

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
Friday 2 nd March Women's World Day of Prayer	7.00 pm United Service at St Michael's (all welcome, including men).		
4 th March Lent 3 Speaker: Linda Fiddymont of the Foodbank.	9.30 Holy Communion		Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
11 th March Lent 4 / Mothering Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion		Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
18 th March Lent 5 / Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion		Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion		Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 5-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080
25 th March Lent 6 / Palm Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion (congregation may sit for Gospel)		Mark 11 vv 1-11 p1016 at hall Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
29 th March Maundy Thursday	7.00 pm Passover Supper Church Hall		Exodus 12 vv 1-14 p68 I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
30 th March Good Friday	10.00 Family Service		tba
1 st April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion		Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Mark 16 vv 1-8 p1024
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
4 th March Lent 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall		Ephesians 5 vv 1-14 p1176 Luke 11 vv 14-28 p1043
	11.00 Holy Communion		Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
11 th March Lent 4 / Mothering Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion		Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 Ephesians 2 vv 1-10 p1174 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall		Genesis 43 vv 1-34 p48 I Corinthians 4 vv 1-17 p1146
18 th March Lent 5 / Passion Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism		Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 5-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080
25 th March Lent 6 / Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion (congregation may sit for Gospel)		Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Mark 15 vv 1-39 p1022
29 th March Maundy Thursday	9.30 am Holy Communion (congregation may sit for Gospel)		I Corinthians 11 vv 17-33 p1152 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1060
30 th March Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion		
1 st April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall		Colossians 3 vv 1-7 p1184 John 20 vv 1-10 p1089
	11.00 Holy Communion		Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
Holy Communion Wednesdays @ St Michael's 9.30 am		Holy Communion Thursdays @ St John's 9.30 am	
7 th March S Perpetua & her Companions	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	8 th March Edward King*	Jeremiah 7 vv 23-28 Luke 11 vv 14-23
14 th March	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 15 vv 17-30	15 th March	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-47
21 st March Thomas Cranmer	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 31-42	22 nd March	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
28 th March Wednesday in Holy Week	Hebrew 12 vv 1-3 John 13 vv 21-32	29 th March Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 17-33 p1152 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1060
* Like Robert Dolling, Edward King was a one of those wonderfully charitable pastors who found himself persecuted for his ritualistic practices.			

There will be Holy Communion every day at 9.30 am in Easter week (1st-8th April) at St Michael's, except Thursday when it will be at St John's, but no other services.

Copy date April Magazine: 9th March 8.30 am Rectory.



Passing Over

We're going to celebrate a Passover meal again this year on Maundy Thursday. Maundy Thursday is the day before Jesus was crucified, the day on which He gave us His new commandment, that we should love one another as He loves us, and when He instituted the service of Holy Communion, which we celebrate every Sunday. The Last Supper was a Passover meal.

Passover is the annual commemoration of God delivering the Hebrew slaves from captivity in Egypt. Jewish people do this every year. Certain food and drink are prescribed. There is a ritual to go through. There are songs to sing. The story is told. The story is told. The story is the story of what God did for His people around 3,000 years ago, a story recounted in every generation. It is much more than history, however. It is the story of the people of God today. The story is the story of who the people of God are. It is a promise of the faithfulness of God to His people in every generation until the end of the world.

This is where we have to be careful. In the Old Testament, Abraham is called by God to settle in the Holy Land. God promises Abraham that the land will be the possession of Abraham's descendants for ever. God makes a covenant with the children of Abraham, through his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob, that they will be His people and He will be their God. They will be holy as God is holy. God's faithfulness to His people will be manifest in His loving kindness towards them. His people's faithfulness to God will be manifested in their obedience to His holy Law, headed by the Ten Commandments. (See below.) Of course, as the story turns out, it is indeed the story of God's faithfulness to His people, but also of our faithlessness towards God – a faithlessness by which we bring all kinds of trouble on ourselves, from which we can be delivered only by God's mercy.

In the New Testament, it becomes apparent that God calls men and women and children of every

race and language and people and tongue to be His people. It is not a question of having Abraham's DNA. What matters is to have Abraham's faith, faith in God, Who is always faithful, faith in God Who Himself provides a lamb for the sacrifice, the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who offers Himself on the Cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Holy Communion is the Christian Passover meal. The Blood of Christ is the Blood of the New Testament or Covenant. Our inheritance is not the land of Canaan, but the Kingdom of Heaven, not just for as long as this world endures, but for ever.

