

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 3 rd May Easter 4	9.30 Family Communion	Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076
Sunday 10 th May Easter 5	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083
Sunday 17 th May Easter 6	8.00 Holy Communion	Revelation 3 vv 14-22 p1236 Luke 22 vv 24-30 p1058
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-11 p742 Acts 10 vv 44-48 p1105 I John 5 vv 1-6 p1228 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083
Thursday 21 st May Ascension Day	7.30pm Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
Sunday 24 th May Easter 7	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 15—26 p1092 I John 5 vv 9-13 p1228 John 17 vv 6-19 p1085
Sunday 31 st May Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 22-27 p1135 John 15 v26 – 16 v15 p1083
Sunday 7 th June Trinity Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065
Sunday 14 th June Trinity 1	9.30 Confirmation	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 3 rd May Easter 4	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Revelation 2 vv 12-17 p1234 John 6 vv 30-40 p1-70
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-5 p8, Genesis 7 vv 11-18 p9, Genesis 8 vv 6-18 p9, Genesis 9 vv 8-13 p10, Acts 4 vv 5-12 p1095 I John 3 vv 16-24 p1227 John 10 vv 11-18 p1076
Sunday 10 th May Easter 5	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 60 vv 1-14 p746 Revelation 3 vv 1-13 p1235
Sunday 17 th May Easter 6	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 55 vv 1-11 p742 Acts 10 vv 44-48 p1105 I John 5 vv 1-6 p1228 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083
Thursday 21 st May Ascension Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
Sunday 24 th May Easter 7	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 15—26 p1092 I John 5 vv 9-13 p1228 John 17 vv 6-19 p1085
Sunday 31 st May Pentecost	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 22-27 p1135 John 15 v26 – 16 v15 p1083
Sunday 7 th June Trinity Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Revelation 4 vv 1236 Mark 1 vv 1-13 p1002
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065
Sunday 14 th June Trinity 1	9.30 Confirmation at Cuxton	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Jeremiah 7 vv 1-16 p764 Romans 9 vv 14-26 p1136

Wednesday Communion at Cuxton 9.30 am		Thursday Communion at Halling 9.30 am	
6 th May	Acts 12 v25 – 13 v5 John 12 vv 44-end	7 th May	Acts 13 vv 13-25 John 13 vv 16-20
13 th May	Acts 15 vv 1-6 John 15 vv 1-8	14 th May	Acts 1 vv 15-end John 15 vv 9-17
20 th May Rogation Day	Acts 17 v15- 18v1 John 16 vv 12-15	21 st May Ascension Day	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
27 th May	Acts 20 vv 28-end John 17 vv 11-19	28 th May	Acts 22 v30 – 23 v11 John 17 vv 20-end

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

Copy Date June Magazine 15th May 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. **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.

Music in June

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 light classics and music from the shows. The date is our Patronal Festival, 24th June. The starting time is 8.00pm.

The Patronal Festival Eucharist will be at 6.30 pm.



Sophie Webster

In case you don't know, Sophie Webster is a character in *Coronation Street*. She is supposed to be in her early to mid teens and she has "got religion". She has fallen for Ben Richardson, hunky captain of her school swimming team, and started going to his Church. There is nothing wrong with this in itself. Most of us start going to Church with somebody else, a family member or a friend. What matters is whether, in the long run, we come to know Jesus personally or whether we just go for social reasons.

What amuses me is the effect all this is having on her parents, Kevin and Sally Webster. Sally tells Sophie that there is no need to go to Ben's Church (or any Church). She is already a Christian. They are a Christian family, Sally tells her, but there has been precious little evidence of this in Sally's life so far. Sally looks down on Janice Battersby and

people like her. She tried to swindle the Peacocks in the buying and selling of houses. Sally has had several affairs. We never see her or Kevin praying or reading the Bible. My guess is that they pray only in emergencies and that somewhere in the Webster household there is a family Bible, which is treasured but unopened. The Websters never go to church except for weddings and funerals and, as we all know, weddings and funerals in Soapland are generally disgraceful affairs, with a benign, but ineffectual, vicar impotently wringing his hands while cast members bellow hideous accusations at one another. In Soapland, normal Church is a small gathering of well-meaning and mainly elderly people like Emily Bishop, who do things like run the League of Friends shop at the local hospital.

