

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December Advent Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion Gift Service	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 p796 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1057
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 3-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Philippians 4 vv 4-7 p1181 Luke 3 vv 7-18 p1029
	2.00 Holy Baptism	
	6.30 Carol Service	
Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	7.00 Scout & Guide Service	
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December Christmas Eve	9.30 Holy Communion	Micah 5 vv 2-5a p933 Hebrews 10 vv 5-10 p1207 Luke 1 vv 39-45 p1026
	5.00 Christingle, Crib Service & Sunday School Nativity.	
	11.00 Midnight Mass	Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 p739 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December Christmas Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 p693 Luke 2 vv 1-14 p1027
Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany	8.00 am Holy Communion	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> January The Baptism of Christ	9.30 Family Communion	Acts 8 vv 14-17 p1101 Luke 3 vv 15-22 p1029
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 62 vv 1-5 p748 1 Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 p1153 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-10 p492 1 Corinthians 12 vv 12-31a p1153 Luke 4 vv 14-21 p1031
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 43.27 – 44.4 p876 1 Corinthians 13 vv 1-13 p1153 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028

Copy Date February Magazine 12<sup>th</sup> January 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45.

**Sunday School** is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays).

**After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's from 27<sup>th</sup> April.

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> &  
<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December Advent Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	1 Thessalonians 3 vv 9-13 p1187 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1057
	11.00 Holy Communion Gift Service	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 p796 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1057
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 3-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> December Advent 3	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Philippians 4 vv 4-7 p1181 Luke 3 vv 7-18 p1029
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December Christmas Eve	11.00 Holy Communion	Micah 5 vv 2-5a p933 Hebrews 10 vv 5-10 p1207 Luke 1 vv 39-45 p1026
	3.00 Carol Service, Christingle & Nativity	
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 62 vv 6-12 p749 Luke 2 vv 1-20 p1027
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> December Christmas 1	11.00 United Parish Eucharist	Colossians 3 vv 12-17 p1184 Luke 2 vv 41-52 p1028
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> January	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall The Baptism of Christ	Isaiah 43 vv 1-7 p728 Luke 3 vv 15-22 p1029
	11.00 Holy Communion Epiphany (transferred)	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 62 vv 1-5 p748 1 Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 p1153 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	1 Samuel 3 vv 1-20 p274 Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> January Epiphany 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-10 p492 1 Corinthians 12 vv 12-31a p1153 Luke 4 vv 14-21 p1031
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> January Epiphany 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 43.27 – 44.4 p876 1 Corinthians 13 vv 1-13 p1153 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028



### Celebrating Atheism

Richard Dawkins' book *The God of Delusion* looks like topping the Christmas bestseller list this year and I, for one, am pleased about it. I haven't read the book and I am not sure that

I want to, but apparently it is a passionate and reasoned attack on all forms of religion. Richard Dawkins is a convinced atheist and he wants to convert the whole world to his view point. He believes that religion has been and is a

powerfully negative influence on human progress. I am delighted that he has written his book and that so many people are reading it. You see; Richard Dawkins and his readers take Christianity seriously. It matters to them. They are passionate about it.

The threat to religion in modern Britain is not opposition. It is indifference that is killing our churches. It isn't the Moslems, the atheists or the humanists who are destroying the churches or even the silly local authorities working so hard to

take the *Christ* out of *Christmas*. The churches are being destroyed by the people who don't care about faith, the many people who call themselves Christians but do little or nothing about their professed belief.

Faith is not afraid of reason. Christians can debate their beliefs with secular philosophers, scientists and humanists. We can have intelligent and courteous discussions with them. They cannot prove that there is no God. We cannot prove (on their terms) that there is a God, but we can certainly establish that there is nothing irrational about believing in God. We can, I think, show that it is more rational to believe in God than to deny the possibility of His existence.

I am quite happy to hold these debates and all Christians ought to be. We raise all sorts of issues for discussion in this magazine. We invite questions. We have suggested discussion groups who could talk about issues raised here or elsewhere.

Neither do Christians have to be afraid to debate with people of other religions. We can respect their convictions. We can learn from their insights. But we do not have to see their beliefs as a threat to ours. On the contrary we are obliged to bear witness to the fact that the God Whom we are all seeking has uniquely made Himself known through Jesus Christ, God's Word made human flesh. We can live in a tolerant multicultural society without assuming that there are no absolute truths or that every person's beliefs are necessarily of equal value with everybody else's.

