

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
4 th December Advent 2	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 1-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
11 th December Advent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-10 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 1-11 p976
18 th December Advent 4	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 p692 Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1133 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p965
	6.30 Nine Lessons & Carols	
19 th December	7.00 pm Scout & Guide Carol Service	
24 th December Christmas Eve	5.00 Christingle, Nativity Play & Crib Service	
	11.00 Midnight Mass	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 p693 Titus 2 vv 11-14 p1199 Luke 2 vv 1-20 p1025
25 th December Christmas Day	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 p739 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
1 st January Naming of Jesus	9.30 Family Communion	Numbers 6 vv 22-27 p141 Galatians 4 vv 4-7 p1170 Luke 2 vv 15-21 p1028
6 th January Epiphany	9.30 Holy Communion & Brunch	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
8 th January Baptism of Christ	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967
15 th January Epiphany 2	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 p1064
22 nd January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-4 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-18 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-25 p968
29 th January Epiphany 4	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 7-16 p358 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-31 p1144 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
4 th December Advent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Kings 18 vv 16-39 p359 John 1 vv 19-28 p1063
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 1-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
11 th December Advent 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-10 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 1-11 p976
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 5 vv 8-30 p689 John 5 vv 31-40 p1069
18 th December Advent 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 p692 Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1133 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p965
	3.00 00 Christingle, Nativity Play & Crib Service	
25 th December Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
1 st January Naming of Jesus	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 4 vv 8-14 p1131 Luke 2 vv 15-21 p1028
	11.00 Holy Communion	Numbers 6 vv 22-27 p141 Galatians 4 vv 4-7 p1170 Luke 2 vv 15-21 p1028

8 th January Baptism of Christ	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Joshua 3 vv 1-17 p217 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201	
15 th January Epiphany 2	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 p1064	
22 nd January Epiphany 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-4 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-18 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-25 p968	
29 th January Epiphany 4	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 7-16 p358 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-31 p1144 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064	
Holy Communion Wednesdays at St Michael's at 9.30 am		Holy Communion Thursdays at St John's at 9.30 am	
December 7 th S Ambrose	Isaiah 40 vv 25-31 Matthew 11 vv 28-30	December 8 th	Isaiah 41 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 11-15
December 14 th	Isaiah 45 vv 6-25 Luke 7 vv 18-23	December 15 th	Isaiah 54 vv 1-10 Luke 7 vv 24-30
December 21 st (S Thomas BCP)	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-18 Luke 1 vv 39-45	December 22 nd	I Samuel 1 vv 24-28
December 28 th Holy Innocents	Jeremiah 31 vv 15-17 I Corinthians 1 vv 26-29 Matthew 2 vv 13-18	December 29 th	I John 2 vv 3-11 Luke 2 vv 22-35
January 4 th	I John 3 vv 7-10 John 1 vv 35-42	January 5 th	I John 3 vv 11-21 John 1 vv 43-51
January 11 th	Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 Mark 1 vv 29-39	January 12 th	Hebrews 3 vv 7-14 Mark 1 vv 40-45
January 18 th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Hebrews 7 vv 1-17 Mark 3 vv 1-6	January 19 th	Hebrews 7 v25 – 8 v6 Mark 3 vv 7-12
January 25 th Conversion of S Paul	Acts 9 vv 1-22 Matthew 19 vv 27-30	January 26 th Ss Timothy & Titus	Hebrews 10 vv 19-25 Mark 4 vv 21-25

Holy Communion 9.30 St Michaels 26th, 27th, 28th, 30th & 31st December, 9.30 St John's 29th.



From the Rector

When is it time to start thinking about getting ready for Christmas? Back in October, someone was telling me about how she and her granddaughter were thinking about making mince pies and Christmas cakes. There's a lot to do for a very special time of year and we want to do it right. We celebrate Jesus' birthday at Christmas. So our Christmas parties are His birthday party. What would we have to do to get ready if Jesus Himself were coming for Christmas this year?

What about the sleeping arrangements? Could we get away with putting Him up on a camp bed in the study or sharing a room with the boys? Or would He expect the master bedroom? He was born in a stable, but presumably we're not going to put Him up in the shed if He comes this year!

