

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
August 7 th Trinity 7	9.30 Family Communion	I Kings 19 vv 9-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981
August 14 th Trinity 8	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-10 p1138 Romans 11 vv 11-24 p1138 Romans 11 vv 25-32 p1138 Romans 11 vv 33-36 p1139 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982
August 21 st Trinity 9	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 9
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983
August 28 th Trinity 10	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 15 vv 15-21 p774 Romans 12 vv 9-21 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 21-28 p984
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
September 4 th Trinity 11	9.30 Family Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
August 7 th Trinity 7	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Kings 11 v41 – 12 v20 p351 John 6 vv 35-51 p1070
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	I Kings 19 vv 9-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981
August 14 th Trinity 8	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-10 p1138 Romans 11 vv 11-24 p1138 Romans 11 vv 25-32 p1138 Romans 11 vv 33-36 p1139 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	II Kings 4 vv 1-37 p371 Acts 16 vv 1-15 p1111
August 21 st Trinity 9	11.00 Holy Communion Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983
August 28 th Trinity 10	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 15 vv 15-21 p774 Romans 12 vv 9-21 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 21-28 p984
September 4 th Trinity 11	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Ezekiel 12 v21 – 13 v16 p839 Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010
	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985

9.30 Holy Communion Wednesdays at St Michael's		9.30 Holy Communion Thursdays at St John's	
3 rd August	Numbers 13 vv 1-35 Matthew 15 vv 21-28	4 th August	Numbers 20 vv 1-13 Matthew 16 vv 13-23
10 th August St Laurence	Deuteronomy 34 Matthew 18 vv 15-20	11 th August	Joshua 3 vv 7-17 Matthew 18 v21 – 19 v1
17 th August	Judges 9 vv 6-15 Matthew 20 vv 1-16	18 th August	Judges 11 vv 29-40 Matthew 22 vv 1-14
24 th August St Bartholomew	Acts 5 vv 12-16 Luke 22 vv 24-30	25 th August	I Thessalonians 3 vv 7-13 Matthew 24 vv 42-51
31 st August	Colossians 1 vv 1-8 Luke 4 vv 38-44	1 st September	Colossians 1 vv 9-14 Luke 5 vv 1-11

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Copy Date September Magazine: 12th August 8.30 am Rectory.

Church hall draw for June : £5 to Renee Barker, drawn by Mary Pitt.

St John's Church Draw for June: £5 each to Mrs Thorne (3), Mrs Warman (51), Mr Silver (76) and Mrs Brunger (159) – drawn by Mrs Mattingley.



Rather Naughty

I told the children at St Michael's on Trinity Sunday that my talk to them would be a sandwich. The first piece of bread was a quotation I had read in the week. *If you can sing Glory to God in the Highest, you can never despair of the Church.* The filling was the Bible reading we had just heard read from Isaiah 40¹²⁻³¹. God is so great. He made everything that exists. He made you and me. He is infinite. When God looks down on us from heaven, it must be like when we look down from an aeroplane and all the people on the ground look to us like insects. And yet, insects though we might be when compared to God, God loves each one of us and cares for each one of us. He became one of us in Jesus. He lives within us and among us as the Holy Spirit. God gives us everything that we have and He promises to look after us for ever and give us a home in Heaven if we only put our trust in Him.

The other piece of bread in my sandwich was the last couple of verses of Isaiah 40. Once when I was doing the London Marathon, at about the 17 mile mark, where many runners experience the wall (when you start to wonder whether you can finish), a church group was holding up a placard with Isaiah 40³⁰ *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:* I surprised them as I ran past (and maybe I was showing off) by finishing the quotation with Isaiah 40³¹ *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

All very true, but I did feel a bit embarrassed to tell the children I had been running the London Marathon. I've always felt a bit guilty about doing that because it is run on a Sunday and recently (because we don't have many 8.00 services) taking part has meant missing Church. That's not the reason I stopped entering. There came a year when the application form demanded to know the entrant's ethnicity. I wasn't going to answer that one. The only race that matters on Marathon day is the one from Blackheath to St James' Park.

So I found myself saying guiltily to the children that it's rather naughty to miss church on a Sunday. Now I have a feeling that quite a lot of

people don't agree with me about that, even people in our own congregations. So then I wondered whether I should have said it? Some people think that my main job is to get people into Church and that people won't come to Church if I say things they don't like. However, in reality, my job as a preacher is to proclaim the Word of God. My job as parish priest is to speak the truth, whether or not the truth is what people want to hear. So, afterwards, I was wondering whether what I had said to the children was true? Is it really rather naughty not to go to Church every Sunday? Well, *rather naughty* sounds a bit childish, but is it wrong, bad, evil or even wicked to miss Church? I quickly came up with three reasons why it is bad to miss Church, if not actually evil or wicked. See if you agree with me. They are in ascending order of importance.

The first reason why it is a mistake to miss Church is that the thing which is most important about us is our eternal relationship with God. Our faith in God makes all the difference to the way we live on earth. Our faith sustains us in everything that happens to us and in everything we have to do. Our faith determines how we behave. Our faith determines our attitudes to everything and everyone. And our experience of living here and now in the love of God is just a foretaste of what He has got laid up for us in Heaven.

