

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
1 st April Palm Sunday	9.30 Family Communion (Procession from Hall)	Mark 11 vv 1-11 p1016 (at hall) Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
5 th April Maundy Thursday	7.30 pm Holy Communion with Stripping of Altar	
6 th April Good Friday	10.00 Family Service Mary Mother of Jesus	
8 th April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024
15 th April Easter 2	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Easter 1
	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 ^{v10-31} p72 Exodus 15 ^{20&21} p73 Acts 4 ³²⁻³⁵ p1096 I John 1 ¹⁻² p1225 John 20 ¹⁹⁻³¹ p1089
22 nd April Easter 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 ¹⁴⁻²⁰ p947 Acts 3 ¹²⁻¹⁹ p1095 I John 3 ¹⁻⁷ p1226 Luke 24 ³⁶⁻⁴⁸ p1062
29 th April Easter 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 ¹⁻¹⁸ p8 Genesis 8 ⁶⁻¹⁸ p9 Genesis 9 ⁸⁻¹³ p10 Acts 4 ⁵⁻¹² p1095 John 10 ¹¹⁻¹⁸ p1076
6 th May Easter 5	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 22 ¹⁻¹⁸ p22 Acts 8 ²⁶⁻⁴⁰ p1101 I John 4 ⁷⁻²¹ p1227 John 15 ¹⁻⁸ p1083
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
1 st April Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
6 th April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	
7 th April Easter Eve	11.30 pm Easter Vigil Service	
8 th April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall Acts 10 ³⁴⁻⁴³ , John 20 ¹⁻¹⁸	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024
	11.00 Holy Communion	
15 th April Easter 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Exodus 14 ^{v10-31} p72 Exodus 15 ^{20&21} p73 Acts 4 ³²⁻³⁵ p1096 I John 1 ¹⁻² p1225 John 20 ¹⁹⁻³¹ p1089
22 nd April Easter 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 ¹⁴⁻²⁰ p947 Acts 3 ¹²⁻¹⁹ p1095 I John 3 ¹⁻⁷ p1226 Luke 24 ³⁶⁻⁴⁸ p1062
29 th April Easter 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 ¹⁻¹⁸ p8 Genesis 8 ⁶⁻¹⁸ p9 Genesis 9 ⁸⁻¹³ p10 Acts 4 ⁵⁻¹² p1095 John 10 ¹¹⁻¹⁸ p1076
6 th May Easter 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 60 ¹⁻¹⁴ p746 John 6 ³⁰⁻⁴⁰ p1070
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 22 ¹⁻¹⁸ p22 Acts 8 ²⁶⁻⁴⁰ p1101 I John 4 ⁷⁻²¹ p1227 John 15 ¹⁻⁸ p1083

Monday in Holy Week: Holy Communion 9.30 at St Michael's

Good Friday and Holy Saturday: Office services 8.45 & 5.00 at St Michael's.

Easter Week Holy Communion daily at 9.30 at St Michael's, except Thursday when it is at St John's.

Holy Communion at St Michael's Wednesdays 9.30am		Holy Communion at St John's Thursdays 9.30 am	
April 4 th	Hebrews 12 ¹⁻³ John 13 ²¹⁻³²	April 5 th Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 ²³⁻²⁶ John 13 ¹⁻³⁵
April 11 th	Acts 3 ¹⁻¹⁰ Luke 24 ¹³⁻³⁵	April 12 th	Acts 3 ¹¹⁻²⁶ Luke 24 ³⁵⁻⁴⁸
April 18 th	Acts 5 ¹⁷⁻²⁶ John 3 ¹⁶⁻²¹	April 19 th	Acts 5 ²⁷⁻³³ John 3 ³¹⁻³⁶
April 25 th S Mark	Ephesians 4 ⁷⁻¹⁶ Mark 13 ⁵⁻¹³	April 26 th	Acts 8 ²⁶⁻⁴⁰ John 6 ⁴⁴⁻⁵¹

Thursday's Children for pre-school children takes place at St John's at 2.00. There is an **After School Club** at St John's on Thursdays at 3.45. **Saints Alive** (formerly Sunday School) meets in the Church Hall, Cuxton at 9.30 on 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays of the month in term time. **St Michael's Angels** meet at Cuxton Church at 2.00 every last Wednesday for a short service for pre-school children, followed by refreshments and toys in the Church Hall.

There is a parish lunch to which all are invited every first Wednesday at 12.00 in the Church Hall.

