

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



April 2024

60p

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

Services April 2024			
7 th April Easter 1 / Easter 2		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 & 15 vv 20&21 p71 Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
8 th April The Annunciation Transferred		11.00 Holy Communion Halling (followed by lunch)	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 KJV Luke 1 vv 26—38 KJV
14 th April Easter 2 / 3		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 3 vv 11-19 p1095 Luke 24 vv 36-48 p1062
21 st April Easter 3 / 4		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 7 vv 1-5 & 11-18 p8 Genesis 8 vv 6-18 p9 Genesis 9 vv 8-13 p10 Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076
28 th April Easter 4 / 5		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 22vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 1101 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 @ Cuxton		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 at Halling	
3 rd April	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-35	4 th April	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48
10 th April	Acts 5 vv 17-26 John 3 vv 16-21	11 th April	Acts 5 vv 27-33 John 3 vv 31-36
17 th April	Acts 8 vv 1-8 John 6 vv 35-40	18 th April	Acts 8 vv 26-40 John 6 vv 44-51
24 th April	Acts 12 v24 – 13 v5 John 12 vv 44-50	25 th April St Mark	Ephesians 4 vv 7-16 John 15 vv 1-11
1 st May St Philip & St James	James 1 v 1-12 John 14 vv 1-14	2 nd May S Athanasius	Acts 15 vv 7-21 John 15 vv 9-11

Copy Date April Magazine: 8th March 8.30 am Rectory

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For Diaries

30th March 10.30 Children's Easter Event St John's

1st April 2.00 Easter Egg Hunt St Michael's £2.00

8th April 11.00 St John's Lady Day Holy Communion & Lunch

21st April, 7.00 St Michael's - Concert (local talent) - Cancer Research UK

Sat 27th April 10.00 church Hall: Meeting to choose churchwardens & APCM.

Sat 15 June 3.00 concert St John's

6th July, 7.00 St John's Halling - Peninsula Big Band - CRUK

Meeting to Elect Churchwardens (formerly Vestry Meeting) & Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting

These will take place on Saturday 27th April at 10.00 at the Church Hall Cuxton. If you are already on the Electoral Roll, you need do nothing this year. If not and you would like to be on the Electoral Roll (and are 16 or older, baptized, resident in the parish or a regular worshipper in one of our churches), please speak to Joyce Haselden. You need to be confirmed and a least 21 to be a churchwarden and 16 and confirmed to be on the PCC. Unless you are under 18, you cannot stand for election to the PCC until you have been on the Electoral Roll for at least six months. Please consider prayerfully whether you ought to stand for either of these offices or to be a sidesman.

Faith and Physics

Some years ago, I was cycling to the annual conference of the Science and Religion Forum at Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire when I suffered a puncture at Bexley. I called in the bike shop there in order to get it fixed and the young man who did the job for me expressed the commonly held view that science and religion can't get on because they contradict one another. This is a serious misconception. Science and religion both believe that there is such a thing as truth. They seek different aspects of the truth and they seek the truth in different ways, but they do believe that there is truth to be sought and found, albeit that our understanding of the truth will always be provisional and contingent. The Laws of Nature, the Laws of Science are just as much the Law of God as the Ten Commandments. The Book of Nature and the Bible are complementary revelations of the Truth of God.

I'm mentioning this now, partly because it ties in with my article on free speech, but also because preaching about Noah's Ark recently reminded me of three links between faith and physics.

Before Quantum Physics and Chaos Theory, it was widely believed that the universe behaved like a giant machine, that if you knew enough, everything would be predictable, just as you could calculate how much petrol your car will use to cover a particular distance at a particular velocity over known terrain. Such a model of the universe invited sceptics to believe that there was no room for God in it. Maybe, if there is a God, He constructed the cosmos and set it running, but then He would have no need or opportunity to interfere in the mechanism until, perhaps, the end of all things. He would be like a skilled clockmaker who makes a clock, winds it up and then leaves it alone. Some philosophers went so far as to say, that with such a model of the universe, God is a hypothesis they could do without.

