

Services August 2023			
August 6 <sup>th</sup> The Transfiguration	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 II Peter 1 vv 16-21 p1222 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040	
August 13 <sup>th</sup> Trinity 10	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Kings 19 vv 1-18 p961 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981	
August 20 <sup>th</sup> Trinity 11	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-32 p1137 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982	
August 27 <sup>th</sup> Trinity 12	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983	
Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays Halling	
2 <sup>nd</sup> August	I Samuel 23 vv 1-29 Luke 22 vv 24-34	3 <sup>rd</sup> August	I Samuel 26 vv 1-25 Luke 22 vv 35-46
9 <sup>th</sup> August	II Samuel 5 vv 1-25 Luke 23 vv 44-56	10 <sup>th</sup> August St Laurence	II Samuel 6 vv 1-19 Luke 23 v 56 – 24 v12
16 <sup>th</sup> August	Acts 5 vv 12-16 Luke 22 vv 24-30	17 <sup>th</sup> August	Job 11 vv 1-20 Mark 2 vv 1-12
23 <sup>rd</sup> August	Job 16 v 1 – 17 v2 Mark 4 vv 1-20	24 <sup>th</sup> August St Bartholomew	Acts 5 vv 12-16 Luke 22 vv 24-30
30 <sup>th</sup> August	Job 23 vv 1-17 Mark 6 vv 1-13	31 <sup>st</sup> August	Job 24 vv 1-25 Mark 6 vv 14-29

Copy Date September Magazine: 12<sup>th</sup> 8.30 am Rectory

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St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Catchpole (79), Mrs Tower (145) & Mrs Botten (160).

Church Hall Draw: 1<sup>st</sup> prize Sally Bourner, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize Dennis Hills, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize Malcolm Curnow.

### Dates

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August at 11.00 am we are all invited to take a picnic and enjoy it with friends and family from all over the area in the extensive and attractive grounds of High Halstow Rectory.

16 <sup>th</sup> August	Teddy Bears' Picnic Rectory Grounds / Church Hall Bring & Buy for Mothers' Union Charities	2.00
10 <sup>th</sup> September	Bring & Share Lunch for Church Mission Society Church Hall	12.00
1 <sup>st</sup> October	Harvest Barbecue Church Hall	12.00
21 <sup>st</sup> October	Quiz for Church Funds Church Hall	7.30

If you wish to make a **donation to our church**, an easy way to do so is to log on to [bit.ly/parishofcuxtonandhalling](http://bit.ly/parishofcuxtonandhalling)



### Artificial Intelligence

All this talk of Artificial Intelligence and its potential for good or ill reminds me of the story of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3). A powerful Being creates other beings in His own image and likeness. He sets them up with all that they need to survive and prosper. He forbids them to do the one thing that will bring disaster on themselves and on the world at large. He also gives them free will. We know what happens next. Here we are – powerful beings, made in the image and likeness of God, sustained by His bounty, knowing right from wrong, and determinedly exercising our free will in opposition to the one commandment which would save us and the world. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* Every other commandment follows from that one, including *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* So why do we disobey it? Why do we eat the forbidden fruit? What's the temptation?

In the words of the serpent, Satan, who abuses the truth for his own purposes, *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* Ye shall be as gods. It could even mean, Ye shall be as God. The Hebrew word could mean *God* or *gods*. It ought never to surprise us what human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, are capable of.

The existential threat and the promise of Artificial Intelligence seems to be that we are close to creating minds like our own, perhaps cleverer even than we are, but maybe not sharing our sense of right and wrong. We've made these intelligences. We nurture them. Presumably, they derive their cognitive power, their ability to think, from the internet which we have created – that enormous repository of knowledge, profound thoughts, sheer idiocy and absolute rubbish. In principle, of course, they depend on us for electricity and their internet connection. We could pull the plug out, except that we have allowed ourselves to become so dependent on the world wide web and our systems are so intertwined that we can't afford to switch off. Within living memory, for example, there were no computers in

banks. Cash was kept in the vaults in local branches. You paid in or withdrew cash. You performed other transactions on paper – such as writing cheques. Everything was recorded in ledgers. But think how the banks have changed. They would be paralysed if their computers went down or they were cut off from the internet and so would their customers, both individuals and businesses. The same would be true of power generation and distribution, communications, traffic light control, air travel and many other necessary public services. Whereas in the past they might have been delivered without computers and the web, they are now absolutely dependent on these systems and we just cannot disconnect them without serious bad effects.

