

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



July 2024

60p

<http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Services July 2024

7 th July Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
14 th July Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008
21 st July Trinity 8	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 23 vv 1-6 p782 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174 Mark 6 vv 30-56 p1009
28 th July Trinity 9	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30
3 rd July	II Kings 2 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 1-18	4 th July Ecclesiasticus 48 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 7-15
10 th July	II Kings 22 v8 - 23 v3 Matthew 7 vv 15-20	11 th July II Kings 24 vv 8-17 Matthew 7 vv 21-29
17 th July	Amos 5 vv 14-24 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	18 th July Amos 7 vv 10-17 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
24 th July	Hosea 10 vv 1-12 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	25 th July Hosea 11 vv 1-9 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
31 st July	Isaiah 10 vv 5-16 Matthew 11 vv 25-27	1 st August Isaiah 26 vv 7-19 Matthew 11 vv 28-30

Copy date August Magazine: 12th July 8.30 am Rectory

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Church Hall Hire: cuxtonchurchhall@gmail.com.

St John's Draw (May): £10 each Mrs Burr (10) & Sam Head (16)

For Diaries

6th July, 7.30 St John's Halling - Peninsula Big Band - CRUK

11th August - Bring & Share Lunch for Motor Neurone Disease Association
Church Hall 12.00

21st August Teddy Bears' Picnic Plus
2.00 Rectory Grounds

31st August Frank & Jean Concert
St Michael's Church 6.30 pm

29th September 6.30 Songs of Praise Cuxton
(Please choose a hymn which means something special to you.)

October 6th Harvest Barbecue Church Hall 12.00
19th October Quiz Church Hall 7.30.



From the Rector

I must begin with the confession that I know very little about art. Having acknowledged that, I have always been perplexed by the art world's very powerful focus on authenticity. From my naïf perspective, I should have thought that the true value of a work of art would be in the effect

it had on the beholder. If I look at a painting and it deeply moves me, surely it is irrelevant whether that painting is by Rembrandt, by one of Rembrandt's pupils, or by a modern artist who has so perfected Rembrandt's style that his work is indistinguishable from that of the great master himself. *Ars gratia artis.*

Rembrandt scholars, seeking to understand how the artist's talent developed and changed over his career, have a real interest in knowing which paintings are authentically his work. But they are a very small number. For the rest of us, surely the point is the painting, not the painter.

The monetary value would of course be very different depending on the authorship, but isn't that missing the point of art? Many of the world's greatest artists have lived in poverty. They have had a gift, an inner need to express themselves in particular ways, ideas to communicate, which they have laid bare to the gaze of others, the people who have viewed their work. The fortunes in the art market are very often made by those who buy and sell rather than by those who create. I cannot really understand why a person who loves a painting believing that it is painted, say, by

Rembrandt sees any less value in it if it is shown to be a forgery. Naughtily, I have a sense of *schadenfreude* when I hear about a millionaire who spends a vast sum on what turns out to be a forgery which to him is indistinguishable from the original, especially if he has bought it as a financial investment rather than because he recognises its intrinsic worth as a work of art.

I'm tempted to a thought experiment. Suppose, by some wonder of technology, it were to become possible to produce quite cheaply an unlimited supply of perfect replicas of the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre so that everyone who would value a painting of the Mona Lisa could have one, instead of access being limited to those who could travel to Paris and pay the admission charge and who would still face a limited view because of the crowds and the security precautions. Would that be a good thing – sharing Leonardo's genius with everybody who could appreciate it? Or would it be devalued by becoming commonplace? Suppose, further, this new technology could reproduce the Mona Lisa exactly as Leonardo originally painted it, without the ravages of time suffered by the original in the Louvre, and make millions of copies exactly the same as the painting was when da Vinci applied his last brush stroke and offer them to everyone who had a wall big enough to hang one on, would this be a good or a bad thing?

At the very least, we'd be uneasy about such a prospect, but many Christians would rejoice unequivocally if we could place a copy of the Bible in the hands of every living person. Roger.