Sally and Kevin are bemused by Ben's lively Christian faith. They like the fact that he is polite and that he is not after casual sex with Sophie, but they think it's all a bit weird. They aren't sure

whether they want their daughter getting mixed up in a group that stands a little aside from what's normal for teenagers.

I should say that the Websters are like a lot of English families. They have given up being Christians without even noticing that they have. Indeed, they still call themselves Christians. Maybe they get a bit cross when the local council bans school nativity plays "in case they upset the Moslems", but there is nothing really especially Christian about their lives. If it were against the Law to be a Christian in this country, there wouldn't be enough evidence to convict them!

Things come to a bit of a head in the Webster household when Sally wants to take Sophie to buy a new pair of shoes one Sunday morning. Sophie insists that she can't go shopping because she's got to go to Church. Doesn't that make you pause for thought? In 20 years we have changed from a society in which the shops stayed shut on Sundays out of respect for the Christian religion into a society in which it is taken for granted that, not only will the shops be open on Sundays, but also that, even people who call themselves Christians, will see no problem in going shopping rather than worshipping God on the Christian holy day.

Indeed, I would go further. For most people, faith is all very well so long as it does not interfere with normal life. I'm not going to take up space here explaining why I think this attitude is profoundly wrong. Suffice to say this. In Church the other week, we talked about the *Rolling Stones* singing their 1965 hit (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction*.



Halling W.I. March Meeting

Our March meeting was less sombre than our previous one although we did remember two former members,

Mrs Doris Mabbott, once a vice chairman and founder member of our W.I., and Mrs Ruby Mitchell who had been a previous secretary some years ago, who had recently passed away. As always we started with a good sing and the minutes were read. Our latest batch of Yorkshire tea had arrived, they must have known we were down to our last half dozen bags. Some of us are going to a fashion show at Kingshill W.I. and Betty, Ann, and Eileen are going to the Annual Council Meeting at Tunbridge Wells, the next day. I explained the plight of Blythswood Care. They are not receiving so much second hand clothing

When you think about it, it is obvious why they couldn't. They wasted their lives on rock concerts when they should have spent their time in worshipping God and humbly serving humanity.

May sees two major festivals. 21st is Ascension Day. On the fortieth day of Easter, Jesus ascended into Heaven. He reigns at God's Right Hand. He ever lives to pray for us. He opens the gate of Heaven to the human race. He pours out His Holy Spirit on the world. I can guarantee that there is almost nothing that you could be doing on 21st May this year more important than celebrating our Lord's Ascension. We have two services of Holy Communion that day – 9.30 am at Halling and 7.30 pm at Cuxton. (See p8 for details of procession.) I am sure that most people could make one of them. If you are coming to either by car, maybe you could offer a lift to someone for whom it is too far to walk or who might be nervous about walking alone.

31st May this year is Pentecost or Whitsun when we celebrate God's gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is God with us and God within us. He makes it possible for us to be Christians, to know Jesus as Lord and God as Father. The Holy Spirit makes us members of God's Church. He empowers us to do what Jesus wants us to do in the world. He brings us home to be forever with God in Heaven. Pentecost too is worth celebrating! Holy Communion at 9.30 am at Cuxton and 11.00 am at Halling.

Roger.

at their Rochester depot. The credit crunch has started to bite. People are not throwing so much away these days.

Margaret then introduced the very special speaker, ME. What was I going to talk about? What had the girls brought for me to talk about? I had five items. The first one I chose I got it wrong. I thought it was a compass, made of brass and wood. On a second look it was covered in numbers. Turned out to be a perpetual calendar, although the owner admitted they didn't move it, so it wasn't up to date, and on the third look it finished in 2026 so I for one won't be around. Miracles like that don't happen. The second item was a bit saucy, no not a bottle of H.P., a pair of black fur HANDCUFFS. They had never seen a

criminals wrists and my mind boggled at what one of the W.I. girls got up too. Had they had been police issue I could have talked for quite a while. As it was I didn't think I had better go down the other road. What do you say about a miniature bottle of 12 year old malt whiskey in a black tin? Although I have been to a few whiskey factories (distilleries) and I've made a few bottles of wheat wine in my time, I still think it doesn't do anybody any good in the bottle. A drop of ginger wine and a dash of the hard stuff keeps the colds away. That's my theory and I'm sticking to it. My fourth "article" was a newspaper cutting. The value of a mum - £32000 according to some survey. I really could get my teeth into this one. What is a mum? A cook, doctor, a nurse, a charlady, a laundry maid, a navigator, a teacher and many more things, but it is the best job in the world. Pity some people don't realise that. In the competition, I chose this one for first. It was brought by Trudy Fenton Scott, a very busy mum. The last item was a framed print of Halling House, long since demolished, but in my youth I used to

