

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
24 th February Lent 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 15 vv 1-18 p15 Philippians 3v17 – 4 v1 p1180 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
3 rd March Lent 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 28 vv 10-19 p30 John 1 vv 35-51 p1064
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 I Corinthians 10 vv 1-13 p1151 Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046
10 th March Mothering Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Joshua 5 vv 9-12 p219 Luke 15 vv 1-32 p1049
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 40 v27 – 41 v13 p725 II Timothy 4 vv 1-18 p1197
17 th March Passion Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180 John 12 vv 1-8 p1079
24 th March Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1059
28 th March Maundy Thursday	9.30 Holy Communion	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
29 th March Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	
31 st March Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 17-25 p752 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 19-26 p1156 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
7 th April Easter 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 52 v13 – 53 v12 p740 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p71 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p72 Acts 5 vv 27-32 p1097 Revelation 1 vv 4-8 p1233 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
24 th February Lent 2	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 15 vv 1-18 p15 Philippians 3v17 – 4 v1 p1180 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
3 rd March Lent 3	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 I Corinthians 10 vv 1-13 p1151 Luke 13 vv 1-9 p1046
10 th March Mothering Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	Joshua 5 vv 9-12 p219 Luke 15 vv 1-32 p1049
17 th March Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Lent 5
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 16-21 p729 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180 John 12 vv 1-8 p1079
24 th March Palm Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	(at hall) Luke 19 vv 28-40 p1054 Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1059
28 th March Maundy Thursday	7.30 am Holy Communion	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
	? 7.00 pm Passover Supper	
29 th March Good Friday	10.00 Family Service	
31 st March Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 17-25 p752 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 19-26 p1156 Luke 24 vv 1-12 p1061
7 th April Easter 2	9.30 Family Communion	Acts 5 vv 27-32 p1097 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089

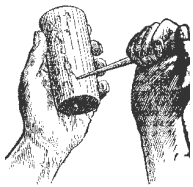
Good Friday & Holy Saturday: Offices at 8.45 and 5.00 St Michael's. 1st Apr – 6th HC 9.30 @ St Michael's (4th @ St John's).

9.30 Holy Communion Wednesdays @ St Michael's		9.30 Holy Communion Thursdays @ St John's	
6 th March	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	7 th March	Jeremiah 7 vv 23-28 Luke 11 vv 14-23
13 th March	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 5 vv 17-30	14 th March	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-47
20 th March S Cuthbert	Daniel 3 vv 14-28 or all cap 3 John 8 vv 31-42	21 st March Thomas Cranmer	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
27 th March	Hebrews 12 vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	28 th March Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081

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There is an **After School Club** at St John's on Thursdays at 3.45. **Saints Alive** (formerly Sunday School) meets in the Church Hall, Cuxton at 9.30 on 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays of the month in term time. There is a parish lunch to which all are invited every first Wednesday at 12.00 in the Church Hall. If you are prepared to *gift aid* your monetary contributions to the Church, please use one of the envelopes provided. Contact Jack Payne to *gift aid* all your donations.
Copy Date April Magazine: 8th March 8.30 am Rectory.

Women's World Day of Prayer Service 1st March, 7.00 pm, St John's.



Readings

One Sunday a brother and two sisters had dinner together. They had all three been to different churches that day and had all read the lesson. How come, they wondered, was it the same lesson in all three churches? The answer is that the bible readings for Sunday and weekday services are appointed nationally by the Church of England and published in a booklet called the lectionary. So you will very probably hear the same lessons whichever Anglican Church you go to and quite possibly in other churches too because many churches use the same or similar lectionaries. This is why I can publish in this magazine what the readings will be so that you can read them and think about them in advance of the service.

