

| Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton | | |
|--|---|---|
| May 1 st Ascension Day | Holy Communion St Michael's Church, 8.00 pm. | Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062 |
| May 4 th Easter 7 | 9.30 Holy Communion | Acts 1 vv 6-14 p1092 John 17 vv 1-11 p1085 |
| May 11 th Pentecost | 9.30 Holy Communion | Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 John 20 vv 19-23 p1089 |
| May 18 th Trinity Sunday | 8.00 Holy Communion | Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 John 16 vv 5-15 p1084 |
| | 9.30 Holy Communion | Isaiah 40 vv 12-30 p724 2 Corinthians 13 vv 11-14 p1167 Matthew 28 vv 16-20 p1001 |
| May 25 th Trinity 1 | 9.30 Holy Communion | Leviticus 19 vv 1-18 p121 1 Corinthians 3 vv 10-23 p1146 Matthew 5 vv 38—48 p970 |
| June 1 st Trinity 2 | 9.30 Holy Communion | Deuteronomy 11 vv 18-21 p190 Deuteronomy 11 vv 26-28 p191 Matthew 7 vv 21-28 p972 |
| Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling | | |
| May 1st Ascension Day | 9.30 Holy Communion | Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062 |
| May 4th Easter 7 | 8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall | Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1173 Mark 16 vv 14-20 p1024 |
| | 11.00 Holy Communion | Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 6-14 p1092 1 Peter 4 v12- 5 v11 p1220 John 17 vv 1-11 p1085 |
| May 11th Pentecost | 11.00 Holy Communion | Numbers 11 vv 24-30 p148 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 1 Corinthians 12 vv 1-13 p1153 John 7 vv 37-39 p1072 |
| | 5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall | Joel 2 vv 21-32 p913 Acts 2 vv 14-38 p1093 |
| May 18th Trinity Sunday | 11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen! | Isaiah 40 vv 12-30 p724 2 Corinthians 13 vv 11-14 p1167 Matthew 28 vv 16-20 p1001 |
| May 25th Trinity 1 | 11.00 Holy Communion | Leviticus 19 vv 1-18 p121 1 Corinthians 3 vv 10-23 p1146 Matthew 5 vv 38—48 p970 |
| June 1st Trinity 2 | 8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall | Ruth 2 vv 1-20 p268 Luke 8 vv 4-15 p1037 |
| | 11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism | Deuteronomy 11 vv 18-21 p190 Deuteronomy 11 vv 26-28 p191 Romans 1 vv 16&17 p1128 Romans 3 vv 21-31 p1131 Matthew 7 vv 21-28 p972 |

Copy Date June Magazine 9th May 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton every Wednesday also at 2.00. **Sunday School** is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays). **After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's.

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

June 29th 2008

Paul Watkin is to be ordained deacon in Chelmsford Cathedral this day. Rev'd Andrew Daunton-Feare (our CMS link mission partner in the Philippines) is the preacher at our 11.00 United Parish Eucharist at St John's.

What It Means To Be Human

(an Easter 2 sermon)

Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71, Exodus 15 vv20&21 p73, Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093, 1 Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 10-31 p1089



There has been a lot of controversy in the media and in Easter pulpits about the latest Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. The main

points of disagreement appear to be as follows:

- The idea that human DNA could be grafted into the eggs of animals and that the resulting embryo could be allowed to develop for up to 14 days. The rationale is that this would enable scientists to study better how embryos develop and might lead to cures for such dreadful conditions as Motor Neurone Disease.
- A clause to reduce the age at which abortions may be performed from 24 to 20 weeks. This arises because developments in perinatal care have made it possible for increasingly premature babies to survive.
- A clarification of the law to permit the selection of embryos in IVF treatment. As things stand, this would definitely outlaw the selection of babies on the basis of gender, physical appearance etc. It would, however, allow the selection of babies whose tissues could be used for the medical treatment of older brothers or sisters (so called saviour siblings). There is a suggestion that deaf parents should be able to choose a deaf baby because a deaf baby would fit in better with the deaf community to which the parents belong.
- Clinics providing fertility treatment would not have to consider the need of any child so conceived for a father and Lesbian couples conceiving by IVF would be able to have both their names entered on the birth certificate as parents and not the name of the man who is the actual biological father.

