

Services December & January			
4 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 2 Bible Sunday (Gift Service)		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
11 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 3		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-10 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976
18 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 4		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 p692 Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1128 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p965
		3.00 Christingle, Crib & Carol Service at Halling	
		6.30 Nine Lessons & Carols at Cuxton	
24 <sup>th</sup> December		5.00 Christingle, Crib Service & Nativity Play at Cuxton 11.00 pm Midnight Mass at Cuxton	
25 <sup>th</sup> December Christmas Day		8.00 Holy Communion Halling	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
1 <sup>st</sup> January Circumcision of Christ Year A		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Romans 4 vv 8-14 p 1131 Luke 2 vv 15-21 p1028
Epiphany Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> January		Watch this space	Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
8 <sup>th</sup> January Baptism of Christ		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967
15 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany 2		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 p1064
22 <sup>nd</sup> January Epiphany 3		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Isaiah 9 vv 1-4 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-18 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-23 p968
Epiphany 4 29 <sup>th</sup> January		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	I Kings 17 vv 7-16 p358 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-31 p1144 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
Advent II			
7 <sup>th</sup> December Ember Day	Isaiah 8 v16 – 9v7 Matthew 16 vv 1-12	8 <sup>th</sup> December	Isaiah 9 v8 – 10 v4 Matthew 16 vv 13-28
14 <sup>th</sup> December	Isaiah 51 vv 1-8 Luke 20 vv 27-44	15 <sup>th</sup> December	Isaiah 51 vv 9-16 Luke 21 vv 5-19
21 <sup>st</sup> December St Thomas	Ephesians 2 vv 19-22 John 20 vv 24-31	22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 John 7 vv 37-44
Christmas			
28 <sup>th</sup> December Holy Innocents	Revelation 14 vv 1-5 Matthew 2 vv 13-18	29 <sup>th</sup> December	Isaiah 59 vv 1-5 John 12 vv 34-50
4 <sup>th</sup> January	Isaiah 31 Matthew 18 vv 21-35	5 <sup>th</sup> January	Isaiah 33 vv 1-16 Matthew 19 vv 1-15
11 <sup>th</sup> January	Isaiah 19 vv 1-15 Matthew 21 vv 18-32	12 <sup>th</sup> January	Isaiah 19 vv 16-25 Matthew 21 vv 33-46
18 <sup>th</sup> January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Ezekiel 13 vv 1-16 Matthew 24 vv 29-35	19 <sup>th</sup> January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Ezekiel 14 vv 1-11 Matthew 24 vv 36-51
25 <sup>th</sup> January Conversion of St Paul	Acts 9 vv 1-22 Matthew 19 vv 27-30	26 <sup>th</sup> January	Ezekiel 28 vv 11-19 Matthew 26 vv 14-29

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### Christmas Gifts

On the first Sunday in December (4<sup>th</sup>) at our 9.30 & 11.00 services we shall be collecting Christmas gifts for households in the Strood area – some of which have little to share even at Christmas. We need items like packaged food including puddings, cakes, sweets, chocolates, crisps, crackers, Christmas crackers, custard, biscuits. We also provide a small gift for each individual like new books and toys, shower gel gifts for adults and teenagers etc...

### A Rich Recipe

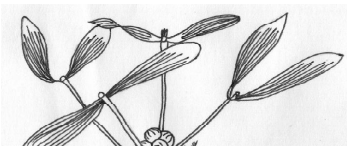
(sent in by a reader)

INGREDIENTS: 1 packet Maltesers, 2x 200gms milk chocolate, 1 tin 395gm tin condensed milk, 1 or 2 shot glasses Baileys Irish cream, 1 tsp vanilla essence

### METHOD:

Place all ingredients into the slow cooker except Maltesers and Baileys. Cook on High for about one hour. Stir every 15 minutes when thick and the mixture comes away from the spoon turn off the slow cooker add Baileys. Pour into a tin lined with baking paper. Place Maltesers over the top. Place in the fridge overnight to set.

(If you have any favourite recipes to share, please send them to me. Roger.