Where we have to be careful is not to suppose that God has cast aside His ancient people the Jews. Christians owe a great debt to the Jews. Jesus was born a Jew in fulfilment of the Jewish Law and the Word God sent by the prophets of Israel. Christianity is rooted in the Jewish faith. All the first Christians were Jews and it was they who, at Christ's command, proclaimed the Good News of salvation to the Gentiles as well as to their fellow Jews. Even at just forty days old, the baby Jesus is described as a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel. We should respect every other religion's beliefs and their adherents' general right to practise those beliefs, even where we disagree with them, and we have a special duty as Christians to respect the Jewish faith, the rootstock onto which we are grafted. That does not mean, however, that we don't try humbly and respectfully to share with them the light that we have received in Christ. In Matthew 28, after the Resurrection of Jesus, it says:
¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

There is some debate and no certain answer regarding the question whether God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would possess the Holy Land is completely fulfilled by and contained in the promise that everybody who shares Abraham's faith is an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, or whether the Jewish people are still entitled to regard the land of Israel as theirs by right for so long as we are in this world. If so, what of the Palestinian Arabs? My personal answer would be that the inheritance of all God's people – Jew and Gentile – is in Christ and in the eternal life He comes to bring, but, if the land of Israel does belong to the Jews, the Old Testament principles apply – to treat the stranger who lives among you decently and generously, but not to mingle with those who would undermine your commitment to worship the LORD alone and to live by His commandments.

So, returning to the Passover, it is the meal which commemorates God setting free the Israelites from their centuries of slavery in Egypt. God hears the cry of the oppressed. He appears to Moses in a burning bush and tells Moses to return to Egypt and to tell Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to let the people go. It is at the burning bush that God reveals Himself as the LORD. "I am what I am," He says to Moses. Tell them, "**I am** sent you." God is in full control of the situation as always and yet, also as always, the human beings involved have freedom of choice and the responsibility which comes with that freedom to choose. God gives Moses certain miraculous signs which he performs before the people and before Pharaoh to show them that **I am** sent him. At first, Pharaoh refuses to let the people go. In fact, he makes things worse. They have been making bricks for Pharaoh's building works. Now they are to make bricks, just as many bricks, but without straw. When they fail in the impossible, their overseers are beaten. So God sends ten plagues on the Egyptians. These are all mentioned in the Passover ritual. Pharaoh still won't let the people go, however, until the tenth and final plague.

The angel of death passes through the land of Egypt and all the first born sons die, from the first born of the royal family to the first born of the servants. Even the first born of the animals die. Except in the homes of the Israelites. The Israelites have been instructed to take a lamb or a kid and, on the fourteenth day, to sacrifice it. They roast and eat the meat. They consume bitter herbs. Their bread is unleavened because there is no time to let it rise. They apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorposts and lintels of their dwellings. Where the blood of the lamb is found, the angel of death passes over the household. This time the Egyptians have had more than enough. At last, even Pharaoh agrees to set the slaves free. More than that, the Egyptians beg them to go and load them up with treasure to take with them on their journey. They set off into the desert to worship God on Mount Sinai and to wend their way through the Wilderness to the Promised Land. But Pharaoh changes his mind and leads an army of chariots and cavalry to recapture the slaves and set them back to work. Overnight, God protects them in a pillar of fire and smoke. The next day, Moses extends his rod over the Red Sea and the waters part so that the Israelites pass through dry-shod. But, when the Egyptians try to follow, the waters come swirling back and they are all drowned. Thus the Israelites are baptised and set off to walk with God to the home He has prepared for them. These events are commemorated annually in the Passover.

Here, in Cuxton and Halling, we have, on a number of occasions, celebrated our own Passover meal. It is a celebration and extremely enjoyable. The special food is very palatable. We really get into the story. This is important, because it is our story too. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. His Blood protects us from the angel of death. His Death on the cross sets us free from slavery to sin. God's covenant with the whole of creation is in Christ. We are the people of God. Our calling is to be holy as He is holy. He is our God and we are His people. In us, if we fulfil our calling as people of faith, all the families of the earth are blessed. You're all welcome to participate in this meal on 29th March at 7.00 pm in the church hall. Please let us know if you're coming so that we know how many to cater for. You'll have an enjoyable and profitable time and it is suitable for children, too. Roger.