If you are prepared to **gift aid** your monetary contributions to the Church, please use one of the envelopes provided or speak to Jack Payne for a longer term arrangement.

Copy Date May Magazine: 13th April 8.30 am Rectory.
roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>



Does Easter Matter?

Well of course Easter matters. It's a major commercial opportunity. Hot cross buns have been on sale since Christmas. There are all those chocolate Easter eggs in the shops. Especially in a time of recession, we need this boost to our retail sector and a holiday in the Spring is something to cheer us all up as well as a way to get us to spend our money in the leisure industry. Scoffing all that chocolate also plays into our national obsession with obesity, providing hours of discussion on Radio 4 and many column inches of copy in the feature pages of our newspapers. Ironically, therefore, Easter also boosts the diet industry and the self-help sector, pumping yet more money into the economy.

For theological and historical reasons which most people have forgotten, Mothering Sunday always occurs three weeks before Easter - another, if smaller, commercial opportunity. So it is all good for the economy and good fun too.

Perhaps the only drawback is that the date of Easter moves around because of its outdated association with the Christian religion and the Bible. It would be so much easier if it fell on the same weekend every year. It would make it much

easier to plan for producers of cards, for confectionary manufacturers and for the holiday industry if there were a fixed time between Christmas and Easter.

It is also true that a lot of people are inconvenienced and the shops lose out on a few hours of business because we still retain some restriction on Sunday trading on Easter Sunday. We broke the religious connection between the Late Spring Bank Holiday and Whitsun decades ago. Why spoil Easter by letting the Church dictate when and how we keep it? Hardly anybody even remembers Whitsun anymore. They'd just as soon forget that the Easter holiday once had something to do with Jesus.

Already the school year has been liberated (to some extent) from the traditional dating of Easter (based on the Jewish celebration of liberation from Egyptian slavery and what happened to Jesus one Passover some 2,000 years ago). The priority of our education system must be to train children to live in modern Britain. They must be inculcated with modern British values - money-making and shopping. There is no place for religion in the public arena in the secular state and, where space is made for religion, in a multicultural society it is unacceptable to give preference to Christianity over any other religion.

Of course the Church tries to say that Easter matters for other reasons. Amazingly, the Church of England says that every confirmed person ought to receive Holy Communion at Easter. But who takes any notice of the Church of England anymore? You can be a Christian without going to Church and you must have lots of more important things to do on Easter Sunday. Or, if you haven't got anything more important to do over the holiday, there are plenty of things to do which are more fun than going to Church. Holidays might have been holy days in the Middle Ages, but they didn't have the internet.

I suppose if your best friend had died a horrible death in order to save your life on Good Friday, you might keep it as a special day. Maybe if you thought that the only innocent man who has ever lived was barbarically executed on that day, you might pause for thought before rushing off to the shops or to the football field or running track. If you believed that the Virgin's Son who died that day was the Son of God, it might matter to you. If his willing acceptance of a cruel death had purchased for you the gift of eternal life, you might conceivably be sufficiently grateful to honour the day on which He suffered and even the day he was buried and lay in the tomb.

I suppose that if you believed that on Easter Day, God raised Jesus from the dead, that might be a reason for a religious celebration. If Easter demonstrated that the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all believers, that life conquers death, that love overwhelms hatred and indifference, that good overcomes evil, that Jesus has defeated the Devil and all his works, then Easter Sunday might just still be special for you. If you believed that on Easter Day Jesus made Himself known to His disciples in the Breaking of Bread and that He still makes Himself known to us in the Holy Communion, you might even agree with the Church of England, that all Christian people ought to receive Holy Communion at Easter. If you believed that Holy Communion proclaims Christ's Death until his coming again, if you believed that the grace we receive in Holy Communion enables us be Christians in the world today, if you believed that Holy Communion is a foretaste of Heaven, then it might not seem that there could be anything else to do that day which is more important or even more "fun".

But, then, if people believed those things the world would be a very different place.

Roger.

Easter Egg Hunt

This popular event will take place again this year in the Rectory grounds at 2.00 on Easter Monday (9th April). There will also be the usual things going on around the church hall and St Michael's Church. See you all there.

