

## TO THE CLERGY AND THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

### Statement on the crisis in Israel/Palestine by the Bishop of Tonbridge

A few short weeks ago I visited the Holy Land with a group from the Diocese of Rochester. We were there to meet individuals and organisations working for peace and reconciliation in that place, including Bishop Suheil Dawani, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem.

Last week, on Christmas Eve, the Bishop preached in the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem. “The world waits in eager expectation for people of goodwill, courage and vision to set aside personal agendas, to encourage a change of heart, to empower all people of faith to tear down the walls of cruelty, fear and hatred”, he said, in the presence of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayaad. He continued, “We cannot diminish or escape from the challenges before us which are very real and confront our people. Peace, a just durable peace, is rooted in the reconciling love of God for all the people of this land”.

In Gaza, just two days after the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the people there were subjected to heavy bombardment by Israeli armed forces. As I write, the military action continues. The roots of the conflict in the Holy Land are deep and complex and while recognising the suffering of all parties involved, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are paying a particularly high price. The immediate cause of the present crisis is that, for many months, rockets fired from Gaza have brought terror and disruption to the lives of many living in Israel. This is unacceptable. Similarly, the reaction against Gaza, which has claimed many innocent lives and injured many hundreds of others, is disproportionate and equally unacceptable.

I am reminded of an African saying that when the elephants fight, it is the grass which gets trampled and this has been the case in the present crisis. As well as killing and injuring many innocent civilians in Gaza, the most heavily populated area in the world, it has also seen a number of innocent civilians killed and injured in Israel.

At this time of Christmas and Epiphany, Christians throughout the world are looking to the Holy Land in a spirit of joy and thanksgiving for the events of 2000 years ago: the realities unfolding today are anything but a cause for joy and thanksgiving. Commentators reflect that the seriousness of the situation should not be underestimated. As Christians we should pray both urgently and fervently.

May I ask, then, for you to pray that the spirit of peace and justice may influence those who make decisions about war and peace in the Holy Land. I also encourage you to pray for the casualties of war and for those who grieve for loved ones, as well as for those working hard to bring humanitarian and medical aid to those suffering in the war zone. Will you remember especially the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, an Anglican hospital which has been serving the people of the area for over a century, as it struggles to bring healing and peace to all who come to its doors. Finally, do pray for all those in the Holy Land working for peace and reconciliation, that they may have the strength to continue their work in the middle of such daunting challenges.

May there be an immediate cease-fire so that the voices and actions of ‘people of goodwill, courage and vision’ prevail. +Brian Tonbridge.



‘SOUPABOWL’ In aid of Emmaus Medway. Helping people who are homeless have a bed and a reason to get out of it.

**SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY (CANDLEMAS) AT ST PETER’S CHURCH, DELCE ROAD, ROCHESTER 6.30pm Church Service & 7.30pm Soupabowl begins.** Soup and homemade bread are served and there is an auction for Catherine Stazika handmade super bowls. Donations are made! All proceeds go to work with people who are homeless here in Medway and cheques are payable to ‘Emmaus Medway’. With thanks to Naylor’s Funeral Services for the donation of the soup and the people to make it. Call Gary on 845122 for more information.

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> February Candlemas	9.30 Family Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> February Septuagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 I Corinthians 9 vv 16-23 p1150 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1002
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February Sexagesima	8.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 2 vv 4-25 p4 Luke 8 vv 22-35 p1037
	9.30 Holy Communion	Proverbs 8 vv 1-31 p641 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February Quinquagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	II Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 II Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
Ash Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> February	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 II Corinthians 5 v20 – 6 v10 p1161 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March Lent 1	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 I Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> February	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall Epiphany 4	Deuteronomy 18 vv 15-20 p197 Mark 1 vv 21-28 p1002
	11.00 Holy Communion Candlemas	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> February Septuagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 I Corinthians 9 vv 16-23 p1150 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1002
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Numbers 13 vv 1–33 p149 Philippians 2 vv 12-28 p1179
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February Sexagesima	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Proverbs 8 vv 1-31 p641 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February Quinquagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	II Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 II Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
Ash Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> February	9.30 am Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March Lent 1	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 5 vv 12-19 p1132 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 I Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002

Wednesdays 9.30 am normally @ St Michael's (25 <sup>th</sup> February 9.30 @ St John's, 7.30 pm St Michael's)		Thursdays 9.30 am normally @ St John's (26 <sup>th</sup> February at St Michael's)	
4 <sup>th</sup> February	Hebrews 12 vv 4-15 Mark 6 vv 1-6	5 <sup>th</sup> February	Hebrews 12 vv 18-24 Mark 6 vv 7-13
11 <sup>th</sup> February	Genesis 2 vv 4-17 Mark 7 vv 14-23	12 <sup>th</sup> February	Genesis 2 vv 18-25 Mark 7 vv 24-30
18 <sup>th</sup> February	Genesis 6 v5 – 7 v10 Mark 8 vv 14-21	19 <sup>th</sup> February	Genesis 8 vv 6-22 Mark 8 vv 27-33
25 <sup>th</sup> February St John's	Joel 2 vv 1-17 Matthew 6 vv 1-21	26 <sup>th</sup> February St Michael's	Deuteronomy 30 vv 15-20 Luke 9 vv 22-25

Copy Date March Magazine 13<sup>th</sup> February 8.30 am Rectory.

