

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
2 nd February Candlemas	9.30 Family Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-6 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
9 th February 4 th Sunday before Lent	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 I Corinthians 2 vv 1-16 p1145 Matthew 5 vv 13-20 p969
16 th February Septuagesima	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Sexagesima
	9.30 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 30 vv 15-20 p209 I Corinthians 3 vv 1-9 p1145 Matthew 5 vv 21-37 p969
23 rd February Sexagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 1 v1 – 2 v3 p3 Romans 8 vv 18-25 p1135 Matthew 6 vv 5-24 p970
2 nd March Quinquagesima	9.30 Family Communion	Exodus 24 vv 12-18 p82 II Peter 1 vv 16-21 p1222 Matthew 17 vv 1-9 p984
5 th March Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 II Corinthians 5 v20 – 6 v10 p1161 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
2 nd February Candlemas	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Malachi 3 vv 1-6 p961 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
	11.00 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-6 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
9 th February 4 th Sunday before Lent	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 I Corinthians 2 vv 1-16 p1145 Matthew 5 vv 13-20 p969
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Amos 2 vv 4-16 p971 Ephesians 4 vv 17-32 p1175
16 th February Septuagesima	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Deuteronomy 30 vv 15-20 p209 I Corinthians 3 vv 1-9 p1145 Matthew 5 vv 21-37 p969
23 rd February Sexagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 1 v1 – 2 v3 p3 Romans 8 vv 18-25 p1135 Matthew 6 vv 5-24 p970
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	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 24 vv 12-18 p82 II Peter 1 vv 16-21 p1222 Matthew 17 vv 1-9 p984
5 th March Ash Wednesday	9.30 am Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970

Wednesday Communion 9.30 St Michael's*		Thursday Communion 9.30 St John's*	
5 th February	II Samuel 24 vv 17 Mark 6 vv 1-6	6 th February Accession HM Queen	I Kings 2 vv 1—12 Mark 6 vv 7-13
12 th February	I Kings 10 vv 1-10 Mark 7 vv 14-23	13 th February	I Kings 11 vv 4-13 Mark 7 vv 24-30
19 th February	James 1 vv 19-27 Mark 8 vv 22-26	20 th February	James 2 vv 1-9 Mark 8 vv 27-33
26 th February	James 4 vv 13-17 Mark 9 vv 38-40	27 th February	James 5 vv 1-6 Mark 9 vv 41-50
5 th March Ash Wednesday At Halling* (7.30 pm at Cuxton V.S.)	Joel 2 vv 1-17 Matthew 6 vv 1-21	6 th March At Cuxton*	Deuteronomy 30 vv 15-20 Luke 9 vv 22-25

Copy Date March Magazine: 14th February 8.30 am Rectory (to arrive with my Valentines)

<http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>



From the Rector

I am writing this on 2nd January, at the beginning of the new year. What will 2014 bring? Some of you, I know, are looking forward to the future with hope. You've got plans for 2014 or at least you're waiting to see how things will turn out for you. Some of you will be leaving school or college and going on to further education or work. Examinations may be a daunting prospect in 2014. Then again, I expect that some of you will be retiring this year. You may be looking forward to retirement eagerly, as a chance to do all the things you haven't got time for now, or perhaps with dread, because you don't know how you will pay the bills or what you will get up to. I know some people who have been made redundant and are wondering when or whether they will be able to find another job. Maybe a long awaited elective operation like a hip replacement or the removal of cataracts will improve the quality of your life. Or maybe you will get ill. Some of us will die in 2014 – a fact which I think I am not supposed to mention, but true nevertheless. Politicians will be awaiting the results of elections in May. There are weddings planned and no doubt there will be children born and christenings. What will 2014 bring? The holiday of a lifetime? A move to a nicer house? Or anxiety about debt or building work that needs doing or coping with the needs of your family? Sharing good times and bad with people you love or loneliness? Who knows? Daunting or exciting or quietly confident?

This is also a time of year when we might be looking back, over the previous year and indeed over our whole lives. There are many things to be thankful for and perhaps there are regrets. Over

Christmas we may have been very conscious of those whom we love but see no more. What will a new year bring forth?

The Christian year began of course four Sundays before Christmas on Advent Sunday. Advent is about the coming of Christ. We think of Him coming into our world, into our lives, into our hearts. Christ is our strength in times of weakness. He is our guide in perplexity. He is the healer of our bodies, minds and spirits, and our relationships. We can talk to God through Jesus no matter what is happening in our lives. We can ask for His help. We can express our thanks through Him. Through Him we can ask forgiveness for our failures. In Advent we think of His coming again at the end of time. He will be our judge. We are accountable to God for what we do with our lives – for how we use our time, talents and opportunities. If we receive Him in faith, we believe we shall be with Him in all eternity when all the troubles of this world of time and space are over and its joys prove to be just the firstfruits of an infinitely greater and eternal bliss.

