

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
September 4 th Trinity 11	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Ezekiel 12 v21 – 13 v16 p839 Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
September 11 th Trinity 12	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 50 vv 15-21 p57 Romans 14 vv 1-12 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 21-35 p985
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Ezekiel 20 vv 1-44 p847 Acts 20 vv 17-38 p1117
September 18 th Trinity 13	11.00 Holy Communion Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Baptism	Jonah 3 v10 – 4 v11 p928 Philippians 1 vv 21-30 p1178 Matthew 20 vv 1-16 p987
September 25 th Trinity 14 Back to Church Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 18 1-32 p845 Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
2 nd October Trinity 15 Dedication & Harvest Festival	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Proverbs 2 vv 1-11 p636 Mark 10 vv 2-16 p1014
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Philippians 3 vv 4b-14 p1180 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
	6.30 Harvest Praise	Deuteronomy 28 vv 1-14 p205 II Corinthians 9 vv 6-15 p1163 Luke 12 vv 16-30 p1045
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
September 4 th Trinity 11	9.30 Family Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
September 11 th Trinity 12	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 50 vv 15-21 p57 Romans 14 vv 1-12 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 21-35 p985
September 18 th Trinity 13	9.30 Holy Communion	Jonah 3 v10 – 4 v11 p928 Philippians 1 vv 21-30 p1178 Matthew 20 vv 1-16 p987
September 25 th Trinity 14	9.30 Holy Communion Back to Church Sunday	Ezekiel 18 1-32 p845 Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
September 29 th St Michael & All Angels	7.30 Holy Communion Bishop James	Genesis 28 vv 10-17 p30 Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 John 1 vv 47-51 p1064
2 nd October Trinity 15 Dedication & Harvest Festival	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990

Wednesday Holy Communion at 9.30 at Cuxton		Thursday Holy Communion at 9.30 at St John's	
31 st August	Colossians 1 vv 1-8 Luke 4 vv 38-44	1 st September	Colossians 1 vv 9-14 Luke 5 vv 1-11
7 th September	Colossians 3 vv 1-11 Luke 6 vv 20-26	8 th September Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Galatians 4 vv 4-7 Luke 1 vv 39-47
14 th September Holy Cross Day	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 John 3 vv 13-17	15 th September	I Timothy 4 vv 12-16 Luke 7 vv 36-50
21 st September St Matthew	II Corinthians 4 vv 1-6 Matthew 9 vv 9-13	22 nd September	Haggai 1 vv 1-8 Luke 9 vv 7-9
28 th September Ember Day	Nehemiah 2 vv 1-8 Luke 9 vv 57-62	29 th September Michaelmas	Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 John 1 vv 47-51 p1064

roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Copy Date October Magazine: 9th September 8.30 am Rectory.

Margaret Guest has been printing this magazine for thirty years now and would like to retire! Is there anyone, please, who could take on this task? The pages are printed on a duplicating machine, stapled and bundled for distribution. It would be much easier if more than one person were willing to share in this task. At present the machine is kept at Margaret's house. You could either have it in your home or on church premises. If you think you might be able to help, please speak to Margaret or me. Roger.



Is Man the Measure of All Things?

Here's a question which goes back to the ancient Greeks. Is something good simply because God says it is good? Or does God say that something is good because it is good? In other words does God define good or is goodness something which exists in itself so that we can recognise goodness apart from God?

Is God good by definition so that whatever God is, God is good? Or is there such a thing as goodness apart from God so that, at least in theory, we can decide for ourselves whether or not God is good?

If we think that God is good by definition, how can we praise Him for His Goodness? He couldn't be anything other than good because God is good by definition. So how can we praise Him for simply being what He is and doing what He does?

On the other hand, if we think that goodness exists apart from God so that we can make up our own minds as to whether or not God is good and whether or not what God does is good, where does goodness come from? If nothing can exist apart from God, goodness cannot exist apart from God.

