

Services at St Michael & All Angels			
1 st April Easter	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024	
8 th April Easter 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 I John 1 v1 – 2v2 p1225 John 20 vv v10-31 p1089	
Monday 9 th April The Annunciation	10.00 Holy Communion Archdeaconry MU	Isaiah 7 vv 10-14 (KJV?) p692 Hebrews 10 vv 4-10 p1207 Luke 1 vv 26-38 p1026	
15 th April Easter 2 Easter 3	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Easter 2	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 3 vv 12-19 p1095 I John 3 vv 1-7 p1226 Luke 24 vv 36-48 p1062	
22 nd April Easter 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-18 p8, Genesis 8 vv 6-18 p9, Genesis 9 vv 8-13 p10 Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 I John 3 vv 16-24 p1227 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076	
29 th April Easter 5	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
1 st April Easter	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Colossians 3 vv 1-7 p1184 John 20 vv 1-10 p1089	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089	
8 th April Easter 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Acts 4 vv 32-35 p1096 John 20 vv v10-31 p1089	
	5. 30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Numbers 16 vv 36-50 p154 John 20 vv 24-29 p1089	
15 th April Easter 2 Easter 3	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism & Stop! Look! Listen!	Acts 3 vv 12-19 p1095 Luke 24 vv 36-48 p1062	
22 nd April Easter 4	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076	
29 th April Easter 5	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083	
Wednesday Holy Communion 9.30 am St Michael's		Thursday Holy Communion 9.30 am St Johns	
4 th April	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-25	5 th April	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48
11 th April	Acts 5 vv 17-26 John 3 vv 16-21	12 th April	Acts 5 vv 27-33 John 3 vv 31-36
18 th April	Acts 8 vv 1-8 John 6 vv 35-40	19 th April	Acts 8 vv 26-40 John 6 vv 44-51
25 th April S Mark	Ephesians 4 vv 7-16 John 15 vv 1-11	26 th April	Acts 13 vv 13-25 John 13 vv 16-20

Holy Communion daily at 9.30 am in Easter Week @ St Michael's except Thursday when it is at St John's. No other services in Easter Week.

Copy Date May Magazine: 8.30 am Rectory 13th April

St Michael's Draw March: £10 Mrs Cheesmer (4), £5 each Mrs Pitt (10) & Mr Haselden (9).

St John's Draw February: £10 each Mrs Thorne (3), Mrs Smitherman (140), Mrs Clarke (180) – drawn Mr Smitherman.



From the Rector

Many years ago now, I received a lot of praise from my family for my Easter sermon. It was because I wasn't going to say anything.

What I did say was, "Just carry on with the celebration." Easter Triumph! Easter Joy! What words could be adequate? What more is there to say. Alleluia! Christ is risen! Rejoice in the Lord always!

So what are we celebrating at Easter?

1. This is how much God loves us.
2. Good is more powerful than evil, life is more powerful than death, love is more powerful than hatred and God is infinitely more powerful than the devil.
3. Through faith in Him and in Him alone, we shall live forever.

What more is there to say? See you in Church. Happy Easter. Roger.

Psalm 113: PRAISE the Lord, ye servants: O praise the Name of the Lord. Blessed be the Name of the Lord: from this time forth for evermore. The Lord's Name is praised: from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same. The Lord is high above all heathen: and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath his dwelling so high: and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth? He taketh up the simple out of the dust: and lifteth the poor out of the mire; That he may set him with the princes: even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house: and to be a joyful mother of children. 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.

April Delights

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Monday
2.00 pm
Rectory Grounds

£2.00

Barn Dance

28th April
7.00 pm for 7.30
Jubilee Hall

£8.00

From the Registers

Baptism:

18th February

Amir Aleali

William Road

Funerals:

28th February

Olive Carter

formerly of Halling

1st March

Geoffrey Cyril Robinson (74)

formerly of Halling

Annual Parochial Church Meeting & Vestry Meeting

These take place this year in the Church Hall at 10.00 am on 28th April. Only those on the church electoral roll can stand for or vote in PCC elections. Candidates may be nominated in advance or at the meeting. Candidates for churchwarden must be on the church electoral roll and must be nominated in advance. Those on the church electoral roll and the civil electoral roll are allowed to vote for the churchwardens. There will also be an account of the accounts and various reports. It is everybody's opportunity to find out what is going on, to raise questions and to make suggestions.

