

Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
1 <sup>st</sup> March Lent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 12 vv 1-9 p13 Luke 14 vv 25-35 p1048
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012
8 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 12-24 p1065
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Exodus 5 v1 – 6 v1 p61 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180
15 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 4 Mothering Sunday	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion, Family Service.	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 John 3 vv 1-21 p1065
22 <sup>nd</sup> March Lent 5 (Passion Sunday)	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 1-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080
29 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 6 (Palm Sunday)	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-11 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
2 <sup>nd</sup> April Maundy Thursday	9.30 Holy Communion	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152
	7.00 pm Passover	John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
3 <sup>rd</sup> April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	tba
5 <sup>th</sup> April 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 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
1 <sup>st</sup> March Lent 2	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012
8 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 12-24 p1065
15 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 4 Mothering Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Lent 4
	9.30 Holy Communion & Family Service	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 John 3 vv 1-21 p1065
	2.00 Holy Baptism	
22 <sup>nd</sup> March Lent 5 (Passion Sunday)	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 1-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080
29 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 6 (Palm Sunday)	9.30 Holy Communion – procession from hall	Mark 11 vv 1-11 (@hall) p1016 Isaiah 50 vv 4-11 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
2 <sup>nd</sup> April Maundy Thursday	7.00 pm Passover @ St John's	
3 <sup>rd</sup> April Good Friday	8.45 & 5.00 Offices	
	10.00 Family Service	Question Time!
4 <sup>th</sup> April Holy Saturday	8.45 & 5.00 Offices	
5 <sup>th</sup> April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024

Weekdays in Easter Week Holy Communion 9.30am at St Michael's except Thursday when it is at St John's.

Copy Date April Magazine: 13<sup>th</sup> March 8.30 am Rectory.

Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am St Michael's		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am St John's	
4 <sup>th</sup> March	Jeremiah 18 vv 18-20 Matthew 20 vv 17-28	Jeremiah 17 vv 5-10 Luke 16 vv 19-31	
11 <sup>th</sup> March	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	Jeremiah 7 vv 23-28 Luke 11 vv 14-23	
18 <sup>th</sup> March	Isaiah 49 vv8-15 John 5 vv 17-30	19 <sup>th</sup> March S Joseph	2 Samuel 7 vv 4-16 Romans 4 vv 13-18 Matthew 1 vv 18-25
25 <sup>th</sup> March The Annunciation	Isaiah 7 vv 10-14 Hebrews 10 vv 4-10 Luke 1 vv 26-38	26 <sup>th</sup> March	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59



### Identity, Values, Loyalty

*Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.* (Exodus 1<sup>8-10</sup>). That was Pharaoh hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, but it a question which does not go away. Whose side are immigrants on? Are they resident aliens, a threat to our culture, always prone to side with our enemies? Or are they part of the rich fabric of our national life, without whose contribution we should all be the poorer both culturally and economically? Then there is the related question. To what extent should immigrant communities integrate? If they retain their distinctive beliefs and customs, is that a threat to our values and to community cohesion, or may their distinctiveness in fact enrich not only their own community, but also the whole of society?

Pharaoh's understandable answer to the question was to enslave and oppress the Israelites, exploiting their labour, and, at the same time, keeping their numbers down. Needless to say, this policy brought great grief and suffering to the Israelites, and, eventually, as divine justice came to bear on the situation (which it always does finally), disaster on the Egyptians themselves – ten plagues, culminating in the death of their firstborn, and the loss of their army in the Red Sea.

Pharaoh's reaction is understandable, wrong as we now know it to be. In both world wars, we

interned enemy aliens in case they proved to be traitors. Ironically some of those Germans interned in this country during the Second World War were actually refugees from the Nazis.

Mentioning the world wars raises three other questions of loyalty. Family loyalty is very important to human beings, but, in the world wars, it was expected that men would put their duty to their country before their duty to their families by joining up and risking their lives. On 9<sup>th</sup> February 1933, in the light of the experience of the Great War, the Oxford Union passed the motion, *that this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country*, by 275 votes to 153. This vote is sometimes supposed to have encouraged Hitler to believe that Britain would not fight him. When it came to it, however, in 1939 we did take him on and millions more put their duty to King and Country before their duty to their families and indeed to themselves.

Secondly, while many people in both world wars believed that it was their Christian duty to fight for King and Country, there were many who became conscientious objectors for religious or other reasons. They had what they considered to be a higher loyalty to conscience or to humanity or to God.

