

Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
March 1 st Ash Wednesday	9.30 am Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
March 5 th Lent 1	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 2 v15 – 3 v7 p4 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 1 Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
March 12 th Lent 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 p1131 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 12 vv 1-9 p13 Hebrews 11 vv 1-16 p1209
March 19 th Lent 3	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 1 Cor 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
March 26 th Mothering Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
April 2 nd Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 5 vv 12-21 p1132 Luke 22 vv 1-13 p1057
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 5-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
March 1 st Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970
March 5 th Lent 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
March 12 th Lent 2 We welcome Ven Peter Lock	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 p1131 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012
March 19 th Lent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 1 Cor 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
March 26 th Mothering Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
Wednesday 29th March	2.00	Mother & Toddler Service
April 2 nd Passion Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Hebrews 5 vv 5-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33 p1080

Copy Date April Magazine: 10th March 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler service at Halling at 2.00.

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

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> and

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Log on to our home pages for up to date information on what is happening in the parish. In addition to notices etc, other items such as Proceedings of the PCC and sermons are from time to time displayed on the web page. Daily Bible notes are available electronically if you send me your e mail address. These too now appear on the web page.

!!!New For Mothers, Fathers, Carers, Babies and Toddlers!!!

Starting 29th March at 10.45 on the last Wednesday of each month, a short children's service at St Michael & All Angels, Cuxton, followed by refreshments and playtime in the Church Hall.



From the Rector

I have just been reading from the *Journal* of John Wesley who lived from 1703-1791. He was a remarkable man, a great preacher, organiser of the Church and lover of the poor.

He had enormous energy and dedication and, in the course of his life, travelled a quarter of a million miles in Britain and Ireland, America and Europe. This was in a time before the invention of either railways or steam ships. He very often addressed huge crowds in the open air, sometimes in the early hours of the morning, sometimes in appalling weather, and it seems that he could generally be heard even though there were no microphones or public address systems in those days.

Most people think of him as the founder of Methodism as a separate Church, but this outcome was something of a failure in his own eyes. What John Wesley had hoped to do was to reinvigorate the Church of England. Unfortunately, the Church of England is very hard to enthuse and Wesley's more impatient followers lost patience and a split became inevitable. This country and the wider world owe a great deal to the Methodist Church, but it surely must be the case, ultimately, that we would achieve much more for God if we could reunite the best of Methodism with the best of Anglicanism in one Church.

John Wesley began with a great seriousness about God. He studied his Bible and believed what it said and acted on what he believed. He believed in frequent Holy Communion – daily if possible, which he believed to be the practice of the primitive Church – and that at a time when most people thought three or four times a year was quite often enough to receive Communion. He believed that fasting was a valuable practice which ought to be observed. Wesley and his friends and supporters met regularly in the week for long sessions of prayer and worship – love feasts. They also committed themselves to make regular and substantial monetary contributions for the relief of the poor. John Wesley revived the biblical practice of a Covenant Service, in which, from time to time, God's people meet to commit or recommit themselves to being His faithful

people as they joyfully receive His eternal promise of faithfulness to us.

Wesley was accused of perverting the Church of England's teaching, but he rightly pointed out that nearly everything he advocated is to be found in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion. He took the Church of England's teaching seriously and acted on it.

The only real points of difference between Wesley and the Book of Common Prayer is that he took it on himself to make a man a bishop, which Anglicans believe only other bishops can do, and that he believed in the power of the human will to accept God for itself and to attain something like perfection on earth, whereas the Church of England's official teaching is that everything depends on God's initiative and does not expect perfection for anyone (except Jesus) until we get to Heaven.

Wesley met a lot of opposition in the Established Church and was often forbidden to preach in pulpits. Why was this?

I think most Christians in countries which have been Christian for a long time, countries like ours, come to equate Christianity with a sort of reasonable respectability. Christians are nice people. We behave decently and try to be kind, but we do not see the need to be spiritual heroes. We are not fanatics! We're not going to give all our money to the poor or spend too much of our time praying or fasting. We're not bible bashers or religious maniacs. Taking part in public worship is a pleasant way to spend a Sunday morning, but it is not an obsession. The Church provides a good environment in which to bring up children respectably.