Christian Aid Supper: 27th April, 7.00 for 7.30, Strood Methodist Church. £7.00



Forthcoming Attractions

2nd April 2.00 pm Rectory Grounds: Easter Egg Hunt(£2.00).

27th April 7.00 for 7.30 pm Strood Methodist Church (£7.00).

28th April 10.00 am: Vestry Meeting & APCM Church Hall.

28th April 7.00 for 7.30 pm: Barn Dance Jubilee Hall (£8.00 includes food. Bring drink).

12th July 7.30 pm: Cantium Singers @ St Michael's.

11th November: Centenary of Armistice which ended fighting in the First World War.

Home Group or Prayer Group or Both?

Following the fellowship we enjoyed in the adult confirmation class last year, it was suggested that we should have a regular home group meeting. We'd come together for fellowship, study, discussion and prayer. What time of day and whereabouts (probably the Rectory or some other home) and the frequency (maybe fortnightly or monthly) remain to be decided. Times which have worked successfully are Saturday afternoons and Wednesday mornings. Please let me know if you are interested.

Independently, the idea came up for a prayer group for Halling – one evening a month, 2nd Tuesdays suggested. What does God want from His Church? What are His plans for the future of our parish? Where can we find the resources to play our part? What would we ask of Him? Of what do we need to repent? How much do we have to be thankful for? Again, please let me know if you are interested. Rev'd Ruth Bierbaum



would lead this group, probably at her house. Those who couldn't come could submit prayer suggestions for our church to the group and receive pointers to use in their prayers at home.

Obviously, these suggestions are not mutually exclusive and they could both happen. Roger.

Stone Age Buses

The picture and short account of a Maidstone and District Bristol K6A in last month's magazine was appreciated with the comment, "What about the East Kent Road Car company?" There is at least one bus in East Kent currently painted in

the company's traditional maroon and cream livery in celebration of the centenary of this operator's

foundation in 1916. For many of us, East Kent buses bring back memories of childhood holidays around Margate and Ramsgate, Dover, Deal and Canterbury and we hold them in special affection. Once I was asked if I could provide a sound recording of the engines of East Kent AEC Regents on the 54 route! This picture (posted by Paul Bullivant on the Old Halling Photos site and sent to me by Frank Smith) is a Bristol K6A on route 120 to Upper Halling a school bus. You can just see St Lawrence Chapel in the background. Those were the days. Incidentally, the 20 route started at Gillingham Depot and only some journeys ran on from West Malling to Maidstone.

Many small bus companies were founded around the time of the First World War, some financed by the gratuities soldiers received on being demobbed. Competition was often cutthroat with buses racing one another or big companies timetabling their services deliberately to put smaller operators out of business with one bus in front and one behind the vehicle belonging to the one man concern. Some of the vehicles in those early days were also quite unreliable. Fairly quickly, however, these operations coalesced into regional companies such as East Kent and Maidstone and District which generally had a good reputation for service.

By the 1960s, however, increased car ownership meant fewer bus passengers and growing congestion on the roads made it difficult to keep to timetables. Where I lived as a child, Betsham, we only had a bus every couple of hours, but you knew exactly when to expect them. More recently, buses have become much less reliable. As bus companies were struggling at that time, in 1969 most bus operators were merged into the National Bus Company. This instigated a period of some confusion. Badly hit were what had been the green bus services formerly operated by London Transport. Somehow, they didn't get their proper allocation of buses and I remember notices on bus stops in Dartford apologising if our bus didn't come at all or if it was a vehicle too small to take all the passengers waiting. We were asked not to blame the driver and conductor. It wasn't their fault. After the teething period, the NBC ran well enough, but the NBC liveries were much less attractive than those of the earlier companies (either a vile green or a vile red). To us bus enthusiasts, the vehicles were less interesting than their predecessors in the heyday of buses, but they were more accessible and probably more reliable. I remember watching a driver struggling to start a Bristol K6A like the one in the picture at Faversham with a starting handle in the hope of getting it to Ashford.