Thirdly, I have often wondered about where the duty of a good German lay in 1939. Most people would naturally support their own side in a war, almost whatever the circumstances. This is *the love that asks no question, the love that stands the test, that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best*. On the other hand, Nazism was utterly evil and had to be defeated. You would have been a very brave German in 1939 if you had refused to fight for Hitler, but where would your duty have lain?

A thousand or so years after the Exodus, Christians were regularly brought up before the Roman magistrates. If they were prepared to make an offering to the cult of the emperor as Dominus et Deus (Lord and God), they were set free, but many refused to make that offering and, as a result, were made martyrs. Most ordinary people had no problem in worshipping the emperor. The pagan religions of the day were quite relaxed about how many gods there were and it was no problem to add one more. To worship the emperor was simply to demonstrate one's loyalty to the state, just as American schoolchildren pledge their loyalty to the flag and British servicemen and women, police, judges, Anglican clergy and other public servants, swear obedience to the Queen. For Christians, however, while (following St Paul) they were perfectly happy to obey the law, pay their taxes and honour and pray for the emperor, the only person they could worship as Lord and God is Jesus. They were happy to be identified as Roman citizens, they were happy to be loyal to the state, but, forced to choose between God and the state, they could only choose God – even if that meant a martyr's death. Civilised pagans simply could not understand why their Christian friends would rather die a horrible death than repeat a conventional formula of loyalty to the society they lived in and in whose benefits they shared – law and order, good roads, relative prosperity, etc..

The state commands the loyalty of its subjects and exercises power. The religious person, however, will always maintain that there is a higher loyalty than loyalty to the state and that there is a higher power to which the state is itself answerable. This is important because, as Lord Acton says, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The emperor or king, fuehrer or pharaoh, dictator or even parliament (which after all abolished Christmas in 1644) may well abuse power to exploit and oppress. Those in authority should know that their authority derives from the God of Justice, Who will call them to account on the Last Day. Ordinary citizens, knowing this, know that there are some laws which we cannot obey. *I was only obeying orders* is not accepted as a defence in a war crimes trial. We have a higher loyalty to justice, conscience, humanity and God, than the loyalty we have to a state which commands us to

commit atrocities or tries to prevent us from doing what we know to be right.

There is therefore always a potential tension between patriotism and religion, between the state and the church, mosque, temple or synagogue. The mediaeval Catholic Church often found itself in conflict with mediaeval kings. It owned a great deal of land and received vast revenues. Some of these were used to the glory of God and to care for the sick and the poor. Some were abused as the Church became corrupted by its own power. A bit like the European Court of Human Rights (and other modern international tribunals), the Church believed that it represented higher ethical standards than national governments sometimes do, and believed that it had the right, therefore, and the duty to impose its authority over that of the king and his ministers, for example, in the conduct of war, the making of laws and the administration of justice. There would be times when a citizen's loyalties might be divided between Church and state, even though the monarchies of mediaeval Europe claimed to be Christian. Perhaps the most famous example in England is the clash between St Thomas Becket and King Henry II, which resulted in the martyrdom of the one (1170) and the humiliation of the other.

We are where we are today because King Henry VIII refused to accept the jurisdiction of the pope with regard to his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The problem of divided loyalties between Church and state was apparently settled by making the Head of State also Supreme Head of the Church of England. (Under Elizabeth I, and subsequently, this title has been changed to Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Christ is the Head of the Church and He alone!) I joked in a sermon lately that, if the Church of England in the nineteenth century was the Conservative party at prayer, in Tudor times it was UKIP, asserting the rights of the English to make their own decisions independently of any European power. *The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England*, boasts the 37<sup>th</sup> Article of Religion.

Of course, the Tudors had not solved the problem. The Tudor state was very far from Christian, if you take Christian to mean living on the principles

which Jesus taught. No state or human society, not even the Church, can claim to be Christian in that sense. So there must always be dissidents, critics, non-conformists, to draw attention to the failings of the establishment – both Church and state. Moreover, these non-conformists themselves are inevitably human and fallible and cannot therefore be trusted to take over the establishment and to run things their own way, putting down all opposition. That is what happened following the Civil War, when Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector and turned into such a tyrant that, when he died, the people begged for the monarchy and the Church of England to be restored.

Divided loyalties had led to a bloody civil war in which more English people were killed per head of population than in any other conflict in our history (including the two world wars). So, once again, crown and parliament attempted to achieve unity by making everyone sign up to a common set of (British?) values. In the context of the Restoration, these were Christian values as interpreted by the Church of England. The high price paid for this uniformity from then (say 1662) until well into the nineteenth century was that people who would not or could not in conscience subscribe to Anglican teaching were effectively excluded from public life. They could not graduate from the universities, sit in parliament or hold important public offices. This amounted to persecution of non-conformists and of course denied the nation the talents of many able people, who were prevented from making the contribution they could have made to our national life.

