

Date	Services at Cuxton	Services at Halling	Readings
Sunday 29 th November Advent Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 1 Thessalonians 3 vv 9-13 Luke 21 vv 25-36
Sunday 6 th December Advent 2	9.30 Family Communion & Gift Service	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 Luke 1 vv 1-25
		11.00 Holy Communion & Gift Service	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 Philippians 1 vv 3-11 Luke 3 vv 1-6
Sunday 13 th December Advent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Zephaniah 3 vv 14 – end Philippians 4 vv 4-7 Luke 3 vv 7-18
		5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 35 Luke 1 vv 57-66
Sunday 20 th December Advent 4	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	(8.00) Isaiah 10 v33 – 11 v10 Matthew 1 vv 18-end
	9.30 Holy Communion	3.00 Carol , Crib & Christingle Service	(9.30 & 11.00) Micah 5 vv 2-5 Hebrews 10 vv 5-10 Luke 1 vv 39-45
	6.30 Nine Lessons & Carols		
Thursday 24 th December Christmas Eve	5.00 Carol , Crib & Christingle Service	9.30 Holy Communion	(Midnight Mass) Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 John 1 vv 1-14
	11.00 Midnight Mass		
Friday 25 th December Christmas Day	9.30 Family Communion	8.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 Titus 2 vv 11-14 Luke 2 vv 1-20
Saturday 26 th December St Stephen	9.30 Holy Communion		Acts 7 vv 51-end Matthew 10 vv 17-22
Sunday 27 th December St John	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 33 vv 7-11a 1 John 1 John 21 vv 19b -end
Monday 28 th December Holy Innocents	9.30 Holy Communion		Jeremiah 31 vv 15-17 Matthew 2 vv 13-18
Friday 1 st January Circumcision	9.30 Holy Communion		Numbers 6 vv 22-end Luke 2 vv 15-21
Sunday 3 rd January Christmas 2	9.30 Family Communion	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	1 John 4 vv 7-16 Matthew 2 vv 13-end
		11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 Ephesians 1 vv 3-14 John 1 vv 10-18
Wednesday 6 th January The Epiphany	9.30 Holy Communion		Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 Matthew 2 vv 1-12
Sunday 10 th of January Baptism of Christ	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 43 vv 1-7 Acts 8 vv 14-17 Luke 3 vv 15-22
		5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Romans 6 vv 1-11 Mark 1 vv 4-11
Sunday 17 th January Epiphany 2	8.00 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	(8.00) Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 John 1 vv 29-42
	9.30 Holy Communion		(9.30 & 11.00) Isaiah 62 vv 1-5 1 Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 John 2 vv 1-11
Sunday 24 th January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-10 1 Corinthians 12 vv 12-31a Luke 4 vv 14-21
Sunday 31 st January Epiphany 4	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 43 v27 – 44 v4 1 Corinthians 13 Luke 2 vv 22-40

There will be Holy Communion daily at St Michael's at 9.30 am from 25th December – 2nd January except 31st December. There will be Holy Communion at Halling at 11.00 on 27th December and at 9.30 am on 31st December. There will be no other services during this period.

Holy Communion Wednesdays at Cuxton 9.30				Holy Communion Thursdays at Halling 9.30			
2 nd December	Isaiah 25 vv 6-10 Matthew 15 vv 29-37	6 th January Epiphany	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 Matthew 2 vv 1-12	3 rd December	Isaiah 26 vv 1-6 Matthew 7 vv 21-27	7 th January	1 John 3 v22 – 4 v6 Matthew 4 vv 12 -end
9 th December Ember Day	Isaiah 40 vv 25-end Matthew 11 vv 28-end	13 th January	1 Samuel 3 vv 3-20 Mark 1 vv 29-39	10 th December	Isaiah 41 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 11-15	14 th January	1 Samuel 4 vv 1-11 Mark 1 vv 40-end
16 th December	Isaiah 45 vv 6-end Luke 7 vv 18-23	20 th January	1 Samuel 17 vv 32-51 Mark 3 vv 1-6	17 th December	Genesis 49 vv 2-10 Matthew 1 vv 1-17	21 st January	1 Samuel 18 v6 – 19 v7 Mark 3 vv 7-12
23 rd December	Malachi 3 Luke 1 vv 57-66	27 th January	2 Samuel 7 vv 4-17 Mark 4 vv 1-20	Christmas Eve	Acts 13 vv 16-26 Luke 1 vv 67-79	28 th January	2 Samuel 7 vv 18-end Mark 4 vv 21-25
30 th December	1 John 2 vv 18-21 Luke 2 vv 36-40	3 rd February	2 Samuel 24 vv 2-17 Mark 6 vv 1-6	31 st December	1 John 2 vv 18-21 John 1 vv 1-18	4 th February	1 Kings 2 vv 1-12 Mark 6 vv 7-13

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

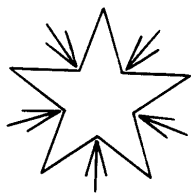
On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton every Wednesday also at 2.00. **Saints Alive!** (formerly Sunday School) is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays). **After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's.

