

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
29 th March Lent 6 (Palm Sunday) Phil Andrews of Blythswood to preach.	9.30 Holy Communion – procession from hall	Mark 11 vv 1-11 (@hall) p1016 Isaiah 50 vv 4-11 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
2 nd April Maundy Thursday	7.00pm Passover Supper at St John's	
3 rd April Good Friday	8.45 & 5.00 Offices	
	10.00 Family Service	Question Time
4 th April Holy Saturday	8.45 & 5.00 Offices	
5 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
12 th April Easter 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 1-19 p72 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 I John 1 v1 – 2 v2 p1225 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
19 th April Easter 3	8.00 Holy Communion (Easter 2)	Epistle & Gospel BCP Easter 2
	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 3 vv 11-26 p1095 I John 3 vv 1-10 p1226 Luke 24 vv 36-49 p1062
26 th April Easter 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 4 vv 1-12 p 1095 I John 3 vv 16-24 p1227 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
29 th March Lent 6 (Palm Sunday)	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 50 vv 4-11 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
2 nd April Maundy Thursday	9.30am Holy Communion & 7.00 pm Passover Supper	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
3 rd April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	The Passion According to St Mark
5 th April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
	11.00 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
12 th April Easter 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 1-19 p72 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 I John 1 v1 – 2 v2 p1225 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 26 vv 1-19 p709 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
19 th April Easter 3 Phil Andrews of Blythswood to preach.	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 3 vv 11-26 p1095 I John 3 vv 1-10 p1226 Luke 24 vv 36-49 p1062
26 th April Easter 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 4 vv 1-12 p 1095 I John 3 vv 16-24 p1227 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076

Maundy Thursday
2nd April

Passover Supper

7.00 pm

St John's

£7.00, half price children.

Please pre-book with Shirley Crundwell or Rector.

Good Friday
3rd April

Question Time

10.00 am Family Service

St Michael's

There has been so much interest in the questions raised in the confirmation group that it has been decided that there ought to be an open opportunity for anyone to ask anything they like about the Christian faith. This is your opportunity. So come along with your questions and we'll try to work out some answers!

Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays at Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays at Halling	
1 st April	Hebrews 12vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	2 nd April Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 John 13 vv 1-35
8 th April Wednesday of Easter Week	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-35	9 th April Thursday of Easter Week	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48
15 th April	Acts 5 vv 17-26 John 3 vv 16-21	16 th April	Acts 5 vv 27-33 John 3 vv 31-36
22 nd April	Acts 8 vv 1-8 John 6 vv 35-40	23 rd April St George	II Timothy 2 vv 3-12 John 15 vv 18-21
29 th April	Acts 12 v24 – 13 v5 John 12 vv 44-50	30 th April	Acts 13 vv 13-25 John 13 vv 16-20

25th April is St Mark's Day and I will celebrate Holy Communion at 9.30 am at John's before the annual meeting. 1st May is St Philip & St James – Holy Communion at St Michael's at 7.30 am.

Copy Date May Magazine: 10th April 8.30 am Rectory.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Vestry Meeting

These will take place at 10.00 am at St John's Church on 25th April. Everyone on both the civil and parochial electoral rolls is welcome to attend the vestry meeting and to elect the churchwardens (two for each parish church). The APCM is attended by members of the parochial electoral roll who receive reports of the PCC's activities and accounts and elect the PCC for the coming year (five each from Cuxton and Halling). The present PCC secretary has indicated that she would like to resign at the APCM and it would be helpful if there were at least one possible replacement in mind at the meeting. If you are at least 16, baptised and a member of our church, please make sure you are on the electoral roll. Those already on the roll will be carried over. Unless you are under 18, you have to have been on the electoral roll at least 6 months before you can stand for election to the PCC.

The Archbishop of Canterbury.

"Evangelism and witness are not strategies, let alone strategies for church survival. A church that looks for strategies to survive has lost the plot. We need strategies so that we may be more clearly those who are able to take up our cross and follow Christ."

Halling Historical Society

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th April at 7.30 pm in the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling. A talk will be given by Mr Jan Porter and the subject "Surviving the Titanic – What Happened After the Sinking". New members and visitors always welcome.

Christian Aid Walk 2015: 13th July. Meet the new puppy!



From the Rector

Are you looking forward to Easter? I know a couple of people who are desperately looking forward to Easter because they've give up things they really like for Lent. Or maybe you are looking forward to the Easter holidays. Or perhaps because it marks the start of Spring.