And why does it matter anyway? It was another ancient Greek (Protagoras) who claimed that man is the measure of all things. In the end, he might have argued, we decide. We decide what is good apart from God. So we can judge for ourselves what actions are good. We can judge for ourselves which people are good. And we can judge for ourselves whether God is good. Obviously humanists like this idea of human beings being the measure of all things. We don't, on this theory, need God to tell us how to live or to judge us. A surprising number of religious believers like this idea too. They want to worship God for being good, but they can't see how they can worship God for being good unless they know what goodness is apart from God. How can God be free if He isn't free to be evil?

This humanist theory creates space for the secular society. If man is the measure of all things, human beings can decide what is right and what is wrong. So we can have laws which are just and good without reference to religion. Religion then becomes a private matter for individuals, families

and faith communities. The secular state makes laws (which everyone has to obey) on the basis that man is the measure of all things. So the laws by which we all live bear no relation to God or to religion. Religion is an extra for those who find that it gives meaning to their lives and everyone is free to practise whatever religion he or she wants to practise so long as he or she obeys the laws of the secular state. Maybe in such a secular state most people would choose not to practise any religion at all. If law and culture can exist without religion, there is no reason for the secular state to attempt to coerce religious belief in the name of social cohesion – which must be a good thing, given our terrible history of religious persecutions.

The notion that man is the measure of all things also provides a justification for the saying that people who go to church are no better than those who don't. Belonging to a church makes no difference if man is the measure of all things. You don't need God to tell you which laws or ethical codes to live by and you don't need God's help to live by the moral law.

I'm not convinced by all this. I don't accept that human beings are capable of recognising good and evil apart from God. Different human cultures have very different moral codes and sets of laws. Those ancient Greeks, whose philosophy we so admire, got up to quite a lot of things which we would regard as barbaric! For one thing, the entire Athenian economy depended on slavery and, for another, women and children had scarcely any effective rights. Human beings unaided do not recognise goodness for what it is. Just think of some of the tyrannical regimes which have disfigured human history. At one level, we are capable of judging them to be wrong in a fundamental sense. At another level, we just go along with what everyone else thinks.

Thinking more deeply, I don't know where people imagine the idea of goodness could come from apart from God. If the universe simply exists without a Creator, if the Universe exists without a purpose and for no reason, if human beings are simply the product of evolution, based solely on chance mutations and the survival of the fittest, where do morality and law come from? They can only be the product of evolution, a mechanism for ensuring the survival of our genes by making it less likely that we kill one another before we have reproduced. Goodness does not exist in itself,

only in the human imagination as a delusion which has arisen by chance, and, simply because it tends to favour the procreation and nurture of our children, goodness is a delusion which has survived to be passed on to the next generation. Some people would argue that religion is the same – a delusion which has arisen by chance and survived down the generations because it makes the survival of human genes somehow more likely.

It seems to me, therefore, that the theory that Man is the measure of all things, which looked like turning human beings into gods, in fact demotes us almost to the status of non-entities. If we are here by chance, for no reason, without any ultimate purpose, and if there is no God to breathe into us the breath of life, we are no more than animals or plants or even micro-organisms, and human culture has no meaning outside the meaning we choose to assign to it.

I do believe that everything comes from God – including the idea of goodness. Goodness is inherent in God and ultimately we can only know goodness if we know God and we can only be good if we are in a personal relationship with Him.

So there are no common human values on which it is possible to base a secular society without

reference to God. Religion cannot be marginalised and confined to the heart, the home and the faith community. It is faith which informs our ethics and which must therefore underpin our laws. It is faith which inspires us to be good.

All human beings are caught up in the necessary task of seeking the Truth. Intellect plays an important part, a vital part in the quest for Truth, but intellect also needs to be inspired and guided by faith. It isn't easy. There are many conflicting faith claims, many different expressions of religion. There is always the terrible temptation to despise those of other creeds, which is a denial of any authentic religion because true faith must have as one of its tenets the universality of love.

