

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
6 th December Advent 2	9.30 Family Communion & Gift Service	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 1-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029
13 th 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
20 th December Advent 4	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Advent 4
	9.30 Holy Communion	Micah 5 vv 2-5a p933 Hebrews 10 vv 5-10 p1207 Luke 1 vv 39-55 p1026
	6.30 Nine Lessons and Carols	
21 st December	7.00 pm Scout & Guide Carol Service	
24 th December Christmas Eve	5.00 Nativity Play, Christingle and Crib Blessing	
	11.00 Midnight Mass	Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 p739 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
25 th December Christmas Day	9.30 Family Communion	Titus 3 vv 3-7 p1199 Luke 2 vv 1-20 p1027
27 th December S John the Evangelist	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 33 vv 7-11 p92 I John 1 vv 1-10 p1225 John 21 vv 19b-25 p1090
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
6 th December Advent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 1-25 p1025
	11.00 Holy Communion & Gift Service	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 1-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029
13 th December Advent 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Philippians 4 vv 4-7 p1181 Luke 3 vv 7-18 p1029
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 Luke 1 vv 57-66 p1027
20 th December Advent 4 Christmas Tree Festival	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Micah 5 vv 2-5a p933 Hebrews 10 vv 5-10 p1207 Luke 1 vv 39-55 p1026
	3.00 Carol Service	
25 th December Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
27 th December S John the Evangelist	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 33 vv 7-11 p92 I John 1 vv 1-10 p1225 John 21 vv 19b-25 p1090

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
3 rd January Christmas 2	9.30 Family Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 John 1 vv 10-18 p1062
6 th January Epiphany	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
10 th January Baptism of Christ	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 1-7 p728 Acts 8 vv 14-17 p1101 Luke 3 vv 15-22 p1029
17 th January Epiphany 2	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Epiphany 2
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 62 vv 1-5 p748 I Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 p1153 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
24 th January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-10 p492 I Corinthians 12 vv 12-31a p1153 Luke 4 vv 14-21 p1031
31 st January Candlemas Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
3 rd January Christmas 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I John 4 vv 7-16 p1227 Matthew 2 vv 13-22 p966
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 John 1 vv 10-18 p1062
10 th January Baptism of Christ	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 1-7 p728 Acts 8 vv 14-17 p1101 Luke 3 vv 15-22 p1029
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 6 vv 1—11 p1132
17 th January Epiphany 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 62 vv 1-5 p748 I Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 p1153 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
24 th January Epiphany 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-10 p492 I Corinthians 12 vv 12-31a p1153 Luke 4 vv 14-21 p1031
31 st January Candlemas Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028

Copy Date February Magazine: 8th January 8.30 am Rectory
Weekday Services. See p5

Forthcoming Attractions

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

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

December 19th & 20th: Christmas Tree Festival at St John's.

January 6th, Epiphany: 9.30 am Holy Communion at St Michael's, brunch and film.

Christmas Coffee Morning

This will take place in Cuxton Church Hall from 10.00 on 12th December. We shall welcome Santa. There will be many of the usual attractions and others beside. Do come along and enjoy this preparation for Christmas.

Christmas Tree Festival

This will take place at St John's Church the weekend of 19th & 20th December. Village clubs and societies and individuals are invited to produce and decorate a Christmas tree. Be as imaginative and creative as you like. Trees may be real or artificial. They need to be set up on Friday 18th. On the Saturday, the exhibition will be open to the public and there will be refreshments on sale. The exhibition will also be open on Sunday with our usual service of Holy Communion at 11.00 and our Christmas Carol Service, Nativity Play and Christingle at 3.00. Please contact Phyllis Chidwick or the Rector if you would like to display a tree. It would be nice if you could leave them in church until twelfth night, but, if you need them for your own domestic festivities, you can have them back after the Carol Service. We hope to have an enjoyable celebration with plenty of things to see and to raise something for church funds by way of visitors' donations.

Carol Singing in the Open Air: All welcome. Outside Cuxton Untied Reformed Church, Bush Road, Cuxton. 6.00 pm, Saturday 19th December. Refreshments and mulled wine to follow.

Psalm 46. God is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved : and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God : the holy place of the tabernacle of the most Highest. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed his voice, and the earth shall melt away. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge. O come hither, and behold the works of the Lord : what destruction he hath brought upon the earth. He maketh wars to cease in all the world : he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Garden Maintenance

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From the Rector

When you were a child, did you run to the door when you heard the postman come and the letterbox rattle? When you were a teenager, did you long for the 'phone to ring? Are you one of those people always checking your messages? Do you just have to tell someone when you hear a good story or something happens to you or you feel you have achieved something? We do like to stay in touch. Communication is one of the things that makes us

human.

