

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
6 th May Easter 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 60 ¹⁻¹⁴ p746 John 6 ³⁰⁻⁴⁰ p1070
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 22 ¹⁻¹⁸ p22 Acts 8 ²⁶⁻⁴⁰ p1101 I John 4 ⁷⁻²¹ p1227 John 15 ¹⁻⁸ p1083
13 th May Easter 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 ¹⁻¹¹ p742 Acts 10 ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁸ p1105 I John 5 ¹⁻⁶ p1228 John 15 ⁹⁻¹⁷ p1083
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Song of Solomon 4 ¹⁶⁻⁵² & 8 ^{6&7} pp 681 & 683 Revelation 3 ¹⁴⁻²² p1236
17 th May Ascension Day	9.30 am Holy Communion	Acts 1 ¹⁻¹¹ p1092 Luke 24 ⁴⁴⁻⁵³ p1062
20 th May Easter 7	1.00 Stop! Look! Listen!, Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 36 ²⁴⁻²⁸ p868 Acts 1 ¹⁵⁻²⁶ p1096 I John 5 ⁹⁻¹³ p1228 John 17 ⁶⁻¹⁹ p1085
27 th May Pentecost	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 ¹⁻¹⁴ p868 Acts 2 ¹⁻²¹ p1093 Romans 8 ²²⁻²⁷ p1135 John 15 ^{26-16¹⁵} p1083
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
3 rd June Trinity Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Revelation 4 ¹⁻¹¹ p1236 Mark 1 ¹⁻¹³ p1002
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 ¹⁻⁸ p690 Romans 8 ¹²⁻¹⁷ p1134 John 3 ¹⁻¹⁷ p1065
10 th June Trinity 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 3 ⁸⁻¹⁵ p5 II Corinthians 4 ^{13-5¹} p1160 Mark 3 ²⁰⁻³⁵ p1005
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Jeremiah 6 ¹⁶⁻²¹ p763 Revelation 9 ¹⁻¹³ p1239
6 th May Easter 5	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 22 ¹⁻¹⁸ p22 Acts 8 ²⁶⁻⁴⁰ p1101 I John 4 ⁷⁻²¹ p1227 John 15 ¹⁻⁸ p1083
13 th May Easter 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 ¹⁻¹¹ p742 Acts 10 ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁸ p1105 I John 5 ¹⁻⁶ p1228 John 15 ⁹⁻¹⁷ p1083
17 th May Ascension Day	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Daniel 7 ⁹⁻¹⁴ p892 Acts 1 ¹⁻¹¹ p1092 Ephesians 1 ¹⁵⁻²³ p1173 Luke 24 ⁴⁴⁻⁵³ p1062
20 th May Easter 7	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Ascension 1
	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 36 ²⁴⁻²⁸ p868 Acts 1 ¹⁵⁻²⁶ p1096 I John 5 ⁹⁻¹³ p1228 John 17 ⁶⁻¹⁹ p1085
27 th May Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 ¹⁻¹⁴ p868 Acts 2 ¹⁻²¹ p1093 Romans 8 ²²⁻²⁷ p1135 John 15 ^{26-16¹⁵} p1083
3 rd June Trinity Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 6 ¹⁻⁸ p690 Romans 8 ¹²⁻¹⁷ p1134 John 3 ¹⁻¹⁷ p1065

Thursday's Children for pre-school children takes place at St John's at 2.00. There is an **After School Club** at St John's on Thursdays at 3.45. **Saints Alive** (formerly Sunday School) meets in the Church Hall, Cuxton at 9.30 on 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays of the month in term time. **St Michael's Angels** meet at Cuxton Church at 2.00 every last Wednesday for a short service for pre-school children, followed by refreshments and toys in the Church Hall. There is a parish lunch to which all are invited every first Wednesday at 12.00 in the Church Hall.

If you are prepared to *gift aid* your monetary contributions to the Church, please use one of the envelopes provided or speak to Jack Payne for a longer term arrangement.

Copy Date June Magazine: 11th May 8.30 am Rectory.
roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays at St Michael's		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays at John's	
2 nd May St Athanasius	Acts 12 ²⁴ -13 ³ John 12 ⁴⁴⁻⁵⁰	3 rd May	Acts 12 ¹³⁻²⁵ John 13 ¹⁶⁻²⁰
9 th May	Acts 15 ¹⁻⁶ John 15 ¹⁻⁸	10 th May	Acts 15 ⁷⁻²¹ John 15 ⁹⁻¹¹
16 th May Rogation Day (also Monday & Tuesday)	Acts 17 ¹⁵ -18 ¹ John 16 ¹²⁻¹⁵	17 th May Ascension Day	Acts 1 ¹⁻¹¹ p1092 Luke 24 ⁴⁴⁻⁵³ p1062
23 rd May	Acts 20 ²⁸⁻³⁸ John 17 ¹¹⁻¹⁹	24 th May John & Charles Wesley	Acts 22 ³⁰ -23 ¹¹ John 17 ²⁰⁻²⁶
30 th May Josephine Butler	I Peter 1 ¹⁸⁻²⁵ Mark 10 ³²⁻⁴⁵	31 st May The Visitation	Zephaniah 3 ¹⁴⁻¹⁸ Romans 12 ⁹⁻¹⁶ Luke 1 ³⁹⁻⁵⁶

Tuesday 1st May S Philip & S James: HC 7.30 am St Michael's.