So whatever happens in 2014, whatever you have to hope for and whatever you have to fear, remember that Christ is with you. Share all your concerns with Him in prayer. Know that there is an eternal home prepared for you in heaven if only you come to God through Jesus in faith and repentance for your sins. Our churches are open to all those who are seeking.

I don't know where it comes from, but there is a good deal in a saying my grandmother frequently repeated: "We know not what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future." Roger.

Thanks to All of You

This is a good opportunity, on behalf of the whole community, to thank everybody who put so much effort into our Christmas celebrations. There was quite a lot of sickness over the Christmas period and some people were disappointed to have to miss taking their usual parts and others had to step into the breach. Nevertheless we had our wonderful carol services in both churches, our nativities and Christingles. Flowers were beautifully arranged. Cribs and Christmas trees were set up. Lots of good food was prepared and served. Less glamorously, but extremely importantly, our buildings were kept clean, tidy and polished. So, thank you everybody and that includes everyone who supported us by joining in.

It is worth mentioning how much we depend on all this work throughout the year, to maintain everything that we do. It all requires hard work and effort and some things cost money. We are very grateful for

monetary contributions towards cutting the churchyard and cemetery grass. Apologies that the latter got out of hand in 2013. We hope to do better in 2014. We do, however, need more contributions – which can be given to the churchwardens or rector. We also need contributions to the general fund which always seems to be in deficit. Jack Payne can advise on regular giving and on gift aid for tax payers. If we believe that what we are doing is God's work, it must be worth doing, and, if it is worth doing, it is worth paying for!

We also thank the people who print and deliver this magazine. Two stalwarts are retiring as deliverers this year and I should be very glad to hear of any volunteers who could take their place around Woodhurst Close and Hayley Close. I can take on the deliveries until volunteers are found, but I don't collect the money. So that puts us at a financial disadvantage!

So thank you all again and there are plenty of opportunities for anyone who would like to help in any capacity in the coming year. RIK.

Food bank

There is a food bank in Medway (<http://medway.foodbank.org.uk/>) which exists to help people who find themselves temporarily without the resources to buy food. This might be because of a delay in getting paid, administrative problems with the benefits system, an unexpected bill (maybe, for example, the roof starts leaking or the washing machine gives up the ghost) or for a whole host of reasons. If you would like to contribute, you can bring packets or tins (with long sell by dates) to any of our services. We envisage a steady trickle of a few items at a time rather than a bonanza like harvest. You might have something over or buy something specially. It is also likely that during the course of the year other reception centres for goods will be set up. I'll keep you informed.

Rotary

In 1905, two American friends regularly dined together and after a third friend joined them, they decided to take turns in hosting the dinner. Thus they 'rotated' and soon other friends joined them. They thus became known as Rotarians. The circle spread and soon there were 'Rotarian' groups in many parts of the country. Today, Rotary International has a membership of some 1,000,000 all over the world. So, what do Rotarians do? Their motto, 'Service before Self,' should give an indication of the nature of their activities. They are concerned with helping others, from providing shelter and food to the displaced people in the world to financing an expedition to the Arctic. They support local, national and international charities and projects to assist others, especially in poorer areas of the country and of the world.

The Medway Towns boasts a total of six Rotary clubs. The most recent to emerge three years ago is the Medway Sunlight Rotary Club which meets every Thursday morning over breakfast at 7.30 at the Community Centre on St Mary's Island. For members who are not always able to attend at this time the club also meets at 7 pm on the first Monday in each month. Activities have included raising money for Cancer Research, McMillan Nurses, Shelterbox and training a guide dog for a blind person. Events such as Dinners, Quiz Nights, Musical Events, Boot Fairs, etc., bring in a steady stream of money which is then used to support our charities. A particular one which is close to the hearts of its members is the funding of 6 youngsters with life-threatening conditions, and their families, from Demelza and Ch Yps Hospices on a three-day holiday in Euro Disney. Rotary has funded an immunisation campaign which has almost eradicated the scourge of polio throughout the world. Now there are only three countries where polio is still endemic, but Rotary hopes that by the end of this year we will have made the world totally polio free.

Rotary members come from all walks of life but all have one aim in common - to use their skills and experiences to help others. If you are a like-minded person and would like to hear more, then speak to a Rotarian or come along to one of our meetings. You will be sure of a warm welcome.

Rotarian Norman Blow, 01634 240893, normanblow@hotmail.co.uk.

St John's Draw: November £25 to Mrs Chidwick (27) and £10 each to Mrs Brunger (159) & Miss J Thorne (23) – drawn by Mrs Mitchell. December £5 each to Mrs Burr (10), Mrs Burr (11), Miss Heighes (40) & Mrs Mattingly (65) – drawn by Mrs Tapson. Please contact Betty Head if you would like to join the St John's draw.

Billy Graham's Prayer For Our Nation

(the USA, but it could be GB)

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbour's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honoured values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from sin and set us free. Amen!

For Thought and Prayer

(Liturgy is worship, what we do in church, our services).