Copy Date February Magazine: 8th January 8.30 am Rectory.

On 6th December, we usually bring gifts for families in need. Toys should obviously be in good condition and should not be wrapped. Decent clothing and blankets are also useful.

Who Are We?

The sign of the cross makes all those who are born again in Christ kings, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them all as priests. Leo the Great.



From the Rector

In the film *Lonely Guy* the hero loses his wife, his job and his apartment. He is advised to get a dog. He is told, "A dog will show you affection even if he doesn't like you. He can't help it. It's his nature." I rather liked that. It does raise that difficult question is it possible to love someone you don't like, but, setting that aside, I liked the idea that a dog loves you just because it is his nature to love you. It seemed to ring theological bells, too. God loves you because it is His Nature to love. In fact, St John tells us, *God is love*. At Christmas we think about what the Greek theologians called *Θεοποιεσις*. What that word means is the process by which we are made to share in the divine nature. In Jesus God took on Himself our human nature. He became like us so that we should become like Him. So, given that

God is love, Christians ought also to be expected to be love. We love because it is our nature to love. We love God. We love fellow members of the Church. We love our neighbours. We love our enemies. Because it is our nature to love. Insofar as we fail to love God, fellow Christians, our neighbours generally and our enemies in particular, it is because the process is not yet complete. We are not yet fully transformed. We are not yet like God. We are not yet pure love, but we will be. St John tells us that we are already the children of God (as baptised believers) and that we shall be like Him when we see Him face to face in Heaven. Then we shall be pure love.

So far so good, but I'm far from comfortable with this. To say God is like a dog sounds as if it might be blasphemous. To say that a dog is more like God than we are is also pretty alarming. We are made in the image of God. Dogs aren't! I was on a country walk once and my dog seemed to be

having such fun just chasing sticks that I remarked to someone that it seems a shame that human beings are not so easily pleased. The caustic reply was, *You would be as easily amused if you lost ¾ of your brain.* Some people do seem to resent dogs and I guess that is, in part, the reason for the clamour to place ever more restrictions on their freedom, just like some motorists seem to resent the freedom cyclists enjoy and mutter about restricting them to cycle lanes and compelling them to wear helmets. Yet a spaniel seems to experience a depth of joy and a frequency of happiness which very few human beings do. Jesus said that He came to bring us human beings joy in all its fulness. My walking companion, however, had a point. We human beings don't experience the love and joy dogs do because our natures are much more complex. We are nothing like so easily pleased. We have free wills which reject love and joy and God and other people. That is our freedom, our right, and we do it all the time.

So why didn't God make us more like dogs, more easily pleased, impelled by our very natures to love and to enjoy life? Well, really would you rather be loved by a human being who chooses freely to love you or by a dog who can't help himself? It's the old free will answer to the problem of evil. God could have populated His world with perfect robots. There need have been no pain, sin or suffering. But He didn't; He gave us free will. It is very much better to be good from choice than to be good because you are programmed to be good, to love because you want to, rather than to love because you have no freedom to do otherwise. Human freedom must be worth all the pain and suffering that follow from its misuse. It is God's Nature to love but it is also His free choice. It is our nature (as made in His image) to love but it has to be of our own free will.

Merry Christmas, Roger.

Thanks

We had a nice letter from Medway Council Children's Services thanking us for the food we sent them at Harvest. Mrs Tyler says that our gifts were very gratefully received by the families they are trying to help and comments that it is overwhelming that people are still so willing to give in the current financial climate.



Dickens' Country Protection Society

Any suggestions for clearing Frog Island Pond, which is again overgrown with reeds? Suggestions please to Mrs Lippiatt on 01322 275389. A happy & restful Christmas to all our members.

Church Hall Draw: October £40 to Grace Pearce, drawn by Sylvia Garland.