You might call it the spiritual dimension. You might call it your immortal soul. You might talk about living Christ's resurrection life. But whatever you call it, it can't be right to neglect it in favour of work or humdrum household tasks or leisure activities. The reality is that in Church we experience Christ because He promises to be present wherever two or three meet together in His Name. We hear the living Word of God in the Bible readings and sermon. We converse with God in our prayers. We share with other Christian people in our thanksgivings and intercessions. We hear God's Word of forgiveness for our sins. We partake of His Body and Blood, His Nature, in the Holy Communion.

How can we value these things less than the chance for a lie in, the opportunity to catch up on shopping and housework or the desire to earn some filthy lucre? Yes, it is true that we don't lose our relationship with God just because we miss the odd Sunday in church. It is also true that

society doesn't cease to be Christian just because some of its members no longer take part in public worship. But there is a critical mass. It does happen eventually. The generation before mine thought it was sufficient to lead a decent Christian life and to send the children to Sunday School. My generation stopped teaching the faith to the children. There was always something else to do and teaching about Jesus was put off to another day. We now have two generations of people following my generation who don't know any hymns or prayers, who know hardly any Bible stories and for whom Church is an alien experience. Christianity is gradually being squeezed out of the public life of our nation.

I would beg people to examine their priorities. Some people really physically cannot get to church. Please ask me to call. You can have Communion at home or a prayer or just a chat.

Some people say they are too busy, too busy for God. Can you honestly say that you don't waste any time at all in the week? No hours lost watching junk TV? No time wasted on physical fitness or personal grooming? No hobbies or leisure activities? No pointless work? No meaningless conversations? No aimless wandering round the shops? Is the whole week taken up with things more important than worshipping God?

Some people say that the time or place or style of worship doesn't suit them. In the average month (apart from weddings, funerals, etc.) this parish provides 58 services you could attend in three different locations, varying in length from 15 minutes to over an hour, formal and informal, modern and traditional, Holy Communion, Morning & Evening Prayer and non-liturgical. If none of those 58 suits you, I think you have to ask yourself whether it's you or us that's at fault. If you really can't get on with anything we do, there are two other churches in the parish and dozens more within travelling distance for anyone who has a car or can beg a lift.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6¹⁹⁻²¹).

The second and more important reason why it is bad to miss Church is that the Church has so much to do and we cannot do it without the wholehearted support of all our members. The Church's task is to do nothing less than to complete the work of Jesus. We have to tell the whole world the Good News of His Life and Death and Resurrection. We have to teach the whole world to do what He has taught us to do. *Peace and goodwill to all mankind* are now the Church's responsibility. Christians are called to work for justice and peace, at home and abroad, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, to care for and (if possible) to reform the prisoner, to look after the sick, to work with God towards the time when the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. The Church's work is not finished so long as there is anyone lonely or in pain, hungry or homeless, so long as there is war or poverty, so long as the eyes of men, women and children are blinded to the eternal love of God whether by hardship or by materialism and excessive wealth. We are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. We are a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. We are the leaven that leavens the lump. There is so much to do to bring in the Kingdom of God and every single Christian is needed to play his or her part in God's work. We are inspired and empowered to do all these things by our participation in public worship and our participation in worship supports and builds up other Christians so that they too can play their part in doing God's work in the world.

Some people speak as though the Church's main task is to survive. But what would be the point in surviving if our survival used up all our resources? In the early days of railways, the efficiency of the newly invented steam locomotives was vital. Some engines were so heavy in relation to the power they produced that all they could do was to drag themselves along the track, with nothing left over to haul passenger carriages or goods trucks. Running engines like that is just a waste of coal and the time and effort of the driver and fireman. The point of a railway locomotive is to pull carriages or wagons. The point of the Church is:

- to sing the praises of Him Who called us out of darkness into His own marvellous light;
- to preach the Good News to the whole of creation;
- to care for people in need of every kind;

to transform the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

We need the absolute commitment and wholehearted support of everybody who claims to be a Christian. If we had that, if every baptised person offered himself, his soul and body, to be a living sacrifice, if we all freely and unstintingly offered God our time, talents and (yes!) money, there would be no question of survival for the Church. We'd pay our bills with our spare change. We'd do any necessary care and maintenance to our buildings in our spare time and we'd be fizzing with energy and overflowing with love to share the faith, to care for all those in any kind of need (which means all of us) and to transform the world.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in

him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10¹⁴).

And finally, and most importantly of all, we ought not to give up on going to Church every week, because worship is our duty to God. We praise God because He is so great. We thank God for all that He has done for us. We love God because He loves us. We worship God because He is. And that is all there is to it.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matthew 4¹⁰).

So am I right that it is *rather naughty* to miss Church on a Sunday? If I'm wrong, show me I'm wrong. If I'm right and people say I shouldn't say these things, please explain to me where is the logic in that? Roger.

