

| Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton                               |                                                   |                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Lent 2                                   | 9.30 Family Communion                             | Genesis 15 vv 1-21 p16<br>Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180<br>Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047 |
| Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Lent 3                                  | 9.30 Holy Communion                               | Isaiah 55 vv 1-9 p742<br>1 Corinthians 10 vv 1-13 p1151<br>Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046    |
| Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Mothering Sunday                        | 9.30 Family Communion                             | 2 Corinthians 5 vv 16-20 p1161<br>Luke 15 vv 1-32 p1049                            |
| Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Passion Sunday                          | 9.30 Holy Communion                               | Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729<br>Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180<br>John 12 vv 1-8 p1079     |
| Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> April<br>Palm Sunday                              | 9.30 Family Communion                             | Luke 19 vv 28-40 p1054<br>Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689<br>Luke 20 vv 9-19 p1055            |
| Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling |                                                   |                                                                                    |
| Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Lent 2                                   | 8.00 Holy Communion<br>Jubilee Hall               | Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180<br>Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047                           |
|                                                                          | 11.00 Holy Communion                              | Genesis 15 vv 1-21 p16<br>Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180<br>Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047 |
| Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Lent 3                                  | 11.00 Holy Communion                              | Isaiah 55 vv 1-9 p742<br>1 Corinthians 10 vv 1-13 p1151<br>Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046    |
|                                                                          | 5.30 Evening Prayer<br>Jubilee Hall               | Genesis 28 vv 10-19 p30<br>John 1 vv 35-51 p1064                                   |
| Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Mothering Sunday                        | 11.00 Holy Communion & Stop!<br>Look! Listen! RIK | 2 Corinthians 5 vv 16-20 p1161<br>Luke 15 vv 1-32 p1049                            |
| Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> March<br>Passion Sunday                          | 11.00 Holy Communion                              | Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729<br>Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180<br>John 12 vv 1-8 p1079     |
| Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> April<br>Palm Sunday                              | 8.00 Holy Communion<br>Jubilee Hall               | Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689<br>Luke 20 vv 9-19 p1055                                      |
|                                                                          | 11.00 Holy Communion                              | Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737<br>Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179<br>Luke 22 v14 – 23 v56 p1058 |

Copy Date April Magazine 9<sup>th</sup> March 8.30 am Rectory.

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

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

**After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's.

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

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

#### Annual Parochial Church Meeting

28<sup>th</sup> April, 10.00 am, St John's. Please make sure you are on the new Electoral Roll being drawn up this year. Enrolment forms from Peter Crundwell.



### Occulture

I have just read *The Re-enchantment of the West* by Christopher Partridge. You can borrow it if you like. A lot

of people think that society is becoming less religious. People no longer believe in prayer or the experience of God. They don't believe in angels or demons, or any other manifestation of the other-worldly. They think that there is no life after death and generally that everything can be explained in terms of what you can see or touch.

Partridge maintains, on the basis of a considerable body of evidence, that while it is true that fewer and fewer people go to Church each year and diminishing numbers of people hold to a specifically Christian faith, in fact there is a considerable amount of belief out there. There is a tremendous interest in the "spiritual" and the "occult". In fact he uses the word occulture to describe this cultural milieu of "spiritual", but not specifically Christian, beliefs which are very widely held in modern western society.

Let me try to give some examples. There are all those people who hold New Age Beliefs in which individuals try to find their own spirituality, independently of traditional religion. There is Feng Shui. People believe in astrology, luck and omens. A lot of alternative and herbal medicine looks to the mystical and spiritual, rather than the scientific. Most people do in fact believe in life after death – reincarnation if not the traditional Heaven and Hell.

Many people experiment with Eastern religions or try to revive what they believe to be the pre-Christian pagan religion of this country. Christianity gets blamed for destroying the environment because it teaches that God gave human beings dominion. Some people claim to practise religions which have more respect for the natural world. Some come close to worshipping Mother Earth herself, almost as a goddess (Gaia).

