

Services September 2021			
5 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 14	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 2 vv 1-13 p1214 Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010	
12 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 15	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 James 3 vv 1-12 p1213 Mark 8 vv 27-38 p1012	
19 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 16	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 11 vv 18-20 p770 James 3 v 13 – 4 v12 Mark 9 vv 30-37 p1013	
26 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 17	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Numbers 11 vv 4-29 p147 James 5 vv 13-20 p1216 Mark 9 vv 38-50 p1213	
3 <sup>rd</sup> October Trinity 18 Harvest Festival	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Timothy 6 vv 6-10 p1194 Matthew 6 vv 25-34 p971	
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am @ Cuxton		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am @ Halling	
1 <sup>st</sup> September	Job 31 vv 13-40 Mark 7 vv 24-37	2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Job 32 vv 1-22 Mark 8 vv 1-10
8 <sup>th</sup> September	Job 40 vv 1-24 Mark 9 vv 14-29	9 <sup>th</sup> September	Job 41 vv 1-34 Mark 9 vv 30-37
15 <sup>th</sup> September	Amos 4 vv 1-13 Mark 10 vv 35-45	16 <sup>th</sup> September	Amos 5 vv 1-17 Mark 10 vv 46-52
22 <sup>nd</sup> September Ember Day	Amos 9 vv 1-15 Mark 12 vv 13-27	23 <sup>rd</sup> September	Micah 1 vv 1-16 Mark 12 vv 28-34
29 <sup>th</sup> September Michaelmas	Revelation 12 vv 7-12 Matthew 18 vv 1-10	30 <sup>th</sup> September S Jerome	Micah 7 vv 1-7 Mark 14 vv 12-25

We're gradually relaxing our COVID precautions. Please let me have any thoughts or suggestions you may have regarding what we should resume doing & when and any new ideas for expanding our work and becoming more effective in our mission and the pastoral care we offer. We are not obliged to do everything we are now allowed to do.

## HALL

For the foreseeable future, this is the policy. We use the hall for church events. We allow members of our fellowship to use the hall for small scale activities. We do **NOT** hire out the hall to the general public Rector.

## Church Services

**Mask wearing is now optional.** I don't think we need the **2m tape** anymore, but people will probably spread themselves out, only sitting near people they live with or meet with closely in other contexts.

**Sanitising** is still encouraged. We'll continue to **ventilate** freely. We can't make people comply, but it will be good to continue **to keep a record** of who attends services.

We'll keep to receiving just the **bread** at HC and we'll stick with the one way system. I shan't invite people to share the **Peace**, but people who live together can shake hands etc., if they wish. We're singing again. The Cuxton service may be **streamed** & available online. I'll advertise details. Also from September, I'll resume **opening St Michael's** on weekdays except Mondays from early mornings until 5.00 pm when I'll close the church with Evening Prayer.

If there were to be a **funeral** or a **wedding** at which a large congregation was anticipated, we should have to do our best to space people apart & to ventilate as much as possible and we should have to encourage the wearing of **masks** as well as sanitising.

Copy date for the October magazine is 10<sup>th</sup> September 8.30 am at the Rectory (hard copy or preferably email). There's been less in our magazines during COVID. Fresh contributions will be welcome – maybe even some new jokes!



### From the Rector

A few weeks ago, I was asked to give my opinion on the government's plans for relaxing the COVID regulations. I wasn't specifically singled out for my specialist knowledge, which I don't have, but I was selected (I don't know on what grounds) to be part of a survey of public opinion on the subject. My first thought was, *Well I don't know. Why are they asking me?* I'm not sure that there is anyone who really knows for certain what we ought to do about COVID, but there are plenty of people who know a great deal more about the subject than I do.

The uncomfortable truth is that the only way to prevent anyone at all from catching the disease would be to make everyone live in total isolation. That would be utterly impractical and totally unacceptable. On the other hand, if we were just to let the disease rip and take no special precautions, there would be huge numbers of people contracting COVID, getting long COVID and dying of COVID. That too would be both impractical and totally unacceptable. But any course of action which falls between those two extremes will still result in some cases of the disease and deaths from the virus. There is no happy medium in deciding how to deal with a pandemic. It is a question of how many cases of serious illness and how many deaths we are prepared to put up with. The obvious answer is none, but that's impossible to achieve. It's a miserable compromise, not a happy medium.

I'm not going to say how many cases and deaths would be acceptable. That would be totally unpalatable. Even if I did have a number in mind, I don't have the expertise to tell people how we would achieve that number. The experts who advise the government have a better understanding of these things than you and I do, but even they are uncertain about many things to do with this pandemic.