Bibles & Christian Literature

In many parts of the world, there is a shortage of bibles & Christian books. Ordinary Christians are unable to obtain God's Word written. Sometimes pastors are poorly prepared and resourced themselves. If you have bibles or other Christian books which you are no longer using, please inform Jack Payne or me so that they can be passed on to organisations which will redistribute them where they are very much needed. Here are some testimonies from the beneficiaries.

By the grace of God, I've read most chapters of the books. In fact it has added more knowledge to what I know. I've been greatly blessed with the knowledge I've acquired through the books. Most especially the Foundation of the Christian Faith, it has help me to deeply understand the basic foundation of major doctrines. Its has enlarging my understanding in the Christian doctrines. The books have helped me to teach in details what God expects us to do as a believer. It has also helped the church to increase our membership. It has again helped me in research, at least I'm able to do biblical references for easy

understanding. Thank you so much for helping to acquire more knowledge in the word of God to impact lives. (Ghana).

As a Christian, I have learned some important foundational truths that have been incredibly useful to me in My life and faith journey. Some of these include:

*The teaching of Jesus Christ particularly his commandment to love God and love others as ourselves. This belief has encouraged me to strive to demonstrate love, compassion, and kindness in my interactions with others

*The understanding of sin and the need for repentance and forgiveness. This belief has helped me to acknowledge and take responsibility for my mistakes, seek forgiveness from God and others, and strive to live a more righteous and just life

*The hope of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life. This belief has provided me with comfort and reassurance, especially during difficult times, knowing that there is greater purpose beyond this earthly life.

*The importance of prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with others believers. These spiritual disciplines have helped me to grow in my relationship with God, deepen my understanding of the Christian faith, and find support and encouragement from my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ

Overall, these foundational truths of the Christian faith have been incredibly useful to me in guiding my beliefs, shaping my character, and providing me with hope, peace, and joy in my Christian walk. (Kenya).

I have been thoroughly impressed with the quality of the books you sent. The level of detail and insight they provide is remarkable. They cover a broad range of topics and have helped me to gain a deeper understanding of various theological concepts. In particular, the commentaries (Ryle's Expository Thoughts) have been an absolute game-changer for me. They have been immensely helpful in my theological studies, helping me to prepare my sermons and teach my Bible students. The depth of analysis and interpretation they provide is unparalleled. I have been taking much help from these commentaries, and I am confident that they will continue to be a tremendous asset to me in the future. Once again, thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness in sending me these books. I am truly grateful and appreciative of your kindness. (Pakistan).

May I take this great opportunity to thank you and your ministry so much for the books you send me three months ago, I must admit that this is the first time I studied theology through your books. I was leading the church under me as an Overseer with five Pastors and a number of leaders without the true knowledge of the word, but from what I have learned I have arranged some mid-week services in the church for bible study so that now I can teach the leaders and Pastors under me.

Being a Pastor here in Kenya for about 20 years, I totally agree with what I have read in your books that it is true there is apostasy in the church in Kenya may be because so many Pastors including me have never gone to Bible College or studied theology. That is why as have false *prosperity gospel where people told to buy holy water, fake anointing oil and even brooms for blessings. Now I know how to perform correct services, raise leaders whom to work with to make work easier, things I did not know for more than 20 yrs. -I never knew that the Bible is God's revelation about Himself.

As a Pastor, I never knew that Jesus Christ executed the three offices of - Prophet - Priest and King. Now I have so much that I can teach the Church.

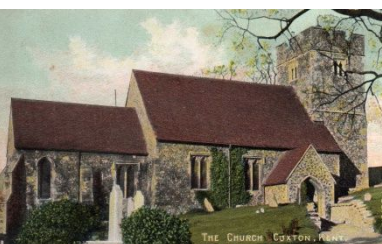
I have also learned that separation[†] is to refuse to be guided by the world and its standards and that standards as a Christian must be those of the Word of God alone.