St John's Draw: October £5 each to Mrs Thorne (3), Mrs Earl (41), Mr Knott (44), Mrs Rogers (163 & 164) – drawn by Peter Silver.

Please contact Buffy Maisey or Betty Heard to join in these monthly draws and support church funds.

FLORIDA COURT SETS ATHEIST HOLIDAY.

In Florida, an atheist created a case against the upcoming Easter and Passover Holy days. He hired an attorney to bring a discrimination case against Christians and Jews and observances of their holy days. The argument was that it was unfair that atheists had no such recognized days. The case was brought before a judge. After listening to the passionate presentation by the lawyer, the judge banged his gavel declaring, "Case dismissed!" The lawyer immediately stood objecting to the ruling saying, "Your honour, How can you possibly dismiss this case? The Christians have Christmas, Easter and others. The Jews have Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, yet my client and all other atheists have no such holidays."

The judge leaned forward in his chair saying, "But you do. Your client, counsel, is woefully ignorant."

The lawyer said, "Your Honour, we are unaware of any special observance or holiday for atheists."

The judge said, "The calendar says April 1st is April Fools Day. Psalm 14:1 states, 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God.' Thus, it is the opinion of this court, that if your client says there is no God, then he is a fool. Therefore, April 1st is his day. Court is adjourned."

Prayer Requests: Please contact Buffy Maisey

From the Registers

Baptisms:

25th October	Lloyd Benger	Snodland
25 th October	Sam Joseph Holmes	Snodland
25 th October	Lily Ann Everson	Strood
25 th October	James David Everson	

Wedding:

31 st October	Ian Roger Buhler and Jenny Louise Sullivan	Cuxton
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Funerals:

22 nd October	Ellen Gertrude Hannan (76)	Woodhurst Close
26 th October	Janice Garrett	(formerly of Halling)
27 th October	Doris Jean Curnow (79)	Pilgrims Way

Doris Curnow RIP

We were all sorry to learn of the sudden death of Doris Curnow. Doris had been a member of our church since 1961 where she sang for many years in the choir as a soprano and then as an alto. She served on PCC, including at the period during which the merger of Cuxton and Halling took place, and was very generous in her support of the church, the hall and a number of charities. Doris enjoyed our social events and took a keen interest in our children's work. She was also a member of the Mothers Union. In the wider community, Doris was a founder member of the 50 club and a Cuxton parish councillor. Among her many talents, Doris wrote poetry. Here is a verse written for her by Elizabeth (Buffy) Maisey and Doris' own poem for last Christmas. Roger.

In Memoriam : Doris Curnow

When I joined St Michael's choir it made the altos number three
And Doris told me what to sing and when and where to be
She sang the first note lustily and I followed very soon
So no-one knew I couldn't hear the first note of each tune!

She had so many talents and for others so much care.
And her love for God and nature she was always quick to share.
Though latterly she suffered more than most of us could bear
She'll be singing now in heaven or playing the harp up there.

Christmas 2008

There's a baby in my manger,
Where I always get my hay,
Wouldn't mind, but I'm hungry
And I've had a long, long day.
From Nazareth to Bethlehem
I've walked the beaten track,
With Joseph beside me
And Mary on my back.

Then suddenly shepherds appearing
Telling of angels bright,
Who told them where to find the babe
That had been born this night.
And now we all are kneeling,
I do not think this odd,
For the baby in my manger
Is Christ, the Son of God!

Doris Curnow RIP 1930-2009

The pale blue card with the symbol of the ascending white dove attached to her coffin cross said, "For Doris Jean. God speed you homewards Christian soul. From Malcolm and Laurence."

Doris was born in Gravesend, dad a Scot and Mum English with a bit of French, and had homes in Dagenham Essex, Stromness on the mainland of the Orkney Islands, then at Blackfen and Bexleyheath in Kent before spending the last 41 years of her life in Cuxton, after marrying Malcolm in 1968.

More than 40 cards of sympathy, some containing quite long and detailed tributes to her life here recall a lady of many sides and parts. Most remember Doris as a choir singer or as an impressive Bible reader of the lesson in church. "One had to listen," one writer recalled. Others remember how much she cared for people, animals and the church buildings. After her death, we found that Doris had been supporting at least 30 charities, most in favour of people, the rest animals. Her generosity extended to, for example, providing that the church hall roof be re-covered and the hall main doors be replaced. A good friend to many, despite the fact that her life was marred by psychiatric illness, Doris will be remembered and missed by many people in the parish.