Given the history of these things, I think it is only fair to assume that these proposals are not the end of the road. Once we have got used to animal cells with human DNA being allowed to develop in the laboratory to 14 days, someone is bound to suggest that scientists could learn even more if they were allowed to develop for longer or if they could be implanted in a womb. When we have got over the yuk factor in the thought of deliberately manufacturing a baby to provide stem

cells for an existing child with some horrendous disease, we shall gradually acclimatise ourselves to taking other tissues and organs for other, possibly less serious, conditions.

A further point of controversy has been the government's attempt to whip this Bill through parliament. The Bill evidently raises complex and difficult ethical issues on which the world's religions and moral philosophies have an important contribution to make. MPs have always in the past been allowed to follow their consciences when such matters have come before parliament. On this occasion, they are to be whipped into passing the Bill, leading many of us to infer that a new secular morality is being forced on society. This attempt to compel people to act in opposition to their consciences is also morally flawed.

The point at issue is *What is it to be a human being?* Science, without the benefit of religion, tends to answer that we are nothing more than the matter we are made of. The solar system coalesced out of clouds of gaseous vapour. One particular planet around one particular sun just happened to have the right conditions for life to develop. By chance, natural selection and the survival of the fittest, we are what we are and that is all there is to it. Law and culture, therefore, are nothing more than human constructs. Neither is morality. There is no judge outside ourselves to weigh our conduct. This life is all we've got. The difference between us and the animals is quantitative, rather than qualitative. In other words, we are much more intelligent than most animals, but essentially we are the same as they are. It is interesting to ask from whence, if people think that this is what it is to be human, we obtain our supposedly inalienable rights?

The Church teaches something very different about what it is to be human. Yes, we are made of the dust of the ground, but we believe that essentially the universe makes sense. The universe exists and things are the way they are because they are the product of the Mind of God. It is God Who creates life and, therefore, all life is sacred. We cannot do just as we please even with the animals. Their life is God-given. God cares

about them and we are answerable to God if we do not treat other living things with respect.

This is enough to make us question whether we ought to be using animal cells as hosts for human DNA. Even if this is OK, could this be a first step on the path to genuine human/animal hybrids? I am sure that this further development would be hard to resist if scientists claimed that such hybrids might lead to cures for terrible diseases or even if someone foresaw that the creation of such hybrids might be to someone's commercial advantage.

The Bible says, however, that we are something qualitatively different from the animals. God formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed into us the breath of life. There is something of the divine in us. We are made in the image of God. The universe makes sense because it is the product of the Mind of God. We can make some sense of the universe; we can make some sense of our own lives because we are made in the image of God and our minds are capable of relating to His Mind.

Today's readings teach us much more. God cares about the human race *en masse*. He is involved in the destiny of nations. He cares about each one of us individually. That is why we can pray to Him in all our troubles and in all our joys. He cares for every single human being on this planet.

This makes us very cautious about abortion or the creation of fetuses or embryos for specific purposes. Human beings exist in their own right, in and for themselves, and for the glory of God. We cannot treat human beings as if they were commodities to use as we see fit or even as if they were animals whom we may own and use as pets or beasts of burden or for their wool or pelt or meat.

At what point of development a fertilised egg or embryo or foetus ought to be regarded as a human being, deserving of the respect we are obliged to give to all human beings, is a debatable point. Science helps us towards the answers we need, but it cannot alone provide those answers. For the scientist, as a scientist, experimenting on a human embryo may be little different from experimenting on an ape embryo, but, for the scientist, as a human being, it is something quite different. The embryo is alive. It is human. It is therefore human life and qualitatively different from animal

life. There is a debate to be had about whether it is ever legitimate to perform an abortion, to carry out experiments on human embryos or to create human embryos artificially with the intention of implanting only some of them to develop in a womb and allowing others to die. It is also debatable whether, if we do create embryos and implant only some of them, it is right to choose those embryos which we believe are most likely to develop into the people we want – sibling saviours with the bone marrow a sick older brother desperately needs, a child we know is safe from the curse of some inherited disease to which his family is susceptible, a child who fits in to the deaf community because he is deaf, a child who is a *he* because his parents want a boy, a child who is intelligent because we need smart people, a child who is strong but dull because we want labourers to do boring jobs, or perhaps just good-looking because the parents fancy a designer baby. All these things are possible, at least theoretically. The question is, *Are they right?* We need to understand the science if we are to answer these questions, but science alone cannot give us final answers.