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

[roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk](mailto:roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk) <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

**Ash Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> Feb: 12.00 Soup Lunch for Christian Aid (Church Hall).**



### From the Rector

The February magazine is my opportunity to thank people for their contributions to the Christmas services: flowers, music, cleaning and preparation of the churches, bells, nativity plays, distribution of Christmas card, etc. As usual, everything was splendid and I am sure I speak for everyone in thanking all those who do so much to sustain the life of our Church in Cuxton and Halling, not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.

Probably owing to the flu bug, most attendances for Christmas services were slightly down on 2007, though slightly up on Christmas Day itself. I nearly lost my voice at the Midnight and I apologise to any of you who could not hear my sermon properly. You can find the text on our web page <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> under teaching, together with a number of other sermons preached over the last few years and our quarterly Bible reading notes. Incidentally, someone pointed out to me that a lot of copies of these seem to get left in church every quarter. Please take them if you do not use any other systematic Bible study. Reading the Bible regularly (preferably daily) is vital to our Christian life and I try to tailor these notes to the needs and interests of our local church. One regular reader says she often wishes she could debate their contents with me and the archdeacon suggests we ought to have the opportunity to discuss the issues sometimes raised in this magazine. Please feel free to raise any questions with me on an individual basis or join our monthly Bible study group on the last Wednesday of each month. The discussions are usually extremely wide ranging.

One disadvantage of not printing a January magazine is that you might have forgotten all about Christmas by the time you read these thanks. The Christmas season really does not finish, however, till Candlemas (2<sup>nd</sup> February) when Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus in the Temple, Mary was purified and the sacrifices appropriate for a first born son were offered. Candlemas because Jesus is the Light of the World.

This year, as Candlemas falls on a Monday, I have decided to take up the option of keeping the celebration on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February. Monday is supposed to be my day off! I would be pleased to provide services in either or both of our churches on such a major festival if I thought they would be well supported. Unfortunately, I suspect that in these ungodly days hardly anyone would come. Most of you would miss out on Candlemas and I would have missed out on my day off for no good reason.

Speaking of “services in either or both of our churches”, at our last PCC we debated what we do on fifth Sundays of the month. Usually (unless it is a very, very, major festival) we effectively close one church and hold a United Parish Eucharist in the other. This provides an opportunity for all of us to worship together from the one parish and allows people who are normally distracted by carrying out duties such as organist or sidesman to relax and let others take responsibility while they simply worship. On the other hand, many people decide (rather shockingly) to take a Sunday off when the service is “at the other end”. Quite a few cannot get to the other church. Nearly every fifth Sunday, some people get confused and go to the wrong place at the wrong time. (These are often people who do not come very often, the very people we should be trying to encourage.) The over all effect is that the United Parish Eucharist on the fifth Sunday often has a smaller attendance than we might have expected in either church on an ordinary Sunday. I also feel slightly guilty about any Sunday or major festival on which there is not a Communion service in both parish churches. I am required by Canon Law to provide one and, personally, I believe it to be the most important of all my duties as a priest. On balance, I thought it might be better to have a 9.30 Communion at Cuxton and an 11.00 at Halling every Sunday, but the PCC seemed to think we should stick to having just one service on ordinary fifth Sundays, although they left it to me to decide to have two services on the most important Sundays. What do you, the people of Cuxton and Halling, think?

29<sup>th</sup> March is Passion Sunday and 31<sup>st</sup> May is Whitsun. So we will have services in both churches on those fifth Sundays. On the other hand, 14<sup>th</sup> June is the day we are holding the Confirmation at St Michael’s at 9.30 am. When you are reading this is really your last chance to let me know if you are interested in being confirmed at this service. There will be no 11.00 at Halling that Sunday. I will put on an 8.00 if any Halling person wants me to, though I am hoping that everybody will come to the Confirmation. Maybe lifts can be offered?

At one of our carol services, I happened to remark that there are lots of beautiful carols, but the ones I like best are the ones which proclaim and celebrate the Christmas message clearly and plainly, as it is stated in the Bible and believed by the Church. So carols like *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* would be my *Top of the Pops*. Someone did send me, however, the following explanation of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, which I have never really understood.

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.  
Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.  
Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.  
The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.  
The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.  
The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.  
Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit - Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.  
Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control.  
The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.  
The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.  
The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

I also came across the following interesting piece during my Christmas reading. If you believe in God (as most people do) you only have to think how immense He must be to realise that the only way you and I could learn anything worthwhile about Him would be if He made Himself known to us. He does this through His Word. The Bible is God's Word written and it bears witness to Jesus, God's Word made flesh. For this reason, Christianity (especially protestant Christianity) has been a great force for promoting literacy, reading and the study of language.

