

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
June 6 th Trinity 1	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 8 v15 – 9v17 p9 Mark 4 vv 1-20 p1005
	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 17-24 p349 Galatians 1 vv 11-24 p1168 Luke 7 vv 11-17 p1035
June 13 th Trinity 2	11.00 Holy Communion	II Samuel 11 v26 – 12 v15 p315 Galatians 2 vv 15-21 p1169 Luke 7 v36 - 8 v3 p1036
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 13 vv 1-18 p14 Mark 4 vv 21-41 p1006
June 20 th Trinity 3	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 1-9 p751 Galatians 3 vv 23-29 p1170 Luke 8 vv 26-39 p1038
June 24 th Nativity of St John the Baptist	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 57-80 p1027
June 27 th Trinity 4	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Galatians 5 vv 1-25 p1171 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
July 4 th Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 29 vv 1-20 p30 Mark 6 vv 7-29 p1008
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 66 vv 10-14 p753 Galatians 6 vv 1-16 p1172 Luke 10 vv 1-20 p1041
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
June 6 th Trinity 1	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	I Kings 17 vv 17-24 p349 Galatians 1 vv 11-24 p1168 Luke 7 vv 11-17 p1035
June 13 th Trinity 2	9.30 Holy Communion	II Samuel 11 v26 – 12 v15 p315 Galatians 2 vv 15-21 p1169 Luke 7 v36 - 8 v3 p1036
June 20 th Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 1-9 p751 Galatians 3 vv 23-29 p1170 Luke 8 vv 26-39 p1038
June 27 th Trinity 4	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Galatians 5 vv 1-25 p1171 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
July 4 th Trinity 5	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 66 vv 10-14 p753 Galatians 6 vv 7-16 p1172 Luke 10 vv 1-20 p1041

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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 July Magazine: 11th June 8.30 am Rectory.

Wednesday Communion at 9.30 am at St Michael's		Thursday Communion at 9.30 am at St John's	
2 nd June	II Timothy 1 vv 1-12 Mark 12 vv 13-17	3 rd June Corpus Christi	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 John 6 vv 51-58
9 th June	I Kings 18 vv 20-39 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	10 th June	I Kings 18 vv 41-end Matthew 5 vv 20-26
16 th June	II Kings 2 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 1-18	17 th June	Isaiah 63 vv 7-9 Matthew 6 vv 7-15
23 rd June Ember Day	II Kings 22 v8 – 23 v3 Matthew 7 vv 15-20	24 th June Nativity of St John the Baptist	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 57-80 p1027
30 th June	Amos 5 vv 14-24 Matthew 8 vv 28-end	1 st July	Amos 7 vv 10-end Matthew 9 vv 1-8

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Burr (10), Mrs Parris (54), Mrs Warman (56), Mrs Garrett (122) & Mrs Gyde (133) – drawn by Mrs Maxwell.

Church Hall Draw:



George for England?

On St George's Day one of the questions on Radio 4's *Any Questions* asked whether immigrants and their children could join in our St George's Day celebrations. The panellists, I am glad to say, all answered with a resounding *Yes!* It set me thinking, however.

When I was a child, we didn't do much about celebrating St George's Day. There is no provision for the commemoration of St George in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 or even the Alternative Service Book of 1980. A literal-minded protestant nation wasn't too bothered about non-biblical saints about whom little is known for certain and whose best loved stories are improbable legends such as the slaying of a dragon. Moreover, on the one hand, we felt that a self-confident nation like ours had no need for displays of patriotism, while, on the other hand, we were nervous that patriotism too easily morphed into nationalism, the extreme manifestation of which had caused two world wars in the life time of our parents' and grandparents' generations. So we didn't do much about George, our patron saint when I was a boy.

It might well be, indeed, that interest in the celebration of St George has grown at least partly in response to a loss of self-confidence in our Englishness. In a couple of generations we have gone from being at the head of the greatest empire the world has ever known to being a second rate power in the European Union, most of whose member states have traditions different from ours, but with whom we are expected to harmonise our institutions. Devolution within the UK has recognised Welsh and Scottish distinctiveness by giving the Welsh an assembly and the Scots a parliament (which vote themselves better public services than we have) while we English continue to have our laws entirely determined by a UK parliament which includes representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Much of the *green and pleasant land* we sing about has disappeared under main roads, housing estates and commercial developments. (I think we feel this particularly in the county which used to be called the Garden of England and is now being swallowed up in London overspill and by routes to the continent.) And finally, there is the vexed question of immigration. No decent person would

dislike somebody else on the basis of the colour of his or her skin. No decent person would want to turn away people fleeing persecution in their own lands. It is hard to justify turning away so-called economic migrants, who want to make a better life for themselves and their families in our richly blessed, secure and prosperous land. If we are sensible, we recognise the enormous contribution immigrants and temporary residents make to our national life – not least in the running of the NHS. On the other hand, many of us are not happy with all the tremendous changes and challenges mass immigration has brought.