Rhythmic dance (in clubs and at raves) alters mood as do alcohol and many other drugs. Some people claim that the experiences they enjoy under these influences are authentic manifestations of the divine.

Satanism has enjoyed something of a revival. People claim to practise magic, Wicca or witchcraft. This is reflected in some kinds of rock music and in television programmes popular with teenagers. There is a lot of interest in Satan, demons, ghosts, vampires and the afterlife in films and books.

Science fiction and interest in UFOs blends into fantasy and magic, ideas about cosmic saviours or final holocaust. A lot of virtual reality computer games are based on myths which are essentially religious.

We are mistaken if we look at our empty pews and conclude that people are no longer interested in religion and the spiritual. People are very interested in these things, but they no longer look to the Church to meet their spiritual aspirations.

What is really striking to me is that many of these alternative spiritualities – drug culture, paganism, interest in vampires, spiritualism, deep green environmentalism, obsession with UFOs etc.- are very much the domain of teenagers and young adults – the very people we find hardest to attract into the Church.

If so many people are seeking spiritual answers, why do so few turn to the Church? I can suggest two answers, one we should be ashamed of and one we cannot help.

What should shame us is that very often people do not look to the Church to fulfil their spiritual needs because we have watered down the Gospel. We have made Christianity a synonym for niceness and respectability. The result is that we are not cool and we are not powerful. Young people rebelling against convention, questioning their own identity, the world and their place in it, see the Church as representing everything they despise: dull, authoritarian, quenching the individual spirit, old-fashioned, conformist.

Feeble! In our Bible and tradition we have huge resources – powerful stories of flawed heroes, violence, family jealousy, greed, lust, revenge and also of loyalty, friendship, self-sacrifice, the striving for right. We have supernatural resources: prayer, sacrament, the whole armour of God. And yet we play all this down. We tell

only the “nice” Bible stories. We don’t encourage people to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. We don’t pass on Christ’s invitation to people to take up their cross and follow Him. Rather we offer a *milk and water* faith for good children and it is not surprising that many of them, when they reach adolescence and have to face the real world and experience powerful forces working within themselves, turn to fantasy fiction, films and rock music for the myths they need to understand the world and themselves, and to drugs and sex and rock and roll for authentic experience of the wholly other.

What we cannot help doing but which puts a lot of people off is preaching the Gospel. Jesus tells us that the road which leads to life is narrow and that there are few who will find it. Most people will follow the broad easy way which leads to destruction. Following Christ is costly. It involves offering Him your whole life. If we proclaim this fact clearly, it is likely that many

people will decide that they would rather follow a philosophy which puts **them** at the centre, which encourages **them** to seek what is good for **them**, which is about **their own** spirituality. They will not want to sacrifice **self** and put **Christ** at the centre. The truth is of course, however, that the only way to find your life is to lose it, but there are few who willingly follow that way.

So we may find low numbers in church because we have failed to present the Gospel in a way which is meaningful to sincere seekers after truth, but it may also be that there are low numbers because we have made the Gospel truth only too clear and people just do not want to take up their cross and follow Jesus.

What we have to do is to proclaim the Christian truth faithfully in what we say, in what we do and in what we are. It is up to other people how they respond to the Gospel and it is up to God how He judges His Church and His world. Roger.

#### Bible Notes

In last month’s magazine, I attempted to tell the story of Jesus as if He had been born in C21 Britain. The idea was to get away from the feeling we sometimes have that the bible stories are set in a fantasy world a long way away from the real world in which we have to live and work. Pursuing this idea, I have done the daily bible notes for April-June in the same way, trying to tell the bible stories as if they had happened to people living in England in the present day. In order to make them more realistic, I have given characters the names of people from our fellowship, but please don’t think that any of the characters is actually based on you or me or any real person. The stories happen to people like us, not to us. These notes are available from church (50p). Help yourself. Or you can find them on the parish web page. Or I will e mail them to you on request.

