

Services October 2022

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29 th September Michaelmas		9.30 Holy Communion Halling 11.00 Holy Communion Cuxton Followed by bring & share lunch.	Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 Matthew 18 vv 1-10 p985
2 nd October Trinity 16 Harvest Festival		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Deuteronomy 26 vv 1-11 p203 Revelation 14 vv 14-18 p1243 John 6 vv 25-35 p1070
9 th October Trinity 17 Vaughan Williams Centenary		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	II Chronicles 5 vv 1-14 p439 Revelation 4 vv 1-11 p1236 Luke 2 vv 8-14 p1027
16 th October Trinity 18		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Jeremiah 31 vv 27-34 p793 II Timothy 3 v14 – 4 v5 p1197 Luke 18 vv 1-8 p1052
23 rd October Trinity 19		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Joel 2 vv 23-32 p913 II Timothy 4 vv 6-18 p1197 Luke 18 vv 9-14 p1052
30 th October Fourth Before Advent All Saints Trinity 20		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Daniel 7 vv 1-18 p892 Ephesians 1 vv 11-23 p1173 Luke 6 vv 20-31 p1034
Wednesday 2 nd November All Souls		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling.	Revelation 7 vv 2-17 p1238 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968
Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays @ Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays Halling	
5th October	Amos 4 vv 1-13 Mark 10 vv 35-45	6th October	Amos 5 vv 1-17 Mark 10 vv 46-52
12th October	Amos 9 vv 1-15 Mark 12 vv 13-27	13th October	Micah 1 vv 1-16 Mark 12 vv 28-34
19th October	Micah 6 vv 1-16 Mark 14 vv 1-11	20th October	Micah 7 vv 1-7 Mark 14 vv 12-25
26th October	Habakkuk 1 vv 1-17 Mark 15 vv 1-5	27th October	Habakkuk 2 vv 1-20 Mark 15 vv 16-32
2nd November All Souls	Revelation 7 vv 2-17 Matthew 5 vv 1-12	3rd November	Malachi 2 vv 1-16 Luke 15 vv 11-32

Copy Date October Magazine 9th September 8.30 am Rectory

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Psalm 46: GOD is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved : and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge. O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord : what destruction he hath brought upon the earth. He maketh wars to cease in all the world : he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still then, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

GOD our heavenly Father, who by thy gracious providence dost cause the former and the latter rain to descend upon the earth, that it may bring forth fruit for the use of man; We give thee humble thanks that it hath pleased thee, in our great necessity, to send us at the last a joyful rain upon thine inheritance, and to refresh it when it was dry, to the great comfort of us thy unworthy servants, and to the glory of thy holy Name; through thy mercies in Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Tideway Folk Group Charity Concert

In aid of the Cancer Research UK Charity

Saturday, 1st October 2022, 7.00pm

Refreshments available after the concert.

St Michael & All Angels' Parish Church, Rochester Road (A228), Cuxton, Kent ME2 1AF

Tideway Folk Group warmly invites you to this evening of musical entertainment, together with singer Dawn Gates, in aid of Cancer Research UK - a charity close to their hearts. Many of us know people affected by cancer - please help us to help more people come through.

Entrance to the concert is free. Book your places at <https://tideway-cuxton.eventbrite.com> Donations to Cancer Research UK can be made at the concert or online any time by going to <https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org> and searching for 'Tideway Charity Concerts'. Bookings may also be made by personal application to John Bogg or other members of the group or the Rector & Churchwardens.

Michaelmas

We shall celebrate our Patronal Festival at Cuxton this year on 29th September with a service of Holy Communion at 11.00, followed by a bring and share lunch in the church hall.

We shall also hold our usual Thursday morning service of Holy Communion at Halling at 9.30.

Harvest Blessings

Poverty and Hope 2022 Appeal

Help tackle poverty around the world: donate to the Diocese's Poverty and Hope Appeal 2022. For four decades, the Diocese of Rochester's Poverty and Hope Appeal, has allowed us to play our part in tackling the causes and effects of poverty in different parts of the world. Last year, over £20,000 was raised - thank you. Since it was first launched 45 years ago, it has worked in partnership with three major Christian charities to provide bridges across the world between donors in Rochester and the left behind in some of the poorest countries. In a new development this year, projects in our three African companion dioceses will also be supported to share God's blessings. Your donations will go into planned programmes in five countries.