My faith teaches me that the Truth of God – ultimately the only Truth and the measure of all lesser truths – is Jesus Christ. In order to apprehend Jesus Christ we have to relate to Him in prayer and as members of the faith community, the Christian Church, as well as to learn about Him and what He said and did through the pages of the Bible.

Man is not the measure of all things. If we were, everything would be ultimately worthless and we should be ultimately worthless. God is the measure of all things and nothing can be properly understood except in Him. Roger.

A Point to Ponder

St Catharine of Sienna: All the way to heaven is heaven itself, because Jesus said, I am the Way.
Boethius: Thou art the journey and the journey's end.

Something to Shout About

September 15th 7.30 pm Bush Road Chapel Hall. All welcome. Is the Green Agenda a Con?

Sunday 25th September

Back to Church Sunday

Missing Church or thinking of trying Church for the first time? Join us at St Michael's Cuxton at 9.30 am or St John's Halling at 11.00 am.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

24 th July	Kirsty Rebecca Joyce Barton	Essex Road
31 st July	James Arthur Tricker	Hostier Close
31 st July	Charlotte Elizabeth Tricker	Hostier Close
7 th August	Evie Louise Murray	Aylesford
14 th August	Jonathan Henry Chatwell	Bush Road

Funerals:

2 nd July	Betty Lofthouse (91)	Poplicans Road
9 th July	Susan Esson Duke (41)	Strood

Muriel Tomkin RIP

Sheila and family would like to thank the many friends for their support and messages of sympathy on the loss of Mum, Muriel Tomkin, who died suddenly at her home in Hathern, near Loughborough on 11th July. Muriel spent 30 happy years in Halling and Cuxton and will be remembered by many as a member of the WI, Mothers' Union, 'Paper Girl' and Deputy Warden at Downsland House.

Church Hall Draw: £40 to Pauline Lofthouse, drawn by Julia Wells.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Burr (11), Mr Mitchell (69), Mrs Cheeseman (135) & Mr Tower (146) –drawn by Mrs Carter & Miss Heighes.

Nature Notes July 2011

The first day of the month is pleasantly warm and with no humidity. I work in the garden during the day, but see no birds for they are renewing their plumage after breeding their young. The evening skies are brushed with high cloud which eventually becomes salmon pink as the sun sets. I hear the melodious song of a blackbird. The early morning skies of 2nd are a clear blue before billowing white clouds drift across the sky. I walk with Murphy along the flower-filled paths at Bluewater. I see a profusion of goat's rue vetch, lucerne, dove's foot cranesbill, meadow cranesbill, a few ox eye daisies, hawkweed, pink and white clover, viper's bugloss, pink and white yarrow, and numerous umbellifers. The 4th is another hot day. I walk in Cobtree Manor Park with Murphy where I see lime trees bearing fruit. The foliage is thick and in the grass daisies, selfheal and dove's foot cranesbill bloom. The sun beams down on us but we are able to find some shade. Westerly breezes blow through the trees. The water in the garden pond sparkles in the sunlight. The evening sky is very beautiful. I drive to Cobham the next morning and as I return I am rewarded with the sight of so many beautiful flowers. I continue to the river where, along the grassy banks a host of flowers bloom, scabious, bedstraws, birds foot trefoil, stonecrop, marjoram, buddleia, white campion, ox eye daisies, hawkweed, nipplewort, mallow, marshmallow, white melilot, wild clematis, evening primrose, viper's bugloss, lucerne, goat's rue and St John's wort. Rain falls in the evening. Heavy rain falls on 6th so cricket is cancelled so we drive to Wildwood at Herne. The rain ceases and we are able