Buses were deregulated in 1986. The NBC was effectively no more and there was a brief period of intensive competition rather like what had happened after the First World War. It didn't last, however, and most bus services are now run by huge companies such as Arriva and Stagecoach. One feature of the NBC survives, however. Bus companies used to have their own individual designs for bus stops. Nationwide, the NBC adopted what was called the Barbara Castle bus stop, after the Minister of Transport responsible for its foundation. The Barbara Castle bus stop is still the standard bus stop, just as the British Rail logo is still used post-privatisation on stations.



Guy Arab buses like this one were purchased during the war and converted to open toppers in the 1950s. When I was a very small child, I pestered my father into promising to take me for a ride on one of these from Cliftonville, where we were staying, to Minnis Bay. The day came and it was pouring with rain, but a promise was a promise! So off we went but had to sit downstairs! Coming back it had stopped raining but the conductress wouldn't let us go upstairs because the seats were wet! I'll tell you what though, on an August evening, as it was getting dark and the Margate illuminations were still at their fantastic best, there was no sight like the view from the top deck of one of these, coming down the hill from the Winter Gardens, past the stone pier, which once had a miniature steam railway, and the iron jetty, which later had a miniature diesel railway but was destroyed in a storm, to the wonders of Dreamland and the Sun Deck and the coastal run back to Westgate or Minnis Bay. Roger.

And this is your correspondent in the driving seat of an East Kent AEC Regent at a bus rally.



The Children's Society

You may be aware that Cuxton & Halling have supported The Children's Society for many years. Our support even predates their own electronic records. Since 1985, £13,834 has been raised to support their work with vulnerable young people. There are 24,609 children in the constituency of Rochester and Strood, 1,767 children known to children's services in Medway because of abuse and neglect. In terms of the county, according to police recorded data for sexual offences against children in Kent, 1,231 sexual offences were committed against children in 2015/16. The Children's Society have sent this article to highlight their approach to tackling these issues, which is only possible due to support from parishes like ours.



The Children's Society know that when young people access their services for support with one aspect of their life, they are often having difficulties in other areas too. Their experience has enabled them to identify three key areas in which young people encounter challenges: where they face **risks** to their safety and well-being; where the **resources** they need to flourish and thrive may be compromised; and with the **resilience** they draw on to respond to adverse experiences in life. Through their direct services they learn more about the complexity of the issues that affect children and young people. This learning influences their campaigning and policy work nationally and locally.

The campaigns tackle the deeply engrained issues children face, influence Government policy and change prevailing attitudes to the most vulnerable in our society.

Last year they achieved over three million positive changes for children. Much of their work in 2016/17 focused on influencing the Policing and Crime Bill as it went through parliament. Between April and June 2016, 37% of MPs supported the campaign. In Autumn 2016 the Government agreed to set up a working group to look at how better to protect 16 and 17 year olds from abuse. The Children's Society are playing a key part in the working group to make sure that police get the tools they need to disrupt child sexual exploitation, which is a positive indicator of the campaign being on track for contributing to policy change in the longer term.

In terms of their direct work, they have the story of Kyran who was groomed by an older man online. The man was lying to Kyran about his age and when Kyran found out he told his mother. They got in contact with us, where Kyran's project worker listened to him and taught him how to stay safe. Kyran told the police about what had happened to him and, with support from his project worker, testified against his abuser in a successful prosecution. Kyran is now actively involved with our work helping other young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

I do hope this gives a clearer picture of where your donations are going. Please do contact Julia Wells if you would like to support through a collection box; it's an easy but important way to raise vital funds to help children and young people.

Sign Supposedly Seen in Village Hall Kitchen

After use, please rinse out teapots and stand upside down in the sink.
Next week's speaker will be found pinned to the notice board.

Billy Graham

There are many reasons to be thankful for the life of Billy Graham who died in February. His preaching reached millions of people throughout the world and, by God's grace, brought many people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and eternal life in Him. We pray that God will raise up many more missionaries and evangelists to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth and for all Christian people that we all may be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ to the people whom we meet.

Two good stories Billy Graham told. He was once asked why he needed to come to Britain in a luxury liner if a donkey was sufficient for Jesus to enter into Jerusalem? He asked his interlocutor if he knew of any donkeys which could swim the Atlantic. Billy Graham also once attended a meeting where another preacher was speaking. Having been asked for 20 minutes but continued for 1 ½ hrs, in frustration the chairman threw his gavel at the preacher, but it missed and brained an audience member, who squealed, "Hit me again; I can still hear him!"

A Protest Song

(You can no doubt guess the tune.)

