

We're carrying on with Holy Communion at Cuxton at 9.30 am on Wednesdays and Sundays and at Halling at 9.30 on Thursdays and 11.00 on Sundays. Cuxton Church is open for personal prayer Wednesdays & Sundays. Please sanitise and socially distance.

Our Holy Week and Easter services (COVID permitting) are set out together with the other services for April in the table below. In addition, I shall continue to say the daily offices in the Rectory and celebrate Holy Communion alone at home on the Monday & Tuesday of both Holy Week & Easter Week – unless asked to do so in either of our two churches. Please let me have any prayer requests.

For now, we shall be producing the magazine online only. It can be found on my webpage <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> and I can email it to anybody who asks. There will be no charge until we are back on paper. I'll carry on with the advertisements in the online edition, but I shan't charge advertisers for 2021 unless and until we can return to paper copies. Copy date for May is April 9th 8.30 am at the Rectory.

I'm sending out a weekly email newsletter and a weekly sermon which can also be found on my webpage. If you would like to be added to the list of those who receive these, please let me know. Please also feel free to share the contents, forward them, print them, pass them on in any way you would like to. The thing is to keep in touch and to support one another.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do for you.

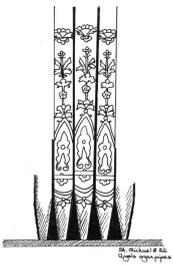
Services April 2021			
1 st April Maundy Thursday	9.30 Holy Communion Halling	I Corinthians 11 vv 17-34 p1152 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1059	
2 nd April Good Friday	9.30 Ante-Communion Cuxton 11.00 Ante-Communion Halling	Hebrews 10 vv 1-25 p1208 John 19 vv 1-37 p1087	
4 th April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024	
11 th April Easter 1/2	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089	
18 th April Easter 2/3	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 3 vv 12-19 p1095 Luke 24 vv 36-48 p1062	
25 th April Easter 3/4	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 7 vv 1-18 p 8 Genesis 8 vv 6-18 p9 Genesis 9 vv 8-13 p10 Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076	
Holy Communion @ Cuxton 9.30 on Wednesdays		Holy Communion @ Halling 9.30 on Thursdays	
31 st March	Hebrews 9 vv 16-28 Luke 22 vv 1-71	1 st April Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 17-34 Luke 23 vv 1-49
7 th April	Exodus 13 vv 1-16 Matthew 28 vv 16-20	8 th April	Song of Solomon 2 vv 8-17 Mark 16 vv 1-20
14 th April	Exodus 17 vv 1-16 John 20 vv 24-31	15 th April	Exodus 18 vv 1-12 John 21 vv 1-14
21 st April	Exodus 24 vv 1-18 Luke 1 vv 39-56	22 nd April	Exodus 25 vv 1-22 Luke 1 vv 57-66
28 th April	Exodus 33 vv 1-23 Luke 2 vv 41-52	29 th April	Exodus 34 vv 1-35 Luke 3 vv 1-14

Some Words from a Tombstone in Ely Cathedral

The line to Heaven by Christ was made,
With heavenly truth the Rails are laid,
From Earth to Heaven the Line extends,
To Life Eternal where it ends.
Repentance is the Station then,
Where Passengers are taken in;
No Fee for them is there to pay,
For Jesus is Himself the way
God's Word is the first Engineer,
It points the way to Heaven so clear,
Through tunnels dark and dreary here
It does the way to Glory steer.
God's Love the Fire, His Truth the Steam,
Which drives the Engine and the Train;

All you who would to Glory ride,
Must come to Christ, in Him abide.

In First, and Second, and Third Class,
Repentance, Faith, and Holiness,
You must the Way to Glory gain,
Or you with Christ will not remain.
Come then, poor Sinners, now's the time,
At any Station on the Line,
If you'll repent, and turn from sin,
The Train will stop and take you in.



From the Rector

If only we were going to be singing again at Easter, but I am afraid that it is not likely that we shall be. We shall certainly joyfully celebrate our Lord's Resurrection. Whatever difficulties we may face, we can

overcome them in His strength. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* John 4²⁴).