The great event of Easter Day is Holy Communion on that day. All Christians are expected to receive Communion at Easter. It is the morning Christ rose from the dead. In fact Lent began as preparation for Easter Baptism for new Christians and then became the preparation for the Easter Communion of all Christians.

Every Sunday is like a little Easter and that is why we celebrate Holy Communion on every Sunday and the reason why I always resist suggestions that we should replace it with a service which requires a lesser degree of commitment in the hope of attracting people who are not yet ready to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Mission services have their place, but not in place of the service which Jesus commanded His Church to perform. The fact that every Sunday is a little Easter is the reason that the six Sundays in Lent do not count towards Lent's forty days. Ash Wednesday is forty week days before Easter. If I could, I would celebrate Communion every day of the week (if I could get a congregation and didn't need at least one day off in order to comply with the fourth commandment) as the disciples in the early Church met daily for the breaking of bread. But we do not celebrate Holy Communion on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, giving up the ultimate for the last two days of Lent.

So what happens in the Easter Communion? What happens in every celebration of Holy Communion? Jesus said, *Do this in remembrance of me*. In Holy Communion we remember all that Jesus has done for us, most particularly the terrible death He suffered on the Cross, so that our sins might be forgiven and that we might go to Heaven if we have faith in Him. He also said, *This is my Body; This is my Blood*. We can argue till the cows come home about how this happens, but it is certain that when we receive Holy Communion, we eat His flesh and drink His

blood, so that our sinful bodies are made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. We are what we eat.

Jesus said, *This is my blood of the new covenant (or testament)*. What Jesus accomplished on Calvary by His crucifixion was a complete renewal of God's relationship with humanity. As baptised communicants, you and I participate in this renewed relationship. *This is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins*. This **IS**. Holy Communion is not a memorial service for Jesus. Our forgiveness, our relationship with God in Christ is a present reality, an eternal reality, not a dusty old page in a history book. It is dynamic reality, the eternal present of the Holy Spirit. Now is eternal life.

St Paul teaches (I Corinthians 10¹⁶⁻¹⁷) that in Holy Communion, as we consume the bread and wine, the body and blood, we are one with Jesus and one with one another. His body is the Church. In Holy Communion we are united with Christ and with all other Christians in heaven and on earth. This is our fellowship meal, our agape or love feast. Never say that there will be fellowship in the church hall after the service. We may well enjoy fellowship in the hall after the service, but our fellowship is expressed at the profoundest level in our eucharistic fellowship as we celebrate Holy Communion together. [St Paul also warns (I Corinthians 11²⁰⁻³⁴) that if we do not "discern the body" – which I take to mean if we do not approach the Holy Communion in love for God and His people – we *eat and drink our own damnation*. It is vital that we examine ourselves before coming to Holy Communion, that we repent of all our sins and that we forgive those who have sinned against us.]

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Holy Communion is a foretaste of Heaven for those of us who believe and a witness to the world of what Christ has done for us to those who do not. In that sense, Holy Communion is a mission service and, when other people see the importance which we attach to it, it is an invitation to them to come and find out what they are missing. Roger.

Annual Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Monday

6th April 2.00 pm

Rectory Grounds + Church Hall

£2.00 per child

DEANERY QUIET DAY AT AYLESFORD PRIORY SATURDAY 6TH JUNE 2015: 10am – 4.30pm

This year the day will be led by The Revd Callan Slipper, an Anglican priest, who lives in a community of the Focolare Movement, an international project to foster Christian unity. There is no charge for the day, only donations for teas/coffees. Bring your own packed lunch. We shall be using the St Therese Room. To book a place please contact the Revd David Green by phone (**01634 719052**) or by email: revdavidgreen@blueyonder.co.uk David will get back to you confirming a place. If by phone, please leave a message on the answerphone if he does not pick up.

Christian Aid

A Division of The British Council of Churches



Christian Aid Supper

This takes place this year on April 17th at 7.30 pm at Upnor Church. Tickets £7.00. Please contact Roger if you wish to come.

Christian Aid

A Division of The British Council of Churches



Christian Aid Help Needed

Could anyone please volunteer to coordinate the Christian Aid street collection in this parish for Christian Aid Week? This is the second week in May. What it entails is to order the envelopes we need and to arrange street collectors to deliver and collect them. The existing coordinator (Shirley Crundwell) will advise you. The street collection is one of Christian Aid's main sources of income and it is an effective way of keeping the important work Christian Aid does in the public eye. We have one of the most successful street collections in the area and we'd like to keep it that way!