From *Reformation* by Diarmaid MacCulloch.

There can be no doubt that the effort of catechizing and the listening to a weekly diet of abstract ideas from the pulpit made Protestant Europe a society generally more book-conscious, and perhaps also more literate than Catholic Europe. One scholar, Kari Konkola, has made some heroic calculations for total book production in Protestant England. On a conservative estimate he suggests that 1,342,500 whole Bibles and New Testaments were printed for the English market between 1520 and 1649 enough for every English household in that period to have one. Among these were half a million copies of the Geneva Bible, which significantly when one looks at surviving copies have usually been read to bits. Perhaps 7.5 million copies of what Konkola defines as 'major religious works' were published in England between 1500 and 1639, in contrast to 1.6 million secular poems, plays and sonnets for a population which hovered around three million.

I can't help wondering whether our currently poor standards in literacy, our lack of interest in words, is related to our lack of interest in the Word made flesh?

And finally, speaking of the Word of God, the second of January was the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of my coming to this parish as Rector. It so happened that, at that day's Evening Prayer, the New Testament passage I read was from St Paul's Letter to the Colossians from chapter 1 v 24 to the end of chapter 2. This is such a statement of what the Church is, what Christians are and what a minister is that I thought I would share it with you in the following Bible meditation.

Roger

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:	All Christians make up the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, commissioned to complete His work on earth. His work includes suffering and Christians rejoice to share in this with Him.
25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;	Ministers of religion are called by God and work under His authority for the good of the Church and her mission to the world.
26 <i>Even</i> the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:	In the past, God's purposes for the human race were only partially disclosed, but now God has shown Himself in Jesus.
27 To whom God would make known what <i>is</i> the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:	The Good News of God is for everybody in the world. If we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus, He lives in us and we in Him – a promise of the glory we shall see in Heaven.
28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:	The minister's task is to tell everyone the Good News, to warn of the consequences of rejecting Christ, to teach people Jesus, the Wisdom of God, and to present every member of his Church to God.
29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.	The minister (any more than any other Christian) cannot carry out God's work in his own strength, only in the strength which God gives him.
1 ¶ For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and <i>for</i> them at Laodicea, and <i>for</i> as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;	If he really cares, it hurts the minister personally when his congregations fail to live up to their Christian calling or if they get into trouble.
2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;	What the minister longs for is that his congregation will find strength in their union in love for one another and for God and their growth in the knowledge of God as they worship the mystery.
3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.	Everything that matters – all wisdom and knowledge – is to be found in Christ.
4 ¶ And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.	Congregations and individual Christians can be led astray if they drop out of the fellowship, become lax in prayer and listen to idiosyncratic teaching which diverges from the <i>faith once delivered to the saints</i> .
5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.	The Church throughout the world is one body and we are one with one another, with our bishop and mission partner for example, even when they are absent in body.
6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, <i>so</i> walk ye in him:	You know what the Church believes about Jesus. Stay firm in that faith.
7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.	It isn't a burden to have faith. Faith is the very foundation of your life and a life filled with faith is a life filled with joy.
8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.	Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Bible bears witness to Him. The Church is His Body on earth. Don't be deceived by what other people tell you or put off by mockery.
9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.	This verse is a complete statement of the Christian faith.
10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:	You were made to be a child of God. As a member of Christ's Body, the Church, you are fulfilled as a person. You join His Body, the Church, by being baptised in faith, repenting of your sins.

<p>11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:</p>	<p>Male Jews are marked out as members of God's people by circumcision and, under the terms of God's covenant, are required to obey God's Law. Christians are included in the covenant through faith in Jesus and co-operate with the Holy Spirit to fulfil God's Law of Love. The new covenant fulfils the old.</p>
<p>12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with <i>him</i> through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.</p>	<p>Baptism – becoming a Christian – is being born again. You are different from what you would have been. You are dead to the old lifeless life and truly alive in Christ. God has saved you from sin and death.</p>
<p>13 ¶ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;</p>	<p><i>The wages of sin is death.</i> So, when God forgives us our sins, we are free. We have eternal life – here and now and in the age to come.</p>
<p>14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;</p>	<p>If we look at God's Law – the Ten Commandments and the rest – and use it as a measure of our lives, we find that we have fallen a long way short of the people we are supposed to be. We are judged and found wanting. God has dealt with our sins by the death of Jesus and therefore we are free.</p>
<p>15 <i>And</i> having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.</p>	<p>Victorious Roman generals paraded through Rome with their captives and spoils of war in their train. Christ has won the decisive victory over sin the world and the devil, not by killing others, but by being killed Himself.</p>
<p>16 ¶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath <i>days</i>:</p>	<p>Religious observances are a secondary consideration. What matters is faith in Christ.</p>
<p>17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body <i>is</i> of Christ.</p>	<p>Religious observances may point us to God, but it is Christ Who makes us at one with Him.</p>
<p>18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,</p>	<p>Members of churches – all of us – are imperfect. We sometimes think we know more than we do. We try to influence other Christians to see things our way. We need to be humble in guiding others.</p>
<p>19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.</p>	<p>What all of us need to do – you and I, the PCC and rest of the Church – is to hold fast to Christ, to be at one with Him in prayer and fellowship, in reading the Bible and receiving Holy Communion.</p>
<p>20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,</p>	<p>Life in Christ is what matters. Why let anything else spoil that? Our lives in the world outside the Church? Obsessions about ritual? Parish politics?</p>
<p>21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;</p>	<p>There are lots of ways of doing things which may help us to worship, to grow closer to Christ and to proclaim His Word to the world. In themselves, however, they can become obstacles to the unity of the Church, cause divisions between people and obscure our vision of God. What you and I have to do is to cling on to what really matters eternally, faith in Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?</p>	
<p>23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.</p>	