The 2001 Census demanded we state our race (which I considered an impertinence and possibly dangerous if ever a party like the BNP should come to power). You could choose Welsh, Scottish, Irish, white British, black, Asian, African, Caribbean. About the only way the government would not allow you to define yourself was as English. All this can leave us with a sense that our Englishness is under threat. Cornered animals turn vicious and people who feel threatened can become dangerous. This is why the questioner in *Any Questions* wondered whether immigrants and their descendants could feel welcome at St George's Day celebrations.

The authorities in this country worry that English nationalism will result in support for parties like the BNP and groups like the English Defence League which provoke race riots. So you read about councils banning their workers from flying St George's flags during the World Cup or prohibiting library staff from displaying religious Christmas cards, and commercial organisations refusing to allow their staff to wear a crucifix in case it offends the ethnic minorities, while, at the same time, in the interests of diversity and multiculturalism, supporting the rights of those same ethnic minorities to practise their own customs. The danger, of course, is of provoking a racist backlash.

What we are trying to achieve is a close community which is not a closed community. I have said the same thing time and time again about the Church – a close community which is not a closed community. As human beings, we are inclined to define ourselves against other people. Family naturally comes first. Then people like us. Other people are snobs. Or they live on the wrong side of the tracks. They don't

speak like us. We just don't have much in common with them. They have different table manners. They weren't born here. Their skin is a different colour. In lots of different ways, we identify the communities we belong to, and the people who don't belong with us. It is impossible to imagine a world where we feel as at home with our neighbours as we do with our families, or as at home in Outer Mongolia as we do in Cuxton or Halling. Relationships and community would be meaningless if we tried to treat everybody in the world in exactly the same way, as if some unknown Australian meant no more to us than our own mother. On the other hand, Jesus teaches us to regard everyone as a potential neighbour, including the suspect stranger. A Church ought to be a close community, but never a closed community, and the Church is the model for every human community, including the community which constitutes a nation. Somehow, we have to work out how we can be confident about being English without fearing, despising or excluding other members of the human race! Charity (love) begins at home, but it must flow out potentially to encompass the whole world, just as the Love (or charity, *caritas*, *αγάπη*) of God begins with the persons of the Holy Trinity and flows out into everything that is and, indeed (possibly), everything that is not.

So how would I answer the question whether immigrants and their children could join in our St George's Day celebrations? I would start by pointing out that there are two aspects to St George's Day. For most people (Christian and non-Christian alike) 23rd April is a celebration of England and Englishness. I agree with the *Any Questions* panellists. This celebration is something that all English people should feel welcome to join in – wherever they or their parents were born, whatever the colour of their skin or racial origins. We will all bring something to share. We can all enjoy curry or pasta as well as roast beef or fish and chips. We can share the music of Bob Marley with that of John Lennon, Edward Elgar and Ludwig von Beethoven. There are dances English people can do other than Morris! Indeed many people think that Morris dancing was originally Moorish dancing and originates with the Arab peoples of the Mediterranean region. All English people, whatever their ethnic or geographical origins, are welcome to celebrate St George and so are our guests and visitors.

Long before it was an English national day, however, St George's Day was the festival of a Christian martyr. As such, it can be celebrated (and is celebrated) by Christians anywhere in the world. Lots of people who know nothing about England celebrate St George. The basic story took place early in the C4 AD. Like his father before him, George was a soldier and a devoted Christian. By his time, Christianity was very popular in the Roman Empire and generally tolerated by the authorities, but the Emperor Diocletian decided to put a stop to it and ordered the Christians to give up their worship. George not only refused, but, according to the story, told the Emperor that he was wrong to persecute the Church. He was imprisoned and was asked daily to recant, but always refused until the emperor finally lost patience and George was beheaded. His flag represents his red blood spilt on the white pavement. It is in the form of a cross because he died in Christ.