Mark Galli: The liturgy, from beginning to end, is not about meeting our needs. The liturgy is about God. It's not even about God-as-the-fulfiller-of-our-need-for-spiritual-meaning. It's about God as he is in himself: Father, Son and Holy spirit. It is not about our blessedness but his. The liturgy immediately signals that our needs are not nearly as relevant as we imagine.

Quotation

George Orwell on the contradictory values at his preparatory school: Broadly, you were bidden at once to be a Christian and a social success, which is impossible. (Did this atheist understand the Christian religion better than many of us Christians?)

A True Story

A young vicar was feeling completely overwhelmed by all the things he had to do in the first few weeks of December when the doorbell rang. Two Jehovah's witnesses were standing there and asked him if he was prepared for the coming of the Lord?

"Not till after Christmas!" he heard himself replying.

St Michael's Draw: November £10 each to Jack Payne, Peter Hills and the Wilsons, £5 each to Mrs Barker & Mrs Harris. December £10 each to Mrs Joyce, Mrs Horner & Mrs Pitt, £5 to Mrs Maisey. The annual Christmas bumper yielded £20 to Mrs Ingram & £25 to Mrs A Harris. This year £525 was given in prizes and £528 went to church funds. If you would like to join this draw, please ask Jeanne Harris.

Thanks from Doris

Doris Riggall would like to thank all her friends, neighbours and family for the cards, flowers and presents she received for her 100th Birthday on 29th December 2013 and thanks to all who joined in the celebrations of her birthday on 29th December at Cuxton Social Club.

Bexley Ukulele Music Society

entertained us in the church hall on 30th November with a wide selection of music of a variety of styles from George Formby to the present day. In the course of the evening £64 was donated for the Nordoff-Robbins charity in addition to what was collected for church funds. The Society would like to thank all those who contributed. Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins developed the use of Music Therapy fifty years ago and Nordoff-Robbins is the country's biggest Music Therapy charity. Music Therapy is specialist use of music which helps people communicate, engage and interact. It could be through improvisation, singing, playing, listening, moving. It can be helpful with autism, learning difficulties, dementia, depression and mental health problems, brain injury, stroke and life threatening or terminal illnesses. Music Therapy may take place in schools, care homes, day centres or hospitals. Nordoff-Robbins helps around 1600 children and adults each week. To find out more, log on to www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

17th November

Peter-Joe Patrick Hare
Olbie Danny Hare
Isabella Juliellen Hare

The Caravan Site

Funerals:

22nd November

Lillian Ethel Joyce Gibbs (91)

Sundridge Hill

12th December

Shirley Louise Killick (84)

formerly of Halling

19th December

James Bertram Pankhurst (59)

Tenterden

Nature Notes November 2013

"November"

By Robert Browning

These early November hours
That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield; else gold from rim to boss
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss.

The first of the month is another grey day with some rain in the morning. Birds come to feed; then are joined by a squirrel. In the afternoon there is some brightness plus billowing grey clouds drifting across the sky from the south west. I plant daffodil bulbs and crocuses. The light fades quite quickly. The next day the sun shines in the morning when I walk to church for the All Souls service. It is particularly pleasant when we come out of the church. In the afternoon I hear the "pinking" of blackbirds and a cawing crow flies overhead. The skies become grey but, by the evening, as the light is fading, they become clear. There is a chill in the air on the morning of the 3rd, but the sun shines brightly from a blue sky brushed with a few white clouds. The wind strengthens in the afternoon but the sun continues to shine. I put out fresh food for the birds. Then white doves soon put in an appearance. On 4th, after overnight rain, North West winds drive clouds across the blue sky. The sun shines brightly but the air is still cold. The following day rain, quite heavy at times, falls throughout the day. As we drive home from Bluewater, where Murphy had an undercover walk, spray from vehicles lashes the car's windscreen.

I see, despite the grey sky and rain, the beauty of the trees and shrubs along the motorway's banks and particularly by the roundabout taking us to Sundridge Hill. The garden at the back of the house is sodden

with rain. Rain falls through the evening and well into the next day. The next day, at Bluewater, the trees are beautiful especially the cherry trees. I walk round the lake where coots glide. A skein of Canada geese flies overhead and I hear their urgent calls. Two days of rain follow. Then on 10th there is beautiful sunshine. In the afternoon, I walk up the church path where I see white deadnettle, then cross Church Fields lit up by the sun and where bright red hips and haws, spindle berries, old man's beard and bristly ox tongue flowers are to be seen. I tread the leaf-strewn paths of Mays Wood which still displays trees, the leaves of which are still green. On entering the top of Dean Valley, I am greeted with the beauty of sunshine, blue skies and green fields. The large beech tree is almost bereft of leaves. I skirt the field and return to Church fields from where I view the sparkling river and the sun just dipping below the trees.