Laurence and I would wish to thank everyone who helped at Doris' Memorial Service, especially Christine Eede and Jenny Beaney with the lunch. The retiring collection raised £294 for charities, as per the order of service. Malcolm.

Nature Notes October 2009

The first day of this month is fine and dry with blue skies, wispy clouds and warm sunshine. I walk Murphy near the river which sparkles in the sunlight. Few flowers bloom on the banks. Winds blow from the northwest but it does not feel cold. The next day the sun is beautiful as it beams down from clear blue skies. We drive to Woodchurch to see friends. A chilly north east wind blows but we sit in the sun in the shelter of the garden. In the afternoon Jean and I walk with Murphy across the fields where sheep had grazed. The colours in the trees are beautiful in the sunlight. At the far side of the field, layered hornbeams display twisted silver grey trunks which bear pale green lichen. The shapes of these intertwined trunks are fascinating. Back at the house I watch tree creepers pecking at the tree trunks.

Early mornings are chilly now and the wind, still from the northwest, reminds me that it is autumn. By mid morning of 4th the sun is shining brightly and with warmth which I notice when I come out of church. The afternoon remains warm as I walk with Murphy by the river which is high but smooth as a millpond. Much needed rain falls on 5th. The next day, after rain, it becomes very humid. I walk along the top path of Six-acre Wood where I see three magnificent clumps of fungi then I notice an ash tree the leaves of which are becoming autumnal. Having met up with a friend and her spaniel, we walk through part of Mays Wood, down into Dean Valley and over to Bush between tall corns on the cob plants which will become animal feed. A rainbow appears in the sky. Tiny speedwell flowers bloom in the field. The sun has been shining but grey clouds which

have not completely dispersed envelop the sky again by the late afternoon.

Clear blue skies and golden sunshine greet the 8th and as I walk by the river with Murphy I am aware of the wide expanse of glistening mudflats. Trees bear autumn leaves. Along the banks yellow crucifers, clover and Lucerne bloom. The skies remain clear all day. We walk round the ponds on 10th. A graceful heron flies across the water then settles on tussock grass and mallards glide on one of the ponds near to a cormorant. I notice that some hawthorns have lost their leaves. On the morning of 12th I open the back door to await the rising sun. An easterly wind drives light cloud across a pale blue sky and eventually the sun becomes warm lighting up the garden where I spend some time.

On TV in the evening, I watch "Life". Two grebe dance on the water, a beautiful sight. The next day. I watch a magnificent grasshopper climb up the window. After warm, sunny days, the 16th is grey and an east wind blows dark clouds across the sky. As I walk through the churchyard, I watch autumn leaves drifting to the ground. There is some sunshine as grey clouds drift across the blue; darkness has fallen early. On 17th a peacock butterfly hovers in the church during the service.

On 18th, northwest breezes bring a chill to the air while the sun shines brightly from a pale blue sky. In the afternoon I walk across Church Fields where bright red hips and haws, deep purple sloes, and dusty pink spindle berries hang on their slender twigs. I watch squirrels scampering across the woodland floor where golden and brown autumn leaves lie. Sweet chestnuts lie among the leaves having burst out of their spiky shells. I continue through Mays Wood to Wingate Wood

and on to the area where pylons buzz with electricity and a blackbird sings. The trees are so beautiful dressed in their autumn colours beneath a sunlit azure sky. Moss grows around the base of a tree and ferns, some green others golden brighten the woodland floor. The trees stand so tall, their slender branches reaching high into the sky. Dean Valley and the fields are lit up by the sun's golden rays. By 21st the sycamores on the embankment look more autumnal and some leaves have fallen. On the morning of 22nd I watch rooks flying and calling among the trees. Harlequin ladybirds have been crawling over the window frames and walls and have been basking in the sun. A great spotted woodpecker comes to the feeders on 23rd. The 24th is grey, damp and mild, yet the golden sycamore leaves brighten the scene. The woodpecker comes to feed and a squirrel takes of its fill. Rain falls during the morning and well into the afternoon. Eventually clouds break to

reveal sunshine which lights up the garden. The night skies are clear revealing a bright moon. On 25th as I walk across Church fields lit up by the sun and where cows and horses graze I hear rooks calling loudly in the wood where the paths are adorned with brown and yellow leaves. Later I stand in the peace of Dean Valley drinking in the beauty of the trees and the fields. The scent of autumn fills the air. The 28th is grey as we drive to Paddock Wood but the trees brighten the scene. The sun shines again on 29th when I watch a great spotted woodpecker hopping among the lilac branches but it flies away without coming to the feeders. I mow the grass on 30th and the air is filled with its special fragrance. The last day of the month is grey and mild with some rain which continues though the morning. By mid day some of the cloud disperses to reveal some brightness and eventually the sun shines. The Indian summer comes to an end. **Elizabeth Summers**