** The prosperity Gospel is the false doctrine that if you become a Christian (and give generously to the Church and its ministers) God will fulfil or all worldly desires for health, wealth, etc.. The Bible actually says: I Timothy 6: ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ¹¹ But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

[†] That Christians should keep themselves unspotted from the world. We are in the world, but not of the world.

Having completed reading your books has changed the way I thought about Christianity, the way I used to teach the bible, the way I used to preach, the way used to conduct the services. (Kenya).

I praise God continually for your wonderful connection with us. I am really impressed and happy to write to you, your staff and thank you for the wonderful work that you are doing as Jesus commissioned us. Very humble to say it with all my strength and thought of mind, that after a couple of long journey going through your wonderful books, Honestly I realized that I knew nothing about: The Trinity, the Atonement, Suffering, Eternity, Prayer, Illness, the Sacraments, the visible Church, The call and the calling, preaching and perils tempered by privileges. Hallelujah! What GREAT books! So many of my questions have been answered. As your books' teachings are leading me in my ministry and Christian life. Through your teachings I find that the way of Jesus is a way of genuine pleasure. I have indeed committed to be sharing what I read from the books with others. So I pray the Lord to choose me among the [†]winners to enter heaven. The truth of the matter is that my heart is filled with joy, and I offer my great thanks to God every day, and my life has become so peaceful and joyous because of what I have received from your books teachings and to crown it. I know now that there is no other gospel, no other faith as true as this one. (Kenya).



On the Ropes

The rather wet early May Bank Holiday Monday saw us welcome a group of “pilgrims” to St. Michael’s and All Angels. This group of half-a-dozen hardy souls were undertaking a sponsored walk from Chelsfield to Canterbury in support of Philippa Rooke’s “Save Our Spire” campaign.

Philippa is a churchwarden at St. Martin’s-of-Tours in Chelsfield and had organised the 6-day, 70 mile walk in aid of church spire repairs at St. Martin’s, whose ancient wooden shingles are apparently under attack not only from the ravages of time but also from parakeets! Philippa had asked if a couple of her walking crew could help ring a quarter peal at St. Michael’s and we were able to rustle up the services of four additional ringers to fulfil that request.

The subsequent ring of 1260 Plain Bob Doubles was successful and we therefore decided to dedicate it to the memory of Malcolm Curnow, who (as most of you will know) was a churchwarden at St. Michael’s for some 23 years before he sadly passed away in January this year. Given the kindness and enthusiasm that Malcolm showed to many visitors to St. Michael’s over the years, we felt this was a particularly appropriate dedication.

The following Sunday 12th, we were pleased to be able to support pre-Sunday service ringing at both St. Michael’s Cuxton and St. John’s Halling with two full teams of six, although five of us had to dash down to St. John’s after finishing at St. Michael’s to complete the “double header”. It made us appreciate the effort our Rector puts in every Sunday – he has to do the “double header” every week! Fortunately one of our number has a roomy van we can all fit into, which saves us having to commandeer Roger’s bike, circus-style. Mrs. Beaney kindly made sure we got a cup of tea/coffee at St. John’s for our efforts, which was most welcome. Courses of Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire and some call-changes at both towers on a warm sunny day gave our “method ringers” a reasonable work-out. The Sundays of the 19th and 26th of May also saw Sunday service ringing at St. Michael’s, with full teams of six ringing courses of Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire, Plain Bob “minimus” along with some Plain Hunt and call changes for the 45 minutes before Holy Communion. ‘April Day’



[†] I Corinthians 9: ²⁴ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

²⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I hope you are all well and enjoying early summer. Here in Six Acre Woo all is well and the trees in full leaf hide our summer roost quite well. We have a good view of the comings and goings below and beyond. We watched some litt'uns having fun flying kites in the top field. They had a wee picnic too and we enjoyed a peanut butter sandwich and the ends of a pasty. Sometimes we don't mind being your edible-litter pickers.