For various reasons lately, I have been going through my collection of old photographs. I have wanted some for my weekly newsletters. Family members are interested in what pictures we have. I think too that a certain nostalgia has taken hold of many of us at this difficult time. We think back to the days when we felt more secure and we remember with affection the people who have loved us. We still pray in the Prayer Book Litany: *From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us.* But I think that many of us had become complacent. None of those things, we thought, was terribly likely to happen to us. Countries like our own - with our wealth, science and technology, with modern medicine, an effective criminal justice system and highly professional armed services - were quite capable of looking after themselves. Devastating natural disasters, plagues, hunger, war and lawlessness were things that happened in countries less developed than our own and, once those nations caught up with us economically, they too would dwell in safety and

security - free from war, free of crime, free from want, free of endemic disease, in peace and prosperity. It is true that we are richly blessed in this country. It is also true that there is a moral imperative that we share our blessings with the whole of the human race and that we are humble enough to receive from other cultures the wisdom and resources they have to offer to us.

There have, however, been terrible forest fires in developed countries such as Australia and the United States of America. On numerous occasions in the last few decades, there has been extensive flooding even here in Britain. Maybe these phenomena are the result of global warming. Quite often they are exacerbated locally by what human beings have done. We have established dwellings in places well known for their propensity to burn. We have built on flood plains, concreted over good earth which would otherwise soak up heavy rain, engineered rivers to hasten the drainage of land upstream, but putting land downstream at greater risk of flooding.

Famine is not something we face in our part of the world. Where famine does occur it is very often the result of bad government, selfishness on the part of the rich and mismanagement of the economy. Zimbabwe, for example, was once known as the breadbasket of Africa, but has endured several terrible famines in the last thirty or so years.

COVID has brought to our knowledge the fact that, while we don't suffer from famines in this country, there are too many people who are

malnourished and do not get enough to eat. Marcus Rashford has highlighted the experience of families with children who go to school hungry, drawing on his own experience from when he was a boy. Sometimes, when I am lying in my nice, warm bed on a cold, wet night, I think of the homeless on our streets.

The human race seems to be incapable of learning the lessons of war, the lesson that peace is infinitely better! Isaiah 2:4 *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* When will we ever learn?

Murder on the streets. Thankfully, there are very few murders where most of us live, but the news of what goes on in our inner cities and their associated housing estates in terms of gang and drug related violence is horrifying. We shouldn't be complacent. We shouldn't cease to pray *From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us.*

We should also be open to the possibility that God might use us as part of the answer to our prayers. Can we change our behaviour in such a way as to diminish global warming? Can we be more responsible in the way we look after our own local environment? Do we have any political influence? Attend meetings. Write letters. Sign petitions. Take an interest in our democratic processes and support our elected representatives as they try to do the right thing. Be charitable. Give to overseas and local charities. Be kind where we have the opportunity. Support law enforcement and measures which might be taken to prevent young people from embarking on a life of crime in the first place – education, youth clubs, pre-school and after school provision, support for families and family life. Care for those who are on their own from choice or otherwise. Support those who offer help for the homeless or volunteer yourself.

We pray for deliverance from sudden death so that we have time to put our affairs in order and make peace with God and man before we die. The Prayer Book service for the Visitation of the Sick

contains the following, which is still something worth bearing in mind!

Then shall the Minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, and be in charity with all the world; exhorting him to forgive, from the bottom of his heart, all persons that have offended him; and if he hath offended any other, to ask them forgiveness; and where he hath done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power. And if he have not before disposed of his goods, let him then be admonished to make his Will, and to declare his debts, what he oweth, and what is owing unto him; for the better discharging of his conscience, and the quietness of his Executors. But men should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates, whilst they are in health. The Minister should not omit earnestly to move such sick persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor.

And then there are plague and pestilence. God may deliver us from these in many ways, some of them beyond our comprehension. Among His more understandable means are: scientists who research into treatment, cure and prevention; professionals who care for the sick and the vulnerable; ordinary people in their love for their families and in their willingness to serve in the wider community; politicians responsible for policy decisions and making wise rules; public servants who carry out the policies and police who enforce the rules; those who are trying to ameliorate the effects of the pandemic on the employment, education and mental well-being of so many people; all of us as we co-operate with the authorities and with one another, willingly make sacrifices for the good of others, and generally act sensibly in order to limit the spread of the disease - among other ways, by observing social distancing and getting vaccinated when we have the opportunity. And never underestimate the importance of our prayers both for ourselves and for all the people who need them. When we pray, we align our will with God's Will. We cooperate with Him in achieving His purposes.