We do not welcome the dregs of society into our churches to spoil the pleasant atmosphere and possibly corrupt the children. As good Christians, we may feel a duty to treat the dregs as charity cases, but we would be very uncomfortable in welcoming them as full members of the Church.

We probably have some vague idea that ordinary decent people are more or less guaranteed a place in Heaven as their eternal

reward, whereas there is no hope for the really wicked. Murderers, paedophiles, rapists etc are definitely on their way to perdition.

Someone like John Wesley really challenges respectable Christianity. For a start, he insists that the Church is open to everyone. None of us deserves to go to Heaven. We are all sinners. Even if we are not murderers, child molesters or rapists, we are all sinners because we do not love God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves.

None of us deserves to be a member of God's Church, but God welcomes us in. Anyone can become a Christian because Jesus has died for the sins of the whole world and anyone may come to God if he has faith and repents of his sins. Baptism into the Church is freely available to anyone who repents and has faith.

There is no other way to be saved. Being a nice person, being respectable, even giving all your goods to the poor and dying a martyr's death won't save you. Only faith in Jesus will save you. Faith will, however, certainly save you and that is true for everyone. Whether you are a repentant paedophile or a repentant snob, you are forgiven on exactly the same terms – that Christ died for you and you accept the forgiveness He offers.

So it is incredibly easy to become a Christian. Repent and believe the Gospel. You can't, however, limit membership of the Church to nice people, people like you and me. The Church is open to everyone and on exactly the same terms – that we have faith in Jesus Christ and repent of our sins. Real Christians long for the salvation of the worst criminals and welcome them into the Church.

Wesley went further, however. What he taught was fully in accordance with the New Testament and the Book of Common Prayer. Having accepted Christ by faith, having been forgiven and joined God's Church, it is our duty and our joy to live out the Christian life

fully and completely. Jesus calls it taking up our cross to follow Him. We lose our life in order that we may know what life really is, in order that we may attain eternal life. We pray and maybe fast. We study our bibles. We delight to meet with other Christians. We rejoice to take part in public worship, encountering God in Word and Sacrament and in the fellowship of a worshipping community. Our time, our talents, our financial resources, are at God's disposal, available in caring for other people, in proclaiming the faith, in worship and adoration, and in extending God's Kingdom in every possible way.

Wesley was a very warm person. He himself sometimes experienced a great closeness to God, the warmth of a passionately loving relationship with his Maker and Saviour. He believed that it ought to be the same for all Christians.

He believed in human contact. He says that it is good to send alms to the poor, but much better to take them, to make that personal contact.

And he believed that all this was only possible if we lived in a disciplined way, according to a method. Hence Methodism. Those who accepted Wesley's approach to the Gospel were organised in "classes" who supported one another in their Christian journey. It is important to have a disciplined prayer life, a thought out policy on alms-giving, a genuine commitment to public worship.

Like most churches in godless England, the Methodists often seem to be struggling in our generation, but Wesley and the Methodists still have a great deal to teach us today and surely the clue to revival and new growth must lie in Wesley's open invitation to all who can be brought to acknowledge their need of God, and total commitment to personal holiness and Christian service on the part of all who have received Christ as their personal Saviour.

Roger Knight.

It is taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of enquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as, if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principle object of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.

Bishop Joseph Butler May 1736.

Proclaiming the Faith Afresh

Diocesan Conference Bognor 2006

Four of us from the parish attended the Diocesan Conference this year. Hopefully, you will be hearing a lot more about it, but, for now, this is my personal summary.

On the one hand, there is a lot of evidence of the secularisation our world. People think they can live without God and this is reflected in depressing statistics of decline in our churches. On the other hand, there is also a lot of evidence of a growing longing for God, a rising tide of spirituality in our society. What we have to do is so to proclaim God as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ that these seekers after truth may, through grace, find themselves in Him. In order to do this we have to distinguish between what is essential to our faith, a reflection of the actual nature of God, and what is extraneous, aspects of what we do which are no longer useful. Put like that, it sounds dry and daunting, but we must never forget that we are doing all this in the joy and power of the Holy Spirit. Roger.

Lent Lunches

Lunch will take place in the Church Hall at 12.00 on Ash Wednesday (1st March) and subsequent Wednesdays in Lent. Funds raised for Christian Aid.