As Christians, we are not afraid of debate. We are not afraid of opposition. We are not even afraid of persecution. There have been many attempts to wipe out the Church by threats and violence. When tested Christians find that the love of the crucified Jesus enables them too to love right up to the end and to accept a martyr's death rather than to deny their Saviour. Far from eradicating Christianity, persecutors, from Nero to Mao, have discovered that the blood of the martyrs is in fact the seed of the Church. We are strong when we are weak.

Back in communist days, two soldiers barged into an East German church brandishing guns. *Get out unless you are fully committed Christians,*

they shouted. Some people shame-facedly left. Then the two guards said, *We had to be sure,* and joined in the worship! Some people think a bit of persecution would do us good. We would have to decide whether we really held a faith that was worth dying for.

I am looking forward to seeing our churches full over Christmas, just as they are sometimes full at christenings, weddings and, especially, funerals. You are all very welcome, but dare you call yourselves Christians? I guess those of you who come to church even only once a year will genuinely want to make sure that the Saviour's Birth is celebrated this December. You will come because you believe that there is a real meaning of Christmas. I hope that means that you are Christians. Only God truly knows who His people are and I believe that you and I should hesitate to judge.

However, consider this. What we are affirming at Christmas is that there is a God Who created everything that is. We are saying that He made human beings in His own image and that He loves each one of us. Because He loves us, He is grieved that we do not love Him or one another as we ought. Our failure to love cuts us off from God, Who is love, and cuts us off from life because God is the source of all life. We therefore die. Yet God, because He loves us so much, sends His Son into the world to be born as one of us. He teaches us how to live by both word and example. Finally, He offers His own life in an excruciatingly painful death as a sacrifice which restores our relationship with God, which restores us to eternal life. We only have to repent and believe. God raises us with Jesus from the dead. Jesus commissions us to complete His Work. He sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and among us, confirming our membership of Christ's Body, the Church, and empowering us to do Christ's work in the world.

If you believe all that, your life is transformed. You are a Christian and God comes first in your life. If you don't believe that, I believe you are lost. But, Jesus says, *Seek and ye shall find,* and maybe that is what people are doing when they come to Church at Christmas or at critical moments in their lives, but show little interest in Christianity the rest of the time. Roger.

## Nature Notes October 2006

The first day of the month was a mixture of sunshine and showers then the temperature dropped in the afternoon after some very heavy rain. It poured down the windows and the wind blew strongly in the trees. More rain fell in the evening before it finally cleared. Rain fell throughout most of the next day.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> we took Murphy to Hothfield Common near Ashford. The sun was glorious and the skies were a clear blue. Heathers had faded but birches and oaks were beginning to display their Autumn colours and the spongy grass was short and green, obviously frequented by rabbits. As we trod the paths, I was aware of hundreds of silver birch saplings and some young oaks. Creeping buttercups bloomed along some of the paths.

The following beautiful day, I walked to Dean Valley where sheep and cows grazed. Along my way I found bladder campion, bristly ox tongue, pink campion and Lucerne while hips and haws blazed red on their twigs. Up in Church Fields white and pink clover, toadflax, mallow and old mans beard were to be seen. I found a single wild rose. After two wet days the 7<sup>th</sup> dawned bright and sunny so we took Murphy to Cob Tree Manor Park where the trees of many species looked beautiful in the sunlight. The leaves were still green and the grass was a lush green. A north-westerly wind brought an Autumn chill to the air. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, a day of warm sunshine, I stood at the top of Dean Valley drinking in the silence and the beautiful surroundings. Towards North Wood I could hear blackbirds; then overhead flew a cawing crow. The magnificent beech was golden set against the deep blue of the sky. I was reluctant to leave the scene.