Going back to those photographs, looking at them brings back many memories and induces a wide variety of emotions. Sometimes I have wondered how my grandparents and parents would have

coped with COVID and I have even thought that perhaps it is a good thing that they did not live to see these days. On reflection I realised, of course, that they had been through worse than COVID. My parents lived through the Second World War, my mother as a child and as a civilian, being evacuated far from home, seeing the consequences of the bombing in terms of loss of life and destruction of property. Ten years older, my father fought on the battlefields, being evacuated from Dunkirk and taking part in the Normandy Landings four years later and then fighting right through Europe into Germany before the final surrender. My grandparents lived through two world wars and the Spanish Flu pandemic at the end of the first. Before and after the Great War, there was considerable poverty and hardship in the Medway Towns from which they were not exempt.

Almost a year ago, I speculated in a comment in the "Times" that perhaps, for a variety of reasons, people were more resilient in those days than we are today. If so, my grandparents and parents might have dealt better with COVID than I have!

"David Aaronovitch asked a few days ago whether the 2020s might turn out like the 1920s when people embraced hedonism in the aftermath of the Great War and Spanish Flu. It occurred to me then that most people's attitude to death was different in those days. Not only had millions died in the war and millions more in the epidemic, it was a world in which it was expected that many children would die young and that adult lives could be cut off suddenly by disease or industrial accident. It always had been like that, right up until the advent of the Welfare State. In 1920, there was little of a risk averse "health and safety" culture. At Church of England funerals (which most were), mourners were reminded "In the midst of life we are in death" and referred for succour to a God who might be assumed to be justly displeased for our sins. Most people nevertheless believed at least nominally that, by grace, if not by merit, the dead were going to a better place than this. There was not the sense which there is today that we are all entitled to expect at least eight decades of trouble free, healthy life in which to complete our bucket lists and that, if we do not receive what we think we deserve, somebody else

must be at fault - probably the government. For C21 western humanity, death is the ultimate disaster, the final failure That is why we find it hard to countenance any kind of risk. We lose sight of the fact that sometimes the cost of a higher quality of life is a diminution of the quantity of life we might expect to enjoy."

Maybe, I'm wrong. It wouldn't be the first time – though my comment did get a few "likes".

As I said, looking at all these old photographs induced a variety of emotions. A significant proportion of the subjects have of course died since their pictures were taken, but many are still alive. We look back and see how we have grown from childhood to maturity and how we have aged. There are reminders of happy times together. Many of my photographs were taken on family holidays. There are pictures of people I remember as elderly taken when they were much younger. Some of them were quite good-looking, but I have never liked the feminine fashions of the 'twenties. When I was a child, I used to tell my grandmother that she and her sisters looked older in pictures taken in the 'twenties than they did forty years later when I first knew them. There are pictures of sporting events and dramatic productions which we were involved in as children or as adults. There are school photographs and college pictures. There are people, like great-grandparents, whom I've heard a lot about but who died before I was born. There are places I know well, some much changed since the pictures were taken. And there are some photographs of people who must have been significant in our family history at some time, but whom I don't recognise. I wonder if there is anyone living who might know who they are? If they were Christians, their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that is what ultimately matters, even if I don't know them yet.

I have a large number of pictures taken in the churches where I have ministered – especially from this parish. There are christenings and weddings, social events, all kinds of activities going on, special services, work parties, village events. Dogs feature in quite a number of them! Again, there are many people who are still friends and with whom I often meet. There are photographs of children who are now young

adults, and some not so young. (I've been here 34 years!) There is a photographic record of the way in which we have all matured. There are pictures of people who have moved away and, of course, of many who now worship on another shore.

A variety of emotions. Joy and happiness relived in memory. Thankfulness for all those good times. Regret that the past is gone forever. Perhaps wistfulness is a more accurate word than regret in this context. Sadness, sometimes, that what we thought were worthwhile hopes were not always fulfilled. Love for family and friends - for those I still see often or occasionally and for those *angel faces, which I have loved long since and lost awhile*. A sense of appreciation for the life God has given me which I am now enjoying and doing my best to live in accordance with His Will. Joy and gratitude in my life today, built on what has gone before. Gratitude for all the love and care I have received all my life from so many people. Missing those who have died, but having faith that they still love me where they are now as I love them, and the hope that one day we shall all meet again – *the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life*.