Modern Physics, Quantum Theory and Chaos Theory, indicates that the universe is far more than a huge mechanism which behaves predictably and independently of any observer. There is room for, perhaps a need for, the "Celestial Clockmaker" continually to be Present, sustaining the machine, bringing about certain outcomes which were previously essentially unpredictable. This could be consistent with what the Prayer Book says about God, that He is not only our Creator, but also our Preserver and the Source of all the Blessings of this life.



My second thought concerns what magnets have to teach us about prayer. A bar magnet is surrounded by a magnetic field. If iron filings are scattered in that field, they will align with it. Not only that, each iron filing becomes a mini-magnet. When we pray, we seek to align ourselves with God and, when our wills are aligned with God's Will, by His grace we work with Him to achieve His good purposes for us and for the wider world.

Thirdly, when preaching on Noah's Ark, we'd got to the point when the waters of the Great Flood had abated, Noah and his family and all the animals had disembarked from the Ark, order had been restored and there was to be a fresh start in a cleansed creation. God promises that the chaos will not return. The world will never again be overwhelmed by a cosmic flood. The Laws of Nature, the Laws of Science will persist steadfastly and dependably till the end of time: *While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* And what would be the sign of God's Covenant with His Creation? The rainbow, that astonishingly beautiful product of the Laws of Science which result in a wonderful display of its component colours when white light passes through a prism, whether of water or of glass.

The Lost Organ Gallery of St. Michael's...

The latter half of the 1800s were a time of great social change in Cuxton. Perhaps foreseeing the coming of a potentially larger congregation, Canon Robert Shaw oversaw a restoration and enlargement of our little church of St. Michael, one which had otherwise remained pretty much unchanged since the 16th century. The *Maidstone and Kentish Journal* of February 17th 1868 tells us that:

“...On Weds 12th the Bishop of Rochester re-opened this ancient parish church which for the past nine months has been undergoing a complete restoration and has also been enlarged to meet the requirements of the Parish. The work was ably carried out by Mr. Stump of Brompton, under the skilful directions of the architect Thomas Wyatt Esq. The internal fittings of the church, which are all new, are designed in complete harmony with the architecture of the building which now, as a whole, presents an appearance of great symmetry and beauty...”

The church of St. Michael and All Angels that we see today is largely the one left to us by the renovation overseen by Canon Robert Shaw, but what did the church look like before this? Unfortunately (at least, to the best of my knowledge) church records give very few indications of the changes made at the time, with building plans or financial accounts seemingly lost.

Fortunately there are other sources that allow us to visualise the appearance of the church prior to the mid-1800s. In terms of the church interior, we have two interesting accounts from the first half of the 19th century. One is from a survey of local churches by a Mr. W.P. Griffith in 1841. The other is a newspaper article from the *Maidstone Journal, Rochester and Chatham Journal and Kentish Advertiser* from 1852, describing a visit to St. Michael's by two anonymous correspondents (“A Scuit and A Pict”).

From these accounts, it seems that perhaps the most interesting changes made in the 1860s was the removal of the “organ gallery”. This gallery once occupied the north-western wall of the original nave, where the arch to the bell tower is today. The 1841 survey of St. Michael's (made on September 10th) states:

“...At the west end of nave is a small modern gallery and organ, in front of gallery are sculpted in relief the Royal Arms – Beneath organ gallery is a staircase leading to it.