cross the river from Wouldham to go to work and the ferry steps brought back a lot of memories, and oh how I wished we could see St John's church from the river. Instead it is covered up by those dreaded sycamore trees. I finished my talk showing the girls some of my many paintings that I have done over the years, and my newly acquired cockerel to adorn our church for Easter along with his hen and chicks. I said, How can I write a report for the church magazine when I have been the speaker? One of our ladies said, it was the best talk they had had so far this year, so I think it went down O.K.

After tea, Ann Hayward produced one of her quizzes, on Nursery Rhymes, which I won. I always say I am a kid at heart. What did I win? A packet of jelly pensioners, her words, not mine. Another meeting over. Next month, the Valley of Vision speaker. I may bring up the subject of those dreaded sycamore trees behind St John's. Watch this space. Phyllis.

Church Hall Draw March : £5 to Maureen Holt, drawn by Shirley Crundwell

St John's Draw March: £5 each to Mrs Swatton (6), Mr Pratt (98), Mrs Crow (29), Mrs Wells (111) & Mrs Carter (127) – drawn by Mrs Hesketh.

March2009-Nature Notes

On the 1st of the month the skies are overcast but it is dry. In the afternoon I walk through Six acre Wood where I hear birdsong. The paths are dry and the banks are covered with ivy. No flowers are in bloom but catkins hang delicately from their twigs. I climb up into Mays Wood where I see dog's mercury, arum lilies and bluebell plants emerging through the soil and dead leaves. I gaze across Bush Valley where there is a slight haze and it is so peaceful, and then make my way back across Church Fields. I like this time of year when winter is coming to an end and there is the anticipation of spring.

The next morning the skies are a clear blue and the golden sunshine brings warmth to the garden. The great tit trills its spring call from a tree on the embankment. At the beginning of the afternoon, white clouds drift across the sky from the west. We drive through Bush Valley where celandines adorn the grassy banks and slender catkins hang from their fine twigs. Snowdrops bloom on the banks beyond Cobham. We walk in Camer Park where the grass is lush green while the bare trees wait to burst into their spring loveliness. Winter returns the next day. The 4th is cold but eventually the sun does shine. I take Murphy to the river which is low and calling gulls congregate. A pale sun shines down from a pale

almost grey sky onto the grey water and grey mudflats. Pigeons forage along the grassy banks which I look forward to being filled with spring flowers. Early morning sunshine beams onto water droplets on the twigs and branches of trees the next day and they sparkle like diamonds. The day is bright but very wintry. In the evening, I watch rooks flying in to roost. The 6th is a beautiful day as in the morning I walk in Mays Wood where the sun's rays adorn the woodland through the bare branches. Golden celandines and pale primroses bloom in the churchyard. The early afternoon of the 8th brings gusty winds from the west which then drives dark clouds across the sky. Showers of rain fall interspersed with bright spells. On the 10th we have a dry spell when we walk with Murphy in Camer Park. Grey clouds scud across the sky then as we return through Bush Valley the sun shines. Catkins sway in the wind and pale primroses bloom along the banks. On the 11th, as I drive along the Halling by-pass I notice that hawthorns are in leaf revealing a fresh spring green. In the afternoon, I walk the river path with Murphy where I see dandelions, speedwell and cowslips blooming on the grassy banks. We then walk round the ponds and through tall brown headed teasels. Golden gorse blooms beneath the bridge. By the river the next day I watch three mallard, one duck,

two drakes, as they forage in the mud flats. Their feet have left a patterned trail. The following day, while returning from Camer Park, I see clumps of coltsfoot along a bank. On the 14th, I watch a blue tit looking for insects on Sam's rose bush. I still miss him.