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

16 <sup>th</sup> November	Peter Kenneth Ronald Streets	Gravesend
28 <sup>th</sup> December	Christian Francis Underdown	Chatham

### Funerals:

17 <sup>th</sup> November	Dorothy Kate Overal (89)	formerly of Upper Halling
28 <sup>th</sup> November	Frank Martin (89)	May Street
1 <sup>st</sup> December	Joyce Evelyn Saunders (84)	formerly of Cuxton
22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Elsie Martin (86)	Low Meadow
11 <sup>th</sup> December	Thomas Edward Cowan (89)	Essex Road
23 <sup>rd</sup> December	Grace Telling (95)	Vicarage Close
29 <sup>th</sup> December	Walter George Hayler (96)	formerly of Formby Terrace
30 <sup>th</sup> December	Denis Percival Haselden (96)	Snodland
9 <sup>th</sup> January	John Hamilton Underdown (70)	Sheerness

### Memorial Service:

16 <sup>th</sup> November	Paul Rogers
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### Halling Ringers

We are sorry to hear of the passing of Eva Crowhurst. She was in charge of the Halling Handbell Ringers and rang the church bells. Eva was also for many years captain of the church guides and introduced many of our ringers. Sadly she died within a few days of her husband Jim, also a good friend and neighbour to St John's Church. Peter Silver & Roger Knight.

### Confirmation 2009

The Bishop of Rochester is coming to confirm on 14<sup>th</sup> June next year at 9.30 am at St Michael's. If you are thinking about Confirmation at this time, please speak to the Rector. Classes 7.30 pm, Thursdays, Rectory.

### Easter Egg Hunt 2009

We are already thinking ahead to this event on Easter Monday (April 13<sup>th</sup>) in the Rectory Garden. Please put the date in your diaries now! What we need in advance is the donation of crème eggs to be hidden in the garden. We can never have too many! So, if you feel able to donate eggs before the event, we shall be most grateful. If you are willing to make a financial contribution we can buy more eggs for the money as we can get them wholesale. Thanks. Roger.

Church Hall Draw November: £5 to Elizabeth Summers, drawn by Eileen Knight, £5 to Marie Hendy, drawn by Ray Maisey.

St John's Draw November: £25 to Miss Partridge (43) & Mrs Smith (112); £10 to Mrs Clark (157) – drawn by Mrs Summerhayes.

St John's Draw December: £5 each to Mrs Swatton (6), Miss J Thorne (23), Mrs Chidwick (26), Mrs baker (46) & Mrs Terry (125) – drawn by Mrs Acott.

[Both these draws contribute very usefully to our income, which is always on the verge of failing to cover our expenditure. If you would like to join the church hall draw, please ask Mrs Maisey(727126). If you would like to join the St John's draw, please ask Mrs Head (240889)].

On the subject of money, the new year might be a good time to consider the planned giving scheme or gift aiding your financial contributions to the Church. Please ask Mrs Hendey for details.

And still on the subject of the offering of our lives, time, talents, etc., at the time of writing we have no definite candidates for either churchwarden vacancy. Our annual meeting will be at Halling on 25<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00. Please think and pray about whether you could offer to be a churchwarden or to serve God's Church in this place in any other capacity. (Malcolm Curnow asked the archdeacon what happens if we can't get two wardens for each parish church and the archdeacon didn't know! I don't suppose it's happened here for hundreds of years! I guess, however, that the consequences would be dire and possibly eventually fatal.)



### CUXTON WI

Cuxton welcomed several members from other WI in our area to our annual Christmas Celebration.

Everyone was served a hot chicken casserole with chunky bread, followed by cheesecake. Later there were mince pies and coffee etc. Most of the food was home made by the committee members. We were entertained by another "homemade" product, namely our small concert party. There were poems, songs and plays and a lot of laughter so it couldn't have been too bad. The evening ended with traditional carols sung by everyone and accompanied by our Doris still playing the piano at 95 years of age!