Something to Shout About

A few of us have been meeting every few weeks for a pub lunch and a chat. That's not *Something to Shout About*. What we've been talking about down the pub is *Fresh Expressions*. What new ways are there to engage people? *Something to Shout About* is one upshot of these discussions. Our *Any Questions* evening was another.

Every third Thursday of the month a group of us meet in the URC Chapel hall in Bush Road Cuxton at 7.30 pm to discuss some topical issue. Anyone can come. The meetings are open to all. The discussions are quite lively. We even get tea and biscuits! So far we've talked about multiculturalism (good or bad?), the media (useful source of information or scandal rags?) and changing standards (why is it now OK to spit in public, but not to include Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the town Christmas lights?). We've had a couple of good ideas for topics on August 18th & September 15th. See village notice boards for details. The people who come decide what they want to discuss – hopefully two months in advance. See you there?



Rochester Cathedral Prayers

Our parish will be remembered in the cathedral prayers at the morning Eucharist (8.30 am) and at Evening Prayer (5.30 pm) on 12th August. If you are in Rochester at those times, you would be most welcome to attend.

New Beginnings for Shaws Wood Residential Care Home

Many readers will remember the council run Shaws Wood OPH in Mill Road Strood. The council closed their operation there a little while ago and Shaws Wood has now been completely refurbished and reopened under new management. The vision is that this should be a Christian home both in the way that the residents are looked after and in that residents will have the opportunity to have their spiritual needs met as well as their physical. This is the ethos of the home. It does not mean that the residents are exclusively Christian but faith sets the tone and creates the atmosphere. There are vacancies for long term residents and short term respite care. There are also vacancies for experienced Christian care home staff. Shaws Wood are also looking for volunteers to act as visitors, friends and prayer partners. For more information contact the home Shaws Wood, Mill Road, Strood, ME2 3BU; 01634 721053; enquiries@shawswood.co.uk; www.shawswood.co.uk.

Max is OK!

Max trod in some white paint and got some of it on my shoes and on his ear. He was a bit worried that the paint might be toxic, but I reminded him that he has been vaccinated against distemper and that is much the same thing! RIK.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

11 th June	Phoebe-Lotti Vaughan-Pollard	Reginald Avenue
12 th June	Alice Violet Isabella Andrews	The Street
26 th June	Joshua John Goodwin	Maidstone
26 th June	Freya May Goodwin	High Street
3 rd July	Theo James Andrews-Lowrie	Chillington Close
9 th July	David Leonard Ridley	Meadow Crescent
9 th July	Louise Elaine Ridley	Meadow Crescent
9 th July	Charlene Lee	Strood
10 th July	Harley John Whyman	Strood

Confirmations:

19 th June (at Gravesend)	Zoe Elizabeth Tapson	Vicarage Road
24 th June (Nativity of St John the Baptist)	Declan Michael Sbrocchi	Vicarage Road
24 th June (Nativity of St John the Baptist)	Esme Michaela Weiler-Grove	Vicarage Close

Weddings:

25 th June	Michael Charles James Leverington and Rebecca Jayne Francesca Best	Halling
16 th July	Simon Feraday & Hannah Newbery	St Peter's Newdigate

Wedding Blessing:

2 nd July	Roger & Sandra Still	Cuxton
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Funerals:

24 th June	Donald Roy Mepsted (74)	Reginald Avenue
24 th June	Sandra Kay Jarvis (49)	Cliftonville
29 th June	Edith Evelyn Hanning (97)	Bush Road
12 th July	Jean Patricia Geary (91)	Borough Green

Eve Appeal Final Figure 2011



The fourth annual bluebell walk on 30th April 2011 yielded a total of £1,100 which has been sent off to the Eve Appeal. Thank you once again walkers and donors. Pat Laurie.

Concert 4th August Mean Time

Mean Time will be performing "Red Intentions" at St Michael's on Thursday 4th August at 7.30 pm. The programme they describe as follows: *Red Intentions, an imaginative and captivating programme bringing together light and sound. Inspired by the colour red in its many connotations (for example fire, anger and passion) this dynamic programme is sorrowful, idyllic, seductive and fiery, including music by Vivaldi, Purcell and Dowland.* Admission free but donations are invited to cover costs and for church funds.

The early music ensemble **Mean Time** was founded in 2003 in Greenwich, with the aim of creating innovative and varied programmes of music which are accessible, and appeal to a wide range of audiences. Specialising in work with the recorder they are also proficient at singing and playing the baroque flute and harpsichord. Often praised for their versatility they cover repertoire spanning the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods as well as a little contemporary music. All members studied early music at Trinity College of Music or The Royal College of Music under the direction of Philip Thorby and Ashley Solomon. Since leaving college they have all enthusiastically entered the teaching profession and enjoy enriching the lives of young people through music. They also enjoy delivering workshops and are committed to charity work having particularly enjoyed a project which took music into hospitals. Performing regularly all over the country the group has played in venues such as Wistow Church as part of The Leicester Early Music Festival, Charlton House, The Greenwich Maritime Museum and St. Alfege Church.

