

| Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton | | |
|---|---|---|
| November 2 nd All Saints Sunday (including commemoration of faithful departed) | 9.30 Family Communion Shoeboxes for Blythswood | 1 John 3 vv 1-3 p1226 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968 |
| November 9 th 3 rd Before Advent Remembrance Sunday | 9.30 Holy Communion & Parade | 1 Thessalonians 4 vv 13- 18 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 1-13 p994 |
| November 16 th 2 nd Before Advent | 8.00 Holy Communion | Revelation 1 vv 4-18 p1233 Luke 9 vv 1-6 p1039 |
| | 9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism | Zephaniah 1 vv 1-18 p944 1 Thessalonians 5 vv 1-11 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 14-30 p994 |
| November 23 rd Christ the King | 9.30 Holy Communion | Ezekiel 34 vv 11-24 p865 Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1173 Matthew 25 vv 31-46 p995 |
| November 30 th (Advent Sunday) Utd Parish Eucharist @ Halling 11.00. | | |
| Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling | | |
| November 2nd All Saints Sunday (including commemoration of faithful departed) | 8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall | 1 John 3 vv 1-3 p1226 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968 |
| | 11.00 Holy Communion Shoeboxes for Blythswood | Revelation 7 vv 9-17 p1238 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968 |
| November 9th 3rd Before Advent Remembrance Sunday | 10.50 Holy Communion & Parade | Amos 5 vv 18-24 p920 1 Thessalonians 4 vv 13- 18 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 1-13 p994 |
| | 5.30 Evensong Jubilee Hall | Judges 7 vv 1-22 p249 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083 |
| November 16th 2nd Before Advent | 11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! | Zephaniah 1 vv 1-18 p944 1 Thessalonians 5 vv 1-11 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 14-30 p994 |
| November 23rd Christ the King | 11.00 Holy Communion | Ezekiel 34 vv 11-24 p865 Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1173 Matthew 25 vv 31-46 p995 |
| November 30th (Advent Sunday) | 11.00 Utd Parish Eucharist Rev'd David Preston | Isaiah 64 vv 1-9 p750 1 Corinthians 1 vv 3-9 p1144 Mark 13 vv 24-37 p1019 |
| December 7th Advent 2 | 8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall | Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976 |
| | 11.00 Holy Communion & Gift Service | Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 2 Peter 3 vv 8-15a p1224 Mark 1 vv 1-8 p1002 |

There has been a request for notice of the readings at weekday services so that worshippers can read them in advance. So here they are for Wednesdays (Cuxton) & Thursdays (Halling) 9.30 HC.

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|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Wednesday 5 th | Philippians 2 vv 12-18 Luke 14 vv 25-33 | Thursday 6 th | Philippians 3 vv 3-8 Luke 15 vv 1-10 |
| Wednesday 12 th | Titus 3 vv 1-7 Luke 17 vv 11-19 | Thursday 13 th | Philemon vv 7-20 Luke 17 vv 20-25 |
| Wednesday 19 th | Revelation 4 Luke 19 vv 11-28 | Thursday 20 th | Revelation 5 vv 1-10 Luke 19 vv 41-44 |
| Wednesday 26 th | Revelation 15 vv 1-4 Luke 21 vv 12-19 | Thursday 27 th | Revelation 18 v1 – 19 v9 Luke 21 vv 20-28 |

November 2nd All Saints Sunday

The 2nd November is a Sunday this year and we shall hold our annual commemoration of the faithful departed by name at the 9.30 am service at Cuxton and the 11.00 am service at Halling. We remember by name all those whose funerals we have taken in the previous year and those whose names are in our books of remembrance. Relatives and friends of the departed are especially welcome.

We shall also be collecting the shoe boxes people have filled for the Blythswood Appeal. Leaflets available in church advise what to put into them. This is the last Sunday for bringing boxes and they will be formally received at this service. Please, however, do not feel that you have to bring a shoebox. This is entirely optional!

Roger.



On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler (**Thursday's Children**) service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton every Wednesday (**St Michael's Angels**) 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.



From the Rector

The Chief Rabbi: *Suppose, for example, that I give someone £100. Either he is entitled to it, or he is not. If he is, then my act is a form of justice. If he is not, it is an act of charity. In English a gesture of charity cannot be an act of justice, nor can an act of justice be described as charity. Righteousness (Heb tzedakah, תְּצִדָּקָה) is therefore an unusual term because it means both. God is righteous and God's people are called to be righteous too.*¹

I included this quotation from the Chief Rabbi in last month's magazine. Since then, I have been pondering what it means, what it means for Jews and what are the implications for Christians. I hope I shall not misrepresent Dr Sachs in any way (although of course the rabbi is writing from a Jewish perspective on the Hebrew Bible {what Christians call the Old Testament} and I am trying to understand those very same Scriptures in the Christian belief that they bear witness to Jesus.)