Blythswood



There has been a number of changes in the way Blythswood is run recently. Phil Andrews Fundraising and Logistics Manager, South East England of Blythswood, will come and talk to us about the current set up at our services at Cuxton at 9.30 on 29th March (Palm Sunday) and at Halling at 11.00 on 19th April.

From the Westminster Catechism

The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

General Election 2015

I was wondering if there was anything helpful I might be able to say on this subject when this verse was brought to my notice. RIK. II Chronicles 7¹⁴: If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

From the Registers

Baptism:

1st March

Rosie Marie Bullen

Strood

Funerals:

17th February

Jean Dorothy Hannen (76)

Poplicans Road

24th February

Gwendolyn May Lott (87)

Stake Lane

26th February

Caroline Elizabeth Ely (97) formerly of Halling & Cuxton

13th March

Peter Michael Sutton (84) formerly of Cuxton

Good Friday Explained

“God could not forcibly reconcile us to himself, since he wants us to be sons, not robots: God could not ignore the sin which is an open rebellion against his holiness: God could not leave us to perish, since that would be to fail in his creative purpose. So God did the unimaginable, yet the only thing: he sent his Son, his other self, to join man in the depth – the last and bitterest depth, where sin cuts us from the holy God and death claims the victory – so that for us, and with us, and in us, he might conquer. This was the way of love.” David H C Read in *The Christian Faith*.

There is a green hill far away,
without a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified
who died to save us all.

He died that we might be forgiven,
he died to make us good,
that we might go at last to heaven,
saved by his precious blood.

Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved,
and we must love him too,
and trust in his redeeming blood,
and try his works to do.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
what pains he had to bear,
but we believe it was for us
he hung and suffered there.

There was no other good enough
to pay the price of sin,
he only could unlock the gate
of heaven, and let us in.

Mrs C F Alexander.

Forthcoming Attractions:

March 29th: Phil Andrews of Blythswood to speak at 9.30 service at St Michael's.

April 2nd 7.00 pm: Passover Supper at St John's. Tickets £7.00 & £3.50 from Shirley Crundwell or Jenny Beaney or Rector.

April 6th: 2.00 Easter Egg Hunt Rectory Grounds £2.00 per hunter.

April 17th 7.30 pm: Christian Aid Supper at Upnor Church. Tickets £7 from Rector.

April 19th: Phil Andrews of Blythswood to speak at 11.00 service at St John's.

April 25th (St Mark's Day) 9.30 am Holy Communion at St John's, followed at 10.00 by Vestry Meeting & APCM.

June 24th (Nativity of St John the Baptist) 7.30 pm: Holy Communion & Confirmation at St Michael's.

July 11th: from 6.00 pm *St Benedict's Day Barbecue in Rectory Grounds.

July 16th: 7.00 for 7.30 pm at St Michael's Prayer and Praise for Foodbank/CAP.

September 19th: 7.30 pm Christian Aid Quiz in Cuxton Church Hall.

September 29th: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist at St Michael's, preacher the Archdeacon.

October 4th: Harvest Festival. Harvest Supper to follow evening service at venue to be announced.

December 12th: 10.00 Christmas Coffee Morning in Church Hall.

December 16th: 12.00 Christmas Parish Lunch in Church Hall.

*The monks at Halling were Benedictine. As we are celebrating their founder's day, this counts as a religious occasion and is exempt from the strictures of the Licensing Act. We shall therefore be able to have music for the first time since 2009.

Riddle

Why is Sunday the strongest day?

Because all the others are week days!

St John's Draw February: £25 to Mr Silver (77) & £10 each to Mrs Shaw (102) & Mrs Terry (125) – drawn by Mrs Gyde. To join this monthly draw in aid of church funds, please contact Betty Head.

St Michael's Draw: £10 Jeanne Harris, £10 Lorna Jones, 3rd (undenominated) prize John Hills - drawn by David and Joyce Haselden. Please contact Jeanne Harris if you would like to join this draw.

Unfortunate Entry in an Auction Catalogue

Victorian painting of man on trial for murder. Framed and ready to hang.