My poem for this month is;

October Robert Frost

O hushed October morning mild
 Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
 Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,
 Should waste them all.
 The crows above the forest call;
 Tomorrow they may form and go.
 O hushed October morning mild,
 Begin the hours of this day slow.
 Make the day seem to us less brief.
 Hearts not averse to being beguiled,

Beguile us in the way you know.
 Release one leaf at break of day;
 At noon release another leaf;
 One from our trees, one far away.
 Retard the sun with gentle mist;
 Enchant the land with amethyst.
 Slow, slow! For the grapes' sake, if they were all,
 Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
 Whose clustered fruit must else be lost-
 For the grapes' sake along the wall.



CUXTON WI REPORT NOVEMBER

A quieter month this time with a lot less business. The new committee had held their first meeting and begun their various jobs within the WI. We are so lucky to get people to help in this way as without their dedication we would have to close. Reading in our magazine, the West Kent News, it was encouraging to see that 2 new WI s have opened this year. Let's hope that their membership has some younger women who will realise that although we can make good jam we are also a powerful voice in the country and are concerned with many local, national and international events. June reported that Cuxton WI had helped to fill 23 shoe boxes with goodies for our serving forces.

There were several invitations to WI Christmas celebrations, all of which include food so slimming is on reserve until January at least!

All our inter groups are doing well with a variety of activities going on - making cushions, taking part in plays in Tonbridge, walking in the local area, cooking delicious new recipes, and reading Shakespeare.

Our Speaker this month told us a short history of Cheese which intrigued us and was most informative in a very light hearted way. Delicious cheese to taste afterwards. So ended our quiet meeting but next month is party time which I think will turn out to be a lot noisier but just as enjoyable. A Happy Christmas to you all from Cuxton WI.
 Sheila [WI Sec.]



Concert in Halling Church. Friday 11th December at 7.30 p.m.

By special request, the Brook Concert Orchestra returns with some light music for a dark evening. The programme will include "March of the Gladiators", "Cavatina", music, from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" plus a Christmas item. No tickets required, just come along. There will be a retiring collection towards church funds. The usual refreshments will be provided.



Saturday 12th December

is a date that many of you will already have in your diaries because it is our Christmas Coffee morning. The doors open at 10.00 am and you will find the usual array of goods for sale and seasonal refreshments.



Saturday 30th January

Come along to a "sing-a-long" Social Evening in the Cuxton Church Hall on Saturday, 30th January, 2010, starting at 7.30 p.m. Sarah Eede, Cuxton's own Professional Singer, will be leading everyone in singing favourite songs past and present and words to the songs will be provided. Refreshments will be served. Tickets are £6.00. Please apply to Shirley Crundwell or Jenny Beaney.



Halling WI

October at Halling W.I, saw our annual meeting. Margaret Sullivan was in the chair and nearly all of our members were present. As usual we started with Jerusalem and had our monthly business, minutes, birthday flowers etc . This time of the year, correspondence consists mainly of invitations to other WI's Christmas parties. Aylesford and Eccles managed to get in first, Ann Hayward and Eileen Buss will accept that one. Thanks were given to Betty Head for arranging the recent lunch we all enjoyed at the *George*, as always they serve enough up to feed the five thousand but very enjoyable all the same, jolly good company, but they can't make a fish pie like I can, much too much potatoes not enough fish and a bit of parsley wouldn't have come amiss either. The next part of our meeting was the Annual bit. It wasn't quite done as it should have been, proposing and seconding and the like, but as we hadn't managed to encourage any new customers to come on to the committee, there was no need for an election. Margaret Sullivan agreed to continue as President for another year with Ann Hayward and Betty Head keeping their posts.

We definitely need some new younger blood at Halling W.I. as the enthusiasm isn't there anymore, but on a lighter note we are all going to gather at the Beeches Restaurant for our Christmas lunch on 8th December. Sandra, one of our newer younger members judged our competitions, Ann Heaseman was first with her Flower of the Month, a pink nerine, and Ann Hayward was first with her Pumpkin lantern, but the good thinking of Jemma Graves left us in a lovely Halloween mood. She bought some matches and lit the pumpkin lanterns, Jemma and her mum had both made lovely lanterns, me, oh I have broken too many knives trying to carve lanterns over the years, its much easier to make Pumpkin soup.