What about food and drink? Might He not disapprove of alcohol? Hang on a minute, though, didn't He once turn about a 120 gallons of water into wine at a wedding feast? It's probably too much to hope that He'll do the same thing for us, this year. Better get in a few bottles and cans.

Turkeys and potatoes come from the Americas. So He wouldn't have had anything like that in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. Probably not Brussels sprouts or carrots either, or Christmas pudding. A polite guest would eat up whatever was put in front of him, but a good host would try to serve up what he thought the guest would like. Would Jesus be eager to try new things or would He be a traditionalist, only really liking what Mary used to cook for Him when He was a boy? Who knows?

As for decorations, I've no idea whether holly and mistletoe grow in the Holy Land and, even if they do, isn't mistletoe a bit suspect because of its

pagan associations? Would Jesus disapprove of kissing under it or would He regard it as harmless fun? Christmas trees have only been around for a few centuries. So would Jesus think they were a good thing? They are supposed to represent the Trinity and eternal life. The candles represent the Light of the World and some people think that the balls represent the Communion wafer, Jesus, the Bread of Life. So presumably He would approve.

What sort of presents could you give to the Man Who has everything? What sort of gifts might He bring for you?

Intriguing, how would we plan for Christmas if we thought Jesus was coming? In reality, of course, what Jesus would really care about would

be whether He was coming to a loving home. Do we love one another in our household? Do we love Jesus? Do we love our neighbours? Those are the things that really matter.

And Jesus really is coming. He is coming again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead and He comes to us every day in the people we meet. He said that the way we treat other people is the way we treat Him. So getting ready for Jesus is about loving God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength and our neighbours as ourselves. It is about repenting of our falling short of His love. It is about having faith in Him and living by His commandments.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
Roger.

Photo Challenge



The picture in last month's magazine is of an Ordnance Survey Bench Mark. It is located on the north west corner of the tower of St John's.

Another Puzzle

A few weeks ago, a very nice lady in Canada e mailed to say that a 1924 depicting the interior of Halling Church had just turned up among goods given to a church rummage sale in Montreal (St Matthias Westmount). Would we like it? She very kindly then posted it to me. It looks as if the C12 wall-painting on the chancel arch was then visible, which surprised me as we believed that it had only been uncovered in the 1940s. What is puzzling is how the calendar got to Canada. Several Halling families did emigrate to Canada between the two world wars and maybe somebody knows something about this.

The inscription on the back says: *To Miss Cooper with best wishes for a Happy New Year from Annie.* Does anyone know who these people were?

Flora and Fauna

We've had some correspondence regarding our elementary nature notes in recent magazines. The UK phenological (defined as the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations in climate, as well as habitat factors) data link records no cuckoos in the Cuxton Valley since 2013. It is possible to be deceived by mimics such as collared doves which can sound like cuckoos. I used to hear cuckoos on my morning runs from Vicarage Road, Halling, across the river in Wouldham and in the Luddesdowne/Cobham area. I don't run to those places anymore, but other people tell me they no longer hear cuckoos in Halling. I don't know about Luddesdowne or Cobham. Locally (if not nationally), it has been a good year for butterflies. So no surprise if you have seen plenty as I have in my garden. A lot of damselflies have been spotted around the path which connects Dean and Bush Valleys and they have been generally common this year. I saw them a couple of days in my garden in October, but not as many as some years. I am glad not to have seen many wasps around here, though my correspondent tells me that they have been plentiful. On 24th October, a number of wasps disturbed our pub lunch at Box Hill. I'm afraid I killed one and then witnessed something I have never seen before. Another wasp came and picked up the corpse and flew away with it. Do wasps have funerals? Or are they cannibals? Does anyone know?

As for flora, the blackberries were plentiful, though later than in recent years because of the wet spring. The elder berries in my garden rotted away very quickly as apparently they did all over the country.

It has been a remarkable Autumn so far. At first, there were just hints of yellow in the green foliage of Summer and then suddenly a riot of colour, gold and brown and some deep red leaves as well as berries and hips and haws. In the sunshine, the woods and hedges have been glorious, whether seen across the valleys or right up close. Under cloud, or observed through the mists which have enfolded our morning walks in late October and early November, the leaves are still beautiful, but with much subtler tones reflecting the uncertain light, sometimes shining in the darkness, sometimes self-effacing in the gloom.