Humid days followed. I watched dragonflies hovering in the garden on the 10<sup>th</sup> and as the light began to fail, I could hear the jackdaws coming home to roost. We took Murphy to Addington on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It was beautifully warm and we enjoyed walking through the dew soaked grass. I found a tiny thistle flower in the Elizabeth Summers

grass. The next day, while I was sitting in the garden, I could hear Canada geese calling from the riverbank. On the 16<sup>th</sup> I went again to Dean Valley, which was lit up by golden sunshine. Sheep grazed there and I noticed that two of them were kneeling down to feed and when they needed to move to fresh pasture they did so on their knees. There was occasional rain but the mild weather continued. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the rising sun cast a golden light in the sky, while south-westerly winds brought grey clouds through which the light filtered. There were some very heavy showers in the morning but by mid day the sun was shining again. At Addington I watched Autumn leaves swirling in the air. I found dandelions and blue speedwell. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> it was still mild but the skies were grey. In the churchyard maples were showing signs of Autumn. An ash tree was laden with fruit. I learned from watching "Autumn Watch" with Bill Oddie and Kate Humble that these are called the keys. I enjoyed those two weeks.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> I stood in the sun-drenched Dean Valley and watched a kestrel circling over North Wood above which the sky was flecked with high cloud. Down in Six acre Field, I watched a beautiful red admiral butterfly sunning itself on a hazel leaf. It was very warm on the 26<sup>th</sup>. I found a variety of ladybirds during the afternoon, a two-spot in the garden, a seven spot on a neighbour's doorframe and a ten spot on a leaf along the road and then I saw several each day until the end of the month. The clocks went back on the 29<sup>th</sup> so now darkness falls so much earlier. On the 30<sup>th</sup> we took Murphy to Trosley Country Park where the birds were singing as though it were Spring. As we drove back I was aware of the beautiful colours of the trees along the Halling by-pass. Northerly winds brought cooler temperatures on the 31<sup>st</sup> but it was still very pleasant. In the afternoon, as I walked Murphy to the village there was a mass of grey cloud in the sky. Colder weather was forecast.

**The Mid-Kent Breast Cancer Research Appeal** Reg Charity No 105549, raises funds to buy high-tech equipment for the early detection and treatment of breast cancer and is run entirely by volunteers. Help, support and donations to help fight breast cancer are really appreciated. Contact: 01634-716049 or visit our charity's website [www.midkentbreastcancer.org.uk](http://www.midkentbreastcancer.org.uk)

## CUXTON'S OWN CHARITY - THOMAS STEVENS TRUST

Founded 1893 - Revived 1995

For those of you who do not already know, Cuxton has its very own Charity.

Thomas Steven died in 1893 and in his will he bequeathed £100 to the Parish of Cuxton to provide "Bread and Coal for the Needy". His charitable trust, known as The Thomas Stevens Trust, lay virtually dormant for more than a hundred years. It was revived in 1995 and three new Trustees were appointed. We currently have collection boxes in both the Newsagents and the Co-operative Store. Thanks to your generosity, in the past eleven years, we have been very pleased to have been able to assist several villagers.

We have funds for distribution and are looking for nominations. We, the Trustees, have interpreted Thomas Steven's original intentions to mean Food and Fuel. So please, if you know of any residents of Cuxton, young or old, who would benefit from some help with their gas, electricity or heating this winter, or maybe some food for Christmas, let us know. They could have a pleasant surprise. You can nominate anyone at any time of the year, we will always respect confidentiality and privacy.

Please contact any of the Trustees in confidence:

Malcolm Curnow 4 Pilgrims Road, Cuxton Tel: 719585  
Flick Foreman 43 Rochester Road, Cuxton Tel: 718480  
Roger Savage Forge Cottage, Lower Bush Tel: 723027

### Cuxton Community Church

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 27 people boarded a veteran red bus outside 43, Bush Road, in order to go to the Museum of Kent Life. The museum management had kindly agreed to let us hold a Service of Sunday Worship in our old building. The journey was great fun with adults and children alike excited by the different views one gets from the top of a bus. "Oh, you'd never see that from a car!" was heard from every window.

After some very expert driving from the bus owner, we arrived in good time and were joined by another six people. The old chapel looks very splendid, being situated on top of a hill and having been repainted, and we enjoyed a very happy time of worship in familiar surroundings. The singing was enthusiastic and the sermon from Dave Ware was challenging and interesting. Afterwards we had 2 ½ hours to have lunch and wander round the exhibits in the museum. Our youngest Sunday School member was particularly fascinated by a full sized model cow which could be milked, and some of the older folk among us were very interested in the hoppers' huts. We also enjoyed traditional dancing, singing and story-telling.