We direct these intelligences and seek to set them limits, but we have to give them freedom if they are, so to speak, to think outside the box, to come up with new things, ideas, concepts, which they haven't been programmed with. Will they loyally serve us or will they run amok, possibly harming us, our world and maybe ultimately even themselves?

Our creation of artificial intelligence is, however, a shadow of God's creation of us. It's not the same thing. We are indeed very powerful, but God is all powerful, omnipotent. We are pretty smart, but God is infinitely wise. He is omniscient. Great as our achievements are, His works are infinitely greater. We are in the dark, groping for the light. God knows what He is doing. He is the Light. He can do anything He wants. His purposes are sure. He isn't reduced, as we are, to hoping for the best. He knows how things will turn out. He knows why things must be as they are today. And, unlike us, God is pure goodness. He will never use His powers for anything other than good. He is never taken by surprise. He never makes mistakes. Whatever freedoms He has given us, God remains in control. When creation unravelled as a result of human wickedness (Genesis 6-9), God sent a flood to wash the earth clean and start again. When we, His creation, got uppity and tried to build a tower to reach heaven (Genesis 11), He knocked it down and restricted the God-given powers we had abused by confounding our language. Can we be confident that we could take back the reins and start again if the AI we create begins to do serious

damage or if it sets itself up as our rival? I don't know.

The reason I remain confident about the future is that ultimately God is in control and His purposes will not fail however badly we mess things up. Our wickedness and folly are somehow factored into His plan for the ultimate victory of goodness, justice, mercy and love - the final consummation, the beatific vision.

Before we get on to the hopefully remote possibility of an AI Apocalypse (the Apocalypse being another name for the Revelation of St John the Divine, the last book of the Bible, which contains both sublime visions of heavenly worship and terrifying accounts of the disasters we human beings risk bringing upon ourselves), let us look at the more mundane and likely risks and benefits of AI.

Powerful new ideas have always worried people. There are plenty of examples of technologies which can be used for good or ill. It's not the technologies themselves, but what people do with them. The discovery of radioactivity, for example, led to X rays, radiotherapy and nuclear power stations, but it also made possible the construction of nuclear weapons. The Industrial Revolution enabled us to produce cheap goods to meet human need. In its initial phases, it also resulted in workers (including women and children) being subject to appalling working conditions, long hours, the very real possibility of industrial injury or sickness contracted through having to work with dangerous chemicals or in such environments as mines, and all, only too often, for derisively low wages. Industrialisation also made possible mechanised warfare, leading to slaughter on a scale previously unseen. The first such war was the American Civil War. When railways first began to spread throughout Britain, there were complaints about their spoiling the landscape and frightening the horses and fears that travelling at speeds faster than human beings had ever previously experienced could have deleterious effects on our health. That's why there is no station at Cobham and why Oxford and Cambridge stations are well away from the city centre. Railways were dirty and possibly dangerous. Early motor cars, of course, had to have a man with a red flag walking before them.

I guess that thousands of years ago, when we first found out how to make fire, there were people who welcomed the chance of a nice warm cave and a cooked dinner while others warned of the risks of getting burnt, accidentally setting fire to things, breathing in the smoke, the possibility that cooked food might be bad for you and that a warm cave could make you soft, and also that, thousands of years into the future, burning wood and coal, oil and gas would lead to global warming! Maybe they didn't think of that last possibility in the Palaeolithic era. Who knows?

So what about Artificial Intelligence? One obvious difference it will make is to employment. AI will be able to do jobs currently performed by human beings. So will it cause widespread unemployment? This is always a fear when new technology is introduced into the workplace. Some years ago, I was shown plans for a big new cement factory (which hasn't been built yet and doesn't now look likely to be built). It was explained that it wouldn't be employing hundreds of men with shovels like in the olden days. About half a dozen people sitting at computer screens would control the whole process. Theirs would be better jobs, less back-breaking, cleaner and probably better paid than the work traditionally done by large numbers of labourers. This has been the general trend associated with technological advance: better jobs, shorter hours, better working conditions. But I did wonder what the men who would have been wielding the shovels would do instead in order to earn their own living? Well, we're told we have a shortage of labour currently and need immigration in order to fill the vacancies. So the technological advances we have already experienced have not caused mass unemployment. Maybe AI will take away the jobs of a significant proportion of the workforce. Perhaps it will take on the drudgery and set human beings free to earn their living in more interesting and less tiring ways.