Eleven per cent of the population of Bangladesh belongs to a minority community and faces extreme poverty and discrimination. The Christian Aid 'Empowering Left-Behind Minority Communities' project will enable these communities to find opportunities, use their voices, claim their rights and be involved in the development process of Bangladesh. Inequalities in Brazil are among the worst in the world. Florianopolis, in the south, has many favelas (slums), which are dominated by drugs and gangs and house much of the city's population. Through CMS partners, Andy and Kati Walsh, this project is about engaging subcultures on the fringes including impoverished migrant communities and people that get caught in the cycle of crime just to survive. Seventy per cent of Myanmar's population lives in rural areas. In remote places, children and young people often have to travel in small boats and walk or cycle for hours to reach schools or live in boarding houses away from their families. The USPG programme aims to raise the standard of teaching, increase school attendance, and strengthen Church and community leadership in education. The Dioceses of Mpwapa and Kondoa are located in the central part of Tanzania, a challenging but beautiful environment of mountains and semi-arid plains. Most people live as subsistence farmers. Donations will be used to empower rural communities with water harvesting projects, irrigation systems and

safe drinking water. In Harare Diocese in Zimbabwe funding will help the rural parishes to towards self-sufficiency through small diversification projects which can provide both food and income, such as fish farming and bee-keeping.

Launching this year's Poverty and Hope Appeal, Bishop Simon says, "Every gift you make will go to these initiatives, relieving poverty and the fear that stalks it. God in Christ loves to show his generosity. And he does this through us. We are his hands and his feet. And we are also his money."

To donate visit: www.rochester.anglican.org/everyday-faith/ourfaithinaction/poverty-and-hope-appeal/ or make use of the envelopes which will be available in church on Harvest Festival (2nd October) and may be returned at any time up to Christmas. Please return to church or Finance Team Rochester Diocese, St Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1SL. (The address on the envelopes is incorrect.) Cheques should be payable "Rochester DBF" with "Poverty & Hope" on the back.

Food Bank

Also at our Harvest Festival services, we shall be collecting goods for the Medway Food Bank – tinned and packeted goods well inside their use by dates and, please, for now no more tins of beans or tinned soup. There is more information about the Food Bank, including how to give money (which is also much needed) at <https://medway.foodbank.org.uk>

Harvest Barbecue

Sunday 2nd October

1.00 pm

Church Hall

All Welcome



As It Were a Tale That is Told

It's about forty years ago that I first realised that I was getting old. I saw a newspaper advertisement for metropolitan police officers and I realised that I was too old to apply. Not that I have ever had an ambition to serve in the constabulary, but it hit me that, with advancing years and decisions already taken, an increasing number of options were no longer available to me. Doors were closing. However, the closing of one door is sometimes the opening of another. So, don't despair. When I left school, I thought I was going to be a doctor and had two years medical training. Yet here I am, doing what I believe was always God's Will for my life. I think my scientific and medical background were part of the preparation He intended for me to serve as a minister of religion.

We mostly think of growing older in terms of physical changes. I can't say that I have noticed many abrupt changes. My hair is pretty much the shade it has always been, but, I've known for something like twenty years that, were I to grow a

beard, it would have a great deal of white in it. Maybe, I'd be more respected for my wisdom if I were a greybeard?

I don't feel feeble than I used to, but I must be. Back in the Summer of 1976, for several weeks I cycled between Wigmore and Dartford to work and in 1977 I did the same between Willesden Green and the Tower of London. Then, for complicated reasons with which I won't bore you, I taught in Sunday School in East Dulwich while living in Crouch End. I don't think I could cycle those distances daily now.

I used to come in from a busy day thinking that I deserved a good night out. Now, if I've worked hard, I think I deserve a good night in. The Reverend Richard Coles was a rock star before he was ordained. He said that, when he was younger, his idea of a good night was partying into the early hours of the morning. Now a good night was when a meeting was cancelled.