Take the joy from my life, keep me healthy,
Take the joy from my life, I say,
Take the joy from my life, keep me healthy.
Keep me healthy till I'm bored to death.

Take the thrills from my life, wear a helmet,
Take the thrills from my life, I say,
Take the thrills from my life, wear a harness,
Wear a harness till I'm choked to death.

Health and safety, health and safety, health and
safety is the greatest thing.
Health and safety, health and safety, health and
safety is the thing.

Mere existence, mere existence, mere existence is
what our life is for.
Mere existence, mere existence, mere existence,
there's no more.

Take the fun from my life, keep me boring,
Take the fun from my life, I say,
Take the fun from my life, keep me boring.
Keep me boring till I pop my clogs.

Take the choice from my life, I'm so stupid,
Take the choice from my life, I say,
Take the choice from my life, I'm so stupid.
I'm so stupid I'm not fit too live.

Risk assessment, risk assessment, risk assessment
is the only thing.
Risk assessment, risk assessment, risk assessment
is the thing.

Thank you Europe, thank you Council, thanking
you's the very bestest thing,
Thank you gov'ment, thank you gov'ment,
thanking you for safeguarding.

This was inspired when I discovered that while the law already requires us to wear belts and braces, from 1st of this month, we shall also be required to carry a spare belt and a spare set of braces.

Disabled Lavatory for the Church Hall

Your Help Needed

The Coop are giving us a grant for this from their community fund. If you would like to help and are a Coop member, please register by calling 0800 023 4708 or on <https://membership.coop.co.uk/register>. Then, every time you spend money on Coop goods at the Coop, they donate something towards our fund. So far, we have raised over a thousand pounds this way, but we'll need around another £5,000 to complete the job.

Why are Fire Engines Red?

Because they have eight wheels and four people on them, and four plus eight makes twelve, and there are twelve inches in a foot, and one foot is a ruler, and Queen Elizabeth was a ruler, and Queen Elizabeth was also a ship, and the ship sailed the seas, and there were fish in the seas, and fish have fins, and the Finns fought the Russians, and the Russians are red, and fire engines are always "Russian" around, so that's why fire trucks are red!

Atonement

I came across an article asking why we don't have more frequently an old service in the Prayer Book for Ash Wednesday? I think I might have been to one once in all my many years of life, but this guy suggested that we should do it more often. What do you think? The service is called the Communion. What's a communion, you might ask? The subtitle is *Or Denouncing of God's Anger and Judgements Against Sinners*. Are we comfortable with that? After all, God is love. So what's all this about His anger and wrath?

Think about what's going on in Syria, all those innocent men, women and children being bombed and shelled and quite probably having chemical weapons used against them. How do you think God feels about that? Wouldn't you expect Him to be angry and wrathful? His children are being killed. How would you feel if it were your children being killed? Surely, there must be justice in the world. If there is no justice ultimately, what's the point? If there is justice, there must be judgment and there must be condemnation of the sinner. Syria is by no means the only place in the world where wicked things go on. There is plenty of evil much closer to home. The ill we do to one another surely provokes God's anger and wrath.

I felt something of this when I was watching the film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, which tells the story of Gladys Aylward, a missionary in China in the first half of the twentieth century. When we got to the part where Japanese aircraft were machine gunning Chinese children in the fields, I found myself hoping, as they came in low in order to aim better, that they would crash. I think that reflects something of what God feels when He looks down from Heaven and sees these terrible things happening on earth.

And yet, God is love? Didn't He love the Japanese pilots as well as the Chinese children? Doesn't He love the Syrian pilots in today's dreadful civil war in that country? Of course He does. It's like those terribly sad families where one brother murders another brother. How are their parents supposed to feel?

There is justice. There has to be. There is judgment. God is angry and wrathful with sinners because sinners inflict pain on God's dear children, by the evil we do and by the good we fail to do. Given our common humanity with those Japanese and Syrian pilots, we should be very rash to claim that we were not sinners too. If we don't see ourselves as sinners, it is because our standards are too low. The standard is Jesus.