to walk round the enclosures in bright sunshine. The conservation work which goes on there is extremely important. The next day, strong south west winds cause billowing grey and white clouds to march across the sky. We drive to Upchurch for cricket. I walk round the fields where mallow blooms and blackberries are beginning to ripen. Later, dark menacing clouds threaten rain but only a few drops fall. The sun soon shines brightly again. Heavy showers fall the following morning but the afternoon brightens up and I enjoy the beauty of the hedgerows as we drive to Cobham. The early morning of 10th is grey but the sun soon breaks through and the skies become blue with billowing white clouds drifting across from the west. I sit in the garden in the afternoon and hear the call of a chaffinch then wood pigeons. A blackbird splashes in the pond, a greenfinch feeds on seed and a red admiral butterfly hovers over the petunias. The next day, in Cobtree Manor Park, I see that the bird cherry tree has recovered from the attack by the ermine moth. The verges along the M20 are full of wild flowers of white, blue and gold. North east winds blow on 12th bringing a chill to the air. At Bluewater on 14th I watch a damselfly hovering over the grasses. In the evening of 15th I walk along Pilgrim's Road where mallow is in bloom. The hedgerows look rather dusty. I walk down the alley where wild clematis flowers fill the air with their sweet perfume. The evening air is balmy. The 16th is grey and wet well into the late afternoon when the sun shines again. The early morning of the following day is sunny but grey cloud soon begins to drift across from the west and by

mid-day strong winds blow. The afternoon is a time of heavy showers. The next day temperatures plummet to 59 degrees F. There is glorious sunshine the next afternoon. The following evening I watch squirrels gambolling in the garden. On 21st, I watch a pair of magpies making short work of the bread which I put out. Greenfinches, a blackbird and a chaffinch peck at the sunflower hearts on the patio wall. More rain falls in the evening. The next day I walk with Murphy at Bluewater where the flowers are still beautiful. In the afternoon I watch water boatmen skimming across the garden pond. A beautiful peacock butterfly settles in the back porch. During the morning of 23rd I walk through Six-acre Wood where fungi like dinner plates and saucers display themselves on the bank where herb Robert flowers bloom and lords and ladies reveal red berries. In the field, aglow with sunshine, haws and hips are turning red and mallow blooms by the hedgerows. Blackberries are ripening. I climb the hill where green spindle berries hang and pink and white campion bloom opposite a field of white flax with a hint of blue and bright red poppies appear among the tall grasses. I make my way into Mays Wood where the wind sings in the tall tree tops and fluttering wings of a bird are heard. Thistles, burdock, white dead nettle, buttercups a wood aven, nipplewort, scentless

mayweed, ragwort, hawkweed, pink and white clover, white umbellifers, black night shade, burdock, enchanter nightshade and dogwood berries are also seen along the way. There is a feel of Autumn in the air because of the rather strong North West winds. When I walk along the road on Sunday, I see ripened blackberries. The evening sky of grey and white cloud reflects the beauty of the setting sun. On 25th I notice signs of stress in the trees a result of the lack of rain. While walking at Bluewater the following day, I see hazel nuts beginning to ripen. A family of green finches comes to the garden on 27th. In the early evening I watch a young jay as it feeds on seed. The evening skies become a clear blue and the sun shines. On 28th I spend time in the garden and watch butterflies hovering over the grass and ivy - a red admiral and two small whites. Birds come to feed including seven greenfinches. When I drive to Addington on 29th I'm aware of different colours in the trees. In the evening of 30th a great spotted woodpecker comes to the feeder and four young greenfinches peck at the seed along the top of the patio wall. The final day of the month is sunny and warm. The morning air is filled with the sound of church bells.

Elizabeth Summers

An Evening Walk by Andrew Young

I never saw a lovelier sky;
The faces of the passers-by
Shine with gold light as they step west
As though by secret joy possessed,
Some rapture that is not of earth
But in that heavenly climate has its birth.

I know it is the sunlight paints
The faces of these travelling saints,
But shall I hold in cold misprision
The calm and beauty of that vision
Upturned a moment from the sorrow
That makes to-day today, tomorrow tomorrow.



