

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
2 nd July Trinity 3	9.30 Family Communion	Jeremiah 28 vv 5-9 p788 Romans 6 vv 11-23 p1133 Matthew 10 vv 40-42 p976	
9 th July Trinity 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 vv 15-25 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-30 p976	
16 th July Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	
23 rd July Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979	
30 th July Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
2 nd July Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Samuel 28 vv 3-19 p300 Luke 17 vv 20-26 p1085	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 28 vv 5-9 p788 Romans 6 vv 11-23 p1133 Matthew 10 vv 40-42 p976	
9 th July Trinity 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 vv 15-25 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-30 p976	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	II Samuel 2 vv 1-11 & 3 v1 p305 Luke 18 v31 – 19 v10 p1053	
16 th July Trinity 5	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	
23 rd July Trinity 6	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979	
30 th July Trinity 7	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	
Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays Halling	
5 th July	Genesis 21 vv 5-20 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	6 th July	Genesis 22 vv 1-19 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
12 th July	Genesis 41v 55 & 42 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	13 th July	Genesis 44 v18- 45 v5 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
19 th July	Exodus 3 vv 1-12 Matthew 11 vv 25-27	20 th July	Exodus 3 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 28-30
26 th July	Exodus 16 vv 1-15 Matthew 13 vv 1-9	27 th July	Exodus 19 vv 1-20 Matthew 13 vv 10-17

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A Shaggy Dog Story

A man saw an advertisement for a talking dog for sale. On enquiring at the house, he was invited to interview the dog. Not only could it talk, the dog said, it could write and had won the Nobel prize for literature. It had also won the VC for fighting in Iraq and was currently advising the government on health and education.

“Why would you want to get rid of a dog like that?” the man asked the owner.

“Because it tells such terrible lies,” came the answer.

Topical Tip

It's much easier to make cakes in very hot weather. The butter is so much softer!



Would You Vote For a Truthful Politician?

It's all right. I'm writing this before the election. So it isn't my commentary on the winner. I also know that you'll be reading it after the election. So no-one can say that I am trying to influence

how you will vote.

Would you vote for a truthful politician? is a question I've been considering for some time. Suppose a candidate in an election said something like this to us, *It isn't possible to provide the public services you want for the amount of money you're prepared to pay in taxes. Oh and, by the way, if we get in, we're going to close your local hospital and build a motorway in that beautiful valley behind your house.* Would you vote for such a candidate?

The first sentence probably is true. Our standards keep going up and we expect more and more of our public services. The NHS is the obvious example. We keep inventing expensive new diagnostic procedures and treatments which keep us alive longer. We expect treatment for conditions which we would once just have had to put up with, like infertility or disfigurements which modern plastic surgery can remove. It isn't only the NHS, however. Benefit levels have to respect a reasonable modern life style. What would have been luxuries in Victorian times or not even invented yet have become necessities. It's not just the youngsters with their mobile 'phones and computers. Try telling granny that her 'fridge and her TV are luxuries she could manage without. Her granny probably survived perfectly well with a radio and shopping nearly every day, but any politician who claimed that the old age pension needn't cover such things in C21 would be castigated as hard-hearted. We expect the state to pay for (or at least to subsidise) child care so that both parents can go out to work. Free school meals have come to be regarded as a right for younger children (whether lunch or breakfast). If council workmen should use scaffolding instead of ladders for safety reasons, the taxpayer has got to meet the extra cost involved. And if we want equality between workmen and workwomen, we have to fund maternity and paternity leave as well. Free bus passes for pensioners might sound like a

luxury, but, as banks and post offices and other local services close down or are centralised miles from where people live, being able to afford transport becomes more of a necessity and less of a luxury.

We expect more and more of our public services and it all has to be paid for. On the other hand, there is a limit to how much tax any government can collect. The rich find ways not to pay. Others may decide that it isn't worth working quite so hard if they take off so much of your hard earned earnings. It's probably fiction to assume that the gap between what we want to spend and our national income can be bridged just by efficiency savings and by taxing the very wealthiest.

What about closing the local hospital? Maybe the candidate sincerely believes that the best thing is to close a number of small, local hospitals, which may have old and worn out buildings and facilities, and build a spanking new central general hospital which can offer the whole range of possible treatments more efficiently and at a lower cost. If you are admitted to hospital with a broken leg and then have a heart attack, you're better off in a big hospital with a top class cardiac unit than in a smaller hospital which doesn't have such a facility.