Time out! Before I go on with the main point of this article, we need some time out. Otherwise, we shall be lost in the gloom. So let me tell you about my faith.

Mine is a simple faith. I believe that God is looking after me in my daily life. I believe that

He is looking after you and that He is looking after the world. What is required of us is that we trust Him. We express this trust in our prayers, talking to the Almighty Creator of the universe as our Father.

I believe that the Bible tells me what to believe and how to live my life. I read it every day and I advise you to do the same.

I believe that God has prepared for me a place in heaven, to which I shall attain not by any effort or merit on my part but solely because He loves me so much that Jesus died on the Cross to save me from sin and death. In heaven, all wrongs will be righted and there will be no more pain or sorrow. There's a place in heaven for you too if you will only put your faith in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and be baptized in His Name.

It is a very simple faith, but it is this faith which enables me to face up to COVID and to all the other troubles and uncertainties of this passing age. It is in this simple faith that you too can conquer all your fears and sorrows.

*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are thy ways. Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water. (Psalm 84<sup>5&6</sup>).*

And now back to the fray – which this month concerns what we understand about democracy. Winston Churchill has been credited with both these observations regarding democracy. *Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.* He was quoting another authority when he made this remark in the House of Commons. He may well not have said *The best argument against Democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter*, though these words are often attributed to him. Two very different perspectives, but each has its point.

When I was asked my opinion about the government's plans for altering the COVID precautions we have to take, my first thought was that I didn't know. Why ask me? And that's one big criticism of democracy. There are many important questions for governments which most of us don't really understand or, if we do

understand them, we don't know the answers to them. What is an acceptable rate of inflation? How can you ensure that everybody who wants a job can find a job? How do you deter criminals? Can we reconcile preventing global warming with letting millions of people take leisure and holiday flights? And, if we don't, what happens to all those people employed in the travel industry? What's the best way to teach children to read? Does the state have the right or even the duty to control what people eat & drink for the good of their own health?

A guy called James Surowiecki wrote a book called *The Wisdom of Crowds*. His idea is that, although we may not be good at solving these problems as individuals, a whole mass of people will get them right between them. We do, he would argue, between us, elect the governments that we need at any given time – Churchill as our wartime prime minister, Atlee to build a better Britain in the years which followed victory. Not everybody would agree even with these two examples and I expect that there would be even less agreement if we were to look at more recent decades and ask ourselves whether we always made the right choices in general elections or local council elections in our own lifetimes.

What's the difference between populism and democracy? The word *democracy* comes from the Greek for *rule by the people*. The word *populism* comes from the Latin word for the people. We tend to think of populism as dangerous – crowds led by rabble rousers taking over the government, imposing simplistic and unrealistic solutions, scapegoating minorities such as the Jews, quickly becoming a new form of tyranny. We think of democracy as healthy – the people wisely making the right decisions for the benefit of all. But they are the same people, we are the same people, the *populus* or the *demos*. Who decides when we are behaving like an irresponsible rabble and when we are acting wisely? Who decides what constitutes wisdom and what amounts to irresponsibility? The cynic might suspect that it is the elite who decide when the decisions the people take are prudent (democracy) and when they are dangerously foolish (populism). In other words, the decisions that matter are really taken by the elite.

Hitler was a rabble rouser and Nazism was a particularly abhorrent form of populism. We would like to think that, in countries like ours, we have democracy – decisions taken graciously and sensibly by the will of the people. It's not always so clear, however. After the 2016 EU referendum, some remainers accused the Brexiteers of populism – stirring up a crowd to make the wrong decision based on over simplistic analyses, false promises and prejudice. Conversely, after the vote was won by the leave campaign, leavers accused those who continued to oppose Brexit of refusing to accept a democratically taken decision.

One of the most democratic countries in the world permits ordinary civilians to own and carry guns and maintains the death penalty.

What we really have is managed democracy. Under our system, it is almost impossible for any extremist party to come to power. It is sometimes frustrating to think that we can only realistically choose between a Labour and a Conservative government, occasionally dependent on the support of smaller parties, but it is good to know that it is very unlikely that Nazis or Stalinists could suddenly seize power by a populist vote at the ballot box. Gradual change is possible under our system. Labour replaced the Liberal Party as the main left of centre opposition to the Conservatives. Some people have argued that the Conservative Party of Margaret Thatcher was more Whig than Tory. UKIP, the Green Party and the Welsh and Scottish Nationalists have gained enough votes to assist in bringing about real change. In Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party replaced the Ulster Unionists as the main voice of unionism and Sinn Fein joined the government (with the possibility of becoming the majority party in the next Northern Ireland Assembly elections.)