Gradually, from the nineteenth century onwards, we moved towards toleration. We remained a Christian country, indeed an Anglican country, as we still are constitutionally, in which the Head of State is crowned by the Church and serves as its Supreme Governor, bishops sit in the House of Lords, oaths are normally sworn on the Christian Bible, prayers begin the parliamentary day, etc., but atheists and people of other faiths have become increasingly tolerated. There are very few official positions in modern Britain which are not open to non-Anglicans. Queen and vicar are the only two which come immediately to mind!

For many people, this is not enough. They would like to see the Church disestablished, the state entirely secular, Christianity just one creed among many, treated no differently from any of the others. To say that Methodists, Roman Catholics, Jews, Moslems, atheists, etc. are tolerated sounds quite rude. Legally, it is a true statement of their constitutional position, but it does not reflect the reality in which people of all faiths and none are equally entitled to regard themselves as British, with all the rights and responsibilities that Britishness entails. Just as in Tudor times we were supposed to be one people under the King, Head of State and Church, and, just as were all supposed to be united as subjects of the King and members of the Church of England following the Restoration, now apparently we are one people sharing British values, whether we are Christians, Moslems, members of some other faith community, militant secularists or just uninterested in religion. But isn't this where we came in? If, in a multicultural society, some communities do not share the values of the rest of society, do they really belong and can they be trusted? If, on the other hand, there is a limit beyond which different community values are not allowed (for the sake of social cohesion and national security), and everybody who wants to be accepted as a full member of British society has to subscribe to certain core values, what are those values, who decides what they are, and what do we do about non-conformists, people who live among us but do not share our values?

For example, in the debate about free speech following the murders of the Charlie Hebdo cartoonists, the question was raised, why did liberal commentators insist that there is an absolute right to offend millions of Moslems when those very same liberal commentators come down like a ton of bricks on anyone who says anything the least bit sexist, racist or homophobic? Two answers were given. One is that people choose their religion, whereas they do not choose their gender, race or sexuality. It is not as simple as that, however. Most people grow up in their parents' religion. Whereas Christianity and Islam are similar in that they actively seek converts from every race of people and that membership depends on belief, other religions are not like this. A man or woman is born a Jew and remains a Jew even if he or she is an atheist. It is quite difficult for

people born as gentiles to be accepted into the Jewish religion even if they believe every word of the Hebrew Bible. Parsees, too, are born into the faith and nobody not born a Parsee is allowed to join.

The second answer is that religion is merely a matter of opinion whereas gay rights, women's rights and racial equality are universals. What is meant by a "universal". If a universal is simply what is universally (or even generally) believed, gay rights, women's rights and racial equality clearly are not universals. They are not respected by a very large part (the greater part?) of the world's population and they have only come to be regarded as self-evident truths in western societies in the last few decades. If, however, by "universal" what is meant is some sort of metaphysical or philosophical principle, independent of what human beings believe, where did these universals come from and how did we discover them? Moslems believe that God revealed the Koran to Mohammed. Jews and Christians believe that God revealed the Law to Moses on Mt Sinai. Christians believe that God reveals the Truth in Jesus Christ. But, if there is no God, or if God does not reveal His Justice, if religion really is merely a matter of opinion, where do these universal moral principles come from? Plato (428-348BC) believed that they have a reality of their own, a greater reality than the world we can see and touch. An understanding of justice, according to Plato, could only be approached by specially trained philosophers who devoted their entire lives to its study. If Justice exists as a universal principle independent of human minds, in what does it consist until it is discovered by philosophers? How would we recognise it? I don't trust Plato as a moral philosopher. He advocated that the children of poor, stupid people shouldn't be allowed to live! (Atheist philosophies have a way of turning out far more ruthless than religious beliefs. How ever terrible religious believers may be they always ultimately have to account to God Who is merciful.)

In the modern world, the best explanation for our ethical values, if we discount religion, is Darwinism. As Richard Dawkins puts it, ideas, moral principles, whatever (memes he calls them), function like genes. They arise. If they are

successful, they are passed on to the next generation. If ideas or cultural norms are not conducive to survival, they die out, just as unsuccessful species become extinct. The fittest memes survive. The less fit perish. On this model, human cultures are rivals. The cultures with the cultural practices most conducive to survival will ultimately triumph. This could mean that the culture which ultimately wins out is the most ruthless, the best armed. Hardly what you and I would call moral!