So the Communion service recites a number of curses on people who commit sin. The congregation says *Amen* to each. We acknowledge that there are rights and wrongs and that transgressors deserve to be punished and that we are transgressors. So far, the Communion sounds like all gloom and doom. And yet, it isn't. God must be just because He loves the victims of sinners, but God loves sinners too. God is merciful. Justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin and that coin is love. (Do you know the song, *Love is like a magic penny*?) So the service invites us to confess our sins and to ask for God's mercy. We are invited to pray Psalm 51 on our knees. God promises to forgive all those who truly repent, all those who turn to Him. God's justice and mercy are to be celebrated joyfully. They are twin aspects of His love. We are asked to pray, *Turn thou us, O Lord, and so shall we be turned*. Everything depends on God. It is He Who grants us the gift of repentance and He Who forgives all our sin so that we are no longer the objects of His anger and wrath, helpless sinners, but His children by adoption and grace and heirs of eternal life.

All this is God's gift to us. It is what is meant by atonement and atonement is what God achieves for us through the self-giving sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*.

*Love is something if you give it away,
Give it away, give it away.
Love is something if you give it away,
You end up having more.

It's just like a magic penny,
Hold it tight and you won't have any.
Lend it, spend it, and you'll have so many
They'll roll all over the floor.



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A Tale of Two Bridges!

parallel to the river and has lovely panoramic views. En route there are opportunities to watch the birds on the river, which include, mallards, seagulls, terns and swans. To the left are Wouldham Marshes with dykes, streams and fields of cattle and sheep. There are vast areas of reed mace and low growing shrubs and thickets with many smaller birds such as reed buntings, tits and thrushes. There is evidence of rabbits and foxes. At this time of year the footpath

This is a circular walk of about eight miles that uses the footbridge path over the River Medway, parallel to the M2, then follows the river to Wouldham, over the new bridge at St Peters Village, up through Upper Halling onto the North Downs Way and back to Cuxton. My walk begins at the junction of Bush Road and the A228 Cuxton.

Walk to the top of Sundridge Hill via Pilgrims Way in order to avoid the very busy main road. Cross the A228 at the end of Pilgrims Way and continue up the hill passing the entry roads to the refuse/recycling centre and Brickfield Farm. Use the pedestrian pathway slightly to the right to go around the roundabout then straight ahead over the railway and M2. After some 50yds turn right and go down the footpath and cycleway leading to the River Medway crossing. This bridge is very high above the ground and so it affords amazing views over Diggerland, the cinema and restaurants in Medway Leisure Park as well as being a great vantage point for checking out the river, birdlife, various boats, yachts and leisure craft. It is rather noisy due to the road, but look down river to see familiar landmarks: Rochester Castle and Cathedral to name but two. Up river views are obscured by the motorway traffic at this point.

At the end of the footbridge and path turn right at the pavement, go under the motorway and railway and then take the next right. Pass the lively guard dogs and some unusual dwellings, then continue down to the river bank. Along the first part of the riverbank are some houseboats with small fenced off grass areas beside the footpath. Beyond the houseboats, the next 2.5 miles of footpath travels

is quite muddy in places but drainage is good. Of course the scene across the river is very familiar; Cuxton Marina, A228, St Michael & All Angels Church and various houses along the roads!

The entry to Wouldham begins at All Saints Church. This church dates back to 1058, has some remaining Norman features and bells dating back to 1624. At this point there is an information plaque entitled, 'The Medway at Wouldham'. It describes seven local features from the area.

Turn left and walk through Rectory Close to the High Street. Turn right and walk along the High Street. There used to be several shops and businesses along this route, but now there is just one mini market shop, two pubs and a motor business. The road is lined with houses and congested by the many parked cars. At the end of the High Street, do not follow the main road to the left but go straight ahead into Hall Road. Pass several more houses and the site of the new school, which is still under construction. Close to the new school, cross over using the new pedestrian crossing and on to the new bridge, St Peters Bridge Road, over the River Medway. St Peters Village is part complete but there is still much construction underway and interesting new river front developments. The road leads to a roundabout at the A228. Cross this busy road with care and walk straight ahead to join the footpath opposite at the side of Whittings Farm. The enclosed pathway gradually leads uphill towards Upper Halling. The footpath winds along the perimeters of former quarries to the left and fields for arable crops on the right. There are rabbit

burrows in a number of places beyond the quarry fences to the left.