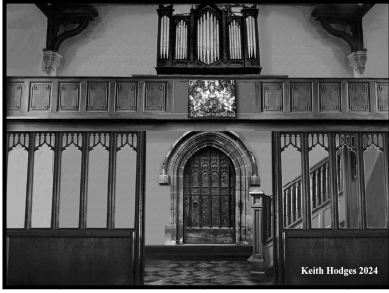
W.P. Griffith calls the gallery “modern” and it is recorded that it was installed at the western end of the nave in 1838, at a cost of £30. It must have been one of Canon Shaw's first innovations at St. Michael's. The “Royal Arms” described may be the Hanoverian ones of George II (1727-60) which now adorn the chancel arch. A rough plan of the gallery (drawn by a Mr. Samuel Siddon of Rochester in 1838) is held by Lambeth Palace library. It shows the gallery dimensions to be 22 feet by seven feet, with the platform some eight feet above the ground, thus occupying the whole north-western wall of the original nave on the back of the bell tower. W.P. Griffith's survey of 1841 goes on to say:

“...A pointed doorway under (the) gallery in (the) west wall leads into the ground part of tower which is very dark and has among other things the Decalogue painted onto boards with Roman cornices and pediments. This part is lighted by two loop hole windows one in (the) west wall, the other in the south wall. A lofty stone staircase with a wooden hand rail leads into the belfry...”

The “west wall” is thus clearly the wall between the tower and the nave. It seems that in 1841, the arch between the tower and the nave that we know today was absent. The “lofty staircase” to the belfry has also long gone and perhaps ran up behind the wall that then existed between the tower and the nave. We have to assume that the subsequent alterations took place as part of Canon Shaw's 1867 renovation. Certainly the coping stonework of the tower arch is similar in nature to the Bath limestone used for the columns of the new nave roof supports.

In terms of the gallery, Mr. Siddons' drawing shows that the organ was sited centrally and the stairway to it was at its eastern end, behind where the font is located today (both the 1841 and 1852 accounts tell us that the font was then located under the arch between the Lady Chapel and the nave).

I've tried to recreate an image of what the gallery might have looked like in 1841, based on the few organ galleries that still exist in other churches, the written descriptions of St. Michael's from the early 19th century and the plan from Lambeth Palace library:



What the northern end of the nave of St. Michael's may have looked like in 1841... Nothing much is known about the organ used in the gallery at St. Michael's. It was almost certainly a barrel organ, similar to the one that used to serve the church of St Peter & St Paul at Trottiscliffe. That instrument was partly rebuilt in 2013 and is now in the Snodland Millennium Museum. It was obtained second-hand from the church of St. John the Baptist at Meopham, being originally made in around 1830 by Theodore C. Bates and Son of Ludgate Hill, London. It was of a type commonly used in village churches at that time, the barrels being "pinned" so that the organ could play tunes simply by turning a handle. Air was supplied to the organ by a foot pedal. The Trottiscliffe instrument once had six interchangeable barrels, each pinned for ten tunes, thus giving a repertoire of sixty hymns.

The organ we know at St. Michael's today is of a far more sophisticated, larger and majestic type and requires a consequentially far greater degree of skill to play. It was installed in 1881 by the firm of Forster & Andrews of Hull during the incumbency of the Reverend Charles Colson, at a cost of £225 (around £23,000 today based on inflation, but which seems to be a huge underestimate given modern considerations). The new organ's inaugural performance was given by the Reverend W.H. Nutter at a full choir evening service on 4th. January 1882. The Rev. Nutter brought the choir from Rochester and after the service gave a short recital.

Over 140 years later, we are indeed very fortunate to still have a regular organist at St. Michael's willing and able to continue the tradition started by the good Rev. Nutter. Mr. Bogg will thank me for not making the obvious joke...
Keith Hodges.



Is Freedom of Speech a Good Thing?