### Three in One, and One in Three

When the Fresh Expressions Group decided that this

year's parish Christmas card would feature a design consisting of its three member churches, I naturally thought of the Holy Trinity. God is three and God is one. There is one God. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, an eternal and perfect unity of love. The Church too is one. She is the Body of Christ. There is only one Christ and therefore all Christians are one with each other, to whatever denominations of the Church (Eastern, Western, Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, etc.) we may belong. If we believe in Christ, we are one with Him and He with us. We are therefore members one of another, a perfect unity of love.

There are problems with this, however. For a start, not all the churches which meet in Cuxton and Halling belong to the Fresh Expressions group. This doesn't mean that they are not one with those churches which do belong to the Fresh Expressions Group – Cuxton United Reformed Church, St Michael's and St John's. If we believe in Christ, we are all parts of His Church. *So God*

*loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that **all** that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* – not just those who belong to this or that sect or denomination. Essentially we are all one.

Sadly, we cannot claim a perfect unity of love. We are all sinners, albeit redeemed sinners. We shall not be perfect till we get to heaven. Jesus told us that we should love one another as He loves us. Sadly, we fail, but that doesn't mean that it is untrue that we all belong to the same family, with the same heavenly Father and the same divine Brother.

I'm not sure that church unity would necessarily mean that we all met in the same buildings, sang the same hymns and used the same forms of service. Neither do I expect us to agree on every point of doctrine and ethics. The Holy Spirit does lead us into all Truth. Jesus is the Truth. But we shall not see Him as He is until, by His grace, we join Him in Heaven. Only then shall we be as He is. Until then, we are imperfect, but we are still His family. We are, too, distinct individuals. We are all different. We each have our unique contribution to make. That is how God made us.

It is why He has made us the people we can be when we dwell in Him and He in us.

It is like a marriage. Marriage is described as *signifying to us the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and his Church*. Bride and groom pledge lifelong unconditional love. They become one flesh. *Those whom God hath joined together, we say, let no man put asunder*. Husband and wife each continue to be unique individuals. Otherwise, if they were the same, if their individuality were swallowed up in their union, they couldn't fulfil their vocation to offer the *mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity*. They each bring their individual qualities to the union of the marriage. No marriage is perfect, but a successful marriage is something which many couples achieve despite their own imperfections and those of their partners. Some people find themselves unable to keep their marriage vows. We are only human. But we know what to aspire to and where to find forgiveness and renewal where we fail.

Baptism is like marriage, on an eternal as well as a lifetime scale. Jesus gives Himself to us in perfect unconditional love. We offer ourselves to Him in perfect unconditional love. Baptism is not only a lifelong union; it is an eternal unity of love. Christ never lets us down. We let Him down only too often. But we know what to aspire to and where to find forgiveness and renewal where we fail. None of us is perfect. None of us deserves the blessings of Heaven. But they are ours by God's free gift to us, if only we will accept atonement with Him in love and faith.

God is three persons and one God. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons and one God, in an eternal perfect unity of love. We have to be careful what we say because these things are so far beyond our understanding. But each of the three persons of the Trinity is everything that God is. Yet each may be known as distinct persons by the relationships within the Trinity. The nearest analogy I can think of (and it's very far from adequate) is marriage in which man and woman are one but one is the husband and one is the wife.

The Christmas story is that Jesus is one and yet two. He is one Christ. He is God and man, immortal and mortal, almighty and vulnerable, impassible yet suffering. I'm not advancing this as a mathematical puzzle for us to solve or even a theological one. What it means is that Almighty God Who created everything that exists, the Fount of all being, the One Who made you and me and all the people we love, the world, the universe and everything in it, the One Who will be our judge, the One Who listens to our prayers and answers them as He sees fit, the One Who possesses all wisdom, all beauty, every virtue, is also one of us, a baby born in a stable, a carpenter, a teacher, a healer, *He was little, weak and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew*. This Man, like us, must die. This Man is one with God. Because He is risen, so are we who are one with Him through faith.