Christianity creates the conditions in which democracy may flourish. It encourages people to think for themselves. It teaches us to seek the Truth as individuals and not to be too impressed by any human authority. God is no respecter of persons. We are all equal in His sight. The Christian religion also encourages learning and education, prerequisites for people to make informed choices in the polling station and to participate in reasoned and respectful discussions

in parliaments, councils, assemblies and committees.

On the other hand, there is history. We know that the crowds cried out for the terrorist Barabbas to be set free and for Jesus to be crucified. We know that thousands of people, millions even, supported the likes of Hitler. Crowds don't always get it right. We venerate the martyr who would rather yield up his own life than follow a multitude to commit sin.

It's not just that. God rules. Man doesn't rule the world. The universe is a theocracy (to be ruled by God - Theos), not a democracy (to be ruled by the people - demos). How do we know what God wants us to do? We read the Bible. We pray. We attend to the teaching of the Church. Where does voting feature in determining the Will of God? Human beings are, after all, sinful creatures and even Christians will not be made perfect till we get to heaven. Why should we be trusted with a vote? *Thy Will be done*, surely, not my will, but Thine.

I have to be careful here. Some countries – like Iran – are called theocracies. Their leaders claim to have a special relationship with God themselves and to be ruling their countries on His behalf. They don't allow dissent. They are ruthless in dealing with any opposition. But, while they may be called theocracies, in fact these countries are not ruled by God. They are ruled by wicked men who mistakenly believe that they have God's authority to rule.

How do we know what God wants us to do? We read the Bible. We pray. We attend to the teaching of the Church. Everyone of us can and should do that. None of us completely understands God's Will for us. How could we when He is infinitely greater than we are? Humility in the face of God is entirely appropriate. We all may have some knowledge of Him, however, in Jesus Christ. We ought to respect one another as each one of us who believe is a repository of the grace of God. We can all contribute to the search for God's Truth. We can all share in the process. We may do so by discussion and debate and also by voting. As Christians, when we vote, we ought to vote for the candidates and policies which we believe would

please God, not to please ourselves. Democracy is Theocracy insofar as the people *humble themselves under the mighty hand of God*. It's not what was originally meant in the eighteenth century when it was claimed *Vox populi vox Dei* (The Voice of the people is the voice of God), but that's what it ought to mean.

The eighteenth centuries reformers were trying to insist that the voice of the people ought to take precedence over the voice of the king. I should say, however, that for Christians, whether we live in a democracy or under a monarchy, those who make the decisions - kings, parliamentarians, citizens - ought to do so in the light of what they believe to be God's Will for the nation. This is the implication of the prayers for the Queen and for parliament in our Book of Common Prayer.

Democracy is probably the safest form of government. We can get rid of them at the next election if we are dissatisfied with their performance.

Obviously, some autocratic rulers are just in it for themselves. They delight in wealth and power, the opportunity to feather their own nests, to do favours for family and friends and to hurt their enemies.

There are, however, idealisms and they too can go badly wrong. People take over the state or mount revolutions with the best intentions, but, as Lord Acton said, *power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*. The French Revolution launched with ideals of *Liberty, Equality & Fraternity*, but quickly descended into the Reign of Terror before succumbing to Napoleon's despotism and lust to conquer. Communism was about *power to the people* and the end of poverty, but we all know how far too many communist regimes turned out. The mediaeval Church allied herself with governments in order to create a Christian society in which the Truth would prevail and men and women would live in accordance with God's perfect Law of Love. Instead, we had the Inquisition and the Crusades, Church and state corrupting one another.

In reality, the secret of good government often turns out to be to prevent anyone (however good and wise that person might seem to be) from



accruing too much power to himself. Democracy is an effective mechanism for preventing that.

There remains the fear that democracy will descend into populism and that is why many countries maintain a division of powers. The courts may rule that an elected government has behaved illegally. The House of Lords is a brake on the Commons, just as in the USA the Senate and the House of Representatives each place limits on what the other can do. In the UK, as the ultimate backstop, we have the Queen who would only intervene as a very last resort but could do so if she had to. Then of course, there is the conscience of every individual citizen. There are inevitably tensions between these different sources of authority – the two Houses of Parliament, the Head of State, and the Supreme Court, your conscience and mine. There is no ultimate authority other than God. We human beings do our best, but it's never perfect, and we ought always to seek to do better, to bring our United Kingdom (and all earthly dominions) increasingly in alignment with the Kingdom of God. As in Science, so in politics, we approximate to the Truth in the hope of getting ever closer to the perfection which always ultimately here on earth eludes us. Constitutional democracy, however, remains certainly the least worst system of government.