The question is, *What is righteousness?* And the answer comes from the fact that God is righteous. Only God is righteous in the absolute sense and the real meaning of righteousness derives from the very Nature of God.

God instructs His people to be holy because He is holy. God's covenant with humanity is that He will treat us in accordance with His Nature (which is righteousness) and we will respond to His righteousness towards us in the conformity of our nature to His Nature. In other words, we shall be holy because He is holy; we shall be righteous because He is righteous; we shall act righteously because He acts righteously. This is not foreign to our humanity because human beings are made in the image of God. It is not alien for us to be righteous like God. We are His children and our righteousness is spoilt only by the sin that corrupts us all. To be made righteous is to be made fully human.

But what does it mean to act righteously? It is more than to act justly. If you act justly, you give people what they deserve or what you owe them. St Paul, who was himself a student of the Hebrew Scriptures long before he became a Christian, concludes that, if God gave us what we deserved, we should all perish everlasting and he seems to be appalled that God might be imagined to owe us anything. God is just and He acts righteously, but, for Paul, God's righteousness consists (among an infinity of other things) in making us righteous and therefore giving us all the blessings which the righteous inherit. God gives us what we do not deserve – eternal life – because He is righteous, which is much more than simply to be just, though He is, in fact, just, as well as righteous. He justifies us. He makes us righteous. What we have to do is to repent and believe, to receive by faith God's gift of righteousness (or justification, if you like).

Jesus (Who is sometimes called *Rabbi*) speaks of the righteous God Who gives rain and sun to good and bad alike. Because God is righteous, He gives of His goodness to everyone. Jesus tells us that we must do the same as God. It is not enough to be just. Everybody is expected to be just – to love those who love them, to do good to those who are good to them, to lend to those from whom they hope to receive back. Jesus says that to be just is not good enough for Christians, for those who are the children of God. The children of God must be perfect even as their Father in Heaven is perfect.

In the quotation above from the Chief Rabbi, *charity* is being good or kind to someone who does not deserve it or to whom you owe nothing (or perhaps to give more than you actually owe). Charity is your own free choice. You can give or withhold charity; it is your choice.

This is where charity differs from righteousness. God cannot but act righteously, because righteousness is His Nature. If we are truly His children, if our nature is truly conformed to His Nature, if we are really righteous, we cannot but act righteously, because righteousness is our nature. We are not merely just. We are much better than just if we are righteous, but we do not

¹ This comes from Jonathan Sacks *The Dignity of Difference* a book I strongly recommend, obtainable from the library.

regard being good or kind simply as charity in the sense in which the word *charity* is used above. If we are righteous by nature, if we are truly the people of God, His children, we cannot be anything other than righteous.

When we fail to act righteously, unrighteousness is not an option which we can claim is open to us, a choice we may freely make. To fail to act righteously is to sin against God and against our essential nature as Christians. Unrighteousness is not a lifestyle choice. There is no limit to the degree of righteousness expected of God's people. God's righteousness is infinite. Insofar as we are not righteous, we are sinners, and the only correct course of action is repentance so that God may make us righteous again in Christ.

It occurs to me that what Dr Sachs means by righteousness (Heb tzedakah, תְּצָדָקָה) is very close to what the New Testament means by the Greek word agape (ἀγάπη). This word is sometimes

translated as *love* and sometimes as *charity*, but no human word in any language can define what the Bible means by agape. Certainly, where *charity* translates agape αγάπη (as it does, for example, in the Authorised Version of 1 Corinthians 13 and the Prayer Book collect for Quinquagesima) it means much more than *charity* in the sense in which the Chief Rabbi (and most other people) use the word. When agape is translated as *love* (as it generally now is) there is a profundity of meaning, missing from the *lurve* which is celebrated in magazines and popular songs. God is agape and what agape is is what St Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 13 (which you will have to read for yourself).

Love, (agape, αγάπη) is very close, if not identical, to righteousness (tzedakah, תְּצָדָקָה). It is the very Nature of God and it is the nature of all those who are one in Him through Jesus, God made flesh.

Roger.