Skype makes it possible to see and hear and talk to friends and relatives on the other side of the world. Instagram enables you to share pictures of yourself. You can upload onto social media sites all your own personal news and views for an audience potentially of millions. Likewise they can share their opinions and their experiences with us.

All heady stuff, but still not quite as good as meeting in person, actually to be with the people we care about. There's nothing like being in the same room as someone you love.

Jesus is God's Word to us, God's message, if you like. The baby born at Bethlehem is God's way of telling us how much He loves us. He is God's creative Word. He is God's Word of forgiveness. He is God's Word of consolation. He is God's Word of power. God speaks to us through Jesus. We speak to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

But Jesus is not merely God's GPO. Nor is He simply God's BT or Facebook or Twitter. Jesus is God. With Jesus, we are in the Presence of God. To know Jesus is to know God. It's a personal encounter, to talk to Him and He to us. In Jesus, we meet God in person. He is in the same room as us. That's the meaning of the Christmas story.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
John 1¹.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.
Roger.

Picture at St John's

I had been curious about this picture and a visitor was able to supply the following information. RIK.

The picture on the South wall, which she mentioned that her great grandmother had worked in tapestry, is a copy of 'Christ blessing the bread' by the Italian artist, Carlo Dolci (1616 – 1686). There are copies also at Kew Palace (Richmond upon Thames) and at Christ Church, Jeffreys Hill, Hanham in the parish of Britton, Nr Bristol; and elsewhere (for further information, Google: Christ blessing the bread, Carlo Dolci). John Constable RA (1776 – 1837) painted a very similar picture entitled 'Christ blessing the bread and wine'.

Can't Get to the Library? Let Medway's Home Library Service Come to You

A friend or relative can collect your books, audiobooks, jigsaws or DVDs or the Library Service can arrange for a volunteer to bring them to your home for you. Just call 337799. You can also go on to www.medway.gov.uk/libraries to find out more about what the Library Service can offer you.

St Michael's Draw: Mrs Barker £10, Mrs Beaney £10 Mrs Taylor £5 – drawn by Mr & Mrs Street & Mrs Morren.
St Jon's Draw: £5 each to Mrs. Farrow (25), Mr Hills (104), Mrs Cheeseman (135) & Mr Tower (146) – drawn by Mrs Baker.

Legal, Decent, Honest and Truthful

Many of you know about the disgraceful behaviour of the Medway Council officers who, contrary to government guidelines and ignoring the results of a public consultation, imposed a woodland Tree Preservation Order on my garden thirteen years ago - their cavalier disregard of the law of the land, and the protections it is supposed to provide for property owners and local residents, and their willingness to be "economical with the truth" and worse.

Since then one of the officers involved has been convicted of a serious criminal offence. He was the Medway officer who trespassed in my garden at night, while my mother and I slept in our beds. He was also seen in other people's gardens at night, allegedly looking for wildlife, and, when he was found on school premises in the daytime, he claimed to be inspecting trees on behalf of the council. I find this very disturbing and I raised my concerns with Medway's Chief Executive, Neil Davies, in an e mail on 12th October. So far, I have not had the courtesy of a reply, even of an acknowledgement that he has received my e mail. Presumably he just doesn't care about us.

This issue has come to the fore again because Medway Council tree supremo Michael Sankus is demanding that we replace one field maple, four dying elm trees, two hawthorns and a possibly dangerous sycamore with twelve new field maple trees (aka weeds) at a cost to the Church of £756 - money given in good faith by good people for good works. I wondered about the consciences of men who could try to bully us into wasting money given for charitable purposes on such absurdity. The most recent figure I can find for what we are paying Mr Davies is £183,905 per annum, which is £503.85 per day plus expenses. (I understand that he also receives many thousands more for acting as returning officer whenever an election is held in Medway.) So far, I have been unable to discover what we are paying Mr Sankus, but it is bound to be a great deal more than most Medway taxpayers are getting. Men in their position obviously cannot sympathise at all with people for whom £756 is a lot of money. It's less than two days' pay to Mr Davies!

I'm not making a fuss about this just because it's the Church or just because it's me. They did something similar to the Scout Group back in 2012. Private homeowners often complain to me about the way they are treated by council officers - their arrogance, rudeness, unreasonable demands and lack of sympathy for the circumstances of the people they are dealing with. My mother knew a pensioner couple who were told by a council tree officer that, if they couldn't afford to maintain the trees in their garden the way he wanted them, they should move. Quite frankly, I'm disgusted both by the sleaziness of the council's operation and the bullying. I should like to see Medway Council adopt the same code as the Advertising Standards Authority. Officer's conduct ought always to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. I think we have the right to expect nothing less. Roger.