The weather seems to be generally improving, Hoorah! The long wet winter was very dismal and Spring was no great improvement. The new fox cubs are out foraging for themselves, chasing squirrels and squabbling. They will soon be looking for their own territory, preferably close to rodent patches. Fortunately they can't climb trees. If you have wildlife visiting your gardens at night but don't know whether they are foxes or badgers, put out apple cores and carrot (peelings and tops). Foxes won't eat carrots but badgers love them. If only the apple is taken, it is likely a fox. If both are taken, a badger is likely. If neither is taken, maybe you have a feral cat. This is a guide and not foolproof! We watched the fox with the white tip to his tail the other evening. He collected some bread and raced back to the rectory garden with it. Twice.

There seem to be a lot more magpies around this year. Philippa says you have a rhyme about seeing magpies

One for sorrow
Two for joy
Three for a girl
Four for a boy

Five for silver
Six for gold
Seven for a secret never to be told.

This well-known rhyme has been around since the mid-nineteenth century when the number of magpies seen foraging together was regarded as forecaster of future events. Magpies can be quite aggressive so we avoid them. Even the gulls are wary. None are as feisty as the ravens though - they have no fear it seems. Regrettably there is no code of honour amongst avians. All's fair in bread and fruit.

We pigeons are very intelligent birds. We recognise human faces too. When one of our favourite humans is sitting in the garden we appear in front of her almost instantly, knowing that she has a slice of bread waiting for us. She bids us welcome and makes small bread pellets for us. Sometimes we have to listen to her talking to the wind as we peck at the crumbs. Philippa says we should continue to nod in agreement - and thanks - as we finish our meal. We recently overheard two men discussing the weather and speculating that there would be a summer heat wave. Is there a wetware or a cold wave? We hope for some warmth and bright, sunny and calm days. Enjoy!

Coo coo.

The 'Book Corner' in St Michael's Church Hall

We have explored many different ways of raising funds for our church over the years. About a year before Covid, a member of our congregation, Shirley Crundwell, suggested that the sale of books could be a good and sustainable source of income. Two members of our congregation took up this challenge and set up what is now the 'Book Corner' in the church hall. It started with only one bookcase and has since grown to four! All of the stock comes from donations from church members or the public, mostly those associated with using the hall or their friends and family. We have raised about £1400 so far; not too bad, bearing in mind that the Book Corner was closed for nearly two years during CoViD! There is a selection of romantic and historical fiction, crime and thrillers, books for children and teenagers, as well as some non-fiction (mainly biography). Sometimes, we receive DVDs and CDs as well. Suggested prices are low - 50p for paperbacks or children's literature and £1 for hardbacks.



A good selection of handmade birthday and other special events cards is also available and are proving to be very popular. Our suggested donation for cards is £1.

The above-mentioned members of our congregation keep an eye out for any book gems, but as yet, nothing has been discovered! They also keep in mind any author or genre requests in their travels. We always welcome any donations of books. They may be left in the church or in the hall, near to the bookshelves. If anyone would like to come and browse, the hall is open for around half an hour on Sundays from 10.30am and Wednesdays from 10am, after our church services. There are also teas and coffees available with a good selection of biscuits! If you have any larger donations, please contact us and we will try to arrange a collection.

As a footnote, we also collect items for our bring and buy sales, raffles and fayres which are held throughout the year. Any donations of unwanted items in as new or good condition would be very gratefully received.

Jack Payne and Dawn Gates

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Christian Aid



A Division of The British Council of Churches

The total raised for Christian Aid this year in this parish is £412.85. Thank you all those who contributed.