For democracy to work, there are at least two conditions. Those who lose elections or votes over policy have to accept the verdict of the majority. They can continue to argue and campaign against what was decided and hope to overturn the decision in some future vote, but they must respect the legitimacy of the vote and not try to undermine it by underhand measures or by force. Secondly, those who win elections must govern for the whole country, not just for their supporters. A member of parliament represents the whole constituency, not just those who voted for him or her.

I still have some questions with regard to democracy. Ought there to be more popular democracy? Should we hold more referendums on more issues? Do we trust members of parliament and councillors to represent us and to make the right decisions?

Or is popular democracy a risk? Will a referendum - with a necessarily simple binary question - inevitably oversimplify complex issues and polarise society as happened with both the Scottish independence and Brexit referendums? Is that risk worth taking for the opportunity it offers to allow everybody to participate directly in the decision making process? Or ought we to leave even big decisions like these to the members of parliament we elect who can debate issues at length and suggest amendments to improve any proposed legislation?

And what do we mean by “represent”? Until a few years ago, we assumed that people voted in by the residents in their constituencies or council wards represented their communities. It was pointed out, however, that, left to their own devices, constituencies tend to vote for middle-aged, white, straight, cis, able-bodied men. The concern is that a homogenous parliament or local authority doesn't represent the diversity of our country. So there have been efforts to tweak the process of choosing candidates in order to increase the number of women, minority ethnic, etc., members of parliament and councillors. The people we actually vote for as our representatives (on this logic) don't represent us unless they reflect the gender, race, sexuality, etc. of the people who vote for them!

What does it mean to say that members of parliament are our elected representatives? Should they be expected to advance our views and opinions in parliament? Should we be able to tell them what policies they ought to support? Are they duty bound at least to attempt to keep their election promises? MPs often insist that they are representatives, not delegates. Once elected (having gained the trust of a majority of voters) it is their duty to do what they think best, not necessarily what the voters want them to do. This came up over our joining the EEC in the early 'seventies and again when we left the EU. It appeared that popular opinion differed from what a majority of MPs believed to be best for the country. Should they defer to the people who voted for them or use their own judgment as to what is in the country's best interests?

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the philosopher Edmund Burke argued that MPs should not be beholden to their

constituent's wishes, but be free to exercise their own judgement in Parliament:

*"His unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion."*

Burke's opinion is often cited by MPs today, but it is fair to point out that Burke was writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when most people didn't have the vote and only a minority of British subjects benefitted by a decent education. Maybe, things are different now? According to a YouGov poll, 80% of MPs agree with Burke, but 63% of the general public believe that MPs ought to do what we tell them to do, whatever they themselves think.

Speaking of the eighteenth century reminds us that a big question for democracy is who gets to vote – the franchise. In Burke's time, only property owners got to vote and very few women. There were rotten boroughs like Old Sarum which had hardly any voters and pocket boroughs where elections were controlled by powerful landowners. Gradually, these abuses have been corrected and the franchise has been extended (in 1918) to all men over 21 (except peers, felons and lunatics), to women (initially only those over the age of 30 then over 21 in 1928)), then to all those over the age of 18 (1969). 16 year olds, however, were allowed to vote in the Scottish referendum and it is suggested that they should be allowed to vote in general elections.

Then, there is the question of who is entitled to a say about any particular question. As things stand, I think I am right in saying, if there is another Scottish independence referendum, Scottish people living outside Scotland (including those who live in the rest of the UK) won't have a vote, but English, Welsh and Northern Irish people living in Scotland, will have a vote. Is this fair? In any case, should England, Wales and Northern Ireland have a vote on whether Scotland remains part of the UK? I can't see that we could force them to stay if they wanted to leave, but, on the other hand, I wonder whether England in particular ought to be allowed a say on whether we should continue to subsidise Scotland and

whether MPs for Scottish seats should have a vote in the UK parliament with regard to laws which don't apply in Scotland?

The Boundaries Commission reviews both the number of parliamentary constituencies which there are and their boundaries. There were 625 parliamentary seats in 1950, 659 in 1997, 646 in 2005 & there are 650 now. The aim is to have constituencies of roughly equal population numbers which also reflect geographical considerations, local government boundaries and natural communities. The Boundaries Commission have a very difficult and controversial task. Their work can influence the outcome of elections. To take a crude example, constituency A has a MP from party X with a majority of 8,000. Constituency B has an MP from party Y with a majority of 1,500. Because a big new factory in A has brought about a growth in its population, there is a need to reduce its size. If the boundary is shifted so that part of A with perhaps 3,000 inhabitants is moved into B, that might equal up the numbers but the MP from party Y who represents B currently is likely to lose his seat at the next election.