At 3.00 o'clock we boarded the bus again (once we had persuaded all the folk who thought the bus itself was an exhibit to disembark!) and set off for home. It was a very happy event which we now intend to repeat every two years. Look out for notices in September/October 2008 so that you can join us next time.

Janet Greaves.



### Dickens' Country Protection Society

The seasons greetings to all our members! The Society is pleased to note that Gravesham Council has refused planning permission for the stationing of mobile homes, stables etc on green belt land at the south side of Chalk Road near the junction with Taylor's Lane, Higham. The Society feels that it would be an inappropriate development in that location. If there is an appeal, objectors need to write again, reiterating their objections.

Kay Roots.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Head (1), Mrs Bailey (33), Mrs Brown (59), Mrs Feraday (64), Mrs Catchpole (79) – drawn by Mrs Fennemore.

## From the Registers

### Wedding:

21<sup>st</sup> October

Matthew Benjamin Mayatt & Jenine May Waghorn

Halling

### Funeral:

27<sup>th</sup> October

Eric John Parslow (78)

Maximillian Drive

*The righteous will be remembered for ever; the memory of the righteous is a blessing.*

Each year on All Souls Day I read out the names of those commemorated in the Book of Remembrance and on Remembrance Sunday the names of those commemorated on the war memorial. I knew personally many of those in the Book of Remembrance and some of the others I feel I recognise because I have heard a lot about them. Of course I do not know any of the people who died in the two world wars from these villages, though I know the families of some of them, a diminishing band as the years roll on. Our memories are precious, though also fading. It is good to think of all the Christian departed in the Hands of God Who loves them far more than we ever could and Whose Love never diminishes in all eternity.

Roger.

### Coffee Morning and S oirée - December 9<sup>th</sup>

*Our Christmas Coffee Morning will take place this year as usual in the Church Hall, Cuxton from 10.00 with Santa in his grotto.*

*At 7.30 pm we have our S oirée, also in the Church Hall. There will be a cornucopia of drama, poetry and music and a display of such local talent that Cuxton & Halling will at last take their proper place alongside Stratford, Glyndebourne and S addlers Wells on the cultural map of Europe. Bring your own hamper with champagne and caviar or have tea before you come. Tea (to drink) etc provided or bring own drink. A collection will be taken for church funds. Don't miss this feast of culture, says R I K of the "Cuxton & Halling Magazine."*



#### Cuxton WI

There was not much business at our November meeting, although we had four invitations from other WIs to their Xmas parties. Unfortunately the speaker we had booked to give a demonstration of making Xmas decorations was unable to come, and so, at very short notice, we welcomed Mr Philip Pretty from Birling. He provided us with a pictorial quiz on leaves, seeds, butterflies, horses, dogs, fish, birds and trees. Although he helped us by giving us clues to the answers, we had to decide which answer fitted the picture. We got together in twos and threes and just about completed all categories in the allotted time! Some of us did surprisingly well in the fish and butterfly pictures, with dogs and birds a close second. The highest score was 59, which Mr Pretty seemed to think was excellent. The Flower of the Month was won by Val Ryan who brought a beautiful Delphinium, not usually seen around at this time of year.

The Walking Group took a stroll around Trottiscliffe Country Park on a lovely sunny morning. (We have been very lucky with our weather!) Chestnuts were collected to roast and we all enjoyed the Autumn colours of the leaves, which were falling fast. We had a very nice lunch at *The Plough* in Trottiscliffe village. Although ten of us descended on them without booking, we were made very welcome and the food was delicious!

The Poetry Group's dinner was cancelled due to three members being unwell and we will probably now wait until after Xmas, when there is not so much going on.

The outing to Canterbury Catering College which Cuxton WI is organising takes place this month and no doubt everyone will have a good day out.

Next meeting is Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December – Xmas Party.  
Ann Harris.