When I was a young man, there could only have been one answer to that question. A book by Robert Hargreaves subtitled *A History of Free Speech* is actually entitled *The First Freedom*. We were brought up to believe that freedom of speech is essential both as a human right and as the key to progress. In history lessons at school, we were taught about the struggle over the centuries against various forms of tyranny which attempted to prevent ordinary people and those who dissented from the powerful in Church and state from expressing their opinions and publishing their ideas. The last Bishop of Rochester to live at Halling (John Fisher) was complicit with the Archbishop of Canterbury (William Warham) in the execution by burning at the stake of Thomas Hitton for Hitton's promotion of the English Bible and liturgy. The next Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas Cranmer) and the next Bishop of Rochester (Nicholas Ridley) were similarly martyred in the following reign but two, that of Queen Mary, for their adherence to Protestantism in the face of the Queen's twisted version of Catholicism. William Laud, in the next

century, (about whom there was an article in last month's magazine) was indefatigable in his attempts to prevent the circulation of books he believed to be in error and treated their authors with great cruelty. When we are careless about reading the Bible and fail to appreciate the privilege of being able to meet together for worship in accordance with our own consciences, we disrespect the sacrifice of those who suffered so much to make these things possible.

It was the same then in most parts of the world, as it still is in many countries today. Those in power censor and suppress ideas with which they do not agree, either because they are afraid for their own position if people knew the truth, or because they believe that the free expression of certain ideas might be dangerous for the nation in general. In those countries where there is freedom of speech, it has been fought for over the centuries and it is always under threat. The authorities can always find a reason for claiming that it is not in the public's interest to know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth or to assert that some ideas are just too dangerous even to be debated. I am proud to say that this country has always been in the forefront of the fight for freedom of speech

and that we got there before most of Europe and even, in some respects, before the United States of America.

In Science lessons, we learned about Galileo's conflict with the hierarchy of the Church in the seventeenth century. Having studied the theory and made observations through the powerful new telescope which he had invented, Galileo concluded that the sun is at the centre of the solar system and that the planets, including the earth, circle around it. Most people in those days, however, believed that the earth was at the centre of the universe. Powerful people in the Church, who didn't understand the Science but who had their own reasons for insisting that the earth is at the centre, persecuted Galileo and forced him to recant. Obviously, Galileo was treated unjustly and Science and other forms of inquiry are unlikely to progress if powerful, but ignorant, people take it on themselves to suppress ideas which challenge their own perspectives.

In Philosophy class, we learned about the death of Socrates. Four hundred years before Christ, Socrates had unsettled the Athenians by challenging them to think about the things they took for granted. Their response was to put him on trial and sentence him to death. Athens, of course, is famous for being a pioneer democracy. Majorities may be no less tyrannical than individuals or elites, whether citizen's assemblies, elected parliaments or social media mobs.

Scripture and Church History supply plenty of examples of people who have stood up for the truth even in the face of persecution and martyrdom. In fact the Greek word for martyr (μαρτυς) initially simply meant witness, but so many faithful witnesses to the Truth of Christ were put to death because of their refusal to be silenced that the word acquired its modern meaning. Jesus Christ Himself is referred to as the faithful witness (μαρτυς).

In the Old Testament, we were encouraged to emulate Daniel, who was prepared to be thrown into a den of lions rather to refrain from praying in public when the king's edict forbade him to do so for a period of thirty days. God saved Daniel from the lions, but the lesson for all of us was that, whether we are miraculously delivered from the

consequences of our witness to the Truth (which we really shouldn't expect) or not, we should faithfully and fearlessly fulfil our duties as the people of God. Daniel's three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced a similar challenge. King Nebuchadnezzar had made a tremendous golden image which everybody had to worship when the band played, but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused. The making and worshipping of images is wrong. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Nebuchadnezzar was very angry with the three lads. Their response only made him more angry still. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace heated to seven times its normal heat and ordered the young men to be thrown into the fire. In the fire with them there appeared another figure described as being *like the Son of God*. Is this an angel? Is this Jesus? In any case, God is with them even in the fiery furnace. On this occasion, they escaped unscathed. But very far from always. If the believer's vocation is to die with Christ, then *nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