Finally, there is the question of which voting system we employ. Most UK elections are First Past The Post. The person who gets the most votes becomes the MP or councillor. This gives clear results and supports a strong link between the elected representative and the constituency or ward. FPTP also tends to support a two party system in which no other party has a realistic chance of forming a government and people who are neither wholehearted conservatives nor totally convinced socialists may feel that they are effectively disenfranchised. I'm not going into the arguments for FPTP or for any of the different possible versions of proportional representation here, but suffice to say that when we talk about democracy, it is far from straightforward. The result of elections does not necessarily reflect the will of the people because their outcome is also partly determined by such factors as the way the votes are counted and the extent of the franchise.

Not easy then, but I remain a democrat. Every blessing, Roger.

## From the Registers

### Baptism:

25<sup>th</sup> July

Ella-Renae Roache

Jackdaw Way

### Funerals:

15<sup>th</sup> July

Sylvia Maureen Turner

Scholey Close

6<sup>th</sup> August

Mary Elizabeth Pitt

Holly Croft

12<sup>th</sup> August

Frederick Bertram Ernest Temple

Kent Road

It is good to record a baptism again, our first since before COVID. We look forward to many more christenings and weddings as life returns to normal. Please arrange with the rector.

### Mary Pitt RIP

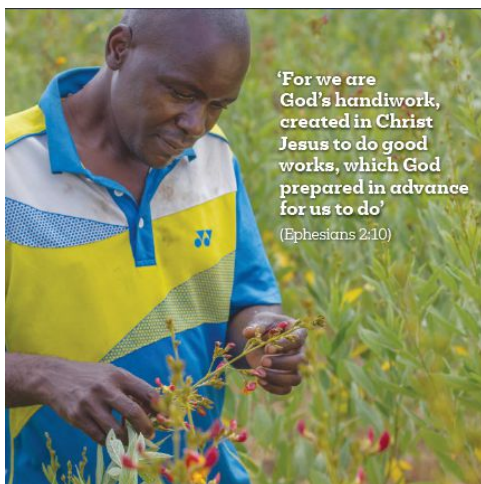
It was with great sadness that we learned of the seriousness of the illness with which Mary was diagnosed in June and from which she died on July 25<sup>th</sup>. Mary was a very active member of our congregation and she dedicated her many talents to serving the Church and the wider community in a great variety of ways, including taking on the roles of vice-chairman of the PCC and parish treasurer. Many people have expressed their appreciation for her kindness and the help Mary gave to them, both professionally as a teacher and as a friend. I personally have much to be grateful in the support and assistance Mary gave to me. She will be very much missed. RIK.

## The Poverty and Hope Appeal 2021

The Bishop of Rochester launched the Poverty and Hope Appeal in June. He wrote

*We are called to love our neighbour, whether they are local or global, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works..." This past year we have seen the injustices of our world all too clearly, exacerbated by the global pandemic that has left no one unaffected. Here in Rochester Diocese our Poverty and Hope appeal is one way that we look to right the wrongs that we see.*

This year the Appeal is supporting , in prayer and financially, a new project in Malawi and continuing projects in Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and, as always, Commonwork Trust in the UK.



• In Malawi, with your support, this year's Poverty and Hope Appeal will be helping farmers to flourish in challenging circumstances. This pigeon pea project is remarkable. Not only is this humble pulse drought resistant, it will happily grow on land affected by flooding. This amazing little pea can provide food and a livelihood to families that grow it.

• Our project in Zimbabwe, including our Companion Diocese of Harare, helps the church work with people living with HIV and AIDS to reduce stigma and transform lives.

- In Sri Lanka, the Appeal supports Nevedita Jeevabalan's work managing the child protection unit of LEADS, a community development organisation. She describes her mission as "to show God's love to children who have been through trauma and abuse. Most children who are referred for assistance

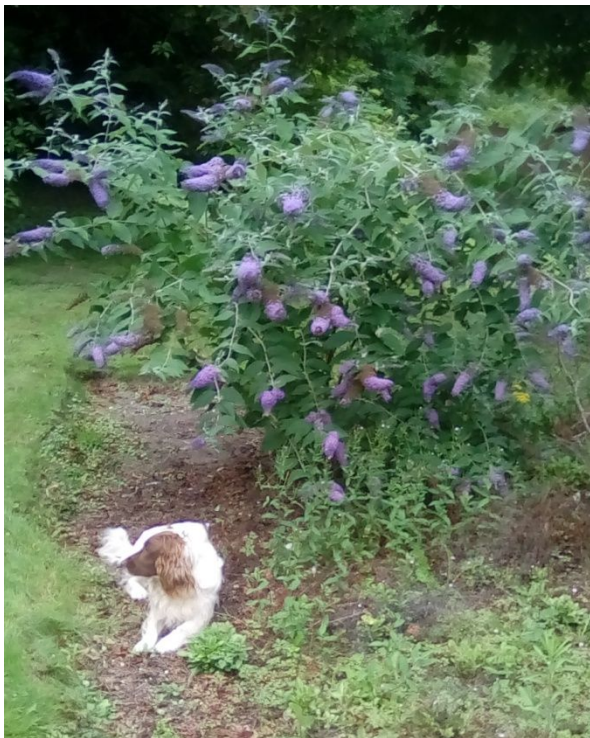
have been abused, abandoned at a young age and been through various traumatic situations. All through their lives they may never have had a loving, trustworthy adult.”