Nature Notes February 2015

One month is past , another is begun,
Since merry bells rang out the dying year
And buds of rarest green began to peer,
As if impatient for a warmer sun,
And though the distant hills are bleak and dun,

The virgin snowdrop, like a lambent fire,
Pierces the cold earth with its green-streaked spire
And in dark woods, the wandering little one,
May find a primrose.
Hartley Coleridge.

The first of the month is bitterly cold with North West winds driving clouds across the sky. The sun shines during part of the morning but afternoon skies are grey. More cold weather is forecast. Birds come to the garden feeders. The 2nd is very cold again with sunshine and blue skies flecked with white cloud. On the morning of 3rd, there is a light dusting of snow and skies are grey. The wind continues to blow from the North West which brings a definite chill to the air. The afternoon brings some sunshine. The night sky is starlit and a bright moon is shining. The next day the golden sun rises over Bluebell Hill lighting up the countryside. We drive to Bluewater with Murphy where I walk him round the lake which ripples in the cold air. The willows' twigs are a deep red and look beautiful. Afternoon skies become overcast. Snow is forecast for later in the week. The morning of 5th is bright with sunshine and blue skies flecked with wisps of cloud. We walk again round the lake. Dark clouds build up and rain falls as we drive home. More cold days follow. The 8th is bright and crisp as we walk round the lake. The water sparkles in the sunlight and a light breeze blows from the north east. I never tire of the beautiful snowdrops and the catkins swaying in the wind. The blue sky is brushed with a few wispy clouds. In the garden, elephants' ears and crocuses are in bloom. Later, in the evening, a bright moon and stars shine in the night sky. The 10th is in complete contrast to previous days for grey clouds cover the sky all day. At Bluewater, we walk round the mirror-smooth lake. It is very pleasant and I can feel some warmth from the sun on my face. The sun continues to shine brightly in the afternoon. At home, I watch a flock of pigeons as they fly to the trees by the river. I can see two Canada geese calling loudly. In the afternoon of 11th, I listen to birdsong coming from the branches of the conifer. Blackbirds and crows come to the garden. Another grey day follows as I walk the spongy grass paths round the lake. The air is quite cold but not unpleasant. I see tight green buds on hazel twigs and the catkins are quite still for there is

hardly a breath of wind. A beautiful jay comes to the garden in the afternoon. The following afternoon, dark grey clouds gather, march across the sky and bring heavy rain. The bare trees stand out against the grey sky as the light fades. On 14th I walk along Pilgrim's road where I hear rooks chattering in the trees. There is a dampness in the air for the rest of the day. A pair of long tailed tits come to feed. They are such striking birds. On 15th, there are glimpses of the sun as I walk to church. Later, skies clear to reveal blue skies and sunshine. I listen to birdsong in the garden and feed the birds. Feral pigeons come to investigate. The pale blue sky is flecked with pink clouds as the sun travels further west. The air is still. Trees are silhouettes against the clear blue. I'm aware of the extra daylight. The early morning of 16th is grey and misty after late night fog; then the air clears to give a bright day. I walk with Murphy at Bluewater where I see a few daffodils in bud and crocuses in bloom. Rain falls in the evening and into the night. The morning of 17th soon brightens to give blue skies and golden sunshine. I walk round the lake with Murphy. A chilly westerly breeze blows, rippling the lake where I hear and see a Canada goose and a coot. Marsh gulls fly overhead and I hear their calls. The afternoon sunshine is glorious lighting up the garden where two large crows come to investigate. The early evening sky is a pale blue adorned with pink from the setting sun. There is no breath of wind. Stars shine in the night sky. On 18th, the sun beams down from a blue sky brushed with wisps of white cloud. A fresh westerly wind blows as I walk with Murphy round the lake. It is very pleasant and I can feel the warmth of the sun on my face. The sun continues to shine in the afternoon. I watch a flock of pigeons as they fly to the trees by the river. I can just see some sparkling water through the bare branches beyond the embankment. The sky is a clear blue. The next day is damp and chilly. Long tailed tits are coming to the garden. The 21st is grey with rain. This clears but grey skies remain. In the afternoon I walk along Pilgrim's Road where

snowdrops bloom along some of the banks. As I view the river and hills from a friend's window, I marvel at the range of colours in the sky- deep and light greys, pinks and golds, and small patches of blue. A few miles away, rain is falling which creates a rainbow from the setting sun. Greys, pinks and blues are features of the late afternoon sky. I walk home at 5.15pm and it is still light. On 22nd the sun rises over Bluebell Hill but it does not last as grey clouds cover the sky by mid-morning. The North West wind is cold as it drives clouds across the sky. Rain falls in the afternoon and continues into the evening with strengthening winds. The next day blue skies and golden sunshine are soon replaced by billowing grey clouds which march across the sky from the south west but no rain falls. Sunshine returns but grey clouds lurk. The afternoon becomes very cold. Grey and salmon pink clouds drift across the sky and then the skies clear; the night sky is bright with stars. On