P.S.: I sent an advance copy of this to Medway Council' press office in case they had any comments, but they have not responded. Perhaps they agree with me.

On a Lighter Note

A visitor to a church was confronted by a rather posh lady evidently in some distress. "There's something wrong with the myrrh," she kept saying. Mystified, the visitor asked her if she didn't mean the incense? "No," she said, "Not the incense, the lawn myrrh. The grass needs cutting."

From the Registers

Baptisms:

19 th September	Paula Marie Graham	Blenchingly
	Gillian Bea Thatcher	Caterham
20 th September	Amallie Faith Whyman	Strood
21 st September	Cheyenne Lexia May Violet Dygos	Tillsonburg Canada
27 th September	Danielle Louise Mitchell	Snodland
25 th October	Kaitlyn Ivy Osborne	Marsham Way
	Elenea Rose Osborne	Marsham Way
1 st November	Jessica Jane Bates	Snodland

Wedding:

7 th November	Richard Ian Hayes & Kirsty Edwards	Cuxton
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Funerals:

4 th November	Florence Ann Waldock (93)	Bush Road
5 th November	Gladys Winifred Homewood (99)	formerly of May Street
20 th November	Doris Madeleine Riggall (101)	Ladywood Road
20 th November	Edwin Balsom (89)	James Road

Thanks: I would like to thank all those who sent cards and condolences on the death of Doris Riggall. She would have been very moved to know so many people thought about her and I hope that she is remembered with affection by those who knew her. Thanks from all the family, Pat Reynolds

Holy Communion Wednesdays at St Michael's at 9.30		Holy Communion Thursdays at St John's at 9.30	
2 nd December	Isaiah 25 vv 6-10 Matthew 15 vv 29-37	3 rd December	Isaiah 26 vv 1-6 Matthew 7 vv 21-27
9 th December Ember Day	Isaiah 40 vv 25-31 Matthew 11 vv 28-30	10 th December	Isaiah 41 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 11-15
16 th December	Isaiah 45 vv 6-25 Luke 7 vv 18-23	17 th December O Sapientia	Genesis 49 vv 2-10 Matthew 1 vv 1-17
23 rd December	Malachi 3 vv 1-18 Luke 1 vv 57-66	24 th December Christmas Eve	II Samuel 7 vv 1-16 Luke 1 vv 67-79
30 th December	I John 2 vv 12-17 Luke 2 vv 36-40	31 st December John Wyclif	I John 2 vv 18-21 John 1 vv 1-18
6 th January Epiphany	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 Matthew 2 vv 1-12	7 th January	I John 4 vv 19-5 v4 Luke 4 vv 14-22
13 th January	I Samuel 3 vv 1-20 Mark 1 vv 29-39	14 th January	I Samuel 4 vv 1-11 Mark 1 vv 40-45
20 th January	I Samuel 17 vv 32-51 Mark 3 vv 1-6	21 st January	I Samuel 18 6-9 & 19 vv 1-7 Mark 3 vv 7-12
27 th January	II Samuel 7 vv 4-17 Mark 4 vv 1-20	28 th January	II Samuel 7 vv 18-29 Mark 4 vv 21-25

Holy Communion will be celebrated at 9.30 at St Michael's on 26th & 28th December. No other services. 29th back to normal.

Nature Notes September 2015

The Vixen by John Clare

Among the taller wood with ivy hung,
The old fox plays and dances round her young.
She snuffs and barks if any passes by
And swings her tail and turns prepared to fly.
The horseman hurries by, she bolts to see,
And turns again from danger never free.
If any stands she runs among the poles

And barks and snaps and drives them in the holes.
The shepherd sees them and the boy goes by
And gets a stick and prods the hole to try.
They get all still and lie in safety sure,
And out again when everything's secure,
And start and snap at blackbirds bouncing by
To fight and catch the great white butterfly.

