

# Parish of Cuxton and Halling



May 2024

60p

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

Services May 202

5 <sup>th</sup> May Easter 5 / 6	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 55 vv 1-11 p742 Acts 10 vv 44-48 p1108 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083	
9 <sup>th</sup> May Ascension Day	9.30 Holy Communion Halling	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Mark 16 vv 14-20 p1024	
12 <sup>th</sup> May Sunday after Ascension / Easter 7	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 p886 I Peter 4 vv 7-11 p1220 John 15 v26 – 16 v4p1083	
19 <sup>th</sup> May Whitsunday Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 John 14 v 15-31 p1082	
26 <sup>th</sup> May Trinity Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30 am		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30 am	
1 <sup>st</sup> May St Philip & St James	James 1 v 1-12 John 14 vv 1-14	2 <sup>nd</sup> May S Athanasius	Acts 15 vv 7-21 John 15 vv 9-11
8 <sup>th</sup> May Rogation Day	Acts 17 v15 – 18 v8 John 16 vv 12-19	9 <sup>th</sup> May Ascension Day	Acts 1 vv 1-11 Mark 16 vv 14-20
15 <sup>th</sup> May	Acts 20 vv 28-38 John 17 vv 11-19	16 <sup>th</sup> May	Acts 22 v30 – 23 v11 John 17 vv 20 - 26
22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Acts 5 vv 12-16 John 6 vv 44-51	23 <sup>rd</sup> May	Acts 8 vv 5-8 Luke 9 vv 1-6
30 <sup>th</sup> May	James 1 vv 19-27 Mark 8 vv 22-26	31 <sup>st</sup> May	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-29 John 6 vv 53-58

Copy date June Magazine: 10th May 8.30 am Rectory

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For Diaries

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May Bring & Share Lunch Church Hall 12.00

Sat 15 June 3.00 concert St John's

6th July, 7.00 St John's Halling - Peninsula Big Band - CRUK

Human Resources or Human Relationships?



The news is that, even though there is a shortage of labour in this country, too many people are eschewing work. Some people didn't want to return to work after

the CoViD lockdowns. Older people might have found themselves in a position to take early retirement. Faced with the possibility of an untimely death, perhaps separated for a time from friends and family, unable to pursue our leisure pursuits, we were given an opportunity to reassess what is important in our lives, perhaps forced to do so. Do we really want to spend the greater part of our time in an office or factory? Is it worth making more money than we need to live on just to spend it on stuff we don't need? Furlough gave

many people the experience of drawing a salary without having to do any work. Did it become a habit for some, who then saw no reason why they shouldn't continue living on benefits? I wouldn't quarrel with someone who took a lower paid job than he could get or worked shorter hours than were on offer because he thought that money wasn't all that important so long as he and his family had enough to live on, (Many clergy could probably get a better paid job than vicaring) but it would be morally wrong if one could work, but just didn't want to, to live on benefits paid out of the taxes of those who do work and possibly don't particularly want to either. St Paul said, *If any would not work, neither should he eat* (II Thessalonians 3<sup>10</sup>), one of the rare points of agreement between the apostle and Vladimir

Lenin! A growing proportion of the population are reporting sick and claiming to be unable to work.

Then there is the demand to work from home, where, some people think, less actual work is done than if people were to go to a place of work. There is also what is called quiet quitting, doing as little as you can get away with without getting the sack. In an increasingly unequal society, wealth and what comes with it might be regarded as so far beyond what an ordinary person can reasonably expect to achieve that those without the advantages which a minority enjoy just give up on any kind of aspiration. Moreover, we're always hearing about people who have made vast sums of money for very little work doing things online. If you can get rich by making silly videos of yourself or by recommending beauty products to gullible teenagers, why work up a sweat laying bricks or endure the tedium of, say, answering the 'phones for HMRC?

Most worrying is the number of young people who drop out of the job market on grounds of sickness, particularly mental illness. Why has mental illness become so prevalent among the young? There are many suggestions. One is that mental illness is no more common now than it ever was. What has changed is that there is less stigma attached to it than there used to be and we are more willing to talk about it and to accept that we are mentally ill and to be willing to tell other people how we feel. This openness has resulted in more diagnoses which is a good thing if it has led to more people getting treatment that will help them.

A diagnosis or even a self diagnosis of a mental illness or some form of neuro-diversity might explain why some tasks are difficult or impossible for you. My self diagnosis that I am mildly autistic may explain why I am so bad at meetings. Is that a reason or an excuse?

Another view is that we have bred a generation of *snowflakes*, young people who don't know the difference between being unhappy and suffering from clinical depression, who can't face the ordinary stresses of life without suffering anxiety attacks and who regard being bored at work or having to do jobs they don't like as a threat to their mental well-being. Maybe people in the past

went to work when they were genuinely quite seriously ill because they didn't want to admit to their condition or because they simply couldn't afford not to, whereas now it might be too easy to get signed off sick for a minor or even an imaginary malaise.

A complication is that, for many sick people, including the mentally ill, going to work, if they can be persuaded to give it a try, is actually good for them. Instead of being indoors all day bored and worrying about their troubles, they get out and meet people. They are better off because wages are paid at a higher rate than benefits and they can enjoy a better lifestyle. Being self supporting is good for self respect. Depending on the work, they may feel that they are achieving something, making a worthwhile contribution to society. That is not guaranteed, however. There was a scandal a few years ago when a Jobcentre was advertising to unemployed young adults the opportunity to work in the sex industry.

Why else might there be a growing propensity for mental illness in young adults? I would suggest the decline in religion and of the traditional family as a possible explanation. Both faith and a decent family life provide meaning, support, purpose and a moral code. Without these, I don't understand how anyone could live a fulfilled life. If we don't know the love of God and we don't have people who love us unconditionally, it is very tough for us to grow up to fulfil our potential as human beings.