Speaking of “help yourself”, all the leaflets, magazines, etc on the table or pew at the back of the church are for you to take free if you want to. Especially, check out the “Inspire” magazines and the Diocesan “Link.”

The parish bible study takes place on the last Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm at the Rectory. All welcome. We are currently studying Colossians.

#### Oh So True

In the year 2006, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in England and said, "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save 2 of every living thing along with a few good humans. He gave Noah the CAD drawings, saying, "You have 6 months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard but no Ark. Noah!" He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?" Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed Building Regulations Approval. I've been arguing with the Fire Brigade about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I should have obtained planning permission for building the Ark in my garden because it is development of the site even though in my view it is a temporary structure. We had to go to appeal to the Secretary of State for a decision. Then the Department of Transport demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it. Getting the wood was another problem. All the decent trees have Tree Preservation Orders on them and we live in a Site of Special Scientific Interest set up in order to protect the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but no go! When I started gathering the animals, the RSPCA sued me. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space. Then the County

Council, the Environment Agency and the Rivers Authority ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd conducted an environmental impact study on your proposed flood. I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on how many BMEs I'm supposed to hire for my building team. The trades unions say I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only CSCS accredited workers with Ark-building experience. To make matters worse, Customs and Excise seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species! So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this Ark."

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?" No," said the Lord. "The government beat me to it."

### Predetermination and Political Participation

People often feel that they can never make a difference because everything is decided by authority in secret and in advance. You know what I mean. There are proposals to build a bypass through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to close the local hospital or to build a huge housing estate on the edge of a mediaeval village. There is a process of public consultation. You go to meetings, sign petitions, write letters, submit evidence to public inquiries. Then the decision-making body – the Council, the Area Health Authority or the Secretary of State – apparently ignore all the evidence submitted by the public during the consultation and simply rubber stamp a decision already taken by officials meeting in secret before the consultation process even began. This is called predetermination.

This feeling makes people unwilling to get involved in local affairs. They are just wasting their time if the decision-making bodies are going to ignore their efforts. Most people do not even vote in council elections and a growing number can't be bothered in General Elections. What is the point, they say? What we say won't make any difference. Neither will voting.

I have always thought that such predetermination is undemocratic and unethical, because it involves deceiving people into thinking that their opinions and contributions are valued and wastes their time and effort in attending meetings, writing letters etc. I have just discovered that predetermination is also illegal. There has to be a real possibility that a decision will be affected by any public consultation or debate in council. Otherwise the authority making this decision is acting illegally.

Predetermination is, however, just the extreme example of what a lot of people feel – that they are not listened to and that the opinions they express and the votes they cast make no difference. Politicians seem to be adept at keeping the whole truth from the general public and getting legislation through in the teeth of public (even parliamentary) opposition. Officials seem to delight in perverse decisions contrary to common sense, persecuting ordinary decent people for minor transgressions of petty rules, while thinking up ever more bizarre excuses for not pursuing real criminals – the dishonest and the violent.

The answer, however, is not to opt out of voting and political engagement. If decent people who care about their community opt out of voting and political engagement, they leave the field open for extremism, corruption and plain mediocrity. We have local elections in May. Think seriously and prayerfully about whom you vote for. Elect good candidates for the various levels of local government. Make sure they have the mandate of winning a proper election. Our councillors represent us and that may sometimes mean taking on Government, more senior councillors and, perhaps especially, council officers. They need the authority given them by a big popular vote. RIK.

### A Bit of History

A census was carried out in 1676 and clergy were asked to report on the number of Anglicans over 16 in their parishes and the numbers of Papists and Anabaptists. Cuxton had 106 Anglicans and Halling 60. Neither parish had any nonconformists of either description. Based on our expectations of numbers of children at the time, it would seem likely that the total population of Cuxton then was around 170 and Halling just under 100.

## Nature Notes January 2007

In the years of 1994 and 1996/7, I produced books of drawings of wild flowers and creative writing. Although I cannot reproduce the flowers, I have decided to reproduce the writing to make a change from daily notes and I hope you will enjoy reading them.