The first day of the month is warm with intermittent sunshine. I take Murphy to Bluewater. Autumn is definitely on its way as the leaves are turning from green to gold, red and yellow. Heavy showers fall on 3rd. On 4th I go to Addington. The early Autumn sky has the clarity of being washed. White and grey clouds drift across the heavens. Early mornings are sunny. On the 7th I take Murphy to the lake. The grass has been cut and most of the wild flowers have been cut down too except for some on the banks where lucerne, bristly ox tongue and umbellifers are still in bloom. Grey clouds build up but no rain falls. I pick blackberries from the garden on 9th. The birds have already had some. The 10th is a beautiful day. I walk round the lake with Murphy and watch crows foraging for seed where the grass is stubbly. In the evening rooks wend their way back to their sleeping quarters in the trees by the river. The 11th is another beautiful day with a golden sun shining from a bright blue sky. I walk up the church path, across the fields and up into Mays Wood. Blackberries, elderberries, hips and haws have ripened and old man's beard straddles the hedges. Purple mallow flowers raise their heads to the sky. As I walk down to the road, I see nipplewort, yarrow, red deadnettle, viper's bugloss and marjoram. The next day I spend some time in the garden. On 14th the sun shines from a blue sky but dark clouds loom bringing some showers during the morning and a strong breeze blows. Birds come to the garden in the afternoon and I hear magpies calling. The night air is chilly, a definite sign of Autumn. The 17th, when we take Murphy to Bluewater, is sunny and warm. The

21st is overcast with grey clouds threatening rain. We walk part way round the lake; then rain falls. David meets us before the rain becomes heavy. After two grey days the 23rd is beautiful. We walk round the lake. The sun shines brightly and with warmth. In the evening a crescent moon shines. During the evening of 24th, the garden is lit up by a pink glow from the setting sun. It is beautiful. In the afternoon of 25th I walk up the overgrown path by the churchyard and into Church Fields where hips and haws are ripe and old man's beard climbs over the hedges. I walk the woodland paths then down towards the road. Hedges have been cut and they look rather ragged but they will eventually soften. I reach the grassy path leading to Six acre Wood. A slow moving cloud hides the sun for a while. In the evening of 26th a bright moon shines from a clear sky. The 27th is a beautiful day again with bright blue skies, golden sunshine and a northerly breeze. I walk round the lake with Murphy. The 28th is another beautiful day of sunshine and blue skies. The grassy paths around the lake are now devoid of wild flowers. Wisps of white cloud drift across the sky. A bright moon shines in the night sky. During the morning of 29th, I walk up to the fields then go along Six acres because horses are loose on the path within the fields. I skirt the lower field and take the lower path back to Six acre Wood. I then climb the steep path through the wood and the even steeper path into the churchyard and home. The last day of the month is also beautiful when wisps of cloud drift across the sky in northerly breezes.

Nature Notes October 2015

"Everyone Sang" by Siegfried Sassoon

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark green fields; on-on-and
Out of sight.

The 1st day of the month is beautiful with golden sunshine and clear blue skies but a north wind blows. White butterflies and a dragonfly hover over the garden. Another lovely day follows; then grey skies greet the 3rd for fog has formed. The 4th is fine then rain falls on the 5th when I walk undercover with Murphy at Bluewater. Later, while driving along the road towards home, I see the trees which are becoming beautiful in their Autumn colours of reds, golds, and yellows. Rain falls in the evening. A few showery days follow; then, on 8th, it is warm with

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted,
And beauty came like the setting sun;
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away. O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing
Will never be done.

sunshine and blue skies brushed with white clouds. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy where trees are displaying their beautiful colours of red, gold and yellow. Acorns are ripening while hazels are displaying small catkins, next year's flowers. The lake ripples in the westerly breeze. The sun shines well into the afternoon when I spend some time in the garden. The next day I watch a red admiral butterfly as it perches on a buddleia bush in the garden. It is a beautiful creature. On 10th I go to Great Comp gardens with a friend. Flowers and trees are beautiful,

brightening what is otherwise a grey day. The 11th is a lovely day with bright sunshine and blue skies. The holly tree in the garden is full of red berries which are sampled by a magpie. In the afternoon, I watch a rabbit enjoying a feast of grass. Northerly winds drive clouds across the sky and silver birches on the embankment sway to and fro. As the sun dips towards the western sky, its golden beams light up the trees along the banks and part of our back garden; it is a magnificent sight. Chilly winds blow for several days, reminding me that Summer has really passed. The 20th is sunny with some warmth. In the afternoon, I walk across the fields and into the woods where leaves are falling from the trees onto the paths below. I watch a squirrel as it climbs a tree trunk. In the valley, Autumn leaves are beautiful in the sunshine. I skirt the fields; then walk up Six acre field which is becoming very overgrown, to the top path. I cut through the churchyard and walk home with the sun shining in my face. Skies are clear as darkness falls. The 21st is grey with rain falling in the morning as we drive to Bluewater. Murphy has an undercover walk because of the rain. Earlier, we had driven along the Halling bypass where the trees along the route are beautiful in their Autumn colours. The rain eases but grey skies remain. The early morning of 22nd is rather grey, but later the sun breaks through the cloud. I walk round the lake with Murphy. A few daisies bloom in the grass and small catkins are on the hazel twigs. The colours of the leaves bring brightness to the greyness of the day. The 23rd is, again, grey. The late afternoon brings scores of rooks returning to the trees by the river. They caw loudly as they circle the trees for their resting place. As darkness descends they fall silent. The next day, we walk round the lake. So many trees are now displaying their Autumn colours. It's almost as if they are in competition with one another. When the frosts come the leaves will fall quite quickly. The 24th remains grey but it is not cold. I walk round the lake with Murphy and marvel at the beautiful Autumn colours. Oaks and maples are shedding their leaves. I notice wild cherry blossom on one of the trees. Rain falls in the afternoon and into the evening. The clocks go back an hour at 2.00am. There has been some