So St George's Day is both an English national day and the feast of a Christian martyr. When I was a boy (and for many centuries before that) England was at least notionally a Christian country. Most people put *C of E* on official forms. The Head of State was crowned at a service of Holy Communion, anointed with sacred oil, given a Bible as her guide, and took an oath to uphold the protestant religion. Your first name was your *Christian* name. Businesses closed on the Christian holy day. It was taken for granted that the Laws of England would reflect the Law of God. We had an established Church. So, although we didn't do much about St George, it wouldn't have occurred to most of us that there could be any dissonance in celebrating our national day and the feast of a Christian martyr together.

However, we now live under an increasingly secular state. It seems to have been forgotten that our Head of State is still Her Majesty the Queen who made that coronation oath. The fact that we have an established Church is regarded as an embarrassment. Christian values and teaching are not particularly considered in the enactment of legislation. The needs and wishes of Christians are sidelined in our commercial life. Conscience is no longer respected as it was in the recent past.

In the 1960s, For example, doctors and nurses whose consciences forbade them to perform abortions, were excused from being compelled to

do so. The Church of England was allowed to maintain the indissolubility of marriage when the divorce law was reformed in a secular direction – also in the 1960s. Sikhs were exempted from having to wear motor cycle helmets. Jewish shops were allowed to open on Sundays if they closed on Saturdays. MPs used to be allowed free votes when moral issues such as embryo research were debated in parliament. I believe that this respect for conscience is a legacy of our Christian heritage.

Unfortunately, in the last couple of decades, a militant secularism has asserted itself in government. Conscience is no longer respected at least in the public domain. Adoption agencies must offer children to gay couples. Bed and breakfast proprietors must offer double rooms to homosexual couples. Relationship counsellors cannot confine themselves to assisting people pursuing heterosexual lifestyles. MPs were whipped to support the government line when the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill was

before parliament. Christians are told that they must not wear symbols of their faith at work. A vicar was threatened by his local council with £1,000 fine and a criminal record for flying a flag on the church flag pole depicting the crucifixion of Jesus. The school year shows less and less respect for Christian holy days. Christians are expected to work on Sundays.

George was martyred because he refused to obey the secular state. It seems to me that it is at least possible that one day Christians in England will have to decide whether their loyalty is to God or to the state. If England finally does cease to be a Christian country, we shall all be forced to decide where our ultimate loyalty lies.

By the time you read this there will be a new parliament and government. Remember them in your prayers as St Paul told us to.

Roger.

Halling Historical Society: June 17th 7.30 Jubilee Hall *Restoration London* Mrs Mount.

The Church at the Fun Day

As Halling Fun Day will fall on a Sunday this year, the Church will be involved. Please pass on your suggestions and watch this space!

September Celebrations

Have you ever celebrated something special at St Michael's? Maybe you were married here or had your children christened. Maybe there is something else special which has happened in your life here. Perhaps you have photographs or other artefacts to remind you of these occasions. 26th September is *Back to Church Sunday*. 26th September is also the date of the Festal Evensong to celebrate the fact that John Bogg has been our organist and choirmaster for 20 years. 29th is Michaelmas. 3rd October is Harvest Festival.

We want to make this week a celebration of what St Michael's means to you and we'd be glad of anything you are prepared to lend to us for an exhibition in the church and hall that week. There will definitely be a Patronal Festival Eucharist on the Wednesday and a Harvest Supper on the Sunday. What else will happen that week depends on the ideas you have. So please note these dates in your diaries, turn out any old snaps or whatever and put on your thinking caps for ideas for a celebration.

If this goes as well as it should, we'll do something similar at Halling in 2011.

Confirmation 2010

We are not due for a Confirmation in the parish this year, but I believe that there are people ready to be confirmed. I am planning to take our candidates for confirmation on 21st November to Frindsbury. Please let me know if you are interested. Roger.

Quizzes in the Church Hall

May 29th (for CMS mission partner Andrew Daunton-Feare) & September 11th (for Christian Aid) at 7.30 pm. Teams 6-8. £6 entry includes food but not drink. Please contact Rector for details and bookings.

From the Registers

Birth:

To William (formerly of Cuxton) and Rebecca a girl, Amy Rose Milligan-Harrison 27th March 2010.

Baptism:

22nd April Jessica Louise Ruth Cornthwaite Larkfield

Wedding:

1st May Peter Barry Graves & Denise Marie Herbert Halling

Funeral:

12th April Dorothy Grace Gray (89) Chatham

Thanks

To all my friends at St Michael's and St John's, thank you all who donated towards my gift that was presented to me on my retirement as churchwarden. Also Betty would like to thank you all for the beautiful flowers given to her for supporting me during the fifteen years I served as churchwarden at St John's. I wish my successor Steve Brown all the best for the future. Norman Head.