What is supposed to happen is that the candidate honestly puts his viewpoint to the voters and they decide whether or not they want him to represent them. But, we've all been to meetings and heard political discussions on TV. We all know that, if you try to put over an idea, a fair proportion of your target audience aren't listening. Quite a lot of them don't understand the issues. Some of them are more interested in power games and playing politics than in finding the best answers to the questions on the agenda, and some are looking at things from a different perspective from yours. They might say, *I can see why you say that a big, new regional hospital is better for the whole county, but if I or one of my family is ill, I don't want to have to travel twenty miles to a place where parking is limited and expensive and which is also difficult or impossible to reach by bus or train.*

So, suppose, you were the candidate, might you not decide that it was better to keep the hospital closure plan quiet till after the election or even to

lie if you were asked direct questions? You are sure that the local hospital should close for the benefit of the whole community. You can't close it unless you win power. You might not win if you tell the truth. So why not dissemble? My personal answer is twofold. We have to live by our principles even when it is to our disadvantage to do so. Pragmatically, if politicians do lie in such circumstances, they erode trust. If the voters believe that politicians lie whenever it suits them, they won't believe them even when they are speaking the truth, which is what has happened.

And what about that motorway being built through the beautiful countryside behind your house? Most people agree that the country needs infrastructure – roads, railways, energy and water supplies. We need housing and commercial developments. But hardly anybody wants these things on their own doorsteps. If party A says we will build an airport or a motorway at the bottom of your garden and party B says we won't, most people are likely to vote for party B. I can think of a couple of instances.

When the Channel Tunnel Bill was being considered by parliament, both the government and British Rail assured us that there would be no need for a new rail link because any likely increase in traffic could be accommodated on the existing lines. The Channel Tunnel was not a very popular project and it might never have been built without such a promise. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link (now called HS1) was an even more unpopular project. The official story is that the promise not to build the CTRL was based on mistaken estimates of rail usage. If so, the people who made those estimates were remarkably incompetent and ought not to have been in charge of a major project. Many people believed that British Rail and ministers quite simply misled the public and parliament because they feared that the bill would fail if the truth were known.

My question to you is this. If you now think that the Channel Tunnel and HS1 are good things but that the only way to get them built was to tell lies, were those lies justified? Alternatively, if BR and the government really did get their sums wrong and made promises in good faith, was it fair to break those promises when they discovered their mistake? I once (as a holiday job) promised to tidy

up an old lady's garden for a particular price. It turned out to be a much bigger job than I had estimated. Would it have been right for me to charge her more or to leave the job unfinished because of my miscalculation? (I finished the job for the price I had offered.) Or do lower standards of honesty apply in politics and big business than in our ordinary decent lives? I remember the vicar of a neighbouring parish telling me that people would call me naïf if I expected politicians and businessmen to tell the truth. But what if, in a democracy, you can't get these major projects, which are generally regarded as necessary by the people who are supposed to know, past a sceptical public?

Then there was Dean Valley – a site of special scientific interest and an area of outstanding natural beauty. The proposal was to quarry the valley for chalk in order to supply the Rugby Cement works at Halling. I was conflicted about this proposal. I tend to resent every square inch of countryside which disappears into mines or quarries or gets covered in concrete or brick. Moreover then (thirty years ago) as now, I probably used Dean Valley more than most people in the village do. On the other hand, Rugby was still a big local employer at that time and threatened to close if the Dean Valley chalk were not made available. You can't play fast and loose with other people's jobs.

There was also the question, if we don't quarry Dean Valley, where do we quarry for the chalk we need to make cement? In some other valley perhaps where local people are poorer than we are and have less political influence? As noted above, developments are seldom popular in the immediate localities where they are proposed. If we say, however, that the country needs this or that airport, oil well, railway, motorway, or quarry, but just not in my backyard, we have to examine ourselves for selfishness. Do our consciences really allow us to demand that infrastructure projects we regard as unacceptable should be imposed on poorer communities elsewhere, maybe abroad? Perhaps, we should have asked the question, do we really need so much cement at all? Haven't we already concreted over too much of this beautiful planet?

I should like to see a proper debate as to whether, for example, the advantages of airport expansion (commerce, holiday traffic etc.) outweigh the harm to the environment done by aircraft and the damage to the quality of life of millions of people living in the vicinity of places such as Heathrow. There must be a balance, but we never discuss in a national forum where that balance should be struck. I recognise, however, the problems I mentioned earlier about getting dozens, let alone millions, of people taking part in any decision making process. We don't listen to one another. We don't understand the issues. We posture. We see things only from our own point of view. In our representative democracy, our members of parliament and councillors are supposed to decide these matters on our behalf, but when do they ever engage in a frank discussion of all the issues with us or even among themselves? And isn't it true that mostly they just rubber stamp decisions made behind the scenes by officers and civil servants?