Clergy do tend to find meetings difficult. I used to blame that on difficult people. I still do. Only I

now realise that I am one of the most difficult people around the table. I suppose that amount of self-awareness is a measure of growing maturity.

A few years ago I found that I could no longer run and walking began to get difficult as my knees became increasingly painful. I think there were two things that made a difference. I decided to undertake the Friends of Kent Churches cycle ride in any case and to take it easy, never straying too far from the railway in case I needed to come back by train! As it happened, the farther I went, the easier it got and I made it as far as Allhallows, which hasn't had a station since 1961. So I'd missed the last train and had to cycle back anyway. I find that cycling really helps. Also, at the time my knees really played up, I was under a lot of stress which has since dissipated thanks to God and the kindness of family, friends and parishioners. There is a big psychological effect even in diseases so obviously physical as osteoarthritis. The upshot of it all is that I have no trouble walking now and even take Tommy out daily doing what I call running – an ungainly gait which would not win any prizes, but we enjoy it.

The COVID lockdown and other factors inspired me to take up a bit more exercise to the point at which I wondered how many press ups I can now manage. The answer is a round number less than one!

It's not so much physical or mental changes that make me feel my age as the passage of time itself, marked out by what I remember and young people don't – things which seem like yesterday to me and archaeology to them. Like most older people, I do worry about getting forgetful and doing silly things like putting the tealeaves in the coffee jar or switching off the electric kettle when the kettle on the gas starts whistling. I have to remind myself that all my life I've done things like this, losing keys, glasses and what have you. In the old peoples' home once, I lost my glasses and it turned out that one of the old people had mistakenly picked them up. The matron said that I was lucky that it wasn't my teeth!

At a children's service, when lighting the candles, they were amazed to see me strike fire from a stick. Nobody smokes or has open fires these days. So they'd never seen matches.

There came a time when John Wayne jokes no longer made sense in school assemblies. A young couple I visited regarding a christening were surprised when I told them that the flats in Vicarage Road used to be the school. It seems like yesterday to me that the new building in Howlsmere Close opened but it was before the parents I was talking to were even born!

Morning Has Broken is a popular wedding hymn and I sometimes mention that it was recorded by Cat Stevens and that he subsequently converted to Islam and changed his name to Yusuf Islam. When I meet blank looks at this, I say, "You know, like Cassius Clay became a Muslim and changed his name to Mohammed Ali", which, to my astonishment, produces even blanker looks. I wonder whether Yusuf Islam regrets being famous for his arrangement of a Christian hymn.

Morning has broken like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.

Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

To Christians, the Word through Whom all things were made is Jesus, although we might mean God's spoken Word as in *Let there be light* recorded in His written Word, the Bible. I suppose Stevens might interpret it as God's spoken Word or even as the Quran. Some Muslims come close to personifying the Quran almost as we Christians recognise Jesus as a divine person, but most Muslims regard this as dangerously close to undermining the truth that God is one.

Things I still think of as new inventions have become necessities of life which younger people can't imagine living without. Recently, a delivery company claimed (untruthfully) that I was out when they tried to deliver my parcel. I was to collect it from a shop in Strood. When I got to the shop, having cycled up an exceedingly long steep hill on a very hot day, the man wouldn't let me have it because I hadn't got the QR code on my mobile 'phone, which I haven't got. When I tell this story to older people, they are astonished that you can't pick up a parcel if you don't have a mobile. When I tell younger people, they are astonished that I don't have a mobile! One begins to feel like an alien in a strange land in the place where one has lived for more than half one's life.

Anyway, the real point is that all our lives are in God's Hand whatever stage in them we are at and we can always trust Him. *So teach us to number*

our days: that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Roger.

Blythswood Shoeboxes

Your kindness and generosity make such a difference at Christmas, receiving a shoebox brings so much joy. We will soon be looking ahead to our Shoe Box Appeal 2022, helping vulnerable communities across Eastern Europe. We trust we will be able to deliver boxes to Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. We shall be collecting these at our services on 6th November. Standard size shoeboxes please. Top priority contents are toothbrush & paste, hat, scarf & gloves, soap, underwear, socks, small toy & sweets, but no chocolate please, no other food, and no toy soldiers or weapons or stuffed toys. Also useful are flannel, shampoo or shower gel, make up, shaving cream & razor, brush, comb, toiletries, sanitary products & stationery, candles, household products and small tools such as screwdrivers or pliers. Leaflets will be available in church. Please add a donation towards the cost of transport if you can. Boxes should be labelled girl, boy, man, woman, etc..