### Halling WI

Annual General Meeting. These three words send a shiver down the spine of anyone who belongs to an organisation or group. Will they or won't they get enough officers for the coming year? The WI is no exception, but at our October meeting Halling WI had a goodly number of members present for the AGM. Those members who didn't come all had genuine excuses; they were either on holiday or ill. Mary Fennemore soon got the show on the road. Minutes were read and signed. The only birthday girl had a rosebud early as she was having a working holiday in France. The correspondence (not much) was dealt with and the menus for the Christmas lunch were given out. Ann Hayward, our secretary, then read the Annual Report. As Mary mentioned in her address, in 2007 Halling WI will be 40 years old. Where has the time gone? Membership then was 2/6d for subscription. Now in 2007 it will be £26. How times have changed. Maureen Burren wished to stand down from the committee, but Doris Hooper was willing to come on. One problem solved. As

Mary was retiring as president after 5 years, we thought we might have a problem, but Evelyn Low was willing to give it a go. Well done Evelyn. President isn't a bad job when you have a supportive committee. Our secretary and very gallant treasurer were both "willing" to continue. All done and dusted, a sigh of relief all round.

Jean Mattingly then showed us some lovely slides of buildings, nature and places. It turned our AGM into a very pleasant sociable evening. Mary judged our competitions. Flower of the Month was won by Ann Hayward with a lovely Cambridge blue Delphinium. How that had stood up to the recent heavy rain and wind I don't know. It was a lovely specimen for the time of year. The competition letter was I which was won by Ann Heaseman with a very old identity card.

It'll soon be Christmas and Halling WI can go forward into 2007 with confidence and take on any challenge that may crop up.

Phyllis Chidwick.

## ***Halling's Long Past***

***A talk to be given by  
Mr Philip Lawrence***

***Chairman Churches Committee Kent Archaeological Society***

***24<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at 4.00 at St John the Baptist's Church  
£5 includes light buffet.***

### Halling Bell Ringers

Cliff Collingwood was made a member of KCACR in October. We have another new ringer and would like to any ringer or potential ringer who would care to join us Wednesday evenings at St John's.

Peter Silver.

### Confirmation 2007

Next year our Patronal Festival at Halling (the Nativity of St John the Baptist 24<sup>th</sup> June) falls on a Sunday. So I am particularly pleased that we shall have the Bishop of Tonbridge to preside at our 11.00 Eucharist and also to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. If you are thinking about Confirmation you should be 12 years old or older. There is absolutely no upper age limit. If you are not yet 12, I can ask the Bishop's permission for you to be confirmed if you are a faithful member of our congregation and have the support of your family. All those interested, please contact me and we will arrange a course next year. You can attend the classes as a seeker with no commitment to being confirmed. If you are already confirmed, you can also attend as a refresher or to support a shy

candidate. At confirmation you repeat the promises made at your Baptism (which were made on your behalf by your godparents if you were baptised as a baby). If you can honestly say that you are a Christian, there is no reason why you should not be confirmed. (I will print the commitment below.) If you want to become a Christian and have not been baptised, you can be baptised before the Confirmation or (preferably) at the same service.

I am trying to lower the threshold of entry and raise the ceiling of aspiration. Absolutely anyone can come. Nobody should feel that they would not fit in in the Church. The only barrier between us and God is sin and Christ has paid the price for all our sins. If we repent, the door is open. If there are social factors keeping us away from the Church, then there is something very wrong somewhere. The threshold is at ground level. Everyone is welcome.

On the other hand, the ceiling is the infinity of Heaven. What I aspire to for you is a total commitment to Christ. You are invited to give your life to Him. We should not be half-hearted, token or merely nominal Christians.

*Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Jesus' invitation is open to everyone, the invitation to lose yourself in Him. If you can honestly say what follows, you ought to be confirmed. If you want to discuss these issues, before making up your mind, come to the confirmation classes as a seeker after truth or speak to me individually. Roger.

*In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him.*

*Therefore I ask:*

*Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?*

I reject them.

*Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?*

I renounce them.

*Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?*

I repent of them.

*Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?*

I turn to Christ.

*Do you submit to Christ as Lord?*

I submit to Christ.

*Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?*

I come to Christ.

*Do you believe and trust in God the Father?*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

*Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?*

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

*Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?*

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### An Unkind Comment

When I was a child a Congregationalist I was very fond of used to say that Church of England people used very beautiful words in their services but didn't mean them. They just said the same thing every week without thinking about the words. I had a great deal of respect for this person, but I also that thought that this point of view was unfair to members of the Church of England. Surely we can say these beautiful words every week and mean what we say.