Nature Notes April 2010

A cold North West wind is blowing on the first but the sun is shining brightly from a clear blue sky. I drive to the river the with Murphy where the water is low exposing the glistening mud flats where gulls forage. Speedwell red deadnettle, dandelions and cowslips bloom along the grassy banks beside the path. By mid day some grey and white clouds drift across the sky but the golden sun and blue heavens are not obscured. On 2nd the sun shines for a while then rain falls but clears by the evening. The sun lights up the wet garden and the grass sparkles. Black clouds have built up in the east. Pheasants, a cock and two hens come to the garden. The 4th is grey with a cold wind blowing. I walk through Six-acre Wood and across the fields in the afternoon. Hawthorns are still in tight bud up on the hill, while in the grass I see dandelions, a few buttercups and speedwell in bloom. On the afternoon of 5th the sun shines brightly and a strong wind blows. The sky in the early evening is a beautiful blue and white clouds scud across the heavens while the sun brings golden light to the garden. The lilac buds are almost ready to burst. After so much cold weather the 6th is warm and I am aware of Spring's awakening. The next day I notice that the trees on the embankment are beginning to burst into leaf. The 10th is a beautiful clear day. In the shelter of the garden the sun feels warm and I hear the song of the chiff chaff but later in the afternoon I am aware of the north east wind which brings a chill to the air. The next day I walk to Bush then over the rise to Dean Valley. Along the way I see white and mauve violets, dandelions, celandines, primroses and wood anemones. Rabbits and squirrels scuttle across the

paths. I make my way through part of Mays Wood and across Church Fields. Some hawthorns are in full leaf and I see two ladybirds on one of these leaves. The sky is a clear blue and birdsong fills the air. I'm very aware of the cold wind as I cross the fields and am quite glad to reach the main road. By 12th the Spring weather has lit up the countryside. On 13th I see a few bluebells and carpets of white wood anemones in Mays Wood and wild cherry is in bloom. In the fields where buttercups, dandelions and speedwell bloom blackthorn flower buds are waiting to burst. The smooth river meanders through the valley. The 14th is grey and cold with north westerly winds causing grey clouds to drift across the sky. The embankment is becoming evermore green as leaves burst upon the scene. They are such a tender green. By mid afternoon there are a few glimpses of the sun. On 16th as I drive to Addington I am aware of the beautiful greens bursting into life. I pass weeping willows in the fields and the hedgerows along the lane are in leaf while the air is full of birdsong. Later as I return along the narrow lane a great spotted woodpecker flies ahead of me. The 17th is such a beautiful day with clear blue skies a slight breeze and birdsong. I watch, at different times of the day, a small white butterfly, an orange tip and a brimstone butterfly hover in the garden. I hear a great tit, a robin, a blackbird and a chiff chaff throughout the afternoon when I sit in the garden. Dunnock come to the pond to drink and to peck at the seed on the grass. The sycamore trees have burst their buds, likewise the small elms. The lilac has formed fresh flower heads. On the 18th I take advantage of the

glorious weather and walk across the fields and into the woods where I see evermore Spring flowers. From 19th to 23rd north east winds bring a chill to the air. Silver birch trees are bursting into leaf. The 24th eventually brings some warmth. I sit in the garden listening to the songs of a robin and a chiff chaff. By 27th, up in the fields, blackthorn is in full bloom and hawthorn and elder flowers are in tight bud. Tiny speedwell raise their heads to the sky and in the wood, wild cherry blossom drifts down to the path. I look for cuckoo flowers and find them where they usually grow. In Mays Wood celandines, wood

anemones, violets stitchwort, yellow archangel and cow parsley bloom while bluebells fill the air with their delicate perfume. Later, as the light fades, the moon rises in a clear sky and to the songs of birds. On 29th, as the afternoon becomes early evening, I listen to the thrush trilling loudly. It is up in the branches of the conifer tree but I am unable to see it. Temperatures are lower on 30th but the sun shines. The white lilac is in bloom and the mauve lilac is following suit. Another month closes.

Elizabeth Summers

Two Goldfinches by David Elder

Two of them came to the table
Dressed in their finery
Of feathered gilt
Showing off their wealth
Of crimson, black,
Vestal white, dark brown,
Bars of gold about their wings,

The blue tits returned
To find their status demoted,
Suddenly looking more like pages
In tight fitting sailor-boy uniforms,
Watching the happy couple
Take a wedding feast, and looking bereaved, bereft.