24th I see daffodils blooming on the banks at Bluewater. On 25th I drive to Addington. The trees stand bare against an overcast sky while a cold north westerly wind blows. Two chaffinches followed by feral pigeons come to the garden to feed then a lone robin takes a turn. On 27th, I see that there has been an overnight frost and the early morning air is very cold. At Bluewater, I see a pair of elegant swans gliding on the lake. The daffodils look beautiful in the sunlight. The night sky is lit by the moon and stars. The last day of the month is grey and damp. Rain has fallen during the night. Birds come to feed when I have replenished the nuts and seed. A blackbird hops across the grass looking for food while a pair of long tailed tits fly among the bare lilac branches. Darkness falls but the moon and stars are hidden by clouds. More rain falls. Another month passes.

Elizabeth Summers.



Halling WI

It's coming to something when the founder President of Halling WI forgets the WI meeting night. That's what happened to me this month. How time catches up with you and passes you by. Busily dishing up my evening meal, a voice called from my back door, "You coming up to the Hall with me or are you getting there yourself?" Yes it was Betty calling and yes I had forgotten it was WI night. Dropping every thing (not my roast lamb) I quickly picked my "flower of the month" in the dark, grabbed my painting of Kineggy Beach and managed to get to the meeting on time. Our speaker had already arrived. We were going to have another back to front meeting which is now almost the norm. This is either to allow the speaker to get home at a decent time as some do come from a distant, or to spare them the WI business. This month's speaker was from SE Water. The last time we had a speaker from SE Water must have been over forty years ago and he was a little man with a beard, can't remember his name. This time we had a lady who had been married in Cuxton Church some time ago. She probably couldn't mend a leak in the road but she knew a great deal about water.

Well, the water hasn't changed in all that time. It's still wet, but what is done with it to make it as clean as it may have done. The people who say we shouldn't have to pay for water as it is free

from God should have seen Sarah's presentation. The filtering and cleaning at the treatment works has to be seen to be believed. We in Halling are very lucky because we drink Halling water and all the time the Blue Lake is there I don't think we shall go thirsty. SE Water have three reservoirs in Halling that I know of and we have the little treatment works in Vicarage Road. The old one, which is now a row of houses, was the first treatment works in Kent. Sarah then went on to explain to us why we should not waste our water. It is a precious commodity with great numbers of people relying on it. Why we are all having meters installed? I think this is a good thing. Then at least you can please yourself if you have a shower or water your garden. You don't feel guilty because you are paying for it. SE Water do excellent work with the charity Water Aid. Sarah's talk was informative, very interesting and eye opening and, as I thanked her on behalf of all of us, I told her of my own thoughts. Every new house built now should have a water tank built under the lawns. Before Sarah went home, she judged our competitions. Sylvia was first with her purple anemone for flower of the month, and my water colour of Keneggy Beach won the picture with connections with water. I did paint that picture a few years ago.

After our cup of tea we did our WI business. Minutes were read and correspondence dealt with.

The most pressing business this month was choosing the next National Executive Committee. We at Halling do not use the pin method although not many of our members know the present committee. Pick out a few you know of, a few new ones and always make sure the whole country has a representative if possible.

Our speaker for March is Mr Dennis Chambers who is going to talk on Reincarnation. I have

been looking forward to this one. I hope he is going to tell this old dinosaur she is returning as a butterfly, but with my luck I shall be coming back as a caterpillar. to eat your cabbages before the birds eat me. Competition next month is something spiritual or out of this world. You have got to get your thinking caps on for this one. Phyllis.

Good News

You will remember that our CMS mission partners in the Philippines, Paul and Charitas Cho, had to come home early when they realised that Charitas was having a baby. Their daughter was born on 25th February. Her name is Joanna Haeun(which means Grace of God in Korean). Paul is awaiting an operation on a troublesome shoulder. Meanwhile our prayers are for God to reveal to them what He is calling them to now and for His continued blessing on the seminary where Paul taught prospective clergy in Manila, the work to train priests from China and Vietnam where training is not available under the current regimes, and Charitas' work with street children with special needs.