The Trinity is an eternal perfect unity of love – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is an eternal perfect unity of love – God and Man. He is one with us in an eternal perfect unity of love if we put our faith in Him. The faithful are themselves dwelling in an eternal perfect unity of love.

*So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

What does all this mean for us in the world in the mess in which we find ourselves? It means that God is with us whatever happens. Insofar as what is wrong is our fault, our sins are forgiven in Him if only we repent and believe. Whatever the causes of our problems, Jesus is with us, sharing our pain and supporting us in our journey.

**WE** humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities; and, for the glory of thy Name, turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved; and grant, that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness and pureness of living, to thy honour and glory; through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### From the Registers

#### Baptism:

16<sup>th</sup> October

Myles James Brian Townsend

Britannia Close

#### Wedding:

22<sup>nd</sup> October

Jamie Ware & Hannah Tickner

Halling

### Christmas at St John's

The Platinum Jubilee concert at Halling was such a success that everybody wanted a repeat performance. I'm happy to be able to tell you that at 4.00 pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, there will be a similar **concert of Christmas music at St John's**. Halling Parish Council have kindly agreed to subsidise this event, but we shall also have to ask for donations to cover the full cost. Entry will, however, be free. Please contact me to book free tickets and tell all your friends about it.

There will also be another **Christmas Tree Festival** at St John's from 17<sup>th</sup> December. If you, or a group you belong to, would like to contribute a tree, please contact Jenny Beaney. Open 10.00 – 3.00 On 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> and 10.00 – 12.00 19<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>.



### Bring & Share Lunches

Following the success of the Bring & Share Lunch to raise funds for Ukraine, we are holding two more such lunches in the church hall at 12.00 noon. Everybody is invited. Just come along. If you can, bring something to eat to share.

There will be a collection. Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November, the lunch will be for the British Legion Poppy Appeal, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January for the Children's Society.



## **CHURCH CHRISTMAS FAYRE**

### **Cuxton Scout Hall**

**SATURDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER**

**10.00 ~ 12.00**

**Events & activities include ~**

**STALLS, LOMBOLA, REFRESHMENTS,**

**RAFFLE & CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES.**

### Jokes

How did the Vikings send messages?  
What is so great about Switzerland?  
Why shouldn't you trust atoms?

They used Norse Code  
Their flag is a big plus.  
They make up everything.

## PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. The weather remains relatively kind to us all. The avian summer visitors have left on their marathon flights to the warmth summer climes of the southern Mediterranean and even Africa. It is always good to see them here as they herald summer ....and they are full of tales of brightly coloured relatives and their unusual diets ....rice, pasta and couscous, being particular favourites apparently. They have to be very wary of large predators though. Here of course we have to compete and contend with gulls, crows and even ravens. We usually submit and fly off when they appear. Can you imagine our distress therefore when a tree-mail told us that Maidstone Council is employing hawks to deter and pursue us. They are quite vicious and attack for enjoyment and to extend their territory. Philippa calls them Pootins. The best and cheapest way for Maidstone Council to deter us is to stop you human beans from dropping food in the streets. That would do the trick.

We are also concerned about avian flu affecting so many of our relatives. Philippa wisely says we should avoid our favourite farms as they may be affected. We know our most favourite farm has sadly had to take drastic action. I know that you human beans are unlikely to contract this flu, but you have your own varieties which can range from mildly uncomfortable to lethal. I do urge you to get your vaccinations for flu and all the other nasties that can affect you. While in Ferry Road I heard two ladies chatting about vaccines for flu, Covid, pneumonia and shingles. They felt like pincushions, but no matter if they are protected. Philippa reminds me that it is vital for all living beings to eat and to be warm too. So don't forget to eat and heat and if you think you can't afford to do both, get help! The well-being nurse at Cuxton on Monday mornings and Halling on Wednesday mornings can really help you sort it out. After all, you don't have a coat of feathers to fluff out nor a cosy Amazon box in a disused garage close to a source of instant food. Eat and heat this winter. Coo coo

St John's Draw: Mrs Mitchell (64), Mrs Booth (86) & Mrs Dallas (157)  
Church Hall Draw: 1<sup>st</sup> prize Michael Lofthouse, 2<sup>nd</sup> Huw Silverthorn, 3<sup>rd</sup> David Gates.

