

Services May 2023			
7 <sup>th</sup> May Easter 4 / 5 Coronation Weekend	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	James 1 vv 17-21 p1213 John 16 vv 5-15 p1084	
14 <sup>th</sup> May Easter 5 / 6	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 8 v20 – 9 v17 p10 Acts 17 vv 22-31 p1113 John 14 vv 1-21 p1082	
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> May Ascension Day	9.30 Holy Communion Halling	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Mark 16 vv 14-20 p1024	
21 <sup>st</sup> May Sunday After Ascension Easter 7	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 6-14 p1092 John 17 vv 1-26 p1085	
28 <sup>th</sup> May Whit Sunday Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Numbers 11 vv 24-30 p148 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1094 John 7 vv 37-39 p1072	
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am Cuxton		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am Halling	
3 <sup>rd</sup> May	Exodus 33 vv 1-23 Luke 2 vv 41-52	4 <sup>th</sup> May	Exodus 34 vv 1-35 Luke 3 vv 1-14
10 <sup>th</sup> May	Leviticus 25 vv 1-24 Luke 5 vv 1-11	11 <sup>th</sup> May	Numbers 9 vv 15-23 Luke 5 vv 12-26
17 <sup>th</sup> May Rogation Day	Jeremiah 14 vv 1-9 John 6 vv 22-40	18 <sup>th</sup> May Ascension Day	Acts 1 vv 1-11 Mark 16 vv 14-20
24 <sup>th</sup> May	Numbers 22 v36 – 23 v12 Luke 7 vv 11-23	25 <sup>th</sup> May	Numbers 23 vv 13-30 Luke 7 vv 24-35
31 <sup>st</sup> May	Micah 3 vv 1-8 Matthew 11 vv 25-30	1 <sup>st</sup> June	Exodus 35 v30 – 36 v1 Matthew 12-32

Copy Date June Magazine: May 12<sup>th</sup> 8.30 am Rectory

The Rev. Roger Knight, The Rectory, Rochester Road, Cuxton, ME2 1AF, Tel. (01634) 717134 email. roger@cuxtonandhall.org.uk

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Laura MacDonald, 97, Pilgrims Road, North Halling, 01634 245926 lauraannmacdonald@btinternet.com

Church Hall Hire: cuxtonchurchhall@gmail.com.

### Dates

Talk: The Thomas Stephens Charity. Mothers' Union Church Hall 10.45 Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Peninsula Big Band, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 7pm at St Michael's.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 7.30 pm: Caleb Parfect event at St Michael's. (Rev'd Caleb Parfect was a remarkable Rector of Cuxton whose incumbency was during the eighteenth century.)

**Christian Aid**



A Division of The British Council of Churches

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May: Christian Aid Bring & Share Lunch - from 12.00 Church Hall.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June Nativity of St John the Baptist 4.00pm: Tea followed by Evensong @ Halling Church

St John's Draw (March): £5 each Mrs Chidwick (18), Mrs G Mitchell (61) & Mrs Mattingly (65).



### The Coronation

A little while after King Charles' Accession to the throne last September, a radio comedy quiz programme put the following question. Did Charles become King because of who his mother was, because he was proclaimed by the Accession Council, because he was acceptable to parliament, because he was welcomed as monarch by the citizens of the United Kingdom and the other dominions with whom we share a head of state, or was he chosen by God? The answer was "yes" to all five.

How ought a head of state to be appointed? Traditionally, men have become kings (and less often women have become queens) on the hereditary principle. In some ways, this makes obvious sense. Most people want to pass on what they have to their children. A monarch would want to pass his kingdom on to his son. In theory, at least, such a boy would have been prepared for his future responsibilities during his parents' lifetimes (as Charles was). Again in theory, if everybody knows who the heir is, when the time comes, there should be no need for disputes and arguments. Insofar as character and ability are heritable characteristics (and how much this is so is a very debatable point), it would be expected that the son of a good king would also be a good king. History demonstrates that this is often far from the case. The sons of good kings do not always make good kings themselves. Besides, it would appear to be unfair to the vast majority of us who do not have heads of state for parents that we can never get the chance to be king or queen, however virtuous or talented we might be. Neither is it fair to the country as a whole if we cannot have the best person for the job simply because he was born to the wrong parents.