The views from this footpath are outstanding. The panorama begins over near Bluebell Hill and circles round to Rochester and North Halling, taking in the farmland, woodlands, Wouldham, Halling, M2 Motorway and Railway bridges, Rochester Bridge and Rochester Cathedral and Castle. The footpath is steep in places but there is such a good excuse to dawdle or rest as even in winter there is a beautiful view in each direction. The footpath leads onto Meadow Crescent in Upper Halling.

Follow left along the road to the junction with Pilgrims Way. At this point there is a bus stop and the quaint Chapel Cottages. Go straight across and up Chapel Lane to where the road bends left. At this corner take the footpath to the right heading towards Court Farm. Turn left at Court farm and aim uphill. The path is a bit muddy and steep. After a short distance, be sure to take the right fork that leads up to the North Downs Way. At the top of this tricky, slippery path there is a welcome seat – no views but a good spot to eat/drink and rest the weary wayfarer! After a refreshing break take the North Downs Way aiming northeast towards home. The path travels through lovely woodlands. Later in the year this is a good spot for bluebells. Remain walking in this direction all the way to Cuxton passing through Wingate Wood, Mays Wood and exiting onto Church Hill. At Church Hill, again there are lovely views, one of my favourites, of the River Medway, Wouldham, Shoulder of Mutton Wood, the marshes and the footpath

From **Angela Hughes**, Snr Support Worker – Perinatal Support Service, Family Action Medway, 5a New Road Avenue, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6BB, Tel No: 01634 829128, Mobile: 07469 660455, www.family-action.org.uk

Help us make a difference....

Many mums and their families can struggle with low mood and anxiety during pregnancy and baby's first year and we need volunteers who can offer support and understanding

Are you

- A good listener?
- Empathetic?
- Non-judgmental?
- Have an understanding of mental health?
- Maybe a parent yourself?

The Pilates Element

Pilates is a body conditioning exercise programme suitable for all ages and abilities. My classes are friendly, fun and enjoyable.

Emily Pollington, member of FHT, qualified instructor.

Pilates classes are held in the church hall on Tuesdays from 7.00-8.00 pm. For more information, please contact instructor Emily Pollington, 01634 256942, 07940233296, emilypollington@btinternet.com Also on Facebook.

traversed earlier in the day. Walking on, St Michael and All Angels Church gradually comes into view. It is a short walk down the hill, through the church yard, onto the pathway to the A228 and down to the junction to complete my walk! Holly Croft.

Could you be a volunteer Befriender for our Perinatal Support Service and help support vulnerable and isolated pregnant women and their families in the Medway area?

If you understand the loneliness and worries that sometimes come with a new baby and can be an understanding and useful person for them to talk to when things feel overwhelming, we would love to hear from you.

For more information please contact the Perinatal team

medwayperinatalsupportservice@family-action.org.uk Tel: 01634 829128.

The Seasonal Steps of our Sires - April

April this year brings us Easter which comes between 21st March and the 25th April, the date depending on the first full moon of spring. In our Christian tradition, Easter celebrates the resurrection of Christ, and the defeat of sin, death and darkness. It is the most important Christian festival of the year and a time of joyful thanksgiving. The name Easter, according to the Venerable Bede, was derived from a Saxon goddess of the Dawn and the Spring whose name was Eostre. An ancient word oster meaning 'to rise' could also be a word from which Easter is derived. As eggs were a popular ancient symbols of spring, re-birth and life renewal, so they became an item that was found in our ancestors ancient customs and are still remain with us today. In some European countries the tradition that dyed or colourfully painted eggs are left by the Easter Hare as an appropriate gift for children at this season are for us today often replaced by the chocolate variety. In some counties of England the tradition of "Pace Egging" can still be found mainly in the north where young people, usually boys, spend the week up to Easter collecting (stealing) eggs from the local community and from other villages which they use at Easter to cook large pancakes or for more unscrupulous activities. If they come across a group from another village there is usually some public disorder but generally it will be good humoured. Sometimes they go around in disguise and some have character names (like Bess Brownbags and Lord Nelson), and sometimes they sing the Pace Egging song –

‘We are two-three jolly-boys, all of one mind,
We are come a-pace-egging. And we hope you’ll prove kind!
We hope you’ll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer.
And we’ll come no more a-pace-egging until next year!’