Halling WI

The idea of our July meeting was for all of us to get "upwardly mobile". We all managed to stand for Jerusalem, then it was all downhill for some of us for the rest of the evening. The minutes were read, and the correspondence dealt with. Lots of correspondence from the National Federation including a suggestion that we sell 100 cups of tea at a pound a cup to help pay for the new heating system for Denman College, That's a laugh! Home Economics have a Flower arranging meeting at Ryarsh on 21st September. These are always popular, also at Ryarsh a Drama Evening on 14th October, Who's going to do a turn? We are managing to keep our heads above water (just) financially thanks to Betty. We made £23 at the afternoon tea, it was very enjoyable, all sitting under the car port. We are going to have our

annual Ploughman's Lunch in Betty's garden, weather permitting on 24th August.

Then the action began. Mrs. Bennett from Tunbridge Wells told us some of the history of Tai Chi, the yings and yangs (outs and ins to you and me I think) or maybe left or right. Tai Chi, so Mrs. Bennett said is a Marshall Art in a line with Kung Fu and taekwando, more to it than moving about very slowly. Every move means something. Then those who could were invited to "have a go". Those who couldn't did the arm movements from their chairs and really enjoyed watching the upwardly mobile. Even Lily Hesketh had a go, not so energetic as to make you stiff the next morning. The only move I could remember was Holding the Ball, one hand up above the other. It was nearly as difficult as rubbing your head with one hand and your tummy with the other. Try it!

Mrs. Bennett judged the competitions. Ann Hayward's antique jumper won the competition, while Ann Heaseman won the flower of the month with one of my favourite flowers, a sunflower.

Next month we are being transported to South Africa by Mrs. Tallboys. It will surely be

something to do with plants - the competition, a flower arrangement, doesn't matter what size but REAL flowers please.

Come and join us you will be very welcome. Phyllis.

J Williams Tree Care

01622 206571 07590 408482

All tree surgery work:

Pollarding
Crown reduction
Crown lifting
Tree removal
Stump grinding
Coppicing
Forestry work
Hedge cutting and shaping
Thinning and dead wooding
Grass cutting and strimming

Fully Insured. 6 years experience

Forthcoming Attractions 2011

September 29th Michaelmas: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist with Rt Rev'd James Langstaff our new diocesan bishop.

15th October: Quiz in Church Hall.

November 5th: Fireworks Cuxton Recreation Ground

December 10th: Christmas Coffee Morning Church Hall.

Paying our Debts

Some months ago I pointed out that our parish owes the Diocese of Rochester thousands of pounds. Someone suggested we should write off what we probably will never be able to pay, but we are part of the wider Church and are morally bound to pay our share. You might think, like me, that the Church of England could cut back on synod meetings and bureaucracy, especially the expense involved in

introducing common tenure in place of the parson's freehold. If so you need to say so, loudly and clearly to our synod representatives, but none of that would save a huge amount. So we do need to find this money. I suggested that if every adult in the parish gave £5.00, we'd be well on our way. So far, I make what's come in £1,572 Thanks to all who have given so far and thanks that money is still coming in. It can be given to me or to churchwardens or treasurer. Cheques should be payable to Cuxton & Halling PCC. Gift Aid means we can claim back any tax you've paid and adds considerably to the value of your donation. Roger.

Cemetery and Churchyards

Thank you again to all those who have donated money towards maintaining these areas, including both our parish councils. We still need support if anyone is still willing to help us this year and for next year. Thanks to all those who tidy any part of the churchyard and to those who remove their own rubbish. A special thank you to those who clear up other people's mess!

Thanks to Medway Council who look after Halling Churchyard. They have promised to cut back a lot of the trees in the Autumn which will restore views of the church and make the churchyard more accessible.