APCM & Vestry Meeting 2012

This will take place in the church hall at 10.00 on Saturday 28th April. The APCM receives reports from the PCC treasurer and secretary regarding our financial situation and the PCC's activities in 2011. The APCM elects 5 PCC members each to represent Cuxton and Halling. As one of our deanery synod members is standing down this year, the APCM also needs to elect a deanery synod representative for the two years remaining of the triennium. Also our treasurer is definitely resigning this year and the new PCC will have to choose her successor at its first meeting after the APCM. It will be very helpful if the APCM elects someone to the PCC who is able and willing to do this job. The churchwardens also report on their work over the past year and the vestry meeting elects two wardens each for each parish church. We know that at least one warden will not be standing again this year. So someone else will need to be nominated. PCC candidates and candidates for synod may be nominated at the meeting or in advance, but wardens must be nominated on the prescribed form before the commencement of the meeting. All those on the church electoral roll may vote at the APCM. Those on the church electoral roll plus those on the civil electoral roll may vote at the Vestry Meeting. Other matters of interest in the parish may be raised and discussed at the meeting. Some years ago I was told that the rector does not have to make a report or deliver an address at either of these meetings. You will be relieved to know, therefore, that I don't and generally try to keep quiet at these meetings! If you are not on the electoral roll of the parish and consider yourself a member of our church, please sign on if you are 16 or over, live in the parish and/or worship with us regularly and baptised. Unless you are under 18, however, you cannot stand for office unless you have been on the roll at least 6 months – a daft new rule, brought in a few years ago.

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Good News on the Financial Front

A very generous bequest has put us in a position where we can pay our not inconsiderable debts and still have some left over. This is wonderful news and we are most grateful to the person who left us this legacy.

We must not, however, become complacent. We got into so much debt over a period because our expenditure usually exceeds our income. I cannot see any way we can reduce our expenditure. So hopefully we can boost our income. We must if we're not to fall back into debt in two or three years. So please support our fund-raising activities. However, our main income is and ought to be your offerings to God placed in the collection plate each week (or by standing order into the church bank

account). Please consider what your contribution ought to be in the light of God's grace. If you can *gift aid* (which you can if your offering comes out of taxable income), please have a word with Jack Payne.

I understand that if you make a bequest to a charity in your will, inheritance duty is substantially reduced. This means that you can make a bequest to a charity and in some circumstances still leave the same amount to your heirs because your tax liability is so much reduced. Worth considering when you are making a will.
Roger.

If you can force yourself to miss the Annual Meeting, this next item may interest you. (You could be nominated *in absentia* for those church jobs you are longing to do.)



Bluebell Wood Charity Walk April 28th 2012 - Eve Appeal

Meet Browdens Road car park at 10.00. The walk will take place over just over four miles (c 2½ hrs) in the bluebell woods at Upper Halling. Please bring your own refreshments. You can reach Upper Halling by a bus which leaves Halling Fire Station at 09.13 and return on the 13.20, 14.26 or 15.59 from Browdens Rd. Sponsorship is for the Eve Appeal, which supports research into gynaecological cancers at University College, London, in memory of Eve Lawry. These cancers remain difficult to detect and treat and more research is urgently required. Forms from Pat Lawry 240892. Cheques payable to the Eve Appeal. Registered Charity No 1091708. www.eveappeal.org.uk

Maundy Thursday (5th April)

There will be Holy Communion at St John's at 9.30 am and at 7.30 pm at St Michael's with the stripping of the altars. There will be a Lent Lunch at St John's at 12.00 – proceeds to Christian Aid.

Disagreeing with Jesus

I'm rather shocked when Christians write off parts of the Bible as *That's only Paul* or *That's just Old Testament*, when they don't happen to agree with it. After all don't we believe that the Bible is the Word of God? I'm definitely shocked when Christian people blithely announce that they don't agree with Jesus. After all, He is the Son of God, but here are a few common examples of people refusing to accept what Jesus said as true for today. Naturally for centuries, people have written off as impossible His teaching about loving your enemies and not resisting evil with evil. More recently it has come to be accepted that His teaching about marriage being lifelong is hopelessly unrealistic in very many cases. But the following surprise me. "The twelve year old Jesus was a naughty boy when He let go of Mummy's hand in the Temple and got lost." He Himself said that He must be about His Father's business. "It's not fair that the prodigal son gets forgiven after wasting half the family fortune on riotous living and it's not fair that the labourers who only worked one hour got the same wage as those who had laboured all day." Jesus said that that is just the way God is. People will not accept that Mary made the right choice by sitting still and listening to Jesus while Martha wasted her opportunity by bustling about with mundane tasks. RIK.