I AM the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. *St. John xi. 25, 26.*

I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shalt stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. *Job xix. 25, 26, 27.*

WE brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord. *1 Tim. vi. 7. Job I. 21.*

These are the words with which the priest begins the funeral service, leading the coffin into Church. What wonderful words! How often must they have been proclaimed over the centuries both at Cuxton and Halling, a reminder that I stand in a long line of pastors called to serve God and His people in these two villages, to share with them

the same Gospel hope which is eternally true and revealed to each generation by the grace of God. Walking around the churchyards or the cemetery stirs up emotions similar to those inspired by looking at old photographs. I see the graves of people I knew and remember very well, lives for which to be thankful. I'm reminded of people's personal tragedies and perhaps say a prayer for the still grieving. There are monuments to people I never knew personally, but I've heard a lot about as significant people in the community. No human life is insignificant!

I was once at a gathering of thousands of Christian people at which the speaker remarked that he didn't like going into a lot of Church of England churches because they are surrounded by dead people. I think he was also implying that those of us inside aren't always all that lively either!

He certainly missed the point if he thought that it was depressing that people choose to be buried around a church. The Church is a symbol of God's gift of eternal life to all who come to Him in faith. Traditionally, people are buried so that they face Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives to which Jesus is expected to return on the Last Day when He will come again in glory to judge both the quick and the dead. Clergy are supposed to be buried facing west so that we may greet our people on that great day – or bear their reproaches if we have let them down.

What about those of us who enter the building every week for worship? Are we effectively dead too, as that speaker hinted? We should be very careful about judging one another. Jesus tells us not to do it! We are exhorted to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith (II Corinthians 13⁵). We are particularly enjoined to examine ourselves before we partake of the Holy Communion (I Corinthians 11²⁸). Let me share the BCP prayer to be said after receiving Holy Communion in accordance with God's holy law of love.

O LORD and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all

thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that all we, who are partakers of this holy Communion, may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. *Amen.*

Encountering Jesus in the Bread & Wine of Holy Communion, we naturally offer ourselves as a *lively* (or rather in modern English *living*) sacrifice. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, we have eternal life, abundant joy, here on earth in the lives we live every day. We are also confident that we shall be made perfect in the world to come when we shall know Him as He knows us, when we shall be made like Jesus, and dwell for ever in that place where there is no more pain or sorrow, no more tears, no more death.

When I first came across the following hymn in the *For the Young* section of an old hymnbook, I thought it was rather morbid. It can still make me sad. But, looking at the last four verses, it is anything but morbid. The first four verses are sad reality. We can't escape their truth. However, S Paul says: *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* (I Thessalonians 4¹³). The funeral service takes up this thought in the following prayer.

O MERCIFUL God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall not die eternally; who also hath taught us, by his holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him: We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness;

that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in thy sight; and receive that blessing, which thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: Grant this, we beseech thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

So here is the hymn.

Within the churchyard, side by side,
Are many long low graves;
And some have stones set over them,
On some the green grass waves.

Full many a little Christian child,
Woman, and man, lies there;
And we pass near them every time
When we go in to prayer.

They cannot hear our footsteps come,
They do not see us pass;
They cannot feel the warm bright sun
That shines upon the grass.

They do not hear when the great bell
Is ringing overhead;
They cannot rise and come to church
With us, for they are dead.

But we believe a day shall come
When all the dead will rise,
When they who sleep down in the grass,
Will ope again their eyes.

For Christ our Lord was buried once,
He died and rose again,
He conquered death, He left the grave;
And so will Christian men.

So when the friends we love the best
Lie in their churchyard bed,
We must not cry too bitterly
Over the happy dead;

Because, for our dear Saviour's sake,
Our sins are all forgiv'n;
And Christians only fall asleep
To wake again in Heav'n.

Christians are never without hope for this life or for the world to come. This is Easter faith. This is the light of eternity in which we view COVID and everything else which might happen to us. It

is the Death and Resurrection of Jesus which puts absolutely everything in its proper perspective.

Happy Easter.
Roger.

From the Registers

Funerals:

26th February

5th March

Yasmin Jade Kerkham

Alan Edward Wood

Ditton

The Glebe

Cobtree Manor Park

Today I am investigating Cobtree Manor Park. It is located at Allington in the Maidstone area, so it is local. Cobtree Manor Park is part of the Cobtree Estate and the former home of Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake. In 1934 The Cobtree Zoo was officially opened and comprised a varied selection of species. The collection included elephants, bears, racoons, wolves, hyenas, monkeys, antelope, kangaroos, porcupines and birds. The zoo closed in 1959. An elephant house still survives today and is now home to the Cobtree Men's Shed project.