The role of the Accession Council is to avoid disputes about who was the legitimate heir and who is now therefore the lawful king. The formal proclamation informed the public of who is now their sovereign lord and there were also many other proclamations of the beginning of the new reign in towns and villages the length of the country. I attended the one at Halling. I'm not aware that such a proclamation took place at

Cuxton, but I assume that Charles III is our lord here too.

We might take the hereditary principle for granted and assume that it goes back to the Bible, but it isn't as simple as that. We are used to the idea that Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the anointed One. (Messiah is Hebrew and Christ is Greek for the anointed One). Jesus is the son (or great twenty six times over grandson) of King David. The descendants of David reigned in Jerusalem, appointed on the hereditary principle from David's time until the city and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and the principal citizens (including King Jehoiachin) were taken captive to Babylon (fourteen generations). Very few of these kings were good men. Exceptions were Hezekiah and Josiah, who were good kings, but were succeeded by sons who were very far from good. You can't trust the hereditary principle always to identify the best candidates for office.

But we need to go back further, before David became King. After the Israelites had been delivered by God from slavery in Egypt, spent forty years wandering in the wilderness, crossed the River Jordan and occupied the Promised Land, they were governed in an *ad hoc* way by "judges". Generally, these were local men who resolved disputes between neighbours and provided leadership when it was required. Some of the judges – the ones whose names we know – were national leaders, not monarchs, but men (and at least one woman) raised up for a specific purpose. Effectively, the last of these judges was the prophet Samuel. When he was old, he appointed his sons to become judges in his place, but they failed to follow their father's wise example and they corrupted their high office. Also, there was a threat of war with the Ammonites and the Israelites thought that they needed a strong leader to counter it. And, besides, all the other nations had a king; so why shouldn't they? So the Israelites demanded a king of their own.

And Samuel was very angry. He reminded them that God is the King and warned them that a human king would tax them for his personal projects, conscript their sons to fight his wars and take their daughters to be palace servants. When I told this story to a group of junior school children,

one little girl suggested that nothing has changed much since those days. She had a point!

Despite all this, God told Samuel to give the Israelites a king as they had demanded and He directed him to anoint Saul, the son of Kish, to be Israel's first human king. Samuel then called an assembly of the Israelites and Saul was chosen by lot (presumably directed by God) from among the assembled tribes. Having been chosen by God and anointed, Saul was hailed as King of Israel by popular acclaim. He consolidated his position by winning a striking victory over the Ammonites (as it was said by some that Margaret Thatcher's position as prime minister was secured by our victory in the Falklands War).

Saul's desire and expectation was that he would be succeeded by his son Jonathan on the hereditary principle. Jonathan was a fine young man – courageous and honourable – and would probably have made a good king. Despite a good start, however, Saul's reign went very wrong. He fell out with Samuel and he fell out with God. Saul became something of a tyrant. Yet, you can't help feeling sorry for Saul. He just didn't seem to be able to make the right choices and he became more and more frustrated. God told Samuel to anoint the shepherd boy David – *a man after God's own heart* – to be King in Saul's place. The hereditary principle was thus broken. Jonathan cheerfully accepted David as his father's successor and helped him towards that end. Jonathan would probably have been King David's right hand man if he had not been killed in the same battle in which Saul died.

David's son, Solomon, did succeed him to the Throne of Israel and Solomon was a very great King, building the Temple and much else besides, establishing peace and prosperity. Solomon was famous for his wisdom. However, in one important respect, Solomon was unwise. He married many wives from other nations – securing alliances with the countries they came from – and allowed them to worship their pagan gods in Jerusalem. *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.* The result was that, when Solomon died, the Israelites, fed up with paying taxes for

Solomon's grand projects, rebelled against having his son, Rehoboam, to succeed him. The hereditary principle was challenged again and the nation split into two. The southern kingdom, thenceforth usually known as Judah, accepted Rehoboam as their King and his descendants continued to be rulers in Jerusalem until the Babylonian Captivity. But the North – afterwards called Israel, Ephraim or Samaria – chose Jeroboam, the son of one of Solomon's servants, to be their King. The hereditary principle subsequently was relatively weak in the Northern Kingdom and there were several coups against reigning monarchs in the centuries following the accession of Jeroboam.