Quotation

Francis A Schaeffer: *If we do not show love to one another, the world has a right to question whether Christianity is true.*

From the Registers

Funerals:

17th May

Sylvia Ivy Breach

Larkfield

28th May

Gary John Simmonds

James Road

1st June (Memorial Service)

Colin James Graham Cogger

Rochester Road Cuxton

Bell Ringing and the Cogger Family

On the day of Colin's Memorial Service we received a newspaper cutting regarding Colin's Uncle Charles Cogger ringing the bells at St Michael's to celebrate the birth of a royal prince. Charles Cogger was 77 at the time and had been ringing at Cuxton since he was twelve. He was churchwarden at the time of the newspaper article and had previously served, as had many in his family, as sexton (the guy in charge of the churchyard). At the time of the newspaper article, Charles said that Coggers had been ringing at Cuxton for nearly 150 years. Delving into the Baptism Register, Charles was christened on 17th December 1882. The royal prince therefore must have been Andrew who was born 19th February 1960. We may infer then that, when Colin finally retired from ringing, his family had been ringing here to call people to worship, to celebrate parishioners' weddings and local and national occasions, as well as to mark the passing of the deceased, for more than 200 years.

Tom Pepper

My father used to describe people (sometimes me!) as bigger liars than Tom Pepper, but I never knew who Tom Pepper was until the other day I heard about him on Radio 4. The story is that Tom Pepper was cast out of Hell for being a worse liar even than Satan.

Jokes

Why do you hear music playing on your head?

It's your hair band

How did I come to fall down that shaft into the water?

I don't see that well

Why can't you trust atoms?

They make up everything

What has ears but can't hear?

Corn

When I told my girlfriend that she was drawing her eyebrows too high, she looked surprised.

How did the egg climb the mountain?

It scrambled.

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

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

The Unpreached Sermon

I Samuel 3 vv 1-10, Psalm 139, II Corinthians 4 vv 5-12, Mark 2 v23 – 3 v6

The sermon I had prepared for Sunday 2nd June turned out not to be the one that was needed at either St Michael's or St John's. Here it is and if you read it you might accuse me of casuistry or legalism or think I'm just plain weird! The previous Sunday I had done something I hadn't done for thirty or more years. I had performed some heavy labour in the garden. I don't normally work on Sundays in deference to the fourth of the Ten Commandments, *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day*. When I was a child, some members of my family were strict Sabbatarians, most much less so, though all of us (as most people did in those days) regarded Sunday as in some sense special. It was when I was a teenager that I decided that I personally ought to observe the Sabbath by, among other things, not doing homework on Sundays. It actually suited my nature very well to get homework out of the way on Friday and then forget about school till Monday morning. I told some friends what I had concluded and they said, *Fine, but the Sabbath is not Saturday, but Sunday*. They were Seventh Day Adventists. True enough, the Sabbath in the Bible is the seventh day of the week. It was the early Christians who changed it to keep the holy day on the first day of the week, the day Jesus rose from the dead. Jewish people, of course, keep the Sabbath on Saturday. Edwina Curry (the "egg lady" and close friend of John Major) came from a Jewish family which ran a delicatessen in Liverpool. They were closed on Saturdays, but Catholics called in for their breakfast after Sunday Mass.

There is a lot to be said for a day off every week, a day of rest, a time for the family, a day especially consecrated to God. The late Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, said that the seven day week with its recurrent day of rest is one of the greatest gifts that the Jews have given to the human race. Without structure and rhythm, life is just one thing after another. Former Lord Chancellor, Lord MacKay of Clashfern, strictly kept Sunday as a day of rest even when he held one of the highest offices in the land. He declared that, having a proper rest on one day of the week, a holy day, enabled him to achieve more on the other six days. It makes sense.

Now, until I came here, I had not regarded gardening as work. To me, horticulture had always been a hobby and therefore perfectly permissible on holy days. Indeed, when I was curate at Orpington, I was quite annoyed one Good Friday when a passer by criticised me for cutting the grass on the holy day. I had already attended Mattins, Litany and Ante-Communion, led the Family Service and participated in the Three Hour Devotion. Surely, I was not committing sin by mowing the lawn before Evensong! Opinions differ on Sabbath observance. St Paul would say two things about this. We should all be guided by our own consciences on these contentious matters and we should not find fault with but support those whose consciences lead them to conclusions different from our own.

