

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 7 th March Lent 3	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-9 p742 1 Corinthians 10 vv 1-13 p1151 Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046
Sunday 14 th March Mothering Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	2 Corinthians 5 vv 16-21 p1161 Luke 15 vv 1-31
Sunday 21 st March Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion BCP	Readings BCP Lent 5
	9.30 Holy Communion (preacher from MAF)	Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729 John 12 vv 1-8 p1079
Thursday 25 th March The Annunciation	11.00 Holy Communion Deanery MU. All welcome. Lunch to follow.	
Sunday 28 th March Palm Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion (procession from hall)	(at hall) Luke 19 vv 28-40 p1054 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Luke 22 vv 14- 23 v56
Thursday 1 st April Maundy Thursday	7.30 am Holy Communion	
	7.30 pm Passover at Halling	
Friday 2 nd April Good Friday	10.00 Family Service	
Sunday 4 th April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 7 th March Lent 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 28 vv 10-19 p30 John 1 vv 35-51 p1064
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-9 p742 1 Cor 10 vv 1-13 p1151 Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046
Sunday 14 th March Mothering Sunday	11.00 Family Communion	Joshua 5 vv 9-12 p219 2 Corinthians 5 vv 16-21 p1161 Luke 15 vv 16-31
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 40 v27 – 41 v13 p725 2 Timothy 4 vv 1-18 p1197
Sunday 21 st March Passion Sunday	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729 Philippians 3 vv 4b-14 p1180 John 12 vv 1-8 p1079
Sunday 28 th March Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion Preacher from MAF	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 Luke 23 vv 1-49
Thursday 1 st April Maundy Thursday	9.30 am Holy Communion	1 Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
	7.30 pm Passover Meal	
Friday 2 nd April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	
Saturday 3 rd April Holy Saturday	11.30 pm Easter Midnight	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Exodus 14 vv 10-31 & 15 vv 20-21 p71 Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 6 vv 3-11 p1133 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
Sunday 4 th April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	1 Corinthians 15 vv 19-26 p1156 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 17-25 p752 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089

Wednesday Communion at 9.30 am at St Michael's		Thursday Communion at 9.30 am at St John's	
3 rd March	Jeremiah 18 vv 18-20 Matthew 20 vv 17-28	4 th March	Jeremiah 17 vv 5-10 Luke 16 vv 19-end.
10 th March	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	11 th March	Jeremiah 7 vv 23-28 Luke 11 vv 14-23
17 th March	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 7 vv 17-30	18 th March	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-end
24 th March	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 31-42	25 th March The Annunciation	Isaiah 7 vv 10-14 Luke 1 vv 26-38
31 st March	Hebrews 12 vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	1 st April Maundy Thursday	1 Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 John 13 vv 1-35



What Religion Really Means (ii)
(Continued from February. See also website.)

Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me.

I thought it would be good to carry on from where we left off last time. If God is so utterly other that we cannot even speak of Him without error, how can we possibly know Him? I'd like to start with the words with which we introduce the intercessions: *In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.* As I said last month, *The Trinity is not a mathematical puzzle, but an unfolding of the mystery of God to include us in His eternal love.*

Let's first try to think about the Godhead, bearing in mind that any words we use, any ideas we have, are bound to be inadequate. In fact our words are so inadequate that we may well want to deny everything we say just as soon as we have said it and thought seriously about what we really mean. God is mystery. This does not mean that God is a puzzle to be solved or even that He is a puzzle beyond our solving. Mystery is the profound truth at the heart of existence, truth to which we must always aspire, but never, in this life, expect to attain.

As we said last month, God is not a being. God is being and everything which exists depends on God for its existence. Our language describes things in the universe. Our ideas derive from what we know of the created order. As we seek God, we seek the One Who both fills the universe and contains it, not the created order which we can know, but the Creator Who surpasses all knowledge.

We may experience God in prayer and contemplation. We may sense God in our awe at the wonders of creation or in our enjoyment of its beauty. Metaphors and images we discover in the Bible and in the teaching of the Church point us towards the knowledge of God. He is love. He is eternal. He is infinite. He is beauty. He is wisdom. He is justice. Yet He is not love as our understanding of love is limited. He is not eternal

in our limited sense of eternity. He is not infinite as we can understand infinity – say the place where parallel lines meet. His beauty, wisdom and justice are not beauty, wisdom and justice as our weak intellects comprehend them. We deny what we think we know so that we may advance towards a greater knowledge of God, though we shall never fully know Him so long as we remain on earth.

