

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 6 th May Easter 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Daniel 6 vv 6-23 p891 Mark 15 v46 – 16 v8 p1023
	11.00 Holy Communion	Acts 11 vv 1-18 p1105 Revelation 21 vv 1-6 p1249 John 13 vv 31-35 p1082
Sunday 13 th May Easter 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Acts 16 vv 9-15 p1111 Revelation 21 v10 – 22 v5 p1250 John 14 vv 23-29 p1082
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall (S Matthias)	Isaiah 22 vv 15-22 p705 Philippians 3 v13 – 4v1 p1180
Thursday 17 th May Ascension Day	9.30 am Holy Communion	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
Sunday 20 th May Easter 7	11.00 Holy Communion Stop! Look! Listen!	Acts 16 vv 16-34 p1112 Revelation 22 vv 12-21 p1250 John 17 vv 20-26 p1085
Sunday 27 th May Pentecost	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 11 vv 1-9 p12 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 14 vv 8-17 p1082
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 6 th May Easter 5	9.30 Family Communion	Acts 11 vv 1-18 p1105 John 13 vv 31-35 p1082
Sunday 13 th May Easter 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 16 vv 9-15 p1111 Revelation 21 v10 – 22 v5 p1250 John 14 vv 23-29 p1082
Thursday 17 th May Ascension Day	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
Sunday 20 th May Easter 7	8.00 Holy Communion	Ephesians 4 vv 7-16 p1175 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 16 vv 16-34 p1112 Revelation 22 vv 12-21 p1250 John 17 vv 20-26 p1085
Sunday 27 th May Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 11 vv 1-9 p12 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 14 vv 8-17 p1082

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> &
<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Copy Date June Magazine 11th May 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45.

Sunday School is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays).

After School Club, Thursdays @ St John's.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Knott (44), Mrs Smith (49), Miss Wells (111), Mrs Cheeseman (134) & Mr Clark (180) – drawn by Mrs Smitherman.



The State We Are In

Twenty five years ago, when I was a young curate, some mothers-to-be among our parishioners complained that the Maternity Unit at the local hospital would not allow them to call their husbands, “their husbands.” Unmarried mothers were in no way to be made to feel different from wives. This episode provides an example of each of three trends in the way we are now governed: we have to be non-judgmental; traditional family life is not to be regarded as the norm; bossy state-funded professionals will tell you how you should behave, what you can and cannot say, and, indeed, how you ought to think.

I believe that the Prime Minister was wrong when he claimed that the spate of gun crime in our inner cities is not a symptom of a sick society. Since the Second World War, we, as a society, have lost respect for the three great institutions which should bind us together as a community: the family, the Queen, and all those in authority under her; and the Church. (I should say that I am using the phrase “the Queen” here in the sense that, as head of state, she represents authority in this nation. We could, of course, choose to have an elected head of state, but this would make no difference at all unless we had respect for what he or she represents.)

Family is based on unconditional love. When a couple marry, they promise *for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part*. This is the same kind of love that mothers have for their children – and hopefully fathers too. It is the kind of love we ought to have for our parents and for our brothers and sisters. This kind of love is the gravitational force which holds society together.

You might say that love like this only exists in cloud cuckoo land and that real families are places of conflict, infidelity, jealousy and sometimes violence. Ordinary people are, however, capable of true love. We get things wrong. Sometimes we go very wrong, but part of love is repentance and part of love is forgiveness. We can say sorry and we can forgive.

We have become so concerned to be non-judgmental that we are unable to say that a couple who marry for life, look after their own children and other members of the family, and sacrifice self on the altar of caring for others, have done a better thing than those who have brought children into the world without committing to one another or have deserted their wives or husbands, or who have put their own perceived needs before the needs of the people they claim to love, and to whom they made supposedly life-long vows.