### HALLING WI

Although November and December 2008 are now history, here are the reports for Halling W.I. for those two meetings. At our November meeting our novice president Margaret was in the driving seat and she did very well. After Jerusalem and our one birthday rose our meeting got under way. Minutes were read and correspondence dealt with, mostly Christmas party invites and last minute arrangements for the District Carol service and our own Christmas revelries.

Our speaker for the month was Mr Phillip Godliman, who had come to speak to us about Gypsies and Travellers, not only from our country but from various places around the World. He showed us slides of their homes and traditions, how they are persecuted in places like Rumania, and he explained why some have very bad reputations and are not very well liked in this country. We learnt how they make their flowers and pegs and quite a large number used to pick the fruits in the seasons, but this has mostly finished now but they still do a bit of totting and tarmacng, but sadly they no longer have pretty caravans and horses, they now have enormous motor homes or static caravans.

Mr Godliman then judged our competitions, I won the flower of the month, with a very late

There will be no meeting in January but do come along on Feb. 5th for another laugh as it is a Beetle Drive evening. Even with the credit crunch don't forget your subs for 2009.

Our usual correspondent - Ann Harris - is quite ill at this time in St Thomas Hospital and we wish her a speedy recovery.

The committee wish you all a very happy New Year.

Sheila Underdown.

Alstromeria. Anne Greaves won the competition, something beginning with S, I can't remember what with but it definitely wasn't "stays". After refreshments I tried to explain a Questionnaire which we had received from the National Federation, but as I couldn't understand some of the questions it was rather difficult, but at least our members know about the *Women Reaching Women* project which is to be ongoing for the next three years.

December was a much more light-hearted affair, our own Christmas party. Once more the tables were heaving with food of all descriptions, supplied by the members. The tables were tastfully laid with seasonal arrangements with candles and we were entertained by our friends the R.A.T.S., the Rainham based variety group. We all enjoyed ourselves, and our W.I. advisor thanked the members for a lovely party.

January sees a new year and our first speakers for 2009 are a couple of our own firemen, Buttons Mark, and Ugly sister David. Come and hear what they have to say, How not to burn your house down or maybe, How to make fools of yourselves and entertain people.

Happy New Year, Phyllis.

### DICKENS' COUNTRY PROTECTION SOCIETY

Chattenden Lodge Hill New Settlement: Land Securities, who have taken over the schema, are consulting local Amenity Societies to seek their views on the development of a new settlement on the former Chattenden Barracks and Lodge Hill site. The Society has responded that it would like to see the settlement contained within the Lodge Hill basin and screened, as far as possible, so that it does not intrude into the landscape. There remains concern that the local services and highway network will not have capacity to service the development.



Season's Greetings: The Society wishes all its members a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Kay Roots per pro DCPS"



## Nature Notes November and December 2008

On the first day of **November** the skies were grey with clouds dispensing heavy rain throughout the day. The only relief to the overcast conditions was the golden glow of the sycamore leaves on the embankment. Eventually birds braved the rain to come to the bird feeders while some remained sheltered by pecking at the nuts from the feeder in the lilac tree. The next day, the sun shone first thing in the morning then fog descended but by mid day the skies cleared to reveal beautiful sunshine. The trees were beautiful too displaying their gold and yellow leaves. Bush Valley was a picture.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> I watched a pair of jackdaws perched on the branches of a dead elm while a magpie flew across the garden. Earlier, a jay had perched on the fence and a cheeky squirrel had scampered along the branches of an elder bush then disappeared into the trees. A wealth of bright red berries hung on the branches of the holly tree. Murphy and I had a wet walk by the river in the afternoon. A great spotted woodpecker came to the feeder on the 5<sup>th</sup> while chaffinches foraged on the seed on the patio wall. A magpie and jackdaws flew across the garden and eight collared doves came to feed. It remained very mild.

The morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> was grey and damp but eventually the clouds dispersed and golden sunshine beamed down from clear blue skies. As we walked by the river gulls scuttled across the glistening mud flats and the sun cast a golden path across the river. The following day the sky was beautiful with patches of blue sky, billowing grey and white cloud and sunshine casting a golden path across the water as it did yesterday. Banks of grey cloud formed a circle round the blue of the sky which was an autumn rain-washed blue. Ribbed melilot still bloomed at the top of the bank at the far end of the path where large puddles reflected the sky's light. I was glad I did not miss this scene. On the 11<sup>th</sup> the sun was gloriously golden beaming down from a blue sky flecked with white cloud. The remaining leaves on the trees on the embankment and beyond were still golden. Later, by the river, the low water was exposing the wide expanse of the mud flats patterned with the tracks of gulls. As we returned to the car, I saw the beautiful colours of half a rainbow. On the 13<sup>th</sup> I watched and listened to redshank as they flew down river. Golden autumn leaves quivered on the silver birch trees by the railway. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, which was pleasantly warm, I could hear birdsong almost as though it were spring. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, as I walked along the main road, I was aware of the delicate colours in the sky, pale grey and blue with tints of gold from the sun.