At the November meeting, the Tea man is coming again, it is a long time since we had him talking about the "amber nectar" and telling us how to make it (talk about teaching your grandmother how to suck eggs). The competition is a Teapot. Some of us still have them in this day of the tea bag, and some may still have a strainer. Why not come and have a cuppa with us.

Phyllis



Max's Tail End Contribution

I was pleased to hear some people tell Master that my bit was their favourite part of the magazine. Mind you, I also heard someone say that I write rubbish, but I think he was really criticising the way Master sometimes lets me say things he wouldn't dare say himself. Perhaps he should be braver!

Anyway, it occurs to me that you never get a new year message. There are only eleven magazines a year (which you get for the price of ten if you are a regular subscriber! What value! 25p saved!) and January gets missed out. For some reason, our printers and distributors don't seem to want to work Christmas week. This means that Master writes a Christmas message for the end of December while it is still November, which confuses him hugely, and there is never anything about New Year. So what about New Year? Well I'm afraid we don't get a New Year's Eve party at the Rectory. He says he can't manage two midnights in a week and remarks stuffily that the important festival is January 1st, when we celebrate the Naming of Jesus. Male Jewish children are named and circumcised on the eighth day of their lives and the Church celebrates this being done to Jesus on what everybody else thinks of as New Year's Day. Still, he has a point. The Name Jesus means "the LORD saves" and Emanuel means "God with us" – something indeed to celebrate.

Christmas week we have the morning services later, which gets us through the darkest days of the year, without having to get up quite so early, not that he is smart enough to take advantage. He still gets up when he wakes up and takes me for a walk if I am lucky or goes for a run when he is feeling selfish. But that, surely, is the point of the New Year, looking forward to things getting better. The days grow longer. The weather starts to get a bit warmer, though often the coldest weather comes in February. Did you know that it is more likely to snow at Easter than it is at Christmas?

You start to see catkins and pussy willow. There are snow drops in the churchyard, then crocuses and other spring flowers. Buds on the trees swell and turn into fresh green leaves. The almond tree at Halling will be covered with pink blossom. We see lambs in the countryside and the crops growing in the fields. It is all about new beginnings.

As I write this, it is still November. It was very dark this morning and it rained all night and it is still raining now. Master went out for a long run this morning. In fact, we were very nearly late for church. I'm not sure whether I was pleased or not. I missed my walk because he couldn't take me running, but he came in with his shorts and vest wringing wet. That's how my fur would have been and I can't take it off. I don't like wet or dirty fur and I have to spend hours licking myself clean and using my teeth to comb my hair. Master says that it is very impressive to be sufficiently supple to be able to use my teeth to comb my chest hair, but, less flatteringly, Mummy says the way I groom myself makes me look like a cat! Anyway, Master was mildly amused that, when we did eventually get to church, the Gospel reading for the daily Communion began, *And as it was in the days of Noe (Noah), so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man*. Well today does seem very reminiscent of the days of Noah!

However, there are two points, if you know the story. One is that, once the Flood is over, God puts a rainbow in the sky and says that this is a sign of His promise. The seasons will not cease as long as the earth endures. There will never again be a worldwide flood. So, in the Spring, we rejoice in God's promises as the season comes round again and we see how we are looked after as He provides for all our material needs. If we think about it, there is plenty to be thankful for in the other seasons of Summer, Autumn and Winter. If we squander or waste the good things He gives us or fail to share with people in greater need, it is our fault if we mess up the environment and other people live in poverty and we get the blame.

And that is the second point. The world will one day end. We don't know when, but the end will come suddenly. Jesus will be there and humanity will be judged. You will all have to give account to Him for what you have done with the freedom He has given you. Did you use your resources, talents, opportunities and time to His glory and for the good of other people or were you entirely selfish? Do you love God with all your hearts and your neighbours as yourself or are large parts of you disfigured by indifference or even hatred? At the Judgment, those who have faith will live. Time ceases. There are no more seasons. God's people live in an eternity of light and joy and love.

And what happens to the rest of creation, to the non-human creatures? The Old Testament speaks about the lives of animals returning to God and St Paul says that the whole of creation (not just the human parts) awaits the redemption, but what that will turn out to mean none of us can know until we get there!

Happy New Year and Happy New Creation!

Max, the Rectory Spaniel.