The weather changed abruptly too - Monday afternoon giving the grass its last cut of the year, clad only in shorts, Wednesday morning a sharp frost and three layers of clothing even indoors with the heating on. Maybe Tommy will see his first snow this year. Roger.

Psalm 8: O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world : thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies : that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. What is man, that thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him lower than the angels : to crown him with glory and worship. Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands : and thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; All sheep and oxen : yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea : and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Governor : how excellent is thy Name in all the world! 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.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

17 th September	Joey Michael Trevor Elliott Lawry-Wilkins	Ladywood Road
23 rd October	Dexter Andrew Bates	Aylesford
30 th October	Elsie Julie Reynolds	Northfleet

Funeral:

22 nd November	James (Jim) William Martin	Pilgrims Way
---------------------------	----------------------------	--------------

Parishioners were also sorry to hear of the death of Maureen O' Neill in Liverpool where she was staying with her daughter. Maureen had been a tremendous help and support at our parish lunches.

<p>Let saints on earth in concert sing with those whose work is done; For all the servants of our king in Heav'n and earth are one.</p> <p>One family, we dwell in Him, one Church, above, beneath; Though now divided by the stream, the narrow stream of death.</p> <p>One army of the living God, to His command we bow;</p>	<p>Part of the host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now.</p> <p>E'en now to their eternal home there pass some spirits blest; While others to the margin come, waiting their call to rest.</p> <p>Jesu, be Thou our constant guide; then, when the word is given, Bid Jordan's narrow stream divide, and bring us safe to Heav'n.</p>
---	---

I used that phrase *narrow stream of death* in our All Souls services sermons. I couldn't remember where it came from. So here it is in context for you.



Christians Against Poverty

Debt Relief

Medway has serious personal debt problems, no doubt including Cuxton and Halling. Both rich and poor people can get into debt and it becomes a nightmare when you can't repay your debts. You may lose your home. Goods may be repossessed. The emotional strain can lead to relationship breakdown, ill health and even suicide. Debt can become an unbearable burden and people may feel very alone with their problems.

Christians Against Poverty is a national organisation which works here in the Medway Towns. If you need help call 0800 328 0006 and you can pass on this number to anyone you know who might need it. You will be contacted and receive a home visit from someone who will help you to deal with your debt problems, getting your expenditure under control, prioritising your creditors, dealing with creditors to rearrange payment schedules, etc.. They will also offer to pray for you and with you and some of the people who are helped by CAP may decide to become Christians. CAP is an explicitly Christian organisation which knows how Jesus can turn lives around. However, you don't have to be or to become a Christian to get help. If you don't want to be prayed for, CAP will still help you to manage your money and find a solution to your financial problems.

As well as providing financial advice, CAP offers befrienders to support the people who turn to them for help. CAP is looking for volunteers from local churches to take on this role. You need to be a sympathetic person rather than a financial whiz to become a befriender. The service is entirely free to those who use it, but of course it does cost money to run and CAP is assisted by donations from Churches and individual Christians.

For more information on helping or if you need help with debt relief <https://capuk.org>

Ruth Millard of CAP will be speaking to us about the work of the organisation on Sunday 4th December at St Michael's at the 9.30 service.

Gift Services

On 4th December we are invited to bring Christmas presents to our 9.30 and 11.00 services for people (especially children) who might otherwise receive little or nothing. Presents should not be wrapped and should be new and in good condition, please.

Forthcoming Attractions

7th December: 12.00 Christmas Parish Lunch in the Church Hall.

10th December: 10.00 Christmas Coffee Morning & Fair in Church Hall.

6th January: 9.30 St Michael's Epiphany HC followed by brunch in church hall.

Christmas Parish Lunch

We enjoy a monthly lunch every first Wednesday in the church hall at 12.00, thanks to Christine Eede, who cooks a variety of dishes for our delectation. All are welcome in return for a donation to cover costs and, hopefully, a bit extra for church funds. Just come along if you enjoy good food and good company. On Wednesday 7th December, the lunch will in fact be a Christmas dinner. We look forward to seeing you.

What's In a Name or All's Fayre in Love and War?