St Augustine of Hippo: There are four actions in the Eucharist: the bread is taken, consecrated, broken and distributed. These are also the four key elements in Christian discipleship. *You are the body of Christ: that is to say, in you and through you the work of the Incarnation must go forward. You are meant to incarnate in your lives the theme of your adoration - you are to be taken, consecrated, broken and distributed, that you may be the means of grace and vehicles of the Eternal Charity.*

Halling WI



As our September meeting was an "open" meeting, it was rather nice to hear men's voices in our usual rendering of Jerusalem, which I must admit we do very well. Mary F was in the chair and welcomed our guests and presented our birthday roses for September, even one for Norman whose birthday happens to be in September, and he is a W.I. husband anyway. Minutes were taken as read, but the correspondence had to be dealt with, and we were aiming to show our visitors how our meetings are conducted. An invitation from Ditton W.I. who are having a special speaker in November. The District Quiz will be in the Jubilee Hall this year on 11th November, cost £2 inc refreshments. Mary then had to fill in a bit of time as our speaker hadn't arrived. The tale of the fire alarm, passed its sell by date had us all amused. Wasn't she lucky to have four handsome firemen visit her and they arrived in a big red fire-engine? Couldn't have been better if her house had been burning down. Then she may have had a fireman's lift.

Mr. Bob Ogley, our speaker did arrive and on time to talk about The Spirit of Invicta, or as I like to call it The Ghost of the White Horse. We have over the years had so many well known men and women living in Kent it makes one wonder who the other counties have produced. We were all quite surprised. The London to Brighton run originated in our county. The first one only had four cars taking part. H.G. Wells lived in Kent and predicted that in the 21st century we would all be "chipped" and living under ground. I think he probably got that right, for me anyway. I first heard Bob Ogley speak when he was a reporter for a Sevenoaks newspaper. He has mellowed and improved with the years. He was warmly thanked by Mary. After refreshments, Bob judged our competitions. Once again it was M for money, Jean Mattingley had brought a fine collection of Medals mounted in a frame which was judged first. My Mole trap was third. Neither Mary or Bob knew what kind of trap it was. The moles are safe however because I don't know how to set them up. The Flower of the Month was won by Gemma Graves with a big spike of white gladioli which Dame Edna Everage would be proud of.

Phyllis C.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOX OPENING

This year we will be opening the Children's Society collecting boxes on Tuesday 4th November between 10 am and 12 noon at 204, Bush Road, Cuxton. Anyone with a box is very welcome to come along and help. Otherwise, I would be grateful if you could hand your box to me at church, drop it in to me here or let me know and I will be happy to collect it from your house. Some of them do get very heavy! Thank you.. Julia Wells Tel: 01634 727424

Friends of Kent Churches Cycle Ride: I was the only one from this parish able to take part this year, but, thanks to my sponsors, we made £185. Half of this will come back to the parish. The other half will be generally for churches in Kent. The final sum will be somewhat larger, because many donors used Gift Aid. I had a very enjoyable morning cycling round the deanery, although I had to leave out Grain as being too far and Merston because I was not absolutely sure where it was! I had to be back for a wedding at 1.00. I know that my route missed out some of them, but it was notable that were was only a handful of "other denomination" and two of the Anglican churches I visited were "redundant" (i.e. permanently closed). Sadly this is what happens when communities do not support their local churches. So thanks to all those of you who support ours Roger.

Nature Notes September 2008

The month began with blustery west winds, billowing grey clouds and warm sunshine. I enjoyed the wind as it blew strongly beneath the bridge over the River Medway in the afternoon when I took Murphy for his walk. The water was high and choppy glistening in the bright sunlight. A few flowers bloomed bravely on the now straggly banks, the edges of which had been cut. Rain fell steadily throughout the following morning and into the afternoon and the skies remained grey even when the rain had ceased. In the evening, when the skies had cleared, I drove with Murphy to the river which glistened in the still golden sunshine. The sky was a pale rain-washed blue with grey and pink clouds being blown by quite a strong northerly wind. We walked briskly and with purpose. The late evening skies were clear. The 4th was a day when summer had definitely departed. The skies, washed with rain, had an autumnal appearance. A jay came to visit the bird feeders in the morning. Three days of rain followed before the sun shone quite warmly again on the 8th. Along the banks by the river I saw scabious, marjoram, ribbed melilot, pink clover, bristly ox tongue, vervain, yellow crucifers, mallow, yarrow, vipers bugloss, lucerne, a few goats rue flowers and a single ox eye daisy. The banks, however, looked very tired. The water was low and gulls and a cormorant with wings outstretched, congregated on the mudflats. The next day, when the sun shone, a dragonfly perched on the patio wall and two butterflies, a peacock and a green veined white flew across the garden while great tits, greenfinches and collared doves came to feed. On the morning of the 12th, David drew my attention to a spider's web with one strand stretching from foliage near the drain pipe across the grass to the conifer on the top of the wall. It was such a wonderful skill from so small a creature. We walked on waste ground near the river where gulls and a heron circled and thistles