Some people blame drugs and alcohol for the state of our young people. I think this is unlikely. Young people today drink less alcohol than their parents and grandparents did at a comparable age. Mostly, it seems, this is because they are much more health conscious than we were. There is also the cost, though non-alcoholic drinks are often more expensive than the beer or wine for which they are supposed to substitute. (When I lived at Ramsgate, I once met a friend from Faversham in a Canterbury pub. Because we were both driving, we drank alcohol free lager. It was horrible. I wondered why we hadn't stuck simply to orange juice. I'm told alcohol free drinks are much better now, but I haven't felt like trying them. Psalm 104: [God] *bringeth forth grass for the cattle : and green herb for the service of men; That he*

*may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man : and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man's heart.)*

Another reason why young people may not drink so much is that they don't go out as much as we did. They socialise on the internet. I was really pleased recently to see two boys I know (who are still far too young to drink alcohol) kicking a ball around. Usually they are glued to their screens, apparently oblivious to the world around them, either playing computer games or on social media. These are of course deliberately designed by corporations, whose only motive is profit, to be addictive.

Social media are widely blamed for the rise in cases of mental illness among young people. There is online bullying. On many sites, users are encouraged to make comparisons between themselves and other people, whose carefully curated images may be largely fake. There is fake news and there are fantastic conspiracy theories. There are financial scams. There is sexual exploitation. There are gambling sites. There is grotesque pornography. There are sites which encourage self harm and even suicide. And there is no escape. It's not like the old days when you could go home from school or the park and the bullies couldn't follow you. It's 24/7. It's very hard to switch off, both because it is addictive and because you will be an outsider at school or work if you haven't got a significant online presence. There is always FOMO – the fear of missing out.

It is also true that children, even quite young children, are emotionally neglected by parents who are themselves glued to their screens. Instead of looking at, talking to and playing with their babies, they are staring at their phones. Quite a few years ago now, I astonished a six year old boy by telling him that, at his age, we didn't have a phone at all. If I wanted to talk to my friends, I had to go and see them, which was fine because most of the people I knew lived in the same street and parents weren't so obsessed with *stranger danger* as they are now (maybe because we did all know one another). If you're sitting in your bedroom interacting with a screen, you aren't out of doors in the fresh air, meeting real live human beings and taking exercise, all of which have been

shown to benefit your mental as well as your physical health.

Another suggested cause of mental as well as physical ill health in young people is ultra-processed food: breakfast cereals, ready meals, etc.. Not only do these products lack many nutrients conducive to good health, they also contain additives to make palatable the sort of ingredients you wouldn't purchase if you saw them for sale in your butcher's shop, fishmonger's or grocery. Some of these foods are calculated to be addictive, playing such tricks on us as making sure that the sugar / fat ratio mimics human breast milk

Then there is the school curriculum, which has been accused of concentrating too much on what can be counted rather than on what counts. Children are examined within an inch of their lives, making school a thoroughly stressful experience for some (and for their teachers). The curriculum concentrates on imparting and assessing progress in skills which will be useful to employers. Religious education, art, games and physical education, music, literature, which we need as much as we need science, technology, engineering and mathematics, are progressively neglected. Different children excel at different subjects. Most of us struggle with some. We are all different. That is how God has made us, for each of us has his or her own distinctive part in His plan for the world. I was struck by a report comparing the educational attainment of children in different countries. We were near the top in terms of ability to read, but way down the scale on enjoyment of reading. Now, who do you think will still be reading as an adult, the child who has had dinned into him what a fronted adverbial phrase is or the child who has derived pleasure from a good story? Ironically (fronted adverb!), if children are prepared for employment by studying those STEM subjects to the exclusion of the humanities and this damages their mental development, they may lack the motivation to do the jobs for which they have been trained. Schools and universities ought to be providing education and employers job training.

There is, however, another reason why people find it impossible or very difficult to go to work because of stress and mental illness and that is the

nature of employment in contemporary Britain. Over the course of the twentieth century, employment conditions improved enormously. Even in Victorian times, there had been social reformers, some of them clergy, who, as a matter of common decency and morality, had campaigned for better working conditions and shorter hours. There was the growth of the Trades Union movement. The Co-operative movement protected producers and consumers from being exploited by unscrupulous merchants and shopkeepers. There were some enlightened employers, such as the Quaker chocolate manufacturers, who looked after, not only their workers' employment conditions, but also their housing and the conditions in which they lived generally. There was workers' education. There was the growth of the Labour Party and a growing understanding across the political spectrum of the need to treat decently the poor and the working classes. After all, they now had the vote (men 1918, women 1928). Two world wars broke down class divisions to some degree, taught people how the other half lived and inspired a spirit of our all being in it together. The shortage of labour caused by the deaths of so many men and the need for post war reconstruction altered the balance of power between the employee and the employer in favour of the former. We established the Welfare State and the National Health Service as well as passing several education acts with the intention of making a good education available to all, irrespective of parental wealth. We built an abundance of new houses to provide homes in the aftermath of war damage and as an essential part of a programme of slum clearance.

Employers, especially big companies, took a progressively greater interest in staff welfare. Most people expected to work in the same line of work, often for the same employer, all their lives. There was an intention to create and maintain a mutual loyalty. There were better conditions in the factories, better wages, shorter hours, social clubs and sports teams, works outings, etc.. Often, sons followed fathers into similar employment.