Anyway, at a public meeting on the subject of Dean Valley, we were assured by a senior council officer that there was no possibility of a site of special scientific interest and area of outstanding natural beauty being quarried without a public inquiry. There was, however, no public inquiry but quarrying commenced anyway. Either the council officer concerned was deliberately misleading us or he didn't know what he was talking about, in which case he should have kept quiet! The top end of the valley was partly spoilt by quarrying and, we are told, it turned out that the chalk was unsuitable for making cement and the works closed anyway and the quarrying ceased. Had there been the promised public inquiry, the unsuitability of the chalk might have been discovered before any quarrying had been undertaken and the whole of the valley therefore saved. Honesty might have been the best policy!

Government gets round the problem of building unpopular infrastructure projects when it can rely on a cross party consensus. All the main parties agree on the need for airport expansion, for example. So there is no-one the public can vote for if they disagree. So airport expansion will go ahead whoever wins the election. But is this democratic? Arguably, they pushed things too far with the EU. The three main parties all supported our membership and thought they could disregard

the considerable proportion of the population who disagreed. In the end by surrendering part of our rebate, signing the Lisbon Treaty without the promised referendum and allowing free movement with no transitional period, they pushed enough people into demanding an in/out referendum that we now appear to be leaving altogether. (Remember I don't yet know the result of the general election!)

Now, how about official cover ups? People representing victims of historical child abuse recently suggested on the radio that the reason for the cover ups when politicians, entertainers, clergy (I'm deeply ashamed to say), police officers, council officers and other people in positions of power abused children was the pragmatic calculation that, in the long run, it would do so much damage to the government, local authorities, the Church and the entertainment industry if the truth came out, that it was better to let these children suffer than to risk the public losing confidence in the institutions we rely on to govern our country. In fact, of course, it is the reverse. Now we know about the cover ups we are much less likely to trust these bodies than we would have been had they been open and honest and taken the right action to prevent these things happening in the first place and to protect victims and to punish offenders.

I was reminded of a case from some years ago when a man was released after serving many years in prison for a terrorist offence which he had not committed. The public campaign which established his innocence showed up the police and the courts in a very bad light and shook public confidence in the system. One very senior retired judge commented that it was a pity we had abolished the death penalty. If the man had been hanged, there would have been no campaign to free him and the uncomfortable truths would have remained hidden.

I've sometimes wondered whether that explains the way much more minor blunders are reflexively covered up in the public sector. Is the view that, if the public realised that people like policemen, social workers, council officers and health service managers, are only human and that therefore they are all capable of making mistakes and some may actually be corrupt, we would not respect their

authority? If, say, you knew that the council had acted improperly in the matter of your neighbour's planning application, might you be less ready to believe that there were good reasons why your daughter wasn't given a place in her first choice of school? My personal opinion is that I would have more respect for them if they admitted their mistakes and dealt firmly with any bad apples. As it is, I never trust an official spokesman who, I believe, will always say what puts the authority in question in a good light, irrespective of the truth.

Integrity and compromise. This is the hardest of them all. We admire people who maintain their integrity and we admire people who can compromise, but are the two things compatible? I haven't yet decided how to vote in the coming election. There are things I like in the manifestoes of all five main political parties but there are also reasons why I don't feel able entirely to trust any of them. So, I shall have to compromise. I can't not vote. Someone has to represent Rochester and Strood in parliament. Whoever is elected will no

doubt have to be prepared to compromise his or her principles. Nobody could agree unreservedly with everything any government proposes. Yet, if backbenchers were to vote down their own government's proposals frequently, the country would become ungovernable. So, there will be remain Conservatives who will support our leaving the EU because they want Conservative economic and social policies and there will be leave supporting Labour members who will go along with their party's desire to keep as close to the EU as possible because they believe in Labour's plans to renationalise the railways and public utilities. Politics can't work without compromise, but can you compromise and retain your integrity? I take a possibly sinful pride in my integrity and I'd be in a party of one if I went into politics and therefore unable to achieve anything in parliament or on a council. *Would you vote for a truthful politician?* But can we respect people who are willing to compromise their integrity in order to gain power even if the reason they want power is in order to do good? Roger.