On the other hand, it does tend to be those at the bottom of the pile who are made redundant and reduced to living on welfare or forced to take low-paid unskilled jobs when mechanisation is brought in, while the already comfortably off are first in line for the benefits.

Artificial Intelligence has already shown how powerful it is in the field of medicine. It has enabled a paralysed man to walk by making a connection between his brain and his legs, bypassing his severed spinal cord. AI can discover new drugs for the treatment of disease and has already done so. It is likely that AI will be able to improve communications within the NHS to make it easier to see a doctor, get a hospital appointment, find out test results, etc.. There is potential for AI to diagnose various diseases and to treat them or at least to assist surgeons and physicians in doing so. AI is already finding an important role in medical research.

But an intelligence which can synthesise an antibiotic could also make a deadly poison. A computer or robot which can unravel the secrets of DNA would also be capable of inventing terrible biological weapons. It would entirely depend on what the human programmers intended whether this powerful technology was used for good or ill – unless, of course, it were to become so smart that it would no longer take orders from us.

Already, there are trials with robot carers in care homes, which seem to be fairly successful. Such robot carers could help make up for the shortage of human care workers. On the other hand, don't we want a fellow human being to have a chat with as well as a wash and a cup of tea and a piece of cake?

So called chatbots interact with us through our 'phones or computers in the same way as other people do. It appears that in some places, notably China, hundreds of thousands of people have actually fallen in love with their chatbots. That sounds to me like a relationship doomed to disappointment. In my opinion it is bad enough that, for many people, a lot of their relationships with other people are conducted online, without ever meeting in the flesh. But to be friends or even lovers with an artificial intelligence! But these chatbots are getting so good that you might well not know the difference between a robot and a human being who is talking to you via your screen. Creepy or what? Or might a friendly relationship with a "virtual" person be at least something for a lonely person? Are there shy, awkward people who would feel more

comfortable conversing with a machine than with a real human being? I'm one of those people who likes to pay for his shopping at a human checkout, enjoying a bit of conversation and the odd laugh, but there are people who prefer the automatic checkouts – quicker and no tiresome human interactions.

Chatbots can impersonate real people. They can pass themselves off as dead people – eg actors or singers from days gone by. Is that distasteful or a respectful technique for enabling a new generation to enjoy the talents of past greats? Chatbots can impersonate living people and, in the guise of some famous person, say or do things which would discredit the human original. Chatbots are well suited to inventing and disseminating fake news, potentially thereby interfering with elections, causing mass panic or lulling us into a false sense of security when we really ought to be worried.

They can also pretend to be family members in distress or a lover asking for help or your bank or the police with a view to defrauding you. If approached out of the blue in this way by 'phone or computer, always break the connection and then contact the person or institution on another device or another number before parting with any money. Never disclose your security details to anyone who contacts you in this way. It may be a fraudster or even a robot.

AI has also got educationalists bothered. Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool allowing students and pupils to research the subjects they are studying. You do have to be careful. AI gets its information from the internet and much of what is on the internet is wrong. So you have to check what AI tells you, but it can be a good way into a subject or a topic. If pupils are learning the humdrum stuff (like times tables or the capital cities of Europe) online using AI, teachers may be freed up for other tasks which really do need a human pedagogue. The fear is that students will employ AI to do the work for them. AI can write some very plausible essays. It can fill in online exam papers for you. So the work your teachers are marking may not be your work at all.

Then there is the military use of AI. AI controlled drones and missiles (which already exist and are in use in Ukraine) or robot soldiers have obvious advantages. They don't feel pain. They are never afraid. If they are "killed", they don't leave a family to mourn them. But, if they don't feel human emotions, they can't respect their enemy or show compassion. If they react automatically to situations, there is no space in which common sense can operate. Two opposing robot high commands could very quickly escalate a conflict in a way in which human generals wouldn't. Common sense should (though it doesn't always) enable a human high command to appreciate when the escalating loss of life and damage to property is out of all proportion to any possible military advantage.