### January 1994

#### **I drew catkins, a robin and a badger.**

The year awakens; Spring bursts into life with warmth and optimism. It is freshness, a sparkle, a tingling of all things new. Praise God for His wonderful creation.

### January 1996

This first day of January was one of greyness and mystery. Thick fog surrounded us as we walked across the fields to cross the stile into Mays Wood, where droplets of water could be heard falling from the trees. The footpaths were muddy and strewn with soggy brown leaves making walking quite precarious. An eerie atmosphere surrounded us, the only relief being the occasional call of a bird. New catkins hung stiffly from the twigs of bushes in the copse and wetness was everywhere. Time seemed to stand still, waiting for new life to burst out of its grey prison. There is a beauty in this starkness of bare trees, fog and dead undergrowth. The earth lies dormant, few birds sing but Winter will pass to reveal radiance and beauty.

### January 1997

The New Year has begun with snow and biting north winds. The birds have swarmed to the bird table—jays, tits, finches, robins, blackbirds, dunnocks, thrushes and a great spotted woodpecker. The icy tentacles of Winter have penetrated the woods and fields and skies have remained grey and bleak. On the marsh, where snow lies crisp, indented with human and animal prints, redshank and lapwings cry as they fly along the river, while there are haunting sounds from a swan as it flies gracefully up stream and greylag and Canada geese feed noisily from the banks. The powers of nature hold sway over the insignificance of man.

Elizabeth Summers.

### Churchyard Pleas

Since 1980, it has been against the Churchyard Regulations to put kerbs around graves or to put chippings on graves. It has never been allowed to put kerbs or chippings in the Garden of Remembrance. Please obey these regulations and remove all kerbs and chippings from the Gardens of Remembrance in both churchyards.

The plots where cremated remains are buried are 9 inches wide with 9 inches between them. This gives you an absolute maximum of 18 inches to put any flowers or memorials. If your memorials or flowers overflow onto other family's loved one's plots, you may cause a great deal of distress. Please be careful not to do this.

We are very grateful to those people who have donated money to pay for the grass in Cuxton Churchyard and Halling Cemetery to be cut over the last few years. It is not really reasonable to expect me or other volunteers to cut all this grass and by paying professionals we get a much better job done. Unfortunately, there is very little money available to pay for this apart from your kind donations. So I am sure the churchwardens will be grateful for any help you can give. Roger.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Stevenson (47), Mrs Wallis (76), Mrs Ashford (99), Mrs Head (121), Mrs Cheeseman (134) – drawn by Mr Mattingly. (Unlike premium bonds, you are eligible for a win as soon as you enter our draw. Please contact Betty on 240889 to join.)

Message in a Bauble: We raised £41.06 for Motor Neurone Disease through these Christmas greetings at St Michael's. Maybe we can do even next year. Watch this space.

## From the Registers

### Funerals:

|                          |                            |                 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 19 <sup>th</sup> January | Barbara Mae Abbotts (73)   | Nine Acres Road |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> January | Joan Beatrice Hopkins (87) | Bush Road       |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> January | Mary Elizabeth McCabe (90) | The Wirral      |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> February | Vladimir Pashyn (52)       | Nine Acres Road |

### Gays and the Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church (backed by the Church of England and the Moslems) has found itself in conflict with the Government regarding whether the Church's adoption agencies should be forced to offer children for adoption to homosexual couples. The Church's view is that sexual relations between people of the same sex is contrary both to Natural Law and to the Bible and the Teaching of the Church. The Government's view (in conformity with rulings from Europe) is that nobody should be discriminated against because of his or her sexual orientation and that, therefore, anyone offering any service or employment of any kind to heterosexual people must offer the same service or employment on the same terms to homosexuals. The Government insists that it will not back down on a matter of principle. Taking an equally strong stand on a different principle, the Church says it would rather close its agencies than give in. What good people on both sides agree is that children needing adoptive parents should not suffer disadvantage. The trouble is that, on the one side, there are those who say that a child is best cared for by two people of opposite sex and preferably married to one another, while, on the other side, some people believe that there are circumstances in which a child would have most hope of finding a good home with a gay couple.