Given that God is in all things, the Creator of all things and the Sustainer of all things, we can seek and find Him everywhere, at any time and in everything. We can always pray. We can always meditate on God. He is always with us.

We ought to avoid a false distinction between the natural and the supernatural. There is a tendency to suppose that there is a natural world – the world we can see and touch, the world investigated and described by Science – and that this natural world more or less runs itself predictably and in accordance with scientific laws. God does not seem to have much to do with this natural world, except perhaps as the One Who started it all up billions of years ago, the first Cause, the Originator of the Big Bang. Then, almost as an optional extra, we may think there is a supernatural world, the possibility that God will intervene with a miracle or an answer to prayer, which will somehow make things different from the way they would have been if nature had been left to her own devices. If we think like this, dividing supernatural and natural, we may imagine that God is not present or active in everyday life and that we only encounter Him in church or during our prayer time. It is a false distinction between natural and supernatural. Everything depends all the time on God. We may not know how He is sustaining and directing our lives, but He is. *He's got the whole world in His Hands.*

This means that, as St Paul says, we ought to be thankful in all things. We ought always to pray. We ought always to act in accordance with what we believe to be God's Will. When we pray, we seek to align our wills with His Will, to pool our love with His Love and our prayers become part of His providential plan for the ordering of the Universe. We are not telling Him what He doesn't know or suggesting something He might

not have thought of or asking Him to intervene in opposition to Nature or Science. Prayer is working with God in order to achieve His loving purposes. So we are thankful in all things, not just when we think we've been specially or unexpectedly blessed. We seek to do God's Will in our personal relationships, our paid employment and our shopping trips, not just in those areas of our lives which we attempt falsely to distinguish from the rest as "spiritual."

God is in everything and God sustains everything that is. Human beings, however, are special. The Bible tells us that God breathed into us the breath of life and made us living souls. Human beings are made in the image of God. We are created to love and to be loved, to love God and one another. God is in everyone and everyone is made in God's image. If we are truly seeking God, we will *live in love and charity with our neighbours*. As Jesus taught us in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, there is no end to neighbourliness. Every human being is potentially our neighbour and therefore the object of our love. If we truly seek God, there must be a compassion, a sympathy, in our relationships with all other people.

This brings us to Jesus, the perfect man. Last time, we spoke about the dangers of images and idols, but Jesus really is the image of God, the icon of God. In Jesus we see God as He truly is. We may know Jesus through meditating on what He did and what He said as recorded in the Bible. We may know Jesus individually in prayer. We may know Jesus in the fellowship of the Church, His Body. To know Jesus is to know God and to know God is to have eternal life.

This is not merely knowing about Jesus as a character from history or even knowing about Him as the hero of the *greatest story ever told*. This knowledge of Jesus is a unity with Him, a union, just as husband and wife become one flesh in marriage. It is *in union with Christ* that we pray to the Father. The Church is the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. Our unity is with Him and with one another and our public worship ought to reflect the glory of Heaven. If it does not, there is something sorely lacking.

Then there is the Holy Spirit. Although God has not left Himself without witness in the glories of

Creation or in the great facts of revelation recorded in the Bible, we depend on His initiative to make Himself known to us. Indeed we don't only need Him to make Himself known to us; we also need Him to give us the power to recognise His self revelation. This is what the Holy Spirit does. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we recognise Jesus as Lord and God as Father. So the Spirit is *the Lord and Giver of Life*. In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, we pray to the Father.

The Trinity is not a mathematical puzzle, a teaching invented by the Church to drive us mad trying to work out how three can be one and one three. Dare I say that God is beyond number, just as God is beyond words? God is one (in our terms) because He is simple, unchanging, the Source and Origin of everything that is. God is revealed as three because He perfects His human creation by uniting Himself with human nature in the man, Jesus Christ, and because He dwells in human beings (and indeed in all created things) to draw all things to Himself in love. God is one and God is three and the essential unity of God is divine love.