A Thought When We Are Confronted With the Enormity of the World's Problems.

I cannot do everything, but I must not do nothing.



Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society is concerned that recent changes in the planning regulations have relaxed restrictions too far and fears that we may see more development in the Green Belt and dormers put into bungalows with no effective control.

If you have not yet renewed your subscription to DCPS, please do not delay and, if you can, please introduce a new member at the same time.

Kay Roots.

Words From A Burmese Christian

Pastor Simon both belongs to a minority tribe which is persecuted by the government and is a Christian. His people are continually moved on into more and more remote parts of the country and harassed.

Our Living Testimony

**They call us a displaced people,
But praise God; we are not misplaced.
They say they see no hope for our future,
But praise God; our future is as bright as the promises of God.
They say the life of our people is a misery,
But praise God; our life is mystery.
For what they say is what they see.
And what they see is temporal.
But ours is the eternal.
All because we put ourselves,
In the hands of the God we trust.**

Pastor Saw Simon.

Mothers Union News

It was our privilege to have the Deanery 'Lady Day Service' here at St Michaels' church this year. We all gathered in Church at 11 am for a lovely service led by our rector (for which we are thankful). Mrs Ashby came with our Mothers Union member from Snodland to play the piano for us and each Branch represented brought their Banner in Good Old Traditional style. After the service we all enjoyed a 'Bring and Share' lunch together in the hall.

Two days later, the 27th March saw some of us in the Cathedral for our Tri-Annual Celebration and Thanksgiving Service at which our new president, Jocelyn Wright, was commissioned - another great service and will be well remembered. Our speaker was Mark Russell from The Church Army who held us spellbound and gave us lots to think about. Some of us had lunch at 'The Copperfield' in Gravesend to round off a happy Saturday morning.

Jocelyn, our President is coming to visit our Branch on Wednesday 16th June. We look forward to this and feel quite honoured to have a visit from her so soon into her term in office.

If you ever feel you would like to join our 'Worldwide Fellowship' or just come as a visitor, you will find a warm welcome on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:45am in the Church Hall.

All are welcome! Shirley Crundwell.



Bluebell Wood Charity Walk Saturday 24th April Upper Halling

I would like to thank all the walkers and walker sponsors, all those who donated on the day, and those who couldn't walk but who sent a donation. The Eve Appeal has now been sent £1,000 from our walk. I know there is more to follow. I will get this figure into the local papers later. Thank you all once again. Pat Lawry 01634 240892.

Your Questions Answered

Who Decides What Readings We Have in Church?

The table of readings for Sundays and weekdays is called the lectionary. The lectionary is determined nationally by the Church of England in consultation with other churches. So our lectionary is very similar to the one used in many churches of other denominations as well as being the same as the one used in other C of E parishes. What the lectionary aims to do is to provide us with Sunday and weekday Bible readings which deepen our understanding and appreciation of the whole of the Bible by sequential reading and also proclaim the great truths we are celebrating at different times of the Christian year. Where there are options, it is my responsibility to decide which to take. I generally publish the readings for Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in this magazine so that you can read them through in advance or read them at home when you can't come to church.

There must always be a Gospel reading at Holy Communion. There must then be at least one other reading from the rest of the New Testament (the Epistles, Acts and the Revelation) or the Old Testament. On Sundays and other feast days, normally we have two readings apart from the Gospel. We need every part of the Bible, not least the Old Testament, without which it is impossible to understand much of what the New Testament is talking about! Sometimes we also have a psalm, the Book of Psalms being a tremendous spiritual resource which is too often neglected now we no longer have Mattins and Evensong as principal services. When choosing which options to use, I have to be sensitive to the need to give you enough Scripture to nourish your faith without giving you spiritual indigestion by overdoing it. So the choices depend to some extent on who I think is likely to be there and sometimes I make last minute changes.

I find Easter (the 50 days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost or Whitsun) a difficult period in which to have decide on what to do about readings. Of course, we always have the appointed Gospel. We also always have the reading from Acts. The Book of Acts is about the work of the Holy Spirit of the Risen Christ and is very suitable for Easter. The lectionary also offers another New Testament reading from the Epistles or Revelation and an OT lesson which is not recommended as an alternative to the Epistle or Revelation reading. I hate leaving any of them out, but I suspect that four lessons (and sometimes a psalm) is too much!