There is a further question. If these secular (Western) values are universals and ought to be required of every community and individual living in Britain today, ought they not to apply equally in every country on earth? Can we respect the culture of any country which does not support gay rights, women's rights, racial equality and the rest of these secular universal values? If not, do we try to change the culture of other countries by persuasion – a kind of secular missionary work? Or do we try economic sanctions or even military might, a crusade perhaps? Is this the twenty first century equivalent of the "white man's burden"? If this last question shocks liberal commentators (as it should) can they explain how they would answer it, please?

Coming back to contemporary Britain, are there limits to multiculturalism? Are there universal values to which all British people should be required to sign up? Can these universal values be independent of religion? (No, they cannot if God is the Maker of all that is and the ultimate Judge of humanity.) What do we do about people who refuse to sign up to what we are now pleased to call Britishness?

If you want my opinion, I start with the Bible. In the Old Testament, the people of God were instructed to treat with special consideration the aliens living among them. They were absolutely not, however, to compromise their own beliefs or practice. In the New Testament, the people of God were instructed to honour the secular state and to treat other faith communities with respect, but, again, they were to be uncompromising in their faithfulness to the Gospel. When Peter and John said to the authorities, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye* (Acts 4<sup>19</sup>), there could only be

one answer. I do not believe that there are any universal principles apart from God and I believe that God has revealed in Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life. I respect other people's right to differ and to practise their own beliefs, so long as they can do so without harming other people. I believe that the state (under God) has the right to demand our loyalty and our obedience, but I do not accept that there are universal secular norms which the state has the right to enforce, whilst treating religion as an optional extra, a mere

matter of opinion. I do not accept that I have a British identity which trumps all my other identities as a Christian, as an uncle and great uncle, as a friend, as a member of the local community, and, indeed, as a human being, part of the global human family. There is something sinister in the state setting itself up as the ultimate arbiter of conduct, the ultimate repository of loyalty. Roger.

William Tyndale: And remember that Christ is the end of all things. He only is our resting-place, and he is our peace. For as there is no salvation in any other name, so is there no peace in any other name. Thou shalt never have rest in thy soul, neither shall the worm of conscience ever cease to gnaw thine heart, till thou come at Christ; till thou hear the glad tidings, how that God for his sake hath forgiven thee all freely.

# Annual Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Monday

6<sup>th</sup> April 2.00 pm

Rectory Grounds + Church Hall

£2.00 per child

**Christian Aid**



A Division of The British Council of Churches

Christian Aid  
Help Needed

Could anyone please volunteer to coordinate the Christian Aid street collection in this parish for Christian Aid Week? This is the second week in May. What it entails is to order the envelopes we need and to arrange street collectors to deliver and collect them. The existing coordinator (Shirley Crundwell) will advise you. The street collection is one of Christian Aid's main sources of income and it is an effective way of keeping the important work Christian Aid does in the public eye. We have one of the most successful street collections in the area and we'd like to keep it that way!

### Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Vestry Meeting

These will take place at 10.00 am at St John's Church on 25<sup>th</sup> April. Everyone on both the civil and parochial electoral rolls is welcome to attend the vestry meeting and to elect the churchwardens (two for each parish church). The APCM is attended by members of the parochial electoral roll who receive reports of the PCC's activities and accounts and elect the PCC for the coming year (five each from Cuxton and Halling). The present PCC secretary has indicated that she would like to resign at the APCM and it would be helpful if there were at least one possible replacement in mind at the meeting. If you are at least 16, baptised and a member of our church, please make sure you are on the electoral roll. Those already on the roll will be carried over. Unless you are under 18, you have to have been on the electoral roll at least 6 months before you can stand for election to the PCC.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mr Head (4), Mrs Burr (12), Mrs Hesketh (115) & Mrs Rogers (161) – drawn by Mrs Chidwick.



### Halling WI

Having just read my NFWI magazine, the first one for 2015 our centenary year, I thought I had better write my report for our W.I. at Halling, our January meeting. Although there are not many of us and our January is our "no speaker" meeting we had a jolly, somewhat noisy evening with the help of our five visitors. Two of our oldest members are not joining us this year, Mary Fennemore and Lily Hesketh. We shall miss their company, and out of respect for how long they have been in the W.I., we will invite them to any of our future events that they would like to come too. Minutes of November and December meetings were read and, as December was our party, this didn't take long. Aylesford and Eccles sent us an invite to their birthday party on 25<sup>th</sup> February and the broadcast live from the Albert Hall of the NFWI Centenary annual meeting is going ahead. For £30 any member of Kent West Kent Federation will be able to see the whole day at the Mercure (Great Danes to you and me) hotel. The price includes lunch and coffee on tap. This will be a great opportunity for all members to join in this important milestone in W.I. history.