God also cares what sort of people we are. God is love and God judges us human beings by that standard of love. He cares whether or not we are good people. He judges us. That is why it is important for us to examine our lives and to confess to Him where we go wrong, to ask His forgiveness and to repent. It matters what we do. It matters what we don't do. And it matters to God what we do collectively as a nation just as it matters to Him what we do as individuals. Making laws is a moral activity and legislators must be guided by their consciences.

I think all this is implicit in today's readings. There is, however, of course, much more to the Easter message. God loves each one of us so much that Jesus dies for each and every one of us. That is how valuable human beings are and determines how we ought to treat one another. He says, *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you*. Jesus rises from the dead and pours out the Holy Spirit of God upon the whole of creation. If we individual human beings will only accept His love, He enters our hearts. We dwell in Him and He in us. This is what it really is to be fully human, to be one with Christ and He with us. We cannot treat human beings as being of less than infinite value.

Moreover, this unity with God is our eternal destiny. What God created human beings for is to dwell eternally in His Love. Any bill before parliament which treats human beings as less than the children of God deserves to be thrown out.

Being made in the image of God, we human beings are called to live in relationships one with another. Among the most precious of these relationships are our family relationships. The Bible and the Church teach that the basic family relationship is a heterosexual couple, who have made a life-long commitment to one another in marriage, their love for their children, their respect for their own parents and their wider responsibilities to their kith and kin. One can argue for polygamy, promiscuity, serial monogamy (i.e. marriage, divorce and remarriage) same sex relationships and all sorts of possibilities for relationships in which people may choose to live and find fulfilment of their various emotional and sexual needs. One may be censorious, understanding or non-judgmental about other people's life styles, but one cannot get away from the fact that the Church has always taught, in full accordance with what the Bible says, that the norm is either to be celibate or to live in heterosexual marriage.

We must regard with some suspicion, therefore, deliberate attempts to create by artificial means families without fathers and to put misleading information on birth certificates.



Halling WI

Confessions all round folk, I was unable to attend the March meeting of Halling WI. I was otherwise engaged attending my grandson's wedding in wildest Nottinghamshire, but I have my spies. I knew what was going to happen. So here goes. Margaret Sutherland, vice chairperson slightly nervous, was in the chair but Mary Fennemore didn't have the night off. She took the minutes as Ann Hayward was otherwise engaged. The usual format, Jerusalem, birthday flowers, and minutes and, from what Betty Head tells me, we are awash at the moment with many tickets for forthcoming events in the Federation. The speaker was Miss Margaret Phillips from West Malling. I have heard Margaret speak on her passion, The Leprosy Mission. Leprosy is not a "Bible disease". It is still around today, mostly in Africa. The sad thing is that it can be cured if the sources and funding

These issues all raise very difficult questions. Scientific knowledge gives us some of the information we need as we search for answers. Science alone cannot, however, provide the answers. We also need other human insights from religion, moral philosophy, the arts and the wider culture. MPs have a difficult job legislating these issues and they need our support in prayer and in other ways.

God has made us free. He has given us the power to choose. He has therefore given us moral responsibility. MPs, no less than any other human beings, are morally responsible. They have to act according to their consciences. It is therefore improper for either government or the Church to attempt to force them to act otherwise.

We cannot, however, escape the difficulty that a society which no longer has an agreed moral framework within which to discuss these issues may be unable to reach generally acceptable conclusions. We used to discuss these issues in the context of the Christian religion. Now many of us are not Christians. Other people's conclusions will be based on the perspectives of other religions or on an atheistic secularism. My fear is that increasingly our laws are based on an atheistic perspective on what it is to be human, but that is another topic for other occasions. I am sure, however, that we Christians have no choice but to bear faithful witness to the Risen Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Roger.

were available. Margaret has written a book on the subject, the proceeds of which will go to the mission. The WI has purchased one of Margaret's books. It is available for anyone to borrow if they wish to read it. She was warmly thanked by Lily Hesketh.

Flower of the Month was won by Eileen Buss, and the competition, something beginning with C, was won by Margaret Sutherland with anything from a Crocodile, a bit of Cheese or even a Candle. I'm told by Betty it was a China Clown, although I'm not sure whether it was made of China or came from China, probably both.