The Ten Commandments

(as found in the Prayer Book with petitions for grace for us to keep them)

God spake these words, and said; I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me and keep my commandments.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not steal.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.

Women's World Day of Prayer

This takes place on Friday 2nd March. Locally, S Michael's will host the service this year at 7.00 pm. All welcome.

Disabled Lavatory for the Church Hall

The Coop are giving us a grant for this from their community fund. If you would like to help and are a Coop member, please register by calling 0800 023 4708 or on <https://membership.coop.co.uk/register>

Then, every time you spend money on Coop goods at the Coop, they donate something towards our fund.

It Makes You Think

A certain businessman had been brought up from his youth to tithe, which he did and found himself richly blessed. In later life, however, he went to his vicar with this problem. "When I started work for this company, I earned £30 per week and it seemed only right to give God £3 back. After some years, I became works manager and made £300 a week and I thought it was fair to give God £30 back. Now, however, I own the company and receive £3,000 a week. Surely, £300 would be too much to give back to God. I can't be expected to do that, can I? What do you think, Vicar?"

The Vicar suggested they pray about it and began his prayer thus. "O Lord, we beseech you to reduce our brother's income to the point at which it won't be too painful for him to pay You what he owes You."

From the Registers

Funerals:

24th January

25th January

26th January

29th January

Julia Chambers (45)
Robert Anthony Morton (72)
Herbert Edward Pentecost (95)
John Edward Whibley (79)

Scholey Close
Vicarage Close
Bush Road
Essex Road

John Whibley RIP

I have known John for 70 years. We went to school together and worked together on the greengrocery round and the small-holding etc.. Many memories of John. See you in Heaven. Your old friend Peter Silver.

The Rose Beyond The Wall - A. L. Frink

Near a shady wall a rose once
grew,
Budded and blossomed in God's
free light,
Watered and fed by the morning
dew,
Shedding it's sweetness day and
night.

As it grew and blossomed fair
and tall,
Slowly rising to loftier height,
It came to a crevice in the wall
Through which there shone a
beam of light.

Onward it crept with added
strength
With never a thought of fear or
pride,
It followed the light through the
crevice's length
And unfolded itself on the other
side.

The light, the dew, the
broadening view
Were found the same as they
were before,
And it lost itself in beauties new,
Breathing it's fragrance more and
more.

Shall claim of death cause us to
grieve
And make our courage faint and
fall?
Nay! Let us faith and hope
receive--
The rose still grows beyond the
wall,

Scattering fragrance far and wide
Just as it did in days of yore,
Just as it did on the other side,
Just as it will forever-more.



CUXTON AUTO SERVICES
Servicing/Repairs/MOT Centre

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Gift Aid

If you are a taxpayer and gift aid your contributions HMRC will refund to us 25p for every pound you give - which is a tremendous help to us. Just bear in mind that we cannot claim back more tax than the amount of tax you pay in any particular year! If you would like to know more please contact Jack on 716368.

Dairy Poem

Mary had a metal cow
She milked it with a spanner
The milk came out in shilling
cans
Or small ones for a tanner.

Forthcoming Attractions

2nd March 7.00 pm: United Women's World Day of Prayer Service @ St Michael's

29th March 7.00 pm Church Hall: Passover Meal

2nd April 2.00 pm Rectory Grounds: Easter Egg Hunt(£2.00)

28th April 10.00 am: Vestry Meeting & APCM Church Hall

28th April 7.00 for 7.30 pm: Barn Dance Jubilee Hall (£8.00 includes food. Bring drink).

The Pilates Element

Pilates is a body conditioning exercise programme suitable for all ages and abilities. My classes are friendly, fun and enjoyable.

Emily Pollington, member of FHT, qualified instructor.

Pilates classes are held in the church hall on Tuesdays from 7.00-8.00 pm. For more information, please contact instructor Emily Pollington, 01634 256942, 07940233296, emilypollington@btinternet.com Also on Facebook.