Our meeting continued. The table was already set. Out came the fresh bread rolls, then the soup, a choice, tomato or leek and potato. It was piping hot and enough for second helpings. Well done Jemma and the waitresses. After the soup and rolls were cleared, cups of tea and Christmas cake. At this point my diet went out of the window and I had a small piece of Christmas cake. (Well, I didn't have any at Christmas when my girls were watching me like hawks.) It was one of the nicest pieces of cake I have had for a long time. I thought Betty had made it. It was that good, but it was the one Betty won in the hamper from the church's coffee morning. The Co-op made it. Well done the Co-op.



### Sad News About Max

I know many of you have enjoyed reading Max's tail pieces in this magazine, his country walks and his impressions of life in the Rectory and in the Church. Last Summer he was 13 and in the latter half of the year he began to slow down. On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December, I had to cut short his morning walk as he was evidently reluctant to go on. After we came in, he totally lost the use of his hind legs. As there was no improvement overnight, I took him to the vet on Thursday. She thought an operation on his back might be possible, but he needed to be scanned first at the animal hospital. So we set off for Godalming. It was a terrible journey because I misread the directions to Godalming and, when we got there, it turned out that we had been given

Then it was make your mind up time. I had brought the Beetle cards and pencils that Pam Amos had donated many moons ago. (Shows how many times we play games at our W.I.) Or the alternative, my daughter Phyl happened to be up from Cornwall and could tell us about her W.I. at Grampound, who had recently had a float in the local village carnival and then again at the torchlight one at St Austell. They won three cups and a few quid so were well pleased. It was decided to let Phyl speak. (She has had a good tutor). First they had to find a tractor with a willing driver, quite an easy task in that part of the woods. There are lots of willing farmers. Next, Phyl scoured the charity shops for big posh hats. Most W.I. ladies can find a posh frock, one they have bought for a wedding and never worn it since. A couple of husbands cut out some cardboard horses and dressed, up as jockeys. Some bottles of champagne and glasses and they were set up for "A day at the Ascot races". The whole float had to be electrified for the torchlight carnival. That one was in November and Phyl said it was freezing. We don't do carnivals any more but we do much the same thing as they do in Grampound W.I. It passed the time away. Our competitions were judged by some of our visitors and Pam Lally's Christmas card won. It was a highland cow pushing her nose through a snow drift. The flower of the month was won by Sylvia Mitchell with a mauve anemone.

Next month's speaker is from South East Water. This will be interesting as the last time we had a SE Water speaker was over 40yrs ago. The water hasn't changed but the systems have. The competition, a watery picture. What scope! A dripping tap to the Pacific Ocean and anything in between. You can all do this. Let's hope the frozen stuff doesn't stop us in our tracks. Phyllis.

the wrong address to go to. Max was X rayed and scanned and it was revealed that he had a large tumour which was causing the problem and an operation was out of the question. The vet at Godalming wanted to put him down there and then. However, he looked at me so lovingly and trustingly and he had been through so much that day, and I looked at him, and I said that I would take him home whatever. The vet gave me some pills which she said would make him more comfortable but she thought that Monday would see the end. Early Friday morning, I carried him downstairs and put him on the grass and, to my astonishment, he got up on his feet and walked, admittedly staggering at first. It was like a miracle. I don't know whether it was the pills, the power of prayer or the strength of his character. There is no reason why it shouldn't have been all three. After that, he got a little better every day. He had a nice Christmas and New Year. He was even able to enjoy a few moderate walks, albeit very slowly. I was very pleased that he was able to see places he had always enjoyed going to one more time. Unfortunately, at the end of January, the tumour had presumably started growing once more and again he lost the use of his back legs. For a few days, he remained loving and attentive and I was reluctant to end things, but, at the beginning of February, there came a time when he was very agitated and then he became quite quiescent and relaxed and very dependent on me. He stopped eating. So the time had come and he was put to sleep on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

My mother used to say that Max was the most loving dog she had ever known. He certainly was loving and full of fun, not to say mischief. He was very strong willed. Even when he could barely walk, he played on me his old trick of hiding in the garden. It was early in the morning and I couldn't find him till it got light. He had a wonderful character. He had lots of lovely walks in his life time. We are very blessed to live where we do with so much open countryside around us. He very often came to church and to church events and was well known in the parish. He had lots of friends. He used to play with the children at Thursday's Children and St Michael's Angels. He would let them take him for walks round the church, but take his lead off them when he had had enough.