### Disappointing Endings

Am I getting old and crotchety? Or do you feel the same? Perhaps you are young and crotchety. I remember my father, when he was older, got very critical of TV programmes and films and even jokes. They say that there is a very limited number of plots you can use in a book, play or film. Maybe, when you've reached a certain age, you've seen them all. If Frankie Howerd in *Up Pompeii!* was anything to go by, things haven't changed much since before the eruption of Vesuvius.

[Incidentally, the late Frankie Howerd featured in the funniest film ever made, *The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery*. (I saw it at the Plaza Gillingham, 1/=-, child, seat, front stalls.) If you're into films, the best political drama ever made was *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. The vicar and the bishop get to drive the train while a group of ordinary decent people beat a bunch of bureaucrats and an unscrupulous businessman, played by Sid James. The greatest line ever uttered on the silver screen was spoken by Kenneth Williams as Julius Caesar in *Carry On Cleo*. "Infamy, infamy! Everybody's got it in for me." So again, the humour of ancient Rome makes perfect sense in modern Britain.]

Seriously, I have been very disappointed lately in the endings of some of the books I've read and the series I've streamed. Like most young people, I don't watch much terrestrial TV, but, judging by the i player, that's sometimes even worse. Or it might just be that I'm not very good at navigating that particular site and lose episodes, especially the final ones.

I read a book recently in which a highly competent and very committed police officer narrowed down the list of suspects in a murder investigation to a small group of people, but couldn't find a way to identify which of them had done it. Then the author introduced another previously unmentioned policeman in the last few pages and he finally cracked the case simply because he "just knew" who the murderer must be by her manner. Whether this would have proved guilt beyond reasonable doubt to a jury we were not given the chance to discover.

I think that there are several reasons for these unsatisfactory endings. One, I believe, is that the channel bosses conclude that there are too few viewers to make a commercial success of it and just cancel subsequent episodes. I used to enjoy a somewhat feeble comedy in which George Cole played the father in an ordinary household in a Britain which had been taken over by the Soviet Union. It was called *Comrade Dad*. It just stopped being broadcast, possibly because I was the last person left watching it. Maybe, there was another viewer, however. I expect it would have made Vladimir Putin laugh!

I was also watching a Netflix series about some young people deceived into allowing themselves to be imprisoned on an island. It was rubbish, but on the principle *I've started so I'll finish* I still wanted to know what would happen next when it just seemed to come to a halt. Admittedly, it was a bit implausible. This island was both supposed to be so remote that nobody knew where it was or even that it existed but also that it was a short boat trip from the coast of Spain.

A friend of mine started watching a series on the Ten Commandments on Channel 4. The first couple were so bad that subsequent broadcasts were switched to later and later times and I don't think they even reached number 10. According to my friend, the Jew, the Muslim and the atheist who were asked to comment on the Commandments were all very good, but the series was badly let down by the Anglican Bishop!

Sometimes, I suspect that the reason that things are left unresolved at the end of a season is that Netflix or whoever want to leave open the possibility of another season if there is sufficient viewer demand. Not that the resurrection of a film or book has to be overly realistic. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle got fed up with writing Sherlock Holmes stories and killed off the great detective at the Reichenbach Falls in the Alps, but subsequently brought him back to life in order to meet reader demand and, I believe, because he needed the money.

It didn't work out so well, however, for the makers of *Dallas* when they brought Bobby Ewing back into the show after his supposed death, by making out that the whole of the season in which he died was a dream of Ewing's ex-wife. Many viewers experienced cognitive dissonance!

Sometimes I think the reason things end poorly is because, having thought up a good story, the writers can't think of a good ending. That may be why *Stranger Things* ended so feebly (in my opinion) or possibly they are thinking about another season. *Stranger Things* does have an important moral. If your great uncle leaves you a creepy old house in his will, on no account live in it. *Stranger Things* is also a reminder of just how long ago the 1980s are. They were using Basic as a computer language and the internet had hardly been invented.