Mid afternoon on the 15th sees me walking up the church path where violets are blooming in a garden. Having walked through Six acre Wood I skirt the field where a number of hawthorns are in full leaf then up into Mays Wood where carpets of dog's mercury cover the woodland floor and bluebell plants are well advanced. I tread my secret paths where I see a single floret of cow parsley peeping out from the fresh grass. In Church Fields I see red dead nettle, speedwell chick weed and a single buttercup. High cloud covers the late afternoon sky. On the 16th the sun beams down with warmth and a westerly wind blows as we walk by the river and round the ponds, then in the evening stars twinkle in a cloudless sky. The next day I listen to and watch a greenfinch in the conifer tree. The morning of the 19th brings sunshine and blue skies but this is short lived for grey clouds soon cover the sky and temperatures drop as the easterly breezes blow. Brightness appears for a brief spell then all becomes cold and grey again for the rest of the day. I walk with Murphy by the river as a grey mist descends. On the 21st I watch garden birds. A pair of collared doves perch together on a holly branch while another perches with its back to the others on another branch. A greenfinch joins blue tits and great tits on the feeders. The next day I watch a pair of squirrels

chasing each other among the conifer branches and causing two collared doves to fly out of the tree and across the garden to the holly tree. I watch a blackbird bathing in the pond and a pair of dunnocks pecking seed from the tray on the patio wall. For the next few days cold North West winds blew. Beautiful spring flowers bloom in the woods, white and mauve violets, celandines and wood anemones. On the morning of the 24th I looked out of the kitchen window and saw a robin hanging upside down and in distress in the holly tree. It was flapping its wings and I think it must have been caught in a spider's web. Fortunately, as I went out to help, it freed itself and flew away. I was glad. Cold winds continue to blow and they are particularly biting when we go to St Mary's Island on the 27th. In the morning I had watched a greenfinch perched on an upturned flower pot then a jay feasting on the nuts. The 29th is dry and bright as I walk through Six acre Wood where with the flowers I see hawthorns dressed in their fresh greenery. Along the way a few brown catkins hang on hazel twigs and a sycamore sapling has burst into leaf. On the final day of the month the morning skies are light grey because of high cloud and barely a breeze blows from the west. By mid day there is some brightness then eventually the sun shines. I take Murphy to the river where the water is calm. Later I sit in the garden listening to glorious birdsong and watching a robin preventing a dunnock from feeding at the seed tray.. Mild weather is set to continue.

Elizabeth Summers.

The poem which I have chosen is "**The Way Through The Woods**" by Rudyard Kipling

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago,
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a way through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.

Yet if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods....
But there is no road through the woods.

Prayer

Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many. (II Cor. 2 v11).

A group of us plan to offer prayer in the parish. This obviously is in addition to our Sunday and weekday services and the prayers offered privately by the Rector and other Christians. The idea is that anyone who would like to ask for prayer, perhaps because of illness or a problem they face or for some new enterprise or endeavour, could telephone Buffy on 01634 727126 or e mail her on elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk She will listen confidentially and relay the request to other members of the prayer group. The request may be praise for a happy event, to pray for help in times of trouble or any other kind of prayer. We hope that the prayers of our group will bring strength to live our lives courageously.

Buffy Maisey.

We apologise that Buffy's e mail address was stated incorrectly in last month's magazine. Ed.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

22 nd March	Matilda Jane Rayner	Oswald Drive, Strood
29 th March	Joseph Leonard Chatfield	Petchart Close
Easter Vigil	Courtney Jewels Rush	High Street
Easter Vigil	Esme Michaela Weiler-Grove	Rochester Road, N Halling
Easter Day	Ellie Louise Philpott	Thomas Harris Close
Easter Day	Harry Robert Philpott	Thomas Harris Close

Funerals:

24 th March	Ruby Mitchell (93)	The Street
1 st April	Anthony Patrick Nunn (43)	formerly of Pilgrims Way

Parishioners were also sorry to hear of the death of Christopher Cogger, formerly of this parish.

Christian Aid

A Division of The British Council of Churches



If you can help collect in Christian Aid Week (10th 17th May) this year, please contact Steve Brown (242867). There is terrific need in the developing world and calling door to door raises our profile in the parish. People can see that we are doing something worthwhile.

The Christian Aid Supper for the whole deanery is at St John's Church Halling on 1st May, 7.00 for 7.30 – cost £6, contact Steve Brown 242867.

This year's annual Christian Aid sponsored walk is from Upper Halling (Jubilee Hall) to Camer Park and back. It takes place on 9th May at 9.30 am. Contact Steve Brown or the Rector or Linda Bromley on thebromleyfamily@hotmail.com for sponsor forms and more details.

