could remind the church authorities that they said that these buildings are inessential and that

therefore we are going to give the money in the building fund to charity and worship in the open air instead. Don't worry. We won't really. It's just a naughty thought on my part.

Buildings do matter a lot to some people. St John's Higham was built in Victorian times because the centre of gravity of the village had moved from the marshes where the old church is. St Mary's closed for public worship probably forty years ago (though it is well-maintained and generally open for private prayer) and you can still find residents of the lower village who believe that the Church has deserted them, even though they are welcome in St John's only a mile away and the vicar ministers to the whole village right down to the Thames!

Back to Skype. Skype, social media, the internet in general, enable you to stay in touch (though not literally) with people you seldom see. They also allow you to form friendships, communities even, with people you have never seen or touched and probably never will. Virtual communities, virtual friendships.

During lockdown, people have been working from home, staying in touch (though not literally) with the office, with colleagues and with customers. Zoom and similar have enabled conferences, parties, social gatherings, and even religious services to take place without anyone meeting up physically. The participants may be people who meet quite a lot with one another in normal times. They may be with people who've never met before. Where security is sloppy, these events may be gate crashed by sometimes unwelcome strangers.

There is now quite a lot of debate about how far this working from home is a good thing. Some people are longing to go back to work. Other people are finding it better to work from home. Some are saying that, while they prefer to go to work, they really ought to work from home as much as possible to spare the planet from the ill effects of traffic. One thing lockdown did achieve was to remind us of the high price nature pays for our car journeys, flights, extended supply chains, etc.. Protecting the environment makes a good case for keeping in touch online or on the phone or by letter but not meeting up physically with

people who live too far away to meet walking or cycling.

The last twenty or so years have seen two opposite trends regarding touching physically. On the one hand, we have been encouraged to show our emotions and to hug and kiss one another a lot more. As the sort of Englishman who tries to keep a stiff upper lip and regards a formal handshake as an act of extreme intimacy, I haven't been comfortable with this, though people tell me that it would be good for my mental health if I would (could?) unbutton a little.

On the other hand, we have had two phenomena which militate against touching. One is the fear of inappropriate touching, concerns about abuse, sexual assault and the #metoo movement. The other is the development of all these online communities in which people feel emotionally close to one another – for good or ill – while never meeting physically. Commentators worried about young people substituting virtual for actual relationships, but now we have COVID19, maybe this is the way ahead. Work, shop and socialise online. Worship online. Never actually meet in the flesh.

The general view seems to be that we can't go back to the way things were before unless either the virus disappears naturally (as some other viruses have) or we develop a safe, effective vaccine against it. Equally, most people don't think that lockdown can go on for ever or that it would be desirable to live in that virtual world in which nearly all our transactions with other human beings would be conducted over the aether or via cables. So, a new normal is proposed, a compromise in which we wear masks when we are away from home; stay at least 79" apart at work, on public transport, in church, in pubs and cafes, and in shops; do not take part in contact sports; don't sing with other people; don't touch other people; and wash every time we touch a surface outside our own homes. When I think of living like that, I think I'm happier in lockdown. I don't want to go to the pub wearing a mask and not being allowed to be close to anyone. I'd rather stay at home.

Matthew 28¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

And this is what I am working round to - Church. I'm desperately keen to see you all again, to be with you again, preferably in our own buildings, but possibly in the open air in nice weather if it isn't possible to be together inside and do what we want to do. I expect most of you would like to get back together too. And then I think about doing so under the restrictions which might be imposed: wearing a mask and gloves, sitting far apart, not allowed to touch even for a formal handshake, no singing, no books, very likely no Holy Communion, possibly Baptisms only at arm's length.

And I ask myself are we not better off as we are now? I worship at home, as we all can. I feel at one with members of our congregations in Cuxton & Halling (like Paul with the Corinthians), with members of other churches, with all those who live in the parish, with Christians throughout the world, with the saints in heaven, with the angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, with God the Holy Trinity. Do we actually need to be in the same space physically, to see one another, to hear one another's voices, to touch? We can after all see and hear one another over the internet if we want to. We probably shan't be allowed to be close to one another or to touch. Worshipping alone physically, I don't have to wear a mask which would make me feel very uncomfortable or gloves and I can sing, pray and read the bible (and, being privileged to be a priest, celebrate Holy Communion on behalf of the whole Church and receive Communion myself, though some clergy, including our bishop and our archdeacon are abstaining from Communion until such time as the whole people of God can once again partake together).