and brown headed teasels stood like sentinels. Hips and haws had ripened in abundance while yellow crucifers, a few mallow flowers and dandelions bloomed. Two rabbits scurried in front of us. Everything was so beautiful in the sunlight. I awoke on the 13th to a grey, misty morning but eventually the mist dispersed and by mid day the sun shone from a beautiful clear sky. Down by the river I watched a heron take flight and two black crows fly out from hawthorn bushes. Robins had not come to the garden for some time. Then, on the 16th, one came to the edge of the pond at lunchtime. By this time, winds were blowing from the north east. The flowers on the bank by the river path were fading on the 18th but the sun shone bringing some warmth. As I sat reading in the garden on the 20th, I was aware of three collared doves pecking at the seed on the patio. They took no notice of me, nevertheless, I remained very still for they were fascinating to watch. Cloud covered the sky on the 23rd and north east winds blew bringing a distinct chill to the air. Trees were beginning to display their autumn tints, beautiful golden colours. In the garden the large family of great tits seem to have disbanded for only a few of them visit the feeders at any one time. From the 25th to the 28th the weather was beautiful with golden, warm sunshine beaming down from almost clear blue skies. I took Murphy to the river which reflected the blue of the sky while the mud flats, when the water was low, glistened in the sunlight and gulls circled overhead and congregated on the edge of the water. The sun still shone on the 29th although for not so long and northwest winds brought a chill to the air. The final day of the month was grey and by mid day rain was falling, sometimes in heavy bursts. It was not an afternoon for walking. Murphy does not like the rain.

Elizabeth Summers.

The Rainy Summer Alice Meynell

There's much afoot in heaven
and earth this year;
The winds hunt up the sun, hunt
up the moon,
Trouble the dubious dawn,
hasten the drear
Height of a threatening noon.

No breath of boughs, no breath
of leaves, of fronds,
May linger or grow warm; the
trees are loud;
The forest, rooted, tosses in her
bonds,
And strains against the cloud.

No scents may pause within the
garden fold;
The rifled flowers are cold as
ocean shells;
Bees, humming in the storm,
carry their cold
Wild honey to cold cells.

Confirmation 2009

The Bishop of Rochester is administering Confirmation at the 9.30 am service at St Michael's on 14th June next year. If you are interested, we will start classes in the new year. Candidates should be at least twelve years old, but may be much older! The commitment is the same as the commitment in being baptised. So any baptised person ought to be able to be confirmed. Please see me for more information. Roger.

Church Hall Draw: £5 to Cherry Glover, drawn by Peter Crundwell

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Smith (49), Mrs Parris (53), Mrs Parris (54), Mrs Mitchell (61), Mr Bourne (108) – drawn by Mrs Rogers & Mrs Court.

Harvest 2008

Again, I should like to thank everyone for the effort that went into our Harvest services – the beautiful decoration of the churches, the goods brought to share with others, the singing and the Sunday School presentation. Thanks also to those who prepared, laid up for and washed up the Harvest Supper. The funds raised will join the money collected in the envelopes from now till Christmas in support of the Poverty & Hope Appeal.

None of this would be possible without the commitment that people make. There are so many distractions from worship in the modern world, but nothing is as important and we are all the poorer if we do not give the best of our time and talents in God's service.

Worshippers at Cuxton may have noticed a slightly different harvest loaf, this year, complete with a doughy harvest mouse. Chris Beaney has most generously provided our harvest loaves for many years and did so again this year at Halling, but the Cuxton loaf this year was presented by Timothy Bedford, whose daughter Isobel was baptized on 21st September. Thank you, Tim & Chris.

We were also delighted to baptize eight candidates at our 9.30 service on Harvest Festival. This is part of a trend, with a large number of baptisms this Autumn. God is bringing in His harvest of souls. We really rejoice that so many people want to come and be baptized. I know that there can be something of a clash of cultures when we are joined by a lot of people who do not often go to church. They may not be sure what is expected of them. Regulars may feel overwhelmed and distracted from their worship. Christ's Great Commission is, however, to proclaim the Good News to the whole human race, to baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to teach them to obey His commandments. We need to consider how we can make people feel that they belong in God's Church and how we can fulfil our promise to *uphold them in their new life in Christ*. At the very least, we ought to pray for them. Those who come to Baptism (and those who bring their children for Baptism) also need to think about how they are going to grow in the Christian faith. At the very least, they need to join a church!