My father was a personnel officer and employee welfare was a big part of his responsibilities. He even visited in prison a former employee who had gone off the rails. I realise I have given a rather

idealised picture of employment in the post-war world. I am also aware that it all started to break down in the 1970s. Trades Unions had become much more powerful after the war, but some of them abused that power and, in concert with weak management and (dare I say?) clueless politicians, as well as such international crises as a dramatic rise in oil prices, they virtually brought the country to its knees. There followed a much harsher regime on which I will not comment save to say that one consequence was the replacement of personnel officers by human resources managers. Now resources are things like iron ore and coal which an industry exploits in order to make a profit. Too often, I believe, human resources (employees, people!) feel as if they are regarded as of no more intrinsic worth than coal – simply resources to be exploited in the pursuit of wealth which will mainly find its way into the hands of top management and shareholders.

Back in the seventies, I attended a course on industrial chaplaincy in Slough. We were taken to visit two factories. One made vans. It was a well-laid out modern building with plenty of fresh air and comfortably cool. The pay was good. The work was not very arduous. All the proper procedures and protocols were in place for the resolution of disputes and disciplinary matters. The other factory made glue. It was an old factory, far too hot inside and stinking of glue. The work was hard and the pay was less than at the van plant. It was a family run concern and many of the employees' fathers had worked there when the current boss's father was in charge. There was a strong sense of loyalty. It was the van plant which suffered from appalling industrial relations. The workers at the glue factory felt like they were treated as human beings whereas the van builders were treated like robots. Only a few years later, workers like them would in fact be replaced by robots.

You may remember the story about the manager proudly showing a visitor over his new fully-automated car plant. "I only need to employ a man and a dog," he boasted. "What's the man for?" he was asked. "To feed the dog." "What's the dog for?" "To make sure the man doesn't touch the machinery!"

Workers today may feel that there is no loyalty to them on the part of their employers and it is unsurprising if they reciprocate. They may work zero hours contracts or split shifts. They certainly don't have a job for life with a final salary pension as many of their parents did. They may need to take more than one job in order to make ends meet. Unless they work in the public sector or for one of the formerly nationalised industries such as the railways, they are unlikely to have the support of a trade union. If they have problems, there is no personnel officer concerned about their personal welfare, only a HR manager tasked with getting the most out of them for the firm.

Mechanisation and computerisation often results in a loss of physical human contact with colleagues and the general public. The latter enables employers who are so minded to monitor everything an employee does all day. Some employers expect their staff to be available when they are at home or even on holiday to deal with work related matters. There is no escape.

In the past it was more obvious what contribution to society you were making. You were a butcher, a baker or a candlestick maker. There are many jobs today where it is less easy to understand what contribution you are making and to enjoy the sense of fulfilment we derive from knowing that we are accomplishing something worthwhile. How would you feel about spending your working day telephoning strangers at home and trying to persuade them to buy what they don't want? How about working on a bank "helpline" or that of a utility company, knowing that, from management's point of view, your task is to ensure that customers never receive any meaningful help?

#### **The Tower Window and the Bank You've Probably Never Heard of...**

Perhaps the most visually attractive legacy of Canon Shaw's renovation of St. Michael's in 1867 are the Victorian stained glass windows, especially the two vivid and striking examples that grace the sanctuary at the end of the chancel. These windows (one depicting St. Michael, the other the Ascension of Christ) were designed by noted stained-glass artist John Milner Allen (1827-1902) and were installed by the Covent Garden firm of Lavers and Barraud (established 1855). They are particularly well-lit by a winter solstice sunrise, thanks to the "miswent" nature of St. Michael and All Angels. Compared to the brilliance of the sanctuary windows, the window set in the north-west tower wall seems somewhat washed-out. The stained glass appears to be of poorer quality and does not appear to have survived the passage of time too well when compared to other windows in the church. In his 1976 book *Cuxton – A Kentish Village*, local historian Derek Church opines that "*the window in the belfry is a particularly poor example and I for one would like to see it replaced by plain glass*". I disagree. This window, whilst not as "showy" as its magnificent counterparts in the sanctuary, has a quiet beauty and interest of its own. Unfortunately its north-western aspect, facing out on to the bank outside, means that it does not get to see full sunlight. It is also

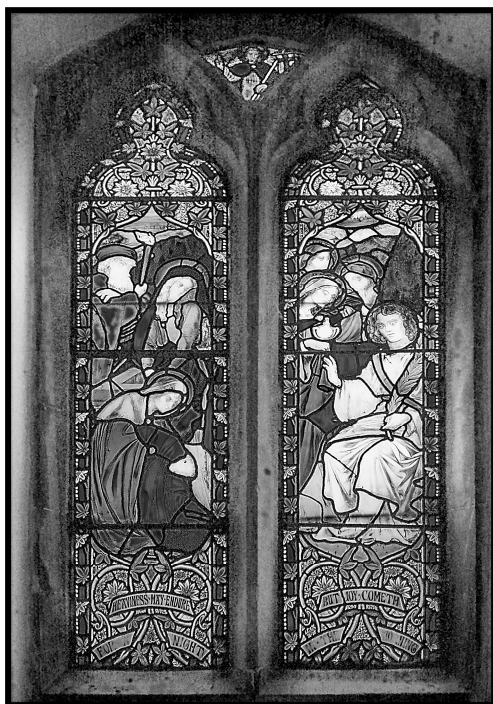
Will Lloyd wrote in *The Times* (4<sup>th</sup> March): "I never really understood what friends were doing when they told me they were *digital consultants* building *online personal development courses* looking to *improve engagement outcomes for stakeholders*. I suspect they didn't know either."