There was a cold, misty beginning to the 17<sup>th</sup> with a golden sun rising over Bluebell Hill. Its light penetrated the mist for a while then the mist

overwhelmed it. The brightness returned for a while then the mist overwhelmed it again and there was dampness in the air. As we walked by the river in the afternoon I saw dead reeds transformed to gold by the sun beaming on them. Pied wagtails scuttled ahead of us then flew across the river. Six mallard ducks glided there. In the garden, I could see two wood pigeons feasting on the holly berries. The next day I counted 19 mallard ducks dabbling amongst the reeds while gulls screeched overhead and pied wagtails scuttled along the path. The blue sky was criss-crossed with vapour trails from aircraft. On the 20<sup>th</sup> plenty of birds came to the feeders while a pair of squirrels chased each other through the lilac branches then up into the holly tree laden with bright red berries. When I returned from walking Murphy a pheasant was in the garden.

I'd noticed that scabious and pink clover were still in flower along the banks and that silver birch trees along the railway embankment still bore golden leaves. The 24<sup>th</sup> was grey and cold in the morning and rain fell. A great spotted woodpecker came to feed and was joined by great tits, a dunnock chaffinches and a blue tit. A jay made a brief visit. In the afternoon we walked by the river where I watched redshank emerging from the river grasses and calling as they flew. There was a beautiful sunset as we made our way home. The next day I found a solitary ox eye daisy and watched a heron fly beneath the Medway Bridge. The 27<sup>th</sup> was a very mild day when grey, billowing clouds drifted across from the west, hiding the eggshell blue sky. Rain fell all day on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The 29<sup>th</sup> was damp and cold with intermittent showers. Five chaffinches came to the seed on the patio wall while great tits flocked to the feeders. A pair of black birds joined the chaffinches then a coal tit appeared. A blue tit, robin and a dunnock eventually came for their food then a great spotted woodpecker foraged from the feeder in the lilac. A pair of squirrels chased each other through the lilac branches. The last day of the month was so dreary and cold with north winds driving grey clouds across the sky. Daylight was slow in dawning while darkness fell before the afternoon was over. Birds came to feed including redwing which devoured the remaining holly berries.

The first day of **December** was dry and bright with pale blue skies and golden sunshine. The next day was cold with North West winds but with morning sunshine. By late morning, however, the skies were grey and soon rain was falling. I watched birds feeding during the middle of the day when there was a hive of activity among the great tits. Redwing continued to look for berries in the holly tree but only a few were left. By the evening a crescent moon was shining. There was a sharp overnight frost covering the grass and plants with tiny white crystals. A beautiful golden sun rose over Bluebell Hill and its light streamed through the windows. I put out fresh seed and water

for the birds. Heavy rain fell during the first part of the morning on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Rivulets flowed along the gutters and water streamed down the pavements. Later in the day when the sun was shining I took Murphy along the river path where two large crows foraged on the grassy banks. The pale blue sky was reflected in the water which sparkled in the sunlight. The following evening I could hear blackbirds pinking on the embankment. A bright moon shone in the sky. There was a sharp frost covering the garden with white powdery crystals again. The sun shone from a clear blue sky throughout the day until it set mid afternoon leaving a pale sky tinged with pink. A flock of gulls flew overhead as I watched from the window. Bare branches of trees were still against the sky for there was not a breath of wind.

When I opened the curtains on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, I was greeted by an inflamed sky. Droplets of water hung on the branches of a sycamore tree on the embankment and they sparkled like diamonds. When we walked by the river in the afternoon, I saw scabious, yellow crucifers, yarrow and dandelions in flower along a short stretch of the grassy banks. The sunlight highlighted them because I hadn't noticed them last week. On the 10<sup>th</sup> I saw lapwing by the water which was low. The sun cast a golden path across the water and mud flats. It gradually dipped below the tree line leaving a beautiful golden glow in the sky.

On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, across the railway cutting, a number of blackbirds were making a commotion and I wondered if a sparrow hawk was in the vicinity. Eventually they calmed down. In the afternoon, by the river, I watched and listened to redshank on the mudflats. The air was cold and there was a mist over the woodland at Cuxton which I could see from the river path. A pair of starlings which I rarely see came to the feeders on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and then they came again the following day. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, which was grey but dry, when I walked with Murphy by the river, I felt icy fingers around my face for it was so cold. On the 19<sup>th</sup> the sun shone brightly in the morning and while in the garden, I felt slight warmth from the sun's rays but by the afternoon it had become overcast. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the

shortest day of the year, we experienced bright sunshine. It became very mild and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> I watched a chaffinch in the lilac and listened to its call. A buffed tailed bumble bee was collecting pollen from a blue winter pansy in a pot on the patio. I was fascinated by this beautiful creature. On Christmas Eve I watched a wood pigeon hanging upside down in the ivy on the holly tree as it hunted for insects. It looked quite comical. On Christmas Day, as David, Murphy and I walked along the river path; I heard a mistle thrush singing in the bare branches of a tree and later, a chirping robin. Pied wagtails scuttled ahead of us and as we returned along the path, I noticed pale mauve flowers on the rosemary bushes.