People who don't have pets sometimes think that those of us who do treat them as substitute children. That is not strictly accurate, but they do become very much part of the family and share in our lives. So the loss of a pet tends to remind us of all the precious things we have shared as a family and the people we have shared them with and are now themselves dead. At the age of sixty, I was tempted to think that maybe the good times are all in the past, but that would be to betray my faith in God, Who holds our whole lives in His Hands. The best is yet to come. He will look after us to the end of our lives on earth and He has prepared a place for us in heaven when our time here is completed.

There is one issue for pet owners on this point. When our Christian friends and members of our families die, we know that they go to heaven. People are different from animals, made in the image of God, living souls. So what about animals? Mostly, the official teaching has been that animals do not have souls and that their life is over when their bodies die. It might be worrying to kill and eat them if we thought they were the same as us. There are, however, two considerations here which I find comforting. One is that when anything dies, the life returns to God. The other is that Christ came not merely to redeem human beings, but to redeem the entire creation (Colossians 1<sup>20</sup>). So whatever may happen, we do know that it is all in the Hands of the God of love.

Roger.

#### **Nature Notes January 2015**

*"The Roaring Frost"*

*Alice Meynal*

A flock of winds came winging from the north,  
Strong birds with fighting pinions driving forth  
With a resounding call.

Where will they close their wings and cease their cries  
Between what warming seas and conquering skies  
And fold and fall?

The first day of the month is grey and damp, mild, but with no glimpse of the sun. Birds come to feed. A west wind drives the grey clouds across the sky. In the evening, the raucous cries of rooks are to be heard as they return to the trees near the river. Winds

strengthen and heavy rain falls during the late evening. In the morning sunshine of 2<sup>nd</sup> I hear the strident call of a great tit. Later, I walk across Church Fields and into Mays wood where I see an elder bush has burst into new leaf. I walk down the hill, then



along to Six acre Field from where I'm able to climb up the path to the wood. This path had been closed because of grazing horses. The sun continues to shine brightly from a blue sky until the late afternoon. The cawing, noisy rooks fly back to roost in the trees by the river. A bright moon eventually shines. It has not been so cold today. The next day, rain, heavy at times, falls constantly as grey clouds are driven across the sky. A few birds come to feed in the morning, but the rain drives them to seek shelter. Darkness falls early. On 4<sup>th</sup> damp and foggy, a dunnoek and pigeons come to investigate the food situation then a robin follows. A little vole scampers across the patio. The morning of 6<sup>th</sup> is grey but not too cold. There are a few glimpses of the sun in the afternoon. Late afternoon skies are clear as I watch the light fading. Bare branches are black against the sky. Heavy rain falls on the morning of 8<sup>th</sup>. Later I watch two feral pigeons having a squabble while chaffinches perch in the bare lilac branches. Bulbs are pushing up their green shoots. The 9<sup>th</sup> is a bright and breezy day when I take Murphy to Bluewater. Westerly winds blow as we walk the grassy paths. Clouds scud across the sky which is a pale blue and from where a golden sun shines. Catkins dance in the breeze and snowdrops bloom. Can Spring be far away? The 12<sup>th</sup> is cold and wet not a day for walking. Westerly winds drive heavy, dark clouds across the sky. More rain falls during the night and the wind strengthens. Strong winds and heavy rain are features of the night of 14<sup>th</sup>. The following morning, grey clouds march across the sky as we drive to Bluewater with Murphy. I keep to the concrete paths as the grass is so wet. There is more wind and rain during the night. The next day brings some sunshine. I watch a pair of blackbirds as they investigate the area beneath the lilac tree. In the late afternoon, salmon-pink clouds adorn the sky as the sun sets. The night sky is filled with stars. The early morning skies of 17<sup>th</sup> are a clear blue as I watch the golden sun rise over Bluebell hill. Later, as we drive to Bluewater, dark clouds fill the sky and small flakes of snow begin to fall. The wind is very cold. Sunshine penetrates the clouds as I walk with Murphy round the rippling lake and I hear the call of a great tit. The 18<sup>th</sup> is grey and