There are companies which regard customer loyalty as a weakness to be exploited just as they have no regard for their employees' conscientiousness. I have just been asked to renew an insurance I've had for decades. I didn't at first because the new premium they asked for was completely unreasonable. Now they've reduced it. Were I still as naive as I once was I would have been cheated by a company of which my family has been a loyal customer for over fifty years. I remember when insurance men called at your house for the premiums, checked that you were all right and actually helped you to make a claim if the situation arose. Wasn't that a more satisfying way of earning a living than sitting at a computer taking advantage of customers' vulnerabilities in order to scam them? I did once make a stand. My energy supplier put up his price to a degree I considered unreasonable and refused to reconsider despite my protestations until I began the process of switching to another company. Then they rang up and offered me a better deal. I said I wouldn't do business with a firm that had been prepared effectively to cheat me.

I could go on, as no doubt could you. What have we established so far? We shall not be a society at ease with itself unless we respect one another and treat one another fairly. Roger.

rather isolated from the main body of the church by the glazed partition between the tower and the nave and is often overlooked as a result. These factors combine to prevent this window from being fully appreciated. Its text (*“Heaviness May Endure For A Night: But Joy Cometh In The Morning”*) is from Psalm 30:5 (the version from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer). Beneath the window is a thin bronze ledger which sheds some light (no pun intended) on its origin. It reads: *“TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF THE LADY SOPHIA WIFE OF PETER RICHARD HOARE ESQRE OF LUSCOMBE DEVON AND DAUGHTER OF CHARLES 2<sup>ND</sup> EARL OF ROMNEY DIED 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1863”*. Lady Sophia was a member of the Marsham family who owned Whorne’s Place for much of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, hence her historical connection with the Cuxton area. Her brother (also named Charles) was the third Earl of Romney and resided at Mote Park in Maidstone. It seems possible that he may have provided funding for the installation of the window in memory of his sister as part of Canon Shaw’s restoration work. Lady Sophia’s husband, the aforementioned Peter Richard Hoare (1803-1877), was a scion of the Hoare banking dynasty which owned (and still owns) the London-based bank of C. Hoare & Co. The bank was established in 1672 by Sir Richard Hoare, who became Lord Mayor of London in 1712. One of the fledgling bank’s early customers was Samuel Pepys. Peter Hoare was joint chairman of the bank with his brother-in-law (Henry Hoare of Staplehurst) and they took turns at the role, each being in charge for a six-month period. Both were deeply religious men but with vastly differing and combative views, to the extent that they could hardly bear each other’s company.

Peter and Lady Sophia were blessed with five children, three girls and two boys. Their youngest child, Charles Arthur Richard Hoare, appears to have preferred hunting, playing cricket and the pursuit of “personal interests” to his duties at the family bank. He subsequently scandalised Victorian society when, in the late 1870s, he began a relationship with a young lady named Beatrice Holme Sumner, who at the time was aged just 14 (the “age of consent” then was 13). Hoare was almost twice her age and already married with five children. Their affair became public knowledge in 1885 and (along with his absenteeism) was probably a contributing factor to his eventual dismissal as a Senior Partner of the bank. The bank survived his rather tumultuous tenure and managed to retain its independence despite the scandal and debt it had become loaded with. A twelfth generation of Hoare family members still serve on the bank’s Board of Directors today. It is a rather exclusive organisation: to bank there, you will need to have at least £3m in deposits *and* £1m of lending capital (somewhat more stringent criteria than its far more famous private banking competitor, Coutt’s). Beatrice Holme Sumner appears to have been a rather eccentric, if not ferocious character, at least by modern standards. In 1885, and as a retreat from the opprobrium that had enveloped them both, her then-lover Charles Hoare founded the training ship *Mercury* at Binstead on the Isle of



Wight. Formerly a barque called *Illovo*, it was re-fitted to serve as an educational charity aimed at training “poor boys of good character” for naval service. The *Mercury* was effectively under the control of Sumner from its inception until her death in 1946. Ronald Morris, a *Mercury* alumnus, recounts (in his narrative of Sumner, *The Captain’s Lady*, published in 1985) that the boys of the *Mercury* were “hounded (by her) from morn to night”. She also subjected them to many other hardships, including violent ceremonial floggings and forced boxing matches used as punishments. Ms. Sumner eventually parted from Hoare and went on to marry the famous Victorian cricketer, footballer, all-round athlete and scholar Charles Burgess (“C.B”) Fry, who was ten years her junior. She appeared to make her unfortunate husband’s life a misery, despite bearing him three children. The marriage had a severely adverse impact upon C. B. Fry’s mental health. This brilliant, extroverted sportsman becoming withdrawn and prone to nervous breakdowns. His daughter-in-law later commented: “I should think anyone would have a breakdown, married to her.” After a marriage lasting forty-eight years, C. B. Fry apparently adjusted to his wife’s death “with great equanimity”, with her middle-aged children showing “all the freedom of the newly liberated”.

So at next Sunday Service, should the bell-tower be open, try and take a quick glance its oft-neglected window. I think it is rather interesting to reflect upon the historical threads of wealth, celebrity and scandal that can be pulled from it...Keith Hodges.

### From the Registers

#### Baptism:

6<sup>th</sup> April

Frankie West

Snodland

#### Funerals:

20<sup>th</sup> March

Ian Leslie Swift

High Street

27<sup>th</sup> March

Margaret June Carter

High Street

### Colin Cogger RIP

We were sorry to learn of the death of Colin Cogger on 10<sup>th</sup> April at the age of 86. Colin had many friends in the parish and multiple skills which he put to good use in the service of the Church and the village. For many years, he had a leading role in our team of bell ringers, encouraging and training others and serving as tower captain for a long period. He was also very active in the Scout Group and the Countryside Group. He will be much missed. A memorial service will be held at St Michael's shortly.