St John's Draw (August): £10 each Mr S Head (8) & Mr S Tower (146).

Church Hall Draw (September): 1st Mrs Cheesmer, 2nd Mr Bogg, 3rd Mrs Gates.

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. Have you ever wanted to be a bird? It can be quite magnificent, soaring effortlessly above all the activity below and observing the changing season on different landscapes. It can also be perilous, dodging predators and constantly seeking food. We note the changing seasons but, apart from seeking refuge in a storm, and shade in a heat wave, we disregard the day-to-day vagaries of the weather.

Can you imagine going food-shopping from dawn to dusk every single day? We cannot be too selective and the winter is hard. So please remember all birds as we move inexorably towards that season once again. We have had a glorious summer haven't we. I hope for a mild winter but we have a nest site ready and close to supplies. If it's very cold we can ruffle our feathers and warm the air around us. It is similar to you wearing several layers of clothing to keep warm.

Now here's a puzzle. We've come across these squares of earth in Six Acre Wood. These squares do seem strange. Have we had an alien invasion? Does anyone know owt about them? They are about 7"x7" and perhaps 1 ½ inches deep and are located on the path which passes the Cuxton/Halling boundary stone.. The pictures won't come out in the paper edition, but they will form an appendix to the email & online versions.

The swifts are gathering for their journey south. Enjoy autumn. Coo coo.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

14th August

21st August

4th September

Matthew-Junior Wilson

Theo Jacob Malt

Sophia Rose Varela

High Street

Walderslade

Limeburners Drive

All Souls Services

On the 2nd November each year, the Church commemorates the Festival of All Souls. It is a day specially set aside to remember the faithful departed. In the words of the Creed, we believe in *the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body*.

In other words, we believe that we can trust God for those whom we love but see no longer. Death is not the end, but a new beginning, a new phase of existence. Our love for them and their love for us continues within the love of God. The things we have done wrong on earth can be forgiven if we ask God in Christ.

Our personality, our soul, is not extinguished by death, but finds its fulfilment in God's love. These are the kinds of thoughts to remember when we think about our loved ones who have died.

In this parish, we remember by name on All Souls Day all those whose names are in the Books of Remembrance, those whose funerals we have arranged in the last year and any other individuals we are asked to commemorate.

The All Souls services this year are on Wednesday 2nd November at 9.30 am at St Michael & All Angels' Church Cuxton and 11.00 am at St John the Baptist's Church Halling. At both services we remember all those whose funerals we have taken in this last year and people from the parish we have heard about. If you or other members of your family or friends would like to be present at either service, you would be most welcome. If there are other names you would like remembered, please give them in writing to the Rector.

Thinking Seriously

"But church services, it is sometimes urged, are valuable because they provide an inspiration for Christian living during the six days ahead. That may often indeed be true, but only if the worshipper is not primarily seeking that inspiration, and is engaged on some less self-regarding activity... Worship is the characteristic activity of Heaven and of all those whom God has called to their places there. A justification of worship on the grounds that it makes man more at home in this world, even if on the highest plane, is bound not only to fail, but to deceive." (Colin Dunlop, *Anglican Public Worship*.)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND THE ENGLISH HYMNAL

In this, the 150th anniversary of composer Ralph Vaughan Williams' birth, the Royal School of Church Music has asked parish churches to reflect on the first publication of the English Hymnal and the contribution made by RVW as its musical editor. The brainchild of the Revd Percy Dearmer, who believed that music should be at the core of Christian worship, his focus was that music should uplift the soul, enhance the worship and to remove the "sentimentality" of 19th century church hymnody and to weed out "dyed-in-the-wool Victoriana".