Underlying all this are the much bigger questions of how we determine right and wrong and to what extent we impose what we believe to be right and wrong on other people. Fifty years ago, homosexual intercourse was illegal, the Government tried to discourage drinking and gambling, and whether or not you smoked and what you ate were considered to be your own business. Nowadays, Government believes it has a duty to stop us smoking or eating unhealthily, multimillion pound breweries are allowed to profit by 24 hour drinking, casinos are to be encouraged as (allegedly) a device for making poor parts of the country rich, and it will soon be illegal to discriminate against homosexuals. What is going on?

Fifty years ago (and for a thousand years before that) most people in England believed that there are moral absolutes and that these moral absolutes coincide with God's Law as revealed in the Bible and in the teaching of the Church. The task of the state – whether king or parliament – was to reflect these moral absolutes in the Law of the Land in order that everybody, rich and poor alike, should receive justice. There have been a number of challenges to even this degree of certainty.

A couple of centuries ago, the Enlightenment challenged the idea that religion was the surest route to truth. Observation and human reason were regarded as surer guides than revelation. This method worked extremely well in science and technology and quite a lot of people came to believe that it is possible to have philosophy and ethics without revealed religion. It became possible to believe in absolute rights without reference to the Bible or Christian teaching. So a secular philosopher, without any reference to God, might decide that homosexuality is a good thing because it is an expression of human love or a bad thing because it is unnatural and breaks the link between sex and its natural outcome, reproduction. Which ever conclusion the secular moralist came to, he came to it without religion.

Enlightenment thinking may be referred to as Modernism. Post-Modernism casts as much doubt on the ability of secular philosophers or ethicists to identify absolute truth as post-modernism and modernism both do to the abilities of religion to proclaim truth. In fact, post modernists generally doubt that there is such thing as absolute truth. Post modernists might well say that there are no absolute rights or absolute wrongs.

Mass travel and mass immigration have made us aware of the beliefs, cultures and ethical beliefs of other races and religions. Many people wonder if we can be sure that we are right about ethical issues when there are so many good people out there in the world who disagree with us. On the other hand, it is fair to say that there is considerable agreement on ethical issues between most of the world's religions. Traditional Christians, Orthodox Jews and most Moslems would agree that homosexuality is wrong - against the secular consensus of Western European liberal opinion.

Finally, there is the question of tolerance. I may think you are wrong, maybe you are wrong, but do I have the right to enforce my ideas of right and wrong on you? In the nineteenth century philosophers like John Stuart Mill maintained the right of the individual to believe anything he wanted and to do what he liked – so long as he hurt no-one else. We must tolerate individual conscience for two reasons. The first is that it is a basic human right to make up one's own mind and not to be forced to conform to the majority. The second is that there have been many times in history when a minority, even an individual, has been right and the majority wrong. We would never have discovered Australia if the flat-earthers had managed to silence the minority who believed the world was round.

Then there is multiculturalism. Different ethnic groups and religions live side by side in our cities with different histories and cultures and sometimes languages. Is diversity a benefit or a threat? Should we defend people's freedom to be different or coerce them into becoming like us? How much coercion is ethically justifiable?

There has to be a balance. We cannot allow people to believe and practise just what they please if what they please is to commit acts of terrorism or child sacrifice or domestic violence or child abuse. On the other hand, we are violating people's rights if we attempt to force them to act against their conscience or their nature. Such an attempt may be counterproductive if people feel so strongly that they are prepared to disobey the law or become martyrs or even to take up arms in order to defend their way of life.

There are three possible views on the adoption by homosexuals debate.