Faith, Hope and Love

The Church of England was in a generally poor state. Many church buildings (including St Michael's Cuxton) were in urgent need of repair. Parishes often had no resident vicar or rector. Church attendance figures were much lower than they should have been, especially in the towns. Worship was uninspiring. The Sacraments were neglected. Outside the cathedrals music was often of a low standard. There was far too little commitment to evangelism either at home or overseas. There was indifference in the face of social evils – what Beveridge would much later describe as the five giants of want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. Good works were often limited to the bestowing of charitable handouts on the poor of the parish. Christian education was sorely lacking. The Church of England's resources were largely concentrated in the countryside rather than in the towns where the needs were much greater. The Church of England was slow to adapt to the needs of the modern world.

This was the scene in the parishes. Intellectually the Church was challenged by new, critical ways of studying the Bible (mostly originating in Germany) which seemed to undermine the Bible's standing as the inspired Word of God and the foundation of Christian faith, and by the rise of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, which claimed that all living things (including us humans) are the product of a process of natural selection, the survival of the fittest offspring, slightly different

from the rest of the litter as a result of chance mutations between generations. On the face of it, Darwin's theory appears to remove the need for a Creator, Architect or Designer of the Universe; it undermines the doctrine of Providence; and raises questions about whether human beings are anything other than a kind of animal, which in turn calls into question the Christian belief that we are all made in the image of God, individually created and cared for by God, and destined for eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

I'm talking about the way things were in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, but it is easy to see parallels with the state of the Church today. I think one of the strongest parallels is the sense that there is a widespread indifference to the Christian religion in the world. Another parallel is that those of us who do care about the Christian religion often suffer from low morale. To take it back from 1800 AD to perhaps 900 BC, we feel like the prophet Elijah when he complained to God that everyone in the land had forsaken true religion for false and that they were all out to get him personally!

It is probably not true now that many church buildings are in a poor state of repair. English Heritage and Diocesan Advisory Committees keep our noses to the grindstone of maintaining our buildings. In fact some people would say that parishes put far too great a proportion of their resources into buildings and that the Church of England is in danger of becoming mainly a historic building preservation society. When the Victorians recovered their nerve, they not only restored their mediaeval churches, they rebuilt

them to meet modern needs and built new churches in new centres of population. I think we are sometimes at risk of being so concerned to conserve what is good from the past that we don't seize opportunities to make things better for the present and the future.

It is true that communities often nowadays don't have resident vicars or rectors. Halling is one such! In C19 the incumbent was paid out of revenue raised locally. Some parishes were too poor to maintain a vicar and vicars had to hold more than one parish (pluralism) in order to survive. Others were just plain greedy and became vicar of several parishes, simply for the income, without considering how the pastoral needs of the parishioners were to be met. No-one becomes a vicar these days for the money! Many parishes are too poor to afford even the basic stipend, however. In some places (including Cuxton & Halling) dioceses will subsidise the rector's stipend because there is a need for a parish priest in a particular place, but diocesan resources are also severely limited. Even if there were enough money to pay them, there are too few priests to fill all the vacancies. Young men don't seem any longer to have that zeal for God which inspires them to think about whether they have a vocation to ordained ministry. It is still true that what resources we do have are concentrated in the countryside rather than the towns. If you think how many people one vicar is expected to serve, it still may be a few hundred in the country (albeit in six separate, tiny parishes) and as many as 20,000 in one urban parish. The risk for all the churches in this country is that we will withdraw from the tough inner cities and the poorer, more sparsely populated, agricultural regions of the country, and concentrate our mission in those parts of the country where people have most money and seem to be most likely to come to church – the wealthy suburbs and rich commuter villages – the very places which perhaps have least need of a full time minister!

As a practical example, we are looking at ministry in this deanery on the Hoo peninsula. There are several small villages with ancient parish churches but barely enough money to pay their way. We expect that we may well have to manage with fewer full time ministers in the near future. It would very sad to close any of those ancient churches. (St Mary Hoo and St James Cooling have already gone.) It would be harder to meet the pastoral needs and to evangelise the

populations of these ancient villages if there were no resident vicar. But we are expecting major new housing developments on the peninsula. Should we be putting our resources into maintaining ancient buildings serving at most a couple of hundred people, when a few miles away there will soon be new communities with thousands of people needing the Gospel? It is decades since St Mary's Strood was first of all merged with St Nicholas and then closed. St Mary's parish had more inhabitants than all the parishes of the Hoo peninsula combined, many of whom have far greater needs than their country cousins. It makes you think!

I think the Church of England today can take a quiet pride in continuing the battle with the five giants of want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. We still run some very good schools, though there are people who would try to stop us either because they think religion should be kept out of education or because they think it is unfair that children who manage to get into church schools often get a better education than those who go to local authority schools. We do get involved in debates about health care and welfare, crime and justice, and all the social issues which perplex us as a society. The Church also provides practical help by such things as running youth clubs, shelters for the homeless, etc..