Human beings who accept the love of God in their hearts are caught up in this unity of the Trinity. We dwell in God and God dwells in us. The Holy Communion service both symbolises our union with God in Christ and the Spirit and makes that union more real. Holy Communion is a union with all God's people and a union with God. Holy Communion is the form of public worship which most clearly reflects the worship of heaven, which is why we say, *therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name for ever praising you and saying: holy holy, holy...*

God is so utterly other that we cannot know Him through our own human cleverness, virtue or strength. If we humbly wait on God, however, He makes Himself known to us. To know God is to have eternal life. St Paul puts it like this: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

Confirmation 2010

We are not due for a Confirmation in the parish this year, but I believe that there are people ready to be confirmed. I am planning to take our candidates for confirmation on 21st November to Frindsbury. Please let me know if you are interested. Roger.

St John's Draw (December): £5 each to Miss J Thorne (23), Mrs Parris (54), Mrs Fuller (78), Mr Luther (107) & Mrs Carter (127) – drawn by Mrs Baker. (January): £5 each to Mrs Swatton (6), Mrs Chidwick (26), Mrs Homewood (36), Mr Silver (77) & Mr Dance (129) – drawn by Mrs Ballard.

Church Hall Draw (January): £40 to Marie Hendeby – drawn by Thelma Partridge.

APCM 2010

The PCC hasn't yet fixed the date and place of the Vestry Meeting & APCM but I expect it will be on 24th April at 10.00 at the Church Hall, Cuxton. Please make sure you are on our Electoral Roll. As well as electing our churchwardens, sidesmen and PCC members, receiving reports and discussing general matters as usual this year, we shall have to look again at the way we elect our PCC. If we do not positively decide to leave things as they are, by default from 2011, we shall have to elect PCC members for three years instead of just one as at present and we shall elect only one third of members at any APCM. This was allegedly introduced to guarantee continuity on the PCC, though it is my belief that the people in the pews should be free to choose at the Annual Meeting whether you would prefer continuity or change, rather than having continuity forced on you by General Synod. Anyway we have to decide at this year's Annual Meeting which system to adopt from next year and I am strongly urging you to keep things the way they are. I have three reasons for this.

1. The proposed new system is less democratic than the present one. We should not be impressed if we were told that at the General Election only one third of seats would be contested this year, another third next year and another third the year following. I do not think we should like to be told that, in the interests of continuity, we ought not to be allowed to change the government all at once if we want to.

2. The new system requires that the number of representatives on the PCC is divisible by three. (Nine would be the number recommended for a parish our size.) For many years now, we have insisted on equal representation from Cuxton and Halling, which requires a total divisible by two. So we have ten PCC members, five from Cuxton and five from Halling. If we change to the new system we can either give up aiming to have equal representation from both ends (in which case I think one end would soon take over the whole parish) or we can set our total number of PCC members at a number divisible by both two and three. We could come down to six – which would mean electing only one person from Halling and one from Cuxton at each APCM – hardly worth coming to the meeting for – or we could go up to twelve in total. That twelve would have to be added to four wardens, three deanery synod representatives and one rector, bringing us to a total of twenty on the PCC at any one time. Human beings naturally work in teams of ten – twelve. So a committee of twenty is likely to be unwieldy and ineffective. On the other hand, if we only had six elected members to the PCC, they would only equal in number the *ex officio* members.

3. Either the APCM or the PCC would have to find someone to administer the new system, which is more complicated than it looks – mainly because people do not always complete their three year terms. In my experience, it is easy to make mistakes and people can be quite rude when you do! Anyway it will be up to this year's APCM to decide. Roger.

Five Reasons for Staying Away from the Cinema

In 1941 Dr Hugh Elmer Brown was quoted, giving five reasons why he does not go to the cinema.

- I was made to go too often when I was young.
- Nobody speaks to me when I go.
- When I have gone I've always been asked for money.
- The manage never calls at my home.
- The people who go don't live up to the fine things they see in the pictures.

Freedom & the Problem of Evil

The most attractive answer to the problem of evil is that evil is a result of God giving us freedom. Human beings get to choose how to live, whether we obey our Maker's instructions and live according to His Law of Love, in harmony with the Universe, or whether we rebel against God and fight against Nature and the interests of our fellow human beings. It is perfectly obvious that a great deal of the suffering in the world is caused by human wrong-doing. Even natural disasters are made much worse by our human inability to act rationally or charitably. Now, God could have created perfect robots instead of free human beings. We could have been programmed always to do the right thing. In His Wisdom, however, God decided that it would be better to create free people able to make mistakes and even to choose to do wrong than to make automata unable to do anything but what they were programmed to do. If He had done that we should have been God's toys rather than His children. (See website under *Teaching* for more on this.)