Roger.

Michaelmas & Mantissa

We very much enjoyed the performance of light opera and songs from the shows which Mantissa Opera put on in St Michael's following our Patronal Festival Eucharist. It was a very pleasant evening.

The good news is that Mantissa Opera say they might come again next year. Also we have the prospect of an orchestral performance at St John's perhaps next Spring. Watch this space.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

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|----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 21 st September | Isobel Hannah Bedford | William Road |
| 21 st September | Zak David Ingram | Nine Acres Road |
| 28 th September | Aston David Page | Chatham |
| 5 th October | Lee Watts | Smarden |
| 5 th October | Jade Watts | Dagenham |
| 5 th October | Charlie Watts | Dagenham |
| 5 th October | Ree Abbey | Chatham |
| 5 th October | Nikky Unsworth | |
| 5 th October | Vicky Unsworth | |
| 5 th October | Mia Leigh Lisa Rose Unsworth-Watts | Smarden |
| 5 th October | Tianna Kirsty Cora Caroline Sarah Unsworth-Watts. | |

Wedding:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 13 th September | David Lee & Hayley Williams |
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Halling

Funerals:

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|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 17th September | Christopher Frank Harris (56) |
| 3 rd October | Nina Chambers (84) |

Acre Grove
Pilgrims Way



CUXTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE
October is the month we hold our Annual Meeting, where new Committee and Officers are elected.

After the normal business, when we welcomed a new member and two visitors, the Annual meeting commenced with reading of the Bye-laws and Decisions. The Financial Statement was explained, the Annual Report and President's Address read out, and as the Committee remained the same and Dorothy Drew was happy to continue as President for another year, she was unanimously voted for the post. Members had brought various items to exhibit, paintings, photographs, poetry, knitting and some beautiful cross-stitch pictures, all of which were admired by all. We then held a quiz, with some very difficult questions which taxed our brains, but was a lot of fun. We were all saddened to hear of the death of Nina Chambers, after a short illness in hospital. Nina was a long-standing member, taking part in all WI activities and she will be greatly missed by us all.

The Walking Group walked from Hoo to Upnor, visiting Upnor Castle on the way to the pub for lunch. After a welcome sit down and break, we then walked along the river shore back to Hoo (the tide being well out!!) A very long walk, which ended with a cup of tea and biscuit in Hoo church, which is open to all on a Tuesday afternoon. We

were made most welcome. Some of us took part in the Autumn Variety Event at Aylesford, performing poetry and two songs. In spite of various difficulties and no pianist on the night, it went very well. We were first on, so could then relax and enjoy the rest of the evening, which included a Ploughman's Supper and coffee or tea. A very enjoyable evening.

Next meeting: Thursday 6th November 7.30 pm.
Wildlife Management of Queendown Warren - Miss Alison Ruyter.

30th Strood (Cuxton & Halling) Scout Group Cheese Tasting and Auction

Saturday 15th November at 7.30 pm in the Scout Hall, Bush Road, Cuxton

Bring your friends along to try lots of different cheeses, some of which will be familiar while others will be new to you. We will provide the cheeses and a light buffet to eat with them, but you will need to provide your own drinks. Once we have had a chance to taste the samples, the cheeses will be cut into portions and sold off to the highest bidders in the normal auction style, so you will also need to bring some money! A raffle will also be held. To help us with planning, please book your place in advance by phoning Matthew Wells on 01634 727424. Tickets are 4.50 per head. Thanks to John and Sue Souter who will be our cheesemasters on the day. Please support your Scouts.

DON'T SHOOT THE ORGANIST –

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

The fiftieth anniversary of the death of the great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams has been celebrated across the world of music in many ways during 2008. Television programmes about his life and works, lectures and concerts, and visits to the place of his birth, Down Ampney in Gloucestershire, have contributed to a new awareness of this very English composer whose exposure this year has engendered a resurgent realisation of his music and philosophy for the next generation of music lovers.

The major opportunity for us as a church to mark this anniversary fell on his birthday, Sunday, 12 October and as such, almost all the music heard at the morning service at St Michael's was composed, arranged or collected by RVW. As a response to a suggestion from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, the Archbishop of Canterbury encouraged the honouring of his memory on the 12th by a worldwide celebration, 'truly ecumenical and joyful', of his contribution to hymnody. When he was alive, RVW was described as feeling a little awkward about any reception of his contribution to hymns. Simona Pakenham, whose book about his music was published in 1957, recounted meeting him later and he, somewhat nervously, greeted her with "You know my hymn books!" She felt this pleased him just as much as what she'd written about his symphonies and other works.