I'm not sure where we stand on evangelism, however. Evangelism is not the same thing as recruiting a few more people into our church to help us to "keep the show on the road." Evangelism is sharing our faith: because it is true; because it glorifies God; because faith brings inestimable benefits to those who receive it. There are churches which are very successful in terms of evangelism, but many of us have lost the confidence to share our faith. Who are we, we might ask, to tell people that they ought to believe in Jesus, especially in a multicultural society? Isn't it just as good to be a Moslem or a Sikh or to have no religion at all as it is to be a Christian? If God is good, we could argue, surely He treats all His children equally. So it won't make any difference to people (either in this life or the next) whether or not they believe in Him. But think about it. What did Jesus say about preaching the Gospel to the whole creation? And why?

Many people would say that the Church of England is still very slow to adapt to the needs of the modern world. That is probably true, but be

careful. What the modern world wants is not necessarily the same thing as what the modern world needs. The world may want a Church which is there when people want it, but doesn't make any demands on them. The world may want a Church which blesses the world's morality. The world may want a Church which provides a religious context in which the world can go about the world's business: sanctifying the state and its institutions; affirming wealth creation at whatever ethical cost; upholding the power of the powerful; God on our side in time of war; preserving social order by keeping the down trodden under foot; or (alternatively!) sanctifying the revolution and blessing the weapons employed to overthrow the state. These things may make up the Church the world wants, but the Church the world needs is a Church which is faithful to the eternal Truth of the Gospel, a Church whose members sacrifice themselves in God's cause (and the world's, if the world but knew it) of justice and mercy.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

Neither has the modern Church of England resolved the problems raised by C18 & C19 biblical critics (or their C20 & C21 successors). The "critics" insist that the books of the Bible should be studied in the same way as we study other books. Otherwise, they would argue, we can't understand them correctly and neither can we discuss them meaningfully with non-believers. More traditional believers insist that the Bible is not like any other book; it is the Word of God and therefore has to be approached in an entirely different Spirit from the spirit in which we approach other studies. Actually, both sides have a point and most modern Christians are somewhere on a very wide spectrum between those (like me) who read the Bible as the surest guide to Christian belief and practice which is available to us; through those who respect the Bible but think it needs a great deal of interpretation if we are to make sense of it in the modern world; to those who think the Bible is simply evidence of what people used to believe

about God and simply one of many resources which we can employ when we try to decide what we believe about God.

And of course Richard Dawkins is using Darwin's Evolutionary theories to attack religious belief just as his predecessor Thomas Huxley did in Victorian times. There are good answers to Dawkins, but there isn't space to consider them here. Suffice to say that the Universe is much more mysterious than Victorian scientists thought it was and that God is infinitely more mysterious and wonderful than the Universe He created.

Faith, hope and love. We ought to have faith. God answered Elijah's complaint that he was overwhelmed by telling him to get on with his work and that there were far more people on God's side than Elijah realised. Nearly 3,000 years later, we still remember Elijah, the Christian Church is flourishing throughout the world, and, so far as I know, there is no-one left bowing the knee to Baal. We ought to have hope. The early C19 might have been a very bad time for the Church of England. In the century that followed, however, things changed entirely. Parishes were properly staffed with dedicated clergy. Buildings were repaired and adapted to meet modern needs. New parishes were founded in new communities. Schools were set up. Christian education was raised to a much higher standard. Christians took a lead in social reform. We got serious about evangelism. We sent missionaries all over the world. The quality of our public worship and our music were improved enormously. Gradually Holy Communion recovered its rightful place as the principal service every Sunday. Baptism and Confirmation were treated with greater seriousness. There was a big increase in the number of vocations to the ministry. A larger proportion of the population attended church in 1900 than in 1800 and almost every child went to Sunday School. We ought to have hope. It's been done before and it can be done again.

We ought to have love. Love is the key. If we loved God with all hearts, souls, minds and strength, if we loved our neighbours as ourselves, we should devote our time and our money and our talents to God's service and God would do the rest. We don't know what God has in store for us, but we can be sure that it is more wonderful than we can imagine. All He needs from us is that we should trust Him.

The empowered Victorian Church drew its inspiration from the Evangelical Revival which started in C18 with people like the Wesley brothers, whose passion for God compelled them to share the Good News of Jesus with *all sorts and conditions of men* at whatever personal cost to themselves. Rooted in the Bible, evangelicals found that they could not but share the Good News of Jesus and also worked hard too to slay those five giants of want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. The empowered Victorian Church also drew its inspiration from the Oxford Movement, a more academic approach which thought through what it means to be Church, to be the Bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The established Church is not the secular state's Ministry for Religion. No Church is a human institution – a club or voluntary society, an organisation or even a charitable body. The Church is a divine institution, founded by Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, devoted to the praise and worship of God and the service of the world.

And I hold in veneration,
For the love of him alone,
Holy Church as his creation,
And her teachings as his own.

The Victorian Church made plenty of mistakes. *The man who never made a mistake never made anything.* Sadly the heirs of the Evangelical Revival and the heirs of the Oxford Movement often saw themselves as opposites rather than as complementary to one another, but it is their insights that saved the Church 200 years ago and the same insights which can save the Church today. The Bible is the Word of God, Good News to be shared with the whole of Creation. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where we encounter God in Christ, the place in which we are empowered to take up our cross and follow Him, to play the part God gives to each one of us in His plan for the salvation of the world.

We have something of an Evangelical Revival in the Church today. It needs our prayers and our support. Can I suggest that we also need a new Oxford Movement, a well thought out recovery of the sense of what it means for us Christians to be God's Church?

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.
And charity is love, and love is the fulfilling of the Law. Roger.