cold as I walk to church beneath grey skies which last all day. There is no glimpse of the sun. I notice that there is still some daylight at 5.00pm. Stars shine in the night sky. Hoar frost covers the grass the next morning which is very cold. A golden sun rises over the hill and the skies are blue. Later in the morning, I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy. A cormorant perches on a wooden device in the lake where, last week, I saw a heron. Dark clouds drift across the sky, but no rain falls. There is another frost the next morning. On 21<sup>st</sup>, we drive to Addington, where bare trees stand out against a wintry sky. Catkins bring some beauty and thoughts of Spring. Another cold day follows as we walk again round the lake where a handsome swan glides on the water which ripples in the light breeze and the air is cold. I hear a great tit's call. Snowdrops look so beautiful in the sun's pale light. The afternoon is bright but with high grey cloud. We have a little vole which journeys about the back garden. I find it fascinating to watch. Two dry days follow. On 25<sup>th</sup> I walk through Six-acre wood where fresh cow parsley plants are beginning to emerge. Paths are quite muddy. I cross Church Fields where I see some hips remaining on wild rose bushes. Today I have recorded garden birds for the RSPB. At Bluewater, on 26<sup>th</sup>, I watch a heron take flight from the lake and make its way to the other side of the complex. A crescent moon shines in the night sky. The morning of 27<sup>th</sup> is bright with some sunshine as I walk across the fields to Mays Wood. Dean Valley looks beautiful in the sunlight. Sheep graze on the grass which is a rich green. The trees and shrubs await the Spring to break into leaf. I walk down the field and along to Six-acre Wood. Bitterly cold winds blow on 29<sup>th</sup> making my face feel almost numb. Rain and sleet fall in the afternoon. The morning of 30<sup>th</sup> is grey after overnight rain. I watch two wood pigeons as they forage on top of the ivy hedge in the garden. Three blackbirds hunt for seed on the grass. The slender silver birch trees on the embankment stand motionless. The skies remain grey throughout the afternoon. The last day of the month is grey, wet and very cold. I do not venture out. Elizabeth Summers.

## TWO GOOD IDEAS

How about inviting a neighbour to come church? They would always be welcome Sundays at 9.30 at St Michael's and 11.00 at St John's. Or some people like better to come on Wednesdays to St Michael's at 9.30 or Thursdays to St John's, also at 9.30. Also, how about sharing this magazine with a neighbour? You could give them yours when you have finished with it or get an extra one from the church. Ask them if they would like to subscribe regularly. People can also find out a lot about us on our website <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

### From the Registers

#### Baptisms:

25<sup>th</sup> January  
1<sup>st</sup> February  
8<sup>th</sup> February

Michael James Melford  
Pearl Evelyn Baker  
Theodore Lee Hedinburgh

Kent Road  
Ladywood Road  
Gillingham

#### Wedding:

7<sup>th</sup> February

Paul David Finnigan & Marie Dawn Botten

Halling

#### Funerals:

2<sup>nd</sup> February  
5<sup>th</sup> February

Ronald John Haden (78)  
Michael John King (71)

Poplicans Road  
Rochester Road Halling



### Cuxton WI

We have enjoyed the last two months and have been busy entertaining ourselves. December was our annual Christmas celebration. Members turned up with platefuls of delicious food for our buffet, both savoury and sweet. WI may have moved way beyond the image of “Jam and Jerusalem” but when it comes to homemade goodies there are few people who can do it better! I think everyone enjoyed the entertainment and we ran it throughout the evening. We celebrated the birth of Jesus with poems, songs, carols and readings of facts about Christmas. We even had the three wise men coming in with their gifts all suitably camouflaged with crowns and beards although no camels were in sight. After refreshments, raffles and a quiz we all finished the evening with a very loud rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas.

Then to our January meeting. We never have a speaker in January as the weather sometimes is very bad and we have to cancel the meeting. Instead, we have a social evening where everyone has time to chat together and enjoy a cuppa and perhaps a mince pie. This year we had been clearing out our cupboards in the hall and found a whole load of photograph albums of times past in the WI. These were put out on the tables and everyone had a great time looking through at the things we have done. The painting group put out a lovely display of their oil and water colours as well as some china painting work. We really have some wonderfully talented people in Cuxton. So, a happy start to the New Year and we now look forward to all the activities that our in house clubs are planning for the Spring and Summer. You are always welcome to join us in the Church Hall on the first Thursday of the month at 7 30pm.

