

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
2 nd April Lent 5 Passion Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
	4.00 Deanery Songs of Praise & tea in church hall.	
9 th April Palm Sunday	9.30 Procession from Hall & Holy Communion	Matthew 21 vv 1-11 (hall) p988 Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Matthew 26 v14 – 27 v66 p996
13 th April Maundy Thursday	7.30 pm Holy Communion.	Exodus 12 vv 1-14 p68 I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
14 th April Good Friday	10.00 Family Service	
16 th April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
23 rd April Easter 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1090
30 th April Easter 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
Services at S John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
2 nd April Lent 5 Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Lamentations 3 vv 19-33 p826 Matthew 20 vv 17-34 p968
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
9 th April Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Matthew 26 v14 – 27 v66 p996
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
13 th April Maundy Thursday	9.30 Holy Communion	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
14 th April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	
16 th April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Colossians 3 vv 1-17 p1184 John 20 vv 1-10 p1089
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
23 rd April Easter 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1090
30 th April Easter 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061

Holy Communion will be celebrated every day in Easter Week at 9.30 am at St John's on 20th at St Michael's on the other days.

Copy Date May Magazine: 14th March 8.30 am Rectory.

Contributions of articles, opinions, questions and historical and nature notes are welcome for possible inclusion. Please send contributions to the Rectory by 8.30 am on copy day. If you think this magazine is good value, please encourage your friends and neighbours to take it. Ask your street distributor or the Rector to add new subscribers.



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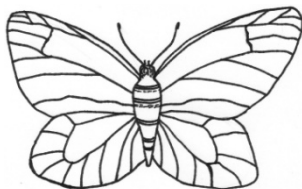


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Peace and Justice

Do you ever listen to “the Moral Maze” on Radio 4? I find it a very frustrating experience.

They ask some brilliant

questions, but they’re not so good at coming up with the answers. One recent programme considered whether it was possible to have both peace and justice and, if not, which would you sacrifice?

The programme began with a man from Northern Ireland whose mother had been murdered thirty years ago by paramilitaries in the troubles. Should her murderers be sought out, put on trial and punished, even if to do so would set back the peace process? In other words, should justice for her and her family be pursued at all costs, even if it meant that the fighting would continue longer? The man’s name is Jude White and he, very generously, said, No. He would forego justice in order to advance the peace process. When questioned, he said that he would expect ordinary

murderers (what they ironically call in Northern Ireland “ordinary decent criminals”) to be pursued and brought to justice in all circumstances. It was only terrorists he was prepared to see let off. He admitted that this was illogical, but anything would be worth it if it put an end to the troubles and avoided further killing. Interestingly, Mr White is a Christian and from that he drew the strength to forgive his enemies but he also looked to God to ensure that justice prevails and to deal with sinners accordingly. We can’t escape God’s justice. Neither is God a pragmatist, turning a blind eye to what He would rather not have to deal with.

Then there is the question of soldiers and policemen in Northern Ireland now being put on trial for what they are alleged to have done maybe several decades ago. Some people would say that, if soldiers and policemen have broken the law, they should face justice, the same as anyone else. Indeed one might expect that soldiers and policemen should be held to a higher standard than the rest of us. Other people would say that

these soldiers and policemen put their own lives at risk to fight terrorism. How can it be fair to put them on trial now for what they did in defence of the whole community thirty or forty years ago? Is it realistic to arm young men, to send them into situations in which they and innocent bystanders are under possibly lethal attack by terrorists and to expect them - in the heat of rioting or battle - always to make the right decisions, especially when any error might lead to people being killed? Should we expect the forces of law and order always to play by the rules when facing a ruthless enemy which has little compunction in committing atrocities? What about those higher up in the army, the police and the security services? Should they always act in accordance with the law or might they sometimes break the rules fighting an enemy who himself doesn't respect the rules? At what point does maintaining public order against violent criminals become a war against an opposing army? The rules aren't the same, but the British Government has always insisted that we were engaged in law enforcement action against violent criminals in Northern Ireland, while some on the other side insisted that they were soldiers fighting in a war for freedom .

The price of peace in Northern Ireland was an effective amnesty for serious crimes committed during the troubles. Was it worth it? Or can, as one witness insisted, there only really be peace if the previously warring factions face up to their crimes, acknowledge and confess them and people are properly punished for the wrong they have done?