From the Registers

Funerals:

14th February
20th February

Eileen Rose Tatnell (87)
Cora Evan Unsworth (81)

formerly of North Halling
James Road

Parishioners might be interested to hear news of two clergy who have preached in this parish as my guests. Rev'd Paul Watkin got married to Tara on 3rd March. Ven Michael Ipgrave (Archdeacon of Southwark) was consecrated Bishop of Woolwich 21st March.

St John's Draw (February): £25 to Mrs Parris (53) & £10 each to Mr Pratt (98)53) & Mr Thorne (32) – drawn by Mrs Gyde. Church Hall Draw (soon to be St Michael's Draw): £5 to Mrs Holt. (Watch for changes in Church Hall Draw!)

Request for Funds



As you know, we are hoping to support Paul and Charitas Cho working with the Church Mission Society in the Philippines. Before they can set out, they need a certain amount of financial support “up front”. If you would like to help to raise this money, could you please let me have your contribution or send it direct to CMS, clearly marked as in support of the Paul & Charitas Cho?

Please make your cheque payable to **Church Mission Society**. If your gift is for a specific area of work, please state this in a covering note. Please send cheques and/or Gift Aid forms to: **CMS, Watlington Road, Oxford OX4 6BZ.**

An Interesting Thought I Came Across In A Book

If you ever wonder who is really the servant and who the master in the public's relationship with “public servants” just think about your most recent encounter with officialdom. RIK.



Max's Contribution

Master got told off for omitting my piece in the last magazine. So he's found me some space in this one! So here's a question for you. Why do you never see people going out for a walk unless they have a dog or else a map and are obviously on a long distance hike? Master says lots of people used to go for walks, but they don't seem to anymore. Why is that? Walking is a cheap recreation, good in this time of recession. You get to see nature, which fits in with our environmental concerns. Walking is non-polluting, ditto. Walking is good for you, which fits in with healthy living. Walking helps you lose weight. The dangers of being run over or mugged or raped are grossly exaggerated. So why is it that only dogs and their owners regularly seem to take part daily in what is such a cheap, healthy, clean and above all enjoyable activity?

Max, the Rectory Spaniel.

Nature Notes February 2012

We have experienced heavy snowfall recently therefore I have chosen a poem by Thomas Hardy, “Snow in the Suburbs”

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute;
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back
upward, when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and
descend again.
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
And overturns him,
And near inurns him,
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

On the first day of the month there has been a hard frost and bitter north east winds blow. However, the sun shines from blue skies as I walk round the wind-rippled lake at Bluewater with Murphy. Yellow crocuses bloom along the route and as I take one of the paths the wind is at my back. The sun shines through the afternoon then, as it sets, the air becomes very cold. Stars and the moon shine in the night sky. Severe frost is forecast. The 2nd is very cold with north east winds blowing but the sun shines from a blue sky. I feed the birds but do not venture out again as it is far too cold. The 3rd is another very cold day when the garden pond remains frozen all day. I feed the birds again before the sun sets. Snow falls in the late evening of 4th. The following day the garden is beautiful for the branches of shrubs and trees are laden with snow. As the birds begin to fly among the lilac branches, snow begins to fall from them onto the ground. I go out into the garden to feed the birds and they gradually come to inspect what is on offer. The skies are grey. I clear snow from the back of the house then after lunch I clear a large part of the drive then I put out more food for the birds. The next day, the snow is melting and the sun begins to shine. Grey skies are in evidence when I walk with Murphy at Bluewater but we do not take our usual path because of the snow. As we reach home later in the morning, the grey clouds are dispersing and golden sunshine lights up the river in the Medway Valley. The snow melts on the trees and the air is full of birdsong. It is still light at 4.30pm and this lifts my spirits. The setting sun glows golden as it dips below the tree line and a few feathery clouds are salmon pink. A bright moon shines from the night sky as I walk home from church a service to commemorate our Queen's ascension to the throne. The 8th is grey and very cold. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy where I see Canada geese foraging on a grassy bank and a moorhen crossing the road. One end of the lake, where reeds grow is frozen and the north east wind is bitter so we walk quickly. Later, while feeding the birds, I hear the strident call of a great tit. The 10th is a beautiful day. Snow still lies in the garden. The garden pond is frozen. Sleet is falling on 12th while snow still lies in the churchyard. The next day we take Murphy to Cobtree Manor Park. Frozen snow lies on the ground which makes walking quite hazardous. The 14th is mild and the garden is now clear of snow. On 15th, a golden sun rises over the hill and North West