And yet, I feel strongly that there is still something missing if we are not together in the same place. Christians have faced a martyr's death rather than miss out on assembling together to celebrate the Sacraments, to hear the Word of God and to pray with one another.

And there I must leave it, my unresolved uncertainties shared. I should be grateful for your thoughts and insights. Roger.

West Malling

My walk begins at the car park in Manor Park Country Park. This is an interesting and popular 52 acre park. It is comprised of a long lake, 2 fields, a meadow, a paddock, a cafe and a car park. The park was once part of the Douce's Manor estate. The lake was created in the 18th Century by widening the Ewell Stream which is fed by natural springs and rainwater. Enough of history and off I go! I walk out of the car park along a footpath and cross the road over to the historic landmark that is St Leonard's Tower. The information board in the grounds states 'St Leonard's Tower was probably built by Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester (1077 - 1108)'. It goes on to say that the tower had a lack of facilities and was therefore unlikely to have been used either as a residency or for defence. It was more likely to have been an administrative centre for the bishop's estates. Interestingly the information on the board is displayed in 'normal' script and in



braille.

I walk up a little slope to the left of the tower and enter an enclosed footpath. From this footpath I get a better picture of the tower before walking past quiet fields of horses. To my delight, one field has a white mare with a rather young foal close at her side. At the end of this very pleasant footpath is a lane, Offham Road. I cross the road and walk up

between a pretty cottage and a farm house before reaching and crossing another road, Fartherwell Road. I turn right then join a footpath in the field that runs



parallel to the road. The field is planted with rows and rows of lettuce and protected with purple netting.

I walk through the salad fields, following the footpaths, seeing tractors with small flocks of birds hopeful for tasty snacks. Eventually the footpath leads down to Church Road, Offham. I turn right and walk along the road to St Michael & All Angels Church and then on to join a footpath on the right. This path passes some houses with more horses and stables before emerging at the junction of Fartherwell Road and Norman Road. My route follows Norman Road into the town centre of West Malling. Norman Road is long and varied. It starts near the Community Village Hall then continues with many residential properties. So many of the homes have pictures of rainbows, teddy bears and interesting / amusing messages in the windows. On arrival in the High Street, I am reminded even more of the current situation with closed shops and a queue outside the supermarket entrance. I cross the 'unbusy' main road, turn left and then right to wander along Swan Street. This street is fascinating and has several unusual features. I can see at least six blue plaques on houses or buildings. There are two at the entrance to St Mary's Abbey for the

Benedictine Community at Malling Abbey. There is another one for JMW Turner who painted the cascade in 1791, drew St Leonard's Tower in 1791

and The Abbey Tower in 1798 . Outside a house on a wall there is a plaque to honour William Locker (1731 - 1800) mentor to Horatio Nelson. There are still more commemorative plaques which tell me that this place has a rich and varied history.

From Swan Street I turn right into Lavenders Road, then turn right again into Water Lane and cross over at the entrance to Manor Park Country Park. I am at the opposite end of the park from my starting point. A signposts points to a tarmac path leading to the lake.





I am surprised by the length of the lake and captivated by the families of mallard ducks, the coots and moorhens. The water looks quite clear and it

is wonderful to be able to watch the birds dive and search for food amongst the stones and weeds below the surface. I walk along the lake-side path watching the birds and find evidence of small mammals. To my delight, I find a small

group busy munching in the foliage at the water's edge. I am not sure whether they were water voles or rats. Either way, they seemed quite relaxed and continued to munch even when a few ducks came over to investigate their activities. The end of the lake signals my return to the starting point and the end of my adventure for the day.

Before I set out on this walk I had little idea of the park, the historic features or the network of footpaths surrounding West Malling. There is much to see today and to learn of the past. A lovely and welcome outing. Holly Croft

Two Extracts from Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg's Credo in the Times 30th May

(Jews celebrate the feast our Bibles call the Feast of Weeks {Shavuot in Hebrew} forty days after Passover as we celebrate Whitsun forty days after Easter, the first fruits of the harvest, God's gift of the Law.)