### Confirmation 2024

I hope to arrange a confirmation in November – date & venue themselves to be confirmed. Classes will take place beginning in the Summer. When you are confirmed, you reaffirm the promises made at your Baptism or Christening to follow Christ & to live by faith in God and the bishop blesses you with the grace of the Holy Spirit to sustain you in your Christian life. You can be confirmed at any age upwards of 12. Please contact me if you are interested in being confirmed this year.

### Easter 2024

I should like to thank everyone who does so much to support our worship: by your prayers and presence, by your care for the maintenance and cleaning of our buildings, by flower arranging and by music and by ringing the bells. I was particularly pleased that we were able to ring the bells in both villages this year.

We held a children's celebration at St John's on Holy Saturday, at which the boys and girls had fun learning and celebrating the Easter story with a quiz, craft work, singing, praying and straightforward story-telling.

We once again enjoyed our annual Easter Egg at Cuxton. We had all the usual activities and refreshments in the hall. Like last year, the actual hunt was in the church as we avoided the downpours, but a good time was had by all. Thanks to all the organisers, helpers and everybody who came. We raised £220.58.

### Christian Aid Week (12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> May)

**Christian Aid**



A Division of The British Council of Churches

Poverty pushed Aline to the brink of survival. She was abused, homeless and hungry. But Aline pushed back harder. In Burundi, malnourishment and poverty affect more than 70% of the population, making survival a daily struggle. Jobs and food are hard to come by, and those who have homes

often have no electricity or running water. For Aline, life was a constant struggle. She was married young and gave birth to her eldest son, Fisto, when she was just 14 years old. Aline experienced constant abuse at the hands of her violent husband. A few years later, Aline faced even more devastation. Her husband married another woman, forcing Aline to flee. He prevented her from taking their children with her, and in a further act of cruelty, told the local community that Aline was mentally ill and unable to care for her children. "I wandered the streets, asking anyone for a place to sleep. Those who showed me kindness would let me stay for two or three days, but it was difficult. People would insult me and treat me with contempt. They forgot I was a human being. It filled me with sorrow."

Hungry, scorned and alone, Aline took her first step towards her new life. She started by participating in a transformative three-day community workshop, funded by Christian Aid. "I came out with amazing knowledge and skills. The trainer restored a sense of hope and energy in me," says Aline. She was taught how to form a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) and establish a steady income. VSLAs mean



people can save for their future and borrow money to kickstart small rural businesses. With all she had learned, Aline's dream of getting her children back finally felt possible.

With a small start-up loan, Aline started trading avocados and peanuts locally. With her profits, she bought a bicycle so she could transport greater quantities of goods to markets further afield. Eventually, her hard work had finally paid off, and she had earned the money she needed to rent a house. Once Aline secured a home for herself, her three eldest sons were able to escape their father and join her. They told Aline that their father had abused them and sent their three young siblings to live with different members of his family. Aline still hopes that she'll be reunited with her youngest children in time. Today, Aline lives peacefully on her own plot of land in a remote village in the Kayogoro Commune in Makamba Province. She's baked her own bricks and is building a strong home for her and her children in every sense. Now Aline can afford food, clothes and essential healthcare for her family. She's also purchased solar panels so her children can do their evening homework by electric light. "I like to feed my family with the produce that I grow, such as beans, vegetables and corn. I am so happy that we are together. Now my children feel supported as they have a parent who can meet their needs."

Of course, Burundi continues to be one of the toughest places on earth to live. The future is uncertain and challenges wait for families like Aline's around every corner. When a ferocious storm destroyed Aline's home, almost killing her and her children, she was able to recover by selling the cows she'd been keeping. Now when crisis threatens her family's survival, Aline has options. Even a small business can provide just enough resilience to weather the most brutal of storms here in Burundi. Aline can not only look ahead to her children's future now, but her own too. Naturally, Aline wants security as she ages. In the next five years she hopes to expand her current wholesale business by selling a range of goods, so that one day she can buy a mill. This will provide a source of income without the need to transport heavy goods over long distances. Aline told us: "This is not a dream. It is a plan, and I will do it. I am a woman who is an achiever."

Aline's long and difficult journey out of extreme poverty began with a little support, knowledge and faith from Christian Aid supporters like you. "When we see Christian Aid, we feel comforted; we feel we are not alone. You helped us to change our poor living conditions. I really thank you from the very bottom of my heart." No one should have to live on the brink of survival. During Christian Aid Week 2023, you raised £5 million to help transform lives just like Aline's. There will be envelopes available in church if you wish to give to Christian Aid this year and a bring and share lunch for Christian Aid in the church hall at 12.00 on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May. See also [Christian Aid - UK charity fighting global poverty - Christian Aid](#)

#### On the Ropes

One of the regular features in past issues of this august publication was a brief account of the activities of our bell-ringing teams. In those halcyon days of the early eighties, both St. Michael's and St. John's had very active and well-supported ringing teams, with their monthly activities being summarised in the church magazine by Mr. G. O. Steadman and (latterly) by Mr. Bob Minor.

Alas, those gentlemen have long since retired from "active service" as have many of our bell-ringers of old. St. John's no longer has its own full ringing team and St. Michael's has also seen the recent retirement of several of its once-regular squad due to the vicissitudes of old age.

The Cuxton and Halling teams have traditionally been rather ambitious crews, looking to practice the art of "change ringing" (where pairs of bells continually swop over in a pre-determined sequence to produce the ever-changing "tunes" you hear) rather than just plain "rounds" or "call changes". This takes a considerable degree of skill and a long apprenticeship to master, but happily St. Michael's can still call on about eight regulars who can support the traditional call to Sunday service as often as not. Wednesday practice nights are still well-supported and it is hoped that our "old hands" can, in their ever-patient fashion encourage, cajole, coerce and generally bring a few newer recruits up to the standard that can support and enhance the current Sunday ringing team.