winds blow clouds across the sky. The ice on the pond has melted. Birds are singing during the morning and as I walk to the church hall, I am aware of a feeling of Spring in the air. When the sun sets it sends a radiant glow into the western sky. More blackbirds have been coming into the garden recently. I take myself for a walk in the rain on 18th. I go to the village through the wood then along Bush Road to the alley. This takes me to Purty's Shaw where I see catkins which are turning brown. Rain falls steadily as I make my way through Six-acre Wood and home. The next afternoon, a cock pheasant struts about the garden. Until Murphy chases it off. On 20th, after overnight frost, the air is crisp. The skies are blue, brushed with a few wisps of white cloud and the sun is golden. The south east has now been declared to be in a state of drought. The 21st is very mild with warm sunshine. Round the lake at Bluewater the banks are beautiful with snowdrops and daffodils are in bud. Thursday 23rd is beautiful with blue skies and golden sunshine and temperatures reach 18 C. A west wind blows causing catkins to dance on their delicate twigs. Daffodils are now blooming on the banks round the lake where coots and moorhens glide. Dandelions bloom in the grass. The morning of 24th is rather grey but the sun penetrates the clouds and a beautiful, warm afternoon ensues. I walk through the churchyard where I see golden celandines on the bank. More clouds appear but the afternoon remains warm and sunny. Night skies reveal the stars. The next day, I see a red admiral butterfly hovering over one of the gardens as I deliver Parish magazines. Later I sit in the garden enjoying the warmth of the sun. Bumble bees collect nectar from daffodils and winter heathers. The next morning I watch the sun rise over the hill. It lights up the clear blue sky. Birds sing their spring songs. The 27th is a mild grey day when I walk with Murphy in Cobtree Manor Park. Trees stand, still in their Winter sleep but new buds are forming. I see early blackthorn blossom sure sign of Spring and I hear great tits calling. On 28th I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy. Dandelions bloom in profusion, crocuses, snowdrops, and daffodils adorn the banks. I see a single daisy, a clump of chickweed in flower and a hazel tree which has burst its buds revealing tiny leaves. A pair of crows forages in the grass and coots call from the rippling water. Birdsong fills the air. The month ends on a sunny note.

Elizabeth

Summers



Cuxton WI

Beware Phyllis! Our Mrs Chidwick was kind enough to give us an evening of hilarity and magic. She made us laugh as she told us of many incidents in her life where there were disasters in her cooking

times and in other things in daily life ending with her daughter having made the Brownies their evening mugs of hot chocolate using lemon squash instead of water - must have tasted unique. That was the hilarious part - now we came on to the magic. Phyllis produced a knife with the

slimmest finest blade and started to cut an ordinary chocolate Victoria sponge into six incredibly thin slices. These she then stuck back together using cream, cherries and a splash of Kirsch. She then asked how many people were there and proceeded to cut this cake into 38 delicious slices - and that was the magic ! With a knife that sharp, as I said before, beware our Phyllis. After that we resumed our business and Pat asked members for their favourite recipes as we had thought about compiling a cookery book which could be sold to raise funds. Maureen Lauder offered to put on a coffee morning also for fund raising. Our June party this year will take on a royal theme with lots of red, white and blue and a crown competition. There was news of several other celebrations in the district most with a royal theme.

All our groups are doing well. We were shown some lovely handbags made from a wet felting

process. The cookery group are focussing on recipes from the original WI cook book. The walking group had enjoyed a historical walk around Halling and will

be going to Margate and the Turner Exhibition in March. Poetry club are looking at poems with a Horror theme. Painting clubs both china and watercolour were now full. Home economics days at Ditton were always something we look forward to in March. And the big one - the Annual WI conference in Tunbridge Wells has twelve of our members attending.

So a busy time for us all. We welcomed six new visitors and judging by their laughter they certainly enjoyed themselves so we hope for a few new members soon. Should you fancy an evening of fun and good company please do come along you will always be welcome. Our next meeting is on Thursday Aril 5th at the Church Hall at 7 30 pm when we will be shown allsorts of ways to ties our scarves - on the catwalk next time girls! Sheila.

Forthcoming Attractions 2012

April 9th 2.00 Rectory: Easter Egg Hunt.

20th April 7.30: Christian Aid Supper at Strood Methodist Church.