Solomon reinforced diplomatic alliances by marrying pagan women who seduced him into compromising his faith in the LORD. Later on in the story, a mighty Syrian general called Naaman was cured by Elisha, a prophet of Israel, of what the traditional versions of the Bible call leprosy. He was so grateful and impressed that he decided to worship the LORD, the God of Israel (the only true God), but he then asked pardon for the times when he would have to accompany the King of Syria into the temple of the Syrian god Rimmon and worship him. Do you think that heads of state, politicians and high officials should be prepared to compromise their religious principles in order to remain in their posts and to carry out the duties of government, which is sometimes a murky business? This has become relevant recently with the candidacy of Kate Forbes, a Christian with traditional Christian beliefs, for the post of leader of the SNP and, therefore, First Minister of Scotland, a country in which the majority of citizens seem to have rejected traditional Christian teaching on matters of gender, sex and marriage.

The first thing that King Charles had to do on his accession was to promise to maintain and preserve the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government in Scotland. In England and the rest of the world, our sovereign is an episcopalian, belonging to the Church of England, which believes that bishops are extremely important for the well-being of the Church, but, in Scotland, he has to support the establishment of the Presbyterian Church, which believes that there is no biblical basis for the office of bishop as distinct

from elder or presbyter. I don't know if this troubles Charles' conscience, but he couldn't be King of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland if he were unable to square this circle. This probably seems a minor issue to most people today, but it was one of the disputes which fuelled the Civil War which led to our first King Charles being beheaded at Whitehall in 1649.

Belgium briefly became a republic in April 1990 when King Baudouin I abdicated for a day because he couldn't in conscience sign an act of parliament permitting abortion.

God was the King of Israel. The human King of Israel, sometimes known as the son of God, reigned as God's viceroy. He was supposed to be familiar with the Law of God. He was supposed to have his own copy of the Law and to read it all the days of his life. He was to be subject to the Law himself and to govern the nation in accordance with God's Law. This contrasts with the rulers of many countries who think that they can do as they like, are answerable to no-one and can use the powers which go with their office for their own benefit. King Ahab of Israel coveted the vineyard of his neighbour Naboth and attempted to purchase it compulsorily. Naboth exercised his legal right to refuse the King and Ahab sulked. But Ahab's wife, Queen Jezebel, was the daughter of the King of Tyre. Jezebel's father would never have allowed a commoner to stand in his way or worried about legal niceties. Jezebel had Naboth tried on trumped up charges and executed by a kangaroo court. Then she told Ahab to take possession of Naboth's Vineyard – which he did, an act for which they were both punished by God.

[I had an article published once on compulsory purchase in modern Britain in the light of the story of Naboth's Vineyard. We allow compulsory purchase (with fair compensation) if the land is needed for the common good, eg to build a hospital or a school or a much needed new road. But is compulsory purchase legitimate if the main purpose is to benefit powerful individuals or corporations?]

Christian countries like England effectively adopted the Old Testament model of kingship.

The King is God's viceroy. He reigns with God's authority. His task is to govern in accordance with God's Law, establishing peace and justice and ensuring the welfare of his subjects. The coronation takes place in a service of Holy Communion. The King is given a bible. He is anointed with oil. Hence the prayer: *ALMIGHTY God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and power infinite: Have mercy upon the whole Church; and so rule the heart of thy chosen servant CHARLES, our King and Governor, that he (knowing whose minister[servant] he is) may above all things seek thy honour and glory; and that we, and all his subjects (duly considering whose authority he hath) may faithfully serve, honour, and humbly obey him, in thee, and for thee, according to thy blessed Word and ordinance; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

Now that the Head of State's role has been largely detached from the business of government, do we think that the prime minister, other ministers of the crown and parliament should govern and legislate on these same Christian principles? If we don't think so, it seems to me that we lack faith in the goodness and universal applicability of God's Law, but, if we do think so, we have to consider that many ministers and members of parliament are not Christians and we would surely not want to return to the days when only Christians (or even only members of the Church of England) were allowed to hold high office.