Good Friday at St Michael's

I need some help! We are making our 10.00 Family Service this year a dramatic presentation of the Passion. There will be plenty for the congregation to do, including lots of singing. I also need some actors – any age, either sex. Provide your own costume or borrow from the prop box as appropriate. I need a narrator and the Voice of Jesus. These two roles have a lot to say, but no movements and no costume. So they can read their lines. Then I need Peter and four other disciples, a Pharisee, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, a centurion, Joseph of Arimathea and a man to carry a water jar. None of these have many lines to learn, but they do move about a bit. We would need one or two rehearsals in early April. Interested? Please have a word.

Roger.



Cuxton WI

Again we had a very good attendance at our February meeting, in spite of being an intensely cold evening. There was not a lot of business, but details of a new WI magazine were given in which members will each receive 8 copies of *WI Life* direct to their home starting next year, one drawback being that subscriptions will be raised to pay for this scheme. There were some mixed feelings about this, as basically we were not given a choice. Our craft rep, June Hanrahan has been in hospital and hopefully will be up and about soon.

The speaker for the evening Phil Shorthouse, well-known in the village, came to give us a talk on Blythswood Trust. His projector would not work. So, instead of giving slides, he told us about two years in the life of an aid worker. We were very lucky to have him as he is always travelling all over the world. He told us about how the trust had helped the Tsunami victims and the Indian earthquake disaster even

though these countries were not their remit. The work involves an enormous amount of organisation and dedication and we were all enthralled listening to him. We are intending to hold a tombola at our Resolutions Meeting in May in order to raise funds and members were asked to bring items for the next two meetings. The *Flower of the Month* competition was won by Maureen Vinnicombe with an unusual flowering shrub (name not known!!)

The walking group finally made it to Bluewater and enjoyed a leisurely walk round the lake, taking about an hour and finishing up having lunch at John Lewis. They hope to go again later in the Spring. Thousands of bulbs have been planted and should be worth seeing. Next walk will be around Rochester or Chatham with lunch at one of the many eating places. Several members have made up teams to take part in the District Quiz at Snodland on 28th February. Cuxton are hoping to arrange a district outing to Thanet Catering College in

September. Our link WI, West Tilbury, have invited us over the river for lunch in March, an outing the “regulars” are looking forward to. Let’s hope it is not snowing like last time!!

Next meeting Thursday 2nd March, 7.30, Church Hall.

Nature Notes January 2006

This New Year began with grey clouds covering the sky and with relatively mild temperatures. New buds on the lilac bush remained in their winter sleep. Gulls flew down river and a male blackbird surveyed the garden. The fish in the pond remained well out of sight. Cloud moved across the sky from the northwest.

I wondered where Murphy and I would walk this year. Only time would tell.

In the afternoon I took Murphy through Six acre Wood where I heard the “pinking” notes of a blackbird then we came back across Church Fields where the wind was quite sharp. The skies remained overcast but no rain fell. The following day we went, again, through Six Acre Wood where a squirrel darted across our path then scampered up a tree. We climbed up into Mays Wood where the leaf-strewn paths were very muddy, then made our way along the “secret” paths then crossed Church Fields where a horse grazed. Two large crows descended into the field.

On the 5th, I found a single buttercup in Church Fields. The 7th was grey damp and cold with only a brief glimpse of the sun. I walked with Murphy along Pilgrims Road to the alley where the path was strewn with damp leaves. We returned along the main road. As the light was fading, I watched from the kitchen window, our robin perched on the fence. It later flew down among the leaves beneath the lilac bush. On the 8th the day never seemed to become completely light and darkness fell early.

The early morning sky of the 10th was a vivid red as the sun rose over Bluebell Hill. The colour then faded to become a soft pink against the pale blue while a south-westerly wind blew light grey cloud across the sky. While in the village, I heard starlings chattering in the shrubs then a pied wagtail scurried across my path. Several dull days followed when our walks were restricted to going to the village or walking along Pilgrims Road. On the 15th, an egret appeared on the garage roof at midday. It was surveying the pond, so I hoped that none of our fish had disappeared. When I opened the back door it flew away. I heard a song thrush early in the morning of the 17th. Cloud brought some drizzly rain the next day but we are not experiencing any much-needed downpours.