28th April 10.00: APCM at Church Hall.

June 24th (St John the Baptist's Day): 11.00 HC at St John's preacher will be the Archdeacon. At 3.00 there will be a presentation by Philip Jones of the Bible Lands Society, followed by tea at St John's church.

June 30th 6.00: Parish Barbecue in Rectory Grounds

July 7th: ???

August 8th 12.00: Barbecue 95, Pilgrims Rd, North Halling.

August 24th (St Bartholomew's Day): 7.30 BCP Celebration HC at St Michael's to mark 350th anniversary BCP.

September 2nd: 11.00 am Bishop James presides and preaches at St John's.

September 29th(Michaelmas): 11.00 am HC at St Michael's preacher Canon Alan Vousden - followed by lunch in church hall.

October 7th Harvest Festival: 6.30 St Michael's Evening Service and Harvest Supper.

October 13th: 7.30 Quiz in Church Hall.

October 27th: 2.00 Sale of Work Halling Church.

December 7th: WI District Carol Service at St Michael's.

December 8th: Christmas Minimarket Church Hall 10.00.

Also in the Summer concert at St John's: Date to be Confirmed.

Every first Wednesday, lunch in church hall 12.00-2.00.

Gossip the Good News

Open to all, commencing 24th at 7.30 pm at St Francis Strood. Just turn up, but if you want more details, please e mail me Roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk and I'll send you them.

The Aims of the Course

Gossip the Good News is a five session course designed to help ordinary Church members to feel comfortable talking about the good news of Jesus to people who are not yet active worshippers.

The stated aims are :

- To help church members to be confident that we have good news worth sharing
- To know how to put this into ordinary everyday language.

Next to Godliness?

To those who enjoy spring cleaning! Please come along to St Michael's Church on Saturday 31st March any time from 9.00 am onwards (finish at 12.00 noon) to help us give our lovely old village church a clean. Bacon butties and coffee will be provided. Jenny 241599.



Halling WI

As February is the most unreliable month, weather wise, we decided not to book a speaker, but have a go at "doing it ourselves". Margaret got the proceedings underway with Jerusalem, birthday flowers the minutes and the like. Ann Hayward did the correspondence, notice of the annual council meeting at Tunbridge Wells, and the National Federation Annual meeting at the Albert Hall, which has been bought forward this year to May, so as not to clash with the Diamond Jubilee. As it is Halling's turn to be delegate for four institutes Betty and I would be going. Betty and I accepted Aylesford and Eccles W.I. party. Money wise we seem to be wealthy, but the total includes seventeen annual subscriptions. I read the thank you letter I had received from Blythwood care with regards the shoe boxes and the girls decided to collect items for the Buckets of Love for India during March, especially when I explained to them what they used DUCK tape for, to mend their leaking roofs.

Then the fun started. Trudy Fenton-Scott and Ann Heaseman turned the Jubilee hall into a card

making factory. All members, even me who is much happier with needles and wool, got stuck in making cards and a mess. We turned out some pretty good cards and the time passed so quickly, we eventually had to clear up and have a cup of tea.

Zoe judged the competitions. Flower of the month was won by Ann Hayward with a small "grey" iris, but the item beginning with the letter B, we had a brown baby in a basket, a bicycle, a bracelet, a brooch several books and many other various things. What did Zoe choose? The biggest black bra I have ever seen, Ann Heaseman decided she should model it. No, she didn't do a Calendar Girl act. She put it on over her jumper which caused a great deal of laughter. Next month we have letter C and there are hundreds of things, cream crackers, coconut, crisps, chisels. conkers to name just a few, but please, no Cats or Canaries, (at least not live ones). They don't go well together, but you never know what will turn up. Our "do it yourselves" evening went down very well as nobody seemed to want to go home.

Phyllis.

Halling Historical Society

Meetings are held every alternate month on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling. We have speakers on various subjects, sometimes illustrated, but always interesting, particularly if local history. Visitors are always welcome. Next meeting April 19th – Mr Ted Baker *The History of the Mathematical School*.

News from Cuxton Infants' School

Dear friends of our school,

A short piece of news this time. Ranscombe class (5 and 6 yrs) recently performed a fantastic assembly. Their teacher really set them a challenge and I must say we all felt really proud at the end. An assembly telling us all about England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, their Patron Saints and emblems. Then we were told all about London, The Queen and famous buildings. Lastly the Olympics and Going for Gold! Children pretended they were taking part in races and then were presented with gold medals. Children showed us models and flags, and national dress. Finally the National Anthem sung better than some adults would!