Meeting of Neanderthal District Council 10,000 BC

1. Report of Hunting Party: Herd of bison followed twenty miles by fifteen mounted hunters with spears and slingshots. Bison almost within range when huntsmen took fifteen minute break away from their mounts and their weapons as mandated by Working Time Directive. By the time they had caught their horses again, bison had disappeared. Returned home empty handed.
2. Hunting Party Complaint of Sexual Discrimination: Ugh, the sole woman member of the hunting party, complains that she always has to make the tea. Council resolves that the fourteen male members of the party be suspended on full pay pending a full investigation. Woman member not to go hunting on her own for health and safety reasons. (Intervention by borough treasurer to the effect that if there is no hunting going on there will be nothing to pay hunters with – and, indeed, nothing to eat for anyone.)
3. Pastoral Committee Report: The committee suggests that, in order to provide for situations when there is no or little hunting, animals such as cows, pigs, sheep and goats could be herded and slaughtered as required. There would also be a bonus in a regular supply of milk, wool, etc. Council rejects Committee report following objections by Animal Rights Activists, who maintain that it is an affront to an animal's dignity to be domesticated. A motion to ban the keeping of dogs and cats on the same grounds is narrowly defeated. Campaigners vow not to let this rest until pet ban in place.
4. Report on Youth Unemployment: Following the ban on the possession of knives and other sharp edged tools by teenagers, they have had to give up their work hunting, skinning, cooking and tool-making. Bored gangs of teenage boys especially have been drinking too much fermented liquor and painting pictures of animals on cave walls. Council introduces ban on anyone under 25 purchasing alcohol without ID. One member points out that, with average life expectancy at 30, there will be little opportunity to sell beer or wine to anyone and high rates of unemployment are forecast in brewing industry.
5. Planning Committee: Application from Ugh to hang a curtain across cave entrance refused. While committee sympathises with her desire to exclude draughts and hears her wish for personal privacy, she lives in an ancient cave in a conservation area and none of her ancestors had any kind of draught excluder. This modern innovation would totally ruin the quaint character of the neighbourhood. Anyway, why would she want privacy? What has she to hide?
6. Innovations Committee: The committee received an application to develop fire as a possible source of heat and a means of cooking food, also to scare off wild animals. Application turned down on health and safety grounds.
7. Innovations Committee Correspondence: A strange letter had been received from the inventor of the wheel. He said he had complied with all council policies by having a workforce nicely balanced as to race, gender and sexuality and family friendly employment practises. His workshop had disabled access. He had carried out a trillion risk assessments and recalibrated all his instruments in metric units. Having done all this, he had now been told that he could not take on his 17 year old son as an apprentice unless his whole workforce was CRB checked. The letter finished that he had put all his workers on notice to quit, closed his premises and was seeking to relocate in the Far East.
8. Agrarian Experimentation Committee: Researchers had had some success in hybridising various species of grass to create new crops to be called, *wheat*, *barley* and *oats*. The grains produced by these experimental crops were more nutritious than grass seeds and the yield was much greater and more reliable. The Committee ordered that these experiments in *Frankenstein foods* cease at once and that all existing crops and seeds should be destroyed immediately.
9. NICE (Neanderthal Institute for Clinical Excellence): The Institute had considered an application from the local medicine man to use an extract of willow tree bark as a remedy for headaches and for its protective properties with respect to heart disease. The Institute ruled that the benefits were insufficient to justify the costs of distribution and pointed out that some studies with domestic cats had raised questions as to the safety of the drug. In a similar case, the Institute ruled that the bark of the Cinchona tree might be used under licence for cases of marsh fever, but only for self-funding patients.

Without the wisdom of ancestors such as these we might not be where are today!

Selective enforcement. Does It Happen Here and in Twenty First Century? (I fear it does, Roger.)

As an Italian Prime Minister of 100 years ago put it, "The law is something we apply to our enemies; for our friends we interpret it."

From the Registers

Funerals:

11th January
26th January
27th January

Joan Beryl Norman (88)
Audrey Milton (90)
Nancy Earl (80)

Browndens Road
May Street
Meadow Close

Halling Bellringers

Our new recruits are progressing nicely in their ringing and are ready to ring for services and other occasions. Hopefully, soon, a few more learners will be on the cards.

P.D Silver.

Women's World Day of Prayer

or World Day of Prayer as it is now referred to in many countries.