Psalm 72: Give the King thy judgements, O God : and thy righteousness unto the King's son. Then shall he judge thy people according unto right : and defend the poor. The mountains also shall bring peace : and the little hills righteousness unto the people. He shall keep the simple folk by their right : defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrong-doer. They shall fear thee, as long as the sun and moon endureth : from one generation to another. He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool : even as the drops that water the earth. In his time shall the righteous flourish : yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth. His dominion shall be also from the one sea to the other : and from the flood unto the world's end. They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him : his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents : the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts. All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall do him service. For he shall deliver the poor when he crieth : the needy also, and him that hath no helper. He shall be favourable to the simple and needy : and shall preserve the souls of the poor. He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong : and dear shall their blood be in his sight. He shall live, and unto him shall be given of the gold of Arabia : prayer shall be made ever unto him, and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an heap of corn in the earth, high upon the hills : his fruit shall shake like Libanus, and shall be green in the city like grass upon the earth. His Name shall endure for ever; his Name shall remain under the sun among the posterities: which shall be blessed through him; and all the heathen shall praise him. Blessed be the Lord God, even the God of Israel : which only doeth wondrous things; And blessed be the Name of his majesty for ever : and all the earth shall be filled with his majesty. Amen, Amen.

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.

Flora and Fauna

There was an article in the "Times" about nature words which were common in the past but are now going out of fashion. The only one I recognised was *owl-light* for twilight. That's an evocative word which I'm sure I've seen in old novels. One I hadn't seen before but really liked was *shivelight* – the lances of light cast through a woodland canopy. That's always a beautiful sight when you're out in the woods with the dog, especially early morning or late evening.

The light is always changing. That's why every day is different in the countryside, every hour of every day. Sometimes there is no cloud. Sometimes the sky is completely covered in thick layers of cloud. Other times altering cloud shapes form, disperse and reform as they drift or hasten across the firmament. I particularly like to see the sun's rays slanting down to earth at the edges of dark grey or black cumulus. It makes me think of the radiance of God's Blessing shed down upon His people over whom He watches from His seat in Heaven.

There's not so much to report this month. The spectacular wild flowers, such as bluebells, mostly come out in Spring and early Summer. The cuckoo I heard at the end of April I only heard once more towards the end of May and it will be migrating back to Africa by the time you read this. I'm not good on recognising individual birdsong, but the dawn chorus has been remarkable. Sleep with your windows open! The cow parsley and nettles I mentioned last time have really put on a spurt of growth, especially after the heavy showers we've had, though still very little actual rain and possibly not enough for the farmers and gardeners. Tommy's tail is the only part of him you can see sometimes waving over the vegetation and wearing shorts (me not Tommy) can seem a questionably good idea where the nettles clog the pathways. At a slower pace, the leaves are growing on the trees.

Many of the spring flowers have now died off, but there are wild roses and, in the same family, flowers forming on the brambles. The blackberry crop never disappoints. Unlike last year, there are plenty of elderflowers if you feel like making champagne. There is plenty of clover – a good thing since clover is one of the few plants which can fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and so fertilise other plants when it dies. Today, it was mostly white clover I saw in the fields and purple in the churchyard. Churchyards and cemeteries create an interesting flora and fauna of their own. They are seldom treated with fertiliser or pesticides. They include a mixture of wild flowers and the plants people put on graves and escape and what grows from the seeds of flowers in floral tributes. Both Cuxton Churchyard and Halling Cemetery have been brilliantly maintained this year by the lads on the Community Payback scheme. I saw some mallow flowering. That's a tough plant which grows in unpromising situations and can be hard to get rid of. It has a pretty flower. I take the view that a weed is simply a plant growing in the wrong place and I welcome wild and semi-wild plants in my garden if they look or smell good. Why plant expensive flowers which feebly struggle for existence until the slugs eat them if Nature provides an abundance of specimens which more than hold their own? That's why so much of my garden is now covered by Hypericum. A carpet of yellow flowers is expected any day now. Having said that, however, most of my half hardy fuchsias which were not supposed to have survived the Winter seem happy enough this year and I've replaced the ones that died with geraniums which slugs don't like either.