It was good to see so many parents coming to our Literacy workshop day to see Literacy activities around the school. They spent time in classes working with children, seeing ways aspects of Literacy are now taught and also seeing the high expectations of staff. We look forward to our Numeracy day in a couple of week's time.

A busy time of year again in school- parents evenings, Mother Day assembly and Easter celebrations.

Do look at our website for further news or to find out about us. In the meantime take care,

Sandra Jones Headteacher, Cuxton Infants.

Gay Marriage?

Fifty years ago male homosexual practices were illegal in this country. Then they were made legal and tolerated. Then it was made illegal to discriminate against homosexuals. Then homosexuals were allowed to form civil partnerships. Now it is proposed that homosexuals should be allowed to marry one another. One is reminded of the old joke about the man who emigrated from this country when homosexual practices were first made legal. He said he was leaving before it became compulsory.

On the present proposals, gay marriages would take place in civil ceremonies and churches and other religious bodies would be free to choose whether or not to participate. Some religious people believe that all loving human relationships are a good thing and they would want to ask God's blessing on gay marriages just as we do for heterosexual couples. Other religious people (like me) believe that God's Will for us is that we either live our lives in lifelong heterosexual marriage or that we live lives of celibacy and that anything else – promiscuity, adultery, divorce, same sex relationships, incest, paedophilia, bestiality, etc.- falls short of what it is to fulfil our full human potential as children of the God Who is love.

If we start by thinking about the Biology of human relationships, I think we can safely say that the principal biological purpose of sex is procreation. Mother Nature makes sex enjoyable in order to ensure that we propagate the species. Having said that, however, the human infant needs a great deal of care for many years. It follows from this that the sex drive has to be focused on the couple who will become parents. From Nature's point of view, promiscuity is wasteful because of the risk of producing children who will not be properly cared for by their parents until they are adults themselves. If the point of sex is to reproduce our own genes, it is not in the interest of men that their wives should commit adultery, cuckolding them and fooling them into bringing up other men's children. If the point of sex is procreation it is not in a woman's interest that the father of her children should desert her and "go off" with other women. Furthermore, if the parents are to create a home in which children may be properly brought up, it is in Nature's interest that sexual partners love one another and care for one another.

You can therefore make a very good scientific case that sexual relations should be between people who can potentially have children together (i.e. a man and a woman), that they should be faithful to one another and that they should love one another and care for one another. You can also cogently argue that in the "natural state" the rolls of father and mother are complementary rather than interchangeable. One parent has the anatomy and physiology to bear children and nurse them. The other parent is more likely to have the muscles and coordination for hunting, farming, defending the home, etc.. In other words, basic human society needs people to form long term (lifelong probably) stable relationships as the context in which to enjoy sexual relations. If the family is the institution mainly responsible for looking after all of us, illegitimate children, infidelity, divorce and homosexual relationships are all likely to be seen as a threat to the social order and society will feel it must impose its own sanctions on those who don't conform.

The 1662 marriage service pretty well mirrors this biological account of human relationships. It gives the reasons for marriage in this order: the procreation of children, the proper channelling of our sexual desires, and for the "mutual, society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." Given that God made the universe, you would expect the conclusions of Science and Theology to be compatible and complementary.

You can argue, however, both that society has changed a lot since 1662 and that my scientific account of human relationships is incomplete. In the past there were high rates of infant mortality and big families were a necessity if the human race was to survive. In recent decades, however, with better sanitation, nutrition and medical care, the world's population has grown exponentially. We are more afraid of the consequences of over population than we are of the human race just dying out. Many people would argue that people should be discouraged from having large families in the interests of humanity and of the ecosystem. Safe, effective contraception makes it possible to enjoy sex without taking responsibility for possible parenthood. On the other hand, modern medicine makes it possible for women to bear children without having sex with a man. So the link between sex and reproduction is considerably weakened.

But if sex isn't mainly about reproduction, why not have sex outside marriage or outside of any other stable relationship? Why not promiscuity? Why not homosexual relationships, long term or transient? Why not incest, come to that?