The weather has been so changeable recently but today I am lucky because it is very sunny although there is a chill in the air.

I begin my walk at Allington and walk down to the lock. The lock has fencing and is busy with workman carrying out extensive maintenance of the lock, its mechanisms and environment. I walk over the lock and bridge then turn left, before the Malta Inn, into Lock Lane. The lane leads uphill along a footpath to Forstall Road. I turn left along the main road. The road goes up and over the M20. Although the traffic is quite heavy and noisy there are good views from the bridge. Slightly to my left it overlooks the Kent Museum of Life attraction and there, as if greeting me, is the former chapel from Cuxton glinting in the sunshine. I cross the road carefully and follow down a well signed footpath. The path is steep, and I notice the lack of mud beneath my feet. Clearly, the recent dry weather has worked magic. The footpath winds to the left, then right through a small meadow then turns to the right following a tarmac track before

turning right again in front of a house. It follows the edge of a golf course before turning left into Cobtree Manor Park.

I enter the park far from the main entrance, which is on Forstall Road, but at a point on the hill affording a good view of the car park, café and the former elephant house. In front of me is lush parkland with numerous trees and shrubs.



There are beautiful clumps of snowdrops and daffodils all around. I turn right and follow the well-maintained perimeter footpath. The trees are not in leaf as yet, but many have buds. The footpath leads up to the furthest corner of the park and reveals an almost hidden glade. There is a path leading out of the park across the golf course and on towards Tyland Barn or to Bluebell Hill. At this point I have a choice of routes. I can walk downhill through grassed areas punctuated with small groups of trees or shrubs or I can follow a well walked footpath through woods. I walk through the woods. The sun is shining through the branches and



there are many birds busily flitting from bush to bush. It is noticeably quiet, and I meet very few people. Although it is well screened by the trees, I can see industrial units and works beyond the park. I follow

the path and eventually walk down to the children's play area, café and car park. An arrival I see some of the park's sculptures and many families enjoying the open spaces and facilities. (Not too sure about the social distancing!) I stop at the café for a light takeaway snack before leaving the park at the main entrance onto Forstall Road.



At the road I turn right and walk to the enclosed footpath beside the Travis-Perkins site. This path leads down to the river tow path where I turn left and walk back to Allington Lock and then cross over to return to my starting point.



This is a lovely walk with a huge variety to look at en route. Cobtree Manor Park has a lot to offer and is well worth a visit. Holly Croft

World Day of Prayer

St. Michael's Church, Cuxton, St. John's Church, Halling and Cuxton Community (URC) Church held a most successful 'World Day of Prayer' Zoom Service. Everyone wishing to attend received a Service Booklet through their door and had a speaking part to play if they wished. Before we started Jack Payne read an introduction on Vanuatu whilst slides were shown on screen. Church organist, John Bogg, played the hymns and we were able to follow the words or mute ourselves and join in. Dawn Gates played and sang the special Vanuatu song on her guitar. We held up our stones and prayed for the people of Vanuatu who had prepared such a lovely service for us to follow. We felt the joy of being part of a worldwide prayer community. Jenny Beaney





Tommy's Talking Points

In the newspaper Master reads, some columnists have been complaining that they have run out of things to talk about when they telephone their friends. At the beginning of lockdown, the frustration was in not being able to meet people in the flesh, but at least you could talk about what you had been doing and they could tell you about their experiences. As the third lockdown drags on, however, they are running out of things to say. All their days are alike. I suppose it's quite clever really to earn a living by writing newspaper columns complaining that they've got nothing worth writing about.

Well, I admit that our activities have been limited for a long time now, but I haven't run out of things to say. There are some things which we do day after day, but they are always exciting and interesting, especially if you're a dog or a rector. As he never tires of telling people, somehow after about five years when he couldn't, he's managed to start running again. It's not very fast, it's ungainly, but it's something he enjoys and so do I. The strange thing is that, even when he was a bit of a serious runner, he never ran more than three or four times a week except perhaps on holiday. Now we run nearly every day. I don't think we've missed a day's running all

this year so far. We always run in the local woods our side of Bush Road, sometimes up as far as Upper Halling, and occasionally to Holly Hill. We haven't been quite so far in the Winter because the mornings have been dark and slippery, but that is now all changing as Spring arrives. All this running justifies him, he thinks, in being less fanatical about a healthy diet. He's very fond of suet puddings. There's one boiling as I write, which he intends to eat doused with treacle for today's dessert. It must be good for him. There's a quotation from the Bible on the tin – *out of the strong came forth sweetness*.