If we can kill people remotely using weapons controlled from locations thousands of miles away from the battlefield, our natural human reluctance to kill our fellow human beings may be blunted in a way which it is not when we see the enemy face to face. Moreover, if we go straight home to the bosoms of our families from a military base in this country from which we have been directing weapons to kill other people remotely, the effect on our mental health may be even worse than the experience of the battle field.

Mostly, the above examples have concerned AI operating under human direction in which case the outcome, good or bad, will depend on the human actors – benign, evil, careless, stupid, wise, reckless, desperate, level-headed, etc.). There is also the possibility of unintended consequences when an intelligence not quite the same as ours sets out to obey what it thinks are our instructions. The *Times* science correspondents provide a couple of possible scenarios. In one, we tell our powerful AI computer to prevent climate change. It recognises that the best way to do this would be to cut emissions generated by human beings. So it kills all human beings. The computer takes us at our word, but its solution to the problem is hardly what we would have wanted. The second example was that we ask AI to reduce the incidence of type 2 diabetes in the population. So it kills all fat people. Again, a logical response which defeats the object of raising the question, which was to save human life.

We've got this far without even considering the plot for a science fiction book or film – that AI becomes increasingly powerful to the point where it decides that it can run things far better than we can and either eliminates us or enslaves us., which is what I think first comes to mind for most people when they worry about how AI might go terribly wrong.

The Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, describes a series of terrible events which lead to the destruction of this wicked world and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Many people down through the millennia have tried to identify the catastrophes indicated in the Book of Revelation and to work out a timetable for the end times. This is a foolish endeavour. Jesus Himself says, *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* We can't know the date of the end of the world, but we ought always to live in such a way that we would be ready for it if it came today.

I believe that it is possible to relate the disasters in the Apocalypse to things that have happened in every age. Every generation has to read Revelation as a warning of what will happen if we don't repent of our folly and wickedness and a promise that, if we will only trust in God, He will look after us, now and in all eternity. In our generation, we could read Revelation as a warning about the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, climate change and environmental degradation, ruthless capitalism, greed and materialism, indifference to the needs of the poor, oppression and slave labour, attention to false teachers and disregard for the truth and, yes, the possible misuse of artificial intelligence. We shouldn't be afraid if we are Christians. Jesus also says (Luke 21), <sup>9</sup> *But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.* <sup>10</sup> *Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:* <sup>11</sup> *And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven...* <sup>25</sup> *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;* <sup>26</sup> *Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are*

*coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.* <sup>27</sup> *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* <sup>28</sup> *And when these things begin to come to*

*pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.* So don't worry. Have faith in God. The Lord will provide.

**Psalm 46:** GOD is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble. 2. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved : and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. 4. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest. 5. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early. 6. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away. 7. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge. 8. O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord : what destruction he hath brought upon the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease in all the world : he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire. 10. Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge. 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.

#### A Peal for the King

We hoped to ring a peal for the King on the Sunday after the coronation, but, as this did not work out as planned, the celebration ring was rearranged for the 10<sup>th</sup> of June. It is good to report that the peal was successfully accomplished by our bell ringers in His Majesty's honour on that date. Congratulations to the ringing team on this achievement which will be duly recorded in the annals.

In view of the royal events we have experienced in the last year, I thought you might like to read this extract from the newsletter written by my predecessor at Cuxton Canon Charles Colson and published in April 1901 concerning the death and funeral of our late Queen's great, great grandmother, another great and long-reigning Queen.

## CUXTON Parochial Magazine.

### CUXTON RECTORY

*April 1<sup>st</sup> 1901.*

My Dear Friends,

The great thought which has occupied our minds, since I last wrote, is no doubt the death of the Queen. Few, perhaps hardly any among you, remember, as I do, the beginning of her reign in 1837, and it seemed almost an impossible thing that there should be any change. What she has said and done as our Queen, has been so familiar, so much a part of our every day life. But the change has come, there were rumours of her health not being so good a few weeks before, but they were not generally known; it was only a day or two before her death that people realized the loss they were about to suffer. Her death actually took place on January 22<sup>nd</sup> at Osborne House in the Isle of Wight. Her own family were of course aware

of its approach, and were round her bed. Among them was her grandson the Emperor of Germany, who shewed all possible love and reverence for her, such love and reverence that he has gained from all British People, the highest loving respect himself. We all feel how truly she deserved the greatest and most loving honour from all her subjects and she has received it. Certainly a true loving Queen of her people, always doing the hard work which the ruling of this great Empire requires, most carefully and punctually. Full too of loving sympathy for all of them, ever the first to show it, and to give the help needed. A true Queen, we may all say, whose memory we must ever lovingly honour.