In New Testament times, there was no King of Israel (except briefly the King of the Jews Who hung on the Cross). Israel and much of the rest of the world were ruled by the Romans. The Roman emperors until 312 AD were pagans and were often thought of as gods themselves. Nevertheless, the bible teaches us to regard even pagan rulers as ministers of God – to respect them, to obey them (unless they try to force us to act contrary to God's Law), to pay our taxes and to pray for them. *The powers that be are ordained of God.*

The King: King because his mother was Queen; King because he was acclaimed by the Accession Council; King because he was acceptable to

Parliament, King by public acclamation; King because he is God's choice for this country.

We've considered the issues around the hereditary principle, the need for clarity about who is King, the implications of the relationship between God's Kingship and earthly rulers, and the role of public acclamation. Rulers have to be acceptable to the people they govern (or else they can only rule by fear). Churchill made both these remarks about democracy. "If you want a good argument against democracy, spend five minutes with a voter." "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those others that have been tried." Democracy is probably the best form of government human beings have yet devised, but it's far from perfect. Hitler achieved power under a democratic system. The crowds called for Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified.

Finally, the role of parliament. Charles I found himself in a Civil War with Parliament, having over emphasised the divine right of kings. He was deposed and decapitated. It was Parliament, however, that voted for the Restoration of the Monarchy and invited Charles II to return. In 1688, Parliament dismissed King James II (Charles II's brother, Charles having no legitimate heirs) from the monarchy and installed William of Orange and James' daughter Queen Mary in his place. It was now clear (and written into the Bill of Rights the following year) that monarchs were themselves subject to the Law, could not exert arbitrary power and had to respect the rights of parliament – a constitutional monarchy.

We pray for every blessing on King Charles in the tremendous task which lies ahead of him.

**O LORD**, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lord, King *CHARLES*; and so replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that he may alway incline to thy will, and walk in thy way. Endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant him in health and wealth long to live; strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and finally, after this life, he may attain everlasting joy and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.



#### Christian Aid

We no longer collect house to house in Christian Aid Week (14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> May), but Christian Aid is still very active in the world and in need of funds with which to carry out its vital work. This year, among other disasters, there have been the Ukraine War, the earthquake in Syria and Turkey and a devastating cyclone in Malawi. There is also the ongoing development work with communities overseas, working with them on projects which lift people out of chronic poverty. There will be posters and envelopes for donations in church. There is also the bring and share lunch on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May at 12.00 in the church hall. You can also donate to Christian Aid online <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> where you can also learn more about Christian Aid's work in the world. Call **020 7523 2269** to donate over the phone. Send postal donations (cheques) to the London office: Christian Aid, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL. Paying directly into their bank account For details on how to pay money directly into their bank account, please call **020 7523 2269**.

#### Holy Week & Easter

Thank you everybody who worked so hard to support us in our marking and celebration of the greatest events in the history of the cosmos. Thank you to those who care for our church buildings, keeping them clean in good repair and correctly set out for our services. Thank you too flower arrangers, musicians, ringers and those who lead our children's work. Also those who arrange and put on our many social events – good opportunities to meet people, have fun and raise funds. There's a lot to do and more help is always welcome. Just offer your services to the churchwardens or me. I'm sure we'll have a job for you.

Tommy was disappointed that it rained on the day of the Easter Egg Hunt, but he need not have been. We ran the event in St Michael's Church and the church hall. Nearly as many children came as last year and everybody seemed to be having a good time – not least Tommy, who, when he wasn't running around, spent most of the time being made a fuss of.

## From the Registers

### Baptism:

Easter Day

Florian Eddie Kaczmarczyk

Woodhurst Close

### Funerals:

16<sup>th</sup> March

William Ralph Harrison

Wood Street

29<sup>th</sup> March

Mary Haynes

Upper Bush

3<sup>rd</sup> April

Joan Olga Rosemary Oxenbury

Rochester Road Halling

13<sup>th</sup> April

Diana Mary Dale

formerly of Cuxton

## **PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS**

Good day to you all. Now the days are getting longer and squabs are almost fledged, it is Spring! So much to do as well as the usual foraging! We have to complete repairs to our nest in the crazy ash tree, and tidy it up. You do Spring cleaning too when the brighter light shows up the dust, cobwebs and fluff that the darker days have hidden.