In anticipation of what I shall have to say later on, I must tell you the story of what happened last time I told this story in a school assembly. The teacher asked the children whether what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did was in accordance with British values. This surprised me. When I was at school, it was assumed that this was a Christian country and that therefore British values were Christian values, the values displayed in the stories in the Bible and the teaching of the Church. When, as a Scout, I promised to do my duty to God and The Queen, it never occurred to me (or I think to any of us) that there was a potential conflict of interest. Our Christian Queen was God's minister who reigned by His authority. She had received a copy of the Bible at her coronation to guide and support her in all her responsibilities and the coronation itself was conducted in the context of the service of Holy Communion. Will

British values necessarily continue to be Christian values now that a large proportion of our population are adherents of other religions and many of our fellow citizens claim to have no faith in God at all or are indifferent to religious considerations? If not, where does the established Church stand? Could it be that there will come a time when there is an unbearable tension between being head of an increasingly secular state and Supreme Governor of the Church of England? My personal belief is that our current King is showing great wisdom in this matter.

I digress. I was very pleased that the children agreed that the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was in accordance with modern British values because the three lads stood up for what they believed in. It did occur to me, however, that another group of children might have concluded that the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not accord with modern British values. The three young men were disrespectful to the Babylonian religion! It was intolerant and narrow-minded to refuse to participate in the majority culture of the country in which they not only lived, but had also attained high office. If British values are no longer to be derived from the Christian religion, where do they come from?

That was the Old Testament. What about the New? Before His Ascension into Heaven, Jesus told the people who believe in Him that they must tell the whole world about Him. From the very beginning, those faithful followers who did so met opposition and persecution. To take just one example, the apostles Peter and John had healed a crippled man in the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. They then preached Jesus and the authorities tried to stop them doing so. *What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. God comes first. We cannot but speak the things which we*

have seen and heard. That is as true for us as it was for them. The authorities tried imprisoning and beating the apostles. Peter was eventually martyred, along with many others, for his witness to the Truth. Good people don't accept censorship at whatever cost to themselves.

My parents' and teachers' generation had just won the war against Fascism. We were brought up in the knowledge of the wickedness of the Nazis and Fascists who had ruthlessly attempted to crush all forms of dissent as they imposed their reign of evil in their own lands and those which they had conquered. We were also well aware of the similar persecution of dissidents continuing in the Soviet Union and those parts of Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain after the War. We sympathised deeply with the sufferings of the people and we understood that, if the Soviet Empire eventually expanded westward, as seemed far from impossible, we should find ourselves living under a similar regime. Events in Russia today indicate that there is no room for complacency that those days have gone away for ever.

The Church is often blamed for attempting to crush freedom of thought and expression and it has to be admitted that foolish and ignorant wielders of power in Church and state have only too often sought to suppress dissent – whether religious beliefs which they have considered heretical or scientific advances which have challenged their prejudices. On the other hand, to be fair, however, the Christian religion (particularly in its Protestant form perhaps) has done much to promote the rights of the individual to make up his own mind. Most human cultures are conformist. You are a member of a family, a tribe, a craft, a nation, a citizen of an empire and you are expected to be loyal to the clans you belong to. Loyalty is important for social cohesion and, to some extent, it only works if we share a common culture, the same values and beliefs. People who insist on thinking for themselves are disruptive. They are a nuisance. They may be regarded as posing a threat to the integrity and security of society. In Roman times, people were expected to worship the emperor as *my lord and my god*. They didn't have to take it too seriously, so long as they went through the ritual of affirming their allegiance to Roman rule.

Christians were awkward. They would only acknowledge Jesus as *my Lord and my God*, which is one reason why they were persecuted. They posed a threat to the Roman order of things, a challenge which, of course, eventually did transform the empire. For the truly religious person, loyalty to God will always transcend loyalty to friends or family, to colleagues or to the state. Generally speaking, loyalty to God is something which requires us to care for our families and friends, to be responsible colleagues, useful members of our communities and patriotic, but, if there is a clash in values, like St Peter, *we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard* – of course humbly and in love.