The 19th was mild and damp without a glimmer of the sun. I walked to the village, along Bush Road to the alley and up the hill through the rape seed

plants. Starlings chattered loudly in the trees. The path across the field was very muddy and I had to take care. Large cabbage plants, near where the sunflowers grew, bore yellow flowers. From the top of the field I skirted the woodland then went along the edge of Mays Wood to Church Fields. New leaves had burst on wild rose plants and fruit had ripened on holly stems. I found two lone haws then my first catkins in flower. Great tits and blue tits called from the shrubs, a magpie hopped in the branches and two crows flew down to the grass. The sun shone on the 20th a welcome episode.

That day a bottle nosed whale was seen swimming up the Thames. The following day it was winched onto a tug when it was hoped that it could be taken back to sea but unfortunately it died.

That afternoon, when the sun shone brightly from a clear blue sky, I took myself to Halling marsh where I watched a pair of grey wagtails strutting across the grass. Redshank skimmed over the river and a flock of lapwing took to the air while Canada and greylag geese foraged on the riverbank. Three calling gulls flew overhead and a heron flew inland. The sun was golden as I walked back along the daisy adorned bank then it set below the trees. It was still light at 5 pm.

I saw snowdrops blooming in the churchyard the next day. The 24th was a beautiful day. As the sun rose it caused the frost covered grass and leaves to sparkle. After lunch I took Murphy to Snodland Lakes where tufted ducks, gulls and moorhens glided. The sun lit up the dead reeds turning them to gold. A heron flew gracefully over the rippling water. We went along the muddy paths and I found a single daisy. Some frost remained on an incline and a reed filled pond was covered in ice. Murphy enjoyed investigating new territory. Some dull days followed then there was sunshine again on the 28th. A few patches of snow lay on the embankment beyond the garden. A northeast wind brought a chill to the air as I walked to a friend to help with a bird watch for the RSPB. We saw robins, house sparrows, chaffinches, starlings, collared doves, a dunnoek and a magpie. Afterwards I watched a beautiful sunset. I recorded the birds coming to our garden the following day. They were a magpie, a jay, a greenfinch, two house sparrows, blue tits, a great tit, a robin, blackbirds and collared doves. The sun shone beautifully again. The last two days of the month were dull and grey but less cold. I

drove to Addington where I heard the great tit' song and watched a pair of pied wagtails scuttling across the grass. Later, in the garden, a pair of long tailed tits came to the bird table, while a wren, dunnock, blackbird, robin and a chaffinch foraged

among the dead lilac leaves. No rain had fallen and none was forecast. The days are lengthening which herald the coming of spring.

Elizabeth Summers

Cuxton Community Infant School News

Dear friends of our school,

The month of January has flown by, Christmas seems months ago and the cold spell and snow flurries a distant memory. We are now almost at half term, which will be a very welcome break as we too in school have been hit by a nasty cold/flu bug, causing several children to feel quite poorly. Fortunately we have not had to close, unlike some of our colleagues in Kent.

As I drive to school in the morning it is a little lighter, I am amazed at the bulbs already sprouting through. I look forward to seeing the spring flowers, to the rear of our school where, some of you may remember, each child planted a bulb for the millennium. To the rear of our school there is an old air raid shelter, shown plainly on some maps of the school grounds. We have been looking through the old archives for our centenary year and have come across some interesting material. The Head teacher in 1906, kept a very comprehensive log book. On one particular date he sent home his wife, also a teacher at the school, for being overcome by the heat and fainting! The following day another member of staff complained of feeling too cold, so also went home!!- thank goodness for blinds, fans and boilers! Oh and don't get any ideas I say to my staff!

Interestingly the curriculum in 'those days' consisted largely of Arithmetic, English and Life Skills, which included cookery, gardening and hygiene. At a recent Head teachers meeting, I listened to a presentation given by two colleagues who had visited South Africa and become involved in a project. The curriculum in South Africa consists largely of English, Maths and Life Skills. In one school of about 2,500 children aged 4-18 yrs, at the end of the day some of the oldest children collect a bag of food to take home and cook for their siblings as they are the main carers in the family, their parents having died from the HIV virus.