Christmas Coffee Morning sounds good, but people might not realise that, as well as coffee and mince pies, there will be stalls with all kinds of goods for sale and games to play and also that Father Christmas will be in attendance with good cheer and more for everyone present. The Rector is a bit snobbish about calling it a *Market* or even a *Mini-Market*. *Fete* seems to attract the words *worse than death*. Maybe *bazaar* sounds too much like *bizarre*. The Rector once got into trouble for confusing *jumble* with *rummage*, but this is neither, and shouldn't a *boot fair* sell footwear? You'd better come along on 10th December and see for yourself what's on offer at the Christmas Fair. Names can be deceiving.

Surely Someone Could Do It

Valerie Brown would really like to give up being parish treasurer. She is well into her second stint at the job. All the time nobody else offers, she has very kindly continued, but it isn't fair to take advantage of her good nature like this and someone else really ought to give it a go. We can't pretend that it isn't a big job, but it is straightforward. It mainly involves banking the collection and other income and keeping our accounts. It could be done by two people – one doing the banking (at the post office if more convenient) and one recording the accounts.

Confirmation 2017

We're hoping to have Bishop James to preach and preside at St Michael's Patronal Festival on 29th September. It will also be a confirmation service if we have any candidates this year. They would normally be aged 12 or over. There will be a period of preparation or classes starting next Summer. The commitment is the commitment your godparents made on your behalf if you were christened as a baby. If you are not already baptised, you would be baptised at the confirmation service. If you mean your Baptism promises, there is no reason why you shouldn't be confirmed and become a communicant member of the Church, receiving the grace of the Sacrament every Sunday.

Quotation

It is in the higher aspects of ethics, the ideals rather than the basic social duties, that religious ethics makes its distinctive contribution and it has at least the following aspects: it gives us a special place in the universe and is the only basis for the moral unity of the human race; it emphasizes the importance of individual human dignity and includes here physical as well as moral dignity; it maintains the delicate moral balance between the dignity of the individual and the requirements of the social order and God provides an alternative to the worship of either the Self or the State; it is very much an ethic of virtue, rather than of rules and rights in the modern secular fashion; it celebrates humility and rejects pride, egocentrism, and the worship of the Self as utterly opposed to right living; it places the spiritual above the material and rejects the worship of material success, physical pleasures, and mere worldly values; it contrasts the fleeting vanities of this world with the eternal values of goodness and truth; and therefore it turns our social priorities of success and power upside down, with a special concern for the poor, weak, and outcast rather than for the rich and important. (p. 97 *Do We Need God? An Anthropologist Considers the Evidence by Christopher R Hallpike and cited in Theology* November/December 2016)

Daily Bible Notes

The Bible is the Word of God and Christians should read it every day. So should anyone who wants to know about God. Some people find it bit daunting, however, to know what to read or how to understand it. So I've prepared daily notes suggesting what you might read and how I interpret it for today which come out quarterly. They might help you to read and understand the Bible. Paper copies are available in church or I can bring you one at home if you can't make church. I can also email you a copy or you can find them under teaching on our parish website <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>.



Cuxton WI

The ladies of Cuxton WI met on the 3rd November and enjoyed a happy evening with tales of "Spooky Kent" from Neil Arnold who not only has some alleged ghost stories of the local area but is also a keen "big cat" enthusiast and told us of some that had been spotted in Cuxton!. As usual we had an

enjoyable evening with lots of laughter. Our next meeting is on the 1st December and is our Christmas Party for members only. After that our next meeting will be on the 5th January when we have a social evening and is an ideal night for any ladies who want to come along and see what we are all about. Certainly it isn't all Jam and Jerusalem!!!

Question

How many psych-therapists does it take to change a light bulb?

Just one, but the light bulb really has to want to change.

Mr Pether's Shop

There was a request in the October magazine for memories of Mr Pether who had the shop where Cuxton Co-op now stands. According to a correspondent, the building was originally two semi-detached houses which Mr Pether had made into one and converted the front rooms into a traditional shop. He sold groceries and greengrocery and papers and he also sold bread brought from Beaney's Bakery at Strood, baked by the father of the present proprietor of the bakery and still available in a couple of local outlets in the parish, as well as at Snodland where the main business now is. Mr Pether was a widower, extensively travelled in earlier days. He ran the shop well into his 'eighties. Before he died, he was negotiating with the Co-op to take over the business and presumably this was completed by his executors. Before they moved to Mr Pether's premises, the Co-op had been on the corner of May Street and Bush Road, which was also the post-office before it moved into what was then a butcher's shop and is now the chemist's.