New life is everywhere. We heard all about two new pups in Cuxton recently. They are bundles of exhausting mischief apparently. A large litter of kittens in Halling don't seem to be so demanding ...yet. The pesky squirrels are back! They destroy the sturdiest feeders you put out for us and steal the food. They destroy even the so-called squirrel-proof feeders. The best deterrent is to sprinkle hot chilli powder on the nuts and seeds - they don't like that but we don't mind it spicing up our food. One hanging feeder we saw had been liberally sprayed with cheap cooking oil - the bushy-tailed perishes slide down, unable to get a purchase with their sharp claws.

I'm told that in two separate incidents in Cuxton, dogs have suffered badly cut paws from broken glass in the woods. That is just awful! I know you aren't responsible for it, but I do urge you to be cautious. If you see broken glass, can or bottles, will you dispose of them carefully. From our observations flying over Six Acre woods, we are saddened by the litter there and the lack of respect for heritage woodland. We can't do anything about it - but **you** can. Please have a care and do your best to make sure wildlife and dogs don't suffer from broken glass, cans or plastics.

**P**igeon enjoys

**E**aster fun

**R**aising squabs

**C**atching insects

**Y**our antics

I hope April puts a "Spring" in your steps. Now the proposed fast food takeaway in Cuxton has been approved, I suspect everyone's peace will be disturbed. Nil desperandum everyone. Coo coo.

## Wise Words

Saint Silouan the Athonite: There is a wide difference between the simplest man who has come to know the Lord by the Holy Spirit and even a very great man ignorant of the grace of the Holy Spirit. There is a major distinction between merely believing that God exists, seeing him in nature or in the Scriptures, and knowing the Lord by the Holy Spirit. The spirit of the man who has learned to know God by the Holy Spirit burns day and night with love of God, and his soul can form no earthly attachment. The soul that has not known the sweetness of the Holy Spirit rejoices in worldly vanity and praise, or in riches or power, but the Lord is the only desire of the soul that has come to know the Lord through the Holy Spirit and with her, riches and worldly fame count for naught. Not everyone can be an emperor or a prince; not everyone can be a patriarch or an abbot, or a leader; but in every walk of life we can love God and be pleasing to him, and only this is important.

### Tommy's Talking Points.



This is me in our garden last year with the forget-me-nots just out of view. I expect, by the time you read this they will be back and we'll be spending more time outside enjoying the spring sunshine.

He still hasn't taken me for any walks outside the parish this year, but I have hopes for a date in a few days time. We continue to enjoy our runs and walks around the local countryside, but a very wet March followed a very dry February, the steep paths became treacherous for bipeds and both of us came in nearly every day smothered in mud. I hate being towelled and he usually lets me off, but when I'm really wet or it's really cold, I have to endure a rub down. He says that he's not really sure it helps. At the end of the process, there's a dirty wet towel and the dog still appears to be just as dirty and wet as when we began. One afternoon, when the sun was shining after much persistent rain, we walked up Bush Road to Warren House. I don't much like walking on the road and I came back just as wet and dirty – worse really because the road mud is mixed with oil. So we've stuck with the woods whatever the weather.

Some days it just rained and rained. The last such day was the 31<sup>st</sup> March. We've always managed our morning outings, but my afternoon walks have quite often been curtailed or even abandoned in this very wet weather – about which he quite rightly feels a bit guilty. We make up for a missed afternoon walk sometimes with a late evening walk in the field behind St Michael's Church. Master especially likes to do this if there is a moon.

Anyway on 31<sup>st</sup> March, there was a meeting of the PCC at Halling. He doesn't like leaving me at home alone and I'd been short of walks that day. So he thought of taking me. But it would have meant walking along the main road. The woodland paths were far too slippery and it would have been dark by the time we returned. He didn't fancy paddling in the Pilgrims Road pool at Upper Halling if we'd taken the top road. He also considered that these meetings sometimes go on past cocoa time (9.00) and it would have been close to basket time (10.00) if we'd had to walk home. It was still raining after tea and he somewhat reluctantly decided to go on his bike. I think he hoped that the churchwardens would say that he needn't attend in view of the weather, but they didn't. Anyway, it was a nice, short meeting and he was back at the right time for his cocoa and my late night biscuits, albeit extremely wet.