There has been vandalism at Halling Church and cemetery. I am sorry about this. I regularly read out the Ten Commandments, but the people who don't know them aren't there to hear them. If you see anything going on, please report it to the police. It was suggested that we might lock Halling Cemetery gates at night, but it would be a big job for someone to turn out every morning and every evening to unlock and lock and I think the vandals would probably climb over the fence whereas legitimate visitors to graves might find themselves locked out. Roger.

Sponsored Bike Ride (or Walk)

Our next opportunity to get fit while raising money for a good cause will be the Friends of Kent Churches sponsored bike ride and/or walk and/or run on 10th September. Just get sponsors and visit as many Kent churches as you can. Proceeds split 50/50 between us and FKCC. Alternatively man or woman one of our churches that day to welcome people from other parishes. You can be sponsored for this as well.



Christian Aid Quiz

Our next event for Christian Aid will be a quiz at St Francis Strood on 3rd September at 7.30 pm and we are invited to enter a team or two. Speak to Steve Brown or Rector if you would like to take part.

Cuxton WI

This evening was devoted to our canine friends, but before we came to those we had all the usual business to get through. Dorothy had held a very successful Strawberry Tea and raised just over £100 for our funds, which these days we have to watch carefully as everything seems to have increased in price especially speakers' fees now that fuel prices are so high. We heard about a good visit to the WI Denman college and everybody was most impressed with the facilities there. Sensibly they have now made the "hotel" side open to members to book for short holidays without having to take up a course and this probably means that they are making extra income to support the college. Various details were given to us about river trips, theatre visits, home economics days and craft activities.

Our WI alone runs craft, poetry, cookery, drama, home economics, painting water colour and china and walking groups. So you need to be fit if you want to take part in the whole lot! However for those of a more sedentary nature we have excellent speakers and lots of teas and coffees to help us through. The WI produces a West Kent News magazine which is worth a look as it is full of interesting articles and reports of what other WI groups in our area have been getting up to. This

works out at approximately £4. 20p per year and if you join the committee you do not even have to pay that as it is a free perk for your services.

But I've gone off track and must tell you about the canines. The speaker Ms Midge Walster told us about her organisation which is purely voluntary with about 60 dog trainers helping people to train their dogs to become guides and all round helpers in their homes. The dogs are peoples' pets and have to have a suitable temperament for training. She told us about the methods employed in training and then we were introduced to Dorothy's daughter's dog Millie who was our star for the evening. She showed us several things that she had learnt e.g. picking up dropped keys, putting away toys, finding slippers, removing her owner's socks and we were told watching her mistress on the stairs and if she is feeling poorly helping her to a seat. A lovely dog and such an interesting evening as could be told by the number of questions that were asked at the end.

Our next meeting is on Thursday September 1st at 7 30pm in the Church Hall. Come along and join us. You will not be on your own for long. And you can hear all about Yesterday's Papers with Mr Monty Parkin. Sheila [Hon Sec].

Something to Shout About

Every third Thursday of the month a group of us meet in the URC Chapel hall in Bush Road Cuxton at 7.30 pm to discuss some topical issue. Anyone can come. The meetings are open to all. The discussions are quite lively. We even get tea and biscuits! September 15th we shall be discussing whether environmentalism is a con to deprive poor people of the benefits of technology. (If you can get the poor onto the bus, there is less congestion on the roads for the rich.) See you there?

Max's Tail Piece

Good. I've got lots of space this month. Not many people have sent in articles and even Master's confined himself to one. It must be the Summer season. It's the same in the mornings. When we go for our walks, there's much less traffic on the roads. It makes such a difference when the children are on holiday and it shows how many children go to school by car. Which reminds me. Why is that some mornings on Radio 4 people whinge on that everyone's now going to live to be a 100 and that this will create a terrible burden to provide pensions and care home beds and other mornings other people are whingeing on on the same radio station about how all our kids don't get another exercise and eat too much fat and sugar so that they're all obese and going to die of diabetes, cancer or heart disease before their parents? I wouldn't listen myself, but Master turns the radio on when we come in from church and I can't go too far away from the kitchen until my breakfast has been cooked, allowed to cool and put down on my mat. By the way, two eggs for breakfast

every day have never done me any harm, even though Master says I am spoilt. I think he says that because he only gets one egg! He uses iron self control to control his appetite and eats much less than he would like to! He eats less breakfast than he fancies and listens to a radio station which is all bad news and then he reads a newspaper with more of the same. I'm glad I'm only a dog!