On this Sunday we remember all those who gave their lives in two World Wars and wars that have followed. I quote Joe Shute who wrote in The Sunday Telegraph: "On the stroke of the 11th hour, as a nation fell silent, an icy wind picked up. The limp union flags billowed out from the rooftops, the London plane trees that flank the Cenotaph shivered loose leaves on to the crowds below. It seemed as if the lost souls of a century of conflict had rushed down Whitehall towards the monument erected to our Glorious Dead".

The 12th is a day of grey skies and damp air. The areas near the bird feeders are sodden because of so much rain. However, despite the lack of brightness, the Autumn colours in the trees on the embankment are very beautiful. The 13th is a glorious day of golden sunshine and blue skies. I walk up the path by the church to the fields where hips and spindle berries glow in the sunlight. I notice for the first time, the red-brown centres of old man's beard. At home the hedge is filled with fresh wild clematis flowers. A peacock butterfly hovers in front of me as I make my way to Mays Wood where paths are muddy after heavy rain. I come to the top of Dean Valley lit up by the sunshine and stand listening to the silence broken only by the distant call of a crow. I skirt the field of crops where I notice fresh cow parsley plants with a small cluster of flowers. I eventually complete my walk through Six-acre Wood. The afternoon remains sunny. There is the most beautiful sunset in the evening.

On 14th the early morning skies are filled with sunshine and winds blow from the north west. A bright moon shines in the night sky. The 15th is a blue-sky day when I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy. The Autumn colours have deepened and look very beautiful in the sunlight. A grebe glides on the mirror-smooth water. We then drive through country lanes to Longfield. The fields either side of the road are so green and bright in the sun's golden light. The afternoon remains sunny until it eventually fades into darkness and a bright moon shines. The next day there is glorious sunshine beaming down from blue skies brushed with wisps of white cloud. I walk to the village and observe the Autumn colours in the trees. The garden at mid-day is bright with sunlight. Later, as the sun sets, the western sky becomes salmon pink. Trees stand like black sentinels against the sky. On the following day a great spotted woodpecker comes to the garden. The morning of 19th is glorious with golden sunshine and clear blue skies but by mid-day

grey and white clouds have enveloped large areas of blue. North west winds bring very cold air - 7 degrees, a shock to the system when I walk Murphy round the lake at Bluewater. The trees look very beautiful, their golden tresses silhouetted against the blue of the sky. It is the most beautiful picture of Bluewater that I've seen this year. Rain falls during the morning of 19th as north west winds drive grey clouds across the sky. It eases in the afternoon and there is a glimpse of the sun which lights up the garden. Later, when the sun sets, the skies clear. Clouds have banked up over Bluebell Hill and their mountainous peaks are salmon pink. It is bitterly cold. Cold weather continues. The morning of 25th is bright and cold with continuing north east winds. I walk round the lake with Murphy at Bluewater where all the grassy banks and paths have been cut for the Winter. The sun is shining from a blue sky brushed with high cloud. I notice daisies blooming in the grass and blossom on wild cherry trees. A large weeping willow is displaying its first Autumn colours. The afternoon remains bright with sunshine and a light wind blows. Salmon pink wispy clouds light up the late afternoon Western sky. I drive over to Addington on 27th and along the way beautiful leaves on the trees brighten the scene. I am particularly impressed by golden beech leaves. At Bluewater on 28th, The trees are still displaying beautiful colours especially the golden leaves of maples. I watch leaves falling to the ground in the light breeze. The 29th is grey with westerly winds driving the clouds across the sky. In the afternoon, while walking through the churchyard, I watch golden leaves swirling in the air and falling to the ground. There have been no heavy frosts or gales to bring the leaves off the trees. The final day of the month is grey and damp which persists throughout the day. A variety of birds come to the feeders and a squirrel tucks into a quantity of nuts.

Nature Notes December 2013

"Winter Ride"

Amy Lowell

Who shall declare the joy of the running!
Who shall tell of the pleasures of flight!
Springing and spurning the tufts of wild heather,
Sweeping wide-winged, through the blue dome of light.
Everything mortal has moments immortal,
Swift and God-gifted, immeasurably bright.

So with the stretch of the white road before me,
Shining snow crystals rainbowed by the sun,
Fields that are white, stained with long, cool, blue shadows,
Strong with the strength of my horse as we run.
Joy in the touch of the wind and the sunlight!
Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one.

The morning of 1st is grey and damp but there are spells of afternoon sunshine. I look out of the window to see very pale blue skies against which stand tall silver birch trees still bearing golden leaves. Grey clouds gather again later. The next day is dry but grey skies prevail. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy and still see beautiful Autumn leaves on the trees. Officially Winter is upon us.