frost overnight; so there is a chill in the air in the early morning of 25th. In the afternoon, I walk across the fields and into Mays Wood, then along the leaf-strewn paths. I skirt the field then walk down to Six-acre Field then up the hill back to the wood. Later, as the sun is setting, the sky is suffused with pink cloud across the blue. It is truly beautiful. The 26th is sunny and I feel the warmth as I walk Murphy round the lake. The trees are so beautiful in the sun's golden light. At home, the trees on the embankment are equally beautiful. As the sun sets, the sky is suffused with pink wispy clouds. I stand at the back door and watch the rooks flying home to roost. Their calls are loud as they circle the trees by the river. A bright moon shines in the clear night sky. The 27th is a beautiful day of sunshine and blue skies. The trees are more alluring each day as the sun's light plays on the surroundings. The warmth of the sun brings enjoyment as I walk the grassy paths round the lake with Murphy. The afternoon remains sunny and pleasantly warm. The 28th is fine with sunshine and blue skies. I walk to the village then along Bush Road to the alley leading to the fields. Heavy rain has fallen during the early morning leaving puddles, mud and carpets of wet leaves of maple and ash. I climb the path of Six acre Wood. Leaves fall silently to the ground. The sun shines into the afternoon then a bright moon rises in the east. The morning of 29th is grey and damp but there is some brightness later. As I walk to the village, I notice a thick carpet of leaves covering the entrance to the rectory garden. They are golden maples. Light rain falls in the evening which is very mild. The 30th is bright with variable cloud as I walk Murphy at Bluewater but on dry paths not on grass as there has been some heavy rain. He finds plenty of sniffs and is quite happy. There is some sunshine as we drive home. The light is fading by mid-afternoon. The sun shines brightly and with warmth on the last day of the month. I hear birdsong from a robin in the holly tree. During the middle of the morning I sit in the garden enjoying the warmth of the sun. The afternoon remains bright with clear blue skies.

Elizabeth Summers.

News from The Academy of Cuxton Schools

Dear Friends of our school,

Another busy few weeks and a half term holiday. Already, whilst slightly mild, the beech trees at the front of the school are shedding their brightly coloured leaves. Our environment day was extremely successful. Thank you to anyone who sent in kind donations of plants and bulbs. The children enjoyed being outside and thankfully the weather was fine. We had a really enjoyable Harvest Festival and the foods collected were taken to folk in need within the village and then to Downsland House. The Year 5 children were thrilled to be able to sing to the residents and very much look forward to visiting them nearer Christmas to sing some carols.

We performed at the Woodville Halls earlier on in the month with the other schools within our Trust. For the first time we have a choir and they performed brilliantly, singing their hearts out – ‘Something Inside So Strong’. The Children have enjoyed participating in Maths week, full of problem solving and there have been various school trips and workshops.

The Children returned after Half term with two projects completed. A poppy- some painted, glued, crocheted, sewn, glittered and collaged. Also a poster to stop people parking and driving recklessly through the village. I am keen that both posters and poppies be displayed around our school site.

This term brings new topics to study in school, Reading, writing and maths, Children In Need, a book fair, the Xmas Fete run by the friends, the Christmas plays, party, disco, Christmas lunch and of course that special visitor clad in red! This time of year in school is magical when children decorate the trees and the Christmas lights go on! Do ensure you look at our website and see some of the wonderful things we get up to!

Sincerely, Sandra Jones, Head teacher Cuxton Schools.