I caught a glimpse of a living badger cub in my garden. I've only seen them dead in my garden before, but they are by no means rare in the countryside around us. I saw a bat in nearly the same place as the badger. I used to see a lot of bats in my garden but not so many now – though I'm not sure whether they really are fewer or I just don't spend so much time outside at owl-light. I'm glad to say that there seem to be far fewer mosquitoes. The bats are partly to be thanked for that. I once read that a bat can eat a million mosquitoes in one night. Good luck to them! The hedgehogs of which I saw a lot here thirty years ago are definitely gone, possibly having fallen prey to the badgers. Maybe that's why there seem to be so many more slugs. I'm very reluctant to use poison. Foxes have quite disappeared from sight in the garden since Tommy became an adult dog, but there are plenty in the woods and around the village.

On misty mornings, spiders' webs have an ethereal beauty, especially if the rays of the sun penetrate the mist to illuminate them. I do, however, always feel the need to comb my hair when I come in! I've seen a few early wasps. There are plenty of bees, especially in the Weigela which has been remarkable this year. I see the mock orange (*Philadelphus*) is just coming out too today. I expect the bees will like that. Some years the white of the mock orange coincides with the yellow of the Hypericum and the two together are lit up by the declining rays of the setting sun as Tommy and I enjoy a crepuscular inspection of our garden. There's always plenty to enjoy out of doors. Roger.



This is the VE Day party in May St. I'm told that you can also find it on Facebook. The only person definitely identified in it is Cyril Dyson, first on the right. Some of the others may still live in the village or they could be your parents or grandparents. Any ideas?

While on the subject of local history, we were reminded not to forget Mr Road's shoe repair shop and the lending library near the Homeward Bound when we were thinking about the shops there used to be in Halling.

Back in Cuxton, we received the following account of where people went to get their hair cut in years gone by. "I feel that mention must be given to Mrs Wheeler who lived at 98, Bush Road with her husband Sidney. She was responsible for the appearance of many of the ladies of Cuxton, being the only hairdresser in the village at the time. She permed, washed and set, and cut hair. This all took place in the small bedroom at the front. I remember sitting there and looking out, my mum talking to Mrs Anderson whilst she waited for me. I hated going there. The house smelt of perming lotion and stale tobacco smoke. No health and safety then, but a warm and friendly lady in familiar surroundings. All the ladies in the village looked the same. She only had one style, but the ladies felt good afterwards. My husband lived next door to Mr and Mrs Wheeler and he remembers a steady flow of ladies going to be crimped and trimmed. There was no waiting room. So you couldn't catch up on village gossip like today's shop. Finally, thank you, Mrs Wheeler, for trying to make all our mums, aunts and grandmothers beautiful." Margaret Booth.

Annual Barbecue

1st July 6.00

Rectory Grounds £7

A Letter to To Tommy from Another Dog

Dear Tommy,

I understand from my humans that your Master works in one of those lovely old buildings that they like to visit. They are always exploring them and I love the interesting smells. Other visitors often comment on how cute I am and tickle my ears, and sometimes I even get treats. Imagine my embarrassment when we were in the Cotswolds on holiday. We were approaching the open door of a rather impressive looking place, mistress had been taking photos and I was looking forward to having a good sniff around. A man suddenly appeared, blocking the doorway, and in a rather officious manner told my humans 'You can't bring dogs in here'. He went on to say I could be carried but that I looked a bit heavy to be carried !! Mistress decided at this point that if we could not all go in, none of us would. I felt affronted (well no girl likes to have comments made about her weight). How would you have felt in the same situation? Judy.

(As her human I would like to say that the incident related happened on a weekday, and there was no service being held at the time. Most churches we visit are empty of people when we are exploring but one of the others we visited did have a gentleman who greeted us and was there to point out things of interest, he had no problems with us having a dog with us.)

Tommy says that, when someone objected to his predecessor, Bobby, entering the church building, a very nice lady reminded the person concerned of the story of Noah's Ark – very appropriately, Master says, because church buildings are supposed to remind us of the Ark where we are safe from the storms of life, washed clean of sin, born again and heirs of eternal life – well humans are anyway!

Forthcoming Attractions

1st July: 6.30 pm Barbecue in Rectory Grounds. £7.00 admission. Music and food provided. Please bring drink and deckchair or rug if required.

26th July: 2.00 pm tea at Ray & Buffy's, 106, Charles Drive. Proceeds for church funds.

16th August: 2.00 pm. Teddy Bears' Picnic. All welcome. There will also be a bring and buy for Mothers' Union charities. Food and games provided. Admission free,

14th October: 7.30 pm Quiz for Church funds in church hall.

4th November: Diocesan Gathering. Details to follow. Watch this space.

9th December: 10.00 Christmas Fair (nee Coffee Morning aka market) in church hall. ALSO evening Christmas music event.