Winter Outring 2010

On Saturday 10th March, Cuxton bellringers resurrected our popular Winter Outring, after taking a break for a couple of years. Eleven ringers from Cuxton, accompanied by three guests from Rainham, were treated to a beautiful warm and dry winter's day as we set off for our short tour of East Kent, starting at Birchington. The highlight of our afternoon was the opportunity to ring at the Waterloo Tower in Quex Park, which we found after an exciting and occasionally alarming trek through a mile or so of very bumpy, muddy woodland tracks, the like of which our vehicles were not intended for. The tower was built in 1819 and, unusually, is not part of a church. It was built to further the art of bellringing itself, rather than to support worship, which is the purpose of most bell towers. The visit provided us with our first ever opportunity to ring on 12 bells. That's similar to somebody who can confidently juggle three tennis balls, trying the same with six whirring chainsaws! Fortunately, the tower is in the middle of a field so the noise doesn't upset anybody. Like the chainsaws, we were all buzzing afterwards. This was followed by some excellent ringing first at Whitstable, and then Newington. After a quick wash and brush up, we re-convened for a very enjoyable social evening, hosted by some of our members. For those that like to join our Summer Outring, we are planning to run this again in 2012, so watch for details. It will be in Sussex and on 16th June. Colin Stubbing.

Newington Bell

I assume our ringers rang at Newington, Sittingbourne on their way home from the Isle of Thanet, but the above account reminds me of my own time as priest at St Christopher, Newington in the parish of St Laurence in Thanet. Our church was built in the 1950s to serve what was then a new large local authority housing development. It had no tower, but a bell had been acquired from the bombed out church of St Paul's Ramsgate, which has never been rebuilt. The bell had been hung in a wooden frame to ring on special occasions. Unfortunately the frame had given way and the bell was firmly on the ground when I was instituted at St Christopher's in 1984 and we relied on a taped recording of church bells for services. The happy ending to the story is that we saw an appeal in the *Church Times* for a bell to be hung in a new church in Africa. We were pleased to offer our bell and it was duly collected and shipped out. Roger.

From the Registers

Funeral:

29th March

Louisa May Roads (101)

Rochester Road, Halling.

Thanks

I would like to say thank you to you all for the lovely cards I received in hospital, also the good wishes and many kind words and visits. I am now making progress. I hope to see you all again one day. Thanks again. Dorothy Taylor.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Miss J Thorne (23), Miss L Thorne (24), Mrs Fennemore (71) & Mrs Potter (120) – drawn by Mrs Court.

St Michael's Draw: £20 to Mr Beaney, £5 to Mr & Mrs Pentecost & £5 to Mr Maisey – drawn by Mrs Bogg.

Readers will be pleased to know that the number of participants in the St Michael's Draw has increased by more than 50% this year. If you would like to join the St Michael's Draw, please contact Jeanne Harris. If you would like to join the St John's Draw, please contact Betty Head.



Paul & Charitas Cho

Paul and Charitas will be leaving for the Philippines via Korea (their home country) on 13th May, arriving in Manila on 28th May. Their commissioning service will be held at CMS HQ in Oxford on 2nd May at 12.00. Please remember them in your prayers.

We'll continue to receive news of how the family are getting on in the Philippines and they will also continue to need our financial support. Donations may be passed to me or the parish treasurer or sent direct to CMS, Watlington Road, Oxford OX4 6BZ. Roger.



Halling WI

We started our March meeting on a high with a new member. We had our usual business, birthdays, minutes and correspondence. The members all remembered to bring their donations for the buckets of Love, and it was soon obvious we could have managed to fill two buckets as we did at St John's, such a great response and pretty painless. Our speaker for the evening was Mrs Wood (didn't give her Christian name) her subject, My time as a magistrate, it sounded like it was going to be boring, but it was most enlightening as most of us present don't do courthouses. Mrs Wood had intended to show us slides, but the technology even outwitted Gemma. We had the power but not the pictures. Bring back the lantern slides, I say. Mrs Wood explained how she became a magistrate. You used to be chosen. Now you can apply if you want to "have a go", but you are not always chosen. He said some of the cases that they have to deal with are pretty petty. A good slap on the wrist by a copper (policeman), and "don't do it again" would suffice in some cases because once you have been taken to court you

have a criminal record. The best policy is to think before you do the crime then you won't have to do the time, even if it only community service. It turned out to be a very interesting talk, so much so we are going to invite Mrs Wood to come again so that we can act out a case. I have offered myself to be the criminal, should be a laugh at something which is really serious.

After our long awaited refreshments the competitions were judged. I won the Flower of the Month with a perfect Ice follies daffodil. I only had two in my garden and the slugs had eaten the other one. Ann Graves won the competition for something beginning with the letter C. What did she bring? a plastic Friesian cow, I won't tell you what it did, but chocolate raisins were involved.

We are having a cookery demonstration in April, and the competition, something beginning with D, some ideas, Doughnut, I think I might borrow Max for the evening. Visitors are always welcome.
Phyllis.

Celebrating Difference

What's the difference between a railway locomotive and a deciduous tree?

One sheds its leaves and the other leaves its shed.

What's the difference between an elephant and a post box?

If you don't know, I shan't ask you to post a letter.