Women's World Day of Prayer – Friday, 6th March

On Friday, 6th March, churches in Great Britain and all over the world celebrated Women's World Day of Prayer. It was St. Michael's turn to hold the Women's World Day of Prayer this year and together with the United Reformed Church in Cuxton, Halling Baptist Church and St. John's Church in Halling, each church participated with readers, representing the different aspects and concerns of the women of the Bahamas. The theme of this year's service was Jesus washing his disciples' feet and saying to them, "**Do you know what I have done to you?**" This was acted out by the United Reformed Church. It was wonderful to feel the solidarity of women joining together to pray for problems and issues which are affecting them in this world.

Last year, Buffy, Mary (Morren) and Jenny were given the task of presenting this year's special Prayer Day Service. Back in October, when Mary and Jenny attended the preparation day in Tunbridge Wells, it was difficult to imagine transforming the church into looking anything like the Bahamas, especially in winter and in Lent! However, Mary with her wonderful artistic gift, created a beautiful display of the Bahamas, with bright colours, seashells, tropical fruits and pretty flowers. It is hard to imagine that, behind this beautiful holiday resort, the women experience real problems and we prayed for these to be resolved: Poverty (to be blessed), Domestic violence (to feel blameless), a Migrant (to be accepted), a teenage mother (never alone) HIV and AIDS (to be included), Breast Cancer (to be cured).

Gillian Feraday led us into our songs of worship on the piano and the singing was tremendous. As one lady remarked, it felt as though we were really experiencing strength of support for women throughout the world. Next year, we are looking forward to joining together again in St. John's Church, Halling. Jenny.



Cuxton WI

Our speaker this month was Mr Jack Deans who had spent 30+ years working at Scotland Yard in the fingerprint department. During that time he had attended 120 murders in the London area. Although a gruesome subject, he made it very entertaining and had a keen sense of humour

which, as he explained, helped him to get through some of the scenes that he encountered. He told us that fingerprinting is still the first way to trap criminals with DNA much further down the list of methods. He explained how really stupid some criminals are and make simple mistakes which lead to their arrest. Time spent in the witness box can also be quite stressful but however late you

are home from that or a crime scene there was no such thing as counselling; you just got straight back on with the next case. I asked him if he had ever felt threatened in his job but he said not until he had to go to Northern Ireland during the time of the IRA and whilst there, he certainly didn't feel at all safe and was glad to come back home. After all the crime we enjoyed a good cuppa and then got down to our business section. When giving out the birthday cards Pat told us the delightful news that Kath Dove will be 90 this month. Although she rarely comes now, we all remember her with affection. There was news of a royal garden party for the WI members to celebrate the anniversary in June. There is also a luncheon cruise on the Thames in June and about a dozen of us have signed up for that day. Maureen is hosting a soup lunch fund raiser next week. Our own 70th birthday "Do" will be a meal at the White Hart also in June-- its going to be a very busy month!

All our in-house groups are busy. Craft still knitting baby blankets and sewing breast cushions for the local hospital. If anyone has a few hours to spare each week, the Wisdom Hospice would like some help in the craft area for day patients. We are hoping to support the Cuxton Village Lunch on 7 June with our now usual tea and cake stall. There is a Home Economics day in April in Ditton and the annual Kent/West Kent council meeting in Tunbridge Wells later in March. We may be getting older but with all these things going on there is no sign of anyone slowing down yet!

Next month our speaker is Barbara Stevens talking about the Trials and tribulations of a Public Speaker and as she is the mother of Nigel Farage she should be very good at this. Come along as a guest on April 2nd up at the Church Hall at 7.30pm. Sheila.

Produce & Praise

On April 12th, there will be a produce show in the Jubilee Hall. As this draws to a close by about 4.30, the church tea will commence, as usual on a second Sunday, and then Evening Prayer at 5.30. This provides an opportunity, if they wish, for service goers to come a little early and to see something of the show and show goers to stay on a little late for the tea and service.

News from the Cuxton Community schools

Dear Friends of our school,

It has been extremely busy in the Cuxton schools. Staff are working effectively to ensure children are making progress and are engaged in their learning. There is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in both schools. The buildings have vibrant displays of children's work and children are enjoying the topic each year group is focusing on.