Thy Kingdom Come

The archbishops invited all Christians all over the world to join in especially in the prayer *Thy Kingdom Come* from Ascension Day to Pentecost (Whitsun). It was an invitation to those who don't pray much or at all to try praying. It united Christians across the globe in a common purpose. It encouraged us to consider how God might use us to bring in His Kingdom. As well as inviting individuals to pray in their homes and taking part in the initiative in our Sunday and daily services, we in this parish held a special event on 31st May. We thought about these things at our normal 9.30 Wednesday Communion service. We enjoyed fellowship over coffee after the service as usual and then we sat down to a bring and share lunch. People were so generous that the table looked like it was set for a banquet. This was in addition to our normal lunch on the first Wednesday of each month which Christine Eede provides us with so excellently. So we were really spoilt in May. At 2.00 pm, we were connected by the internet (along with the rest of the world who wanted to take part) with the service in Hull, organised by the worldwide Mothers Union. We sang hymns and prayed with Christians in many different places. We read God's Word together and we heard a sermon from the Bishop of Whitby and several talks by MU members. The message was that prayer is not so much something we do from time to time but the way we live. If we live prayerful lives, we grow more like Jesus and so we are better able to serve Him by caring for the needs of the world. We heard how the Mothers' Union seeks to fulfil this calling throughout the world. We remembered Mary Sumner's (the founder of the MU) daily prayer: All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen

From the Registers

Baptisms:

14th May

Jessie Emma Austin-Fuller

Gillingham

28th May

Callum George Blacker

Hazlemere

Funeral:

16th May

Margaret Mary Temple (69)

Kent Road

Confirmation

If you'd like to consider Confirmation this Autumn, please contact Rector immediately. Classes imminent.

Supposedly a True Story

A top American professional golfer was invited to spend a week playing golf with the King of Saudi Arabia. He had a great time. The king sent his private plane to get him and let him stay at the palace where he was spoiled rotten. At the end of the week, the king said he wanted to give the golfer a present. The golfer said it was unnecessary as he had been given so much but the king insisted and rather than offend his host, the golfer said he collected golf clubs. The king nodded and the golfer left. A few weeks went by. The golfer wondered if the king had forgotten or if one day he would open his door to find some gold tipped club or one with a jewel encrusted handle. Eventually, the postman did call but with a manila envelope. The golfer opened it and found inside the deeds to a 500 acre golf club.

This is story was told in a sermon to illustrate the truth behind the collect for Trinity 12.

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve: Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Fair enough, but I wouldn't confuse the King of Saudi Arabia with God and I have never prayed for either kind of golf club.

Scripture Quiz

A little boy asked his grandfather, "Were you in Noah's Ark, Granddad?"

"Certainly not," the old man replied.

"How come you weren't drowned, then?" said the little boy.

What Do We Make of Terrorism?

Coming in from lovely walks with Tommy in our incredibly beautiful countryside, I turn on the radio and hear the news of sickening terrorist attacks in which innocent people are horribly murdered for no reason that makes any sense at all. I can't help thinking of the couplet from the hymn:

Though every prospect pleases, And only man is vile?

Only man is vile. Isn't it so often the case that we human beings spoil what is good? God creates a beautiful world. He gives us so many good things. He gives us one another. And we ruin things. We quarrel. We argue. We're jealous. We're selfish. We're ungrateful. We're unfaithful. We're unforgiving. We're dishonest. We're violent. We destroy *what is true, what is honest, what is just, what is pure, what is lovely, what is of good report* (cf Philippians 4⁹). We mess up God's world and, in doing so, we mess up our own lives. It doesn't have to be like that, however. We've also seen the good people are capable of in the offers of ordinary people to help in any way they can, the response of the emergency services, the willingness of the police and the security services to put their own lives at risk and everyone's sheer determination to carry on regardless and without malice. As S Paul puts it, *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Romans 12²¹).

The whole verse is from the hymn *From Greenland's Icy Mountains* and it goes:
What tho' the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle; though every prospect pleases, and only man is vile? In vain with lavish kindness the gifts of God are strown; The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone.

The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone. We don't sing those lines much today because it looks as if we're looking down on other people, other nations and other cultures from a position of our own imagined superiority or their ignorance. The real truth to bear in mind is that the whole human race (including us) tends to worship what is created rather than the Creator and that is why man is vile and the reason we ruin what God has given us. Those of us who call ourselves Christians need to pray for forgiveness for where we fall short of wholehearted worship of our heavenly Father and for grace to do better and our calling is to be faithful witnesses to the world that Christ is the answer and the only answer to the evil which we have brought into the world by our worship of that which is not God. Roger.