I feel quite humbled by this and realise that we are all very lucky to live as we do in Cuxton, and that our children in this village have such wonderful opportunities.

Have a peaceful and healthy month,

Sandra Jones

St John's Draw: £5 each to Miss Thorne (14), Mrs Flood (21), Mrs Farrow (25), Mrs Mitchell (28), Mrs Garrett (122) – drawn by Mrs Rogers.

Church Hall Draw: £40 to Mr Bogg – drawn by Mrs Maxwell.

From the Registers

Wedding Blessing

4th February

Andre and Marion Ray

St John's

Funerals:

20th January

Joan Georgina Mary Wells (85)

formerly of Halling

3rd February

Mark Trevor Ingram (51)

High Street

Joan Wells RIP

Yvonne, Maralyn and Terry would like to thank neighbours and friends for their kindness, messages of sympathy and floral tributes on the sad loss of their Mother. Also thank you to Roger and the choir for the service.

Trainers and Coaches

It is quite usual these days to read about people having personal trainers or life coaches. Until a few years ago, this would have meant training or coaching for some athletic or sporting event. Life coaches and personal trainers now, however, help people with every aspect of their lives. It is about leading a fulfilling life, finding yourself, achieving what you want. Your personal trainer will help you to set goals, to prioritise, to work on your weaknesses, to know what to give up and what to go for. Every so often you might be asked to review your life. What have you achieved? Where is it all going?

You are reading this just before or during in Lent. This is the time of year in which the Church invites us to review our lives. What ought our goals to be? What have we achieved? Where are we going? What is wrong in our lives? What can we do about it?

You might be ashed on Ash Wednesday. Aware that we have become too wordy, the 21st Century Church is recovering the use of symbols, ancient symbols and new symbolic actions. Ashes are a sign of mortality – *earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust*. This may not be something we care to be reminded about, the fact that we are going to die, but it is realistic. This is where our lives are going ultimately.

Lent, however, is kept in the light of Good Friday and Easter. Death is not something for Christians to fear. It is something to prepare for by leading a holy life.

Ashes are also a sign of penitence and sorrow. In what respects are our lives less than holy? What are we ashamed of about the way we live? Lent is kept in the light of Good Friday and Easter. We are sorry for our sins, for letting down the Friend Who died on the Cross for us, but that sorrow is soon swallowed up in the joy of reconciliation. When we bring what is wrong in our lives to Jesus, we are forgiven. We begin again.

A life coach or personal trainer might tell us to watch our diet so that we are physically fitter and more attractive. Traditionally, Christians have fasted in Lent, not for those reasons so much, but as a further sign that our priorities are different. Our bodies may be what we eat, but we are more than our bodies. Our identity does not depend on what we own or how we look. Our identity depends on God. The road to fulfilment is the way of holiness. Fasting both sets us free from domination by the flesh and expresses our repentance for giving way to its weaknesses: greed, selfishness, lust, envy, pride, arrogance, ill temper, obsession with self.

Lent is kept in the light of Good Friday and Easter. We see Jesus. Jesus gave up everything on the Cross. God raised Him from the dead. That is all we need to know. The road to life is the way of renunciation.

So what are our priorities? Jesus said, *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*. Look at what you spend your money on. Is that your priority in life? Even more precious in today's busy world than money is time. How do you spend your time? Is this your priority in life? Where do you put your efforts?

What are our priorities and are they worth it?

Lent is kept in the light of Good Friday and Easter. If we examine our lives and decide that the things of this world are just not worth it, it is time to look at the Cross and the Empty Tomb, to reach out to Jesus Who will lift us up.

There are services every day in Holy Week and Easter Week. Why not make that special effort to take part? Don't fail to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus at at least one of the Easter Eucharists. He made Himself known to His friends on the first Easter Day in the Breaking of Bread. He still does! But don't forget you need to come through the Good Friday experience if you are to participate in the Resurrection.

There are two innovations in our Holy Week worship at St Michael's this year. The Maundy Thursday Eucharist (7.30 pm) will attempt to recreate something of the atmosphere of the Last Supper as we gather round the Lord's Table. The Good Friday Family Service (10.00) will be in the form of a participatory Passion Play. Curious to know what that means? Then come along and find out!