Sex in marriage is sacramental. It is an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of a couple’s love. Commitment-free sex may be fun, but it devalues one of God’s most precious gifts to the human race and robs sex of its potential for satisfying our deepest need – the need to be loved for ever. Commitment-free sex all too often leads to the birth of children who cannot rely on the love of both their parents.

We have also come to rate material wealth above nearly everything else. People are judged by what money they earn. So any paid job, how ever humdrum, is seen as more worthwhile than looking after one’s own children. Moreover our children have grown up in a society where their own worth is measured in terms of having the right trainers and the trendiest computer games and going on the coolest holidays. So children, whose parents have worked shorter hours in order to spend more time with them, appear to be deprived when compared with children, whose parents have worked every hour God sends to give them bedrooms full of electronic toys and wardrobes full of designer clothing.

Mothers come under a great deal of social pressure to put their young children in nurseries, which are increasingly run not by family and friends, as they used to be, but by professionals, following a government sponsored curriculum. Thus parents can go out and get a “proper” job as opposed to merely caring for the next generation and little Henry and Henrietta can climb a couple more rungs of the developmental ladder a few months before other children who stay at home with Mum all

day. If parents opt out of sending their children to nursery, their children are thought to be at risk of missing out on an opportunity to learn and to make friends and there is also the threat that they may not be offered a place in the infant school of their choice when they at last reach the ripe old age of five years.

Under government plans, schools are to open fifty hours a week, with activities laid on before and after the existing school day. Thus parents will be set free to do real work for money in offices and factories and the state gets to determine what children will learn and experience for pretty well all their waking hours.

For decades now, at eleven years of age, many children have had to leave their old friends behind them and travel to giant impersonal schools where the teachers need photographs at parents' evenings because they are unlikely otherwise even to be able to recognise the children they are asked to talk about. Such schools struggle to become communities and it is hard for children to build lifelong friendships with other children whom their families know.

If you doubt that it is public policy to undermine traditional family, consider the Civil Partnership Act. If I were gay, I could set up house with my homosexual lover and register a civil partnership which would enable him to keep the house when I die, just as if he were my wife. But, if I set up house with my sister I cannot do anything to protect her from having to sell up or lose the tenancy on my death, even if she were to be made homeless as a result.

A very high proportion of robberies and violent crimes, including murder, are connected with illegal drug-taking and/or alcohol abuse. Why do so many young people feel the need to get out of their heads on drugs? Could it be that their lives are so bleak because they do not know real love – the love of family, the love of friends, the love of God?

So much for family. What of the Queen and all those set in authority under her? We live in a society in which, if an adult uses physical force to prevent a child or a teenager from committing a crime, the adult is more likely to

be punished than the young criminal. And that goes for teachers and policemen as well as for ordinary people. So, many young people grow up believing that they are literally untouchable whatever they get up to. In fact, in many parts of the UK, teenagers are more likely to respect and fear the criminals on the estates than the police, social workers or teachers.

The Church teaches that all power is derived from God. The laws and rules governing nations are derived from the Law of God, not the arbitrary will of human rulers. Human rulers are answerable to God for administering just laws justly. This being the case, we are bound to obey the law, not principally because of the punishment we fear if we do not, but for conscience' sake.

Modern secular society believes, however, that ethical rules are not universal and absolute, but culturally relative. Different cultures have different norms. Laws and rules are human inventions and are enforced by peer pressure or by force. You are not allowed to say that modern British values are better than, for example, Saudi Arabian values, because moral values are all relative to culture.

This means that the authorities in this country cannot rely on universal moral principles, backed by religion, to confront such practices as forced marriage or female circumcision. "It is their culture; who are we to say they are wrong?" Lacking universal moral absolutes, we are all uneasily conscious that power is arbitrary and that the rule of law depends on force rather than the ability to justify itself in moral debate. A young black man, cautioned for possessing cannabis, might think that it is just an attempt to enforce white ethical norms on black culture. A student caught illegally downloading music might say that the police are being used to protect bloated capitalist record producers from poor people exercising their legitimate right to enjoy the bands of their choice. Government cannot rely on the principle that it is enforcing universal moral standards because it does not believe that there are universal moral standards. Ordinary people, therefore, may conclude that they only need to obey the Law if they are afraid of being caught and punished, not for conscience' sake.