Nature Notes March 2012

"A Prayer in Spring" by Robert Frost

Oh, give us pleasure in
the flowers today;
And give us not to
think so far away
As the uncertain
harvest; keep us here
All simply in the
springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in
the orchard white,
Like nothing else by
day, Like ghosts by
night;
And make us happy in
the happy bees,
The swarm dilating
round the perfect
trees.

And make us happy in
the darting bird
That suddenly above
the bees is heard,
The meteor that
thrusts in with needle
bill,
And off a blossom in
mid air stands still.

For this is love and
nothing else is love,
To which it is reserved
for God above
To sanctify to what far
ends He will,
But which it only
needs that we fulfil.

On the 1st day of the month, the sun shines warmly from a bright blue sky brushed with wisps of white cloud. Birds sing and as I sit out in the garden for a while, I watch a bumble bee gathering nectar from rosemary flowers. A large wasp crawls along the kitchen ceiling. I remove it. The 2nd is grey as I drive to Addington. I notice large buds on trees and shrubs waiting to burst. There is drizzle in the air which lasts into the evening. The next day I hear a woodpecker hammering away in woodland near the river. Later, at Bluewater, I watch two large crows foraging in the grass. The 4th is cold and wet and rain falls during the night. North East winds blow on 5th and the skies clear as we drive to Bluewater. The wind is cold and quite strong as I walk the grassy paths with Murphy. The following day, when I am walking along Strood High Street, I watch a pied wagtail strutting ahead of me. It is a delightful creature. On 7th westerly winds drive grey clouds across the sky as I drive to Snodland. Eventually much needed rain falls. In the car park starlings are calling loudly from the trees. Later in the day, there is a contrast of colours in the sky, from dark grey clouds to golden sunshine in patches of blue. The 8th is a sunny, blue sky day with warm sunshine beaming down on the rippling water at Bluewater where I walk with Murphy. A light breeze blows from the West. Daffodils adorn the banks and I see the first cowslips. While I have been walking, David has been watching a long tailed tit gathering nesting material from the hedge and this included a small feather. The next morning I hear the drilling of a woodpecker in the woodland by the river. Sunday 11th is a warm sunny day. I walk to church where the churchyard is beautiful with celandines, snowdrops and primroses. Later, in in the garden, I listen to the songs of a robin and a great tit. The next day is another beautiful sunny morning when I walk with Murphy in Cobtree Manor Park. Early creamy blackthorn flowers bring the first signs of Spring to the park where birdsong fills the air. Along the route, A228 and M20, I see young elder and hawthorn leaves and in the park, early leaves on weeping willow trees. It becomes rather cloudy mid-afternoon and

there is a chill in the air, not surprising for the time of year. Buds on the garden lilac tree are becoming plump. I continue to hear the woodpecker in the mornings. The 13th is grey and rather chilly as I walk Murphy round the lake at Bluewater. Banks are aglow with daffodils. A pair of Canada geese sidles down the bank to the rippling water where they glide near a number of coots. The early morning of 15th is foggy as we make our way again to the lake where the sun is shining. I see red deadnettle, daisies, dandelions and a few blue speedwell flowers peeping out from among the grass stems. Temperatures reach 19 degrees C. What a difference a day makes, for the next day is grey and cold. On 17th I listen to blackbirds singing in the front hedge. When I walk along the main road the next day, I see alexander in flower and tiny elm leaves are unfurling. Early blackthorn reveals its creamy blossoms. When we go to Cobtree manor Park on 19th we see frost on the grass. The sun is shining brightly from a blue sky and as we travel, I see hawthorns in full leaf, blackthorn flowers and weeping willows in early leaf. Gorse displays golden flowers. The 20th is warm again with white feathery clouds drifting across the azure sky from the west. As I walk round the lake at Bluewater, I see more manifestations of spring. Trees are adorned with pink blossom, while dandelions, speedwell, a single clump of buttercups, red and white deadnettle, cowslips and tiny star-like flowers bloom in the grass. The water in the lake sparkles. On 21st we noticed that a bird had started putting nesting material in our letter box but David removed it because it would not be safe for fledglings. The next morning, which was sunny with North West winds blowing, I watch a dunnock collecting some of Murphy's fur from the patio. It flies away with its beak full. The 24th is a beautiful day. I walk up the church path and across the fields to Mays Wood. Speedwell, dandelions, shepherd's purse and red deadnettle bloom. Blackthorn branches are covered in golden lichen. I hear a magpie, a greenfinch and a great tit calling within the woodland where I see celandines, wood anemones, dog's mercury, dog violets, ramson plants and blue bell

plants. I make my way down to The Warren where I see more violets. The river and hills beyond are covered in mist while silver birch trunks gleam in the sunlight. A brimstone butterfly hovers near some shrubs. Dried teasels line the steep path which takes me down to the road where I see a garden bank adorn with pale yellow primroses. The walk has been an enjoyable experience. The next day is grey and chilly but the 26th brings sunshine with light northerly winds. We are now enjoying an extra hour of daylight. The warm weather continues and Spring flowers and new leaves on trees and shrubs bring their delicate beauty to the countryside. On 29th bees are gathering nectar from comfrey flowers in the garden. The woodpecker drills away, a greenfinch calls stridently from a conifer and an orange tip butterfly hovers over

parsley plants. The early morning skies of 30th are hazy as I watch a blackbird perched on a high branch of the holly tree and delight in its song. The high clouds disperse to reveal clear blue skies and the golden sunshine brings more warmth. I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater where trees are covered in glorious pink blossom. Canada geese glide on the mirror-smooth water. Later, wispy clouds drift across the sky. The final day of the month brings grey skies, northerly winds and a significant drop in temperature. The warm weather has caused the lilac buds to unfurl and elders, hawthorns and small elms on the embankment are displaying their tiny, new leaves. The forecast is for more wintry weather. Elizabeth Summers.