Forthcoming Attractions 2011

Wednesday, 10th August from 12.00 noon: BBQ in Jenny and Chris' garden at 95 Pilgrims Road, North Halling (in aid of Church Funds)

September 29th Michaelmas: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist with Rt Rev'd James Langstaff our new diocesan bishop.

15th October: Quiz in Church Hall.



Halling WI

Phew! Thank goodness we have seen the back of June, what a busy month. We started with the National Federation of W.I.'s Annual meeting at Liverpool, one of the most electric meetings I have attended in almost fifty years. Sir Steve Redgrave was our main speaker, nothing to do with Olympics, water, or gold medals, but picking cotton in West Africa and promoting the Fair Trade Movement, Then the delegates decided to throw out a resolution, which all added to the excitement.

We then went to Ryarsh for the Malling District Conference. What we don't know now about South Korea isn't worth knowing. What a country! How they preserve their very ancient artefacts and how present day South Korea works. Imagine unlocking your front door when you are in the next town all by pushing a little button. I think I may go there next year for my holiday. I wouldn't last five minutes with all that technology. The speakers slides did go on a bit, but at least she showed us the poverty and the smelly rivers as well as the wealth.

We have also celebrated our 44th birthday in our usual grand style, a lovely "feast" laid on by our very hard working committee. Thank you girls. We were entertained by "The Spare Parts", I wonder why they are called that? Easy really, they were all senior citizens and I suspect many had some spare part of some sort, teeth, hips or knees. They were great and we had a good old sing song, They don't write songs like that anymore.

We staged an exhibit at the St John's Festival weekend, another great get together. Lastly, us five W.I. girls who have been going to the primary school to teach the seven-eight year olds to knit, have finished for this school year, and yes we had a bit of a party with tea and cakes, thanks to Mrs Linda Mitchell. We were warmly thanked by Mia and us ladies were given a box of chocolates each as a thank you present and the children all went home with a little woolly dolly made by me.

We are now having a well earned rest until September when we shall all be much fitter thanks to our July speaker Mrs Fran Bennett who is going to teach us Tai Chi (from our armchairs). Who says W.I. is dull. Phyllis.

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Halling Weekend

We had a wonderful weekend at Halling 24th-26th June. Everybody commented on the Confirmation Service conducted by Bishop Stephen Venner at which everybody was made to feel at ease and challenged to respond personally to God's call to each one of us. We all enjoyed the exhibition in the church, which included displays by the school, Rainbows, Brownies and other children, as well as old Halling in photographs, and banners to be presented by the WI to contestants in the Olympics. The concert by the Brook orchestra and the Marlowe Singers on the Saturday night was tremendous. We hope they will come again. Then, on Sunday, we heard from Andrew Daunton-Fear about his life and work in the Philippines and we were delighted to meet

his wife Jenny and Paul and Charitas Cho and their young son Hayoung. The Chos hope to be taking on Andrew's work and may become our new link mission partners. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this weekend the success it was. Roger.

Women Bishops

The Church of England is currently carrying out a consultation on the issue of women bishops. We are to discuss it at PCC on 6th September, Deanery Synod on 14th September and Diocesan Synod on 15th October. General Synod will then debate the matter again and hopes to come to a decision next year in the light of this consultation. I expect to be at the first three of these meetings. I don't intend to speak. Arguing has come to seem to me to be both futile and destructive. I do intend to vote against the proposal to ordain or consecrate women as bishops – unless something happens to make me change my mind. I have been led to believe, however, that at least some of you would appreciate a bit of an explanation as to what is going on.

The Bible teaches that men and women equally are made in the image of God (Genesis 1²⁷). It also teaches that we are equally redeemed in Christ (Galatians 3²⁸). There are examples of capable women taking leadership roles in the Old Testament (e.g. Judges 4) and the New Testament (e.g. Acts 18²⁶). There are also examples of powerful women in church history such as St Hilda of Whitby. Some Christians regard it then as a matter of fairness that whatever opportunities are open to men ought also to be open to women. Women ministers ought to have the same possibilities for promotion as male ministers and there should be no *stained glass ceiling*. Some of us are uncomfortable about referring to becoming a bishop as promotion. Christian ministry is not a career; it is a vocation. However, if there are no essential differences between men and women in God's sight, it seems unreasonable that we mere human beings should behave as if there were and deny women the opportunity to minister in roles to which God is perhaps calling them. To be fair to us Christians, despite feminist accusations of misogyny on the part of the Christian Church, women have been treated with far more respect in countries with a Christian culture than they have been in other parts of the world. We don't expose girl babies to die, as has been the practice in China; burn widows on their husband's funeral pyres, as they used to in India; or wrap up our women in burkas, as so many Moslem cultures do.