But how are the readings chosen? The Bible readings at Church services have two functions and there is a degree of tension between the two. The first and most obvious purpose of the lessons is to proclaim the story of what we are celebrating that day: Christ's Birth at Christmas, His Death and Resurrection at Easter, the Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost or Whitsun, the Mystery of the Trinity on Trinity Sunday and the other great doctrines and events which we mark as we observe the Christian year – Advent and Epiphany, Lent and the Ascension, Corpus

Christi, Christ the King and festivals of saints, Bible Sunday, Harvest and other significant commemorations. The other purpose of the Sunday and daily Bible readings is to form Christians, to make Christians and to make Christians better Christians. I pointed out last month that I can't explain the mystery of faith in a magazine article. No-one can explain the mystery of faith. We can, however, point one another towards an understanding of that mystery. And we can grow into the mystery. The Church's year takes us through the story of our salvation in Christ. As we live and worship Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Whitsun, Trinity, our knowledge of God is deepened. To know Him is to have eternal life. In my experience and in the experience of millions of Christians the Church's year is one of the means of grace which God uses to teach us about Himself, to sanctify us, to form us as Christians, to transform us into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.

The Bible is the Word of God and through reading it we come to know God and to know Him better. For this reason our Bible reading ought to include the whole of the Bible and, as far as possible, the lessons should be read in the context of Scripture. We should not read just extracts which make the points we want to make and confirm us in our prejudices. We come under the judgment of

Scripture. We are not the judges of Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. We are responsible for judging how the eternal Word applies in the particular circumstances of our lives, in a world very different from the world in which the books of the Bible were written, but it is not an option for Christians to decide that the Bible or any part of it is irrelevant to the decisions we have to take today about what to believe and how to act.

So the lectionary has both to provide readings which proclaim the particular truths we are celebrating on special occasions and to provide readings which familiarise Christians with the whole of the Bible, thereby providing us with the spiritual resources to meet the challenges we face in our daily lives.

There is therefore also a tension between providing for people who take part in the daily worship of the Church and those who come only on Sundays and other major festivals, and also making meaningful provision for people who only come to Church very occasionally.

It is important that the readings are accessible to the hearers. Readers need to make sure they understand the readings themselves and read them sufficiently loudly and clearly for people to hear and to understand. It does help if members of the congregation follow in their own Bibles and it helps even more if you have read through the readings in advance of coming to Church.

It can be off-putting if readings are too long. Attention wanders. On the other hand, if the readings are too short and you don't know the rest of the story or you can't follow the logic of the argument, they may not make sense. Sometimes shortening readings can make them say something different from what the original author meant, a point only obvious in the wider context.

Sometimes the names of characters in the Bible stories are difficult and the customs they refer to are alien to us, but we shouldn't be put off. Living, as we do, in a multicultural society and being informed both by the media and by our own experience of foreign holidays, we ought to be aware that other people live differently from the way we are used to and have names which may

seem strange to us. There is no excuse for thinking that the people in the Bible stories ought all to be called Willie or Sam and live lives barely distinguishable from ours in C21 Britain. In fact it is fascinating to see how human nature remains the same and the principles on which we relate to God and to one another do not alter despite huge differences in culture, climate, locality and history. It broadens the mind to read the Bible if we read all of it and not merely our favourite passages.

We also sometimes shy away from reading, either out loud in Church or to ourselves in private, those parts of the Bible which are boring, hard to understand or horrifying. All those lists of names in the genealogies, all those details about the Ark of the Covenant or the Temple, the itineraries of St Paul and his missionary companions, may not engage our interest. However, they are part of Scripture and therefore the Word of God and we ought not to give up on them altogether. They are there for a reason and I suggest every Christian should read even the tedious passages of the Bible at least once. The genealogies put people in their contexts. They tell us who people are, just as a lot of people today research their family history. If you know nothing about the Ark of the Covenant and its associated rituals, a good deal of the New Testament will pass you by. I have always been much more interested in what Paul preached than in where he went, but it puts both his teaching and his achievements in context if we know something about the places he visited and what happened there.