It is unlikely that warring factions will lay down their arms if they expect to be put on trial for what they have done during a conflict. So peace may appear to depend on drawing a line and starting again with a clean sheet. Yet, how is that just for the victims and how can people be expected to live in peace with one another if atrocities are unacknowledged, unconfessed, unpunished and unforgiven?

There is also the issue of victors' justice. If the winning side put soldiers of the losing side on trial, can they expect a fair trial?

There is the further question of due process, especially if the events under investigation

happened long ago. Evidence will have been lost. Memories fade. Can people who were on one side or the other of a violent dispute be trusted to tell the truth now? Can they even be sure of their own ability to tell the truth unvarnished?

Punishment has three components: retribution, reformation and deterrence. We are probably most comfortable with the last two, but in these post-conflict situations it is harder to see the point. If we punish old men for what they did decades ago, how is that going to help them to reform now? Is it likely that imprisoning former combatants for offences committed in the remote past will deter present day terrorists, insurgents or regular troops who might be tempted to go beyond what is permitted in international law?

The real issue seems to be retribution, the feeling that murderers, rapists and torturers shouldn't be allowed to get away with it. There is a balance to be restored. They've hurt other people and they deserve to be hurt themselves – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. There is a distinction between retribution, justice meted out by society because society has suffered harm from a crime committed, and revenge, individual victims seeking their own back, but it's sometimes a very fine distinction.

Before we go on, it's worth saying something in favour of retribution as setting a limit to punishment. The punishment must be in proportion to the crime and no greater. The criminal gets what he deserves and no more. That is why those indeterminate sentences for public protection are unjust. The idea was that a criminal should serve his term, pay his debt to society, get what he deserved, but, after that, be kept in prison until the state decided that he was no longer a risk to the public.

You can see how you could deter illegal parking by shooting offenders or try to reform a petty shop lifter by imposing twenty years of intensive therapy in a secure unit, but such penalties would be unjust. The punishment must be in proportion to the crime and no more. Mercy might make it less, but pragmatism is no excuse for making it more.

So back to retribution. Should people who have committed terrible crimes ever be allowed to get away with them? If the price of peace is to overlook atrocities is it worth it? Can there be peace without justice?

Tough questions to which the Easter story gives a tough, but truthful answer. God is just. Jude White is quite right. We shan't get away with our wickedness. There will be retribution. The victims of human evil can be quite sure that their assailants will be dealt with. Evil, sin, wickedness, whatever you like to call it, breaks the peace, the peace between human beings and God, the peace between us human beings with one another. Somehow, along with justice, there have to be mercy and forgiveness. There can be no peace without justice. There can be no peace without mercy. There can be no mercy without forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't pretending that the injury never happened. It isn't saying that it didn't matter. It isn't just forgetting about it. Mercy presupposes justice and mercy depends on forgiveness.

Psalm 85.

Lord, thou art become gracious unto thy land: thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the offence of thy people : and covered all their sins. Thou hast taken away all thy displeasure : and turned thyself from thy wrathful indignation. Turn us then, O God our Saviour : and let thine anger cease from us. Wilt thou be displeased at us for ever : and wilt thou stretch out thy wrath from one generation to another? Wilt thou not turn again, and quicken us : that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O Lord : and grant us thy salvation. I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me : for he shall speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, that they turn not again. For his salvation is nigh them that fear him : that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together : righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall flourish out of the earth : and righteousness hath looked down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall shew loving-kindness : and our land shall give her increase. Righteousness shall go before him : and he shall direct his going in the way. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. **Amen.**

Updates



The 1932 photograph of a South Eastern and Chatham Railway C class locomotive taken in 1932 at Soldier's Hard was not very clear. Here is a better picture. In addition to the shops recorded in Halling High St in the 1950s, there was also a sweet shop next to the library. Nobody else can recall a pub called the "Good Intent" in Halling, but the "Walnut Tree" is remembered as an off licence where you could send the boys to buy a jug of beer after church for you to enjoy (shandy for them) with your Sunday dinner. A different world! Someone was saying that there were no obese children in the 'fifties. I immediately thought of one notable exception to that rule in my school. Then I remembered that he lived in a sweet shop – which might explain things. I can also remember going to the jug and bottle of our local pub when I was a child to buy my grandmother's cigarettes. My mother was horrified when she found about it fifty years later. RIK.

On the Cross, God demonstrates just how seriously He takes justice. Jesus takes upon Himself all the sins of the world and suffers the penalty due. On the Cross, God demonstrates how seriously He takes mercy. The sins of the world are dealt with in the offering by Jesus of His life once and for all for us. In Him and His death on the Cross, all the sins of the world are there to be forgiven. *We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Our peace with God is the key to our peace with one another.