It was a family joke that once, when they were children, Master's sister made the excuse for being late for afternoon school that it took too long for the treacle to run off the spoon onto the pudding.

Once he had some vegetarians round for dinner. He discovered a vegetarian recipe which was like a meat pudding except you use vegetables instead of meat and cheese sauce instead of gravy. He couldn't understand why the recipe specified margarine for the actual pudding part. Suet would be much better, he thought. It was only just before the guests arrived that he remembered where suet comes from. Fortunately, their vegetarianism was not too strict. He wasn't quite as unwoke as the family member who said that their vegetarian guests needn't have complained about being offered salmon because it was tinned.

We do generally confine ourselves to the same paths for our daily essential exercise. Until it got too dark in the mornings last Autumn, we used to walk round by the mausoleum on Saturdays and pick up a newspaper on the way home. He has it delivered on the other week days. Now he wants to run on Saturdays, we have to run a route which brings us back past the Rectory before we go to the shop. There is no pocket for a mask in his running shorts.

For now, we are not allowed to travel far anyway. Maybe, we'll soon be back to taking the car to meet friends for walks as we did last year in Surrey and Sussex. I do not think that we shall return to taking the train to exotic locations and enjoying pub lunches on our travels until such time as it is acknowledged that it is safe to do so unmasked.

However, there is always something of interest even if we do go to the same places to do the same things every day. There are always new scents. We meet old friends, canine and human, and make new acquaintances, both dogs and people. Nature changes with the seasons. There are catkins and pussy willow on the trees. Very soon there will be leaves and, on some trees, blossom. May usually blooms in April.

The birds have begun their dawn and evening choruses. The woodpeckers are actively drumming. Lambs are being born. Violets have appeared in Bush Valley. There are spring flowers in the countryside, the churchyards and the cemetery and in people's gardens. We've got crocuses, snowdrops, only one or two this year, daffodils and Pulmonaria. All the year round, there are squirrels racing up and down the trees and across the paths and, believe it or not, I very seldom chase them. What would be the point? I can't catch them.

Nature changes not only with the seasons, but even by the hour. Every sunrise and every sunset is different. The light changes as the day progresses. There may be clear skies or a uniform cover of grey or fascinating cloud formations of various tints ranging from white to black. The shadows move with the sun. Flowers like crocuses only open when heaven's light shines upon them. So there is plenty to see, hear and smell and much to enjoy. Being out of doors is good for people and animals.

Not that he is ever really idle even indoors. There is always something which wants doing and he says he finds it hard to believe how quickly the time passes. He wonders how he ever fitted in all those things which he is currently not allowed to do, but hopes to go back to eventually.

He does enjoy writing the weekly newsletter and spends a lot of time on it. It has a circulation beyond regular churchgoers and even beyond this parish. If you'd like to receive it by email, just let him know. He's always pleased to increase the circulation.

Master really enjoys thinking about issues, conversation and the exchange of information and ideas. These newsletters have given him an outlet. He says that he now realizes just how little opportunity a rector or vicar has for conversation, especially for serious conversation and discussion. Once a vicar has more than one church to provide for, the classic opportunity for catching up with parishioners after the Sunday service disappears. There is so little time.

When he is preaching or teaching, the minister can only seek to speak the Word of God. There is no place in the pulpit for his own opinions, but only for what the Bible teaches, read in the light supplied by the Holy Spirit, and applied to the circumstances in which we all live our lives today. This is not a licence to be dogmatic. He ought to admit to uncertainty where it exists. He certainly has to be open to other ways of looking at things. But the focus is on priest and people discerning together the Word of God, not coming to conclusions from any purely human point of view.

As a focus for unity, the rector is well-advised to try to avoid taking sides unless one side is absolutely clearly in the right or a decision really has to be made. It is generally unwise for a minister to express his opinions on controversial issues where it is unnecessary to do so, but there are occasions when no Christian can avoid taking a stand.