Cuxton WI

Our evening began on a rather sad note as we had heard that Doris had died at the wonderful age of very nearly 102 years. I had known her for at least 45 years and we had been on committees together and acted as the tea ladies as well as appearing in what used to be annual pantomimes. Apart from difficulty with walking, Doris was really quite well and could converse with the best of them having no loss of memory at all. She had been our pianist at WI for many years playing for carols and songs for plays etc., all by ear. She always played at the beginning of our meetings when we sing Jerusalem. So, instead of a silent memory we decided to sing our hearts out for her and Jerusalem echoed across the room with no accompaniment - loud, not altogether successful, but Doris would have laughed and enjoyed it I'm sure.

This was followed by a very interesting talk by Wilf Lower. He had worked for years for the BBC and gave us a feast of old memories as he

reminded us of the shows we all loved in those earlier days. Dad's Army was the most popular. It was translated into 96 different languages and even now is shown in at least three countries in the world everyday. I think it made some of us quite sad when we remembered the days of shows which were pure fun with no violence or bad language in them, an altogether more restful time.

Our business section was quite brief with all clubs busy at this time of year and there are several new things to look forward to in the new year. Our next meeting is for members only as it is our Christmas Party. A little rest for the committee, as we have arranged with caterers to bring us a buffet and my job is to organise all their brains and present them with a quiz evening. Not too strenuous just lots of laughter and fun.

So we all wish our keen readers a very Happy Christmas and we hope to meet and greet some of you in the New Year. Sheila.

A Terrible Warning Seen on the Internet:

Every time someone decorates a Christmas tree in November, an elf strangles a baby reindeer. You have been warned!

DUST IF YOU MUST

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better, to paint a picture or write a letter.

Bake a cake, or plant a seed, ponder the difference between want or need.

Dust if you must but there's not much time, with rivers to swim and mountains to climb.

Music to hear and books to read, friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the worlds out there, with the sun in your eyes the wind in your hair

A flutter of snow, a shower of rain, this day will not come around again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind, old age will come, and it's not kind,

And when you go ,and go you must, you yourself will make more dust.

Foster Parents Needed

Dear Churches Together in Medway,

In the manner of St Paul, I am writing an open letter to you all, to ask whether there are “those among you” who may feel called to become foster carers for children who live in Medway, and need someone to care for them whilst they cannot live at home. Fostering children takes time, patience, and a big heart. It may be challenging and, at times sad but it will also be fun, and one of the most rewarding things you could ever do. When you foster for Medway you are part of a team, working together to support and care for children who have experienced trauma, loss and disruption to their lives. You will have your own supervising social worker to guide and support you. There is excellent training available and, although we are non profit making, you will be paid an allowance to cover the needs of the child, plus a fee that recognises the good work you do. We currently need foster carers for our children, people like you. You will need a spare room, and be within driving distance of the Medway Towns. Fostering may not be for everyone, but if you think it could be your calling, please contact us on 01634 335726 or visit our website. We are having open evening on 17 November 5.30pm until 8pm at Gun Wharf, Chatham and again on January 16 same venue 9.30am-12pm so ring and book a place to find out more. Or, just give us a call; we would love to hear from you. Come and join us, it might be the best thing you ever do. Please keep us, and the children we care for in your prayers. Yours sincerely, Medway Council Fostering Team. Click on this link for further details: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/carehealthandsupport/applytobeafostercarer.aspx>



Halling WI

It is with great sadness that I am writing this report today, as by the time you read this Halling W.I. will be no more. It was about 1963 when I was invited by my friend Rene Hitchcock to accompany her to Cuxton W.I. Looking forward to the 1st Thursday of the month, it wasn't long before I was in the thick of it, joined the Drama group (didn't we have fun June with Peggy King?) and the choir with Elsie Griffin, I designed and helped embroider the WI table cloth that is still used today, attended the Annual Council Meetings and went to the National Federation Meeting at the Royal Albert Hall as their representative. What a thrill it was to stand on that famous stage!

After a few years and a new addition to my family, I started to think, Why do I have to go to Cuxton for all this fun and friendship? Yes, I did make lots of friends, some of whom are still around now. It wasn't long before a meeting was arranged at Halling old school to see if it was feasible to start a W.I. in Halling. Mrs Peggy Muxlow, our then County chairman attended that meeting and so did over 70 ladies. So in June 1967 Halling W.I. was formed. Over the years we have done so many exciting things, been to many places, made so many friends and been educated and entertained. We sang with Doris Mabbott, acted the fool with Ann Carter, crafted and cooked, took our children on picnics, went to the theatre, and had lots of fun. Betty Head and

myself have sung Jerusalem in so many places, Cardiff, Liverpool, Brighton, Birmingham and many times at the Royal Albert Hall where, we have listened to many famous people and ploughed through many resolutions.