You can have peace and justice. We must have peace and justice. Without either of them, life wouldn't be worth living, but we can only have peace with justice through Jesus of Whom it is said, *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.* In other words, what we cannot do, God Himself does in Jesus. He reconciles all things to Himself – peace and justice, peace with God and peace with one another. Easter is the key both to peace and justice.

Happy Easter, Roger.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

12th February
4th March

Harry Charles Crittenden
Reece Isaiah Smith

Strood
Snodland

Funerals:

28th February
2nd March
3rd March
8th March

Marie Ann Hendey (78)
Harry Guest (82)
Ruby Whibley (89)
Marjorie Irene Court (83)

formerly of Harold Road
Rochester Road Cuxton
Snodland
Reginald Road

Harry Guests RIP

I cannot begin to say thank you for all the cards, phone calls and gifts I have received since the death of my beloved Harry. He would have been astounded at the numerous notes – both sad and funny – regarding his time in Cuxton. We had 60 wonderful years together when he loved and cared for me for which I was so lucky. I must also thank Roger for all the help and understanding he has given me when it was greatly needed. Please remember Harry with a smile. Margaret Guest.

Holy Communion 9.30 am St Michael's on Wednesdays		Holy Communion 9.30 am St John's on Thursdays	
5 th April	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 31-42	6 th April	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
12 th April	Hebrews 12 vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	13 th April Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 John 13 vv 1-35
19 th April	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-35	20 th April	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48
26 th April	Acts 5 vv 17-26 John 3 vv 16-21	27 th April	Acts 5 vv 27-33 John 3 vv 31-36

CUXTON'S OWN CHARITY

The Thomas Stevens Trust

This charity was founded more than 100 years ago by the Rev Thomas Stevens to provide 'Bread and Coal for the needy of Cuxton'.

The present trustees interpret that to mean we can provide funds for 'Food and Heating' (in the form of coal, an electricity or gas bill).

We have money available.

We need your help: we are asking for nominations for people that would benefit from our assistance. The criteria are as set out above and they **must** be resident in Cuxton.

If you know of an individual or a family that would benefit from our help, please contact any one of the trustees in **confidence**. We do not publish names of those we help.

The Trustees:

Malcolm Curnow

4 Pilgrims Way Cuxton ME2 1LQ
Tel: 01634 719585

Flick Foreman

Whornes Cottage 43 Rochester
Road Cuxton ME2 1AD
Tel: 01634 718480

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Annual Parochial Church Meeting & Vestry Meeting

29th April 10.00 am St John's Church.

Forthcoming Attractions

2nd April 4.00 pm: Deanery Songs of Praise at St Michael's followed by tea in the church hall. All welcome.
17th April 2.00 pm: Easter Egg Hunt Rectory Garden & Church Hall. £2.00 per egg hunter.
22nd April 7.00pm in Cuxton Social Club: Cuxton Voice – Singing competition for adults and teenagers. If you would like to take part, please contact Robin Bournier 07708 362 836. National singing star Jamie Johnson will also be performing in the first half.
29th April 10.00 am: APCM & Vestry Meeting at St John's.
5th May 7.00 pm for 7.30 @ Hoo St Werburgh: Christian Aid Supper.
1st July 6.00 pm: Barbecue at Rectory.

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Monday (17th April) 2.00 pm

Rectory Grounds.

£2.00 per child.

Also refreshments and activities in church hall.

Christian Aid

A Division of The British Council of Churches



As it is increasingly difficult to carry out street collections, next month's magazines will contain Christian Aid collection envelopes. These may be returned to church or posted directly to Christian Aid. It is also possible, if you wish, to donate to Christian Aid online. Christian Aid Week starts on 7th May. Don't forget the Christian Aid Supper and Talk at Hoo St Werburgh on 5th May (7.00 for 7.30, tickets £7.00). Please inform Rector if you wish to attend.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS PRESENTS

CUXTON VOICE

ON 22ND APRIL 2017 AT 7PM

AT CUXTON SOCIAL CLUB, Bush Road, Cuxton

WITH

JAMIE JOHNSON

PROMOTED BY ROBIN BOURNER

To take part in the competition contact Robin on
07708 362 836



There will be a Lent Course in the church hall Wednesday mornings from 1st March 10.30 am to study the course which ties in with *Our Conversation Our Future*. Join in on remaining sessions if you wish.