A lot of churches don't read the Old Testament at Holy Communion – only the Epistle and the Gospel. Now, actually much of the Old Testament is only too easy to understand - simple stories illustrating the best and the worst of human behaviour, with the underlying message that if we live in accordance with God's commandments things go well, and that if we go against God everything goes wrong, and that tragically humanity nearly always does rebel against God with disastrous consequences which only God can redeem. Much of the content of the epistles is, however, obviously difficult to understand. St Paul was an intellectual. I suspect a lot of the epistle readings go over the heads of most of the congregation, especially if they don't know the

Old Testament on which much of the logic of the epistles is based. The Gospels are deceptively simple. I say deceptively. What Jesus said, what Jesus did, even Who Jesus is very simple, but we shall never plumb the depths of what Jesus implies this side of Heaven.

Finally, the horrifying parts of the Bible. Human life consists of good and bad. People do terrible things. Awful things can happen to us. There are wars and famines and earthquakes (just as the Bible said there would be). There is disease, poverty, squalor, crime. Family life may be very far from ideal for a lot of people. Loneliness can be a killer. There is that dark side of life as well as the sunlit, flower strewn meadows. The Bible deals with all that. There are horrifying stories of violence and sexual misconduct and their consequences. The people who wrote the Bible experienced despair, anger, fear, doubt and all the negative emotions as well as the positive ones. God's judgment on those who reject Him and perpetrate acts of great wickedness is dreadful. The temptation is to read only those parts of the Bible with which we are comfortable, the nice passages, the teaching which seems to reinforce our prejudices. If we do that, we cut ourselves off from a great resource. The Bible challenges our complacency, calls us to repent of our sins and provides us with the words and concepts to manage war and famine, disease and disaster, personal pain and loss, doubt and despair. It's all there in the Bible and worked out in the context of God. It has been suggested that one of the reasons why so many teenagers abandon organised religion is that we only tell them the nice stories, the stories which we think are appropriate for children. Then when they start to face the challenges of big school, relationships with the opposite sex, the temptations of gang culture or drugs, the need to earn a living, rent or buy a property, start a family, they see nothing for them

in the Christian religion. For them the Church is an irrelevance, a congregation of well-meaning people doing their best to live good lives in a bubble protected from the real world. So they turn to their peers, to "other" religions and spiritualities, to drugs and alcohol, to rock music, films and computer games, seeking the resources to cope with the lives they actually lead. Yet they could find all that in the Bible and in the Bible all these horrors are worked out in the context of God, the only context in which you can finally make sense of life. Church is not an aspect of our social lives. Church services are not entertainment, philanthropy or education, although all those things come into it. Church is being real about every aspect of life and the Bible is our manual. It is vital that we read it, all of it, and that we act on it. I strongly suspect we are wasting our time when we dumb down to attract people who are not really interested. Dumbing down only deprives those who do want to know of the treasures of which we are stewards.

I was going to say a lot more about how our two lectionaries (Common Prayer and Common Worship) are compiled and on what principles and what you can expect if you go to Church daily or weekly or if you use these readings in your personal devotions. I think I've written more than enough for one month, however. If you would like me to, I might say some more on this topic at a later date. You will find a lectionary at the beginning of your old prayer book at home. You can buy them from Church House bookshop or find them online. You can use any scheme for reading the Bible as long as you read it. You might find the quarterly notes helpful which I draw up especially with the needs of the people of Cuxton and Halling in mind. If so, you can pick up a printed copy in church, ask me to bring you one or e mail you a copy or find them on our parish website under Teaching. Roger.

Cuxton and Halling Have Talent 23rd March 7.00 Cuxton Social Club

Competitors offering any form of entertainment and supporters/ audience welcome. Judges will include the Mayor of Medway, Dave Lewis from the White Hart and one other celebrity. Compere Craig Bartley of Starquest Performing Arts School. If you've got talent, please apply to Buffy on 727 126 or elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk

From the Registers

Funerals:

22nd January
24th January
25th January
28th January

Robert Terris (92)
Colin Webster (68)
Marion Rose Borner (78)
Keith William Peckham (71)

High Street
Ladywood Road
formerly of Halling
High Street

Yet There is Love

I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and concern, shown by so many people, during my recent illness. To all those who offered prayers, visited, sent cards, flowers and other gifts or telephoned – thank you. I especially appreciated the support given to my family at what was, indeed, a very scary time. Our four grandchildren coped very well with the sudden changes to our Christmas and New Year arrangements, although four year old Rowena was disappointed to hear that she couldn't ride her bicycle around King's College Hospital. I am now pleased to report that I am almost back to normal after some quite breathtaking brain surgery. I leave it to all of you to define "normal". Di Maxwell.