Obviously, when dealing with pastoral matters, the focus must be on people and their immediate needs. Social events are seldom an opportunity for serious conversation or discussion. The ambience isn't right and often the music is too loud.

Neither do meetings provide a forum for discussion of fundamental issues or serious conversation. There is an agenda to get through.

Master has been reading the latest version of the Church Representation Rules. One change is that there is no longer a minimum number of PCC meetings to be held in the course of a year. PCC meetings only have to be called when they are necessary. Now, Master reasons, there were churches in both Cuxton & Halling for more than a thousand years before PCCs were even invented. They faced far greater challenges than anything we face today – the Norman Conquest, the Black Death, the Wars of the Roses, the Peasants' Revolt, the Reformation, the Civil War, more plagues, famine and extreme hardship, the Napoleonic Wars

and the Great War – and they came through them all without a PCC meeting ever being necessary. On that basis, he’s pencilled in the date for the next meeting some time in the year 3021.

Seriously, though, conversation is good. God is the Creator of all that there is. He is involved in everything that happens. We are answerable to Him for every second of our lives and for what we do with the opportunities and challenges He puts in our way. There is no subject regarding which Christians should be uninterested. That doesn’t mean that there is a clear Christian answer to every question or that we have the solution to every problem. Christians may well disagree among themselves, but it is good that they should talk, that they should think and pray. Every aspect of life comes within the Providence of God and Christians have a duty to see the whole world and everything in it in the Light of Eternity.

Master enjoys preparing these newsletters in which he tries to include some light-hearted bits and pieces, personal sharing, and a bit of a discussion about some serious issue in a not too serious manner. He also welcomes any responses and further discussion. This has been a very fulfilling way for him to use the time provided by the pandemic. He hopes it is useful to other people too.

My comment on missing the mausoleum shamed him into giving me my Saturday morning walk on a Sunday afternoon instead. It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon, though cold. Lots and lots of people and dogs were out and about. I really enjoy chasing around Cobham Woods and then down the path to White Leaves. I get so excited. It’s a whole different set of smells and I love making friends with people. I walked so closely with one young couple for a bit that other walkers thought that I was their dog. Master gets quite jealous. He thinks I’m hoping to be taken home by somebody who would treat me better. Master’s reward for taken me that way was to see the Lower Bush alpacas for the first time. They are usually still in bed when we pass that way. We didn’t get too close. Camelids don’t like canines!

Vestry Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The vestry meeting appoints our churchwardens (two for each church if possible) for the coming year. All those who are entered on the church electoral roll plus the civil electoral rolls for Cuxton and Halling are entitled to attend, speak and vote. Churchwardens must be nominated on the appropriate forms before the meeting and must be communicant members of the Church of England, on the electoral roll of the parish and at least 21 years old. The Vestry Meeting is now called a Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens.

The APCM receives reports on the previous year’s accounts and activities. This meeting elects the PCC. The PCC now elects the sidesmen, whereas they were formerly elected at the APCM. Only those on the church electoral roll are entitled to vote at the APCM. PCC members must be communicant members of the Church of England, on the electoral roll of the parish and at least 16 years old. Candidates over 18 must have been on the electoral for at least six months.

The laity of the parish elect five PCC members each to represent Cuxton and Halling. This year the PCC will need to consider appointing a new safe-guarding adviser.

I can’t tell you when these meetings will take place. The PCC will decide. As things stand, they ought to happen on or before 31st May, but there is the issue of COVID. Shall we be able to meet by then? If not, is it legal to conduct these meetings online? I’m waiting for instructions. Roger.

Lady Day (25th March)

Usually we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation with a big service to which Mothers’ Union members are especially invited and very often this is followed by a meal. Just now, we do things on a less ambitious scale, but you are very welcome to join us at St John’s at 9.30 am on Thursday 25th March for Holy Communion celebrated as we have been celebrating since lockdown ended.

New Jokes

So what if you don't know what Armageddon means.

It's not the end of the world.

What did Mars say to Saturn?

Give me a ring some time.

Why did the schoolboy eat his homework?

Because the teacher said it was a piece of cake.

What did the pirate say when he attained his four score years?

Aye matey.

Why aren't koalas classified as real bears?

They don't have the koalafications.

What makes music on your head?

A hair band.

Which vegetable should never be brought onto a ship?

A leek.

Odd Job

Lady. Inside or
out.

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gardening etc.

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