“Inspire” Magazine

We’ve been putting copies of “Inspire” magazine out at the back of both churches for people to take and read. I know some of you have found these interesting and enjoyable. The publishers have till now sent them out free, but they are no longer able to do this (understandably). So, we shall not be having them in church, but if you would like to subscribe directly (£15 pa) you can fill in the form on p23 of the current issue or access the website <http://www.inspiremagazine.org.uk> .

Some people don’t quite like to take the materials on those tables at the back of the two churches, but please feel free. They are there for you to look at and take away if you wish – whether Church Army, CMS or other prayer letters, magazines published by various Christian organisations or other literature. There’s quite a mix of things there. So please help yourself. It’s a shame if they finish up in the recycling unread.

Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee

**Monday 4th June 11.00 am
Festival Morning Service
St John the Baptist Halling.**

**From 12.00 onwards there will be a major street party
arranged by the Parish Council in the surrounding area.**

New Dean of Rochester

The Reverend Dr Mark Beach is to be instituted and installed on 20th May. Please remember him your prayers. We hope to welcome him to a service in this parish in the near future . The Dean & Chapter are our joint patrons together with the Bishop.

I Think This Is Outrageous

The residential development known as the Glebe, Cuxton, and Cuxton Scout Hall stand on land which used to be part of the Rectory Grounds. In fact the Scouts still pay a modest rent to the Church for the land on which the hall now stands. My predecessors used to grow fruit on some of this land and there came a time when the local Scout Group had to cut down some superannuated fruit trees. Because they cared about the appearance of the village, although they didn't have to, they replaced these old fruit trees with some younger specimens of woodland species, never considering for one moment that there would ever be a problem about pruning them, removing them if they became too large or too old, or even using the wood for scouting activities.

Everything was fine until a woman living in the Glebe took exception to the fact that a neighbour of hers had cut down a flowering cherry in his own garden. Unfortunately for everybody, she had a friend on the Council and she asked him to intervene. He called in the council tree officers and they imposed preservation orders on a large number of trees in gardens and in the scout hall grounds, all neighbouring this lady's property. She has now left the area and the councillor in question has sadly died, but the Tree Preservation Order remains and looks like remaining in perpetuity. I must be fair to the councillor. Before he died he told me that he was appalled at what officers had done, reacting completely out of proportion to the problem. Sadly, however, *local democracy* is a misnomer. Most council decisions are not taken by the councillors we elect, but by officers. Councillors are often not even allowed to know what actions officers are taking or the reasons for taking them. [The Council's similar decision to impose a TPO on the Rectory was actually published in the local paper the day before the meeting at which it was allegedly taken.]

I was so puzzled about the reason behind putting a TPO on the scout hall grounds that I actually offered a £100 prize to anyone who could give me a good reason for it. There were no takers (except one from a councillor who told me why TPOs in general might be a good thing, but couldn't think of anything to say in defence of this particular one). So we can only speculate as to why this TPO was imposed and why it has not been lifted now that the person who asked for it has left the area? I've had complaints about it both from the Scout Group and from local residents. So who benefits by it? I can't say, but I do know, that no fewer than three of the officers involved in the TPO on my own garden had a personal interest in the case.

Another mystery concerns whether officers came into the scout hall grounds to inspect the trees before making the order. They say that they didn't, but they also said that they hadn't been in my garden, prior to imposing a TPO on my trees. Only they had been and witnesses saw them. So they eventually had to pay me compensation both for trespass and for lying. If they didn't come onto the scout hall site to inspect the trees, I don't see how they could have assessed them properly. If they did come onto the site, they ought to have made an appointment with the Group Executive and, if officers had unsupervised access to the site when the children were there, they ought to have been CRB checked.

Anyway the TPO still stands and the Scouts can't do anything to their own trees without permission from these unsympathetic council officers. Like the trees in my garden, they overshadow neighbours' properties. They also are in danger of undermining foundations. TPOs are supposed to be used to protect trees as a public amenity. This TPO (like the one on the Rectory) is more of a public nuisance.

To cut a long story short, the council have reluctantly agreed to the removal of a particular tree which is causing serious problems. They are insisting, however, that the Scouts replace it with another mature tree.

I am told that this could cost as much as **£1,000**. If it dies, it will have to be replaced for another £1,000. Bear in mind that all the Scouts' money comes from the boys' and girls' subscriptions and from donations and fund-raising for the benefit of the children by very committed people who work extremely hard on a voluntary basis for the benefit of the community. Bear in mind also that Medway Council's motto is *Serving You!* Assuming that motto isn't just a sick joke, can you disagree with me when I say that Medway officers' conduct in this matter is outrageous and an affront to the people they claim to be serving?

Tree officers behave like that unjust judge *which feared not God, neither regarded man* (Luke 18²) but even he finally did the right thing because the widow kept on at him. So don't give up on the nagging. Roger.