Incidentally, why is it a problem to live to a ripe old age? If you're that healthy, surely you can carry on working and support yourself and you won't need a pension. Master dreads retirement. He was moaning today about it being wash day and having to hang out the clothes before he could start work. Then he said that he supposed that, when he retires, wash day will be one of the high points of the week. Better spread out the excitement, he said, and do the washing on a different day from the day he puts out the rubbish for the dustmen. That will ensure that there are two days to look forward to each week.

Also, why do people go on and on about their weight? If they care that much, it's easy enough to eat less and take more exercise and if they'd rather enjoy eating the food they like and be fat, that is up to them. Putting the two together reminds Master of the story of the two old men in a care home, sitting in chairs tipped so they couldn't get out of them, with the TV turned up too loud, showing a programme they don't want to see. One says to the other, "If we hadn't given up smoking, drinking and fatty food, we'd have missed all this!"

Back to the school holidays. I like the holidays. I like to see children happy and enjoying themselves. I like to see them out and about. Some educationalists say that holidays are bad because children lose ground in the relentless pursuit of qualifications that will help them to get jobs, but there is more to life than paid work. Master's father always reckoned it was unfair that, just as you were getting old enough to enjoy a bit of independence at about five years old, you were dragooned into school, then, in his case, at 18, into the army to fight Hitler and then into work until you retired, by which time your best years were over. With children going to school earlier and retirement getting later, don't begrudge them their holidays!

Master is very blessed to be paid a living wage for doing the work which he thinks fulfils his life. But a lot of people have to do work they don't find fulfilling in order to earn the money to live for the things that they really want to live for. They're the people for whom work/life balance is more than a slogan.

I do like children. I notice how children make families happier and help to bring the adults through tough times. Their enjoyments and their needs are so straightforward. I like playing with children and I like the way they make a fuss of me and give me sweets and biscuits. Sometimes I take the biscuits before the children even realise they are going to give them to me.

Every Thursday afternoon at St John's we welcome pre-school children and their carers at 2.00 and primary school age children and their carers at 3.45 term time. It's only on the last Wednesday of the month at the moment that we do the same things at St Michael's at 2.00, but it used to be every Wednesday, and it will go back to that if the numbers pick up again. All three are great fun. Master tells a Bible story. They're usually well known ones, but everybody ought to know the Bible and, if we don't teach the children, who will? We sing about three or four songs, always the one about the wise man who built his house on the rock. Children love that one. Also Jesus bids us shine. We also have a prayer we say. After about 15-20 minutes someone makes tea, the children have squash and we get out the toys and biscuits. Sometimes the children take me for a walk round the church. When I've had enough I take the lead out of their hands and bring it back to Master. Master says it's something different for the children in a too structured world, where every child has the same toys and goes to nurseries where again they have the same toys and every child is expected to develop within a structure towards predetermined goals. In church they are just allowed to be human on the assumption that the truly human is divine – but that's Athanasius and therefore all Greek to a springer spaniel.

Well next time I write it will be October – Harvest Festival (and Supper!), Autumn colours, darker mornings and evenings, probably cooler weather and thoughts beginning to turn to Christmas. When Noah and all the animals came out of the ark, God promised that the seasons would not cease till the end of the world. Isn't it marvellous how they come round each year, each one with its own special joy? Max, the Rectory Spaniel.