The Protestant perspective is that every believer is entitled to make up his or her own mind about what we ought to believe in the light of what the Bible teaches without necessarily submitting to the authority of those who think they know best – a dangerous doctrine, but one which is necessary if the Church is to be preserved from error.

Three reasons for defending freedom of speech. First, it is a basic human right. Secondly, if you forbid people to speak out and they do so anyway, what do you do about them? Unfriend them? Get them sacked from their job? Fine them? Imprison them? Execute them? Make martyrs of them? Thirdly, the person with the minority beliefs might turn out to be right as the people in the examples I have given above mostly did. If we refuse to allow people to challenge our beliefs and practices, there can be no progress.

Freedom of speech cannot be limited to defending people's right to say what I or you or the government regard as acceptable. Freedom of speech has to be freedom to say what is unacceptable to the majority and to the powerful. We can't know whether or not someone is right unless we listen to what he says and test his words. Even if we are sure he must be wrong it is a violation of his rights if we refuse to let him speak and we might look very foolish in the eyes of future generations. "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

How do we test what other people claim to be true? The Enlightenment answer, the scientific

answer, is that we examine what is claimed in the light of a rational consideration of the evidence. From a religious perspective, I would add that we carry out this rational examination of the evidence in the context of prayer and openness to God.

Personally, I was appalled when the Church of England told us that, if we held hustings meetings before elections, we must not allow British National Party candidates to speak and that we might face disciplinary action if we did*. As a child of the Enlightenment, I would allow all the candidates to put forward their programmes and trust the audience to consider wisely what they have to say. But can people be trusted to judge rationally and sensibly? General Synod obviously thought not and maybe they were right. After all, millions were taken in by the likes of Hitler and Mussolini.

To take the example of anti-vaxxers in the CoVid 19 emergency, they were clearly wrong, but did they have all the evidence for and against vaccination and were they capable of understanding the case for and against? No scientist could say that the vaccines were 100% safe. The case is that the odds of saving life are considerably greater if people are vaccinated than if they are not. But most people don't understand odds. If they did, there would be far fewer people doing the lottery each week. Granted that the anti-vaxxers were wrong, should they have been allowed to disseminate their ideas which might have led to more cases of the disease and consequent fatalities than would have been the case if everybody eligible had had the vaccine?

So far so good. However, in the last few years, we have backtracked on the value of freedom of speech. When I was at school, if people upset us with insults, we were told, *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me*. That is obviously not true; words can hurt. But does that mean that people should not be allowed

* If a PCC were to allow a BNP speaker to speak in the church hall, the rector might face action under the egregious Clergy Discipline Measure. When I pointed out to an archdeacon (now a bishop) that the CDM denies the accused the right to a fair and public hearing required by the European Convention on Human Rights, she said that a public hearing was one in which the public were informed of the verdict and the sentence. Josef Stalin would have been proud!

to make offensive remarks, or does it mean that we should be more resilient and put up with (even be prepared to forgive) the hurt. The desire to restrict freedom of speech in order to prevent offence is especially powerful in discussions about gender, gender roles, sexuality, race and religion. Are we now so sure about same sex relationships, trans identity, the roles of men and women, the values of secularism and multiculturalism, etc., that it is unacceptable even to question what those who believe themselves to be on the right side of history now affirm so vehemently? How do we know that they are right? Even if they are right, what right do they have to suppress dissent? How do we reconcile secular, liberal, western values regarding sex and gender with tolerance of and respect for traditional Christian beliefs and for the culture and faith of diverse immigrant communities?

People do say terrible things about Jews, Muslims, people of minority ethnicities, women, disabled people and people whose beliefs and lifestyles they don't approve of. All kinds of people receive vile threats of violence, rape and even murder via the internet and other forms of communication. Cemeteries, religious and cultural buildings are desecrated. People are insulted in the street just for being who they are. Intimidatory posters and chants at demonstrations demonise and terrorise whole peoples.