When our new village hall was built at Upper Halling, we decided to up sticks and move to the Jubilee Hall and have been the only organization that has used it from the beginning.

I never thought we would go on for 48 years. If only we could have made the half century, but all good things must come to an end and with only nine paid up members (It was two and sixpence subscription when I joined.) it wasn't practical to carry on. So our W.I. Advisor, Maggie Vidgeon, whom I have known for many years, will come on 15th December to "suspend" us officially. We are going to have our Christmas dinner and our Christmas party, albeit the party will be held in January because of the ongoing road works going on in Upper Halling. The way things are going with the road works that will be January 2017.)

Our third Tuesdays will not be the same any more. Yes some of us will miss it. It has been part of our lives for half a century and given so many ladies so much pleasure. Some may even join a neighbouring W.I. My only hope is that, sometime in the future, Halling W.I. will rise again with new people, perhaps a new venue, but with the same enthusiasm as I had so many years ago. Phyllis.

Halling Historical Society

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17th December 2015 at 7.30 pm in the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling. The speaker will be Mr Dean Caston and the subject: History of the Royal Variety Performance. Visitors and new members always welcome.

Fifteen Questions Arising

I was asked to preach a sermon on the case of Canon Jeremy Pemberton. When I looked into it, I realised that there were so many matters arising from this subject that it warranted at least an undergraduate course at a university. Briefly, the situation is this. Canon Pemberton is homosexual and has entered into a gay marriage with his partner. He is a hospital chaplain and was offered a more senior post in a different hospital in another diocese. Although hospital chaplains are employed and paid by the NHS, they have to be in good standing with their Church or other religious authority. In the case of Church of England chaplains, they require the bishop's licence to officiate. The relevant bishop withdrew Canon Pemberton's licence because gay marriage is contrary to the discipline of the Church of England. This meant that he could not take up his chaplaincy post. Canon Pemberton took the case to an Employment Tribunal, claiming that he was being discriminated against, contrary to the Equality Act 2010. The judge agreed that his treatment did constitute discrimination, which would normally be unlawful, but that religious bodies, including the Church, are exempt from many of the Act's provisions. Canon Pemberton lost his case, but intends to appeal. All this cost a great deal of time, energy and money, quite apart from the personal effects on the individuals involved and the wider consequences for the Church's evangelistic and pastoral mission. Here are some of the questions we would have to answer before we could decide the rights and wrongs of this case.

- 1) Is marriage a divine or a human institution?
- 2) If marriage is a human institution, who decides who may lawfully marry and in what circumstances? Is it the lawfully constituted and internationally recognised government? If so, does it make any moral difference whether these decisions are taken by a democratically elected parliament (as in the UK), by a supreme court (as in the USA), by a secular autocrat (such as President Putin in Russia) or by the religious authorities (as in Iran)?
- 3) Are the rights and wrongs of marriage moral absolutes which ought to apply in the same way all over the world? Or is marriage a cultural phenomenon, which may vary over different eras of history and in different sovereign states?
- 4) If marriage is a purely cultural phenomenon (and there are no universal moral absolutes), by what right do we criticise and even attempt to change cultures which regard homosexuality as a perversion or treat women as inferior beings?
- 5) If what we believe about marriage is universally true and ought to be applied everywhere in the world, how do we know that we are right? Or could it be a vestige of colonialism or racism which assumes that European and North American culture is naturally superior to most of Africa, much of Asia and quite a lot of South America? Do we think that people who don't agree with us must be stupid, ignorant or wicked?
- 6) Actually, if marriage is a purely human institution, why should the state be involved at all? Many people manage to live together in all sorts of relationships without benefit of registrar. What is more, given the rise of feminism, married couples are increasingly treated as individuals – not least by the state in such matters as taxation. What business has the state with people's private lives, so long as they are not hurting anyone?
- 7) If the state's role in marriage is to protect individual's rights in the event of dissolution or death, etc., would it not be better for the state to sanction civil partnerships and to keep out of marriage? If civil partnerships are not about who may have sex with whom, but protecting people who decide to share their lives for whatever reason, why are civil partnerships not available to heterosexual couples, people who are closely related and, possibly, to people who want to form communes?
- 8) If the state is involved in marriage, ought it to respect the consciences of those who disagree with it about the nature of marriage? That would include gay couples in states where gay marriage is illegal and, in states where gay marriage is legal, it might include respecting the consciences of people who do not wish to officiate at gay weddings or accommodate gay couples in double rooms.
- 9) Should the secular state allow religious groups exemption from the ordinary law? If so, would this be: because our duty to God is always more important than our duty to Caesar; because freedom of religion is recognised as a basic human right; or because religious people can be so difficult, choosing (depending on the religion) civil disobedience, martyrdom or terrorism over conformity with ungodly laws?
- 10) If marriage is a divine institution, how do we determine what God's Will is for marriage? Do we rely on the Bible or the traditional teaching of the Church? If we do, we shall certainly conclude that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and a woman and that gay marriage, divorce, fornication and adultery are all contrary to the Will of God.
- 11) Could it be, however, that God's Will for the present day is different from what the Church believed it to be in the past? How would we know? Is it a matter for individual conscience? If so, the Church will not be able to come to a