Some communities have Easter games like egg rolling, egg-shackling which is like conkers with hard-boiled eggs, egg catch with uncooked eggs, and the traditional hunt for eggs. In the north-east of England and the Welsh borders, Easter Lifting was popular on Easter Monday. A chair covered in greenery was paraded around the village visiting each house in turn and each female in the house was lifted in the chair three times. The lifters were then entitled to a kiss and/or a small gift of money. On the next day the women of the village lifted the men. On both days, lifting ceased punctually at noon.

All Fool’s Day occurs on April 1st and is a day for pranks, jokes and general horseplay as long as it ceases again at noon. The traditions appear all over Britain following the same format. Pennies stuck to the floor, banknotes with invisible thread to whisk them away out of reach from someone trying to pick them up, messages stuck on someone’s back and stink bombs activated in enclosed spaces. Teachers sending a pupil to the metalwork master for a left handed wrench, to the science teacher for a long wait or to the art department for some chequered paint often made them groan!

April 23rd is St George’s Day. George superseded King Edward the Confessor in the 13th Century as the patron Saint of England but his life story is not clear. He is thought to be a Roman Christian from Asia Minor in the 3rd century and he supposedly saved Cleodolinda, the daughter of the king who was being sacrificed to a fierce dragon (a dragon story maybe being confused with that of St Michael) causing the king and his people to convert to Christianity. The English victory at Agincourt was attributed to St George and April 23rd became a great day for celebration and feasting ever since and “mummers plays” celebrating his victory over evil are traditional performed on this day. Unfortunately, the English seem to have forgotten their patron saint!

The writer of the second Gospel in the New Testament, St Mark, is celebrated on April 25th. The Venetians supposedly stole Mark’s body from a grave in Egypt and brought it back to Venice where his symbol of a lion holding the book of gospels can be seen all over the city and St Mark is a force of protection of the city which became the richest in the Mediterranean trading with Europe, Africa and Byzantium. St Mark’s Eve is considered like Hallowe’en and Midsummer’s Eve as a time when the frontiers of the realms of the living and the dead are dissolved and contact might be made across those borders. On a lighter note, maidens wanting to see an image of their future sweethearts would bake a dumb cake on St Mark’s Day, mixing it in complete silence and baking it just before midnight when their sweethearts would appear and turn the cake. The way to a man’s heart?! JGB

April Parish Lunch

As the hall will be unavailable on 4th April, the parish lunch will be in the Rectory grounds at 12.00 noon. Please bring picnic food to share and maybe something to sit on. Some food will be provided. Any Easter eggs not found at the hunt on the Monday are yours if you can find them. Those travelling by car, please park at the hall as usual.

Food Bank

Linda Fiddymment came to our services at Halling on 4th February and at Cuxton on 4th March to tell us about the work of the food bank and its history in the Medway Towns. It is appalling that in the twenty first century food banks are required, but they are. There are all kinds of reasons why people find themselves penniless: bureaucratic delays in the benefit system, falling into the hands of loan sharks, high costs of housing, family breakdown, addiction, alcoholism, etc.. Living comfortably as most of us do, it is sometimes hard to see how people get into such deep difficulties. It would be rash, however, to assume that we would never make the kinds of mistakes they might have made or that we could rely on family or friends to bail us out if we suffered serious misfortune such as chronic illness or unemployment. "There, but for the grace of God go I".

The food bank is needed. At present, demand exceeds supply. We can support the food bank with our prayers and with monetary donations. One of the main forms of support is to donate food. We collect donations at both our churches. You can go onto the food bank website to see what is most needed, but generally, any canned, packeted or dried food well within date will be gratefully received.

You might be interested to know that the last consignment we took to the food bank weighed 135.3 kg and in total we have sent 938 kg.



Tommy's Talking Points

This is me in the snow, unusually sitting still for long enough to have my picture taken. You see I'm nearly up to the tops of my shoulders in it. There are snowballs in the long hairs of my legs and they will soon be creating puddles all over Master's kitchen floor. Unlike some dogs Master has had, I do have the good sense not to get into my bed when I am wet (usually).