It may seem strange that a significant contribution to Christian worship was composed by a man who was for a time an atheist, and later an agnostic and who resigned as a church organist because of the vicar's insistence that he should receive communion. But his passion was that music plays a part in the life of the ordinary people, including church-goers, as well as the valuable contribution by the Church to musical developments in England. This is illustrated not only in his arrangements and compositions that appear in hymn books and in his editing of the English Hymnal, but also in his settings of biblical texts in his oratorios and in his anthems and liturgical settings for choirs. He also dedicated much time and energy in the support of amateur choral singing, especially through the Leith Hill Festival, and he regularly conducted performances of Bach's Passion settings over some thirty-five years.

Although rather reluctant to oversee the music for a new hymn book, RVW set out energetically to find best tunes from English, Welsh, French, German and other sources. He commissioned composers, arranged traditional and folk songs (he'd started collecting these with Holst in 1903) and he provided music of his own. Who does not marvel at the majesty and power of *Sine nomine (For All the Saints Who from their Labours Rest)* and the simplicity and loveliness of *Down Ampney (Come Down O Love Divine)*. Major compositions came from this synthesis with church music. The *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* for strings, for example, whose wonderful use of unrelated consonances (i.e. combinations of harmonic sounds), provide a new sound and a different way into a large-scale form. This sound, with its sense of natural objects seen in a transfigured light, placed Vaughan Williams in the powerful English visionary tradition, giving him a credible association with the work of Blake (in the ballet *Job*) and Bunyan (in the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*). His use of the "visionary" manifested itself later in a group of religious works of around 1920: the unaccompanied Mass in G Minor, the Revelation oratorio *Sancta civitas* and the 'pastoral episode' *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*.

During his editing of the English Hymnal (1906), and later with contributions to Songs of Praise (1925) and The Oxford Book of Carols (1928), RVW found that sometimes new words were required for tunes that he particularly admired. Examples of these include Athelstan Riley's 'Ye watchers and ye holy ones' for *Lasst uns erfreuen* and Percy Dearmer's 'Holy God, we show forth here' for Wagner's chorale from *Die Meistersinger*. RVW also wrote music for organists including preludes, processionals and recessional, as well as several arrangements of other composers' work for organ and orchestra. There are choral pieces, settings of hymns and Christmas music. In fact, his various compositions of church music give the church musician plenty of scope for celebration of a musical career lasting many years.

An epitaph, which I consider encapsulates the composer's own contribution to his considerable output of church music comes from Michael Kennedy, a close friend over the last decade or so of the composers life, that describes *Down Ampney* as 'a tune of simple grace that enters one's heart and, once there, stays for ever.'

JGB

Source material: The Groves Concise Dictionary of Music, ed. S Sadie (Macmillan Press Ltd)
"Celebrating Vaughan Williams" Anne Harrison, Church Music Quarterly (RSCM)

The music used for the morning service at St Michael and All Angels, Cuxton on 12th October, 2008 included (from Ancient and Modern New Standard Hymn Book) the following –

Music before the service – Folk song arrangements by Ralph Vaughan Williams

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 105 | All Creatures of our God and King | Arrangement by RVW of German tune ' <i>Lasst uns erfreuen</i> ' Words W H Draper based on St Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun. |
| 156 | Come down, O Love Divine | Composed RVW – <i>Down Ampney</i> |
| 378 | Jesus, Good above all other | Arrangement of German mediaeval melody ' <i>Quem pastores</i> ' |
| 247 | I heard the voice of Jesus say | Folk song arrangement |
| 446 | Christians lift up your Hearts | Composed RVW <i>Salve festa dies</i> |
| 212 | Who would true valour see | Traditional tune arrangement with words by John Bunyan |

Recessional *Sine nomine* - Composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams

News from Cuxton Community Infant School

Dear friends of our school,

The children have settled well into school and this week the younger children have experienced lunchtimes with their parents. Many favourable comments from Parents and Grandparents saying that the lunches were ... a little different to when we were at school! This week we have held our Harvest Festival with each class performing a song, rhyme or poem. We merrily sang, 'I can see Cherries' and of course the old favourite 'Cauliflowers Fluffy!' My thanks to all who donated to our Harvest charity- Caring Hands, based in Rochester who run a day centre for homeless folk. We managed to collect quite a few cans and other goodies.