- The Catholic Church is right in an absolute sense. After all, until very recently, local authority and secular agencies took the same view that adoption by gay couples was wrong. If the Church is right in an absolute sense, not only should she refuse to back down, but she should try to persuade Government and other agencies to join her in rejecting homosexual couples as adoptive parents.
- The Government is right in an absolute sense. Homosexuals should suffer no discrimination. In that case the Church ought to be persuaded or forced to accept homosexuals as equally entitled to be considered for adoptive parenthood as married couples.
- There are no absolute rights or we do not know what absolute rights there may be or tolerance is an absolute which trumps every other right. In this last case all kinds of adoption agencies should be allowed to make up their own minds about the suitability of adoptive parents, and adults considering adoption should be free to choose which agencies to use.

The law against discrimination against homosexuals will also compel a hotel owner to let a room to gay couples on the same terms as are offered to heterosexuals. Some hotel owners do not like this either. Interestingly, some hotels at present cater exclusively for homosexuals and they are worried that the new law will force them to accept heterosexuals. Should we be allowed to choose whom we invite to stay in our hotels or should the Government compel us to open our doors to everybody without discrimination?

In the TV police series *The Bill* there was talk of setting up an association for straight, white, male police officers. After all, there are already associations for women officers, gay and Lesbian officers, and black and Asian officers. It seems only fair to have something for straight, white, males. But the story line was never developed and I have a strong feeling that it would very quickly have been condemned as sexist, racist and homophobic if it had been.

Until the 1960s, the Law in this country largely imposed or at least supported traditional Christian values. Then there was tolerance. Now it seems to me that we are in danger of developing a new intolerance. Government promotes multiculturalism in the sense that people may believe anything they like, hold colourful festivals, eat exotic food and do pretty much what they like in their homes or their own communities. But religious and cultural values are essentially private. They are not to be allowed to interfere in the public realm, the real world – the important arena of business, commerce and politics. Christianity is gradually being squeezed out of our public squares. The *draw and colour* it in aspects of other religions are to be celebrated, but government has no real interest in engaging with their philosophical, spiritual or ethical insights. In the public realm a liberal, secular morality is imposed in an increasingly illiberal manner. Deviation from what the Government calls tolerance will not be tolerated. The danger is that those of us with strong beliefs, whether Christians or faithful followers of other religions, will find ourselves excluded from taking a full part in our national life. We shall all be much the poorer for that.

If there is to be a new secular morality, enforced by Government, we have to ask where Government finds its absolute moral principles. There is an old joke about the man who supposedly emigrated when homosexuality became legal because he was afraid it might be made compulsory. Seriously, however, if something can be illegal 50 years ago and now compulsorily tolerated, what is going on? Do moral principles change? Were we wrong 50 years ago? Are we wrong now? How would we know what is right, if we do not think our religious faith or our traditional cultural values have anything to teach us? Spokesmen for the Government’s position say that the law has been changed to reflect majority opinion, but it would be more true to say that changes in the law have led a change in the climate of popular opinion. No individual or campaign group could press for any change unless it believed that minorities are sometimes right against the majority.

I cannot help but fear that what Government is saying is something like this. *Absolute moral principles are simply what the legitimate Government defines as absolute moral principles.* That is a scary thought because it would mean that, in Hitler’s Germany, it would have been your moral duty to hand Jews over to the Gestapo. Government cannot be trusted to define right and wrong!

After the serious stuff, a quirky question about what tolerance means. As a Christian, I would not expect to be served a ham sandwich in a Jewish or Moslem hotel. So why should an unmarried couple – straight or gay – expect a double bed in a Christian one? Roger.

|                                               |                                                       |
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Church Hall Draw January: £40 to Grace Pearce, drawn by Dave Maxwell.

December draw :- £5 to Chris Beaney, drawn by Grace Pearce, £5 to Malcolm Curnow, drawn by Matthew Wells

If you would like to join the St Michael's Church Hall Draw please let Buffy Maisey know. Cost is £12 per annum payable in monthly, 6-monthly or annual instalments. Prizes are £40 per quarter and 2 prizes of £5 for the remaining 8 months. All profits go to Church funds.