Birds come to feed in the garden. I see blackbirds on the embankment near our fence. It's the first time of seeing them for many days. On 3rd a great spotted woodpecker comes to the garden to feed. Network Rail have cleared many trees and shrubs from the embankment opening the ground to the light. So it will be interesting to see if wild flowers will emerge in the Spring. Frost covers the grass on the morning of 5th. The sun is a red glow as it rises over Bluebell Hill. The light becomes pale as, later, grey clouds gather. The light wind becomes quite strong during the day and the clouds thicken bringing a shower of rain. The evening air becomes very cold. It is cold the next day but there is some sunshine. I feed the birds which are perched very patiently on the roof. Later, in the afternoon, the setting sun casts golden light along the embankments and the tops of trees still bearing leaves. The sky is a mixture of blue, grey and salmon pink colours. The night is very cold. We walk round the lake at Bluewater on 7th where some of the trees are bare but brown leaves still cling to some oak twigs. The weeping willows look beautiful as fronds turn to gold. In the late afternoon, I hear rooks coming home to roost. On 8th, the sky is aglow with light as the sun rises over the hill. It shines during the morning and it feels mild - less cold than recently. There is a haze round the moon in the night sky. Early the next day, mist hangs over the river; then disperses to reveal pale blue skies and sunshine.

There is mist again on 10th. As we drive to Bluewater, the sun is breaking through and the golden Winter light is beaming down from a pale blue sky. However, as we return to Cuxton, we enter the dreariness of fog which is grey and dank. In the garden, water droplets fall from the conifer. The sun tries to break through but to no avail. Fog penetrates the darkness of the evening. The early morning skies of the 11th and surrounding countryside are wreathed in fog but it

eventually clears to reveal blue skies and sunshine. The trees along the route to Addington have lost leaves but some still bear golden tresses. On 14th, a feral pigeon is caught upon one of the bird feeders but I am able to free it and it flies away unharmed. The 15th is mild; rain falls and winds strengthen. Unsettled conditions are forecast. The 17th is grey when I walk with Murphy along the grassy paths at Bluewater. Two young beech trees still bear leaves of golden brown. Pink almond blossom has appeared, while weeping willows have become very pale green and gold. Hazels are covered in catkins waiting to burst into flower in the early Spring. On 19th morning skies are a clear blue and there is golden Winter sunshine. I hear birds singing Spring-like songs and the sound is quite uplifting. On 20th, golden light suffuses the sky as the sun rises over Bluebell Hill. A pale blue sky is cloudless against which bare black branches of trees are motionless. As I walk with Murphy, I feel faint warmth of the sun on my face. The 21st is wet and windy. The next day I watch a blackbird, a chaffinch, a robin and great tits feeding in the garden. The 23rd is grey and damp with strengthening winds and heavy rain which falls into the night. Garden pots have been knocked over. Christmas Day is bright with sunshine and blue skies for the morning and early afternoon. A great spotted woodpecker comes to the front garden. The 26th is clear and bright. On 28th, I watch three chaffinches feeding on the seed. After sunshine for most of the day, grey clouds drift across the evening sky as the light begins to fade. Frost carpets the grass on the morning of 29th and a golden sun beams down from a clear blue sky. Melodious birdsong is heard on the air. I feed the birds and am aware of slight warmth on my face from the sun. The skies remain clear and bright until darkness falls. Rain falls during the morning of 30th when we take Murphy to Bluewater where he has an undercover walk. The rain continues into the afternoon when, for a short space of time, there are a few glimpses of the sun. The night skies become clear with stars shining. Rain falls throughout the last day of the year. The trees stand like sentinels against the grey sky. Their branches are slender and the twigs point to the sky in lacy patterns. Birds come to the garden to feed. As darkness falls, another year closes. Bells ring out the old year and ring in the new. Elizabeth Summers.

Confirmation 2014

We are not expecting to hold a confirmation service in the parish this year, but we have at least one candidate and I shall be running a class later in the year, probably leading to a confirmation service in another church in the Autumn. If you are interested in confirmation this year, please ask me. The commitment is the commitment you made at your Baptism – faith in God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, repentance of sins and renunciation of evil. If you are not already a Christian and wish to become a Christian, you will be baptised at the confirmation service. You are also welcome to attend the classes if you are “just looking” at this stage. Please contact me if you are interested. You need to be at least twelve (or ten if you know what you are doing). There is no upper age limit. I've known people to be confirmed in their nineties. It's never too late. Roger.

Farewell and Thank you for the support.

After 15 years of serving the Lord, helping the poor and needy, working for Blythswood Care, time has come to retire! Since 1998, the church and the villages of Cuxton and Halling have supported the Annual Shoebox appeal, and donated hundreds of bags of clothing and knitted goods. Although I will no longer be working for Blythswood care, the need for clothing, footwear, knitted goods etc. is just as great. Any items can either be delivered to the charity shops in High St, Snodland or Darnley Rd, Strood. Alternatively taken to the depot on Medway City estate. If a collection is needed please contact June on 01634 291411.

Although retiring from Blythswood Care, I have accepted a voluntary Coordinators position, providing **project support** to a charity located in the Romanian county of Bacau. Back where it all started for me, in early 1990, when Cuxton village supported the very first relief aid truck I ever drove to Comanesti in Romania. The Christian charity 'Cry in the Dark' runs a residential home for 22 young adults with physical and mental disabilities, a hospice for 108 children and young adults, plus a very special project in a Romanian village without 'HOPE!' in and around Comanesti and Bacau. If any club, association or group would like to hear more about this amazing charity and their work, please contact me.