On the other hand, despite the fact that the Bible teaches that men and women are equal in creation and redemption, by and large, it continues to make a distinction between them in regard to their respective roles. Jesus gave women much more respect than many of His contemporaries. They were among the most faithful of His disciples and the first witnesses of His Resurrection, but He did not choose any woman to be an apostle. Despite the fact that St Paul taught *there is neither male nor female: because ye are all one in Christ Jesus* and that he valued the work of a number of prominent women in the early Church, he insisted more than once that women ought not to carry out the functions of a Christian leader and put this all into a theological context when he compared Christian marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5²¹⁻³³. On this view, we ought not to have women priests, let alone women bishops. The Church has mainly interpreted the Bible this way and has not usually had women ministers for most of the 2,000 years of its existence and most of the world's Christians today belong to branches of the Church which still do not have women ministers. Is the Church, in making a distinction between what men and women are called to do, faithful to Scripture and guided by God, or is she misinterpreting the Bible and turning a misogynistic deaf ear to the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

Some Christians would say that it does not matter what the Bible says on the issue of women's ministry or what the Church has (mainly) always taught. They would say that the place of women in society today is so very different from what it was in biblical times, or in the Middle Ages or even half a century ago, that what the Bible teaches and what the Church believed in the past is no longer relevant and women ought to be allowed to become priests and bishops just as they can now become doctors or cabinet ministers. This seems dangerous to me. It makes me think of that advertisement for insurance where the man is sawing off the branch he is sitting on. If the teaching of the Bible and the Church is outmoded and irrelevant on things like gender roles and family life, might it not be out of date on other issues like money, ethics, prayer, forgiveness, eternal life, etc.? If I can't trust St Paul when he tells me that women shouldn't lead churches, why should I trust him when he tells me that I shall one day see again my loved ones who have died in the Lord? I can't understand the logic of people who tell me that they can see nothing wrong with having women priests and bishops, but that homosexual practices are an abomination because the Bible says so. If we prefer C21 western values to biblical values on women, why not on sexual ethics, or indeed any aspect of

ethics? This is why I say that in practice only two out of the Ten Commandments are still respected*. You may well think that the Bible and 2,000 years of Christian teaching are out of date, but, if that is the case, why do we need a Church at all and why would we want priests or bishops?

I do think that if you believe that women should be ordained as priests and bishops you must come to that conclusion in the light of biblical teaching, not in opposition to it. If you discount the Bible, what are these women preachers going to preach about?

Leaving aside the Bible and traditional Christian teaching, are men and women in fact the same and ought they to be entrusted with the same roles in society? Traditional feminism was apt to assert that men and women are the same (apart from the plumbing) and that boys and girls would grow up with the same approach to life if they were only treated in the same way from babyhood, and that therefore men and women ought to have equal opportunities as a matter of fairness to them. I think it is now, however, coming to be recognised, by feminists as well as traditionalists, that men and women are different and that boys and girls would act differently even if they were treated in exactly the same way from earliest infancy. This seems reasonable to me because, after all, most, if not all, human cultures all over the world and throughout history assign different roles to men and women. Harriet Harman suggested that Lehman Brothers (the American firm whose recklessness precipitated the present worldwide financial crisis) might have behaved differently if it had been Lehman Sisters. If it is conceded that men and women are different it could be that women are more suitable for some jobs (e.g. nurse, infant teacher) and men for others (e.g. footballer, policeman). If that is so, it could be that women are not meant to be priests or bishops and that it actually unfair to them and to their congregations to ordain them.

On the other hand, some people argue that men and women are indeed different but complement one another. So, such people would argue, we need both men and women in, say, parliament, the judiciary and the police force – and in the ministry of the Church. We need, they would argue, men and women to represent the whole human experience across the genders. I'm a bit nervous about talking about Christian clergy as representatives of God to the world or as representatives of God's people to God. That was the role of Old Testament priests. Jesus fulfils the role of representative (*our only mediator and advocate* {BCP}) in the New Testament. Christian ministers are leaders, not representatives. God is not male or female. He is *without body, parts or passions* (First Article of Religion) and Jesus is a man, but He represents all human beings – all men and all women – to God. On the other hand, I can see that pastoral and evangelistic ministry requires both typically female and typically male attributes and you could argue that we therefore need both male and female clergy, but then I would argue back that all baptised people – male and female – are pastors and evangelists. All baptised people are led in Christian ministry by the clergy (who on St Paul's teaching ought to be male) but the clergy do not carry out Christian ministry in place of or on behalf of everybody else.

One last issue is Christian unity. Would having women bishops help or hinder the quest for reunion with other parts of God's Church? The answer is that it would make it harder to reunite with the Roman Catholics or the Orthodox if we ordain women bishops, whereas it will make it very difficult to reunite with the Methodists and the URC if we don't. The RCs and the Orthodox are very much more numerous, but reunion with the Methodists and the URC is much less unlikely. So the ecumenical argument cuts both ways.