#### CHILDREN'S SOCIETY NEWS

I am sorry to be so late in reporting back to you the total amount collected in the 2006 box collection, which was counted rather later in the year than it used to be. Anyway, the total raised was £415.84. Once again we have exceeded the previous year's total by a large amount so many thanks to you all. A special mention should be made of the boys from Temple School who made a very generous donation to the collection, so well done to all of them. If anyone would like to join us in collecting money at home in a Children's Society box, please contact me and I will be very happy to provide you with one. Julia Wells 01634 727424.





## Service of Praise, Celebration and Thanksgiving

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March a very special service will take place in Rochester Cathedral. The service is to celebrate 40 years of Christian service by Blythswood Care and the prelude to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UK South operation. From its early days in Glasgow, Blythswood has been to the fore front of providing Christian care for body and soul. Friends and supporters from the UK, Romania and Serbia will be joining us. ALL ARE WELCOME.

Although the service will start at 3-15pm, you are asked to be seated by 3-00pm when a soloist will be playing Psalms on a Celtic Harp. After the service you are invited to meet the team, look at displays and take refreshments in The Crypt. Blythswood Care wishes to thank the Dean and Chapter for the use of the cathedral.

### Cuxton WI

Our February meeting had a better attendance and, as our president, Dorothy Drew, was on holiday, Vice-President Sheila Underdown took the meeting. She read out the birthdays for February – rather a lot – and welcomed back Val Shaw whose husband died before Christmas. There was quite a lot of business to get through and dates of future events in 2007 were noted in everyone's diaries. It is going to be a busy year!

Our speaker was Linda Wiffen from the League of Friends at Maidstone Hospital. She gave us an interesting and informative insight into the amount of work that volunteers undertake. Some of them have worked there for years and one lady, who has received the British Empire Medal, has been in charge of the book trolley for 50 years and is aged 92!! Volunteers can work as many or as few hours as they wish, and can choose what they do, from serving in the café, helping in reception, the library, transporting patients to and from hospital, the shop, various trolleys that go round the wards, and many other areas of hospital needs. Her colleague, Linda Payne, is in charge of fundraising and for this they hold a number of events throughout the year: quizzes, raffles, coffee mornings, a garden party in the hospital grounds (which raised £2,000 last

year) and many other things. So, if you have any time to spare, get in touch with Linda Wiffen. Transport expenses are paid and you get free car parking!!

Our Walking Group never let the weather put them off. So, as it was raining hard on the morning we met, we drove over to Maidstone and had a look round the new Hobbycraft Store. We were going to walk along the river if the rain had stopped, but, as it hadn't, we drove to Dunelm Mill and had a cup of coffee there and a look round. We then drove over to Nottcutts and had lunch in the café there – a very nice lunch, reasonably priced. We had a quick look round and then home. If all goes to plan, we hope to have a tour around Aylesford Paper Mill next time.

The Poetry Group are looking forward to their annual meal, which this year is to be at the Plough, Trottiscliffe and we are going on the Villager bus. So no-one will have to drive.

Next meeting: Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March at 7.30 pm at the Church Hall. *Memories of a Garden Boy, Memories of a Garden Boy*, Laurie Manser.

Ann Harris.

### Dickens' Country Protection Society

Barn Dance 28<sup>th</sup> April at Buckland Farm, 8.00 – 11.30. Dancing to Big Ian Petrie Band. Tickets available from 11<sup>th</sup> March (01474 822797), £9 adults, £5 children under 15. Supper included. Please bring own drinks and glasses.

### Quiz Night

30th Strood (Cuxton) Scout Group, 7.30pm Sat. 24th March at the Scout Hall, Bush Road. Teams of up to eight people. If you haven't got a team - come along anyway and we will find you a team on the night. Tickets @ £4.50 each, to include a ploughman's supper, available from Matthew Wells on 01634 727424. Please bring your own drinks.