So why did I change my mind when I came here and deem gardening work rather than recreation? For one thing, the Rectory Garden is huge and much of the task of keeping it in order is hard work. That's not the main issue, however; I enjoy exercise in the fresh air. The principal point is that there were so many things I had to do as Rector. If I spent my leisure time doing the garden, I would have no time to myself. I need to discipline myself to do nothing, to rest, to visit friends, to undertake genuine leisure activities, to take up His invitation, *Be still and know that I am God*. I must not use precious time off to mow the lawn or cut the hedge. But nowadays, I am much more relaxed than I was thirty years ago. I'm under much less pressure. So, paradoxically perhaps, I am now free to regard gardening as a leisure activity.

Many clergy houses have large gardens. The Archdeacon himself said that he would not expect clergy to give up their days off to spend on garden maintenance. A vicar I knew and his wife moved into a parsonage with a large garden. They had been town people and were appalled at the prospect of having to care for this huge plot. They resolved that they would only keep it tidy and do so in "work time". They soon found, however, that they loved gardening and wanted to spend far more time on it than they could justify taking from his work as a minister. They compromised by doing the hard work in "work time" and performed the more intricate tasks which won their garden a great reputation for beauty on their days off.

But what does count as work for a clergyman? Can I really distinguish between working hours and time off? Bishop Jonathan observed on Maundy Thursday, *Ministry is not what we do. Ministers is what we are.* It is true that at my ordination I was given grace to perform some tasks which other people can't, mainly to do with the administration of Sacraments, leading worship & preaching, and, that as a minister of the Established Church, I have certain legal powers and responsibilities. But everything else I do is what every Christian is called to do: to worship, to pray, to keep the commandments, to care for one another, to share our faith, each to play our own part in making this world a better place.

Moreover, if you are a Christian, you can't distinguish what you do for God from what ever else you may do. If you are a Christian, your whole life is an offering to God. As George Herbert wrote, *Teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see, and what I do in anything, to do it as for Thee.* One year, on our statistical return, we were asked how many hours a week lay people (that's Christians who are not clergy) work for the Church? I took the number on the electoral roll (those who formally identify as belonging to these parish churches) and multiplied it by seven and by twenty four. The number I came up with was too big to go in the box on the online form, but all Christians are called to be full time ministers of Christ: in your public worship & private prayer, in your voluntary work for the Church, in doing the job you are paid for, in caring for your family, in going to school or college, in being a useful member of the community, in your leisure activities, all the time in fact. You are certainly working for God when you are arranging the church flowers. So you are when you take some flowers round to a neighbour who is sick or lonely. So you are when you put flowers in the family home to make it nice for the other inhabitants. So you are when you arrange flowers just for yourself and praise God for the beauty. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him* (Colossians 3¹⁷).

So, if it isn't clear, what counts as work, how do we decide what we can and cannot do on a Sunday? As I said above, we have to follow our own consciences, but how are our consciences informed? We need rest. We need time to ourselves. We need time for family and friends. We absolutely must have time for God.