**Barbecue
Rectory Garden
11th July
Don't miss it!**

HALLING HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 1985 - 2010

Some time in the Autumn, 1984, and Spring, 1985, a group met to discuss the possibility of forming a local history society. The prime mover was Bob Smith, then Chairman of Halling Parish Council, who had been inspired by the Centenary Celebrations at the old Maidstone Hospital. He was joined by Ted Gowers, our local historian, and Arthur Harrison, our local amateur archaeologist. A committee was formed with Bob as Chairman, Arthur as Vice-Chairman, Marion Lear, Secretary, Sheila Godding, Treasurer Ted, myself, Cyril Haines, Cyril Godding and one or two others. Those of us who were 'Founder Members' were issued with certificates. These included Don Court, Jack and Marjorie Court, Wilf Fennemore, Peter Silver, Mary Morran, Alan Vousden, Sheila and Bill Underdown, Roy and Mary Underdown, Irene Gowers.

The first meeting was held on 10th June, 1985, in the old church room in Vicarage Road but as membership grew this proved too small and we transferred to the school in Vicarage Road. When this closed we met for a time in the Social Club in Stake Lane and then in Harris House. When that closed we moved to the Jubilee Hall, ensuring that anyone without transport could be given a lift to Upper Halling. Over the years we have been educated, amused and occasionally bored. One of our more memorable occasions was when Arthur Harrison and Ted Gowers did a joint presentation on local history at the new Primary School. The Hall was packed.

We have had many enjoyable excursions, some of them organised by the two Dons, Court and Hicks. Bignor Roman Mosaic and Whealden Open Air Museum, Oxford, Cambridge, Dover, Eynesford and the Roman Villa, Finchcocks, Gads Hill School and, to me, one of the most fascinating, to Long Melford when we went through the time zone to Tudor times.

So, on Thursday, 17th June we shall be celebrating 25 years. Some of our members include some of the 'Founder Members'. If, reading this, you, too, are a 'Founder Member' we shall be pleased to see you at the Jubilee Hall at 7.30 p.m. when after Mrs. Toni Mount's talk on Restoration London, we are to mark the occasion with a glass of wine and a piece of cake. Of course, even if you are not a 'Founder Member' you would be welcome as you would to our future meetings this year: August 19th - the Great Flood, 1953, October 14th - Huguenots in Kent; December 9th - Behind the Scenes at Westminster Abbey. Mary Acott Chairman.

News from Cuxton Community Infants School

We have had a busy few weeks following the Easter holiday and are now looking forward to some warm weather, particularly as the Foundation stage visit Tyland Barn and year one and two visit the Museum of Kent life. The children are desperate to remove their coats at playtime and wear sun hats and shades! The Summer terms are always hectic. Year 2 have begun their visits to the Junior school and experienced playtimes in their new environment as of September. They are very grown up at this time of year! We soon begin new class visits for the rest of the school. So all children now have the opportunity to visit their new classes, meet their new teacher and teaching assistant and learn about new routines, make their coat peg, tray label and do some art work etc! We welcome new children into school for a few visits this year and my deputy, the class teachers and I meet their parents for informal discussions. These chats are so valuable and help us to get to know each other before the children begin school.

We have been teaching the year two children skipping games in PE, using long ropes. It has brought back memories of playtimes at school and rhymes such as I'm a little bumper car, Salt, mustard, vinegar, pepper!

In June we are holding a fun sports morning on our top field and inviting dads into school for Fathers Day lunch. The feedback is always good on this occasion especially if it's cook's chocolate sponge and custard or pineapple upside down cake!

We recently enjoyed a walk to St Michael's to meet Roger and learn about the Church. The children were delighted to look around and see the font, stained glass windows, organ, altar, bells, pews, and learned so much from the talk Mr Knight gave about the history of St Michael's. As part of the National Curriculum, we teach children about aspects of Christianity, also Hinduism and Judaism.

In ICT the year 2 children have been learning about the use of email. I received several yesterday from year two children and they were quite excited to respond. Each child has an email address, but we obviously teach the safe use of the internet. In contrast the Foundation children have been learning how to use and program robotic toys. Some of our year one children have been taking photographs around the school and putting them onto the computer with a caption. It has been amazing. They are so advanced in these skills and find ICT much easier than many adults! Children seem to be growing so fast. It is so important for us to teach them a broad, creative curriculum but also to hold on to some of the more traditional aspects, and certainly to teach them values and respect.

Lastly my thanks to the Parish Council for donating a cheque towards our staging fund, for use by the school and community. It was most interesting to attend the meeting and hear about all the hard community work going on in Cuxton.