Forthcoming Attractions.

23rd March: Cuxton & Halling Have Talent (See Above!)

28th March : 7.00 pm Passover Supper Church Hall (£6 or £3 for children)

1st April: 2.00 Easter Egg Hunt Rectory Grounds (£2)

20th April: Christian Aid Supper 7.30 Jubilee Hall.

5th May: The Bishop of Tonbridge will preside at our 9.30 & 11.00 services.

8th June: 10.00-4.00 Deanery Quiet Day at Aylesford Priory. All

welcome. No charge, but please indicate if you are coming.

29th June: Bellringers' Outing.

8th September: Preacher @ 9.30 & 11.00 The Archdeacon of Rochester.

29th September: Confirmation at St Michael's 6.30 pm. Please see Rector if interested in being confirmed this year. Classes will begin early Summer.

6th October: 6.30 Harvest Praise & Harvest Supper Jubilee Hall.

Annual Meeting Alert (27th April 10.00 Halling)

This is the year everyone has to fill in a form by 1st April if you wish to be on the church electoral roll. You are eligible if you are 16 years old or older, baptised and live in and/or worship regularly in the parish. Forms from Peter Crundwell or me. Also available in church. Or e mail me for one. Roger.

St Michael's Draw: £20 Mrs Gill. Bogg, £10 Mrs Wilson, £5 Ruth Jones – Drawn by Di. Maxwell.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mr Marler (5), Mrs Burr (11), Mrs Winter (14) & Mrs Warman (51) – drawn by Mrs Heaseman'



Annual Easter Egg Hunt
2.00 pm Easter Monday
Rectory Grounds and Church Hall
All Welcome £2.00 per child hunting eggs.



Halling WI

Our January meeting was well attended. Just Zoe forgot the date. As this month is a bit iffy, weatherwise we entertain ourselves, or rather Trudy Fenton Scott did. We sang Jerusalem and even though I say it myself, we few do it proud unaccompanied. We had a back to front meeting, entertainment, education first, business, after refreshments. We really did get 'stuck in'. Trudy opened her bag and out fell coloured paper. Glass plates, little dishes and one of my favourite 'stuffs', glue or early learning paste. She then began by tearing pieces of the sheets of paper and stuck them to the underside of a glass plate not unlike papier-mâché only using posh paper rather than newspaper. The effect was quite amazing as it dried very quickly and shone. I think she said it was because of the sparkly glue. After the demonstration we all had a go and like a crowd of kids, we had a laugh. Some did colour coordination; others made a pile of confetti first. Poor Lily's hand won't let her do fiddly things any more. So Kitty made one for her. Margaret thanked Trudy for taking us back to our school days, after which we had refreshments and the business in hand.

Minutes of the November meeting were read, almost history and on to Correspondence, Invitations, a Fashion Show and Home Economics day. The Annual Council meeting speaker will be Adam Henson, the farmer on Country File, Betty and I must go to that.

The committee have decide, not before time, that the tea should be increased from 20p (which it has been for years) to 50p. Not one member objected. The competition, something beginning with the letter K, was won by Betty with a lovely big glass key. I wonder what she unlocks with that? The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow perhaps. Flower of the month was won by Ann Heaseman's Christmas Rose, not a slug nibble in sight. I won the Flower of the Month Cup for 2012 and Jemma Graves won the Competition Cup.

Next month Mr Mills is going to talk about 'The changes in our life time'. It will be interesting as I expect Lily will be able to go back further than Mr Mills. The competition letter is L. No pet lions please, a jar of lentils if you like. Why not come and see what we do? Not many of us but we have a laugh! Phyllis.