I have had a glowing report from Mary Fennemore, of the Kent West Kent Federation's 90th Annual General meeting which was held recently. The Executive committee all came on to the stage wearing a posh hat. The County

Chairman, Angela Robbins, explained that is how it used to be (I can still remember it). Every member who attended the meeting was given a piece of birthday cake, must have been like feeding the five thousand and each Institute in the Federation was given a glass paper weight to commemorate the 90th anniversary. Mary said it was one of the best meetings she had ever been to, the main speaker was Mr David Batty of the Antique Roadshow. If every member of the

Federation could attend at least one Annual Meeting, the opportunity is there (they are for all members, not the favoured few) they would fully appreciate what kind of organization they belong too. Imagine what it is like to attend the National Federation's Annual meeting. Roll on this years one in Liverpool in June. Betty Head and myself are going and are very much looking forward to it.
Phyllis C.

CANTILENA

Conductor: Bjørn Borge

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choir from Norway**

Friday 27 June 7.30pm

St Michael's Church

Rochester Road, Cuxton

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From the Registers

Baptisms:

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Easter Day | Lorraine Barbara Day | Ladywood Road |
| Easter Day | Harvey William Watts | St Neots |
| 6 th April | Nathaniel James Douglas Andrews | The Street |

Wedding:

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------|
| 29 th March | Michael Anthony Bright & Natasha Louise Brown | Halling |
|------------------------|---|---------|

Funerals:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 27 th March | Patricia Anne Hills (72) | Pilgrims Way |
| 10 th April | Rita Humphrey Overy (92) | formerly of North Halling |
| 10 th April | Margaret Annie Jones (89) | James Road |

TABLES

The Church Hall has some wooden trestle tables which are now surplus to requirements. If you could use one or more of these, please contact Malcolm Curnow on 719585.

Nature Notes & Reflections March 2008

The sun shone brightly from a blue sky adorned with billowing white clouds on the first of the month. Murphy and I walked along the river path where a clump of beautiful dog violets bloomed on the grassy bank and where golden dandelions lifted their heads to the sky. Gulls congregated on the mud flats. A brisk westerly wind blew rippling the water. The next day sunshine was interspersed with dark clouds. Celandines and daisies adorned the churchyard banks. In the afternoon we took Murphy to Hope Hill. Blackthorn bloomed along the Snodland by-pass and there was golden gorse along the motorway verges. Catkins and pussy willow were in the field where we were walking. On the 4th cold north west winds blew white clouds across the blue sky which was bright with sunshine. Grey cloud developed in the afternoon when I walked along the river path with Murphy. The river was low revealing wide expanses of glistening mud flats. Cormorants perched on the buoys. I walked swiftly because the wind was so cold. Mild west winds blew the next day when we walked by the river where gulls and shelduck foraged on the mudflats. Cowslips and speedwell bloomed on the grassy banks. I heard the call of redshank. After early rain on the 7th, the sun shone brightly. I walked Murphy round the lake area near the bridge. The west wind rippled the water where shelduck and redshank glided and foraged, golden coloured lichen festooned bare elder branches. Stormy weather had raged through the night of the 9th and continued into the next day. There was a brief lull when Murphy was able to

have a walk along the river path then heavy rain returned and continued for the rest of the day. The wind blew the roof off the bird table. Chaffinches and a collared dove came to the patio wall for seed then later, the dove perched in the holly tree sheltering from the rain. The 12th, after a night of strong winds, was bright with sunshine, blue skies and billowing white clouds. I took Murphy to the leisure park and under the bridge where the wind was very strong and whipped up waves on the river where I could see swirling currents as we walked along the grassy paths. The combination of sunshine and bracing wind was exhilarating. At least a dozen rabbits darted out of the grassy tussocks towards the railway fence and disappeared into the undergrowth. The river was high and reflected the blue of the sky. Pied wagtails flew over the grassy areas and a large black crow perched on a fence post as we walked along the river path. A large thrush appeared in front of us and two pairs of shelduck foraged on the mudflats. On the 14th I found coltsfoot and beautiful celandines blooming near the water beyond the Medway Bridge. Along the river path more clumps of cowslips speedwell and dandelions bloomed while a long tailed tit perched in a tree. I saw a brimstone butterfly on the 18th. On the 20th, my only walk was to the post box for it was cold and grey and rain which was pouring down causing the gutters to resemble streams overflowing onto the pavements. Traffic caused plumes of spray to fly up into the air while large puddles formed on the pavements. A jay visited