"From the chirping of the birds, the mooing of the cows, the voices and tumult of human beings — from all of these one hears the voice, the unceasing voice, of God in the Torah." These words were written in February 1942 by Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, known as the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. In January of the following year he buried his writings; a few months later he was murdered.

The rabbis taught that all the biblical Commandments were transmitted to the people by Moses, except for two: "I am the Lord" and "Have no other gods before Me". These each person heard directly from God. Some things only our own heart's experience can tell us, just as we can't fall in love by proxy.

St Michael's Draw: £10 Mrs Graves (39), £5 each Mrs Gates (16) & Mr Lofthouse (4).



Tommy's Talking Points

It's supposed to have been the sunniest, driest Spring ever. It certainly has been bright and there has been very little rain. It is hard to believe now that the Winter was so wet and that we were sliding about in the mud on our woodland walks not so many months ago. Well, he was sliding about. I've got four paws with claws and a low centre of gravity. The temperatures in May have been extreme for the time of year, again despite an amazingly mild Winter that did not even kill the top growth on the fuchsias which have always, every year until now, died back to ground level before growing again in the Spring. Even after the middle of May, there were some quite sharp frosts, day after day, in the early mornings. Master thinks that is why, despite plenty of blossom, there appear to be very few apples on our trees this year. Even the frosty mornings warmed up quite fast and many days since have been so warm that even Master has been forced to sit in the shade. Master has an impressive sun tan. That's good, he says. Sunshine kills any virus on surfaces quite quickly. The sun on your skin helps your body to manufacture vitamin D which helps to protect against infection. It also protects against rickets when your bones are still growing. What with not being able to have a hair cut and cutting back on the shaving, he thinks he looks like Tarzan. I should say that he looks more like Cheetah.

As lockdown has been relaxed, we have taken advantage to get out more and to see more of the family, which is good. We meet plenty of people and dogs in the woods and the human beings have some interesting conversations 79" apart. They have more time. There are more people about than usual. The Bishop of Tonbridge notes that Britain effectively gave up on keeping the Sabbath in the 1990s, but now a Sabbath rest has been forced on many of us, compelling people to think again about what really matters –

their relationship with God and with other people and the natural world, their own personal health and well-being - or consumerism, materialism and being busy for the sake of business. Master likes the verse from Psalm 46: *Be still then and know that I am God.*

In the Bible, there were supposed to be Sabbath years as well as Sabbath days, when Nature could rest from relentless exploitation by human beings. The land was to lie fallow every seven years. This practice was not observed for a very long time, but the land enjoyed a forced Sabbath rest of 70 years when the Jews were in exile in Babylon. Nature could be said to have enjoyed something of a Sabbath rest as human beings' polluting exploitation of the planet has been held in check by their need to isolate themselves from possible sources of infection.

Dogs rather like the fact that they are left alone less when there is nowhere for their human companions to go, not that I am left alone much anyway. Master ordinarily works from home and I'm welcomed in church and most of the other places where he has to go. I do get a bit bored, however, in lockdown. True, he is with me even more than usual, true he takes me out even more than usual, but I do miss seeing my church friends. If we pass St Michael's around 5.00, I sometimes look wistfully at the building in case we are going in for Evensong, but we don't. There are plenty of foxes and badgers and the occasional cat in the garden to give me something to bark at of an evening.

Master got some running shoes by mail order. The old shoes weren't really running shoes. They were on their last legs and beyond even his cure of souls. He's a bit disappointed that they don't run any faster than the old ones, but he says that they are more comfortable.

We've seen the rhododendrons at Holly Hill. Master says that there is a layer of more acid clay covering the chalk of the North Downs there. Otherwise, they wouldn't grow. He says that he would expect hydrangeas planted at Holly Hill to come up blue instead of pink. Hydrangeas are the opposite of litmus!

In Bush Valley, they're planting vines. In previous years, we've seen rape and different kinds of cereal. Within living (human, not dog) memory, he says that hops were grown there. I suppose wine is like beer only it comes in smaller glasses and Master doesn't think it tastes as nice. It's not new growing grapes for wine around here. They grew grapes at Halling during the Middle Ages. Maybe there weren't enough, however, or there was something wrong with the flavour, because they mixed the grapes with blackberries, which certainly do grow in abundance around here, and to Master's barbaric taste, wines made from fruits other than grapes often taste better than the "real" thing.