A Brief Bible Study – the Transfiguration – Luke 9²⁸⁻³⁶

Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. Jesus led a very busy life. He was under extreme pressure to meet the needs of the crowds, to care for His disciples and to prepare for His own Death and for the continuing of His work when He left this earth. Time for prayer, for communion with God, was essential if He was to do all the things He was required to do and to meet the challenges He faced. It is no different for us.

He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. Praying alone is good, but we also need company. The Church is a fellowship. We need one another, public worship as well as private prayer. Jesus promises to be present when two or three are gathered in His Name. We may not need to go up into a mountain to pray, but we do need to get away from it all. Of course we can and do pray with everybody and everything crowding around us, but we also need time and space to concentrate on God alone.

The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. When we celebrate Holy Communion, the bread and wine somehow become the Body and Blood of Christ and we are transfigured and transformed by our encounter with the divine. Holy Communion is not trivial.

There talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias. Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets – the Word of God in the Bible. The Bible is a vital aspect of our encounter with God in Jesus Christ and reading and preaching the Bible are an essential dynamic of our public worship as well as our personal devotions.

There came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him. Jesus is the Gospel. In our church services we meet Jesus in Word and Sacrament. We hear His Voice and to hear is to obey.

Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The life of Jesus was self-sacrificing love. Our Christian calling is to take up our cross and follow Him, not to lead purposeless, meaningless lives, but to offer everything we have and all that we are in the service of God and His Creation.

Sunday 3rd February scared me. Our congregations were unusually small. Did they presage a time when we would have to close our churches? Most people seem to believe that coming to church is just not important. They think that church-going is of little relevance to modern life. Could they be right and should we therefore give up? The above, the reading for 10th February, gives 6 reasons why they are wrong and we should carry on how ever discouraging the response. Roger.

Nature Notes January 2013

"A Morning Song" *Eleanor Farjeon*

Morning has broken, like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning,
Praise for them springing fresh from the word.

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall, on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,
Born of the one light Eden saw play.
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day.

The first of the month and the beginning of another year begins with beautiful sunshine. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy beneath a clear, bright blue sky and the sun lights up the grass and the rippling water. The leafless trees display the beauty of their structures with slender branches and even more slender twigs stretching out to the sun. A fresh breeze blows from a northerly direction. When darkness falls, a bright moon shines from a sky which is clear, revealing twinkling stars. On the 3rd, early grey skies are later transformed by sunshine and blue skies and it feels very mild. Birds are singing as though Spring has arrived. The next day at Bluewater, I see hazel catkins which have unfolded and snowdrops which are peeping up on the grassy banks. Sunday 6th is damp and dreary with drizzle in the air. Long tailed tits come to the garden feeders and two robins chase each other. A great tit is singing in the woodland on the embankment. Mild, grey, damp weather continues. In the garden, a willow tit visits the feeders; then is joined by great tits and long tailed tits while robins and dunnocks forage on the grass. The bare branches of the trees stand motionless for there is no breeze. On 8th the sun shines with billowing white and pale grey clouds drifting across the sky from the west. A pair of mallard ducks glides on the Bluewater Lake which reflects the trees on the banks. The orange and red willow stems gleam in the sunlight. And more catkins have burst into flower. A skein of Canada geese fly overhead while three black crows forage on the grassy banks. The next day, while driving along the A2, I see golden gorse in bloom. The morning of 10th reveals frost and fog. Great tits come early to feed then magpies put in an appearance. The skies remain grey all day and there is a distinct chill in the air. Sleet and snow are forecast. Northerly winds blow on 9th bringing grey clouds scudding across the sky. A song thrush comes to the garden pond. I haven't seen a thrush in the garden for quite a long time. When I walk to the church hall in the afternoon, I see carpets of snow drops in the grass. The 13th is a cold day when a few flakes of snow fall, heralding