Yesterday was the first proper snow I have ever seen and it was marvellous. We had three walks because something else Master was supposed to do was cancelled on account of the weather. I ran in it and jumped in it. We met lots of happy, smiling, laughing people and joyful dogs. The sun shone on the snow – especially lovely early this morning when its rays were still red and at a low angle so that the snow glowed and glistened pink. The children were off school and some of them were out sledging. Master loves to see the snow on the branches – the bare boughs of the deciduous trees and the dark green needles of the evergreens – and all over the fields, the greenish grass just visible through the white blanket. The cows were enjoying specially brought in hay and the horses were clearing the snow with their hooves in order to get to the grass. There were white doves flocking in an azure sky and a robin on the snow trimmed twigs of the shrubs as you get nearly into Bush. It was wonderful – though Master says not so good for those whose homes aren't warm enough and those who have to travel. He's got to go out in the car this afternoon. So he's hoping there won't be any more snow today. I shall be warm and cosy indoors and looking forward, if there is time, to a short walk when he comes back, church and a pleasant evening in the Rectory with him watching TV or reading and me sleeping or getting him to play with my toys, tug of war or fetch. When I feel like it, I let him do the fetching.

There's more. I'm now writing the next day. We did get our second walk yesterday. The wind was whipping the snow into flurries and some of these were gloriously illuminated by the late afternoon sun. Overnight, however, the wind had blown the snow into drifts for long lengths of the paths around and across the fields. He was plodding through snow more than a foot deep early this morning, while I was racing around in an ecstasy of delight. It might be prudent for him to stay in until conditions improve, but he

maintains that it is worth it to see me so happy. Powdery snow again whirled high in the air above the snow fields as we descended from the woods to the church for Morning Prayer. It's marvellous. Then, yesterday afternoon, he got stuck in a snow drift, fell over, couldn't get up and had to crawl out of it. So he's got a bit more cautious today.

It has been pointed out that the snow became much drier than normal. It started wet and clingy. Then it became very dry. It cleaned my coat beautifully, which is just as well since I have been very muddy a few times lately. The snow has also lingered. Even today, after several mild days and no more snow, even a little rain, there were still places where we were scrunching through the snow on our morning walk.

I did blot my copy book a couple of weeks ago. We were out for an early walk on a Sunday morning when it was still quite mild, but very wet and muddy. I made friends with two runners and ran off with them. Master says that he is sorry he can't run anymore as he knows I would enjoy running with him. Anyway, I went a long way with these two runners and he couldn't find me when it was time to come home and for him to go to church and take the service. He wasn't very pleased with me. A nice man told a nice lady and she led me back to the churchyard. I pushed the door open and entered the church filthy dirty during the second hymn. You could say that I received a mixed reception, though mainly people were relieved to see me!

We were going to do the bit of the Saxon Shore walk from Cliffe to Hoo, but that has been postponed for now. I hope to tell you about it in the next magazine. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

Local History

Having been here as long as I have (31 years), I was asked to speak to a class at Cuxton School about the history of the village and the changes I have seen since I've been here. So I took the stone axe head with which I killed my first brontosaurus to show them. No, actually, I haven't been here quite as long as that and there hasn't been so much change in my three decades. So I asked a lady who has lived in Cuxton a lot longer than I to come with me.

We started on plumbing! The children were horrified to hear about outside lavatories and baths hanging on hooks in the yard to be brought in once a week and filled from the copper with everybody using the same water and having to carry the bath outside to empty it on the garden when all the family were more or less clean. They didn't much like the idea of several children sharing one bed top to toe with ice on the inside of the bedroom windows and dad's overcoat instead of a duvet.

They had lots of questions, however, and were very interested in the different shops there have been over the years. They really liked the idea of a shop specifically devoted to the sale of sweets. They also liked the thought of community events, like the street parties to celebrate the end of the war. They hadn't known that there had been a fire station in Cuxton for a while. There was an old photograph of the church choir from 1922, including one boy who went on to give seventy years of service and one boy who grew up to be the father of my colleague. There was a picture of the school, probably in the 1950s, judging by the clothes the children were wearing. I told them that, when somebody had remarked to me that there were no fat children in the 1950s, I'd thought, well what about Gary? But Gary lived in a sweet shop!

They wanted to know whether we were more or less polluted now than in the old days. I said there was much more obvious pollution in the past – coal smoke coming out of chimneys, cement dust covering roofs and much stronger agricultural sprays which could eat holes in any washing you might have out. We reminisced about smogs you couldn't see through. Nowadays, there is much more pollution by things you can't see: nitrogen oxides, CO₂, tiny particles of carbon. So which is better?

They asked me which changes I liked most and I said greater warmth and comfort and which I liked least and I said too much traffic on the roads and too few people in church! Roger.