Some people knew him as Old Pop Pether – but not to his face. Mr Pether had been a trader in dry goods in India since before the Second World War. His wife died in the year India became independent and he moved to Cuxton in the 1950s. He lived in the rooms above the shop.

The Co-op Dairy delivered milk to Mr Pether's shop at 4.00 am, which he delivered around the village in an old gray van between 5.00 and 6.00. The village then was much smaller and quieter than it is to day. The shop itself opened at 8.00, six days a week, never Sundays (as is right and proper).

After Mr Pether's retirement, the Coop took 18 months – two years to refit it and then closed their premises at the corner of May Street.

[The above is a compilation from more than one correspondent one of whom wonders whether there might be a photograph anywhere of the shop in Mr Pether's time? More information is promised for a future edition.]

Before Cuxton Medical Centre

Thinking about the doctor who was in the Scout Hall it was Dr Shroff from Halling. He also went into the Social Club before the Surgery was built. In Halling, he practised from his own home in Vicarage Road and, in early years, mixed up himself some of the medicines he dispensed.

Wartime Memories of Brenda Woodrow (nee Thorpe)

I was born in 1937 and lived in Bush Road until 1959. I was only two at the outbreak of World War II, but I remember quite a lot of the later years. My dad and Uncle Jim built a lovely dugout at the top of the garden with all mod cons (??). There was a fireplace and bunks for Neil (my brother) and me. We slept there for most of the war, but at the end we had a Morrison shelter in the house. I was spooked one night and refused to go to the dugout again.

I remember the barrage balloon in the rec (now roughly Woodhurst Close). All the kids used to go up there and talk to the man. I remember the bombs, one of which landed in the woods at the back of the school. The school windows all came in.

My dad belonged to the Home Guard. He was the quartermaster sergeant and was in charge of all supplies and equipment. When it was first formed, they didn't have a proper meeting place, but eventually they got a Nissan hut which was put up in the field next to our house. My mum used to light the fire in there every night for them. Until the hut was put up, we had all the supplies in our house – guns and ammunition. It was a good job a bomb never hit our house. My dad wasn't called up as he was doing war work.

One friend of his was a blacksmith and he used to walk up to the forge to see him and I went too. We went hop-picking at Dean Farm every year (as we all did). We had rabbits and chicken. My mum used to

preserve the eggs in isinglass. So we always had plenty and dad grew lots of vegetables and fruit. So we lived quite well.

Mum belonged to the Mothers' Union and the WI and I knew a lot of people. We all helped each other to do things during the War. I have somewhere a photo of the street party held in May Street at the end of the War.

I remember Mrs Muddle. She lived with her Peke dog, Mr Woo (very spiteful) opposite us in one of the houses next to the shop. Mrs Muddle taught most of the village children to dance. Mostly, lessons were held in the Long Room behind the White Hart. Mrs Muddle also taught the piano. Neil had lessons with her, as did my father and his five brothers.

The History of our Parish

Copies of Cuxton Remembered by Lillian Bennett and the Centenary History of Halling School are available on application to the Rector at £1.00. We should be pleased to publish any other memories of Cuxton or Halling in this magazine, if anyone has any to offer. Our principal history correspondent has undertaken to try to answer any questions anyone may have. [I have one question. Why did people preserve eggs in isinglass? Eggs don't go off in any reasonable time between the henhouse and the kitchen.]

A Question of Literacy

Did you hear about the illiterate sailor who tried to learn the alphabet?

He was lost at C.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Burr (12), Mrs Hayward (80), Mrs Shaw (102) & Mrs Terry (125) –drawn by Mrs Mattingly.



Tommy's Talking Points

We have, as I had hoped, tackled the next section of our North Downs Way walk. How much more North Downs can there be? I've done Canterbury to Box Hill via Dover and Folkestone. Max did the Coldrum Stones to Canterbury.

Heavy showers were forecast for the day we had arranged and Master made a point of packing his waterproof. He didn't want to get wet, but, as it turned out, rain was the least of his worries on that score. In fact, it didn't rain and the weather was quite mild.

We took the train to Merstham, where we left off last time, an uneventful journey, given that the two trains that were late were not so late as to miss our connections. We met Master's friend at Redhill, an occasion for much tail-wagging on my part.