A cold north wind blew the mild weather away. A golden sun rose over Bluebell Hill on Boxing morning, lighting up the eggshell blue sky flecked with high cloud. Before our visitors arrived I walked through Six Acre Wood where ivy with black berries clung to old elder branches some of which bore golden lichen, and there was a silence with not a sound of a bird. I skirted the field and made my way into Mays Wood the paths of which were strewn with brown leaves crunching beneath my feet; I found a single floret of white deadnettle. As I eventually crossed Church Fields, the golden sun beamed down from a clear blue sky. In the afternoon, along by the river I found a single scabious flower. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, blackbirds, great tits, a dunnock, a robin, collared doves, two wood pigeons a marsh tit and a great spotted woodpecker came to feed while a grey squirrel took advantage of every opportunity to eat the nuts from the feeder in the lilac branches. Frost lay on the grass throughout the 30<sup>th</sup> and it was too cold to go out in the afternoon. On the final day of the month and year the ground was frost laden and the skies were grey. I watched a wren as it hopped among the pots on the patio. The air was cold and damp and this persisted throughout the day

### **Elizabeth Summers**

#### **Last Snow by Andrew Young**

Although the snow still lingers  
Heaped on the ivy's blunt webbed fingers  
And painting tree trunks on one side,  
Here in this sunlit ride  
The fresh unchristened things appear,  
Leaf, spathe and stem,

With crumbs of earth clinging to them  
To show the way they came  
But no flower yet to tell their name,  
And one green spear  
Stabbing a dead leaf from below  
Kills winter at a blow.

#### Changes In Our Sunday School

December saw the retirement of Julia Sacre from teaching in Sunday School. Julia must have completed twenty years of service and all of us – especially the generations of children – are very grateful to her. We presented Julia with some flowers, an album of photographs of events over the last twenty years and a gift token. Trudy Fenton-Scott has now joined the staff with Jenny Beaney. Sunday School meets in school term time at 9.30 am every Sunday except the first in the month, when we encourage families to attend church all together. Further details from Jenny Beaney 241599.

## Cuxton Infant School News Letter

Dear friends of our school and village folk,

Already in a New Year, with Christmas plays, parties, entertainments, tinsel and glitter a distant memory! Back in December, our play Baboushka was a great success. The children spoke well, loudly and clearly and shared the microphones between them independently! The acting was excellent and our audiences commented on how well the children performed. The FCS ran a very successful Christmas Bazaar and with their help and the generosity of all the folk who came, they raised about £1200 for both schools. Our thanks to them all.

Over the next couple of terms we look forward in school to parents evenings, class assemblies, Red Nose day and a visit from Jeremy Clark from the Guildhall Museum in Rochester who will be talking to the children about 'old toys'. Topics for the Children in school include forces, routes and maps, Old Testament stories and playgrounds. Of course there is always a large amount to cover in Numeracy, Literacy and ICT.

I am hoping that I will have some news from you on the building work next time I write and also update you with our plans for a new ICT suite.



[www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org)

Mothers Union  
Our theme for this year will be *Home*. We have started with our *At Home* meeting at 73, Charles Drive in January and we will be doing a study course entitled *Home*, published by the Mothers Union, for three months, but watch this space for other meetings, which might include *Harvest Home* and *Home for Christmas* etc.. We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 10.45 am in the Church Hall and all are welcome.

Shirley Crundwell would like to thank you all for your prayers before her recent operation and during her stay in hospital. Also thank you for all your get well cards and flowers received after the op. It was wonderful to feel the support of all your prayers and to know that so many people were thinking of me, at such a busy time of year too. Shirley hopes she will be skipping up the church path before long!!!

### Epiphany 2009

I was struck this year by the slight, but I thought significant, difference between the Collect for Epiphany in the old prayer book and the new. The collect, of course, is the special prayer for the Sunday or for the Season, which comes near the beginning of the Communion Service.

The prayer begins in much the same way in both books. *O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; and O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth.* The newer version leaves out the word *begotten* for reasons I can't go into here, but I will explain if you ask me<sup>1</sup>. The term *Gentiles* is more or less

<sup>1</sup> In the Authorised Version of the Bible of, e.g. John 3 v16. *only begotten* translates the Greek word *monogenes μονογενης*. equivalent to the Latin *Unigenitus* used in the original version of the collect, which certainly does mean *only begotten*, but many

Lastly I would like to finish with this piece, given to me when I first started teaching, some time ago now! Sandra Jones, Headteacher, Cuxton Infant School.

### Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism  
He learns to condemn.  
If a child lives with hostility  
He learns to fight.  
If a child lives with ridicule  
He learns to be shy.  
If a child lives with shame  
He learns to feel guilty.  
If a child lives with tolerance  
He learns to be patient.  
If a child lives with encouragement  
He learns confidence.  
If a child lives with praise  
He learns to appreciate.  
If a child lives with fairness  
He learns justice.  
If a child lives with scrutiny  
He learns to have faith.  
If a child lives with approval  
He learns to like himself.  
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship  
He learns to find love in the world.

equivalent to *peoples of the earth*. It means *nations* and generally means *all the nations except Israel*, but occasionally Israel is described as a *nation*. Traditionally, a distinction has been made, describing Jesus as *a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel*. The shepherds have been taken to represent Israel and the wise men the nations, but Jesus is certainly good news for everybody – Jew and Gentile alike. That is the point of the New Testament.

The two versions of the collect then carry on almost identically, *mercifully grant that we, which know thee now by faith*. The wise men were given the sign of the star, which led them to Jesus. We know Jesus now by faith. But, just as the star led the wise men on, so we are led on towards a more perfect revelation by the faith that we now have. And this is where the two translations really appear to differ. The new version of the collect has *that we who know you now by faith may at last behold your glory face to face* whereas the old version has *that we which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead*. The modern English translation may appear to be a more literal rendering of the Latin (*Ut qui iam te ex fide cognovimus, usque ad contemplandam speciem tuae celsitudinis perducamur*) than Thomas Cranmer's prayer book of 1549 and a lot of people wonder why? Cranmer usually translated ancient Latin collects pretty literally. My guess is that he is trying to convey that there is a much greater depth to this petition than the surface meaning might suggest. It is not merely that, when we get to Heaven, we shall see God. It is that the experience of seeing God as He is will totally change us. We shall be so overwhelmed by His love that our very nature will be transformed. We shall become pure love like God and live eternally in the rapture of unadulterated love for God and for humanity.

There is now an electronic indicator on Cuxton & Halling stations and it might tell you that the next train is for Strood, just as the star in East told the wise men that a new King of the Jews had been born. If you trust Network Rail (or whatever they are called now), you might have faith that you will soon be travelling to Strood. You might very much want to go to Strood, just as you may well have faith that you are going to Heaven and you may very much want to get there. But the analogy is inadequate. Getting to Strood will not be a life-transforming experience. Going to Strood will not make you a new man or a new woman. See Strood and die? I don't think so.

You do not form a relationship with Strood. It is, however, relationships that transform lives. They say that owners grow like their pets. I don't know whether that is true, but, obviously to some extent, they mould us and we mould them. We train a dog (or try to). Walking the dog makes us slimmer. Having a dog teaches a child (or adult) the need for patience and consideration for another living thing.

Much more that relationships with animals, human relationships change us. After the vicar had tried to explain everything at the wedding practice, the bride still didn't understand. So the bride's mother explained. *It's very simple. Just remember: Aisle, altar, hymn*. Well that attitude may not be very healthy, but we are very much moulded by our relationships with other people. Loving relationships with parents, brothers and sisters, husbands or wives, our own children all help to form us and make us better people. But human beings are never perfect and some relationships make us worse. Other people try us and we fail the test! But relationships change us and, the closer the relationship, the more difference it makes to the way our character develops.

Just as our relationships with people are much more significant than our relationships with pets, so our relationship with God is infinitely more significant than even our relationships with other people. Jesus became human so that we might become divine. Two biblical passages.

1John 3 vv 1-3 : *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

And 1 Corinthians 13 vv 10-13: *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

Our relationship with God is a life-transforming relationship. The technical Greek word is θεοποίησις (theopoiesis). God is making us divine through our relationship with Him in Jesus Christ. To *behold His glory face to face*, in the words of the newer translation inevitably means that, as Cranmer's version puts it, *we may have the fruition of his glorious Godhead*. RIK.

Let us pray: *O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## **Urgently Wanted**

**We need a few more people, please, to take the bundles of magazines each month to the deliverers. Offers, please, to Margaret on 240644.**

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scholars think that in New Testament times μονογενής meant no more than *unique*. Hence the caution of the modern version of the collect. As it is a translation of a Latin collect we have here, not a passage of NT Greek, I think we should be bold and stick with *only begotten* as that is how the Church has traditionally understood the nature of Christ.

## Musical Plans For the Future

This Summer the Brook Concert Orchestra and Cuxton Music Group will be putting on a concert at St John's Church, Halling. The programme will be delight classics and music from the shows. The date planned is our Patronal Festival, 24<sup>th</sup> June. The starting time is 8.00pm.

The Patronal Festival Eucharist will be at 7.00 pm.