Despite the very cold weather it was a pleasure to welcome 27 hardy members and also 2 guests for our February meeting. Our speaker for the evening was Christine Everidge who had pursued a career as a pearl stringer. She had started her work at the court jewellers of Garrard and had stayed there for many years in the Pearl Room. As she talked to us she was busy stringing a whole pearl necklace. She told us about how they had to make their own very fine needles and told us how to look at our own pearl necklaces for signs that they needed attention and repair. She also showed us magnetic fasteners - very useful when we are all getting older and struggling with clips etc. but not to be used if you have a pace-maker because of the magnetic effect. Altogether a very different and interesting evening. After that we moved on to the business part of the meeting. We have to be thinking of new committee members in May. There will be a lot of activities going on at Lullingstone Castle and gardens in the spring. The annual council meeting in Tunbridge Wells is in March where we are taking food to be distributed to local food banks. The craft group have been busy making heart shaped pillows for breast cancer patients to make their life more comfortable and a whole batch of these will be going up to the Medway Hospital this week. They are also knitting blankets for the new born baby unit. We shall then all have to be busy as June is arranging a “box” to be made covering all our various club activities within our WI and there are a lot of those. So, plenty to look forward to in the New Year which is February already as I write this and I still don't know where January disappeared to. Sheila.

Maundy Thursday  
2<sup>nd</sup> April

## Passover Supper

7.00 pm

St John's

£7.00, half price children.

Please pre-book with Shirley Crundwell or Rector.

Good Friday  
3<sup>rd</sup> April

## Question Time

10.00 am Family Service

St Michael's

There has been so much interest in the questions raised in the confirmation group that it has been decided that there ought to be an open opportunity for anyone to ask anything they like about the Christian faith. This is your opportunity. So come along with your questions and we'll try to work out some answers!

### Fairness and Equality

Politicians frequently promise us fairness and equality, but is it possible to have both? Fairness implies that people get what they deserve, but is everybody equally deserving? Consider the following five cases.

Tom left school at 16 and worked hard in modestly paid jobs all his life. He married Sandra and they put off having children until they were financially secure and had a home of their own. Because they had a little money and no children, they did not qualify for council housing and lived in expensive private rented accommodation till Grandma died and left them enough for a deposit. They lived carefully and saved for a rainy day. So they never qualified for any means-tested benefits, and, when, in old age, they had to go into a care home, because they had savings and a house, they had to pay for themselves. In fact, they paid a supplement because the care home had to charge "self funders" more to make up for the fact that the council wouldn't pay a proper rate for the residents they were funding. Tom and Sandra died with nothing left to leave to their family.

Dick took up with a girl who already had a council flat because she had had a baby. After Dick fathered a couple more children, the council moved them into a house, where they lived on benefits, the proceeds of petty crime and the odd unskilled job in the grey economy until old age, when their care home fees were fully funded by the local authority and their children inherited their undeclared savings stuffed in a mattress.

Harry worked hard too when he first left school. He married Deirdre and they had a couple of children. Sadly, Deirdre became ill with multiple sclerosis and had to give up work. Harry had to look after her and the children. When his firm was looking to cut staff, Harry was the first to go because he had had so much time off to look after his wife and family. So they had to live on benefits. In order to cope with the stress, Harry smoked like a chimney. So he died with cancer rather than dementia and the NHS looked after him free of charge until the day he died. His children, therefore, were able to inherit the family home.

Tarquin's distant ancestor had done a favour for a mediaeval king which was rewarded with land and a title which remain in the family to the present day. Tarquin went to a top school, where he received not only an excellent education, but also made friends with boys who would one day occupy the highest positions in society. After Oxford, Tarquin joined a bank, swiftly rising to boardroom level. In the good times he made a fortune gambling with other people's money. Smart accounting enabled him to avoid paying much tax. When the bust came, taxpayers like Tom and Harry picked up Tarquin's tab. Tarquin even got to keep his bonuses. Tarquin never suffered any penalty for his rash and unethical behaviour. The politicians who made the regulations and the officials who enforced them had all been to school with him!

Wayne never knew his father, who disappeared when Wayne's teenage mother became pregnant. Brought up in a skanky flat with stepbrothers and stepsisters and a succession of wastrel stepfathers, some of whom ill-treated Wayne's drug-addict mother and the children, Wayne was nevertheless a pleasant, hard-working pupil at primary school and did well in his SATs. Unfortunately, they lived on a sink estate in the catchment area of a sink comprehensive, where it wasn't cool to be a swot and the only way to protect yourself was to join a gang. Thus Wayne left school with few qualifications in an area where there was little demand for unskilled labour and a background in teenage crime. You don't need me to tell you how things probably worked out for Wayne.