We have recently held a book week to try and encourage more children to foster a love of books and reading. Class teachers swapped for story time, each class thought about a different author and the various books he/she had written and we had a story teller in school who inspired the children greatly. Parents attended a book shop at the end of each day and the week ended with each child coming into school dressed as a book character.

As part of their topic work the children have been on a trip to the Natural History Museum, had a visit from 'Shake, Rattle and Roll' and played some marvellous instruments and soon some are visiting Horton Kirby Nature Reserve.

Each Friday afternoon the older children attend 'open door' where visitors from the community or the children's parents spend time in school talking with the children about their career path. This has really engaged the children and we have spoken about them working hard to fulfil their dreams.

Each class is performing an assembly to their parents and today we have 12 classes performing to their Mums for a special Mothers Day Assembly. I am sure there will be both laughter and tears!

The Friends of the school who raise money for us with your support continue to work extremely hard, running school disco's, cake sales, a Mother's Day shop and preparing for the annual egg rolling event! Next week the year 2 children attend the Medway Music Festival, performing on the stage in the Central Theatre Chatham. We will be one of about 20 schools performing over three different days and we always come back very proud of the children who have looked smart and sang clearly, behaving well!

There is always so much more I could write but it would fill the magazine! So lovely to see the sunshine and it means the children can enjoy the fresh air! I chuckled to myself this week whilst walking across the playground during playtime- the sun was out and a group of children (all girls) had removed their coats and were lying pretending to sunbathe! It was still only about 10 degrees! Sandra Jones, Head teacher.



A Home Without a Dog is Just a House.

First of all, let me thank all of you for your kind words, e mails, cards and letters about Max. He was a very good dog and a great character. You may be interested to know, that, if all goes to plan, I shall shortly be bringing home a new spaniel puppy, whom I shall name Tommy – just as soon as he is old enough to leave his mother, brother and six sisters. I hope you will soon be seeing him around and he may well be writing for this magazine.

In the mean time, I thought you might like to hear about some of the other dogs I have had since I became a clergyman. When I was curate at Orpington, back in 1980, I very much wanted a dog, but I felt that it was not possible to have one as I was out so much, sometimes having to stay away overnight. Dogs really love company and it is not fair to leave them for long periods on their own. I suffered a number of burglaries, however, and the police were not at that time treating domestic robbery as a priority, and my father urged me to get a dog, promising to look after him when I was away – a promise which I think he sometimes later regretted (though only a little bit). I enquired at the pet shop and they didn't have any dogs, but they knew of a family who had found a very young puppy abandoned in the woods. They had named him Blue, taken him home and looked after him, but he had become too much for them to manage when he got bigger. I took Blue off their hands. He was a spaniel type dog and adorable as they all are. Also mischievous. One Saturday afternoon I came in to discover that he had managed to get the Sunday joint out of the refrigerator and had made a start on it. My guests the next day and I had to share what was left. I didn't tell them that Blue had had first bite until the meal was over. Poor Blue. I did not have him very long. The people who found him had not been able to have him injected. I did, but it was too late and he must already have contracted the parvo virus of which he died.

Soon after, a friend and I went to some kennels where they took in strays. Believe it or not, we walked about ten miles in the pouring rain to this rather unprepossessing establishment. I realise now that it was a risk. We weren't shown where the dogs were kept, but it was all very dirty and muddy. I asked for a medium sized male and they led out a very thin springer spaniel, on a lead so poor that it would not survive the journey home. We took him back to Orpington by train, naming him Ben, as we passed near the place where I had lived as a small child and loved to ride on the back of our neighbour's dog also called Ben. Ben was so hungry that he tried to eat the chewing gum on the train floor, raided the biscuit bins in the pet shop at the station, and eyed up the guinea pigs alarmingly. We got him home and he proved to be a very friendly and devoted dog, perhaps too much so.

Next morning, I decided to leave him indoors for half an hour or so while I went to church. When I returned, the house was empty. Because he could not bear to be alone, he had jumped out of an upstairs window. He was now unharmed in a neighbour's shed. So now I had a guard dog who wouldn't stay in the house on his own. Well he did learn to, but mostly he came with me. I soon found that most people welcome dogs. The people I took him to visit would feed him biscuits and give him milk and tea to drink. There were people who used to come up to him in the street, people I didn't know, and speak to him. One poor woman with a similar looking dog was accused by some children of having stolen Ben. He visited schools and sheltered accommodation and often came to church and to various meetings. He happily travelled by car, bus and train. Once, when we were walking together, he got on a bus by himself and I had to ask the driver to wait while I got him back! He enjoyed many visits to public houses, where he sometimes drank beer from the ash trays. One night, when I hadn't taken him, I found myself locked out as he had put the bolt on and I was the one who had to climb in an upstairs window.