- Here in Rochester Diocese Commonwork offers justice and global citizenship education to school children and also helps vulnerable young people fulfil their potential. If you are involved with a school do get in touch with Commonwork and see all that they can offer.

The Poverty and Hope Appeal is run by volunteers and over 95% of the money we raise goes to the projects. Each is overseen by one of our partner organisations, Christian Aid, USPG, CMS and Commonwork. They ensure the money is well spent and regularly report to the Diocese of Rochester’s Poverty and Hope Coordinator.

You can find more information about all the projects on the Diocese website at [bit.ly/PovertyHope](http://bit.ly/PovertyHope) or you can contact [povertyandhope@gmail.com](mailto:povertyandhope@gmail.com). You can donate through your Church or, for details about how to give directly by card, bank transfer or cheque, please see the website or email [povertyandhope@gmail.com](mailto:povertyandhope@gmail.com). Envelopes for donations will be available in both our churches at the end of September.

This annual appeal is one way in which our diocese walks with our neighbours in different parts of the world. Another is through our Companion Diocese links with Estonia, Harare (Zimbabwe) and Kondoa and Mpwapwa in Tanzania. Many parishes, schools and communities enjoy friendships with our Christian sisters and brothers in these places.



#### Tommy’s Talking Points

This is me in front of the Buddleia, which is also called the butterfly bush because it attracts butterflies, which like the nectar it produces and it also provides a home and a source of food for many different kinds of moth and butterfly caterpillar. Master likes to see butterflies in the garden and he enjoys the heavy sweet scent of the Buddleia flowers, especially when we’re in the garden late in the evening. He says that Buddleia bushes only became common in England when they colonised the bomb sites at the time of the Second World War. *Out of the strong came forth sweetness.* (He was going to compliment me on my knowledge of the Bible, only he suspects that I read this on the treacle tin in the larder awaiting his next foray into suet cuisine.)

We’re actually in the rose bed, but there were never enough roses and some of what there were have died. So, when kind friends gave him some other shrubs, he found homes for them among the hybrid teas and floribundas. The effect is not altogether displeasing. Most of what look like weeds are in fact forget me nots, which he has allowed to remain in the hope of another blue carpet next Spring. Some of them are really weeds. You can’t always easily separate the wheat from the tares. You see, Master, I have been reading my Bible!

The garden has kept him busy this year. Growing conditions have been ideal with alternating warmth and rain. No sooner has he cut the grass and the hedges than they want doing again. Brambles seem to grow inches overnight. He is hoping that the prolific growth of the thorns presages a heavy crop of berries in a couple of weeks, but, I keep telling him, if you keep cutting them back, they won’t flower and fruit. He’ll never learn. He’s had quite a lot of rhubarb, however, and the apple crop looks very promising indeed. The apple tree which snapped off about three and a half feet from the ground a couple of years ago had some



blossom, but, so far no fruit. He's waiting to find out whether the new growth has come from above the graft, in which case there will be lovely red eating apples like before, or below the graft, in which case there will probably be crab apples. Either way, it looks like he'll have to wait till next year to find out.

He's more or less given up on other food crops. Squirrels eat the nuts before they're ripe enough for human consumption. Neither does he attempt much in the way of delicate flowers. Planting them is only feeding the slugs, he says. We do have some nice fuchsias, however, and the geraniums look good in their pots lined up along the front wall. Someone planted a row of geraniums in pots in front of the church hall this year and they look lovely too. They haven't needed much watering!

There's a bit of a funny story about the fuchsias which shows how frustrating gardening around the Rectory can be. Last year, he'd nurtured some fuchsia cuttings in pots and, when they looked hale and hearty, planted them in the ground. Last year was very dry and they needed watering. The moist soil attracted worms and the badgers came and dug up the fuchsias so that they could get at the worms. This year, he put more fuchsia cuttings in just the same place. It's been very moist this year with no need to water. So, this year it's the moles digging round the flower bed, rather than the badgers. So far, four out of five seem to have survived the elevation of their situation to form molehills.