what is to come. I put out plenty of food for the birds and they flock to the garden. The 16th is another cold day, remaining below freezing. Frost remains on the grass and the air feels very cold. A crescent moon shines in the night sky. As the golden sun rises over Bluebell hill on 17th, the frost glistens on the grass while a mist hangs over the river. The trees are motionless. I feed the birds with a variety of foods and one by one they come to sample the fare. I drive to Snodland as the sun continues to brighten the earth and skies are a pale blue. The frost lingers all day as temperatures remain very low. I put out more food for the birds and a squirrel comes for its share. The daylight lingers beyond 4.30pm and bare branches are black against a pale sky. Snow is forecast for tomorrow. There is a misty ring round the moon. A dusting of snow falls on 18th. Grey clouds cover the sky throughout the day and the temperatures remain low all day. Four blackbirds, three cocks and one hen are in the garden at the same time. Long tailed tits and four wood pigeons join the throng. Snow begins to fall on the morning of 20th and continues all day. The trees' branches eventually become snow laden and imprints of birds' claws form along the edge of the patio wall. I feed the birds at intervals during the day; my feet crunch on the snow covered grass. Darkness falls and later in the evening the snow ceases. The next day, trees and shrubs are laden with snow and look very beautiful. Birds come to the feeders which I have refilled. In the morning there are a few glimpses of the sun before cloud obscures it. On 22nd, fog envelops the river and the fields in the early morning and temperatures are low. A raven is amongst the birds coming to the feeders. Long tailed tits have become regular visitors while blackbirds chase one another in the lilac branches then on the snow covered grass. Later there is some sunshine and blue sky and the light signals the fact that we are in a new year. The afternoon becomes grey and more snow is forecast. However no more snow does fall and it is less cold. The snow has gone from the trees and is melting on the grass but it still lies on higher

ground. A pheasant forages on the grass in the garden until Murphy goes out and it flies off squawking loudly. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy. Moorhens forage on the grassy paths which are almost clear of snow. The skies are grey and there is a raw feeling in the air. Snowdrops bloom on the banks and delicate catkins droop from their slender twigs. After two grey days, the sun shines throughout the morning of 26th. I feel the sun's welcome warmth on my face Birds are singing and flying amongst the trees. Can Spring be far away? Westerly breezes blow on 27th. There is beautiful birdsong in the garden the next morning. I watch a

wren hopping among the flower pots. As the light fades in the late afternoon I watch grey clouds marching across the sky from the west. I listen to the cawing of rooks as they fly home to roost. Temperatures reach 11degreesC on 29th. Strong winds blow on the night of 30th and heavy rain falls. The early morning of 31st is grey but eventually the sun shines. The wind is brisk. Just after mid-day a light shower falls but the sun soon shines again and the wind strengthens. The rest of the afternoon remains dry. The first month of the year closes.

Elizabeth Summers.

Hymn Writers 2 by John Bogg

The main focus of music that survived between Ambrose (340-97) and about 1550 was that of the church; in sacred music, plainchant was the most common and more readily stored within the archives of the church or monastic order. In late 11th century, Guido d'Arezzo, a monk, developed the music stave, thus allowing a system to show musical sounds horizontally in length of time, and vertically in height of pitch, and in a very similar style that we use today. But during these early historical periods, music didn't change drastically. Secular music, the music of the minstrels, troubadours and so on, was really passed on orally and aurally from one musician to another and not considered worthy of preservation until well into the 12th century. We do know of the work of Hildegard of Bingen, a nun who amongst other subject matter wrote a collection of contemplative and ecstatic religious music in the 12th century, probably the first collection of vocal music. Guillaume de Marchaut, a French monk, wrote a series of songs on unrequited love (a story we will not go into here) and who had a number of secular patrons from all over Europe. What did spark change was the use of another voice part in plainchant usually singing an octave apart from the main line (therefore using the same sounding note at a higher or lower pitch) or the sound a fifth or fourth note above or below the main tune, but still following the contour of the original. Leonin and Perotin composed a significant body of polyphonic music for the newly built Notre Dame in Paris. Church composers then started experimenting with different voices singing together but using differing harmonies especially for special music for Easter and Christmas. This polyphony (or many voices) led to two, three and four part singing which by the 15th century had become established in both the church and in courtly celebrations. This, in turn, began the founding of schools of music in major European cities such as Rome (Palestrina), Florence, Venice (which was a centre for printing music), the Flemish school and the less organised English school with composers such as John Dunstable, John Taverner, Thomas Tallis, William Bird, Thomas Campion and John Dowland. But a significant change to the music of worship came with the Reformation and from the Protestant Hymnal of Martin Luther and Johann Walther. Just like the idea of Ambrose allowing the congregation more contact with the liturgy using singing in the Mass, Luther used hymns as a major factor in the worship of the reformed church and music became a vital force in the spread of the Reformation.