Do Try This at Home

If Jesus were writing a letter to your church, what would he say? Try writing such a letter and, if you'd like to, send it to me (Roger) personally or for inclusion in this magazine or for use in wider discussions.

Our Conversation; Our Future asks just three questions:

- What may the Holy Spirit be saying to us about our area?
- What do we currently spend our energy and resources on?
- What do we need to change about who we are and what we do?

Our Conversation; Our Future is part of our process to develop a strategic framework for the Diocese. A diocesan strategic framework isn't new. As recently as 1954 the Diocese of Rochester published 'Your Diocese', a sepia-tinged document setting out the circumstances and future opportunities for the area. Those opportunities included massive new housing developments throughout south east London, Kent and Medway. The diocesan leaders of the time saw the opportunity and grasped it, setting out an ambitious plan to build twenty church buildings. Through God's power, these were all completed, and now play an important part in the life and work of God's people. What should we (the diocese, the parish) do now? Please share your thoughts within the parish. You can also respond online. Don't forget to pray about your response. <http://www.rochester.anglican.org/strategy/conversation/take-part/>

The Archbishop of Canterbury will be visiting the diocese from the 17th – 19th July, arrangements to be announced.

Thy Kingdom Come is the Archbishops' prayer initiative for the period from Ascension Day to Pentecost – 25th May to 4th June. The Archbishops state the aim as being:

- To join in prayer with the whole family of God the Father;
- To pray for the empowering of God the Holy Spirit;
- That we may be effective witnesses to God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Parish Lunch 5th April

This will take place in the church hall at 12.00. Christine Eede will not be able to be with us on this occasion. Broth and bread will be provided and dessert fruits. If you wish, please bring other platters to share. All welcome. Collection for Christian Aid.

Bulgarian Orthodox Service at St Michael's

The next Bulgarian Orthodox Service at St Michael's will take place on 1st April at 10.00. Everybody is very welcome to come and join in.

Quotation

Pope Francis: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security.

What If?

I have reason to believe that there will be at least three vacancies to be filled at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Vestry Meeting at 10.00 on 29th April at St John's. What if nobody is willing to take on these responsibilities? Maybe, things just won't get done. We'd miss them very badly. Perhaps people think that those who already give of their time and energy to the parish could take on still more duties, but that would be unreasonable and unfair. Two of the positions I think are likely to become vacant I am forbidden by law from taking. The other I'm not sure about it. It might be legal for me to do it, but I don't think it would be appropriate and, in the circumstances of our parish, I am not sure I could do it anyway. So what about it? Who is willing to step up to the plate and take on these necessary tasks? Roger.

(Advertisement.)

Need A Cleaner?

Call Luke Crook, lukejcrook@hotmail.com and 07961 527642 mobile.

St Michael's Draw March: £10 to Mr & Mrs Beaney (20) & £5 each to Mr Crundwell (14) & Mrs Pitt (10).

St John's Draw: (February): £10 each to Mr Marler (5), Mrs Shaw (102) & Mrs Gyde (133) – drawn by Mr Silver

Wasps and Wood

Following our discussions about wasps, killing them and their cannibalistic habits, I have received a warning that there is an old Kentish saying to the effect that, for every wasp you kill, two will come to its funeral. As the one I killed was in Surrey, I shan't mind if all our local wasps take a few days off stinging in Kent to attend the obsequies.

Some readers might be interested to know that the present site of Cuxton doctors' surgery and car park was originally used by a Mr. James Wraight as his wood yard. This was at some time during the 1880s, precise date uncertain. He held the rights to some woodland in both Cuxton and Upper Halling and supplied local farms, orchards and landowners with everything from picket fencing to hop poles. This old fellow had three trades. He was a forester, charcoal burner and a fence maker. He had two specially adapted heavy horse drawn wagons to bring his timber out of the woods but there are no records left to us today to explain where he stabled his horses. It could have been in what is now Woodhurst Close. A bit later, Jim Wraight also established a wood yard at Upper Halling, but this was later bought out by Bakers who continued to use it for the same work. If any reader has any further information or perhaps a photograph, would they be prepared to share it with the rest of us? It is all part of Cuxton's history

Newcomers to Cuxton who like to enjoy walking in our woods and fields might be interested to know that there is such a thing as a magpie marriage and a poem that goes with it. There is a gathering of magpies in a field during springtime, as few as six or seven or as many as fifty. The male birds will perform an odd set of ritualistic displays before their chosen females. See <http://therattlingcrow.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/on-magpie-marriages.html> for pictures (not taken here). This old poem is said to have arisen in connection with magpies.