Normally, he doesn't take me to the shops. I pull so hard on the lead that it is difficult for him to carry heavy shopping as well as keep me safe. However, he has been taking me a bit more often lately. One lady, who lives alone, was out in her front garden and asked why he had taken me to the Co-op, when he doesn't usually. He said he didn't think I liked to be alone. The lady remarked that she felt lonely sometimes too, a reminder to keep in touch with one another, especially in these trying times.

We love these very long days, especially the extended evenings as the sun gradually sinks in the west and the moon and the stars come brightly into view. We sometimes sit on the seat on the patio for a few minutes just after it has got dark. He is hoping to see some bats, but not so far this year. He's happy to say, that there are far fewer mosquitoes than there used to be. Perhaps the bats have eaten them all and gone elsewhere for their supper. There are plenty of butterflies and other benign insects in the garden.

As the year advances, we see different flora and fauna in the countryside, in the churchyard and in the garden. He thinks that one of the flowers he could not identify last time (the one with flowers like wild garlic and leaves like bedstraw) is probably stitchwort. There is some in the garden as well.

The bank from the garden up to the churchyard was a picture with golden laburnum and white hawthorn, both of which grew up the bank as a waterfall might tumble down a ravine. Abruptly, these have died, to be replaced with a similar cataract of wild roses. The lilac too is finished, but its place will soon be taken by buddleia, the butterfly bush. The night air is scented with the woodbine or honeysuckle and the mock orange or Philadelphus is just coming into bloom. Deep red Weigela both ornaments the garden and provides food for umpteen bees. Yellow Rose of Sharon flowers carpet what was once going to be a rockery and would take over the whole garden if Master didn't keep them in check.

He still likes to boast about something which he did when he was quite a young child. His even younger sister came in from the garden obviously very sick. No-one knew what to do until Master told them that he had seen her eating the pods on next door's laburnum tree. Then they knew what to do. I don't know why he's so proud of that. If he'd had any sense, he would have stopped her eating them in the first place. Anyway, something to be careful of. Don't let children eat laburnum! Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.

What Christians Believe

The following is a meditation on the Apostle's Creed, traditionally taught to those who wish to be baptised.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Everything that exists has a Creator. The world did not come into existence by chance. Neither did we. There is a purpose behind the universe. This Creator, Who gives everything its existence, is not a blind, impersonal force, but a loving Father, individually concerned with every person and every part of His creation.

I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.

The mystery of the Godhead is such that the one eternal God exists as three persons, united in love, and manifesting that love to the created world.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

One person of the eternal uncreated Godhead entered our world and became one of us.

Born of the Virgin Mary,

While eternally being the Son of God, Jesus was born and remains a human being just like us.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,

There was nothing illusory about Christ's humanity. He experienced life as we experience it.

Was crucified, died and was buried.

God made human beings in His own image to enjoy eternal life with Him. Humanity rebels against God and we cut ourselves off from the life

which is His gift. God therefore endures our death in order to give us the gift of life restored.

He descended to the dead.

There is nowhere His love cannot reach. He even takes the Good News to the "spirits in prison."

On the third day He rose again.

God, goodness and life inevitably win out over the Devil, evil and death.

He ascended into Heaven.

Jesus the Man has opened the way to Heaven to everyone who believes in Him.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

All our prayers reach God through Jesus, Who also Himself prays for us.

And he will come to judge the living and the dead.

This world will come to an end, but Jesus will always be there. We shall have to account to God for what we have done with our lives. We can rely on His mercy to forgive us what we have done wrong.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

God sends His Holy Spirit into the world - the third person of the Holy Trinity. With God's Holy Spirit in us, we are forgiven and sanctified and united in communion with Christ and all who believe in Him on earth and in Heaven. We have the gift of eternal life which is the same thing as the knowledge of God.

Pictures from VE Day 75th Anniversary Commemoration in Cuxton



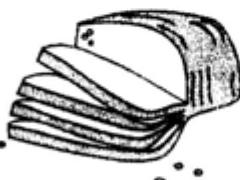
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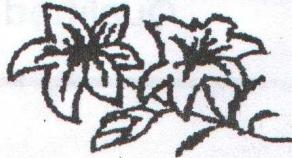
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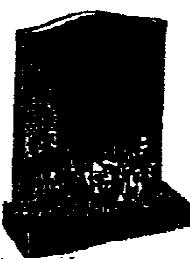
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