Finally what many people in the Church of England are seeking is a solution which allows women to be consecrated bishop – which seems to be what the majority wants – while respecting the consciences of those

* You can't say there is only one God Whom we should worship if you accept C21 western views on multiculturalism. Neither can you object to graven images for the same reason. Nobody sees anything wrong in using the Lord's Name as a swear word or in a trivial and possibly false oath. Keeping the Sabbath is a joke with very few people coming to church and most people treating Sunday as a day to work, shop and so forth just like any other day. If we really honoured our parents, there would be no crisis in the care of the elderly. Adultery is scarcely taken seriously. You get into more trouble for breaking an injunction by gossiping about a celebrity's infidelities than the celebrity gets into for perpetrating them. Everybody lies to get out of trouble from the highest levels of government to the lowest criminal on the street. Our whole economy depends on people spending money on what they don't need just because they covet material possessions. And that only leaves murder and theft!

who, like me, believe this to be unscriptural and illegitimate in terms of the tradition of the Church and therefore wrong. This too is fraught with difficulty. If parishes or individuals are given an opt out from the ministry of a woman bishop, she is not truly bishop of the whole diocese. So many senior women in the Church are very reluctant to legislate for the sort of opt out we were granted over women priests. On the other hand, it hardly seems right to exclude from the Church those whose consciences tell them to continue to believe what the Church always has believed up until now.

I hope these notes are helpful! Whatever our thoughts about this, we all need to pray. Roger.

What's the Difference Between God's Grace & God's Mercy?

God's grace is when He gives us what we don't deserve. God's mercy is when He doesn't give us what we do deserve.

Here's A Thought

"The natural state of all creatures is conformity with the will of their creator." - Bishop Basil of Amphilopolis. Stephen Parsons comments. "The task of the Church is in essence to cooperate with this process, not by domination and control of nature but through pursuing God's ultimate purpose for the universe and humankind namely its divinisation." (*Expository Times* July 2011).

Christian Aid

A Division of The British Council of Churches



Christian Aid Walk & Quiz

Thanks to everyone who came on the Christian Aid Walk and who sponsored our walkers. From this parish we raised £400 and a good time was had by all the humans and especially their canine companions.

Our next event for Christian Aid will be a quiz at St Francis Strood on 3rd September and we shall be invited to enter a team or two.



Sponsored Bike Ride (or Walk)

Our next opportunity to get fit while raising money for a good cause will be the Friends of Kent Churches sponsored bike ride and/or walk and/or run on 10th September. Just get sponsors and visit as many Kent churches as you can. Proceeds split 50/50 between us and FKC. Alternatively man or woman one of our churches that day to welcome people from other parishes. You can be sponsored for this as well.



Teddy Bears' Picnic

Our acclaimed Teddy Bears' Picnic at Cuxton will be at 2.00 on 31st August this year and at Halling at 2.00 on 25th August. We try to invite personally all the still young children whom we have baptised, but don't wait for an invitation. We'd love to see any children with their parents or carers.

Barbecue

What a wonderful evening we had for our barbecue on 9th July: beautiful weather, good company, excellent food, the lovely views over the downs from the Rectory Garden. Thanks again to all who took part. We made over £300 for church funds. Background music was supplied by Malcolm Curnow and created a great talking point.

Apology to Medway Council

Last year I am ashamed to recall I made quite a fuss when Medway Council forced us to cancel our barbecue because we did have a singer but did not have an Entertainment Licence. I now realise the error of my ways and apologise to the council unreservedly. On consideration, we might so easily have transgressed some *Health and Safety* regulation such as slicing a cucumber without carrying out a risk assessment. One of our guests might have entertained a politically incorrect thought or two. We very probably would have failed to monitor the ethnicity, gender and sexuality of the people serving the food. Raising money for the Church could be construed as religious discrimination against non-Christian religions and runs counter to the philosophy of the secular state. I now understand that unlicensed church social events are probably the greatest evil facing the world today and I should like to thank Medway Council for protecting the people of Cuxton and Halling from such a threat in 2010. I cannot think of a better use of taxpayers' money. I've certainly learnt my lesson! Roger Knight – the contrite Rector of Cuxton and Halling.

Advice From Medway Council

Last month it was reported that some of my neighbours object to living in the shadow of the Rectory Tree Preservation Order. One of them tells me she received some very helpful advice from the council senior tree officer. "If you don't like it," he told her, "Move!" So now you know what our public servants think of us.

Nature Notes June 2011

The first day of the month is warm with blue skies and golden sunshine although in this part of the country we are desperate for rain. The evening air is balmy and everything is still and serene. The next day is very warm with variable cloud. The 3rd is a glorious day after early cloud drifting across from the north east. Later the sky is a clear blue with very warm sunshine. I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater where some of the vetches are fading only to be replaced by purple vetch, a beautiful deep colour. St John's wort ox eye daisies and vipers bugloss are blooming near pink yarrow and bird's foot trefoil. The water in the lake ripples in the wind. It becomes very hot in the afternoon forcing me to stay indoors. The fresh wind blows from the north east preventing unpleasant humidity. The sycamore and small elm branches bend and bow. Rain falls in the evening and well into the night of 5th. Rain continues to fall through the morning of the next day when I walk with Murphy at Cobtree Manor Park where I see a beautiful maple bearing leaves of green and white and the bird cherry tree which is beginning to recover after the attack by the ermine moth. The leaves of the trees shine as they are drenched by the rain. The rain ceases by mid-day and there are glimpses of the sun during the afternoon but grey clouds cover the sky in the evening. While walking at Bluewater with Murphy the next day I am aware of the sweet perfume of lime flowers and carpets of goats rue and meadow cranesbill. The air is fresh. The 8th is a chilly day with brisk westerly winds and sunshine and showers in the afternoon. There is plenty of activity from the young great tits especially in the morning. The 10th is grey and chilly when, again, I walk the flower filled paths at Bluewater with Murphy. Flying in large numbers among the grasses and flowers are clouds of six spot burnet moths, such beautiful creatures. I see fully formed but still white, hazel nuts. The morning of 12th is grey and cold -55degrees F. By mid-day rain is falling and it persists all day. The wind blusters through the trees causing the branches to sway backwards and forwards. It may be cold but the rain is most welcome. The light fades early because of the overcast skies. It is grey the following day when we take Murphy to Cobtree Manor Park. The clouds eventually break and a warm sun beams down on us. We walk on grass softened by rain and among the trees the leaves of which have darkened from their Spring freshness. The showery conditions clear and in the afternoon the garden is lit with beautiful light. While out in the garden I watch a young collared dove as it sits on the