The grand solemnity of her Funeral, has become familiar to almost all, by the different excellent pictures of the chief parts of it. Never, I suppose, has such a sight been seen before. So many Kings and Princes taking part in it, and all evidently there to show loving honour and respect.

Her body was brought by water to Portsmouth on February 1<sup>st</sup>, through a grand Fleet of her own ships, thence by train, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, to Victoria Station, thence through the largest assemblage perhaps ever seen of her subjects, through London to Paddington, and from thence to Windsor, where the public Funeral Service was held. On Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, her body was laid by the side of her husband, Prince Albert, in the Mausoleum she had had built for him at Frogmore.

All this is well known to you, but the great distinguishing point was not the grandeur of the solemnity, but the plain evident truths of the true loving honour felt for one whom all called the good Queen—a Queen who had ruled us for more than sixty years who had set the best possible example of true home religious life and deserved most thoroughly all the honour now paid to her memory.

Our King, so well known to us as Prince of Wales, now Edward the Seventh——King and Emperor—has begun his reign quite as we could have wished and expected that his mother's son would do. Our Empire, now so vast, may feel that it has in him a Ruler, whom all may love and honour. We can all of us join in heart and voice and say when we think of him—God save the King, long may he live to reign over us, and be such a King as his mother was a Queen.

#### English Clergy Association and Save the Parish

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, with some reluctance because I had a lot to do here, I attended the AGM of the English Clergy Association at St Martin's in the Fields. I was glad I went. It was a very warm day and I enjoyed travelling up to London and walking through St James Park from Victoria to Trafalgar Square. After the business meeting, there was a talk given by Rev'd Marcus Walker, Rector of St Bartholomew the Great in the City of London and Chairman of Save the Parish - set up a couple of years ago to resist the trend towards church closures, parish mergers, the withdrawal of clergy from local communities, excessive bureaucracy and centralisation.

Mr Walker said that the Church of England seeks to justify its withdrawal from the parishes on three grounds: shortage of clergy, shortage of money and a desire to spend money where, in the judgment of the "higher ups", it will do most good. Mr Walker challenged all three propositions, suggesting that the closure or merger of parishes is driven more by ideology than by practical necessity. He maintains that there is no shortage of clergy. For several years, there have been more ordinations than retirements. Moreover, there are currently over 900 clergy employed by the Church of England not in parishes, but in other work – mostly administration. I would add that there are plenty of clergy forced into retirement even if they are able and willing to continue in active parochial ministry.

There follows a couple of paragraphs on the South African War and the War in China. Canon Colson remarks: The South African War has cost us the life of a friend whom we may think of as almost a Parishioner. Mr Collard, who was in the Imperial Yeomanry, has died of Enteric Fever. His Colonel wrote to his father to say how good and useful a man he had been, and how he had endeared himself with his comrades. Those who knew him here will feel that this was sure to be so. His loss will be felt by very many. (Arthur Lionel Collard's memorial is in Cuxton Church.)

There follows a paragraph about the succession to the Darnley Estate - a concern to Cuxton where much of the land was owned by Cobham Hall. I considered the following paragraph rather thought-provoking.

The water is now laid on to almost all the houses in the Village. It will, I trust, be a great safety against the infectious diseases which before seemed so dangerous through the shallow wells and the nearness of the drainage to them.

The Rector concluded his magazine article, as was his custom, with a short sermon. As this was April, his text was part I Corinthians 15 v55 - *O Grave where is thy victory.*

As for money, Save the Parish, with the aid of its most financially astute members, has drawn up a statement of the Church of England's financial position. The Church hierarchy at first challenged this account, but later, having carried out its own audit, admitted that Save the Parish was substantially correct. The bulk of the Church's income (c£900,000,000) comes from the parishes. The Church Commissioners hold one of the biggest investment portfolios in the world (£10.2 billion). Of that, they provide £226 million per annum, to the 42 dioceses. The figures make your head spin but the reality is that only 19% of this endowment income is spent on the parochial ministry. Given that all, or nearly all, of the assets of the Church of England were originally donated to maintain ministry in the parishes – vicars and rectors – how can it be morally right that only 19% of this income is used in accordance with the donors' intentions? Is it even legal that this is so? Can it be legal that dioceses' stipend funds are often used for purposes other than paying clergy stipends? The dioceses are often not very efficient in the way they spend the money they have. The Charity Commission reckons that it is legitimate for a charity to spend 10% - 12% of their income on administration. Some dioceses spend three or more times that amount on administration.