Dickens' Country Protection Society



Order tickets now for the Barn Dance at Bucklands Farm, Cliffe, on 23rd May from 7.30 – 11.00. Dancing to the Ian Petrie Band. Tickets £10 (£5 under 16) include ploughman's supper. Please bring own drinks and glasses. Elizabeth Dray 01474 824622.

A report on the AGM held 16th March will follow.

Kay Roots.

Halling Bell Ringers

Owing to a shortage of ringers lately, we are practising at Cuxton most Wednesdays for the time being. Trainees are progressing well, however, and we hope soon to have a full team again.

Ringers from Chiswick rang a quarter peal on March 21st.

Peter Silver.

Reminded of Old Jokes

A person with a persistent illness, after many years of suffering, took a long and painful journey to a holy man who resided on a holy mountain in a holy land. The holy man gave him a blessed piece of leather on which to suck till, as he assured him it would, the pain went away. He sucked and sucked over many long years until the leather was all gone but he was no better. He returned to the holy man with the complaint that the thong is ended but the malady lingers on!

A man and his dog were run over coming out of the pub at closing time. The man went to heaven, but the dog could not get past the pearly gates because he was imperfect. His tail was still lying in the road. Desperate to be reunited with his master, he went back down to earth and asked the publican to pin his tail back on. "Sorry, sir," said the publican, "but I'm not allowed to retail spirits after 11.00."

f(x) goes into a bar and asks for a ploughman's and a pint. "Sorry, sir," says the barman. "We don't cater for functions."



Cuxton WI

We have all decided not to become criminals and to, maybe join the forces against them! This after a most informative and enjoyable talk from a local magistrate. It was very interesting to hear how you could join this group and the training and interviews which you would have to undertake. Very stiff tests but obviously needed if you were chosen to do such important work on behalf of the community. Many people left the meeting feeling a lot poorer as tickets for lots of events all seemed to have arrived at the same time. These ranged from Home Economics days to Craft and Royal College of Surgeons. Then it hardly seemed possible but it was time to sign up for our annual birthday event in June. So more to pay, but we get a jolly good meal for our money - most WI know how to eat well!

Members were very willing to help with the Cuxton Village day in August and also at our own Craft Dabble day which is to be held at Snodland. One of our members had recently returned from her holiday in New Zealand where she met our link lady Nina. We had not heard from her recently and were quite worried but it was because her own WI had closed and she had joined another. Our Pam was invited to attend a meeting and then found herself speaker for the evening! She told them about WI life in England and they were all interested to know what we do. And, we do a lot - Art, Cookery, Poetry, Craft, Home Economics, Walking, Music and Drama. We still have room for more members if anyone would like to join our "club"-1st Thursday each month 7.30pm.
Sheila.



Cuxton & Halling Lunch Fellowship

On the first Wednesday of every month there is a meal in the church hall, superbly provided by Christine Eede, for all who choose to come and enjoy having lunch together. There is no charge, but donations are welcomed (suggested minimum £3). After expenses, the money left over goes to church funds. So do come and join us. You will enjoy yourself and be helping your church at the same time. Lunch is served at 12.00.

Cuxton & Halling Mothers Union



The Mothers Union meets every third Wednesday of the month at 10.45 am in the church hall, following corporate Communion at St Michael's at 9.30 and coffee. You are welcome to join us for either or both every month.

Our theme for this year is Home. During Lent we have been studying a course set out by the Mothers Union Faith & Outreach Department.

The programme for the rest of the year is set out below. Please note our May meeting (20th). Our speaker Caroline Smillie will be talking about her decision to educate her son Scott (who has Asperger's syndrome) at home after quite a turbulent junior education up to the age of eleven. This may be of interest to people who know other children with similar problems. These children may be blessed with a special talent and, in Scott's case, this is a beautiful singing voice, which he uses to sing in his church choir. We are hoping he will sing for us. So please come and join us.

MU Programme

(meetings 10.45, church hall)

May 20th Home Educating – Caroline & Scott Smillie
June 17th AGM & Home Produce Stall
July 15th Home Comforts & Home is Best
August 19th Holidays at Home
September 16th Home-made Jewellery

October 21st Harvest Home – the Rector
November 18th Child Minding at Home – Jenny Beaney
December 16th Home for Christmas – All our Memories.

Barbecue 2009

This will take place on 11th July in the Rectory Garden. Please note the date as it is not the date which might have been anticipated on the basis of precedent!