That's all from the Infants for now, take care,
Sandra Jones. Headteacher.

Scoutana 2010 **Saturday 26th June Scout Hall & Grounds**

An Inspired Idea or A Stupid One?

While quietly day-dreaming one day, it occurred to me that we could probably pay off our £22,000 parish share debt to the Diocese if every adult in the parish simply donated £5. If you thought this was an inspired idea, you could hand your donation to me, to a churchwarden or to the treasurer, saying what it is for. Any cheques should be payable to "Cuxton & Halling PCC" and gift aided donations mean that we can claim back the tax you've already paid. Even if only some people did this, it would go some way to reducing the deficit. What do you think? Roger.

Cooperating With the Holy Spirit

A Sermon for the Sunday after Ascension 2010

Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28, Psalm 97, Acts 16 vv 16-34, Revelation 22 vv 12-21, John 17 vv 20-26

Last week I expressed my puzzlement that, whereas God gives so generously of His Holy Spirit, the Church in this country is in such a parlous condition. It cannot be that God is unable to build His Church. In many parts of the world, Christians thrive and flourish and the Church is growing rapidly. This is often true in countries where people live in great poverty and the Church has to live with savage persecution. I heard recently that as many as 250,000,000 Christians in the world today face persecution for their beliefs, yet, not only do these Christians remain firm in their faith, but their churches attract large numbers of converts. God does not let them down. Throughout the world God is building His Church, except in places like this. It is astonishing and baffling that it is in countries which are prosperous and at peace, where we have freedom of religion under the law, that congregations are melting away and the *gloom and doom* merchants are asking whether the Church can even survive. I suggested that the reason for the failure of the Church in this

country is not that God fails to pour out His Holy Spirit upon us but that so many of those of us in England who *profess and call themselves Christians* fail to cooperate with His Holy Spirit. Not unreasonably, after the service, someone asked me what it would mean to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

The greatest of the Spirit's gifts is love. Therefore to cooperate with the Holy Spirit is to obey the Commandments, summed up in the words, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Suppose we loved God with all hearts, then the things of God would be the most important things in our lives: worship, prayer, the Sacraments, the Word of God, Christian fellowship. We would understand why Zimbabwean Christians meet together for public worship in the gutters when Mugabe's police throw them out of their church buildings with tear gas and beatings. We would understand those Sunday School stories about people who walked many, many miles to obtain a copy of the Bible. We would understand why the prophet Daniel continued to pray three times a day in front of an open window even when it had been ordered that anyone who did so would be thrown into the lions' den. Maybe we could understand how the best of the persecuted find the grace to pray for their persecutors. If we opened ourselves up to the Spirit of God, the things of eternity would by far outshine the things of this world. We all have our own opinions about public worship and how it should be presented, what we should sing, what words we should use, how the building should be decorated, but, if we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, we know that *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

Suppose we took seriously the words *All things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.* All our talents are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All our possessions, all our money come from God. Our very life is God's gift to us. The *Christian Stewardship* movement asks people to consider how they use their time, their talents and their money in the light of the fact that everything we have is the gift of God. When we come to the Offertory in the Holy Communion service we are only acknowledging that everything we have comes from God and, of our own free will, offering back to Him everything that we have and everything that we are, to use as He sees fit. The point about the story of the widow's mite is not that Jesus was better pleased with a small offering than a big offering or even that a small offering would do. The point is that the widow gave all that she had, whereas the rich people, who put much more into the treasury than she did, held back a considerable proportion of their wealth for themselves. The poor widow lost her life, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel and found it, whereas the rich saved their lives, thought they could gain the whole world, and yet lost their own soul.

Suppose Christians in Britain today offered their abundant material wealth, their time, which is so often frittered away on trivia, and their many and diverse talents to the building of God's Kingdom. Do you think the Church in this country would still be struggling?

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. One of St Paul's difficult sayings is *As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* Why especially unto them who are of the household of faith? Is this meant to limit the scope of our doing good to the Church, to fellow Christians? This is another version of the old question *Who is my neighbour?* If God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New, tell us to love our neighbours as ourselves, whom does He mean? Well, *charity begins at home.* It doesn't stop there. We do have a special fellowship with other Christians. This is what Jesus meant when He said, *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* There is a special bond between Christians because the Church is the Body of Christ, the Communion (or fellowship) of the Holy Spirit. We are one with Christ and therefore one with God and one with one another. We are members of Christ and members of one another. Our membership of the Church means a great deal to us. The Church is our family. Jesus says *For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.* Charity begins at home, but it cannot stop there if it is genuine charity, love or $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$. God's people are obliged to love the world, because *God so loved the world*, but first we love God and then the Church.