Fortunately, we realised it was not necessary to head back up the dual carriageway the way we had come last time and we joined the NDW at a golf course and then passed through the grounds of a private school. I was kept on my lead because Master has found that golfers don't see the funny side when dogs run off with their balls. We saw the Millennium Stones at Gatton Park – ten modern standing stones, each with a quotation from a famous thinker from St John to T S Elliott, arranged in a circle in imitation of sites like Stonehenge.

After that, it was up onto the downs once more. There were plenty of signposts and we didn't get lost this time. It was half term week and there were lots and lots of people out with their children and their dogs. I had great fun, running up and greeting and playing with them. Master had to keep calling me back or I might have got lost. I'm always happy to go off with anyone who makes a fuss of me. Master has a very loud voice and one young mother with her children thought he was calling her husband. His name is Johnny!

The foliage was just turning yellow and red and brown as Autumn came on and there were some really stupendous views, with crowds of people at the viewing points. Some teenagers were attempting a trust exercise, despite Master's cynical comments about learning to trust no-one.

There was also a lot of up and down. Some places were so steep that steps had had to be carved into the paths. I had great fun running up and down them, while the men took things at a somewhat slower pace. All went well, however, till we were on the far side of Box Hill and we had to cross the River Mole. The sensible thing would have been to have gone a little way downstream to where there is a footbridge, but Master thought it would be more fun to use the stepping stones. I could quite easily have followed him across. I could have jumped the spaces between the stones. I could have swum. I am, after all, a spaniel. I declined, however, to do either. So Master had to come back for me and carry me across. I wriggled and squirmed and we both fell in and I got out of the river again on the wrong side. So now, with both of us soaking wet, he took a much firmer grasp on me and carried me across. Then he discovered that he had lost his glasses in the river. Spectacular! Despite he and his friend and several kind strangers looking, they couldn't find them. They were only an old pair, but it made things interesting going home, because he could barely read the indicator boards on the stations which tell you which train to catch.

Master's friend and some of the strangers were most solicitous with advice and offers of dry clothing, but, as you know, Master is stubborn and incapable of taking advice or accepting help. He insisted that his tee shirt would dry quicker on. Actually, my coat dried much more quickly than his clothes. Fortunately he had a sweater to substitute for the wet shirt when we got to the pub for our accustomed lunch. It wasn't far from there to the station and we got home all right, only having to ask directions once. I don't know why he buys tickets to Cuxton as the connections are so poor. So we walked from Strood yet again, but at least his shorts were at last thoroughly dry! Guilford next, I'm promised, and then Farnham! Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.

We've Been Together Now For Thirty Years

January 2nd 2017 is the thirtieth anniversary of my institution and induction as Rector of this parish. It was a Friday evening and the service was held in the larger of our two churches – Halling. It might have been a very short incumbency indeed because I was nearly knocked off my bike at the roundabout on the way back to the Rectory after the service. I no longer wear a black cassock when cycling.

In 1986, I was curate of St Laurence in Thanet with special responsibility for St Christopher Newington. I had already taken up Bishop David Say's kind offer to return to his diocese when I was ready for a parish of my own and one became available. I was also at that time officiating chaplain to RAF Manston (which is how it came about that my first flight ever was in a two-seater Spitfire) and chaplain to the Ramsgate and Broadstairs Branch of the Royal Airforce Association. On September 21st that year, I was asked to preach at the Battle of Britain service at Canterbury Cathedral. I had tea with a friend in Faversham and, driving back to Canterbury, my car was smashed up by a driver who crossed the central reservation out of control. The sub-dean had to preach at very short notice and I spent the night in Canterbury hospital having broken glass chiselled out of my skin and my broken shoulder heavily plastered. Unable to look after myself, I went to stay with my parents at Wigmore, which meant I was in the right spot when Bishop Say telephoned to invite me to consider coming here. Then one of our four churchwardens, Walter Hayward decided that the man in a clerical collar with his arm in plaster walking at the top of Sundridge Hill towards Cuxton must be the prospective new rector and gave me a lift first to Halling to meet the wardens there (Joan Charlton and Gladys Stephenson) and then back to Cuxton and finally dinner with all four wardens at Brian Topham's house. I liked them and the parish and they liked me. The patron (the Dean and Chapter that year) approved and so did the bishop. I told him I could start any day after New Year's Day and he said, 2nd January.