Tel Med 715314. Mob 07900055538 or email philms@cryinthedark.org.

Once again, thank you and bless you for your support over the last 15years.

Phil Shorthouse.

A Thought

St Francis of Assisi: Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.

Ten Reasons for Not Washing

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. I was made to wash as a child. | VI. None of my friends wash. |
| II. People who wash are hypocrites. They reckon they are cleaner than other people. | VII. I'm still young. When I'm older and have got a bit dirtier I might start washing. |
| III. There are so many different kinds of soap. I could never decide which one was right. | VIII. I really don't have time. |
| IV. I used to wash, but it got boring. So I stopped. | IX. The bathroom is never warm enough. |
| V. I still wash on special occasions, like Easter and Christmas. | X. People who make soap are only after your money. |

Six Reasons for Not Going to Pubs

- | | |
|--|--|
| I. Every time I go they ask me for money. | IV. They don't sing the kind of songs I like. |
| II. The landlord is the only person who ever speaks to me. | V. My dad made me go with him when I was a kid. |
| III. Some of the people who go to pubs are hypocrites. | VI. You don't have to go to bars to be inebriated. |

Manifest Delight

On 6th January we celebrated the Epiphany with a sung Eucharist at St Michael's, followed by brunch in the church hall and a showing of the film *Nativity*. As we celebrated the Good News that the people who were outside joined the people of God at God's own invitation, we reflected on what a privilege it is to belong, to know God now by faith and to anticipate that, by His grace, we *may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead*. We further reflected on the imperative to extend God's invitation to all nations, starting with our own. After the service, the people of God continued their fellowship with bacon rolls, scrambled egg, grilled tomatoes and toast and marmalade and sat down together to watch the film. When, at the end, I stood up to thank the people who had made all this possible, I realised that everyone present had played a part and that we all needed to be thankful for one another – just as St Paul says of God's people. Roger. P.S.: I used the 1662 collect because I think the Common Worship collect for Epiphany is really disappointing.

THE GREAT WAR - MORE THAN JUST NAMES

Thomas James Harris VC MM

Thomas James Harris was born at 79 High Street Halling on 30 January 1892 to William John and Sarah Ann Harris. He was the seventh of nine children. He attended Halling Board infants school starting in 1896, and Halling Council School. He may have worked at Hilton and Andersons Manor Cement Works as a labourer after leaving school.

When he was 22 he enlisted in the 6th Battalion Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment in August 1914. After training he was sent to France in June 1915. He was wounded in action twice in 1916 and was sent back to England to recuperate. Thomas went back to France in 1917. In 1918 he attained the rank of Sergeant and was awarded the Military Medal for action on the Somme.

On 9th August 1918, Sergeant Harris took part in an attack near the village of Ville- sur- Ancre near Albert in Northern France. He led his section under heavy fire in an attempt to capture and destroy concealed machine gun posts to allow the 6th battalion to advance. The first two attempts were successful but during the third he was killed by machine gun fire. The following is an extract from a letter from his platoon commander to Thomas' parents (then living at 6 Manor Terrace) - " I have never seen a braver man, totally unafraid doing his duty nobly with an utter disregard for his own personal safety.....He covered himself with glory..... His valour was remarkable, and he was a credit to himself, his Regiment, and to his parents." As a result of this action he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. This was the first such medal awarded to his Regiment. The citation stated that the award was for "most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in attack".

Thomas was buried at Dernancourt Communal Cemetery 2 miles south-west of Albert in France, along with 2000 other fallen heroes.

Many local residents still remember the German field gun placed next to the lynch gate at St John's Church Halling as a memorial to Sergeant Harris. This was removed during World War 2.

Many will also remember Harris House a sheltered housing scheme dedicated to the memory of Thomas Harris and opened in 1971. This was later closed and replaced in 2008 by Thomas Harris Close built by MHS Homes. At the entrance to the Close is a large piece of granite with a commemorative plaque. 28 members of the Harris family attended the official opening of the Close and there are possibly many more of the family in Halling and Cuxton. A "re- union" of Thomas Harris family members is being planned for later this year, probably in April. Please watch this space for more details.

Please continue to send these stories about the people commemorated on both our war memorials from the First World War. As we commemorate the centenary of its outbreak it is important to remember these people as they were, as men and women like us, and to learn the lessons of their sacrifice. Our commemorations will be 11.00 Holy Communion at Halling on 27th July with the Bishop of Tonbridge and 6.30 Evensong at Cuxton on 3rd August with the Archdeacon of Rochester. We also hope to be joined by the mayor or the deputy mayor on these occasions.

Halling Baptist Church

Kevin Felix-Hollington, the new minister at Halling Baptist Church very kindly invited me to have lunch with him in the New Year. It was good to meet Kevin and his family and to enjoy fellowship with them and we pray for every blessing on them and their ministry and the ministry of Halling Baptist Church to the village and to the wider community.