A Little Story for Lent

A child came home from the Ash Wednesday service and asked his mother if it was true that from dust we come and to dust we shall return? When his mother replied in the affirmative, he remarked that there seemed to be a lot of people coming or going under the beds.

Quotations

Father Robert Dolling (St Agatha's Landport 1885-1896)

<http://anglicanhistory.org/bios/rwrdolling.html>

'As God the Father wills to be known in the Incarnation, so God the Son wills to reveal himself in the Breaking of Bread,'

'I speak out and fight about the drains because I believe in the Incarnation,'



The Children's Society

Children's Society

We shall have a speaker from the Children's Society at

the Mothers' Union meeting in the church hall at 10.45 on 21st March. All welcome (not just Mother's Union members). If you'd like a Children's Society collection box, please contact Julia Wells, 727424.

Correspondence

Dear Rectory Spaniel (or may I call you Tommy?),

I don't want you to think I'm taking advantage of old friendships. I want to thank you. Every month you tell us your news and sometimes what your master has been up to and we enjoy reading this. We have read with great interest the walks taken along the Saxon Shore Way. Most of these walks seem to finish in a pub with lunch and a glass of beer. I fear for a while you will have to stay in Cuxton until we reach Spring. This is not a bad thing as you are very well known in the village. As you so rightly said, being good looking is one of your chief points. So many people agree with you and that, together with a heart of gold, makes you a very special and dear friend of mine. Keep writing. I hope your new food dish is being filled to the top and make sure you get your five a day. Margaret.

Stone Age Buses

We were quite keen to get some more local history for the magazine. Any contributions welcome. I got to thinking about the bus route which used to serve Cuxton and Halling. It was Maidstone and District service 20. This, as I remember it, ran from Chatham Town Hall to Maidstone via West Malling. The bus pictured is a Bristol K6A. These were first manufactured during the Second World War, refurbished in the 1950s and continued in service probably till around 1970. I often went to school on one from Wigmore to Gillingham Grammar. I couldn't find a picture of a number 20 and I'm ready to be corrected if these were never used on this route, but they probably were. They were quite common around the Medway towns, a very good looking bus I always thought. Roger.



Ightham Moat

‘Don’t wait for the storm to pass. Learn to dance in the rain’! This is appropriate on so many levels, especially at this time of year and I feel that it is something relevant and should be considered. Yes, winter weather can be cold, blustery and wet, but should we sit indoors all day? Should we stay at home in order to keep warm and dry whilst waiting for the summer sun to entice us to venture outdoors? No, not likely! I cannot sit still indoors or become devoted to cleaning, tidying or watching TV throughout winter and wait for ideal conditions. I don’t like getting wet or feeling cold. So I do compromise, but staying indoors is not on my schedule!

Perhaps, for me, the quotation could read, ‘Don’t wait for the storm to pass. Learn to avoid and dance around the rain’! I think that living in Kent is a privilege. Kent is a delightful county with some amazing towns, beautiful countryside, extensive coastline, interesting country houses and varied places of interest. I would like to share one aspect of this county.

Recently I drove to Ightham Mote. This is a National Trust property which is nearly 700 years old and is a very picturesque moated manor house. It has an interesting history and has been owned by medieval knights, courtiers to Henry VIII and high society Victorians

Ightham Mote is set in beautiful gardens which include an orchard, vegetable plots, water features and lakes. The estate has sign posted walks that open up stunning views across the estate and the amazing Kent landscape. The manor house is closed until March but the gardens have many hard footpaths. So there is plenty to see and do.

My day began with coffee and a cheese scone at the Mote Cafe. Lovely start! From the cafe, I took the short walk through the entrance and down to the house, moat and gardens. The well-tended borders displayed crocus, snowdrops and primroses. The first lawn to the right is the north lawn and has four life-size figures depicting part of Ightham Moat’s history. At this very point, the painter John Singer Sargent, painted this scene, ‘A Game of Bowls’, in the late nineteenth century.

The carefully maintained pathway leads passed the side of the house and onto small courtyards, with water features and neat flower beds. The borders had recently been turned over. So the soil is a haven of discovery for robins and great tits looking for grubs, seeds or worms. Moving along to the right, is the small orchard with apples trees and bee hives in the corner. This area ends at a stumpery.