As a boy, I would be discouraged from playing cards or singing vulgar songs (like Henry VIII) on Sundays and I would argue that, if it was sinful to do these things on a Sunday, it must be sinful to do them on week days too. Sunday isn't a day to be kept pure so that you can behave in a manner unworthy of a Christian on week days. Keeping Sunday as a holy day sanctifies the whole week. The time we spend with God on a Sunday, our rest and recreation (re-creation?) make us fit to live as Christians throughout the week. So, what we might feel we should give up doing on a Sunday is not simply what is wicked. We shouldn't do wicked things on any day of the week. Working is certainly not wicked. Nevertheless, it is our duty to rest as much as it is to work. This can be insidious, however. Because what we ask people to give up on Sundays is often profitable work or innocent pleasure, it can be hard to understand why we are asking it of them. If a man said to me, *We shan't be in Church on Sunday because I'm taking my boys to rob a bank,* nobody would be surprised if I told him that he was wrong. But. If he had said to me, *I shan't be in Church on Sunday because I am taking my boys to the football,* could I tell him he was wrong? Would you support me if I did? Back to Orpington on Good Friday. I might see nothing wrong with cutting my grass on the holy day, but I was offended by notices indicating that the shops would be open on the Bank Holiday. *Is it nothing to you, ye who pass by?* ask both the biblical text and the Good Friday hymn. Those lads who go to the football on Sundays instead of Church are that much less likely to learn about Jesus, to hear the Good News, to understand the importance of prayer, to enjoy Christian fellowship, to partake of the Sacraments, to know God's commandments, to find meaning and purpose in life and to know what awaits them on the day of their death. Without their contribution, the Church will be that much weaker and less effective in serving God and the wider community.

As you know, my official retirement date falls this year. I'm trying to get the bishop to let me stay on longer, but I shan't be here forever. It is my fervent hope that, when that time comes, there will be a new minister to carry on God's work in this place in succession to more than a thousand years of Christian service here. When I go, will the bishop have reason to believe that there are sufficient numbers of members

at St Michael's and St John's that appointing a new Rector is good use of the resources with which God supplies us? Keeping Sunday special matters for the Christian growth of the individual & for the life of the Church.

Tommy's Talking Points



This is me nine years ago, a seven week old puppy in the garden at Walden Point where I was born. Little did I know what a fun-filled life awaited me at Cuxton Rectory. We had another lovely day out on 20th May, a beautiful warm sunny day, contrasting with the persistent heavy rain of the day following.

It started well, like many Mondays, with the arrival of Lollie who comes over most weeks and sometimes stays for a holiday, though she is not as young as she once was and mustn't be taken out too far for walks. We weren't to meet our human walking companion till a quarter past noon. Lollie would be staying at home. So Master first relaxed with the paper and then got on with some jobs on the computer. This is when steam began to come out of his ears. In the course of his recent illness, he discovered a new NHS online service called EMIS. It enables patients to gain access to information about their treatment and monitor test results. He thinks this is really great, but they have recently added an additional level of security, which he can't penetrate. He downloaded the authentication app as instructed, but then what? He hadn't a clue. So now he is excluded from something which was really helpful. Cynically, he supposes that all these layers of security present no barrier at all to criminal hackers, but only to dinosaurs like himself whose extinction cannot come soon enough.

After that, things could only get better and so they did. We set out in the warm sunshine down the hill towards the village. Where could we be going? I don't much like walking on busy roads, but I like it when we go to the *White Hart*, where I'm made a lot of fuss of or to the station which has been the point of origin for many excellent excursions. We carried on walking, however, up Sundridge Hill and Pilgrims Way till we came to the motorway bridge which we crossed to Borstal. From there, we followed the riverside path to Baty's Marsh (famous salt marsh conservation area) and on to the Esplanade. There were plenty of opportunities for me to be let off my lead and run on ahead exploring the scents. There were lots of dogs and people about enjoying what was a really wonderful day. We heard the clock of St Margaret's strike 12.00 and Master thought that we might be late for our 12.15 appointment, but, as Master had made a mistake, and our friend's train wasn't due till 12.20, we all arrived simultaneously. This friend (poor man) has no dog, but we do enjoy walking with him.

We set off up past the cathedral to the beautiful building which used to be the Archdeaconry. It is now a hotel. It does seem a shame that this lovely house no longer belongs to the Church, but there are more important demands on the Church's finances than housing the clergy in fine buildings. So it has to be accepted, however regretfully.