grass, while its partner perches on one of the feeders. Billowing clouds drift across the sky from the west. A willow tit visits the garden. We go to Kent College for a cricket match final and while there I watch a mistle thrush hopping across the grass. Later I go for a walk along a lane then down a wooded path which takes me into a field where I used to take Sam and it is here that I watch a sparrow hawk hovering overhead. As we drive home along the M2 I see a field of beautiful red poppies. The next day a young jay makes a brief visit to the garden. On 16th the skies are grey with billowing clouds threatening rain which does fall as we drive to Bluewater with Murphy. It is dry when we arrive so I walk our familiar paths where beautiful wild flowers continue to bloom with viper's bugloss and goat's rue coming into their own among the variety of vetches, clover, lucerne and St John's wort . Ox eye daisies are fading. Lime flowers emit such a strong perfume. I hear water birds on the lake and the wind in the trees. A pied wagtail hops on the grass ahead of us. Showers fall during the afternoon. The early morning of the 17th is grey but dry but by mid-morning rain is falling and it persists through the day. Birds brave the rain to come to the feeders. The lilac leaves shine as they are washed by the rain-still much needed. The temperatures for the time of year are low. There are then blustery conditions for several days. The 23rd is another blustery day with sun shine and showers. We drive to Rodmersham for a cricket Cup final match. The sun shines brightly in between banks of billowing grey clouds. There is a shower before the match. The wind blows through the trees with the branches swaying back and forth. The air is full of birdsong. In the afternoon I walk along the lane looking for wildflowers. A few elder flowers linger in the hedgerows and brambles produce pink and white blooms. I see thistles, yarrow and mallow plus yellow vetch. The sun shines brightly in the early evening but when we drive home rain is falling. The early morning skies of 24th are a clear blue. Eventually billowing white clouds drift across the sky from the west and it feels pleasantly warm. Rain falls in the evening. The 26th is a very hot day then the next day temperatures reach 90 degrees. On 28th we set off for Tenterden for another cricket match. The skies are blue and it is very hot. Soon after mid-day, however, dark clouds cover the sky and rumbles of thunder can be heard. Lightning flashes across the sky and thunder roars overhead while rain beats down on the ground. The match is put on hold. Eventually the rain ceases, skies clear, the sun shines and the match continues. It

becomes much cooler. We go to Rodmersham the next day and I walk in the woods where I see fox gloves, St John's wort, selfheal, white clover and willowherb. As we drive home along the lanes, I'm aware of beautiful wild flowers along the verges. The sun shines brightly on the last day of the month but dark clouds drift across from the west in the latter part of the afternoon but only a few drops of rain fall

before the skies clear again. I drive to Cobham where I see the verges clothed in poppies, bedstraws and scabious, a beautiful sight. The sun lights up the countryside as I return and take in the glorious view across the fields in the valley and up into the hills. The evening air is still. We are halfway through the year.

Elizabeth Summers.

Home Thoughts from Abroad by Robert Browning

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees some morning unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England-now!

And after April when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark where my blossomed pear tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops-at the bent spray's edge-
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
Far brighter than this gaudy melon flower.

Saints Alive! BBQ

On Sunday 3rd July, the Saints Alive! children's group enjoyed a fun walk through the woods to Pilgrims Road, Halling. The weather was hot and the cool woods were most welcoming. The children played lots of active games in the garden and then sat sheltered under the weeping willow to make Lego models. We were most impressed by their enthusiasm and concentration. Others joined us later and we all enjoyed a welcome BBQ followed by strawberries and ice-cream. It was a pleasure and a privilege to entertain such polite and well behaved children. JB.

Keys Missing?

Two keys were found outside the church hall around 30th June. If they are yours please contact Rector.