MISSION MAY 21st

One of Jesus' last sayings to his disciples before his ascension was "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" Mark, ch.16 v. 15. On Ascension Day, MAY 21st, there will be a service for at 7.30pm at St Michael's church. We plan to meet in Cuxton at the Co-op at 6.45pm and walk through the village in procession, stopping at appropriate places for a hymn, a reading and a prayer. This will be an example of the church entering the community and reminding the residents that the church is not just for baptisms, weddings and funerals. If anyone from either church would like to join in, please contact Buffy Maisey on 727126 or the e-mail no. quoted in this message. Looking forward to hearing from you, Buffy. elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk

A Modern Take on Acts 6

In Acts 6 the Jerusalem Church is confronted with a row over the distribution of food to the poor. The apostles respond by appointing seven deacons to "serve tables", thereby preserving their freedom to give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." In fact, the narrative shows no further interest in serving tables and the deacons themselves quickly become ministers of the word, Stephen becoming an early expert in biblical preaching and the first martyr.

How different things might have been if the Jerusalem Church had been more like the post World War II Church of England. What follows is a suggested framework for the way the Book of Acts might have been written in such a case.

Acts 7: Stephen is asked by the Church not to preach the Word until he has received appropriate training and received a licence.

Acts 8: The apostles instigate weekly staff meetings with the deacons to ensure that everyone is "singing from the same hymn sheet."

Acts 9: The Jerusalem Church begins to resent "clerical dominance" by apostles and deacons and sets up committees of lay Christians to meet with the clergy and discuss strategy and tactics.

Acts 10: The committees decide that the deacons need proper contracts of employment.

Acts 11: The committees discover the need of a permanent bureaucracy to service the committees and the clergy. This bureaucracy will be paid for out of the offerings of the faithful.

Acts 12: The apostles find that they have to hold regular meetings with the deacons, the committees and the bureaucrats, leaving very little time or energy for prayer and the ministry of the word. Some of the apostles find that they quite like the comfort of managerial roles as opposed to the challenges of evangelism and pastoral work.

Acts 13: The committees notice that worship, pastoral work and evangelism are pursued with much less energy than they were in the past. So they set up further committees to look into the situation.

Acts 14: These new committees set the apostles their targets and prescribe the methods to be adopted in attaining them.

Acts 15: It is decided that the apostles (for their own security) should come under the authority of the bureaucrats and committees.

This new Book of Acts peters out at this point, but, fast forward to 2009, and we can see the agenda for the May meeting of the Jerusalem PCC.

Agenda

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|---|--|
| 1) Opening prayer (brief and perfunctory) | 4) Financial Report |
| 2) Minutes of last meeting. | 5) Fund-raising |
| 3) Correspondence. The PCC has received an invitation to <i>Dynamic Vision</i> a lecture at the university, where leading Christian thinker Professor Mordecai ben Joseph will be daringly suggesting that, once the Church has got its administrative structures right, it might begin a world-wide mission. | 6) The Summer Fête |
| | 7) The Vestry Roof. |
| | 8) The possible admission to the Church of uncircumcised gentiles. |



Max's Remarks

Master has heard rumours that two of our parish pubs are under threat of closure. That would only leave one pub in a parish that had six when he came here 22 years ago. Master is not one of those rectors who would see that as a triumph for his ministry! Ephesians 5 v18 indeed says *And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit* (meaning the Holy Spirit, not brandy), but Psalm 104 v15 says that God gives *wine that maketh glad the heart of man*. Alcohol is a blessing from God if used wisely, though (like anything) a curse when abused. Maybe village pubs are being regulated out of existence. Master stopped going so much when so many pubs banned dogs. It's nice to know he's got his priorities right! Pubs also face the absurd Licensing Act which makes a pub singsong illegal without the prior permission of the council! And the strange law that bar staff can no longer refill your glass. If you have a second drink, they have to give you a fresh glass. How much extra washing up does that rule make when we are supposed to be saving water and the fuel we use to heat it? The latest blow has been the smoking ban, a boon for non-smokers like your rector, but enough to keep nicotine addicts at home to drink.

Maybe pubs are just another victim of changing lifestyles. Consumer choice drives us outside the village. We like to think there are amenities in the village. They create community. We might even want to use them ourselves one day, but, for the time being, we just hope they can survive without us! Max.