He was reminded of an occasion many years ago when he was much fitter and more robust than he is now. The PCC meeting was at Halling that night too. There was thick snow. He didn't feel that he could cancel or even postpone the meeting. There's no obvious provision in the rules for doing that and how would he have been sure of letting everyone know? So he and Bobby walked right round through the woods to St John's via the *Black Boy*, taking advantage of the fact that it is never really dark in the snow. They arrived to find that very few other people had made it – just enough to be quorate – and that most people would have cancelled, whatever the difficulties cancellation would have caused.



He has, however, been on the receiving end of cancelled meetings and he doesn't like it. Once, he and a man from Gillingham and another man from Sheerness battled a terrific gale to attend a meeting at Halling, only to find, on arrival, that the Halling members of the committee had cancelled the meeting without telling them and were safely at home in the warm. On another occasion, he walked up to the Jubilee Hall to discover that they had cancelled a meeting just because of a power cut. Are there no candles in Upper Halling?

He gets really discombulated by that sort of thing. One Wednesday in his previous parish, he led the congregation in the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* twice, so he distracted was he by being put under pressure to cancel what had been arranged for later in the day because of snow.

It was this weakness which earned my teenage Master an entirely unjustified reputation as a hard man. He was standing outside the *Queen's Head* public house in Wigmore irritably discussing with a group of school friends proposed alterations to their previously agreed plans when a group of toughs approached intent on provoking a pugilistic confrontation with the grammar school wimps. Discombulated by the changed arrangements, Master's response to the belligerents was, "I'm sorry, but I'm far too busy to deal with you right now." They were so surprised that they walked away, leaving Master's friends slightly stunned.

Thankfully, the weather improved with the arrival of April. We went out for a run early on the 1<sup>st</sup>. There were signs up obviously giving directions for a later organised race. Master remembered it was April Fool's Day and thought it might be fun to change all these markers. He resisted the temptation, however! Once, when he was running the Gillingham Marathon, someone had tampered with a signpost and the guy at the front of the field took the wrong turning. He still reached the finish line first, despite taking a longer route, but he was disqualified, which seemed to Master like rough justice, but, in sporting contests, as in life generally, the rules must be followed. I hasten to add that Master was a very long way from first place. In fact, the first time he ran the Gillingham Marathon, he passed the home of his old PE teacher who expressed surprise that he was taking part in an athletic event at all. Master wasn't much of a competitor at school.

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> was another lovely day and we saw our first new born lambs of the year on our morning run – two of them with their dam. When we went out in the afternoon, we saw several more. Our organist at Halling played that lovely devotional song *All of an April Evening*, which Master particularly likes. The lambs in their vulnerability make us think of the Lamb of God *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

At Cuxton, at the same point in the service, the organist played that most moving of hymn tunes *Rockingham*. We sing *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* to that tune and also *My God and Is Thy Table Spread?* both inviting us to respond to God's amazing love for us by loving Him in return to the utmost of our being.

The third of April saw him working in the garden at last this year, pruning the roses and trying to restore them to some semblance of health despite the vicissitudes they have suffered of age, weeds, botanical competition and extraordinary weather over the last year or so. Time will tell whether he has been successful.

On the fourth, we saw our first bluebell of the season. Master had to go back to check because it was surrounded by pale mauve violets which, together with primroses, anemones and other wild flowers had already been blooming for some weeks in the countryside and the churchyards, a subtler Lenten beauty than the golden splendour of Forsythia and daffodils in the gardens.

There was a widespread frost that morning and the sun shone brightly. The atmosphere was crisp but rapidly warming. Both of us really enjoyed our run out in the open air that day – the freshness of the air on our skin and the young green shoots in the hedgerows, the contrasting warmth of the sun, the sheep and cattle in the fields, the birds singing their spring songs, the woodpeckers drumming and the squirrels racing up and down the trees. We possibly stayed out longer than we should have done. One fellow dog walker did ask Master how he could run shirtless in such low temperatures. He replied that it was just a question of keeping moving, but the complete answer is Master's exuberant enthusiasm for the beauties and wonders of God's Creation in this world and the fact that they are a foretaste of *the vision of that eternal splendour for which [God] has created us.*

Sadly, the Easter Egg Hunt was indoors this year, because of the rain. Max used to help the children to find and eat the eggs. I don't mind helping the hunt, but I never eat chocolate. How many of you can say that?