We are, however, very pleased with the hollyhocks. A couple of years ago, he remarked how disappointed he was that we had no hollyhocks in the garden. A couple of kind friends gave him some seed and here we are. Most of what look like weeds are in fact forget me nots. Since this picture was taken, the big pink hollyhock has blown over, but it will come again next year and its seed will replenish the earth (another Bible reference, Master). (Yes, Tommy, I do recognise and commend these scriptural quotations. No doubt it comes from your and my daily bible reading, which we can recommend to everyone.)

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, we were pleased to provide a venue in our garden for the parish barbecue. This was the first social event since lockdown. It was meant mainly to be an opportunity to meet together again after all that time, rather than a fund-raising event. There were, however, a number of donations and we made a small profit.

Some COVID regulations were still in place. So we were limited to thirty people even in the open air, but it was really good for people to meet up again with their friends. The music was good – provided by the Stevedores (three young men called Steve, only one isn't). There was some very nice meat, to which I am ashamed to admit I helped myself off other people's plates.

And what will be the new normal for us at the Rectory?

Before COVID, we'd get up quite early, go for a walk, normally in the woods, and say Morning Prayer in St Michael's Church. We'd then leave the church open for visitors during the day, closing it after saying Evening Prayer at 5.00 – following another walk if we were lucky. After Morning Prayer, we'd go home for breakfast and he'd read the paper over the tea and toast part of the meal when he no longer needs to use his hands to wield the cutlery. During school holidays, when the paper was late because the paperboys like a lie in, he'd get more and more angry and frustrated – sometimes even going to look for them. Latterly, when

the paper was late, he'd read the online version on his tablet, which made him wonder why he bothered with a paper paper at all, except that it's easier to read than the onscreen version and he cuts out the puzzles for someone who likes that sort of thing. Also, it's good to support local businesses and the paper shop has many other things that he likes besides papers. The range of tinned and frozen goods is better than the big supermarkets if you time your shopping trips right, just after the proprietor has been to the wholesaler.

Come COVID, we were forbidden (by the bishops, who were, as Master points out, acting *ultra vires* which was confirmed by a subsequent court ruling, meaning that threats of action against offenders under the egregious clergy discipline measure were not only uncalled for but also unenforceable) even to pray alone in our churches. So the routine changed. We said Morning Prayer at home. Having more leisure and not having a later Communion service during lockdown and thinking about others also praying alone each day, he expanded what he does for Morning Prayer and the time in which he reads the service – ditto Evening Prayer. It became easier to have breakfast before saying the service. He's fresher and more alert after he's eaten and had a couple of cups of tea and we go out in the garden if it's light and not raining to finish breakfast and to say the office. Then we go out into the woods after he's washed up. By the time we get back, the paper is here even in the school holidays and he sits down to read it then.

As COVID restrictions have diminished, we've pretty much kept to this new routine. We find that it suits us rather well. Even in the Winter, it won't be dark if the the third thing we do in the mornings, instead of the first, is to go for a walk. I don't mind going in the woods in the dark. Neither does he unless it's really very dark. But now that he tries to run every day instead of just walking, it is preferable to wait till it's light. Otherwise he slips and trips too much for an old man to bear. He ought, however, to say his daily offices (Morning and Evening Prayer) in church so that others can join him if they wish. It would be good also to revert to celebrating Holy Communion on more weekdays. He likes also to leave at least one of our churches open in the daytime so that people can visit, enjoy the atmosphere, and pray by themselves.

So, from 1<sup>st</sup> September, we'll still be having breakfast first and saying Morning Prayer at home. We'll open S Michael's on weekdays except Mondays when we go out on our run – still quite early - and we'll say Evening Prayer in church at 5.00 and lock up. If anyone would like to suggest anything different with a view to joining us, he's open to ideas. Otherwise, this is what we shall do for the foreseeable future.

The disadvantage of starting the newspaper after nine o' clock is that it can take much of the rest of the morning to finish it, which he thinks is too much time, but he also thinks that he ought to be informed about what is going on in the world and what intelligent and knowledgeable people think about it if he is to do his job properly.

It looks as if Master & I between us have written most of this magazine once again. It would be more interesting if there were some contributions from other people as well – maybe from some of you who receive the magazine but don't live within the parish. Anything can be interesting and Master will publish almost anything he receives. Copy date is 8.30 am on the second Friday of the month before publication.

Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

## **Kent Ride & Stride**

The Friends of Kent Churches Sponsored Ride & Stride takes place on the second Saturday in September each year. This year it will take place on **Saturday 11th September 2021**. To register as a participant, for further information, or to request a sponsorship form, contact your local church. Participants plan their own routes with the assistance of a printed list of churches and chapels open. There are usually some 700 of these places of worship open, scattered right across this big county, and wherever you go you'll be assured of a warm welcome. Go individually, as a couple, with friends and family, with a cycling club, with your work colleagues, with school friends, with choirs, with a sports team – whoever you wish. You need a sponsor form. Please ask sponsors to tick for Gift Aid if they are tax payers; this increases their donations by 25% with no cost to them. Ask your relations, friends and colleagues to sponsor you – so much per church or chapel visited between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm on the day. 50% of all sponsorship money raised can go to the church or chapel of your choice, with the other 50% going to the Friends of Kent Churches, who distribute it by grant aid to help the most needy churches in the county. [Home | Kent Churches Ride & Stride \(kentrideandstride.co.uk\)](http://kentrideandstride.co.uk)

### **PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS**

To introduce myself, I was born in Six-Acre Wood though my mother was from Ranscombe and my father from Cobham. My name is Percy but my mother called me Coo-Coo-Coo.

I was quite contentedly bouncing on a bough in the rectory garden last week when kerpow! Wow! Bang!. Now by nature I am not courageous, so I flew instantly up to the shelter of a bushier branch where friends were gathered. Turns out, it was the return of BELLS. These are very big noisy pigeon-scarers. They certainly worked for us and the squirrel sect who raced up back to safety for hours. The foxes and badgers merely grunted in their sleep of course. People say how good it is to hear the bells again as they have little regard for our mental health.

However this was quite offset by the wonderful news for us, that a kebab take-away is to open in the village! We so love chips, and will do our very best to clear up after clumsy late-night customers. There is always a risk that we will leave our own scars on the pavements but these will soon wash away during our glorious summer.

Why does the village need two hairdressers and three barbers? In my biased view the real need, is for a pavement cafe, and a fish-and-chip shop. I know others would prefer a delicatessen, a florist's or a greengrocer's.

I have noted with some consternation, a decline in the number of wires from telegraph poles these days. I am informed that this is due to folk not using "land lines" but preferring little boxes they often carry in their pockets and attach by wires to their ears. Again this discriminates against all birds! But we do still have the aerials - some of which are as high as the rectory garden's trees. We so love to sway on aerials cooing along to our favourite refrain (Coo-coo-ka-choo).

Other village news as observed from the dying ash tree in the rectory garden? Well, Cuxton Bakehouse has now moved into new premises, so no more optimistic forays to William Road for those wonderful breads and bakes. More news and views next time, from the ash tree.

(Further contributions welcome from human, animal and avian authors will be very welcome. RIK.)

### Guidance

A cockney had been stringing along two women, but the time came when he felt that he really must decide on which to marry – Maria or Rosemary. He went into a church and knelt to pray for guidance. When he opened his eyes, he saw above the altar written in huge golden letters "AVE MARIA". So he did.

### A Couple of Evenings Ago

I was rather taken by this psalm at Evensong. It's a good prayer for today.

**Psalm 61. HEAR** my crying, O God : give ear unto my prayer. 2. From the ends of the earth will I call upon thee : when my heart is in heaviness. 3. O set me up upon the rock that is higher than I : for thou hast been my hope, and a strong tower for me against the enemy. 4. I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever : and my trust shall be under the covering of thy wings. 5. For thou, O Lord, hast heard my desires : and hast given an heritage unto those that fear thy Name. 6. Thou shalt grant the King a long life : that his years may endure throughout all generations. 7. He shall dwell before God for ever : O prepare thy loving mercy and faithfulness, that they may preserve him. 8. So will I always sing praise unto thy Name : that I may daily perform my vows.

Jesus is the Rock. David is the King in the OT. Jesus, the Son of David, is the King in the NT. The sure mercies of David and God's gift to all who put their trust in Jesus.

## Jokes for September

What type of sandals do frogs wear?

Open toad

What is the difference between a Zippo and a Hippo?

One is very heavy; the other is a little lighter.

Why did the mushroom go to the party?

Because he was a fun guy.

What did the nut say when it caught a cold?

Cashew!

What do you call a pig that can do karate?

A pork chop.

Why did the schoolboy eat his homework?

Because the teacher told him that it was a piece of cake.

What did the pirate say 365 days after his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday?

Aye Matey.

**Odd Job  
Lady. Inside or  
out.**

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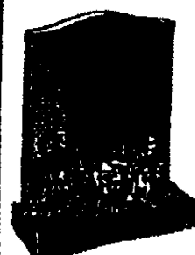
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