Sometimes people speak as if the different churches were rivals. In fact the opposite is the case. All faithful people are brothers and sisters in Christ and share in His commission to preach the Gospel to all nations. If God received His due in Halling, St John's and the Baptist Church between them would have nothing like enough room to accommodate all the joyful worshippers who would meet together every Sunday to praise Him. And as for our differences of theological opinion? We're only required to believe what the Bible says.

Where the Bible does not make things clear, we are entitled to think differently, waiting patiently and charitably for the fulfilment of Christ's promise to lead us into all truth. What the Church of England says on this subject (VIth Article of religion) is: *Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.*

One Serious Thought on Prayer and Two Less Serious

It occurred to me the other day that we might be asking the impossible when we ask God, as we so frequently do, to *cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you.* I'm not sure that there is anyone I love perfectly, not even myself perhaps? Am I capable of perfectly loving anyone, even God? Are you? It is just as well that we are asking God for this grace to love and not depending on our own efforts. *For with God nothing shall be impossible*, as the angel said to Mary. It is just as well that we can depend on God to do the impossible and so to fill us with His Spirit that we may perfectly love Him, because our joy is proportional to our love. Without love there is no life.

Did you hear about the man who prayed to God that he might become the man his dog thinks he is?

A farmer up from the country went into a cool cafe in London and said grace before starting his meal. Some teenagers made fun of him. "Do they all do that where you come from?" they jeered.

"No," said the farmer. "Not everybody on the farm says grace. The pigs don't."

Roger.

Halling Historical Society

The next meeting will be the AGM and will be held on Thursday 20th February at 7.30 pm in the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling. The speaker will be Mr M LeGear and the subject: History from the Air. New members and visitors welcome.



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Hymn Writers 12a
Graham Kendrick (et al)
2nd August, 1950

Graham Kendrick styles himself on his mobile site as a Worship Leader, Songwriter and Teacher and there is no doubt from his various public appearances that he is a popular personality with an impressive catalogue of worship songs and hymns. So to describe him as a “hymn writer” is reasonable. But what is a hymn writer in the context of the twenty-first century? Certainly Franz Schubert and John Lennon & Paul McCartney wrote a great many songs but to call Schubert a song writer would have a different meaning to me when compared with the output of Lennon and McCartney. In the same way Kendrick’s output could not really be compared in the same way to that of St Ambrose of Milan or Martin Luther, of John Newton, Isaac Watts or Charles Wesley. Graham Kendrick is very much a man of his time and I believe is one who is responding to how he understands the church now, as opposed to drawing on a need to be of service to the church. This does not mean that there is any difference in faith, belief or service, but the circumstances and period have very much changed in the second half of the twentieth century into the twenty-first. He and I are from the same generation and therefore have both witnessed the changes, not always for the better, that our country has experienced in the last sixty years since World War II.

Graham Kendrick was born in Blisworth, Northamptonshire, the son of a Baptist pastor, the Rev M D Kendrick. He was a founder member of “March for Jesus” and was a former member of Ichthus Christian Fellowship, a new wave Christian, all-inclusive organisation which has differing social projects within the community. He now lives in Croydon. He began his song-writing career in the sixties and his authorship of ‘Shine, Jesus Shine’ is the most widely known of his Christian output world-wide, but his other songs being primarily used within Great Britain. In 2000, Brunel University awarded him an honorary doctorate of Divinity in ‘recognition of his contribution to the worship life of the Church’. In 2008 he received another from Wycliffe College in Toronto, Canada. In 1989 he released the single ‘Let the Flame Burn Brighter’ which reached 55 in the UK singles charts.

Shine, Jesus Shine is regularly placed high in hymn popularity polls although I think that ‘The Servant King’ is better and more “hymn-like”. Fellow songwriter and band member Stuart Townend has said “I have no doubt that in 100 years the name of Kendrick will be alongside Watts and Wesley in the list of the UK’s greatest songwriters.” Hopefully there will be dedicated parishioners still using hymns as part of worship then. Only time will tell! There are voices within the Church of England fearful that this will not be the case but I would like to explore this in another article. Kendrick has his critics, among them journalist Quentin Letts, who has described Kendrick as “the king of happy-clappy banalities” (2008) and “the nation’s pre-eminent churner-out of evangelical bilge” (2008). Unfortunately the advent of the new worship-song movement encourages other, not so good, writers who don’t seem to look deeply into what they are doing and, because of this, a tsunami of new sub-standard material floods on to the market, tending to dilute that which is much better.