From this section the pathways lead to the far end of the garden and to bridges over the lakes and stream. There are extensive grassed areas on either side of the lakes and streams. These are surrounded with wetland plants such as reeds and common bur-weed. The whole area is popular for birdlife, such as ducks (mostly mallards), blackbirds, tits, magpies, with crows out in the fields and even a few seagulls overhead!

At the end of the garden stands a wooden and rope adventure playground for children. There is also an open barn providing a sheltered area. This open barn, made of wood, had all sorts of colouring sheets and work sheets for younger explorers as well as information on the flora and fauna in the gardens. In addition, there is seating and a cabinet containing deck chairs for use on sunny days!

Walking back towards my starting point, I found a rhododendron showing the first signs of little buds. Very encouraging! There was a beautiful bank with small bare trees but lovely patches of snowdrops and primroses. They were gorgeous and looked all the better as the sun was shining in spite of the cold day.

My visit ended with a look at the exhibition in the entrance hut. The information and artefacts on display detailed the composition of various walls and tools used for agriculture and maintenance at the property. The brief spell of sunshine towards the end of my visit was a bonus and would have been missed had I not ventured outdoors. My highlights were getting out into the fresh air, seeing the birdlife and observing the early spring flowers that had bravely broken through the soil. I enjoyed my visit! Holly Croft.

April Delights

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Monday
2.00 pm
Rectory Grounds

£2.00

Barn Dance

28th April
7.00 pm for 7.30
Jubilee Hall

£8.00

St John's Draw (January): £5 each to Mrs Chidwick (30), Mrs Bridges (41), Miss J Thorne (23), Miss Mitchell (74) – drawn by Mr Badman. Please contact Betty Head if you would like to take part in this monthly draw.

St Michael's Draw: £10 to Mrs Morren (19) & £5 each to Miss Holdsworth (23) & Mrs Bogg (24). Please contact Mary Pitt if you would like to take part in this monthly draw.



Church Army

Log onto

https://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Groups/299918/Church_Army/web/Get_Involved/Being_Salt_and/Being_Salt_and.aspx if you would like to participate in the

Church Army Lent Course or if you would like to know anything about becoming more involved in the Church Army's work. Please contact Gillian Feraday or the Rector if you would like a Church Army collection box at home for the rest of Lent or for longer. Loose change adds up. You could contribute what you save by giving up something for Lent.

CHURCH ARMY – LENT

I have been our parish representative for Church Army for some time now. I admire the work they do amongst disadvantaged people - particularly leading young people to the Christian faith - and also providing a refuge for women who need a place of safety. I sent a donation at Christmas time including one lonely pound in a box I had put in St. John's. Now, of course, I do put the magazines in each church every quarter and hope many of you take them and read them - and who knows, perhaps many of you send your personal donations directly. Sadly my box holders have moved or found they needed to make economies and I no longer have anyone putting money regularly into a savings box. Sadly in some ways, Church Army has moved its headquarters from Kent to Sheffield (and it may well be that there is greater need in the north of England) and perhaps donors felt more involved when Church Army was 'local'. Also Gill Martin who was working at St. Francis in Strood, has moved away. Ms Martin (Sister Gill) gave some inspired presentations about her work in our Sunday services. So perhaps those factors may contribute to the downturn in support.

Church Army tell me that last year: they provided more than 46,000 nights of accommodation for homeless people in their hostels; they supported over 100 young people experiencing self-harm in Cardiff and opened new Centres of Mission across the UK, so they now have 18 Centres of Mission and more in the pipeline; more than 10,000 people were served by their team each month, most of whom have never stepped inside a church building.

“Each one of those numbers is someone Jesus loved. God yearns for each one to know his love in their lives and he has called us to help love them into life.”

Now about Lent, which I know starts on 14th February 2018 and so will be under way when you get this magazine. Firstly you can sign up for the Church Army ‘Salt and Light’ Lent Course on their website at www.churcharmy.org. You’ll need to search for ‘Salt and Light 2018’. It is well worth a look. But if you are unable to participate in that (they’ll send you one email a week to study as you wish), you might consider having one of their boxes during Lent which will help to fund their work.