The service for 2010 has been arranged by the Christian Women of Cameroon, the title of which is "Let everything that has breath Praise God". The service for Halling and Cuxton will be held on Friday 5th March at St John the Baptist Church Halling at 7 O'clock. Our speaker will be Sister Julia Crathorn, from the Abbeyfield Kent Society. All women, men and young people are invited to attend and will be most welcome.



Halling WI

Our first meeting of 2010 and sixteen paid up members, enough for us to go forward with enthusiasm. Once again we were to have a "back to front" meeting. Margaret Sutherland (sorry Margaret, I got it wrong last month) was in the chair and after Jerusalem, she introduced our speaker, Joan Poynter, a Macmillan nurse who had come to tell us about the work they do and show us some slides. Alas, we shall never know what was on her slides as the magic machine wouldn't work. We can handle the old fashioned slide projectors, but none of us could help with this little modern monster. Betty Head fixed up the extension lead and the Jubilee Hall had paid the electricity bill, that part was OK. The machine asked Joan to press one button or another but not a picture was forthcoming, so she just had to speak "off the cuff". Joan had a quiet voice but we managed to get the gist of what she did. Only six nurses, based at The Heart of Kent Hospice, had to cover a vast area of West Kent. Macmillan are not hands on nursing service, although they are all qualified nurses. They help and support, not only cancer patients, but anyone with terminal illness if they are called upon, but one thing Joan did emphasise was, the patient should always be consulted first, as now and again she had been told to go away as they didn't want to see her. This made us all laugh, and ended her talk on a less serious note. She was thanked by Eileen Buss, as like me, our husbands had had the support of Joan at the sad end to their lives.

Joan then judged the competitions. Flower of the Month, yes even after all that snow we had two or three. I did find a bold little primrose which had been under a foot of snow the previous week, but to my surprise I found TWO violets, violets in freezing January, it must be climate change. I must admit they didn't smell much like violets, more like "dog" or even "fox" but nevertheless violets, so I won. Our competition, Your prettiest Christmas card, more like your funniest, as Joan chose Ann Hayward's card with a very cheeky cat dressed as Father Christmas climbing through a cat flap. We said goodbye to Joan and proceeded with our meeting proper. Only one birthday this month, then Ann read a bit of history, November's minutes, Margaret signed them as it was so long ago we had probably forgotten what had happened anyway. Correspondence was mainly future events to look forward to, especially the County outing to the London Olympic site in March, several members were keen to go so it seems it will be a popular outing. We had a quick show of hands for what resolution Halling would like discussed at the annual meeting in Cardiff. The majority plumped for the Flood Prevention one, but we are more likely to be discussing "Save our village pubs" we have tried hard enough with "Save our village Post Offices" You can but try.

Next month, our speaker, an old friend, Mr Peter Shearan who will talk about "The Lure of Family History". Have I got any skeletons in my cupboard? Who knows? Why not come and find out.
Phyllis.

Nature Notes January 2010

Frost and a sprinkling of snow greet the first day of a new year. The skies are a clear blue lit up by golden rays from the sun as it rises above Bluebell Hill. After feeding the birds I walk along Pilgrim's Road. The air is crisp but there is no wind. So the cold does not penetrate. The frost and the snow lie on the gardens all day. Birds sing in the trees on the embankment and in the garden. By mid afternoon the sun has dipped below the tree line and fingers of salmon pink light up the western sky. Darkness falls. There is a dusting of snow during the night. On the 4th I watch two robins chasing each other in flight. The days are bitterly cold for this is a real winter which over past years we haven't experienced. On 5th the early morning sky is a fiery red then the sun rises over the hill. Grey cloud drifts across the sky. Later I watch two robins attacking one another and feathers fly drifting down to the ground. A pair of green finches joins the other birds. It remains bitterly cold. The great spotted woodpecker brings brightness to the garden. The next morning there is a covering of snow in the garden and the skies are grey. I clear some snow but once darkness falls more snow spirals down from the sky. The main road is brought almost to a standstill. I look out into the garden to the beauty of a white world where trees' branches are laden with snow and where I hear faint bird calls. More snow falls the next day but eventually the sun shine brings respite from the greyness. On 8th it takes quite a while before it really becomes light. It has been the coldest night of the year. The sun rises above the tree line but soon grey clouds bring a more prolonged snow shower. On 9th, after more snow has fallen, I watch a fox trotting along the path the other side of the railway line. There are more snow flurries in the afternoon. I watch a cock pheasant strutting along the other side of the fence then flying away when I go outside. A north east wind blows coldly through the trees and powdery snow is whipped up into the air. The next day, after more overnight snow, a flock of redwing come to the holly tree only to find it bereft of berries. So they all fly away except for one bird which lingers a while in the tree. A pair of collared doves shelter there, too, to avoid the snow. A slight thaw has set in for a while. By 14th the snow is melting leaving the garden muddy and wet. I listen to bird song and watch a variety of birds come to feed. At one time there are great tits, robins, a blackbird, a dunnock, a greenfinch and a great spotted woodpecker. On 17th, as dawn breaks, blackbirds and rooks become very vocal. The trees stand so still, silhouetted against the clear sky. The sun rises then shines brightly throughout the day and it feels quite warm. Across the river, rooks are busying themselves in the trees. Later, when I walk along Pilgrim's Road, I glimpse different shades of ivy, some