Reading the Bible

If you'd like guidance in reading the Bible, how about using the daily notes produced in this parish for a suggestion of what to read and a brief explanation of its meaning? We're looking at the Book of Psalms from July to September. You can pick up a paper copy in church or ask me to deliver one to you. Alternatively, email me and I'll send you an electronic copy. Or go on to <http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/Bible%20Notes%20July-September%202017%20Psalms.pdf>

Trees Again

Regular readers will know of the extraordinary trouble caused to my neighbours, the Church and to me by the woodland Tree Preservation Order imposed on my garden by Medway Council. Of course, there would be no order if they had followed the relevant government guidelines or paid attention to the results of the public consultation. Given that officers were arrogant enough to announce the council's decision to the local paper the day before the meeting at which it was to be considered by councillors, one cannot have much confidence in either the integrity of the process or the competence of the officers involved.

Anyway, the latest is that one of these preserved trees, a scrappy specimen if ever you saw one, is interfering with the TV reception of one of my neighbours. Neighbours have offered to help the Church to pay for its removal, but we are very reluctant to do this. It would mean getting permission from Michael Sankus, Medway Council's chief tree officer, and he has proved completely unreasonable in the past, not only towards the Church but to the Scout Group and private citizens in the village. He won't communicate with me at all, even though I am the landowner. Last time we wanted to cut down some dead and dying trees which might have become dangerous he made the Church spend hundreds of pounds on planting field maples (weeds) to replace them. There are plenty of self-sown field maples in my garden and all over Cuxton. This waste of money would come from funds given by good-hearted, generous people for charitable purposes. Some of these generous people are pensioners whose income is about a fifth of what Mr Sankus is paid by Medway taxpayers. So what are we to do? Medway Council's motto is *Serving you*. If they're your servants, can you please tell them to behave decently?



www.themothersunion.org

Branch Leader's Report for 2016/17

This has been a great year for the Mothers' Union as we have celebrated the 140th Anniversary of Mary Sumner holding the first meeting in her sitting room - and it has been a great year for our Branch as we celebrated our 115th Birthday. I ended my report last year by saying 'thank you for just being there whenever you can' and we are still here, even though we are few in number. We are still proud to keep our Branch going and to be a small part of such a huge world-wide organisation.

Two of our members — Jenny Beaney and Philippa McDonald — were able to attend the World-Wide AGM in Winchester in the autumn and found it a moving and exhilarating experience. They spent one of our meetings telling us all about it and brought back several mementos and photos etc. We felt we had

shared some of the excitement. They now plan to go to America to Washington to be with the Provincial President — we look forward to hearing more about another great experience in September.

My thanks go to you all for the way you all muck in to make our meetings a success, especially to Ann Saunders for looking after our finances for the last few years; to Dawn Gates for typing minutes etc for me; to Jenny Beaney for always stepping in to help in any way and to Mary Morren for sending out our baptism anniversary cards. We also thank Roger our Rector for his support whenever we need it — and of course, we thank God that we have the strength to keep our Branch going when some are closing — so keep it up and keep praying and smiling!

Now I am pleased to announce that Jenny Beaney has agreed to take over our Branch and Mary Morren will take back the role of Treasurer. So thank you to those two and to Ann for stepping in as treasurer these last three years. Also a huge thank you to all members for their very generous gift to me – to Chris Beaney for making a cake and to Dawn for making for us a yummy carrot cake for our light lunch following our Annual General Meeting. Thank you everyone. Shirley Crundwell.



Cuxton WI

In May, we had our Annual General Meeting when the committee and the president were re-elected for another year. At this meeting, we also had to discuss the Resolutions to be put before the WI Federation to be voted on at the National Federation meeting in Liverpool this month. June saw our annual birthday celebrations when we enjoyed a quiz kindly put together by

Sharon and Steve Rose as well as plenty of food and drink. The Sunday after our meeting was the Big Lunch in the village and has the WI has done in previous years, we manned the tea and cake stall with lots of homemade cakes and thanks to all who stopped and bought a cake and a drink as we were able to make a donation to the Parish Council. Our next meeting is on July 6th with a history of Capital Punishment.

A Message from Christians Against Poverty

Wherever you chose to put your cross on the ballot paper this week, there is one place we can all be united – prayer. With so much change to navigate from the election, Brexit and the growing danger of terrorism, we need to pray for our leaders and country. In the mix of everything that is going on please join us in praying that the needs of the poor are remembered in this election.

Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2:2)

Prayer and praise points:

- **Praise God** that, following our involvement in campaigning, both Labour and Conservative parties have included pledges to provide ‘breathing space’ to those in debt. This is a period of time where creditors can’t chase payment or apply interest and charges to allow people space to seek help.
- **Praise God** that all three major parties have mentioned problem debt in their manifestos. Pray that we would see these materialise swiftly, and that they would be open and willing to talk to CAP and others as they develop these, so they work well for our clients.
- **Pray** voters will consider the needs of those in poverty and those without a voice as they make their decisions.
- **Pray** for CAP services as they connect with their new local MP. Pray that the MPs will be inspired by how CAP is changing lives in their constituencies and be open to supporting our work.
- **Pray** for the new cabinet and key government ministers for the DWP and Treasury, who will engage with CAP and listen to our concerns.
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Four Men Boasting

Four men were boasting in their local pub about what their sons had achieved in law enforcement. One son was a customs officer and, although he was only 21, he had prevented £10,000,000 of drugs entering the country in one shipment. Another, at the age 25, was the youngest ever chief constable. The third was a supreme court judge at the age of 30. “That’s nothing,” said the fourth man, “My son’s only 12 and he’s already helping the police with their inquiries.”

August 16th 2.00 pm

Teddy Bear's Picnic Bring and But For Mother's Union Charities

Rectory Grounds
All welcome



Tommy's Talking Points.

I promised to tell you about the next stage of our journey along the North Downs Way. We were to meet Master's friend at Dorking Deepdene, a station Master had never heard of until this walk was arranged. We got up very early on what turned out to be, despite earlier gloomy weather forecasts, a beautiful day. He needed a return ticket to Shalford. So Master gamely tackled the new ticket machine at Cuxton. Yes, it could issue tickets between Cuxton and Shalford, but only a seven day season ticket. Master thought this was odd and there surely can't be that many people doing that journey daily and regularly – a belief confirmed somewhat by the fact that the ticket collector at Cuxton had never heard of Shalford and the ticket collector at Shalford had never heard of Cuxton. Anyway, four trains and three changes later we made it. A woman at Redhill said how good and quiet I was, not something Master hears often. He suggested I was subdued by all that train travel. We walked up the main road from Dorking Deepdene to join the NDW where we left it last time when Master fell in the river. It wasn't far and we had to squeeze past some workman doing something to do with trees or pipes or surfacing or something. The hills were much less steep on this section and the sun came out quite hot. Mostly we were walking through freshly verdant woodland, but there were times when we came out into open spaces where there were terrific views across the Surrey countryside. There were quite a lot of people and dogs about, runners and cyclists. One or two of the cyclists didn't seem to care too much whom they ran over! Master is still envious of the runners. I ran off a couple of times – once far too far across a huge open grassland. This resulted in me spending more time on my lead than either Master or I would have liked. Towards the end of the walk, they got lost. They were hot and tired by this time, though I was still fresh as a daisy. Despite sharing my water, Master was very thirsty. We deviated from the right pathway, but finally found it again, St Martha's church acting as a landmark. Master had never heard of a church dedicated to St Martha before. (She was the sister of Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. It was to Martha that Jesus said those marvellous words, *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*) We walked on unsure of how to come down off the downs to find a pub and station. They asked two women who didn't seem to know either, despite saying that they did. Master expressed an opinion but his friend's wiser counsel prevailed and we entered Shalford. The *Seahorse* welcomed dogs into their garden, served terrific beer and offered an extensive menu. Suitably nourished, it was but ten minutes to the station and four more trains to Cuxton and a well deserved lie down in the garden where we sat till it was too dark for Master to read.

Since then the highlights have been the Big Lunch and the Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea in Palm Beach, Florida youth pilgrimage to Canterbury. The former I couldn't attend (no dogs in the rec) but Master says the Fresh Expressions stall was good with its sweets representing the fruits of the Holy Spirit (It was Whitsun. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*). After that, he had a cup of tea and took me out in the woods where I lost him because I couldn't hear him call for the music coming from the rec! The youth pilgrimage was wonderful. The young people had walked from Otford (18 miles) and most of them didn't look a bit tired when they arrived at our hall where they spent the night. They loved St Michael's church and they made a lot of fuss of me. They took it in good part that I ran off with their socks. Today they are going to Rochester Cathedral and Aylesford Priory and then on to Chilham and finally Canterbury Cathedral. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.