Soren Kierkegaard: *The tyrant dies and his rule is over, the martyr dies and his rule begins.*

Richard Feynman: *I'd rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned*

At what point do wicked words translate into acts of violence or even terrorism?

We have always had some limits on free speech. We're not allowed to cause dangerous panic by shouting *Fire* in a crowded theatre (unless of course there is a fire). We are not allowed to imperil national security by revealing state secrets. We are not allowed to undermine our constitution with seditious talk. There are laws of slander and libel, though a cynic might think that they benefit only those who can afford legal fees.

But what about misogyny and racism, transphobia and homophobia? Do we need to define these offences so tightly that it is effectively impossible to dissent from what has rapidly become a consensus among those with sufficient power to impose their definitions on the rest of us or do we risk allowing people to say what they think, possibly causing offence, possibly making it more likely that vulnerable people will suffer discrimination and violence?

What are the limits of free speech? Would I say that, while I disapprove of your anti-Semitism, racism, misogyny, insulting language about people who are different and cruel jokes about disabled people, I defend to the death your right to utter them? Roger.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY NEWS



The Children's Society

The Children's Society continues to work to support young people facing huge challenges in their lives. Over the last year they have focused particularly on helping young carers through their #Young Carers Count campaign. As well as practical support, the charity sets up peer support groups so that young people

can feel less alone as they struggle to balance their home and school lives. They even organised a young Carers Festival to give children a chance to have fun, unwind and make new friends who understand their home situation. I am pleased to say that this year's collection for the Children's Society here in Cuxton raised a total of £235.36. This is an excellent result given that there are fewer people collecting than there used to be and most of us are using less cash nowadays. If anyone would like to join us in collecting spare coins (or notes!) in a box in your home, please contact me and I will arrange this for you. It all adds up!

Julia Wells Tel: 01634 727424

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I hope you are all well and enjoying the first colours of early Spring. As I write, winter has returned with frost and biting winds. We shall soon be moving into our summer roost at the very edge of Six-Acre Wood. After the winter there is plenty of nest-building material ...the problem is simply finding twigs that are dry but pliable. Work in slow progress.

It will soon too be your festival of Easter which is a time of much hope. We have a penchant for hot cross buns. Hint hint. Easter falls at the end of March this year. Your clocks will move to summer time and the gardens will be colourful again. Our squabs will be fledged and we will be busy with the new roost and the ever-constant food foraging. Thank you to all of you who put out food for us. Please don't put whole nuts (including peanuts) out for birds between March and September. Fledged birds are at risk of choking from large pieces of hard nuts.

Last year February was an exceptionally dry month. This year it has been exceptionally wet! We notice far fewer dog-walkers in six-acre wood this year so far. The roads and paths are easier to navigate while woodland is a mire. I think a lot of dogs are longing for a good run, rather than plodding up James Road and down Tar Tank Lane.

The foxes are rearing their cubs. We think there must be a small vulpine township between the rectory and the main footpath. There are two young black foxes there as well as the usual brown ones. None of them appear well-fed. One has a pronounced limp and we doubt he finds much to eat. It is a hard time for foxes and badgers, yet still their numbers grow. Now we are spending more time in six-acre wood, we notice more owls, not just at night time. They search for rodents to feed their young. Squirrels seem too big for them.

We continue to collect hair from outside the hairdressers. It is a good lining for nests and roosts. Avians recycle! Do you? Coo coo.

<p>Saturday 30th March 10.30 - 12.00</p> <p>St John's Halling</p> <p>Children's Spring Festival</p> <p>Activities, Craft, Music & Prayer</p>	<p>Monday 1st April 2.00</p> <p>St Michael's Church, Hall & Rectory Grounds</p> <p>Easter Egg Hunt</p> <p>Plus crafts, raffle & refreshments</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£2.00</p>
<p>21st April, 7.00 St Michael's - Concert (local talent) Collection for Cancer Research UK</p>	

New Homes for Old Bibles

If you have any bibles which you no longer require or other religious books, if you hand them in to me or Jack Payne, we can arrange to send them to people in other parts of the world where they are unable to obtain these vital resources for Christian growth.