He loved playing football with the church youth club and any activity involving playing with children. He really clung to me. He would walk safely at my side without his lead. We went running together, covering many miles in the days when I too was fit. We ran in the woods around Orpington and the lanes in the surrounding countryside. When we moved to Ramsgate, we ran on the beach and he would also come in

swimming with me in the sea. I don't think he really liked being out of his depth, but he loved splashing in water – garden ponds, the lake in the park and the sea. When there was snow on the beach, he would run into the sea and come out with ice in his fur. It didn't seem to bother him. Ben loved fetching sticks and stones. If you threw a pebble on a beach, he could find the very same stone among all the millions of others and bring it back. When I cut the grass, he would drop sticks in front of the mower to make me throw them for him. When I threw weeds onto the compost heap, he would bring them back to me, even stingers.

He really hated being parted from me, however. He would jump a six foot gate, rather than be left alone in the garden, and, if I wanted to go out without him in the car, I used to have to take him for a little ride in it, park it round the corner, and then go back for it, when he had forgotten where it was. I don't know how old Ben was when he died of heart disease. I don't think he was very old, but he had had a very full life, packed with fun. Moreover, the possibility that he might be at home proved enough to deter the burglars.

A very short time after Ben died, and still living at Ramsgate, I went into town to pay some money into the church account. A few doors away from the bank was a pet shop with some black puppies in the window, cross collie and labrador. I bought one and a friend bought his brother, Gyp. Mine was Bobby, whom many of you will remember. He too had a very full life, lots of long walks at Ramsgate and, from 1987, in the beautiful countryside around here. He too loved to come running with me. If I went out running without him, he would turn his face to the wall in disgust and ignore me when I came in. When he became old, however, that changed. He would get in his basket and lie down just as soon as he saw me in my running shorts. Like Ben, Bobby was a frequent visitor in parishioners' homes, schools, sheltered accommodation and, of course, church. He made lots and lots of friends in the parish and further afield. Like Ben, he had his "clients" who would try to tempt him with biscuits and tea. Bobby was fussier than Ben, however, and would lead people on to make him tea just as he liked it, with plenty of sugar and milk, and then refuse to drink it. Unlike, Ben, he had never gone without.

Bobby very often came on holiday with us as a family and had lots of walks and runs on the beaches around Bognor, Bournemouth and Poole, and, once, Newquay, though he didn't particularly like the water and thought that the game of fetch was a waste of time. Those of you who remember Bobby will remember what a naturally good dog he was. He never made a fuss about anything and was generally obedient, much more placid than my spaniels. Bobby lived to be nearly 15 and he too enjoyed a good life with lots of fun and love.

It does sadden me, however, when I think that we couldn't do now what gave us so much joy in the past. The regulatory regime has dramatically tightened over the last thirty years and things like taking your dog on the beach or into certain establishments, which were formerly regarded as harmless fun, are now banned or regulated. Bobby was not as free as Ben. Max was less free than Bobby and, no doubt, Tommy will face more restrictions still. It's not only dogs, but we human beings as well whose lives are increasingly hemmed in with seemingly endless rules. From well-meaning, but over zealous, health and safety and political correctness to downright killjoy jobsworthery, bureaucrats and politicians are taking away our personal freedoms. We might live longer in the cocoons the bureaucrats are spinning for us, but what happened to all the fun in life? I'd rather be a butterfly than a chrysalis, even if there's a greater risk of being eaten by a bird or blown away in a storm. An important part of being human is to take responsibility. If all our responsibility is taken away from us by the state, our lives are impoverished; we are robots or puppets whose strings are in the hands of our masters, the bureaucrats. We cannot, however, take responsibility unless we are free to be irresponsible. That freedom is in itself a risk, but without risk, there is no freedom.

Max was thirteen when he died. There are many memories of him too, from puppyhood almost up to the present – his determination to do just what he wanted, the strength of his character, his loving nature. I won't say any more about him just now. Most of knew him or at least knew all about him from these articles. He won't be forgotten. I am very much looking forward to sharing Tommy's life with you. I'll see that he has a lot of fun and I'm sure he'll bring me much joy too. Roger.