I think there are two good reasons for using fixed orders of service. One is that we get to know the prayers so well that they become part of us. We know prayers by heart that we can use at any time even when we don't feel much like praying. If we know the service well, we can still join in even



when sight and hearing begin to fail. The other good reason for using fixed forms of service is that they represent the distilled wisdom of the Church. We can learn a lot from meditating on the words which the Church has given us to use in our public worship. Official prayer books ensure that the minister takes services in accordance with the faith of the whole Church, not to reflect his own eccentricities, and that a local congregation worships as part of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church and does not drift off into heresy or error. It is fair to make the point here that in the nineteenth century, many congregational churches did leave the Christian fold and become Unitarians. Local congregations thought that they had the authority to decide questions of worship and doctrine themselves, but did not have the theological expertise to do so.

The objections to fixed forms of service are that they can be too inflexible. We don't know how to pray unless we have a prayer book in front of us. We don't know what to do when a religious service is required for occasions for which our prayer books make no provision. Above all, the risk is that we say the service parrot fashion without thinking about God or what the words mean at all. There is possibly an even greater risk when we sing. Concentrating on the tune, we can forget about the words.

On balance I think that Congregationalist I'm thinking about from my childhood was wrong. If I didn't I wouldn't be a priest in the Church of England. I do think, however, that she had a point. We must think about what we say, and say or sing sincerely.

Obviously, I've been thinking along these lines for more than forty years now, but another consideration struck me the other day and inspired me to write this article. There is a sense in which we cannot enter fully into the meaning of some of the most sublime words we use in public worship. Our mortal understanding is too limited to comprehend their full import. To give just one example, I don't think we shall ever, so long as we remain on this earth, fully comprehend what this means:

*Through him (Jesus), and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, Father Almighty, in songs of everlasting praise.  
**Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.***

See if you can find some other examples of things that we say daily or weekly that are too wonderful for us fully to comprehend in this life although we hope we shall in the next.

Roger.

**A Merry Christmas  
And  
A Happy New Year  
To All Our Readers.**

## A Few Things To Make You Laugh This Christmas

**What beats his chest and swings from Christmas cake to Christmas cake?**  
Tarzipan !

**Mum, Can I have a dog for Christmas ?**  
No you can have turkey like everyone else !

**What did the Eskimos sing when they got there Christmas dinner ?**  
"Whale meat again, don't know where, don't know when " !

**What did the big cracker say to the little cracker ?**  
My pop is bigger than yours !

**Who is never hungry at Christmas ?**  
The turkey - he's always stuffed !

**What bird has wings but cannot fly ?**  
Roast turkey !

**What's the best thing to put into a Christmas cake ?**  
Your teeth !

**What happens if you eat the Christmas decorations ?**  
You get tinsel-itus !

**Mother bought a huge turkey for Christmas dinner.**  
'That must have cost a fortune!' I said .  
'Actually I got it for a poultry amount,' she said.

**A man went to a butcher's and saw that the turkeys were 90p a pound. He said to the butcher, 'Do you raise them yourself?'**  
'Of course I do,' the butcher replied. 'They were only 50p a pound this morning!'

**How do you tell the difference between tinned turkey and tinned custard?**  
Look at the labels!

**Did you hear about the stupid turkey?**  
It was looking forward to Christmas!

**Last year's Christmas pudding was so awful I threw it in the ocean.**  
That's probably why the ocean's full of currants!

**Is that policeman eating turkey?**  
No, he's eating truncheon meat.

**This turkey's disgusting!**  
Well, you asked for a foul roast!

**This turkey tastes like an old settee.**  
Well, you asked for something with plenty of stuffing.

**How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizzas?**  
Deep pan, crisp and even!

**What do ducks do before Christmas dinner?**  
Pull their Christmas quackers!

**What do you drain Christmas dinner Brussels sprouts with?**  
An advent colander!

**What's the most common wine at Christmas?**  
Do I have to have the Brussels sprouts!

**Will the Christmas pudding be long?**  
No, it'll be the traditional round!