So here I was. It was like coming home after being a missionary in the Far East (Ramsgate). My early childhood was spent at Betsham and then Wigmore. My father's family come from Northfleet and Southfleet. My mother's family come from Frindsbury. Most of my family and many of my friends live in the Medway Towns. I told Bishop Say that from this parish I can see the church where I was baptised

(Frindsbury, which is also where my parents, my grandparents and my sister were married) and the cathedral where I was confirmed and ordained deacon and priest.

When the two parishes were put together in the 1970s, Halling was somewhat struggling. The principal local employers had been agriculture, cement and paper. Mechanisation had tremendously reduced the number of farm labourers required and the cement and paper-making industries were contracting and laying off workers. The construction of the bypass was a mixed blessing. It made the High Street much quieter and more pleasant, but divided the village and brought a lot more traffic to Cuxton. There was talk of closing Halling School and St John's Church was in a poor state of repair. Both ends of the parish rallied to raise the large sum of money required to save it with social events, a monthly produce stall and a parish wide collection of newspaper to sell for recycling. This had really brought the community together. It was not only hard work, but also a lot of fun. I came in right at the end of this and reaped the benefits.

The normal offering of public worship had been divided between the two parish churches and the Jubilee Hall (which replaces the old St Laurence mission church at Upper Halling). Given that St John's was in such a poor condition and that the Cuxton congregation was larger, it was not surprising that services and events tended to focus on St Michael's. We were now able to offer Parish Communion with a Gospel sermon in both churches every Sunday. I regard Sunday Communion as the heartbeat of any community and participation in this service is the duty and the joy of every Christian and an essential part of our spiritual development. The service which Jesus gave us is the foundation of everything else we do – our pastoral work, our evangelism and our service to the wider community. Holding a main service in both churches every week did more than anything to increase our over all numbers of worshippers. The second most significant thing we did in this respect was to instigate the monthly tea and Evening Prayer in the Jubilee Hall. There's no excuse for not coming to one or other of our services.

I was very soon caught up in the life of the community. There was the Campaign against the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The government had promised that there would be no new railway line to the Channel Tunnel. So people in Kent were stunned when British Rail came up with four proposals to build such a line, three of them having a potentially devastating effect on communities. The line as built was nothing like as bad as those proposals and I use it sometimes. It has, however, spoilt some places around Boxley and Ebbsfleet. It used to be a lovely walk from Betsham to Swanscombe, though it was a bit tricky crossing the A2 until they provided a tunnel under it. Like all development projects, it has of course attracted more development, which may or may not be welcome according to your point of view. And I still think that politicians should tell the truth and keep their word! There were also campaigns to prevent an incinerator on the Rugby site and to keep Dean Green, when the valley was about to be quarried for cement. When I was younger, I used to enjoy the local pubs, though now it's cocoa and early to bed on a good night.

Bishop Michael Turnbull joined the Chairman of Halling Parish Council Bob Smith at the instigation of the Halling Fun Day on St John the Baptist's Day 1988. We tried Cuxton Fun Days with less success. The same year, we lit beacons in both villages to mark the 400th anniversary of the Armada and the 300th anniversary of the Glorious Revolution. The Rectory grounds have provided a suitable setting for church fetes, teddy bears' picnics and barbecues. We've held beautiful flower festivals in church and a Christmas tree festival. We've done drama and music. We performed at the Central Hall Theatre Chatham once with the archdeaconry and with the Rail Action Group twice at the Orchard, Dartford.

There have been close friendships with local schools. Many grown ups in the village remember my dog Bobby coming into assemblies and the highly sophisticated jokes I told them. We've worked with other churches and on our own to hold open air services and healing services and processions. We followed a donkey one Palm Sunday to St Michael's. We sort of beat the bounds on Halling Marsh before it was developed. We've processed to Church on Ascension Day and out into the fields for Rogation. We've celebrated other cultures (and food) through our missionary links. We've celebrated the Jewish Passover. I've run out of space, but it's all been wonderful and there's still the future to come. I just want to thank you all for your loyalty and support over all these years. They've passed so quickly and yet the beginning seems so long ago. Roger.