One for sorrow,	Five for silver,	Eight for a wish,
Two for joy,	Six for gold,	Nine for a kiss,
Three for a girl,	Seven for a secret,	Ten for a bird,
Four for a boy,	Never to be told.	You must not miss.

Can't Get to the Library?

Let Medway's Home Library Service come to you. Medway Libraries and Archives provide a library service to residents who are housebound and unable to visit a library because of their disability or caring responsibilities. The Home Library service is available to people of all ages, adults and children, their carers and family. A relative, friend or carer can come to the library on your behalf or we can arrange for one of our volunteer couriers/drivers to deliver your library items to your home. We can provide books in ordinary print and large print, audio books (cd), jigsaws and DVD's. To request this service please contact us on **01634 337799**. When we receive your request we will contact you to discuss your needs. Medway Libraries also have downloadable e-Books and Audio books and free access to online reference resources. You can visit the Library website www.medway.gov.uk/libraries to find out more or telephone the library on 01634 337799.

24th June - Our Patronal Festival

What do you do to celebrate a patronal festival. The first Halling Fun Day and several subsequent ones were held on 24th June or the nearest Saturday to celebrate the birthday of St John the Baptist. When it falls on a Sunday, we commemorate him at our normal service. Other years, weekday evenings, we've invited the bishop and celebrated with a Confirmation service. Probably, our church was dedicated to S John the Baptist because it is near the river and, for over a thousand years, John has been the patron saint of Halling. This year his birthday is a Saturday and we'll hold a sung celebration of Holy Communion at 9.30 am. I

don't know how many people will come on a Saturday, but it's an important day in the life of our community and Church isn't only for Sundays. So we'll have to see. Maybe some people who don't normally come on Sundays will join us for this one off special occasion. I'd love to see you there.

A visiting team of bell ringers will ring in celebration at 11.45 am till about 12.15.

We had been hoping that the bishop would come on 29th September for Cuxton's Patronal Festival this year and lead a Confirmation service. Unfortunately, this will not prove possible after all. We are hoping he may come on some other day in the Autumn. If not, we'll take any confirmation candidates to another parish. Please ask me if you are thinking of confirmation this year. Roger.

'SCEPTICS CORNER' – © Mandy Carr 2012

Monologue for Thomas [Ref: John 20: 24-29]

Mary had told us all – but I didn't believe her – and I wasn't the only one. We all thought it was nonsense. But I was the only one who had the courage to say it. I thought I would be doing her a favour by getting her to face reality. But it didn't seem that way to her. You can't blame the poor woman - she was beside herself with grief. We were all cut up by his death – of course we were – but you know what women are like. And we all know what Mary is like.

'Risen from the dead? You're seeing things' I told her. It's just your mind and heart conspiring together because you want it to be true. But it's not. How can it be? You must see that!' She wouldn't have it though. She got so angry she flew at me shouting about my lack of faith and how we'd all deserted him when he needed us most. I'm glad Peter and John were there to calm her down. I'm not very good with hysterical women. All those emotional displays seem so.... needless. When John took her away we all sighed a sigh of relief. I know we all thought she'd finally 'lost it'. Her claims were unsettling but we dismissed them soon enough. The room was full of sceptics that day.

You see, I've always taken pride in weighing things up and coming to conclusions based on facts and hard evidence. I want to examine other possibilities so I don't make a fool of myself. I don't like rushing in with a burst of enthusiasm, like some of the others in our band and I've seen the consequences of that these last three years. I prefer thoughtful, analytical, rational, deduction. Jesus died and that's a fact. And the sad reality was that life had to go on without him and the sooner we recognised that the better. What we needed to alleviate the misery was some normality. We needed to go about our normal business. So, some went fishing, I went to my workshop and some visited family. We thought that perhaps life would return to normal if we did ordinary things, the things we used to do.

But it didn't work. Being with Jesus had ruined us forever. After seeing what we'd seen, and having lived the life we had with him, What could ever compare to that? What could ever be ordinary again?

Then I heard the news that some in our group were claiming that they too had seen the risen Jesus. I began to wonder what had got into them? Had they taken leave of their senses too? I made it clear that unless I could put my hand on the nail marks on his wrists and the spear wound in his side, I would not believe Jesus was alive. Till then, these sightings were just figments of their overwrought imaginations probably bought on by grief, guilt and fear.