Cuxton WI

It was a very long but enjoyable meeting this month. We were entertained by Mrs Helen Kendall-Tobias who showed us all how to tie and use scarves as an accessory. She had some beautiful scarves including one with the Armani label. However she insisted that you do not have to pay a lot for a scarf and showed how with a few simple twists and turns you could make an ordinary scarf look fabulous! Go home she said and try it out before your mirror until you've got it right. I hate to think how many broken mirrors are now lying around - smashed in frustration. But should you see the ladies of Cuxton looking extra elegant then you know how well she taught us! Several members had been to the Annual Council meeting in Tunbridge Wells and to the Home Economics days in Ditton. Four people had made stunning small handbags for a competition in Tunbridge and we were pleased to see that Maureen had won best in class. Then we were entertained by Amanda Cottrell and Paul Whittaker. Both excellent speakers, Amanda gave us a brief resume of her family history and as she is of the Howard family of Henry VII time it was an exciting account. Paul is profoundly deaf and

yet betters the best comedians on the circuit and is setting up worldwide schools of music for deaf children. Certainly deserves his OBE. At Ditton we were told of the demise of Knole House which is in a very bad structural shape. In a more cheerful talk we learnt how to decorate cup cakes and in the afternoon we learnt about Ikebana - Japanese flower arranging. So two really enjoyable days which show how much pleasure can come from joining in with the WI.

There is of course a more serious side to WI and this is shown in the Annual General Meetings held each year with representatives from all WI in the country. Each year a resolution is put to the floor and if voted through is usually presented to the government for consideration and in the past many of these have been agreed and passed in law. This years resolution is The need for more Trained Midwives and we shall see in June if this is put forward.

Our next two meetings in May and June are really only for full members but in July we will be meeting at the church hall on Thursday 5th at 7.30 pm when the talk will be about Music in a Great House. So do come along and join us. Sheila.

Respect for Cemeteries and Churchyards

First of all a thank you to everyone who maintains the graves of family and friends and to those who do a bit more, perhaps tidying up the area around their families' graves, and to those of you who do a lot more to keep our burial areas clean, tidy and free of weeds. You can see how the spring flowers have flourished now that so much of the undergrowth has been cleared away.

Thanks also to all those who contribute funds for the cutting of Cuxton Churchyard and Halling Cemetery. We receive some generous help from the parish councils, for which we are very grateful, but we also depend on voluntary contributions. If you would like to help, please give your donation to treasurer, churchwarden or rector. Cheques should be made payable to *Cuxton & Halling PCC* and marked on the back with the purpose of the donation. If you are a taxpayer, you can *gift aid* all your gifts to the church, which enables us to claim back the tax (25p for every £1.00 you give).

Hopefully, we shall have flags for the flagpole at Halling by 4th June and raise the union flag at 12.00 on that day to signal the start of the Street Party, following the 11.00 service at St John's.

And now for the grimmer news. Several people were working hard to tidy up the trees in Halling Churchyard last Summer, till Medway Council found out and told us to desist. They did say, however, that they (the Council) would come back in the Autumn and do the jobs that need doing. Sadly, they have not yet appeared and can't do anything anyway for the next few months because it is now the bird nesting season. Maybe next Autumn? I'm not holding my breath, however. The Diocese say we might need a faculty for this work. If we do, that's two bureaucracies to satisfy before we can even open the tool shed and, in my experience, it's a much bigger job filling in the forms and getting official approval than it is picking up your working implements and just getting on with what needs doing!

I've also had reports of thefts from graves in Halling Cemetery and vandalism there. I'm sure that the people who do that sort of thing are unlikely to be readers of this magazine. So I can only say I am sorry to people whose family graves have suffered in this way and ask people to keep their eyes open and to report anything suspicious to the police.

Then I've had a letter from Peggy Foote understandably saddened by the way the efforts of those who try to keep Cuxton Churchyard tidy are undermined by the thoughtless. Maybe publishing this letter will result in an improvement. Roger.

Why? Why? I can't help wondering how it is that some people have the strength to carry fresh flowers to the churchyard and graves, but cannot take home the old ones, that they have replaced. No. They dump them outside the gates on what is part of the Rectory grounds. A lot of years ago two of us spent much time and energy clearing away a huge heap of rubbish, even an old carpet! Then I planted shrubs and trees, which I think looks better, but a lot of people dump rubbish, even sacks full there and spoil it all. While I am sure that they are not the ones who are reading this magazine, please have a word with them if you know who it is as I won't be able for ever to clear up after them. Thanking you, Peggy Foote.

Easter 2012

Many thanks to those who cleaned and decorated our two churches, arranged flowers, sang in the choir, played the organ and rang the bells. Also to all who attended our Easter services. The Church is the people. We meet together to glorify God, to build up one another in the faith and to proclaim the Gospel to the world. Jesus says *Without me ye can do nothing*. The Bible teaches that the Church is the Body of Christ. We cannot be Christians without being members of the Church and the Church's Communion and fellowship is most normally expressed in the Breaking of Bread on the Lord's Day when we assemble together to break bread in the communion of the Body of Christ and to bless the cup of wine in the communion of the Blood of Christ. For those unable to be present at the Church's Eucharist I am pleased to bring Communion at home. You only have to ask.

Thanks also to those who worked so hard for the Easter Egg Hunt. Those who came had a whale of a time. Unfortunately we were low in numbers this year. I blame the weather forecast rather than the weather! They talked about gale force winds and torrential rain, whereas all we got was a fine drizzle. If you take notice of weather forecasts (or weather for that matter) you won't do anything outdoors in Britain! Let's hope for better weather next year!