It was therefore felt that we could perhaps revive the tradition of a regular written contribution to the church magazine once more.

As it happened, March 2024 proved to be a good month for Sunday ringing across the parish. We were able to ring at St. Michael's for the Mothering Sunday service, and also for those of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday was particularly satisfying given the importance of the occasion in the Christian calendar as we were able to support a "double header", ringing at both St. Michael's and St. John's.

The bells of St. John's had not been rung since the coronation of King Charles III, but a quick "pre-service" oiling of the bell bearings ensured that the bells could sing out in fine voice once more, one that both the congregation and the village seemed to appreciate, as did we.

March also saw the annual "ringer's dinger (dinner)", which was held at the White Hart. Nineteen people, consisting of ringers both past and present (along with better halves) attended, and we were well looked after (as ever) by the White Hart crew. 'April Day'

### PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I hope you are all well and enjoying the Spring. I trust you celebrated Easter with your usual confectionery, though we avians are not partial to chocolate and of course it is poisonous for dogs. I suspect that foxes have very different digestive systems enabling them to eat just about anything except carrots. We enjoyed hot cross bun crumbs - "stale" means nothing to us

It appears that I am famous! Last week I was happily pecking outside Cuxton Library when a lady came out and just stood watching me. Rather unnerving I thought, but then she said, "Hello Percy!". Well I flew up very quickly to tell Phillipa who was quite impressed, but did suggest the lady might have said that to all the pigeons she saw! We have never known such a long wet time. The reservoirs must be very full - but will that stop a hosepipe ban this summer?



We have been busy with our new roost at the very edge of Six-Acre Wood. Our squabs have left, setting off for their own adventures, They left with our blessing as well as some noodles and suet. We are really tired of all the rain and you must be too. We hear people complaining and joking about building an ark.

The woodland is much noisier now, with young avians calling for parents to bring food. Even the owls are out longer hunting for food. There is a lot of competition for everything. We are quite used to other nocturnals scrambling around. The foxes and badgers need to feed their young too.

As I am now famous, you might like my autograph. No charge: donations to the RSPB.

Coo coo.

### Rain! Rain! Go Away?

1872 is the last year which bears comparison with the first three months of this year for tremendous rainfall. The rain went on all year and caused great hardship. It took until Christmas Eve that year for the Archbishop of Canterbury (Archibald Campbell Tate) to comment on the failure of clergy to pray the collect for fair weather. This was remedied and the prayer began to be widely used. 1873 is one of the driest years on record! Coincidence? As the man said, there seem to be far more "coincidences" when you pray than when you don't!"

**O ALMIGHTY** Lord God, who for the sin of man didst once drown all the world, except eight persons, and afterward of thy great mercy didst promise never to destroy it so again; We humbly beseech thee, that although we for our iniquities have worthily deserved a plague of rain and waters, yet upon our true repentance thou wilt send us such weather, as that we may receive the fruits of the earth in due season; and learn both by thy punishment to amend our lives, and for thy clemency to give thee praise and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thinking about this ancient prayer raises several issues in my mind.

- 1) Many people worry about whether stories like Noah's Ark are true in a scientific or historical sense. I'm sure that to do so is to miss the point. These stories present profound truth regarding what it

means to be human irrespective of whether or not they bear witness to historical or scientific facts. If you want to consider this in greater depth, please see the appendix (electronic versions only) *The Truth of Myth*.

- 2) Does God really control the weather? Everything is in the Hands of God. So I would pray for His grace in any and every situation. I wouldn't presume to tell Him what to do. He is infinitely good & infinitely wiser than I am. When we pray, we seek to align our wills with God's Will, working with Him in order to accomplish His purposes. We discern God's Will through our reading of His Word in the Bible, through our membership of His Church (the fellowship of the Holy Spirit) and through our own personal experience of Him in Jesus Christ.
- 3) Could this *plague of rain and waters* really be deserved punishment for our iniquities? There is certainly plenty of sin in the world today, sin in our own country, sin in our own hearts. Sin is our failure to love God and to love one another.
- 4) If not a general punishment for human rebellion against God's perfect law of love, could these extreme weather events be caused by environmental sin? A materialistic world carelessly and recklessly uses up the world's resources generating toxic waste, including carbon dioxide, which is a major factor in climate change, while continuing to allow millions of people to dwell in abject poverty, without even the basic necessities of life.
- 5) Could we infer that those people living in parts of the world which have suffered worse natural disasters (acts of God?) than we have are worse sinners than we are? To do so would be very rash. In Luke 13 we read about a number of people killed in a massacre and another group who died when a tower collapsed on them. Jesus asked rhetorically, *Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?* and answered Himself, *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
- 6) In fact, it is the rich who tend to generate the most pollution with their high levels of consumption and the poor who are often the most vulnerable to the effects of toxic waste and climate change. Moreover, richer countries and individuals are more resilient. They are more likely to have the resources to protect themselves against floods and droughts, shortages of food and other necessities of life, atmospheric pollution, etc..
- 7) When bad things happen to us can we assume that it is nothing to do with our sinfulness? That too would be a rash assumption. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
- 8) So, it would be good to repent of all our sins collectively and individually whether or not the current *plague of rain and waters* is a punishment for sin. As the prophet Joel said in the context of a plague of locusts, *Who knoweth if he [God] will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?* The world would be a very much happier place if we all kept God's commandments.