the garden. The 22nd was wet and cold as I walked by the river but I still found some golden buttercups bravely raising their heads to the sky. The north wind formed white horses on the river and wavelets broke over the reeds. Dark clouds filled the sky but gradually they parted and the sun shone. Easter Day dawned wet and cold with sleet showers falling during the morning. I drove to the river with Murphy in the afternoon as sleet beat down from a very grey sky. Eventually the sun emerged enabling me to walk Murphy along the river path where cowslips, red deadnettle and buttercups bloomed along the banks. The river was grey and high with the north wind forming white horses and waves breaking on the reeds. Snow fell on the 23rd. It soon melted but snow showers continued to fall until mid day. We drove to Hope Hill with Murphy. Along our way, I noticed patches of snow lying on the woodland floor and on the roofs of houses. Rabbits scuttled across the fields where we were walking. The early morning skies of the 25th were a clear blue and golden sunshine beamed down on the earth. Light cloud then drifted across the sky and grey cloud formed in the afternoon when I took Murphy to Snodland and walked by the river taking us towards the Leybourne Lakes. Three male mallard ducks, a coot and a pair of graceful swans glided on the water. Willows were breaking into leaf and a clump of cow parsley was in bloom. On the 28th the grey skies released their rain as I walked with Murphy along the river path. A west wind blew the rain into our faces and in a strange way I enjoyed it. Clumps of cowslips brought brightness to the grassy banks. The rain continued to fall through the morning and well into the afternoon but eventually the grey cloud lifted, the rain ceased and the sun broke through.

The sky, brushed with white cloud was a beautiful Spring blue and it was quite mild in the shelter of the garden. Chaffinches, robins and collared doves fed on the seed. As the sun set, salmon pink cloud brushed the sky. On the 29th I walked through Six-acre Wood where I saw tiny white violets mauve violets and golden celandines. I continued up into Mays Wood where beautiful carpets of wood anemones and celandines bloomed. Bluebell plants spread across the woodland floor and three had burst into flower. I returned across the fields where chickweed, shepherds purse, dandelions, white and red deadnettle, buttercups and carpets of tiny blue speedwell bloomed. I felt the full force of the strong wind. British Summertime began. The final day of the month was bright with some sunshine. As I walked by the river with Murphy I watched a grey heron fly across the water and I saw and heard a redshank. The late afternoon was bright with sunshine and I heard the yaffle of a woodpecker in the woodland beyond the railway cutting.

Spring flowers are blooming despite the cold winds which roar through the bare branches of the trees. Golden buttercups in the fields, celandines in the churchyard and in the woods accompanied by delicate wood anemones lift their delicate heads to the sky. I hear the strident calls of great tits, the pinking of blackbirds, the beautiful songs of skylarks the chirpings of a robin and the raucous cawing of rooks. A jay and magpies join chaffinches, robins, tits and dunnock in the garden. Dark clouds scud across the sky bringing heavy rain and sleet while icy northerly blasts remind us that Spring remains in a precarious position. Elizabeth Summers.

The Thrush's Nest

Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush
That over hung a mole hill large and round
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound
With joy; and often an intruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day-
How true she warped the moss to form a nest,

And modelled it within the wood and clay;
And by and by, like heath bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers
Ink-spotted over shells of greeny blue;
And there I witnessed in the sunny hours,
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as that sunshine and the laughing sky.

John Clare.

Looking Ahead

This year's **Parish Barbecue** is on 5th July in the Rectory Grounds.

In August, we have a **Victorian Tea Party** at the Rectory on 9th and a **Cheese & Wine Party** on 29th at 73, Charles Drive. Other events for August, yet to be announced.

Dickens Country Protection Society

Book your tickets now for the **Barn Dance** at Buckland Farm, Cliffe on Saturday 24th May, 7.30-11.00 pm. Adults £10, children under 16 £5. Price includes ploughman's supper. Tickets from Kay Roots 01474 822797.

At the **Annual General Meeting** the current officers and committee were re-elected unopposed.

A Well Fêted June

The **Halling Fun Day** is on the 21st June in the Recreation Ground and the **Scoutana** is on the 28th June in the Scout Hall Grounds. This is the Diamond Jubilee of 30th Strood (Cuxton) Scout Group.



CUXTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

We were very sad to learn of the death of one of our long-standing members, Pat Hills, on 17th March after a short illness. Pat was a Drama Rep for many years and took an active part in our Drama events and especially our "Pantomimes". She also belonged to our Poetry Group and had a particular fondness for Wordsworth. She will be missed by all of us.

The April meeting was well attended and business was short. President Dorothy Drew read out her report on the Annual Council Meeting at Tunbridge Wells. Those of us who went to this enjoyed the day very much, with guest speaker David Batty from the Antiques Road show. As it was the 90th Birthday of the West-Kent Federation, everybody there was given a piece of birthday cake (delicious!!) and each WI was presented with a glass paperweight. After tea break, we listened to our speaker, Christopher McCooley, who gave a very amusing talk on Weird, Wacky and Wonderful Kent Characters. After close of meeting, he had several of his books for sale and did a brisk trade.

We held a Promotional table at the Junior School's Pamper Evening, and generated some interest in our activities. We exhibited examples of what we do, craft, painting, china painting, poetry, cooking and walking. We sold all our cakes and made a small amount towards our funds.

The Walking Group took the train to London and had a walk around Mayfair, ably guided by one of our members, who used to work in that area. It was a beautiful sunny day, although the wind was cold, and we saw various shops and businesses which we had heard of but never seen: Burlington Arcade, Sotheby's, Bond Street, Sloane Street, Saville Row, various tailors, shoemakers, jewellers, etc. We had an excellent lunch in the Washington Hotel in Curzon Street, a special offer of 3-course meal for £10, which we ate in luxurious surroundings. A memorable day out. Our next walk is Ashenbank Woods, near Cobham.

Items are being collected for the Tombola we are having at our Resolutions Meeting in May, to raise funds. Next WI meeting on Thursday 1st May at 7.30 pm at St, Michael's Church Hall.

Ann Harris.

Master Deserves A Medal by Max the Rectory Spaniel.

Throughout my nearly seven years of life (and for a couple of years before that, I'm told) a new kitchen has been promised for the Rectory, Master had given up believing in it but his mother never lost faith and now it has been begun and is nearly finished. What an experience! First, the floor tiles in the bathroom, lavatories and kitchen had to be removed because they might contain a trace of asbestos. So did the ceiling tiles in the boiler house. Rectory families had suffered no harm from them for over forty years, but now they had to be taken out through an air lock by men wearing space suits, who then had to shower in a special caravan. A couple of weeks later, the order went out to shift everything – all the groceries and kitchen utensils. The hall was packed with kitchen items. Master couldn't find anything he wanted. There was nowhere to put anything down. In due course, the men (and a lady) arrived. Master had particularly asked that the nicest feature of the old kitchen (through cupboards and drawers to the dining room) should be retained. So you can guess what they ripped out first! The surveyor said this was for Master's successor. So presumably they intend that there still will be rectors in 2024, when he is due to retire! Days of chaos and dust followed. The worst were when the power was off at meal times. Once Master had to cycle into Strood for fish and chips – only to find the shop closed and the necessity to go further. Once it was the "White Hart" – very nice for the humans but I don't get to go there. There was talk of having a cold dinner one day!

Salad! They even turned the gas off while they worked on the electricity! Fridges got turned off because Master didn't know where they were plugged in. The dear old washing machine died from the shock of being moved out to the new utility room. So now we have a stylish new machine, which takes longer, but is allegedly more eco-friendly. I must make my bed clothes really dirty to give it a fair test. When everything was nearly finished, a bombshell was dropped. Before putting down the new floor covering, the remains of the old floor would have to be screeded. As the new floor-covering is a species of linoleum, Master thought it could rest on newspaper, but, apparently not. It needed a cement screed and we all might have to stay out of the kitchen overnight. Now, I have slept in that kitchen every night since I was a puppy of six weeks and Master got really worried (Bless him!) as to whether I would get a proper night's rest anywhere else. Fortunately the screed dried enough to walk on (and sleep on) but not yet enough to support the Marmoleum. So we are still waiting for the floor and the screen which will isolate the utility room and kitchen entrance from the elements. It is also apparently impossible to find curtains to match the new paint. Anyway, Mummy and I are really impressed and are very grateful to the Diocese. Master is still complaining about two tea spoons he can't find!

Max.