We will be collecting for the British Legion Poppy Appeal and Children in Need in November. Once again Sharon our cook will be making her infamous Pudsey Bear biscuits to sell to the children. I thank the parents who support these charities. Children do need to know about the wider world in which we live and to know that some people are not as fortunate as ourselves.

At this time of year, we begin to think about sending out admission forms for those children who are due to start school next September 2009. If you think this maybe your child and you have not been in touch with us, do contact the school office on 01634 718162.

Shortly we will have half term and then another busy period commences! Children in school will be thinking about the following topics: clothes, colours and patterns, including materials, change, aspects of Christianity, and Josephs Coat. The Children will also be thinking about non-fiction and poetry. We will also be having Christmas plays, parties, entertainments and a visit to the junior school! It is always quite amazing to see how much work we all actually have to fit in. However the Children are happy and generally confident young people who enjoy school and that to me is paramount.

Wishing you a very happy month, take care, Sandra Jones, Headteacher.

Back to Church Sunday

Asked to preach on “Back to Church Sunday”, I asked myself why is it important that people should come back to Church? The cynical answer is that the Church of England cannot survive (at least in its present form) unless the people of England come back to Church, but that begs the question. Unless it is important that the people come back to the Church, it would not matter if the Church did not survive. So I asked myself why is the Church important to me? I hope the answers I came up with might be helpful to you.

I consider myself very blessed in that I was brought up as a Christian. As far back into my childhood as I can remember, both my parents said prayers with me when I was put to bed. Putting a child to bed is a very important expression of your love for your child. So is prayer. If parents love their children, they need to pray for them from the time they are born, to pray with them as they grow up, and, when they are old enough, to teach them to pray for themselves. There is nothing difficult about praying. It is just talking to God. You can tell Him anything in any words. If it helps you, you can read prayers written by other people, but there is no need to. You may like to kneel or to sit quietly or to stand, but what really matters is that, wherever you are, whatever words you use, whatever posture you adopt, you open yourself to God.

My grandmother taught me that I could pray anywhere because God is everywhere. Whatever problem I might have to face, God would always be there and I only had to pray. She even taught me a song which some of you many know:

*A little talk with Jesus makes it right all, right, A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right,
In trials of every kind, praise God I always find, That a little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right,*

The same grandmother also taught me a great deal of the Bible while I was still a young child. Not only is the Bible full of good stories; it teaches you how to cope with life. The Bible is a wonderful guide as to how to live your life. The Bible teaches you about God. Children ought to be brought up, not only to pray, but to know their bibles. Most bookshops sell bibles and there are some very good children’s bibles available especially from Christian bookshops and places like the gift shop at Aylesford Priory.

I don’t know if adults still do this for children (maybe not if they spend all their time indoors and go everywhere in the car) but in my childhood grown ups used to point out to me the wonders of nature, the beauty of the countryside, not only as things that are good in themselves, but also as testimonies to the glory of the God Who made everything that is. When I got older and more sophisticated, I learnt to see God in the city as well. You can deduce the existence of God from a single grain of sand. Well, there are millions of grains of sand in a concrete wall. Every human being is made in the image of God. So there are tens of thousands of reflections of God in the faces of the crowd at the Cup Final. (Incidentally, that is another reason why it is so terrible to see human faces disfigured by anger, malice or pain.)

So learn to pray always and everywhere. Know the Bible. Look for God in the world around you. Teach your children to do the same. But this is not enough. When I was a child, I was again blessed in that I was taken to Church and sent to Sunday School. Faith is a shared thing. If we are Christians, we are members of the Church, members of one another. Our personal prayer life, our understanding of the Bible, our recognition of God in the world around us, are sustained by our sharing with other people in public worship, by our membership of God’s Church. In Sunday School, teachers and pupils learn together, extending what they learn of God in the family. In Church services, we pray together with other people in fellowship. Our faith is informed and sustained by the public reading of the Bible and by the sermon. God acts in our lives when we take part in the Sacraments – Baptism & Holy Communion. It is good to pray on your own, to study the Bible and to recognise the awesomeness of God in the natural world, but all these things are incomplete and insufficient if they are not done in the context of your belonging to God’s Church.

Until I was nearly nine, I was taken by my mother to the family service once a month at St Nicholas’ Church of England Church in Southfleet in the morning and by my grandmother to the evening service at the Congregational Church. So I was privileged to share with different congregations in two entirely different styles of worship with different theological emphases. When I was nine, we moved to Wigmore. At St Matthew’s Church, I learnt the importance of Sunday Communion. Jesus told us to do this in remembrance

of Him and Christian people, I believe, have a sacred duty to meet around the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day for the Lord's Supper. I was confirmed while I was at St Matthew's and so became a communicant member of the Church myself.