That being the case, people who cooperate with the Holy Spirit have a great loyalty to the Church. We are a fellowship, a *κοινωνία* the Communion of the Holy Spirit. If we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, we bear one another's burdens, we build one another up in the service of Christ. We do not defile or destroy God's Temple by mistreating fellow members of the Body of Christ, by putting them down. Our Church has a programme of public worship, social events, evangelism and pastoral care. We seek to support charities and missions. If you believe that your Church's programme is God's Will for the Church in this place, you will support what we are doing insofar as you are able. If you believe that what we are doing is not in accordance with God's Will, you should say so to your Rector or your PCC representatives. We have a duty to speak the truth, but always in love. We belong to Christ and He belongs to us. Our Church is His Church and His Church is our Church. We pray for discernment of God's Will for us and we pray for one another in His service.

Christian people are loyal to the Church they belong to and to every expression of the Church: the diocese, the national Church, the Anglican Communion, Christians of other denominations, of whom there are far more in the world than there are Anglicans. We all together constitute the *one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church*, of which we are a part and we share one another's responsibilities, one another's triumphs and one another's pain.

A few days ago I heard a presentation by a representative of HART, an international organisation which seeks to support people who are oppressed or persecuted or who suffer hardship. It is a Christian organisation which stands up for Christians and others who are the victims of humanity's wickedness. One story was of a Christian woman in the Sudan. We were shown her picture. As a result of civil war, anarchy, oppression and a harsh climate, many people in Sudan are very poor. This woman had a young child who was quite literally on the point of starving to death. She was told that she could take him to a place where the government was distributing food, but only if she converted to Islam. I don't know what she did or what she should have done, but, as our speaker pointed out, we are richly blessed to be in fellowship with people like her. He told us that, first of all, people like that woman want to be remembered. Then they want to be prayed for. Then they are grateful for any material help we can give. We are in a worldwide communion with them, mutually supporting one another.

There is so much to do in the world and we need the time, talents and resources of all those *who profess and call themselves Christians*. As somebody put it, when faced with the enormity of the world's problems, *I cannot do everything, but I must not do nothing*.

The widow brought her two mites. The little lad gave Jesus five loaves and two fishes which He used to feed a multitude. If we work with the Spirit, there is no limit to what we can do.

The love of God is without limit and, if we live in the Spirit, our love too is limitless.

Life in the Spirit is not a burden; it is liberty. It is not a grind; it is joy, joy in all its fulness. It is walking with God, sampling the firstfruits of the Resurrection in anticipation of the Final Consummation in the Kingdom of God. It is what Jesus showed the divine John in the Revelation which bears his name. Here are John's closing verses which will also form the conclusion of this sermon. Read Revelation 22 vv 12-21.



Max's Tail Piece

Master hasn't found room for me for the last few months – hardly just as some people tell me that my column is their favourite piece in the magazine. Anyway, how slowly Spring seems to have come this year! Traditionally I get taken for a walk to see the bluebells and to calm Master's nerves before the Annual Meeting each year. Master says that a bluebell wood in Spring is the nearest you can get to Heaven on earth, whereas meetings are about as close to the other place. I hope he doesn't really mean it! This year, there were hardly any bluebells out at the end of April, but since then they have turned out with all their customary glory. One morning we were asked by some photographers where was the best place to see them. For some reason, Master says, they look better as you come down the path rather than up and they show up more beautifully with the sun behind them. So

actually it is better to go in the afternoons if you want to see the bluebells in Mays Wood. Master can remember when there were bluebell woods where the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre now is and it makes him quite sad to think of how much of the Kent countryside has disappeared under concrete in his lifetime. Well, the weather continues fresh. I was able to roll in the frost Wednesday morning, but it does not seem to have damaged the abundant blossom on the apple trees. That's good, I like to play with the drops and, just occasionally, I surprise everyone by eating one. It might be cold, but the light mornings and evenings are marvellous and soon, we are told, it will warm up. Then, I expect, they'll be praying for rain – but not on the day of the barbecue!

It was a pity Master fell over on his Easter break. He didn't look so good with his grazes and missing teeth. The grazes are now gone, but the teeth are still missing. He can whistle, but he has trouble pronouncing words like *flourisheth* and *inestimable*, which is very inconvenient for a clergyman. He ought to see a dentist.

Best wishes to you all, Max, the Rectory Spaniel.