Dearmer first met RVW at the latter's home. As RVW later recalled: *I was sitting in my study in Barton Street, Westminster, when a cab drove up to the door and 'Mr Dearmer' was announced. I knew his name vaguely as a parson who invited tramps to sleep in his drawing-room; but he had not come to see me about tramps. He went straight to the point and asked me to edit the music of a hymn book.* This was the recollection the composer remembered as the commencement of his involvement with a hymnal which would "overturn Victorian hymnody's threadbare reputation and become one of the finest collection of hymns and hymn tunes ever assembled" widely used the world over and in print for over one hundred years.

RVW's visitor was Percy Dearmer (1867-1936) who had been appointed in 1901 vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill, in London. He was devoted to sound liturgical practices and saw music and hymn singing as integral to worship, but was unhappy with the standard of the hundreds of hymns in circulation (about 400,000) in 1890. The music of the British Isles, and in England specifically, was in such a state that it was known in musical circles world-wide as "The Land Without Music". Why was this?

The English Civil War and Commonwealth 1642 - 1660 brought many changes and music became reviled by the establishment. Centres of musical excellence, such as cathedral libraries, were closed and the contents destroyed. Choirs were disbanded and much of their music disappeared or was ripped asunder, and only after the restoration in 1660 was the difficult job of rescuing the tradition begun after years of neglect. The country never recovered the glory days of 1610-41 and of Henry Purcell and Thomas Tallis. After them there were no great composers of secular or sacred music until perhaps Edward Elgar. Some say, "What

about George Frideric Handel?" but he was really an exponent of the German tradition which had fundamental differences to English style. Welsh music of the chapels was largely untouched because their singing traditions were embedded in their way of life, and the rurality of the Irish and Scots had similar effects.

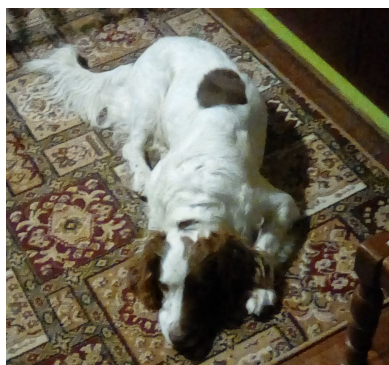
The Anglican Church had never promoted an official book of hymns but by default Hymns Ancient and Modern had been revised into just that in 1904 by the organist of Rochester Cathedral, Bertram Luard-Selby. This publication apparently failed because of alterations to texts and by discarding well-known good tunes. This encouraged Dearmer and some like-minded churchmen to plan a supplement called "Church Hymns", which in turn became a large-scale publishing project with Oxford University Press containing 700 hymns with matching tunes with a title change to The English Hymnal, "a collection of the best hymns in the English language", which was offered as a companion to the Book of Common Prayer.

Vaughan Williams, aged 32 in 1904, was at the beginning of his composing career but as an organist at St Barnabas, South Lambeth he had an idea of good and bad church music. Dearmer had heard of RVW from folk song collector Cecil Sharp and had decided that an all-round, practical musician was what he needed for a music editor of his new hymnbook.

RVW was born in 1872 to Arthur Vaughan Williams, vicar of All Saints', Down Ampney and his wife Margaret who was the third daughter to Josiah Wedgwood III and Caroline Darwin – so he could name Wedgwood the famous Stoke-on-Trent potter and the evolutionary biologist Charles Darwin as ancestors. The Wedgwood family had bought Leith Hill Place near Dorking, Surrey and it was here that the very young Ralph came to live after his father died suddenly. His mother's sister, Aunt Sophie, gave him early music lessons. He went to preparatory school at Rottingdean and then to Charterhouse where he organised concerts and learnt to play the viola, piano and organ. He entered the Royal College of Music in 1890 where he studied with Sir Hubert Parry (composer of 'Jerusalem') whose music Ralph described as 'peculiarly English' which awakened a consciousness of the nationalistic composer in him which would manifest itself later. He went up to Trinity College, Cambridge where his cousin Ralph Wedgwood and many Darwin relations were also studying and he made a wide circle of friends. He took his B.Mus in 1894 and History degree a year later then returned to the Royal College of Music where he met and made friends with Gustav Holst, later composer of The Planets Suite, who was "the greatest influence on my music", and their friendship was to last until Holst's death in 1934. The pair walked the countryside together listening to the sounds of nature which both filtered into their music. Ralph wrote songs for voice and piano such as 'Linden Lea' and 'Bushes and Briars' and his discovery of the English folk song had a very important impact on his style of composing and his construction of melodious hymn tunes. He studied the works of Tudor and Elizabethan composers, tuneful, light and full of movement and completely unlike the heavy sounds and stifling style of the European and German genre.