Branch Leaders Report for the Mothers Union AGM 15th June 2011

I finished my report last year with the words "maybe we can come up with a special plan for the coming year". We did not know then that God had a plan for us and that was that we were to lose four of our members during this year, sadly we have to say goodbye to Brenda Payne (an indoor member) Thelma Partridge, Mabel Thompson and Eileen Knight - at our Lady Day Service, which was at St Francis Strood this year, Jill Martin prayed for them and said they had "Gone to Glory now" and lit a candle for them along with a member of their branch who had died very recently, a service we shall remember well. Another plan that seemed right for us was that our Rector had written his Bible notes about 'Women of the Bible' this first half year and it seemed right for us to use these notes as a study for the first half of 2011 - several of us led these meetings using the notes which we found interesting and led us into discussion. We have had several highlights this year, a visit from our Diocesan President, our 'Tea at 3' event which was a great success and was a very happy afternoon, especially as Thelma, Eileen and Mabel were all there with us then and able to enjoy it, we have photos to prove it.

The biggest highlight I think was our 110th Anniversary which we celebrated on 1st May with a lovely Evensong Service at which our diocesan Chaplain Revd Ken Clarke was the Preacher, thanks to our Rector Roger who invited him, we also enrolled a new member, Trudy Fenton-Scott, which is always a pleasure. After the service we had refreshments in the hall when the other parishioners joined us, when we cut the lovely cake that Chris Beaney had supplied for us, along with the other goodies members had made.

Once again Mary Morren set up the crib under the altar at Christmas and helped the Sunday school with the Easter Garden; Mary also diligently sends our Baptism Anniversary cards to children who have been baptised at both Churches in the Parish.

Some of us managed to do the 'Count your Blessings' project in tent again this year, this time it was for Diocesan funds and we were able to send £43, so thank you to all who made the effort enabling us to do this. We did not get down to the coast for our Fish & Chips this year but not to be outdone we had a Fish & chips lunch instead following our November meeting, this was made possible by Peter Crundwell and Michael Lofthouse organizing the shopping.

I think we can say it has been a good year, although a sad one, and hopefully we can look forward together to the coming year, when it is hoped we can increase our numbers. Thank you for all your efforts and for just being there, we thank God that this is possible.

Looking Forward:

July 20th we will be reading a short play. This year we are going down to Herne Bay for our fish and chips on 17th August for a lunchtime meal. Any of our friends will be welcome to join us. August 3rd is our Archdeaconry Service at St Stephen's Chatham at 2.00 pm. This will be followed by refreshments in the church hall. September 14th we will be having a sing-along of our favourite hymns. October 12th a speaker from Bible Lands will be coming to sell us some cards, candles, etc. All are welcome to join us if interested. November 16th All About Dyslexia. December 14th A Merry Sherry Evening at which we will prepare Christingles to be completed the following week. January – April 2012 we plan to use the Rector's Bible Study notes on Children in the Bible. (You can preview these on <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> under teaching.)

Shirley Crundwell.



Max's Tail Piece

They say "Nostalgia isn't what it used to be," but Master really enjoyed watching "John and Julie" sickeningly sentimental though it is. According to the blurb, "This timeless film records the adventures of two young children who run away to watch the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II 1953, meeting various English eccentrics along the way." It was made soon after the Coronation when Master was still an infant and depicts England as a green and pleasant land, not yet disfigured by motorways and out of town industrial developments and shopping centres, in which steam locomotives pull the trains, buses have half cabs and open platforms at the rear, in which there is little traffic on the roads, aeroplanes are a rare and exciting sight, people are polite and treat one another with respect, even the church is fairly full, and children can roam the countryside without someone contacting Social Services, as indeed can dogs without fear of the dog warden. Genuine footage of coronation day interspersed with scenes made for the film show a London at ease with itself after winning the World War, at the head of the Commonwealth family of nations, and optimistic for a future in which a combination of new technology and traditional Christian values of mutual care and support would slay what Beveridge ten years before had described as the five 'Giant Evils' of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness.

Yes, well. While basking in the rosy glow of reminiscence what does he remember about living in a house with a coal fire in just one room, with ice inside the windows in the Winter? What does he think of his mother having to put the clothes through the mangle before they had a spin drier? Or boiling them up once a week in the copper and the misery of trying to dry them in front of the single fire when it rained on washday? Does he remember his father coming home from work freezing cold having had to wait for the very infrequent village bus and walk from the stop? Or the Summer they had to bury the meat before buying a refrigerator?

I know he thinks that the TV programmes on the one channel you got in those days were better than the 100 you get now, but I can't really believe that he thinks that, even if *In the Night Garden* is pathetic compared with *Tales From the Riverbank*. I do agree with him, however, that it was better when most telephones were kept in red boxes on street corners and only "accessed" when there was something really important to communicate.

So the fifties weren't so perfect after all, Master, but what about fifties hopes for the future? You could say it hasn't worked out as expected. We're not taking helicopters to work and vacationing on Venus. The United Nations hasn't abolished war. Nuclear power hasn't provided infinite amounts of cheap fuel. There are still far too much want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness in this country and abroad. Did they really think they could change human nature?

Don't despair, Master. There's a lot of good in the world today. We have a lot of fun, not least in the countryside around here. The war against evil has to be won in every generation but it always is won because *If God be for us who can be against us?*