I also joined the youth club. Belonging to a church is about friendship, having fun together, being there for one another. And there is giving back. God has given us everything we have: our money, our possessions, our time, our talents, even our life itself. I had always been taught the biblical principle of tithing, the idea that we offer back to God a substantial proportion of what He gives us (say a tenth) of our money, our possessions, our time, our talents. We offer a generous proportion of what we have as a token that we offer our whole lives back to God *as a living sacrifice*. As a teenager, as part of giving back, I taught in Sunday School, which meant I had to attend the 8.00 Holy Communion service and I learnt something of the value of quiet contemplative worship. I also joined a Pentecostal youth club which gave me warm fellowship, a solid grounding in Scripture and the possibility of seeking gifts like speaking in tongues, gifts, which after much prayer, I decided were not for me.

I was very happy at St Matthew's, but, at 18, I left home and went to medical school in London. I went to the local church in W1 and it wasn't what I was used to. The services were different. I didn't know anyone. It would have been easy to drop out of church life, but, thank God, I didn't. I asked myself whether I really loved Jesus or the church of St Matthew, Wigmore? Well, I did love my old church, but, as I loved Jesus even more, I had to join the new one – even though it was not what I was used to and not entirely what I liked. As it happened, I got involved with a number of Christian groups in and around the medical school and the hospital, as well as visiting quite a few London churches of different traditions and denominations. I learnt a lot from the sermons at All Souls, Langham Place, our parish church, and, in the hospital chapel, I began to discover the blessing of attending Holy Communion on weekdays in addition to Sundays. I developed a lot spiritually through experiencing new and different churches and Christian groups. Towards the end of my two years at the Middlesex Hospital, it became apparent that the doors to a medical career were closing, and a sense that I had always had, at least as a possibility, that God was calling me to ordained ministry became very strong. God does have plans for our lives and it is up to us to cooperate with Him. So, having consulted with very many Christian friends and been encouraged by the Church, I started a new course at a different college in Theology.

It was while I was at King's London, that my appreciation of Holy Communion truly deepened. I remember kneeling in St Paul's Church Herne Hill, almost overwhelmed by the implication of the words of the old prayer *that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us*. To think, the Son of God dwelling in me (and in you, if you too have faith in Him) and me (and you if you want) dwelling for ever in God. It is amazing.

It was also at King's, I think, that I came to appreciate the true nature of the Church. We are not a group of individuals who come once a week for our spiritual fix, to meet our Christian friends, to ask for God's help in some emergency, to have a good sing, to hear a sermon and to make our individual Communion. Coming to church once a week isn't like going down the pub. You know. You enjoy a couple of beers. You like the ambience. You meet your mates, chat up the bar maid. But perhaps the time comes when you get out of the habit of going to the pub. You grow out of wanting to drink a lot of alcohol. Your mates find another pub or a club to go to. You get married, have children, take a new job. You don't like the bands the new landlord hires. You object to the smoking ban. They start employing ugly barmaids. So you drift away from your local. But the Church is something different. If we are Christians, we are members of the Church, members of one another. We are sustained by our belonging and our faith will fade if we cut ourselves off from our fellow Christians and the worshipping community. The Church also needs us. We are each one unique. We all have different opportunities. We all have different talents. The Church is that much the worse off for every member who leaves. If we do not belong to a church, to the Church of God, we are letting ourselves down and we are letting God's Church down. I think we are even letting God down. There used to be a sign outside the church opposite Gillingham Bus Depot. *UR missing from this ch.ch.!* You see the point.

And finally, we have to appreciate that the church is not merely the church we go to, not merely the Church in Cuxton or Halling. All these little local churches are part of the worldwide church, with the diocese, with the Church of England, with the Anglican Communion, with churches of other denominations, with the church in every nation and the saints in Heaven. We are not to forget that they depend on our fellowship and we depend on theirs.

It matters that the people of England come back to the Church because the Church needs the people and the people need God's Church. Roger.



Tail Piece by Max, the Rectory Spaniel.

Dog owners have a better cardiovascular health than other people. Walking us is the only exercise many people take. Stroking us reduces stress levels and therefore blood pressure. Children brought up with pets are less likely to get asthma and miss fewer days at school through ill health than other children. Apparently we stimulate their immune systems. A recent survey even suggests that pet owners are less likely than other people to develop cancer. Doesn't it make a nice change when the healthy option is also the fun option?