Advanced societies such as ours will try to look after children if the parents can't or won't. So it is less of a big deal than it was in the past if women sleep with men who aren't prepared to be fathers or if fathers don't stick around. The balance has changed. Divorce becomes a better option than putting up with an abusive partner if you don't depend on the abusive partner's wages in order for you and your children to survive. You don't need to worry quite so much

about becoming an unmarried mother if you know that Social Services will make sure that you and the baby have food and shelter.

Current thinking is that some people are born gay. Biologically, genetically, they are only attracted to people of the same sex. Is there a reason why it is somehow advantageous for the human species that some of us are born gay (if that is indeed the case)? It is hard to see how it helps the race if some people are born unlikely to reproduce, but there might be some reason why this should be so. Or is homosexuality just one of those things, without any particular significance one way or the other. Some people are born with six fingers. It only matters because most of us are prejudiced against people who are a bit different. If either of the above accounts of homosexuality is correct, it is hard to see why homosexual practices should be forbidden. We only need to forbid what does harm either to the person doing it or to other people or to society at large.

In the modern world, technology makes it much more possible either for men to live without women and women without men or for them to swap traditional rolls. Dad can feed baby with a bottle. Mum can dig ditches with a mechanical digger. The availability of professional childcare and ready meals which don't take all day to prepare makes it possible for both parents to be out at work all day and the woman's place need no longer be in the home!

All these changes may seem to make the traditional marriage redundant or at least to reduce its status to that of just one option among many. Procreation need not be the principal point of relationships. Promiscuity seems much less serious for that reason. But there is still the third reason for marriage, the "mutual, society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." Reproduction is not the only reason for sex or for forming stable relations. We've always blessed loving marriages in which there is no hope of children. (In 1662 the prayer for a fruitful marriage is omitted *where the woman is past child-bearing*). We support and seek to bless couples who prove to be infertile. More recently, we seem to have begun to accept that some people will marry with no intention of starting a family perhaps because they think other things are more important than children or the woman is afraid of the pains and dangers of childbirth. Why deny the blessing of lifelong marriage to homosexual couples if we offer that blessing to other couples who cannot or choose not to have children?

Christians ought to look to the Bible for guidance and to the traditional teaching of the Church about homosexual relationships. But this is very much like the debate over the ordination of women or the possibility of remarriage after divorce. As traditionally understood, the Bible says "No" to all three. Jesus says nothing about homosexuality and there is nothing in the Gospels about it. The Old Testament condemns homosexual practices, but most Christians don't worry about OT prohibitions on eating pork or shellfish or on wearing garments of mixed fabrics. Many Christians ignore what the OT says about observing the Sabbath. So, why, some would argue, worry about what the OT says about sex? (The Church of England does try to distinguish between the OT's moral commandments and those of a ceremonial, ritual or civil nature, but into which category do homosexual acts fall?). St Paul condemns homosexual practices. Some people (including the Archbishop of Canterbury), however, believe that Paul is referring to the promiscuity and paedophilia of the corrupt Roman aristocracy of his own day and that he is not talking about loving long term relationships between two men or two women. I think the Archbishop is wrong. You read Paul (especially Romans 1^{26&27} & I Corinthians 6⁹) for yourself and make your own decision. But many Christians would argue, just as they do with regard to divorce and women ministers, that society has changed so much since biblical times that whatever the OT, St Paul or even Jesus might have said on these subjects is no longer straightforwardly applicable in the modern world. If they believe that things have changed that much since Jesus came, however, what relevance do they think Christianity has to modern society in any respect? Personally I don't believe that God or human nature has changed since biblical times and I do believe that we would all be happier and more fulfilled if we lived the way the Bible says we should. I also believe that we ought not to persecute people who disagree with us, that we ought to be open to the possibility that we are wrong and that we should patiently wait for God's Truth to be revealed and live in love and charity with all our neighbours while we wait. We still have the problem, however, who can decide on behalf of society whether gay marriage (or anything else) is morally right. Governments get things wrong. The Church gets things wrong. Individuals get things wrong. Majorities get things wrong. So how do we know what is right? Roger.



Getting My Own Back on Max

Sunday afternoon I thought I had better take him out even though the wind was howling and it was still raining and getting dark. He led me quite a dance, making me run after him and search for him in the bushes. One of his favourite games is to disappear in my garden and hide when I'm calling him. He knows perfectly well where I am but I don't know where he is. But last Thursday I was just in too much of a hurry to go looking for him and left him to it. I found him standing by the back door with an expression on his face which said, "Wouldn't you care if I was lost?" So, for once, I beat him in the game of life! Roger.