tinged with brown, some pale green almost yellow and the dark green which shines. The sun is dipping down the sky. On 19th I drive to the river with Murphy and we walk the path by the grey, still water where redshank fly and call beneath a grey sky. I notice one small dandelion flower on the bank. The grey skies take on a darker hue during the morning and the air becomes damp and cold the great spotted woodpecker pays a visit and a squirrel ventures into the garden only to be chased away by Murphy. On 21st the morning is grey but dry as we, once again walk by the ebbing river. A cormorant is perched on a buoy redshank call from the water's edge and gulls scuttle across the mudflats. There is sunshine by midday and the skies are a pale blue. The daylight hours are gradually lengthening. Two grey days follow then on 24th still grey, Murphy and I walk along the river path. Redshank call. We then walk round the ponds where gulls float on the water. Brown buddleia flowers and teasels stand so still beneath grey skies. We walk across the spongy tufts where rabbits scuttle. The light is beginning to fade as we return. We walk by the grey river again the following day and feel the cold north east wind on our faces. Dark clouds drift across the sky. Long tailed tits come to the feeders on 26th then perch on the bare lilac branches. Normally they just fly on without feeding, so it was joy to watch them. A collared dove with scruffy neck feathers alights on the seed on the patio wall I wonder if it has been attacked. The sun lights up the garden but it brings no warmth. The next morning, red bars of light cross the early morning eastern sky before the sun rises over the hill. In the afternoon of 28th I walk along the top path of Six-acre Wood, up into Mays Wood and back across the fields. Cow parsley plants have emerged through the woodland floor and light orange/brown fungi grow at the base of a tree trunk in Mays Wood. The view across the valley is beautiful with pale green crops growing in the fields. The pale wintry sky is brushed with light grey cloud. Sleet showers fall on 29th. The 30th is bright with golden sunshine beaming down from a clear blue sky where a few white clouds drift across from the North West. Frost covers the grass. In the morning I walk through Six-acre Wood to open fields of crops looking across the valley where silence reigns. I skirt the field then make my way into Mays Wood. A blackbird flies out of the woodland ahead of me. I eventually cross Church Fields from where I can see the river glittering in the sunlight. It remains very cold all day. The final day of the month is bright with pale winter sunshine, ice on the pond and frost on the grass. The churchyard grass is covered in frost. High grey cloud drifts across the sky in the afternoon then the skies clear as the sun sets. **Elizabeth Summers.**

Winter Spirit Peter Cardwell

I am the cold on frosty
days
That makes your noses
glow,
I turn the trees to
sugar sticks
And bring the flakes of
snow.

I am a robin on a fence
With breast of scarlet
red,
I make the stars a
tapestry
When children are in
bed.

I am a scene of pure
delight
When snowflakes
clothe the land,
The hills are sugar
dumplings
I made with tender
hand.

I am a sky of winter
blue
With wisps of lacy
cloud
I give the sun a gentle
face
That does not call
aloud.

ROCHESTER THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AND ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

“WHAT DO WE MAKE OF THE BIBLE?”

A morning with Rev. Dr. Alan Le Grys on Saturday 13th March 2010 from
10.00 to 12.00 at St. Margaret’s Church, Rochester

Alan Le Grys will explore contemporary attitudes to the Bible by those both within and outside the Church. He will discuss how the Bible has been seen as formative, normative and transformative. He will argue that it is the neglect of the transformative element in Christian readings of the Bible that has led to its loss of meaning for many people, and seek to show what needs to happen for meaning to be recovered.