RVW and his English Hymnal committee set about introducing new hymns to join established good hymns. "While trying to include all the good tunes, I did my best to eliminate the bad ones ... my committee however insisted that certain very popular (second-rate) tunes should be retained the compromise was to place these into an appendix at the end which we nicknamed the 'Chamber of Horrors'. Happily, some Victorian composers' hymns were not relegated. 'Love Divine' (Stainer), 'O perfect love' (Barnby), 'For those in peril on the sea' (Dykes) and 'Abide with me (Monk) remained in Division One (of the original edition), whilst others received 'new' tunes or folk melodies – 'He who would valiant be' was fitted to the West Sussex song 'Our Captain cried All Hands' for example. RVW wrote four new hymn tunes for the first edition the most famous of which are the tunes to 'For All the Saints' and 'Come Down, O Love Divine'.

On one of their country hikes, RVW and Gustav Holst arrived for lunch at the Plough Inn, Rusper, West Sussex where a Mr Gorman, a farm labourer aged about 60 from Forest Green was singing the song 'The Ploughboy's Dream' with full gusto and an ale in his hand. Ralph wrote down and possibly recorded the song which is now best known as the melody for the carol 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'. Generally, these melodies are identified in the hymn book as "English Traditional Melody" and there are quite a few of them. Like the hymn tunes in the Welsh tradition, these traditional tunes have memorable and flowing melodies which are easy to sing by congregations and, because of that, they have stood the test of time. Puritanism and its banning of Christmas forced the Christmas carol into the alehouses and homes of labourers only to rise again as popular as ever they were and it's the same with the traditional melodies that RVW and other composers in a new confidently English age used to spark hymnody back into life. The English Hymnal (1906) became very successful in worship along with Songs of Praise (1925) and The Oxford Book of Carols (1928). There is a plethora of hymn books now available for worship today suiting a variety of denominations and styles of divine service within a multitude of different cultures that are on offer. What would Dearmer and Vaughan Williams say about the state of hymnody in the Church of England specifically, or indeed generally, today?



Tommy's Talking Points

Here am I relaxing one evening on the dining room carpet. Usually, I lie in the upstairs hallway at this time, looking out for foxes which, though Master doesn't understand how, I can still discern when it is quite dark. Then I bark and hope he'll let me out to chase them, which he won't.

We enjoyed our Summer. The hot weather is supposed to be bad for dogs, but so long as we have access to shade, fresh air and water, it's fine – provided that we don't over exercise. As someone pointed out to Master, there are plenty of dogs living in countries regularly hotter even than we have been this year. We generally get out twice a day. Because of the drought, there's been no mud and the paths have not been occluded by brambles and nettles. Master too really enjoys being out of doors - running, walking, cycling, reading the paper, whatever - with the sun, or even the rain, on his skin and God's good air flowing around him. Surprisingly, keeping still in the sun can seem more exhausting than keeping moving at a reasonable pace. So we've had some good times, although we have not so far managed to arrange another walk along the Medway Valley. We have stuck to the local woods, Dean & Bush Valleys, occasionally Upper Halling and, even more occasionally, what I really enjoy, up Brockles to the Mausoleum and back round to Whiteleaves. I generally have a good run round Cobham Woods. We've even seen deer, which are apparently quite common there. Master says that it is to my credit that I don't chase deer or farm animals or rabbits. Squirrels I occasionally run after, but it's waste of time. I can't climb trees. I don't even bother with pheasants, though that's what I'm bred for - just foxes, badgers and cats if they come into our garden, but I wouldn't hurt one if I caught it. 10.00 one night I followed a fox and jumped over the wall into Woodhurst Close and a woman took a video and sent it to the dog warden as evidence that I was out of control. (Admittedly, I have scrapped with her dog in the woods in the day time, but even so! I was only out of our garden for two minutes & didn't do anything wrong!)