I recognise there are many calls upon our money nowadays. But if you would like to feel you are doing something for others during Lent, you might like to have a box and put some loose change into it each day. Roger has boxes available in both churches. I had expected their boxes to refer specifically to Lent but they do not. However if you can return the boxes to me or Roger at the end of Lent (Easter) the contents will be forwarded to Church Army in Sheffield, where to the best of my knowledge they have no highly paid CEOs creaming off a large percentage. So this is a short term box, at a time when we try to go without as our Lord did in the wilderness. Perhaps some of the money you would have spent on cake, alcohol etc. could go to Church Army who will use it to make a difference in our society. They clearly do a lot of work but need the finances if they are to continue to help and lead people to Christianity in this country. If you are unable to attend church but would like to contribute, please email me on stmichaeljohnpcc@yahoo.co.uk I can deliver/collect boxes in Halling or Cuxton while stocks last. Gillian Feraday .

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Rather belatedly, I’d like to say a big thank you to John Bogg, ably aided by Dawn with Cuxton church choir (plus readers) for the wonderful Christmas concert in Cuxton Church Hall on 9th December. We were provided with comprehensive words to so many jolly (and to me nostalgic) Xmas songs so we could sing along. Since I retired from teaching I have missed the secular, joyful Christmas singing. Putting together a programme like that which ran so smoothly, involves a huge amount of work - finding the music, practising, preparing the song sheets etc. etc., then organising others into the programme to make sure it is well balanced and fun. I’m sure everyone present had a really happy, Christmassy evening as I did. And I’ve bought the sheet music to Winter’s Tale and also a copy of Alan Titchmarsh’s book from which Peter Crundwell took his reading. I loved the Christmas-themed readings, which I had never heard before. Everyone enjoyed a great evening. Thank you John. Gillian Feraday.

CANDLEMAS SERVICE

Everyone who attended the Candlemas Service at St Michael’s Church on Friday 2nd February would like to thank Roger most sincerely for the lovely service and for the delightful tea, served by Roger, in the Rectory afterwards. The freshly prepared sandwiches were particularly delicious. We are certainly look forward to the next occasion! JAB.

Robert Radclyffe Dolling. (10th Feb 1851 – 15th May 1902)

On the 14th May 1902, the faithful collected in a candlelit vigil at St. Saviours, Poplar. Seven days later the church would overflow as crowds of thousands attended requiems and masses for Robert Radclyffe Dolling. Dolling was not an actor or author, however; he was in fact “a spiritual power of rare and telling power with a wonderful power to enthral... Intellectually nothing in particular – but with the ability to produce whatever he read or heard into strong sermons”. Dolling was in fact a man of the people, a voice in the wilderness for those whom society deemed the dregs, the undeserving poor, the flotsam and jetsam of the new Victorian order.

Fr. Dolling struck an imposing figure. In *Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum*, he recounts two occasions amongst others that particularly stand out to give us an insight into his character. The first is not having long arrived at the Mission, he conducted a Sunday service for the children. During the service two of the local boys aged about 15 lit up their pipes and started to smoke, although pre-warned by Dr Linklater that the boys of the parish had ‘diabolical’ behaviour, and the Vicar of All Saints describing them as a ‘savage crew’ Fr. Dolling’s response was immediate, the boys promptly had their heads banged together as hard as he could and then evicted from the service. On another occasion when Fr. Dolling was trying to move the old clubs into their new home in the gymnasium, after becoming disgusted with the language in use in front of the lady that managed the club, he was “compelled to chuck their leader downstairs, and almost broke his leg.”

Dolling grew “up a Catholic because he saw that Catholicism is the language through which God communicated Himself more fully and most subtly with man”. This link with the Catholic view of incarnation and theology is evident throughout Dolling’s writing and work. Fr. Dolling’s theology was contemporary with the High Church movement that was expanding at the time of his work. This theology was based on ‘a high view of God’; creation; incarnation; the church; the communion of the saints; the sacraments; Holy Orders, Anglicanism and especially the Incarnation. In 1999 Alexander expressed the following in his explanation of Anglo-Catholicism which grew out of this High Church theology. “Our salvation began when Christ took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. God became man in order to transform human existence through participation into Divine love. The collect for the second Sunday after Christmas expresses the Anglo-Catholic vision perfectly. “Oh God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the Divine life of Him who humbled Himself. To share our humanity, your son Jesus Christ...”