### Halling WI

Evelyn Low, our new president started the New Year off in fine style. Betty head, our treasurer was kept busy taking subscriptions for 2007. sixteen paid up members in January isn't too bad, considering the steep rise and the dreaded magazine that has been thrust upon us.(It isn't too bad, a cheaper version of Home and Country, printed on recycled paper.) Only one birthday girl this month, Eileen Buss, was presented with her rose. It was quite a night for presentations. Mary Fennemore presented both the Competition cup and the Flower of the Month cup to Evelyn, whose job it is to keep them clean for the next twelve months. We had the minutes of the November and December meetings read by Ann Hayward, our secretary, seemed so long ago we couldn't remember if they were correct or not. They were signed anyway. I reported on the resolution selection meeting held recently at Matfield. We are having only one resolution to discuss this year at the Annual meeting at the Albert Hall in June, I wonder what the National Executive have for us up their sleeve.

West Kent Federation have decided to have a debate on the plight of the Dairy Farmers, who are going through a bad patch. Our speaker for the evening, was Mr Frank Smith who showed us his slides of Old Halling, some a lot of our members could remember how it used to be, lots more trees, but not too many cars, in fact some of the slides showed horses and carts, not a lot of pollution, plenty of muck for the gardens, but oh dear, so slow. For January the Flower of the Month was well supported, Ann Heaseman's delicate blue Iris was the winner. The competition, a photograph of Halling, was won by me with a photo taken by Pam Amos looking towards the hills behind Court Farm, with a vibrant strip of oil seed rape in full bloom.

February, weather permitting, I am continuing my account of Christmas in Australia, it was definitely warmer than it is here. The competition for February is Lamingtons, an Australian speciality. They are quite messy to make. Girls, think you are at the seaside making mud pies, but they taste good. See you there.

Phyllis C.

### Cuxton Community Infant School News

A big hello from us once again. It does not seem possible that half term is almost here and the Christmas holiday a distant memory. Looking out of the window however it looks rather festive- we have had the snowfall the weather folk predicted and the fields where I live are like blankets of snow. We have had to close our school today, which I hate to have to do, and nervously ring the LEA and three radio stations at the same time as ringing staff who start a 'round robin'. Most of our staff, have to travel a distance and so we cannot run without them. Hopefully tomorrow all will be back to normal.

Over the last few weeks the Children continue to enjoy the 'voices' project we are involved in and their singing confidence and understanding of rhythm, pulse, pitch and phrasing is growing. The year one and two children thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Rochester Castle and Cathedral, as did the staff. Its always quite stressful taking children out on school trips, and from experience I know the night before you don't really get a good nights sleep, however you make up for it afterwards! They have become totally absorbed in their castle topic and when asked can tell you all about the life of the servants, knights and minstrels. The trip was very well organised and the children had a lovely time in the cathedral learning about baptism, the stories in the stained glass windows and the designs and patterns on different buildings. Sadly our Foundation year grounds day with Beehive and Mayday playgroups had to be cancelled because of the gales.

Some of our parents once again this term have attended Family Learning. This time they are looking at Numeracy . I am pleased these sessions have taken off and hope they will continue throughout the year. We continue to welcome the 5 0 club into lunch on a Wednesday and any other day if they would like to come- the offer is still there folks, just let us know.

I am extremely grateful to the adults who come into our school to help on a regular basis, giving up their valuable time. Please, if you are interested in helping and have a spare hour or two, give us a ring, your support would be great too. Or maybe you have a particular skill, interest or job that you do, that you feel may be of interest to the children.

Next half term we look forward to class assemblies, Mothers day celebrations, Red Nose day and various FCS events, not forgetting the probable arrival of the Easter Bunny (if we are all good!) Have a good month and take care, from all of us at the Infant School, Sandra Jones, Head teacher.

With God's help already for some time an Orthodox bookstore, [www.orthodoxlogos.com](http://www.orthodoxlogos.com), based in the Netherlands has become operational.