consensus. Is General Synod or any other body capable of discerning with reasonable certainty what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today?

12) Can the Church of England have a different fundamental understanding of marriage from that of other dioceses in the Anglican Communion? Difficult, because the USA and Canada already have quite different understandings of marriage from what most of the African and South American dioceses believe. We cannot agree with all of them, but, at what point, does disagreement make it impossible to remain in communion with them? Which matters more? Church unity worldwide or that we are true to our principles?

13) Can the Church of England have a different doctrine of marriage from that held by other Christian Churches – the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox and other Protestant Churches? How would we know that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us and not to them or *vice versa*?

14) Does it make any sense at all to have a different discipline for the clergy from the one which we apply to the laity? We have at the moment, but surely our belief is that all Christians, all the baptised, are called to the same standard of holiness. Christ is that standard.

15) Is it right to approach the question of clergy discipline as though the clergy were working for a secular corporation, rather than fulfilling their vocation as part of the Body of Christ? We are under grace, not under law. The fulfilling of the law is love. Ought codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, bureaucracy and legalism to be allowed quite such a prominent position in the way we deal with our problems? You get law, rather than justice. You waste a lot of money on courts and lawyers. Pastoral care and evangelism hardly feature in a box-ticking culture, borrowed from secular corporations and politics. Roger.



Tommy's Talking Points

On Monday, we managed the Dover-Folkestone section of the North Downs Way. I enjoyed the train ride to Dover, though Master was frustrated that, while we were stuck at Strood, we saw the train we should have been on sweep past over the viaduct on the Victoria line to Rochester. I like travelling by public transport. So many people make a fuss of me and tell me how pretty I am. One nice lady even took my picture! Master's friend was waiting at Dover and we set off on up towards the cliffs. I was allowed some freedom off my lead. I'm a bit more trusted now and I'm getting better at coming back when I'm called. Then back down onto the roads, negotiating the busy A20. We soon got back on top of the cliffs, however, and they were really spectacular. As the path is very near the edge, I definitely wasn't allowed off my lead. There was a lot of up and down and a very high wind, mostly in our faces and coming in off the sea. Master said, that, had it been blowing the other way, we might have finished up in the sea. The cliffs are really high. The tide was in. The sun shone intermittently and lit up the white caps. There were seagulls, but not many people or dogs. We saw a shepherd rounding up his flock. There were hardly any pubs, and, because things were taking longer than expected and the fact that it gets dark earlier, Master wanted to press on in case we got caught up there in the dark. So, only water for all three of us! Nevertheless, the walk was very bracing for the men and ecstasy for the dog. In today's paper it says that those cliffs are eroding at a rate of 10 cms (nearly 4") every year. So maybe we did it just in time! Master says that 30 years ago, when he last did that walk, you came down straight off the cliffs to Folkestone Harbour. You can't do that now because of all the infrastructure connected to the Channel Tunnel. He said that maybe, if you vote to leave the Common Market in the referendum next June, the Channel Tunnel will be filled in by the following Christmas, and the grass will grow back over its infrastructure. I don't think he meant it, however. He was appreciative enough of the fact that the high speed train whisked us home from Folkestone to Ebbsfleet in only forty minutes, though it took as long again to get from there to here. Anyway, I digress. The new route from cliffs to town isn't easy. He made us walk along a lane to avoid cows in the field where the correct path runs. He's been nervous of cows since Max was attacked last year and an article in Monday's paper said that 74 people had been killed by them last year. Finally, we had to descend a steep grassy bank. There was no obvious path and such tracks as there were wound up and down and round and round and petered out in thickets of brambles. I think they were tired by this time, but it was great. I was allowed to run free, to and fro, hither and thither. Eventually we came into town and a long walk to the station, picking up fish and chips to eat in the station waiting room. A good day out. Tommy.