I must confess I was a bit disappointed at the attendance of a couple of the services this year. For 25 years I've been trying to get people to see that the Easter Midnight is the most wonderful service of the whole year, but, having failed so far, I'm going to need some indication that it will be reasonably well supported before I can confirm that it is on next year.

It's been rather on my mind this year that the way we "do" Holy Week and Easter is a mixture of traditions and somewhat attenuated by having to be shared out across two villages. Ideally the whole congregation would experience together the whole sequence of services and ideally, of course, there would be two of us priests so that both villages could have the full range of services. The basic pattern should be as follows: Maundy Thursday morning – Clergy gather in cathedral for renewal of ordination vows, to bless oils used in Baptism, Confirmation and anointing the sick and dying, and for the Holy Eucharist with our bishop; In parish churches, Maundy Thursday evening - Holy Communion with stripping of altars – possibly followed by vigil;
Good Friday – Morning Prayer and Litany, Evening Prayer;
Holy Saturday – Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer (no joyful Communion on the days of His Death & Burial, but nevertheless services of Bible readings and prayer);

Easter Eve/Easter Morning – Vigil Service, lighting Easter Fire, sharing the light of the Risen Christ, readings from Old & New Testament bearing witness to Jesus, renewal of baptismal vows (baptised Christians are dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ, the Easter people) and Easter Eucharist (all of which could go on all night bringing us to dawn for our Easter Communion with the Risen Lord.)

We do all this, but divided between Cuxton and Halling (mostly Cuxton where I live) but I think I am the only person ever to experience all of it. It would be too much for many people. We also have to accommodate other traditions which have grown up over the last 100 or 150 years – the early Easter Sunday Communion, the midmorning Easter Sunday Communion, the Three Hour Devotion on Good Friday and the Good Friday Family Service. Plus we like to re-enact the Passover when we can manage it. They are all good things and we wouldn't want to give any of them up. We also have to share them between three places of worship. It's good because everybody gets the chance to go to what suits them (is that a good thing?), but it's not good that all the Christians in one place don't do all these things together as one Communion and fellowship. Still I think it's the best I can do, but no wonder Max and I spent Easter Sunday evening dozing and he didn't get a walk!

An interesting idea was could we use something like what we do at the Three Hour Devotion on a Sunday – twenty minute segments of hymn, reading, psalm, address, silent prayer – which people can attend to bits of? Could this be a part of our Communion Service (the Ministry of the Word) or an addition to it? Let me know if you have any ideas, please. Roger.



Max's Tail Piece

He's found me a decent amount of space this month and just as well. I've got a lot to tell you. We've had a lovely week since Easter Sunday. Master takes this week and Christmas week as a kind of holiday, only doing the bare minimum of work. (Who said that's just like what he's like the other 50 weeks of the year?) He says he doesn't go away on holiday now because of me, but I think that's just an excuse. He could take me. Really he can't be bothered to sort out a holiday - finding retired clergy, who are still able and willing to work, to take services while he is away (and getting the PCC to pay them, which has twice been a bone of contention), and locating a dog-friendly hotel in a resort where dogs are still allowed on the beach and in the park. "Anyway," he says, "Why go away and spend two lonely weeks away, eating other peoples' cooking, when nearly all our friends live around here, we can enjoy all the comforts of home (including home cooking) and the countryside is just as nice as it's likely to be anywhere else in the world? We haven't even explored every footpath within walking distance of Cuxton Rectory."

Well, this week he's been around, which is good because I don't like being left on my own. We had the family over for Easter Sunday and a delicious roast lamb. Master and I had lamb for dinner Monday and Tuesday as well and there was a nice big bone for me. When they went at 5.00, we were both too tired for a walk. (He's been watching films like *Carry on Camping* and *the Great St Trinian's Train Robbery*, which he says is the funniest film ever made and cost him 1/= the first time he went to see it). The last few days had been busy and we'd both been to the Easter Midnight the night before. He did manage his Sunday run before the 8.00, but I strongly suspect that he was running in his sleep. Did anyone see a jogging vicar in his pyjamas on Easter Sunday morning? Then we had the Easter Egg Hunt – fewer people because of the weather, but an equal number of chocolate eggs to what we usually have. I'm still finding them in the garden. Master tells me that too much chocolate isn't good for me and silver paper is no good for me at all. I notice he's been eating Easter eggs all week, however. Tuesday we had a wonderful walk. A couple of weeks ago Master took me somewhere he hasn't been for years and where I'd never been before. That day in March it was really hot sun, but April was colder. Nevertheless it is an interesting path with lots of enticing smells and Master likes the views across the Medway Valley. I'm talking about the back path to Holly Hill from the top of Chapel Lane. For weeks now, he's been enjoying the wild flowers in the countryside. He says it has been a particularly good year for violets. I'm more interested in the fauna than the flora and exploring the scents and aromas they leave. We Springers are very inquisitive, but he won't let me stray too far off the path. So far this week we've been out in frost, sunshine, rain, thunder and lightning, fog and a little bit of hail. We're waiting on sleet and snow. Perhaps we'll get them in May and June. Whatever the weather, I'm sure we'll have fun!

Max, the Rectory Spaniel.