From there we walked through the Vines to Crow Lane and saw Restoration House before doubling back via the High Street and Star Hill to Jackson's Field & Fort Pitt Gardens. There are many beautiful, significant and interesting sites (sic) to see around the Medway Towns. We passed the Elim Pentecostal Church, which Master was pleased to see has apparently been rebuilt and re-opened, having been badly damaged when a vehicle crashed into it some years ago. The leaders of the youth club he attended worshipped there and Master has sung with the rest of the youth club in that building (*One Day When Heaven Was Filled With His Glory*) and preached (on Low Sunday 197?). Some time after that, but still some years ago now, the minister at Elim was a man who had been born the same day as Master. The boys had played together, their mothers having been friends for many years, living next door to each other as very young children and meeting up again because their swains took the same last train from Strood to Gravesend when courting.

Jacksons Field & Fort Pitt Gardens were extremely pleasant in the sunshine and I enjoyed some more freedom to run. Fort Pitt itself was constructed during the Napoleonic Wars, but was never needed as a fort.

It served as a hospital for a hundred years and then the buildings were taken over in 1929 to provide accommodation for a school, which they still do. The patients remaining in 1922 were transferred to the Royal Naval Hospital at Gillingham.

We crossed over New Road to where Rochester High Street meets Chatham High Street. Dickens said that the boundary was unclear, but there has been a sign there now for very many years. This is the location of the Sir John Hawkins Hospital – founded in 1592 and rebuilt in 1789 to provide almshouses for poor seamen, shipwrights & their wives. They were converted into flats in the 1980s.



Master's intention was to walk along the riverside path, but much of this is temporarily inaccessible on account of extensive building work. So we were unable to join it until we came to the bus station, from whence we proceeded on the riverine route to the gun wharf. We crossed over the road again through Brompton onto the Lines and thence to the boundary of the Medway Maritime Hospital. This is, of course, on the site of the Royal Naval Hospital, much of which remains to this day. After it had closed as a Naval Hospital and before it reopened as a National Health Service Hospital, the old wards were used to educate children (among whom was Master) who were pupils at Fairview Primary School at Wigmore, which was at that time overflowing. The children were conveyed each day in buses provided by Pilcher's of Chatham. This picture is probably the one they called *Privet*, because it lacked the final *e* in *Private* on the destination blind.

As we passed the hospital, we were greeted by a scion of a Cuxton family, who told us that, if we were looking for a good meal and good beer in a very dog-friendly pub, we should go to *The Command House*. We headed back across the Great Lines to Chatham. Our friend was wowed by the views of Rochester & the river.

At *The Command House*, the men were fed & I was watered and they were beered. A notice on the bar warned that customers might be asked for proof of age if they looked too young to drink. Master was relieved that he had his bus pass with him, but it wasn't asked for. It was so good - me sleeping, them talking and lackadaisically looking out on the river at high tide, its surface rippling golden as it reflected the afternoon sunshine. So it was something of a shock that it was 5.35 when we finally emerged and walked back to Rochester where we missed a train while Master did battle with the ticket machine. It was, though, a perfect day. Master's friend took the Victoria train. We caught the next one to Strood and just about had time to eat tea before being asked to host the 7.30 meeting at the Rectory, which we were pleased to do, the hall already being engaged and it being such a lovely evening our garden full of flowers and the declining sun shining on the recently cut grass. Master discovered an effective way to draw a meeting to a close at this time of year. You only have to remark, *Isn't it nice that it's still light at bed time?* Tommy.

High Spirits

A man and his dog came out of the pub at closing time & were run over by a passing bus. When they got to the Pearly Gates, the man was admitted, but the dog was told that he was incomplete because his tail was still in the road. He went down, took it into the bar and asked the barman to fix it back on for him. "Sorry," came the reply, "I'm not allowed to retail spirits after 11.00."

A certain clergyman did enjoy cherry brandy, but he was afraid of offending the teetotallers in his congregation by buying it in the local off licence. A friend teased him that he would give him a bottle for Christmas if the vicar promised to put a thank you note in the New Year parish magazine. The vicar agreed and received and enjoyed the cherry brandy. In the next parish magazine was, The vicar would like to thank his friend for the Christmas gift of fruit and for the spirit in which it was given.