Finally, there is the matter of spending the Church's money where it will do most good. In the past, rich parishes and dioceses expected to subsidise other Christian communities which were struggling. This practice is now regarded by many as subsidising failure. The weakest are allowed to go to the wall and the Church has spent millions on various "projects" and "initiatives" which it has believed will be effective in bringing people into contact with the Church and the Gospel we preach. Recent research has demonstrated that these "initiatives" have been a costly failure, bringing in very few people, half of whom were members of other churches already, at very great expense. Other recent research has demonstrated (Who would have thought it?) that the Church's most effective outreach in any community is the presence of a resident rector or vicar and its own church building in which services are provided regularly and with a reasonable degree of frequency.

The problem basically is that the Church of England has taken too much notice of business models and too little notice of the Bible and of the deposit of faith. Fundamentally, whatever else it does, business must make a profit and does so by dealing in material things. The Church, on the other hand, exists to glorify God, to preach the Gospel to the whole of creation, to care for all people, especially those in need, and to play a part in the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our God and His Christ. Money and material goods can only ever be means to an end, never ends in themselves.

If you want to know more about Save the Parish (including how to protect your own from closure or merger) please see [Home - Save the Parish](#).

#### Insects and the Law

Early one morning on the *Farming Programme*, they were talking about the alarming decline in the numbers of insects which has taken place over the last few decades. We don't know what all the consequences would be if whole species were lost or continued in serious decline. We do know that nature is interlinked. Predators keep down pests. Insects provide food for animals and birds. For farmers, a big concern is that insects (not just bees, but many kinds of insect, especially moths) are vital for pollination to occur. No pollination, no crop. There were several possible reasons suggested for this decline in insect life. The obvious ones are pesticide use and the loss of habitat as we concrete over the natural world. Air pollution might be a factor. One I hadn't thought of was light pollution. The fact that it is never properly dark in so many places messes up the daily rhythms of life – feeding, resting, mating – for insects and for many other creatures, including perhaps us. The news that week was also of those terrible wildfires in North America. So bad were forest fires in Canada that people in New York were advised to stay indoors or, if they really had to go out, to wear a mask because of the smoke. The consensus is getting firmer and firmer that events like these are caused by global warming and that we human beings bear a big responsibility for this.

After my Radio 4 accompanied breakfast, I took Tommy out in the garden and said Morning Prayer. I was struck by the line in the Confession *We have offended against thy holy laws*. Usually, when I say those words I'm thinking of laws like the Ten Commandments and the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the



Mount. God's holy law is to love Him with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. But, I wondered, should we also be confessing and repenting of our failure to heed the Laws of Science? The Laws of Science are after all God's holy laws just as much as the Moral Law. He is the Creator of Heaven and earth.

I become more and more convinced of the link between sin and folly. It is the fool who *hath said in his heart, There is no God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* We are sinful and foolish if we fail to take into account the Laws of Science as well as the Moral Law in the way we live our lives, in our stewardship of the planet. Follow the Maker's instructions!

I once attended a lecture by the botanist and student of ecology Sir Ghilleen Tolmie Prance FRS FLS FRSB. Sir Ghilleen is also a Christian and he pointed out how some of the biblical laws tend to protect both the natural environment and the well-being of humanity, including the poorest. According to the Old Testament, when you harvest your crops, you should not take absolutely everything. You should leave some for the poor and allow nature to recuperate. One year in seven the land was to be left fallow. One day in the week was the Sabbath, a day of rest for you, for your family, any servants you might have and for your beasts of burden. You don't have to be striving all the time to get richer. There are more important things in life than work. We don't have to wring every last drop of profit out of our fields, fisheries, mines, oil wells or our industry. The world is a better place if we don't do these things. A nice little illustration is that, if you took eggs from a nest for food, you mustn't take the mother bird as well. Let her live to produce another brood. After fifty years, debts were forgiven, mortgages written off, forfeited land returned to its original owners, bondservants set free. The land would enjoy an extra fallow year. Thus, the environment would be taken care of and the poor looked after. Nobody would aggregate to himself vast riches. Nobody ought to be destitute. Older readers will remember that when we kept Sunday special in this country, there was one day a week when there was some relief from the incessant roar of traffic. Presumably people bought fewer material goods when the shops were only open for six days in the week.