Martin Luther 1483 -1546

"I feel strongly that all the arts, and particularly music, should be used in the service of Him who has created and given them." So said Luther as his ideas for the reformation of the Church began to take hold. As a young student, Martin Luther sang in the streets of Eisenach (like the buskers of today) to raise the money to pay his school fees. He obviously looked fragile and needy as a well-to-do couple took him in to their home and, in these affluent surroundings, his hunger for culture and knowledge grew quickly. He was encouraged to sing and play the lute, and his love of music developed. He went on to study law at the University of Erfurt and it was while here that he had an experience which propelled him into the service of God. He went for a walk in a forest with a friend. There was a sudden storm and a bolt of lightning struck his friend dead. The very frightened Luther begged the Almighty to spare his life and vowed that he would

give himself completely to the service of God and his church. On his return from this horrible experience, he entered a monastery.

A study of the Psalms and the letters of Paul gave Martin Luther the basis for the principles for which he became famous. God's favour, he advanced, was a gift to be accepted not a prize to be won therefore justification comes entirely by faith in God's grace. This was the doctrine by which Luther was famous, a doctrine that remained controversial throughout his life, and yet he became one of the most influential men in history. Later, in times of stress Martin had his faithful wife Catherine to comfort and encourage him. "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage," he said. The couple had five children and his Christmas hymn 'From Heaven Above to Earth I Come' was written for his son Hans. It is disputed whether he also wrote 'Away in a Manger' but the cradle song did appear in a Lutheran hymnal.

Philip Schaff, the protestant church historian, calls Martin Luther the "Ambrose of German hymnody" adding "To Luther belongs the extraordinary merit of having given the German people in their own language the Bible (a masterpiece of translation), the catechism and the hymnbook, so that God might speak directly to them in His Word and that they might directly answer Him in their songs."

Martin Luther's first German hymnal (1524) included the powerful 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God' (paraphrase of Psalm 46) and contained sixteen hymns mostly by Luther himself. By his death, nearly sixty hymnals were in existence and included hymns by various writers. Through his efforts, congregational singing regained its place in Christian worship at the beginning of modern hymnody. The popularity of Lutheran hymns was astonishing and people everywhere started singing them. He was also the inspiration for later hymn writers and composers and opened up a whole new era of music. Samuel Taylor Coleridge regards Martin Luther as doing "as much for the Reformation by his hymns as by his translation of the Bible."

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great, And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

Readings II

As unexpectedly I have a bit more space, I'll conclude on readings this month instead of waiting for some unspecified future opportunity. Both the Book of Common Prayer (1662) and Common Worship (2000) lectionaries revolve around the two seasons of Easter and Christmas. Advent leads into Christmas which segues into Epiphany. Lent leads into Easter which culminates in Pentecost. Trinity Sunday rounds off the year. The traditional hangings are: white for the big festivals, Christmas, Easter, etc.; purple for periods of reflection and penitence, Advent and Lent; and red for feasts of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost, Confirmations, Ordinations) and martyrs – fire and blood. Green is used for the rest of the year in what is referred to as ordinary time.