Alan is an Anglican priest, with a particular interest in relating theology and Religious Studies to the mission and ministry of the Church, as well as the broader interaction between faith communities and their social context. He holds theology degrees from King’s College, London, was formerly Principal of SEITE (The South-East Institute for Theological Education) and continues to be active in church-based training agencies across the South-East. He works part-time for the Centre for Flexible Learning and the Student Learning Advisory Service, as well as teaching some theology. He is also Anglican Chaplain on the Medway Campus of the University of Kent. He is a regular reviewer for the *Journal for New Testament Studies* and other journals. His doctorate is entitled: *Shaped by God’s Story: making sense of the Bible*.

Coffee and tea will be served at 11.00 a.m. Donations towards costs will be invited. Please let us know that you are coming by Monday 8th March 2010.

Michael Insley: michael.insley1@btinternet.com 02084642076

Philip Hesketh: canonpastor@rochestercathedral.org

Sharon Francis sharon.francis@ukonline.co.uk

Next RTS event: Ven. Dr. Paul Wright, Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley will lead a morning on *Pastoral Care or Leadership: Can we have one without the other?* 10 a.m. -12 noon Saturday 5th June 2010 at St. Luke’s Church, Bromley Common.

Irony or Paradox?



I should very much prefer it if people did not allow their dogs to foul Church land in the parish. I feel, however, morally bound to give them my formal, legal permission to do this. This is to protect people from prosecution by Medway Council. (The Fouling of Land By Dogs (Medway Council area) Order 2009.)



I should, on the other hand, be quite content if my neighbours were to prune or remove the scrubby trees in my garden which overshadow their properties. I cannot, however, given them my formal, legal permission to do this. This is to protect people from prosecution by Medway Council. (Tree Preservation Order M89/2002.)

Roger.



Dickens Country Protection Society

The Society is concerned that Railtrack have closed the pedestrian crossing over the railway to Shorne Mead Fort. There has always been a crossing at this point and the Society is campaigning for it to be reopened. AGM 22nd March 7.30 for 8.00 Higham Memorial Small Hall. K Roots.



3rd Annual Bluebell Wood Charity Walk

Saturday 24th April 2010 in the woods above Upper Halling. 10.00 start Browndens Rd car park. Please join myself, my family and friends a third time on another sponsored walk in aid of *The Eve Appeal* registered charity no 1091708. The charity is aimed at research into ovarian and other gynaecological cancers.

The walk will be the same as last year about 6.5 km (4.2 miles) taking about 2 ½ hrs. Bring a drink and a biscuit.

For sponsorship forms or any queries, please call Pat Lawry on 240892.

A bus leaves Halling Fire Station for Browndens Rd at 09.20 and buses return at 12.51 & 14.51.

The Eve Appeal have informed me that since April 2008 together we have raised over £7,800 Let's do it again. We are making a difference.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY NEWS

I am sorry to be so late in thanking all box holders for your efforts over the last year. The total amount raised in 2009 was a splendid £308.45, so well done to everyone. It just goes to show how small amounts of money really do add up if we all combine our efforts. If anyone else would like to collect money in a box at home for the Children's Society, please let me know. Julia Wells Tel: 01634 727424



CUXTON WI

Village life is far more affected by weather than for those people living in towns. The life of a village revolves around friendships, gossip, meetings, gardening etc. and when all this is brought to a virtual standstill, as happened over the winter weeks, everyone feels somehow bereft and in a time warp. So, it was with great joy that Dorothy, our President, was at last able to welcome members to our February meeting. Belated New Year wishes were exchanged and we were very pleased to welcome one new member. We had also received greetings from our link WI member in New Zealand. The usual business news was given out including news that Halling WI had kindly offered on our behalf to send a representative to the AGM at Cardiff, who would

report back to several WI s in our group. Our Reps gave reports of their club meetings and despite the weather we all seem to be determined to carry on these enjoyable activities, ranging from painting, theatre-going, poetry, walking, and, the most indulgent, the cookery club whose main activity seems to be overeating! We always enjoy a laugh when they give their report although this year they have decided to concentrate on vegetarian recipes - perhaps to preserve their waistbands. After all this and a good cuppa we enjoyed a talk by Mr Cornwall about his work as a witness support officer working at the Crown Court in Maidstone. It sounded a very worthwhile job. Our next Meeting is on Thursday March 4th at 7 30 pm - everyone is most welcome. Sheila.