Do you remember *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*? In the former a modern police officer finds himself back in the 1970s. In the latter another officer from the present day wakes up in the 1980s. Brilliant story lines, but a very disappointing ending. I strongly suspect that the writers didn't know where the series were going until well into the broadcasting of *Ashes to Ashes*. *Life on Mars* was one of those embarrassments for the BBC. We were rightly shocked by scenes showing some of the worst of 1970s policing, but plenty of viewers pointed out that there was less crime on the streets in those days.

Bring back *Dixon of Dock Green*, I say. PC George Dixon was a traditional copper not far off retirement when he was shot dead in 1950 in the film *The Blue Lamp*. After his "resurrection", George continued to serve as the epitome of British policing on television until 1976.

Perhaps the most notorious example is the adventure story writer who, having got his hero into a situation from which escape was absolutely impossible at the end of one episode, insouciantly began the next with the words, "With one bound he was free!"

There is another reason why maybe I find the end of a book, film or series unsatisfactory. If it goes on too long or is too dull, I lose track. Sometimes I doze off. If the plot is at all complicated, I can't always follow it. *Better Call Saul* seemed to go on for ever and I was very disappointed with the end of it, but I had forgotten quite a lot of the story lines by the time we reached the end and I wasn't very interested anyway. *Better Call Saul* was supposed to be a prequel to *Breaking Bad*. I really did enjoy the original. *Breaking Bad* made sense! The pundits, however, say that *Better Call Saul* is much the better of the two. Personally, I'm neither sophisticated nor subtle. I like things spelled out clearly. So sometimes it's my fault when I don't get the ending.

Authors and playwrights are, nevertheless, restricted in how they end their works. The public very often won't put up with an unanticipated ending which fails to resolve the tensions in the piece. Your readers and viewers expect the detective to identify the rogue, the freedom fighters to defeat the tyrant, Perry Mason to establish the innocence of his client, the hero to marry the heroine and the spy to be unmasked. Anthony Trollope got into terrible trouble with his fans when the ending every reader was rooting for didn't come to pass. I referred to this in a sermon once, naming the book, and thereby spoiling it for a couple of members of the congregation who were reading it. That's another oddity. We expect an ending within certain parameters but we don't want to know what it is until we've read the book. Most people don't turn to the last page until they've read all the other pages. Trollope ended a subsequent book by really laying it on thick. In the last couple of pages, pretty well everybody gets married to the right person.

Occasionally, you come across a book where the author has written two possible concluding chapters, one perhaps in which the hero dies a hero on the battlefield, another maybe in which he comes home from the war, marries his sweetheart and gets a job as an accountant. Such devices are intrinsically unsatisfying because they force you to acknowledge that what you are reading is just make believe. I understand that some electronic book and story formats allow readers to change or even determine the ending. I've never tried that. So I'd better not comment, but I don't much fancy it.

I was once saddened by a child who asked me why so many stories end with "They all lived happily after" when that isn't what happens in too many true life instances?

Now I'm getting to my point. We do know how things ought to turn out, even when they don't. It's what we expect in fiction and it's what we're working to achieve in real life – that things turn out the way they should. And now I'm going to speculate, which was the theme of the sermon in which I talked about Anthony Trollope upsetting his fans. Could it be that we not only know how things should turn out but also trust that everything will come out right in the end because, deep down inside, we know that God is in charge, that His purposes are good and that His promises are sure?

#### Looking After Each Other

In these difficult times it is especially important that we take care of one another – especially those who live alone and may be elderly or vulnerable. Are they warm enough? Are they getting their meals? Are they able to get the shopping they need? We may be able to offer help or to point people to charities or statutory bodies which can offer support.