Not enough people have yet experienced the value of our Three Hour Devotion at St John's on Good Friday and the Easter Midnight starting at 11.30 pm on Holy Saturday, when we light the Easter Fire, share God's Promises from Scripture, renew our baptismal vows and greet the Risen Christ in the first Communion of Easter. Maybe this year?

Roger.

Annual Parochial Church Council and Vestry Meeting

Saturday 29th April, 10.00, Church Hall. Make sure you are on the church electoral roll if you belong to this worshipping community. Consider whether God is calling you to any office, what He would want decided and discussed and how He would have you cast your vote.

Sunday 30th April

It looks as if the event in lieu of the Marathon will be a walk to the Coldrum Stones. The United Parish Eucharist is at St Michael's at 9.30. Then coffee. Then walk. Bring a picnic. If you like, arrange to be brought back by car or else walk. You don't have to be sponsored, but those of us who are will be doing it for this parish and Andrew Daunton-Fear our CMS link mission partner in the Philippines.

After School Club?

For some years now, people have been bringing pre-school children and babies to St John's on Thursday afternoons at 2.00 for a Bible story, a song and a prayer, plus the opportunity to socialise with other children.

We are thinking about inviting parents to bring their older children after school, also on Thursday afternoons, for something along similar lines. There would be refreshments and the opportunity to learn and have fun together in a Christian environment. We would probably finish around 4.30. The idea is to start after Easter. If you are interested, please speak to me. We are also discussing the idea of holiday clubs at Cuxton and/or Halling in the Summer. Again offers of support would be appreciated.

Roger.

Easter Egg Hunt: Our annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place as usual this year in the Rectory Grounds on Easter Monday (17th April).

Cuxton Churchyard

It has been suggested to me that the PCC could be prosecuted for cutting the grass if by so doing we are damaging wild plants protected by Law. I am taking legal advice on this point. If, however, it is correct that we cannot cut the grass because of the possibility that there are orchids, then we cannot dig graves either. In that case we should have to close the churchyard. This would mean that Medway Council would have to pay for its maintenance, which would help us a lot financially. It would be distressing, however, to people who want to be buried in the churchyard and it will not happen if I can help it. It would seem to defy common sense if the Law prohibits the church from digging graves in the churchyard, but I have been told that I face a fine of up to £20,000 if I prune the sycamore trees in my garden without the Council's permission. So any absurdity is possible.

I am working on this for you and will let you know when things become definite. In the mean time we shall continue to cut the grass throughout the growing season as the village petitioned the PCC to do a few years ago. It will, for the foreseeable future, continue to be possible to be buried at Cuxton. We shall continue to be grateful for contributions from members of the public towards keeping the churchyard tidy – both financial and practical, in the sense that people help by keeping the churchyard weeded and free of litter and obey the Chancellor's regulations regarding monuments.

If we are forced to close the churchyard to protect the orchids, Cuxton Parish Council and the Borough Council both have the power to acquire land in the village to use for burials.

Roger.

This is Supposed to be a True Story

A young student was home for the summer. She had gone to visit some friends one evening and time passed quickly. She ended up staying longer than planned, and had to walk home alone. She wasn't afraid because it was a small town and she lived only a few blocks away. As she walked along, Diane asked God to keep her safe from harm and danger. When she reached a shortcut to her house, she decided to take it. However, halfway down the alley she noticed a man standing at the end as though he were waiting for her. She became uneasy and began to pray, asking for God's protection. Instantly a comforting feeling of quietness and security wrapped around her, she felt as though someone was walking with her. She walked right past the man and arrived home safely. The following day, she read in the newspaper that a young girl had been raped in the same alley just twenty minutes after she had been there. Feeling overwhelmed by this tragedy and the fact that it could have been her, she began to weep. Thanking the Lord for her safety and to help this young woman, she went to the police station. She told them her story. The police asked her if she would be willing to look at a line up to see if she could identify him. She immediately pointed out the man she had seen in the alley. When the man was told he had been identified, he immediately broke down and confessed. The officer thanked Diane and asked if there was anything they could do for her. She asked if they would ask the man one question? Why he had not attacked her? When the policeman asked him, he answered, "Because she wasn't alone. She had two tall men walking on either side of her."