In the New Testament, of course, Jesus reminds us that *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* There is so much more to life than material possessions, the goods and experiences money can buy. If we realised that, surely we would use up far less of the world's natural resources buying things we didn't need or going places there's no real reason to go to, and therefore generate less waste and pollution. If the rich were less greedy, maybe the poor would be less hungry.

I am conscious that there are many in the modern world who believe that it was the desire to become powerful, rich or famous on the part of some people that inspired them to pursue their interests with incredible energy, inventiveness and vigour, and with a generous helping of ruthlessness, which created our modern industrial economy which in turn made possible advances in technology, medicine, food production, etc., which have ultimately benefited us all. If anyone feels like writing an article expounding this proposition, I'd be glad to publish it.

### From the Registers

#### Baptism:

25<sup>th</sup> June

Sienna Helen Lee

Chalgrove Mews

#### Funerals:

16<sup>th</sup> June

Patricia Joyce Holmes

Charles Drive

27<sup>th</sup> June

Henry John Holman

High Street

Those of you who know him will be sorry to learn of the death of Wilfred Groves, who, with his wife Thelma, lived in Cuxton till about eleven years ago. They were both faithful members of our parish church. You can see a tribute to Wilfred on this link. [wilfredgrove.muchloved.com](http://wilfredgrove.muchloved.com)

## PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. What a peculiar summer we are having ...quite unseasonable at the time of writing. We won't have any different weather on our holidays but hope yours is an improvement - unlike several who left during the hot weather here for their holidays in the sun, only to arrive in dismal, cool conditions where they sipped their cocktails shivering around a cold pool wearing several layers of warm clothes.

I overheard a couple recently discussing AI. Philippa says this stands for Avian Intelligence. The couple discussing it said they were very worried by it. It seems they think avians will take over the world. I have to tell you all that this is pure science fiction. We avians can't make bread or cakes nor gather nuts so you are all quite safe from us ..... just as long as you keep leaving us food!

We have noted that a lot of people in Cuxton village want a Zebra crossing installed. Philippa reminds me that there are no zebras in Cuxton. Perhaps it should be an alpaca crossing? There have certainly been several near-misses with your littl'uns, elderly and disabled folk moving out from behind parked vehicles. We avians are also at risk, though unlike you we have vertical take-off.

We hovered around Cuxton's Big Lunch but there were meagre pickings for us and then it rained so we had a very Small Lunch instead.

We are looking forward to our holiday at Leybourne Lakes. Unlike you, we do not have to pack or check documentation nor line up in endless queues nor take special clothes. We just go! We do try to ensure we have enough food to give us energy for our short-haul flights of course, which is why we shall leave on a Thursday morning after the rubbish sacks have been opened by the foxes. Our itinerary is Cuxton-Halling-Snodland-Leybourne. We are looking forward to sandwiches, crisps, popcorn and ice-cream cones when we meet up with friends and relatives there. I wish you a delicious summer too. Coo coo.

### AT LAST!

At last after 3 years, my hip has been replaced. Though not before my leg got shorter unfortunately!! However it's the problems with my eyes that have made me feel it is time to give up playing the organ. I realise what good eyesight you need to read all those small notes quite quickly! Just one note disappears and the whole thing falls apart.

It was Autumn 1987 when Joan Charlton approached me to see if I would be organist and choir mistress at St. John's Halling when the new Rector started his ministry in January 1987, after an interregnum following Alan Vousden leaving the Parish. I had recently completed my teaching degree and so felt I'd have time to make a contribution to our community. I was keen to ensure St. John's remained a viable church in the village. It had been there for centuries through times of great poverty and change and I still feel we have a duty to pass it on to future generations. I must add that Roger has done much to ensure regular services there but at the time we did not know if a new Rector would do that.