For Dolling this incarnational theology would lead him into places and to people that most even now would cross the road to avoid. In the most literal sense of the word Dolling would regularly share his table with sinners, prostitutes, and thieves, but at the same time he would entertain bishops, mayors and the gentry. Thus, for Dolling it was quite clear the dining table represented the Eucharistic feast, the sharing of bread and wine was done as a classless act (cf James 2:1-4; Luke 14:13ff). For Dolling all men were equal and in a break from the times of his day *so were women*. In a powerful sermon delivered to Christian Socialist Society called Soldiers and Sailors, Dolling starts to develop the thoughts that are seen later in the work of Feminist and Queer theologians. Dolling explicitly questions the notion that the navy needed prostitutes and that women were the corrupters of society. Dolling also questions the male bigoted societal structure and argued that women have as much right to a standard of living equal to their male counterparts. In this Dolling makes the theological leap from the male dominated and mis-judged Victorian reading of some scripture and moves into a position where “the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society” (cf Luke 10:25-37; Proverbs 22:2) This position was later expressed in the following manner “Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men [*men here means all humans*] are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. (Second Vatican Council, The Church in the Modern World [. . . Gaudium et Spes. . .], no. 27)”

However it is wrong just to judge Dolling’s legacy in terms of dignity. His true legacy stands in terms of social action. In times of unimaginable poverty and deprivation, Dolling instigated many areas of mission that we blindly accept in modern church life. In a C of E report published in February 2018, the Bishops have raised serious concerns that “mental health problems in local communities are now one of the biggest social issues Church of England clergy encounter” (<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/mental-health-english-communities-leading-concern-clergy-survey-finds-0>) and “the vast majority of churches are involved in supporting people with mental health problems, family breakdown, and loneliness”. Many areas that we see to combat this blight on society, such as foodbanks, community

banking, social clubs, peer support and family breakdown (especially in the case of abuse) are well documented in the work of Dolling. It is this area that I would argue that we need to learn from Dolling's example and be prepared to cross over the road and engage with our communities, with the greater society and our excluded congregations. For Dolling the Church was the beacon of society and the place where people could turn for help, and while it must be recognised that help comes in a multi-agency form in modern society, it cannot and must not be argued that the Church's role is any less important. In fact in a society where more and more people are disconnected from society, where we have a government minister for loneliness, where austerity is the norm and the wealth gap is increasing at the fastest rate since the Victorian era the Church is obliged to retake its central role in any debate. As Dolling stated in Lent 1895 "It is the enduring of hardness, it is the sharing of life, as far as possible the very food, the understanding of the thoughts, the realising of the difficulties, the carrying away out of sight the poverty which degrades men and women made in the image of God, a discontent with the luxury, the "needed comfort" as it is called of modern life, that will create amongst the educated classes a true enthusiasm for righting of wrongs that cry out continually into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth – for which, if we do not repent of them, England's Church at any rate, because she has not dared to speak the truth, must expect her punishment." Pete Joyce.

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Christian Aid Supper: 27th April, 7.30, Strood Methodist Church.

Double Standards?

A couple of months ago, I mentioned that odd ash tree in my garden which interferes with neighbours' television reception and some think might one day blow over and cause injury to people or damage to property. Subject to an egregious tree preservation order, it is subject to Medway Council senior tree officer Michael Sankus' whims and he says that it is too precious to prune. So, tough luck for my neighbours.

There has, however, been quite a scandal lately regarding the way Medway Council have bull-dozed Deangate Ridge golf course. They claim that the damage to the grass, trees and wildlife habitats is part of normal maintenance. Less trusting people think that they were clearing the way for property developers. You can read about it here <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/anger-over-councillors-wish-to-159705/> Cllr Barry Kemp said this in an email, "Deangate Ridge has, I hope, be (sic) cleansed of rare birds and exotic grasses." He now claims that he was only joking. What do you think?