The old prayer book lectionary was rather reacting against the Middle Ages. The Tudor reformers believed that the services of the Church had become too elaborate and complicated during the Mediaeval period. Ceremonies, statues, paintings, pictures and stained glass that were originally meant to illustrate and highlight the meaning of the Gospel story had, it was believed, become so complex as to obscure its simplicity. There was the danger that people were worshipping the statues and pictures instead of God to Whom they were meant to point. Elaborate music was accessible only to trained singers. Bible readings in Latin were meaningless to many of the hearers and, in any case, the lectionary was so distorted by the need to accommodate innumerable saints' days that the steady daily reading of Scripture had lost its focus even in the monasteries.

The English Reformers' answer was to strip out much of the art in mediaeval churches, to adopt a much simpler musical style and to read the Bible and conduct the service in English. The monasteries were dissolved and the hope was that ordinary people would meet daily for Morning and Evening Prayer in the parish Church. The prayer book style lectionaries such as the one you find printed in the front of your BCP at home provide for the sequential reading of the Bible every day throughout the year. Nearly all of the Bible is included and there is limited variation for Sundays, saints' days or seasons. If you use the lectionary in your prayer book at home, you will read the whole book of psalms in order every month. You will read nearly all the New Testament through twice in a year. You will read most of the Old Testament in order in one year – except for the Book of Isaiah which always comes in the lead up to Christmas. Isaiah has been called the fifth Gospel and prophesies the coming of the Messiah. Only the Old Testament lesson varies from this pattern on most Sundays and only really major festivals deviate from the pattern with regard to the psalms appointed and the New Testament lessons. On such big festivals where special lessons are provided, the Old Testament lessons often introduce the readings at Communion. The pattern of early morning Communion followed by Mattins was always wrong. Morning Prayer is a service for early in the day (*O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us **to the beginning of this day***), to be followed by Holy Communion as the principal service every Sunday and other major festival.

The advantage of this daily sequential reading of Scripture is that you get to know the whole of the Bible very well. The disadvantage is that you don't get to feel the changing seasons of the church's year, to enter through the word into the spirit of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter. Ideally we worshippers experience what the seasons stand for in our daily and weekly worship – getting ready for Jesus, celebrating His Presence and the anticipated Final Consummation, examining our lives in the light of His Love, repenting of the sins which divide us from God, and celebrating the Atonement wrought by His Death and Resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The BCP Communion lectionary provides Epistle and Gospel readings for the Sunday or other occasion to be marked. They are celebratory "cathedral" style readings. The task of educating Christians in the whole of the Bible is performed by the "monastic" style readings at Morning and Evening Prayer on weekdays and Sundays.

Common Worship makes much more of the seasons. Music, pictures, colour, etc., have been brought back as we rediscover the value of multimedia. Epiphany is explicitly linked into Christmas. It is underlined that Easter is a fifty day celebration, culminating in Pentecost (Pentecost coming from the Greek for fifty). Other feasts (such as Christ the King) not included in BCP are inserted into the year. A couple of major festivals are moved out of Advent and Lent so that the penitential seasons are not interrupted with too many celebrations. Even in ordinary time, some Sundays are marked out as preparing for Advent and Lent. Except in ordinary time, we do not read the Bible straight through from Genesis to Malachi, Matthew to Revelation, plus all 150 psalms in numerical order. Instead the readings and psalms are chosen to match the seasons. This is true of the Holy Communion readings (which follow a three year cycle) as well as Morning and Evening Prayer. It is realised that most Christians will only go to Church once a week and, of course, if we only go once that once must be to the service that Jesus gave us, Holy Communion.

The advantages and disadvantages are the mirror image of the BCP. Having readings linked in with the seasons makes the seasons much more meaningful to us, but we read some lessons several times in the course of the year and quite a bit of the Bible not at all. We also read more readings out of context. Also readings tend to be shorter with the result that we read fewer psalms in a month and less of the Bible in the course of the year. I have not decided whether the daily BCP or CW readings are better. I use CW at our weekday services in church. I am quite sure, however, that CW is best for the Sunday Communion readings. BCP Communion readings would provide a thin diet for people who came to that and nothing else. So the compilers of lectionaries have a hard job. It is not possible to achieve everything we would like, but, let me assure you, how ever you go about it, daily Bible reading pays tremendous dividends. RIK.