The other issue is that of exposure. Are these new tunes and words being played often enough for congregations to get to know them and the answer to that is probably “No!” Roger touched on this in his Christmas Midnight sermon. Too often the church choir is asked to sing hymns chosen for a wedding only to find that we are the only ones singing. Often the bride and groom have been unable to choose their own hymns and quite often those in the congregation do not know them or just don’t sing because they have not been brought up in the tradition of church and singing or they’re embarrassed. To a lesser extent, and often for different reasons, we find this happening at funerals as well. People are not getting the grounding in the hymns or carols that we use in church because they don’t attend church, they don’t sing songs around the piano any more, and schools don’t have hymns in assembly and don’t teach an exclusively Christian religious education. So what many of us think are traditional and well-known are no longer that. Don’t use it – lose it! The reason I know so many tunes (if not the words – but these do come back) is because my mother sang them to me when I was smaller than a nipper and it just stuck in my memory. This country, for example, has a wide, rich and ancient tradition of singing which would have been all but lost if composers such as Holst, Cecil Sharpe and Vaughan-Williams hadn’t gone the length and breadth of the country recording and writing them down and folk, family and pub groups didn’t keep them alive by singing them. It is said that the public houses in the north of England kept the carol alive after the puritan church had banned them. It doesn’t take long to lose the tradition because, as Roger said quite rightly speaking about the loss of the knowledge of hymns in his sermon, “the problem is that so many people don’t know any hymns or prayers (or bible stories) at all. The tradition hasn’t evolved. It has died out. It has died of neglect!”

Will Kendrick's output be around at the end of the next hundred years? Maybe his music attracts those who are despondent about what the traditional church churns out every week and therefore his songs are exciting for the future. But without the tradition and its evolution, will it not be stifled as other music has been? As Roger also said in his sermon; "it's not that people now want modern hymns and worship songs in place of more traditional hymns or that they want more modern prayers. That wouldn't be the problem. The problem is that so many people don't know any hymns or prayers at all." And this, of course leads to inappropriate, unfulfilling and uninspiring music or readings being chosen. Graham Kendrick's words and music are part of hymn evolution. Where hymns become banal to some is where we lose the proper evolution of the hymn into something that caters too much to the un-discerning ear. To make hymns sound modern and up-to-date without making the words challenging or the music illustrative is to lose the point. Without proper use and hence evolution it will die.

It's not only the modern composers that could be found wanting in this. Very often the church is guilty of using archaic language and people unfriendly music. The established church on occasions don't make it easy to rely on the evolution of the traditional and this sometimes is responsible for people turning away to use a more simplified version. I remember being with a primary school teacher rehearsing for a Christmas nativity concert when one of her ten year olds asked what the words in one particular verse of Oh Come all Ye Faithful meant. He was asked what the words were and I felt myself being drawn away very quickly as he said "Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb". There are many modern versions of the Christmas story being used in education but the cost is to fade out the traditional for something that only has a short shelf life. The traditional Christmas carol service at St Michael's is to use the carols that people in the congregation have asked to be included interspersed with those from other countries and traditions together with some traditional choir pieces. Our choir is pretty good at keeping a tune, singing a descant and keeping the harmony correct. We have used Graham Kendrick's new music on occasion and this has been well received by people coming to the service. However the church is never full whether we use old or new music, and it can be hard to know exactly what people would like to be included. In the next article I hope to be able to widen the argument. JGB

*Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the father's glory. Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy; send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.*

STAMPS – Thank you everyone who is supporting this. Many of you have sent in loads of stamps and I am just about ready to sent the next consignment on behalf of OCD UK. Please bring your used (and even unused) stamps into us. We are still collecting them –they are appreciated and for a good cause!! JGB



Max's Tail Piece

For the first time in my life this year, we did not spend Christmas Day at home with the family coming to us. They joined us Christmas Eve for a fish and chip lunch, Christingle, Christmas Eve tea and Midnight Mass and then they went home. [Did you know that Adam was the only person who could say "It's Christmas Eve on 25th December?"] So Christmas morning was like a normal Sunday for us – walk, 8.00 service, breakfast and 9.30 service. Then we joined Kerry's family at Twydall for Christmas. It was a lovely meal and Master didn't have to worry about any of it, not even the meat, which he usually supervises. A pleasant afternoon with presents and then Master's other niece Denise arrived for tea with her family and their dog Lolly. Now a wonderful surprise. Kerry disappeared for a short interval and returned with a new puppy for her family. His name is Simba and he is a Chihuahua cross just a few weeks old. He is lovely, but also feisty. He saw Lolly and me off more than once. There is a lot of truth in the saying *A home without a dog is just a house*. Master had been rather proud of the fact that he was the only one who had been able to finish his Christmas dinner, but now found that he didn't really want any tea and he was very tired after all the Christmas services. By this time, in a normal sized house, we were six adult humans, two children, a baby, two dogs and a puppy, and Master was not entirely sorry to return to the solitary peace of the Rectory. One of his Christmas presents this year is a box set of *the Big Bang Theory*. We're watching this in long sessions. I don't know if you know it, but I can see uncomfortable correlations between Master and some of the characters, especially the most annoying one. You should try living with him! No, he's all right really so long as you make allowances. Happy New Year! Max the Rectory Spaniel.