Tommy's Talking Points

We had a wonderful day off one day towards the end of January. The previous day had been cold and wet – raining all day except when it briefly turned to snow. I still haven't seen proper snow, which Master says I'll really like. I enjoy splashing in the sea. Rolling in the frost is sheer ecstasy. Master says that snow will be like the best of both. Our second walk that Sunday was on roads and made up paths. Not so good as the woods, but I can recommend Halling Riverside and the new path through what used to be the cement works. We met just one other dog walker!

Because he thought the sylvan tracks would be seriously slippery, on our day off he had a bit of a lie in rather than go out in the dark. In fact, he made me wait for my walk till he had had his breakfast, said Morning Prayer and read his paper. It was amazingly warm, however, for January and at least we sat in the garden while he did these things. When we eventually went up the woods, the sun had come out. It was like Spring (definitely shorts weather for Master) and we met several other dogs and their people.

In the previous week's gale (The weather does change abruptly!) a tree had blown over in our garden and Master wanted to dispose of the wreckage. This was great fun. As he was sawing it up, I was checking out the scents in the garden. When he got to dragging it to the place where he has bonfires, I got to grabbing the other end and pulling the opposite way - good fun for me, excellent exercise for him. He'll have muscles like grapefruits (or grapes anyway). You should have seen me running and jumping up in the air when he tried to hold the branches higher so that I couldn't reach them. He checked that nobody had washing out and that the wind was blowing away from the houses and commenced the conflagration. Well it had rained all the previous day and most of the tree was still full of sap. So he really couldn't get the fire to go. Even the newspaper didn't want to burn; it was so damp. I wandered off round the garden and had a chat with our neighbour. She then let us have a box of firelighters. He got the fire going with these, but it was still too wet and, after a bit, it went out again.

So he gave up and we stopped work for a very late dinner (2.00)! He doesn't like to be beaten, however, and, as he ingested his belated repast, he thought the matter through. Having washed up, he went through all his recycling and sorted out all the combustible rubbish. He then lit the fire again and fed it with every unwanted object that would burn he could find until at last the wood itself became so hot and wet that it couldn't help itself but burn. Once well alight, of course, it became a chain reaction and it all went up. By the time we came in, as it was getting dark, there was a little bit left to smoulder away and, by bed time, there was not much more than a pile of hot ash, which he applied to his roses (for the potassium) the following day. So we had a wonderful day out in the garden mainly in the sun. I had a great deal of fun. Master thoroughly enjoyed himself and derived some satisfaction from having completed successfully a task which apparently had got him beaten.

The mild weather continued all week with plenty of signs of Spring. He disentangled the brambles from the forsythia before it comes into flower and leaf, when the thorns become much harder to find. We noticed polyanthus in flower in other people's gardens and rosemary in ours. There are also violets in Bush Valley. There are lots of catkins, but no pussy willow that he has seen. The snowdrops have been out since December and other bulbs are on the point of flowering. The crocuses are already out. The sparrows take the yellow ones and leave the purple and white ones - unless, of course, there aren't any yellow ones, in which case they'll take any colour. The birds are singing, establishing their territories and finding mates.

Sunday, he was just about to dish up dinner when he saw the family unexpectedly draw up in a car. Luckily, they had brought their own light lunch, and, after we'd all eaten, it was off to the woods in the warm sunshine - definitely shorts and tee shirt weather. We should have gone out anyway about 4.00, I expect, but I'd have had to wait patiently while he read his book and fiddled about on the computer for a couple of hours before we went. As it was, the human beings walked about the same distance as we would have done, but we were out the whole afternoon. They had to go at the pace of two small boys who wanted to stop and climb the trees. This meant that Lolly and I were free to run around as much as we liked for a couple of hours while they hung about. This was much more fun than sitting on the mat watching him with a book. To be honest, however, I was quite glad to have a lie down after tea when our visitors had gone and Master was catching up with his Netflix.

Well, we have had some more snow. It's not that exciting. Master finds it easier to stay upright and I to stay clean when the mud is frozen, but when it melts, it's even more slippery. I have to wait a bit longer for him to get ready now. He needed some new shoelaces and the packet said size 9+. So that was good. It also said 180mm. He couldn't quite believe that. So he translated into English - five foot! Why would he want five foot laces when he's only got two feet? Well, they are that long and it takes ages for him to tie them, retie them and untie them. Good thing I'm patient. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

A Prayer For Lent.

That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to thy holy Word;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.