Then it happened - the one thing that blew my doubt away. We met together on the Sabbath. They were still going on about Jesus being alive and I have to confess that it was really getting on my nerves by then. I'd had enough and was going to leave when I heard *his* voice. I turned round and right in front of my eyes was Jesus. I reached out my hand to touch him, wondering if he was a ghost but he was solid, flesh and bone under my touch. He took my hand and guided it to his wounds and my fingers touched the scars of the nails and the spear in his side. I touched his crucified flesh alive again with my own hands! He said 'stop doubting and believe.' I fell upon my knees and cried 'My Lord and My God!' What other response could I make? And that day, not only did I meet again my Risen Lord, I was taught an important lesson. I learnt not to ridicule the one who believes yet has not seen for such 'so-called' foolishness can shame the wise. For all things are possible with God.



Tommy's Talking Points

We have a lovely large garden at the Rectory, but do the Rectory dogs get the chance to take full advantage of it? Years and years ago, there used to be a Rectory dog who quite often roamed the village in search of company. That might be as long ago as when what is now the Glebe and part of Woodhurst Close were part of the Rectory grounds. The person who told Master the story is now no longer with us to check. Anyway, in those days, there was much more freedom for dogs and people and we wouldn't get away with it now.



Master's first dog here, Bobby, used to have the run of the garden. He never thought about running away. A couple of times he dashed up to the church hall to chase off people he thought were breaking in. Once, when he had been left in the garden by Master's sister, he went back down to the village to find Master who was doing some shopping. But, generally speaking, he never wanted to leave. He loved his home. He even went home on his own when he got bored while Master was cutting the churchyard grass, which he used to do some of the time when he was young and fit. Best of all, from Master's point of view, he could let Bobby out in the garden last thing at night on his own, knowing that he would come back. When Bobby was very old, a day or two before he died, he struggled outside for a farewell walk around the garden of the home where he had been so happy and, after that, he stayed in close to the house.



Max was a different story. He was a springer spaniel too, after all. When Max was young, he was brought back a couple of times when he had wandered off. Unlike me, he wasn't afraid of traffic and might have wandered off down the road. Like me, he would sometimes jump down off the wall at the bottom of our garden, but, unlike me, he would never jump back up, maybe because he was bigger and heavier. So, when Max was in the garden on his own, he had to be tied up with a long rope, which was a shame, because he loved being outside, especially chasing the leaves when they were swirling in the wind. There was a bit of a mystery in that this rope would often be cut when Master got up in the morning. It was a time of a lot of stress for Master with people putting food waste in the garden – presumably for the wild life, but Max would eat it and Master worried because Bobby's last illness had begun when he ate something he had found in the garden. It was the time when council officers were trespassing in pursuit of a tree preservation order and vandals were throwing things at the windows. So Max was kept in more than he would have liked. He did love hiding, however, and would disappear into the bushes even when Master thought he was watching him. He could vanish in an instant, even though he was bigger than me. He still did it in his last illness even when he could hardly walk, which worried Master one dark, freezing morning when a very sick dog had gone missing. Max's late evening trip round the garden was always on his lead after an incident early in his life. He'd been let out and Master was watching him when the telephone rang. Master tends to assume that, if the telephone rings late at night (say after half past eight), it must be a matter of life and death. As it happened, it wasn't; it was just someone ringing up for a chat with Master's mother. By the time Master got outside again, Max had got up into the wooded part of the garden, and rolled in something very unpleasant so that he had to be bathed before anyone could go to bed. Max did love his garden, however, and there are some beautiful pictures of him out there, monarch of all he surveys. He might have been more obstinate than I am (like Master), but he was also more regal than I am (unlike Master).

But what about me? I was treated rather like Max until recently – no rope, but not often let out unsupervised. I was a naughty puppy, even though I'm so lovable. He's now sure, however, that I won't leave the grounds without him, except possibly into the garden of one neighbour who doesn't really mind. So I'm out there quite a lot, having a mike round, occasionally just chasing around and jumping for no reason at all. I do appreciate the freedom except dog's don't really like being on their own. I want him out there with me. If you don't live with a dog, you won't understand how dogs can pester their masters until they get their way. If he won't come out with me, at least I want the door open so I can come in and out and check on him. Even though he likes being out of doors and doesn't feel the cold like some of his parishioners, he's not always pleased about that, but he does like to see me happy. So I usually get my way. Our last walk at night is a compromise between Bobby and Max. No lead, but supervised; I'm usually good.