The days are getting shorter. The light has changed, more golden and autumnal. Master has been getting up a bit later some mornings. He needs his beauty sleep and he is reluctant to get up while it still dark unnecessarily and turn on the light with fuel prices being what they are becoming. There have been a number of tips for energy saving and also staying warm. Here are a few less obvious ones we've heard. It's usually a mistake to turn off your gas central heating and heat just one room with an electric heater. Electricity is so much more expensive than gas that it is cheaper to run your central heating. If you can, turn down or turn off radiators in rooms you don't use. Some people keep the heating on for their pets. Dogs and cats really don't need artificial heat. Their fur keeps them quite warm enough. If you're still cold sleeping with as many blankets as you can manage on your bed, an electric blanket will keep you warm much more cheaply than running the heating all night. Except in very cold weather, it is not necessary to

have the heating come on before you get up or before you come in unless you are old or otherwise vulnerable. Changing to LED light bulbs soon pays for itself. Don't leave appliances on standby. Only shower and wash your clothes when necessary and try not to use a tumble drier to dry them. Wear enough clothes indoors. Cuddle the dog! Master says, *Do prioritise keeping warm and well fed over other expenses.*

I wonder what the Winter will be like? It's not all doom and gloom. We've got one another. God is looking after us. There's Christmas to look forward to. That's celebrating the Birth of Christ and spending time with your loved ones with or without a lot of expensive parties and presents.

It might be just as well we haven't driven anywhere much. Master had to go to an important formal occasion at Leybourne and Mereworth. He decided that, given his age, Mereworth was a bit too far to cycle in the heat, especially given the need to dress properly for the occasion. He also thought the car ought to have a run as it very seldom sees the light of day. He was very pleased that he went to what was a significant event, but his promise that he wouldn't be too long came to little. He blames poor signage. I blame his stupidity. He found himself coming back through West Malling town rather than bypassing it. He therefore turned left off the A20 to go through Leybourne again, but you can no longer go straight from Leybourne to Snodland. Another missing sign resulted in his finding himself on the M20 heading for London and it was only just short of Swanley that he found a way to turn round. It would certainly have been quicker on the bike! He wondered how much petrol is wasted by people getting lost because of the lack of sign posts?

Coming back to our evenings, we very often watch films. He's apt to mutter, quoting whichever of the Ten Commandments the actors are breaking. More often than not, the disastrous things which happen in the movie wouldn't have happened if the people had only behaved themselves properly. But what would be the story if all the characters didn't take the Lord's Name in vain, honoured their parents, were honest, faithful, refrained from violence, were truthful and didn't covet what other people had got and they hadn't? They would do & be all those things if they kept the first two Commandments – to worship the one true God in spirit and in truth. Master says that if people kept the Commandments life on earth would be as the Sabbath is meant to be, a foretaste of Heaven, in which we joyfully find peace in the Presence of God and the company of those whom we love. I expect he's right.

One more thing. Master has discovered a new way to tell how long couples have been married. You can work it out from which of his dogs is in the wedding photographs. We are generally very popular at weddings and christenings and feature in many family albums. Tommy.

Filial Devotion

Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered. Years later, they get back together to discuss the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother for her 90th Birthday. The first said. "I built a big house for our mother." The second said. "I sent her a Mercedes with a driver." The third smiled and said. "I've got you both beat. You know how Mom enjoys the Bible and you know she can't see very well. I sent her a brown parrot that can recite the entire Bible. It took 20 monks in a monastery 12 years to teach him. I had to pledge to contribute \$100,000.00 a year for 10 years, but it was worth it. Mom just has to name the chapter and verse and the parrot will recite it." Soon thereafter, Mom sent out her letters of thanks. "Milton." She wrote the first son. "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house." "Marvin." She wrote to another. "I am too old to travel. I stay home all the time, so I never use the Mercedes. And the driver is so rude!" "Dearest Melvin." She wrote to her third son. "You were the only son to have the good sense to know what your mother likes. That chicken was delicious."

The Oldest Inhabitant

When the new bishop first visited the parish, the rector introduced him to the oldest member of the congregation. "A hundred years old" said the bishop, "And have you worshipped in this church all your life?" "Not yet," came the reply.

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