#### Tommy's Talking Points

As I write, Master's recovery continues to progress. The other day, without even thinking about it, he opened a new jar of jam without any difficulty. It was only after he had accomplished this feat that he realised what he had achieved. He says that, if they make any more Tarzan movies, he will audition for the title role. As a child, he always rather fancied the life of a Tarzan or a Mowgli but membership of the wolf cubs was as close as he ever got.

Anyway, it was decided that it was time to arrange another walk with Enzo and friends. After what seemed like weeks of rain, we had had a couple of days of pleasant dry days in the week before the day for which we had planned our outing. The woodland paths were drying out nicely in the wind and (briefly) under a warm sun. Disappointingly, however, on the very day before we were going out, it rained all day. Master had been planning to wear his new shoes for the first time on this trip, but that plan was shelved.

The idea was to meet at Ightham Mote for a walk in the surrounding woods. Not too far to drive, and Master was confident that he could find the way. This is Kent, not Surrey, the Bermuda Triangle of Southern England and, anyway, he often used to cycle that way to Sevenoaks. He only made one serious mistake. Where they have altered all the roads around Leybourne, where one would expect to turn right onto London Road, the A20, one actually has to carry straight on a bit farther towards Kings Hill and then swing back. He achieved this on the second attempt. Coming back is even more confusing. At the same junction, you have to turn right where you would expect to turn left, but he was wise to that and we made it home without incident.

Our friends had already arrived when we got to Ightham Mote. The weather forecast in the paper showed rain. The radio forecast said that there would be mist clearing in the afternoon to admit sunny spells. Master was not sure whether to wear his coat or his pullover. On getting out of the car, he opted for both. The temperature was not especially low, but the cold was nastily damp. In the event, the mist never cleared. So I cannot tell you about the wonderful views as I usually do. On the plus side, there was only a very little drizzle and that was only as we were driving home. We saw some primroses and the abundance of foliage which promises a carpet of bluebells that will probably be in bloom by the time you read this.

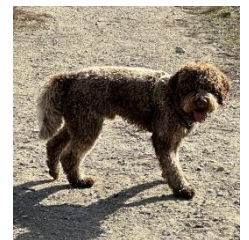
The paths were indeed muddy and slippery and, in some places steep. This was not a problem for quadrupeds with claws on their paws but did present a challenge to shod bipeds. There were no serious mishaps, however. We enjoyed the exercise and the fresh air and one another's company. The humans had a lot to catch up on and Enzo and I enjoyed ourselves running around and largely ignoring one another.

We saw a hoppers' cottage where people from town coming to the country to harvest the hops in the Autumn in the old days would have been housed. There they had cake for elevenses. We walked on a bit farther and they found some dry chairs on which to sit while they lunched on sandwiches. Enzo declined his own meal, but lusted after the cheese sandwiches. Master knew that I would not eat in an unfamiliar environment and so I wasn't fed till we got home when I had dinner and tea combined. After lunch, we set off again and worked our way back to the cafe where they sat outside and drank tea. A very tame robin approached in the hope of crumbs, but he would have been better advised to join them when they were eating cake or scoffing sandwiches.

We then set off for home, I a very tired and dirty dog, he preparing to act as my amanuensis when I should have eaten and rested, as I now have. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

#### Enzo's Observations

We drove yesterday to meet with Roger and Tommy at Ightham Mote in Kent. It was said to be a long way, but sprawled across the back seat of the human's new car they call Hooray Henry I luxuriated like a medici princeling. I was glad of my double coat when we arrived because it was cold and damp, and Tommy was shivering in the car park before we set off.



Roger's old shoes looked very chewable and were soon caked in mud. I could sense that my humans were happy and relieved to see him looking and sounding pretty much back to normal after an illness, and soon they were chattering on about all manner of things I could not follow. At one point Alex made the mistake of asking about wearing socks out walking, and Roger thought she meant socks for dogs! I hope that idea does not catch on.

Tommy is the sort of dog who likes to be number one and out in front, and now I am bigger and wiser I just let him get on with it, sticking close to my humans and making friends with any other dogs we meet just to show how good at it I am. That said, Tommy was more friendly than before, and so when he wanted to be patted and stroked by my humans I did not mind too much. I smirked a bit though when he got brambles caught up in knots in his tail.



Roger had made excellent sandwiches . He said that he could not move away from the source of such excellent ham and cheese; the Cuxton Co-op - and from the treats I managed to beg , I agree with him. I was disappointed to be offered canned dog food in a plastic box when the humans were eating such delicacies. They had commandeered a NT volunteer's hut and chairs out of the cold and wind, and Tommy made himself comfortable for a rest inside. Several cars stopped to ask whether they should pay an entrance fee, which led the human's to entertain criminal fantasies.

After lunch, we walked on and the human's started to be more philosophical and reflective ; talking about poetry, routines , ageing and retirement over tea in the NT cafe. I like to pretend to my humans that I cannot cope without them, but I was happy to stay with Roger and Tommy while they went off for comfort breaks. All in all it seemed a success , and I think we shall be meeting up again soon as we can. Enzo.

St John's Draw (March): £5 each Mrs G Mitchell (62), Miss D Mitchell (78) & Mrs J Tower (146).

From a 1916 Parish Magazine: A mother takes her daughter into the butchers and asks her how she should tell the age of the birds. "By the teeth," replies the daughter. "But birds don't have teeth," replies the mystified mother. "No, but we do," replies daughter.

### World Day of Prayer – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March, members from Cuxton Community Church, St. Michael's Church, Cuxton and St. John's Church, Halling, met together at St. John's Church for a very moving World Day of Prayer Service. This had been prepared by a group of Christian women from Palestine where our Christian faith began and is rooted. We joined with people in over 146 countries and islands around the world to pray with and for the people of Palestine. After the service we enjoyed a light buffet of Mediterranean cheeses, bread and olives. By taking part in this lovely service, we shared the theme "I beg you bear with one another in love."