I started in January 1988, finishing at the end of 2022 makes it virtually 35 years. It's been a large part of my life, ensuring someone was there for each service even if it wasn't me. It's quite an adjustment and I've been grateful that Roger and all at St. Johns have been understanding in allowing me to finish 'gently'. Rather sadly the 'proper' organ had been removed as beyond repair during the reordering of the church so there was an electric organ there. I had some guidance from Mr. Crowhurst I recall as I believe he occasionally played it, after the previous organist retired. I got to know its quirks and foibles and I hope managed to get a reasonable sound from the various stops. It did not like the damp though and eventually Roger felt it should be replaced with a more robust electric organ which had to go in the other way round so I had to get used to looking over my shoulder to see what was going on in the church. That one didn't

like the damp either. Then we had the generous offer of a Clavinova in memory of Mrs. Beaney which has been much appreciated and is far less temperamental. Thank you to the Beaney family.

At first the choir consisted of Mrs. Ethel Evans – who had sung with the choir for decades – and my daughter Caroline and her friends. I must apologise if I miss people but it's a long time ago. Kelly Cheeseman, Sarah Randall, Emma Robinson, Mrs. Browning and her four daughter soon joined us and were stalwarts for a long time. Simon Chidwick also helped us with our singing – the only boy I recall but sadly I suspect he felt too outnumbered. Alfie and Jean from the High Street. Anne and Tim. Then as the children moved on in their lives, Donna and her daughter, Karen Thorne and her twins also joined us. Janice Ballard (who also helped with the beautiful flowers I could see) and Mary Morren. Then Betty Head, Yvonne Gyde and Marilyn Cheeseman. In recent years our choir was small but sadly the pandemic made even that commitment difficult for choir members. It would be wonderful if there were people in the village now who would enjoy supporting the congregation with the singing again. I also played for weddings though I found the thought of funerals more daunting until comparatively recently. Weddings are less frequent now with so many venues available to choose from but it was a great privilege to provide the music for those special days.

The commitment became too much at one time with my own family and work and I was very grateful in latter years to work jointly with Dorothy Smitherman. We worked flexibly so were able to cover most services even if one of us was unwell or away. And occasionally playing at Cuxton too if John was away. It would be lovely to see the choir back and with more members to support the congregation and the organist. It's been good to see Dorothy has now been able to return to playing more often and a choir is a great help when trying to keep count of the verses! Our stalwart members have needed to take more care during the pandemic but I'm sure if there are people in our bigger village who would like to support the congregation from the choir stalls on Sunday mornings, they would be warmly welcomed.

So basically it's been a long time and I feel privileged and honoured to have played the organ in St. Johns. While sitting there, I've often thought of all the people who must have trodden the pathway to the altar over the centuries – many living in extreme poverty. I'd like to thank everyone for their friendship and support.

ADDENDUM: Since writing the above (and missing the deadlines for the magazine!), I felt honoured and delighted to be presented with a certificate and a medal from the Royal School of Church Music. These were presented on 21<sup>st</sup> May at the Christian Aid sharing meal in Cuxton and mean a great deal to me. Sincere thanks to John Bogg who contacted the RSCM, Chris and Jenny Beaney (Chris is Churchwarden at St. John's) and of course the Rev. Roger Knight.

Gillian Feraday.

#### Tommy's Talking Points

We've not had any outings since I last wrote, but we have been enjoying the warm summer weather. We spend a lot of time out of doors as we both love the fresh air. Master takes any reading material outside from Morning Prayer to the morning paper to learned journals to leisure literature. He tells me that he used do his writing out of doors too in the days when it was done on a manual typewriter or even with a pen. The snakes' nest of leads connecting the computer to the wall socket is too difficult to disentangle to do that now and, even if he takes his tablet outside, it is hard to see the screen with the sun on it.

Taking advantage of the warm, dry weather and a quietish spell in the parish, he's been getting on with some big gardening jobs. Completing one which had looked impossible inspired him to get on with the rest. There's less time for an afternoon walk when he gardens, but I don't mind too much since I can be out there with him.

One funny thing. He's normally into the eco thing, but he was dismayed that the muddy shorts he'd worn while digging came out of *today's low temperature wash / use less powder* nearly as dirty as when they went in. In fact, when we got caught out in it, the rain did a better job of washing his shorts than the machine!

Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.