#### Why Wedding Breakfasts?

People often wonder why the meal after a wedding is called the wedding breakfast? In the past (and still in some other Christian Churches today) it was the custom for the newly married couple to receive Holy Communion together at the same service – the nuptial mass. Before receiving Communion, communicants were required to fast. Hence the meal after the wedding was the break fast. The rule used to be that Holy Communion could not be celebrated after noon, which was why weddings used to have to be celebrated in the morning. This was put back first to 3.00 pm & then to 6.00 pm. Even if there is no Communion, there was a fear that people being married under cover of darkness might be doing so because there was some *cause or just impediment* which ought to have prevented their wedding. I think that this has now been changed, but I'd have to check if anyone wants a nocturnal wedding.



### Tommy's Talking Points

Master was in the doghouse last month because he didn't save space for my Talking Points – everybody's favourite magazine feature, though Percy has his fans too, even though he isn't a fantail. Max, you may remember, had his Tail Piece and Bobby was once ITDA (a play on ITMA – It's That Man Again, if you're old enough to know what I'm talking about, the olden days when the radio was the wireless and phones were wired to the exchange. Master has learnt his lesson.

I'm pleased to report that we were able to arrange another riverside walk with our friend during what is sometimes called St Luke's Summer. The day started wet, but *Rain before seven, fine before eleven*, even just after ten, when we met our companion on the train at Cuxton. Last time we walked, we had followed the river from Maidstone to Watlingbury where they had had lunch in the *Watlingbury Arms* while I lay on the grass under the table. We were very impressed with this establishment. Besides being the only pub in Watlingbury open on a Monday, it is extremely dog friendly, has a beautiful garden and serves (to human beings) very fine food and drink. Just water for dogs. So they resolved to stay on the train to Beltring and walk back to the Watlingbury Arms for their midday repast.

Which we did. The sun soon came out and the warmth was such that coats and pullovers quickly came off and Master was able to top up his tan *e'er the winter storms begin*. The mud in that part of Kent is much thicker and clingier than around here on the chalk down land. So I was soon plastered. Never mind. Mud is supposed to be a beauty treatment. We turned right out of Beltring Station onto a rather unpleasant main road, but soon found the path to the river. This might be our first walk on which they have not got lost – possibly because Master didn't argue with the man with the map. At first, we did not encounter many people, except some fishermen and dog walkers. I was able to run on ahead and explore. The men enjoyed the autumn colours. I followed up on the scents. As we approached Yalding and Teapot Island, we came to some attractive looking riverside dwellings, but Master recalled that these are often flooded in Winter. So their owners and tenants may have problems. One of them complimented me on my distinctive and beautiful markings – the reason I was originally selected from a litter of six. Before my remarkable physiognomy was pointed out to him, he had been thinking of choosing my apparently livelier brother. Do you suppose he could have coped with a livelier puppy than I was?

There were more people about when we got to Teapot Island and Master told our friend about the wonderful collection of teapots there which he has seen when visiting with the Mothers' Union. On this occasion, however, we continued along the river path. There were more riverside homes and leisure facilities. Eventually, we came to Watlingbury and stopped at the station to check the times of the trains. We were made very welcome in the Watlingbury Arms. We were quite content in the warm sunshine in the garden, but we were told that, despite being muddy, we could have eaten inside so long as we had avoided the carpeted areas of the pub.

They usually set the world to rights in their discussions of every major issue confronting the human race and I think, "If only people would listen to their profound wisdom, which increases amazingly with every mouthful of IPA." This time, however, even they were flummoxed by the state of the world and the Church. They must have been enjoying themselves, however. They cut things so fine that we had to run for the train!

Three days later, just Master and I set out in our local countryside for an early morning run in a gentle, warm rain. Shortly after we entered the woods, it seemed like the heavens opened. Fortunately, the rain was still warm, but it came down in torrents – cats and dogs if you will. Paths turned into rivers. We had to climb over a large fallen tree on the North Downs Way. There were thunder and lightning. He found it difficult to see where we were going with his glasses running with water. He managed too to slip over in the mud. If only he had four legs! It was an inspiring experience and suggested a sermon on the life-giving, cleansing, invincible power of the Holy Spirit.

Merry Christmas.

Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.





# THE HALLING SINFONIA

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