### Holy Saturday – Children's Celebration at St. John's

On Holy Saturday (30<sup>th</sup> March) children and parents met together to celebrate the coming of Easter. On arrival the children were given a card wheel to colour in, which followed the events of Holy Week & Easter. At first we talked about Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday riding on a donkey and we jogged round the church on hobby horses. We then looked up at the lovely wall painting of the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples. Everyone then walked up to the main altar where the bare cross of Jesus stood and we sang, "There is a Green Hill Far Away". Back at the Font we looked at the Easter Garden and talked about the stone being rolled away on Easter Sunday. The children enjoyed making their own Easter Garden outside in the lovely sunshine. Back inside we all had food and drink with lots of chatter. At midday we went back to the altar and our Rector Roger summarised a fun morning with a closing prayer. Every child had an Easter Egg to take away.

### Lady Day" Service - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April at St. John's, Halling

Reverend Roger Knight took the "Lady Day" Service at St. John's Church, Halling on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April with Dorothy Smitherman playing the organ. The "Lady Day" Service, which is the Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is of particular importance to the Mothers' Union. We had members of the Mothers' Union from other parishes, together with our own members and members of our congregation. A buffet lunch was served afterwards which gave everyone an opportunity to chat and catch up with news.

**You may not be the kind of person who engages with surveys. In that case, your input is possibly even more important than that of those who do! Survey seeks to track how Church is changing**

Church of England members and leaders are invited to participate in a '[Church 2024 Survey](#)', devised by two Professors of Theology, hosted by York St John University. The initiative follows two previous surveys in 2001 and 2013 which have informed widely-published research. New questions look at contemporary issues including the environment, artificial intelligence (AI), and changing views on ethical issues such as assisted dying. The survey will run for several months, with occasional updates given on the website, and aims to provide helpful insights and evidence from ministers and congregations at the grassroots.

[Find out more](#)

## Appendix: The Truth of Myths

### *God created the heaven and the earth.*

A lot of Christians worry about some of these stories in Genesis and the rest of the Bible. Are they true scientifically and historically? Some Christians vehemently insist that the whole of the Bible is true in the scientific and historical sense and even that those who believe otherwise are damned. It can't be right that people are damned for what they believe about the Bible. We are saved by faith in Christ and by nothing else. Faith is God's gift to us and it is not for other human beings to judge us and to denigrate our relationship with God. Some other Christians, I'm sorry to say, write off the stories in the Bible which they find hard to believe as myths, devised by ignorant peoples for their own ends, and try to explain away teaching about doctrine or ethics, which they don't agree with, as reflective of the values and beliefs of primitive cultures. Some unbelievers ridicule what the Bible says about Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel and much else, judging these stories by the standards of modern science and historical investigation, and abusing them in a vain attempt to discredit our religion. I suspect that there are many Christians more like me, however. We have had a modern, western, academic education. We understand the world in terms of Science and History, Mathematics, Geography, etc.. We celebrate the fruitfulness of these ways of explaining the world in terms of our growing understanding of how the world works and the advances brought about in industry, agriculture and medicine, etc. by the application of modern scientific measures. And yet we know that the Bible is the Word of God. Not only do we love what the Bible says, we love the Bible. We know that it speaks to us the truth of God. It works for us. It works for the Church. It works for the world.

### *In the beginning God*

For many years, I've resolved this tension between the Bible and evolution, the Flood and recorded history, the Tower of Babel and modern theories about the development of language, by pointing out that the Bible isn't a history book or a scientific treatise. There is a great deal of history in the Bible and a certain amount of science, as well as information about other subjects which are quite properly studied in schools and universities. But the Bible isn't really about such things. The Bible is God talking to us about the things that really matter: Who God is, what we are, what God requires of us, what God promises us, how He cares for us, what is our ultimate end. We don't read the Bible for information about how the physical universe came into being or the early history of the human race or about ancient middle-eastern politics. We read the Bible in order to get to know God, Whom to know is eternal life – in the end much more important than anything in the world of time and space in which we live out our three score years and ten. The Bible is true. The Bible is the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God. He is the Way, the Truth & the Life. But the Truth to Whom the Bible bears witness is infinitely more profound than the mundane truths we investigate in our laboratories and debate in our lecture theatres.

This has been my understanding for some time, but I believe that I have found a deeper insight into these difficult questions by reading a book by a friend of a friend. This guy was an anthropologist and spent some time living with and trying to understand a culture very different from our own in Peru. The Arakmbut have their stories to explain who they are and how the world works. They are not interested in whether these stories are true historically and scientifically or not. Worrying about issues like those is missing the point. Their stories are the stories of the Arakmbut people. They inhabit the stories. The Arakmbut dwell in their myths. Those who are not Arakmbut, who do not belong to the Arakmbut people, can never truly appreciate these "myths".

The Arakmbut are not Christians, but what they are saying about their culture provides us with an insight into our own Christian culture. We are the people of God and only we can truly appreciate the Bible. We inhabit the Word of God in the Scriptures. He dwells in us and we in Him. Scientific and historical questions miss the point of the Truth contained in the Scriptures. People who are not Christians cannot

ever fully understand the Truth contained in the Bible. What we have is not merely information about, but a relationship with the Truth. *Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* In order to receive the Truth to which the Bible bears witness, we must be members of the community of faith, the people of God and approach His Word prayerfully. The good news is that, whereas you have to be quite intelligent and to have a good education if you want to be a scientist or a historian, anyone can become a member of the people of God and discern the Truth which is in the Bible simply by believing in Jesus.