Thanks



As always, our request for help to fill shoeboxes for Blythwood Care's annual Christmas appeal was met with enormous generosity and enthusiasm. An incredible 122,000 gift boxes flooded into our depots and shops during October and November and were distributed in ten countries in Eastern Europe and Asia, these being Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, India, Moldova, Pakistan, Romania, Serbia, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.

Orphanages, special schools, hospital wards, care homes, gypsy villages and urban slums were all visited and gifts given out. In December it was a joy for Phil, Pete and I to take a group of thirteen to Serbia to visit some of the projects in which we are involved and to give out shoeboxes. We visited old folks' homes in Mataruska Banja and Kucevo, gypsy villages on the outskirts of towns, a school and a children's club in Kraljevo, Centres where Internally Displaced Persons still dwell in 'temporary accommodation' eleven years after the conflict in Kosovo. Some of these folk have been re-housed recently but a great number are still living in dilapidated dwellings. When the opportunity arose we gave out Christian books and calendars with

the gift boxes or left them with our friends and colleagues to hand out later. The older folk received a calendar, the teenagers a book entitled 'Reach Out for Him', which covered many different topics for which they could explore the Christian values and viewpoints and the younger children received a colourful bible story book. Each individual received these things in their own language of course.

We are so grateful for the many folk who took an active part in the shoebox appeal and for the very generous donations of time, talents, goods, money and prayer that we received. There are so many different ways in which people contributed and whatever the role - whether high profile or quietly in the background - it was instrumental in making the 2009 Shoebox Appeal the success that it was.

We send you our heart felt thanks,

June Tottman, Regional Administrator Southern Area.

Rochester Cathedral

As part of our fund raising we are presenting a Murder Mystery Puzzle Evening at the cathedral on 16th April.

"In the calm of the Benedictine Priory of St Andrew, it was time for Vespers. Brother Alwyn was reading from the Book of Hours. The pilgrims seated in the small chapel, heads bent in prayer, did not see the monk appear at the entrance until he moaned and his lifeless body hit the floor, his hand outstretched clutching a human bone. Barnabas, The Sheriff of Rochester, turns to his trusted friend Brother Alwyn for help in solving the puzzling case of the corpse in the Crypt.

Set in Medieval times, the peaceful setting of the Priory is the last place one would expect a murder.

In a mystery full of twists and saintly intervention, it will be a matter for the 'little grey cells' to catch a cold-blooded murderer"

The play is performed and then there is an interval where the audience get the opportunity to question members of the cast to work out "who dunnit"

People can contact me for tickets at £6 each. 01634 810074.

News from Cuxton Community Infant School

Dear friends of our school,

We are now at the end of what has been a busy half term, and finish school today with a pantomime- Beauty and the Beast! I am sure there will be much excitement and Boos, hisses and laughter! The cold spell back in January has not stopped a nasty virus from spreading amongst the children, but hopefully we are over the worst, and the current cold weather will hopefully halt illness and we can return from the holiday feeling refreshed.

The children have been learning about the United Kingdom, and the Patron Saints and national emblems. They have used Computers and the Internet to take a journey around London and visited St Paul's, the London Eye, Buckingham Palace and Big Ben. They have found out where the Great Fire started and learned about the Thames. Quite interesting used of ICT especially as on today's news we learn of an early edition of the Britannica found in Essex.

It is the start of the Chinese New Year this weekend and following half term we will talk about the celebrations that happen across the world, including the importance of the colours red and gold, the stories behind the dragon/ beast and how the years were named after animals. The children always have fun finding out which animal year they were born in and the character traits of the animals. Mr Tang, has once again very kindly provided each child with a fortune cookie to take home.

I am extremely appreciative of the Haiti appeal money that folk have been sending into school. I will inform you of how much we have collected next time.

After half term the year 2 children visit the Central Hall in Chatham to sing with other Medway schools, in a Music festival. We also continue performing our class assemblies to parents and of course, Mothers day and Easter celebrations. A busy time once again!

Well that's all from us at the Infants, take care, keep healthy

Sandra Jones, Head teacher.

Halling Lent Lunch: 11th March 12.00 At St John's.

New Archdeacon to Preach: 18th April 9.30 Cuxton & 11.00 Halling.