Church Hall Draw (February): 1st Viv Balsom, 2nd Dawn Gates, 3rd Jan Cheesmer
Church Hall Draw (March): 1st Julia Streets, 2nd Neil Coombes, 3rd Dick Kerkham
St John's Draw (February): £10 each Master Burman (15) & Mrs Mattingly (65)

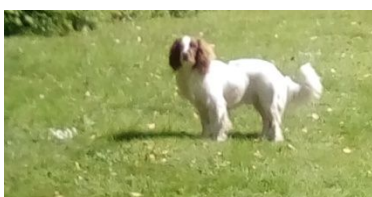
From the Registers

Holy Baptism:

25 th February	Maeve Louise Treacher	Barnham
25 th February	Gabriella Skye Burton	Rochester
3 rd March	Poppy Joyce Rowlinson	The Timbers

Funerals:

14 th February	Malcolm Brian Curnow	Pilgrims Way
23 rd February	Esmond Peter Lingham	formerly of Court Farm
26 th February	Elizabeth Ellen Abery	Pilgrims Way



Tommy's Talking Points

I'm pleased to report that we are nearly back to normal. Master's magic pills are working wonders. Just don't ask him how he is, unless you want his medical history in detail, quite possibly as far back as his late arrival in the maternity ward at West Hill Hospital Dartford. His legs are now working fine and we're back to our daily runs and walks in the woods. There's been a lot of

rain and it's very muddy and slippery – which never has bothered me and worries him less now that his knees are stronger and he can steady himself when he trips. These pills really are amazing. He can squat down on his haunches – something he hasn't been able to do for years.

Now the strength has returned to his arms and he can manage the tin opener, we're able to have ham and salmon for tea again – though not together. He isn't into surf and turf. When he has a traditional '70s pub meal, he likes the prawn cocktail to be served separately from the steak & chips. (Whatever happened to Black Forest gâteau? he wants to know.)

There are plenty of signs of Spring as well as the bird song and the drumming of the woodpeckers I mentioned last month. It wasn't a harsh Winter and things like dead nettle never really died back. We have dead nettle flowers in the garden now. Also, Pulmonaria and primroses. There are a few hyacinths growing from bulbs which he thought he had dug up last year – one in the lawn. There are also daffodils and the Forsythia is coming into its glory. What a lot of spring flowers are yellow! Our crocuses, however, are all purple and there is a story to that. When he had yellow crocuses, the gentleman house sparrows used to strip them of their petals and wave them around to impress the lady house sparrows. So he decided that it would be best only to plant purple and white crocuses. He discovered, however, that if there are no yellow crocuses, the sparrows will take the other colours instead. Sadly, nowadays there are too few house sparrows left for it to matter.

We saw the autonomous vehicle working among the vines in Bush Valley apparently unsupervised. He wondered what we should do if it ran amok and chased after us. He probably needn't have worried. We saw it get stuck at the end of row and have to be rescued by human beings who turned up in a car.

We're hoping soon to meet Enzo for another combined walk. We haven't agreed where to meet yet. If it's in the uncharted wastes of the last unexplored land mass on planet earth – the County of Surrey – the rendezvous may not be accomplished. I'm hoping it is, though, because it is always good to meet new people and explore new places.

As Percy perceives, there have been fewer dogs in the woods in these wet, winter days. With more daylight and hopefully less rain, we are beginning to see a few more of our old friends and some new ones. Master enjoys meeting people and their dogs. For me, it depends on the dog. I always like to be made a fuss of by people, but most dogs I ignore, some are my friends and some are not. It will be good when Summer comes, though every season has its own delights.

Tommy.