It is not surprising, then, that the Government's reflex reaction when confronted with any public order problem is simply this: more surveillance, more laws, harsher punishments. Being morally bankrupt, it has no other resources.

But what of Church, the third and greatest force binding our community together? Surely the Church bears witness to the universal moral Law, the Law of God summed up in the two great commandments to love God and neighbour. Surely the Church supports the authority of the state while providing the whole nation with a moral compass. Surely the Church sustains family life. Doesn't the Church bear witness that human beings will never find fulfilment in money, material possessions or casual sex, and certainly not in drunken or drug-induced oblivion? Doesn't the Church offer every human being the gift of eternal life, joy in all its fulness? Doesn't the Church have the tools for reconciling humanity to God? Isn't the Christian Gospel the key to all humankind's problems?

Surely, but remember the Parable of the Sower. Jesus talks about the seed which fell among thorns. *The thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.* This, He says, is like people. *They hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.* Doesn't this describe so many Christians in England today? Aren't we unfruitful because, although we hear the word, *the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful?* We are unable to transform modern society because we have been absorbed by it. We are supposed to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the leaven that leavens the lump, but too many of us have given up being salt, light and leaven and have effectively become earth, world and lump!

So what is to be done? Repentance would be a good start. It is no use blaming other people or bemoaning a past golden age. Maybe things were better in the past; maybe they weren't.

We have to live in the present and build the future. So we need to repent of our lack of commitment to God and His world. We also need to pray for the Church and the world. When we pray, we ally ourselves with Jesus, the divine Word, Who sustains and transforms God's whole creation. We need to do what we can to influence public policy, to bring up our own families, to play our own part in the community. We may, for example, be school governors or help with guides or scouts or youth clubs. We need to make clear that, as Christians, we live by Christian principles. Public worship and private prayer are our top priorities. We, ourselves, try to live by the Law of God as we learn it from the Bible and the Church's teaching. Spiritual things really matter more to us than material things. Money is no more than a means to an end. People come before things.

It isn't going to be easy or instantaneous. We are commemorating this year the 200th anniversary of the end of the slave trade. The slave trade didn't end easily or quickly. Wilberforce and his companions laboured for decades, spending huge amounts of time and money and enduring a great deal of hostility. They not only had to argue with the evil people who operated the trade, but also with "realists" who thought that the British economy couldn't survive without slavery and misguided people who managed to convince themselves that negroes were not fully human or that there was biblical warrant for the institution of slavery. Much blood was spilt ending the slave trade, as well as money and words. Sometimes those liberating the slaves inadvertently made things worse. A freed man starving because he couldn't find a job might be worse off than a slave with a full belly. So ending slavery was not simple, quick or easy. Indeed there is still slavery in the world and still work for the anti-slavers to do.

Sorting out the problems of British society won't be simple, quick or easy, but you and I can make a real difference if we commit ourselves to God and His world. The greater our commitment, the greater the difference we can make.

Roger

Cuxton Community Infant School News

Another busy term has come to an end and we can look forward to a holiday. Children are excited and tired and can't wait for the Easter bunny to come! Parents have been invited to three excellent class assemblies this term. Bush class focused on singing, through our voices project, and sang songs and rhymes and taught us about pitch, rhythm, pulse, rhyme and beat. They performed so confidently and are singing beautifully. Today they sang in our Friday celebration assembly to the rest of the school and sang in three parts, a very tricky song which many adults would find difficult. Sundridge class performed their assembly in their PE kits and told us about PE- dance, gym and games. Children skipped, jumped, travelled along benches and used ribbons. The whole class finished with a dance and a plea for Sainsbury's vouchers. Ranscombe class entertained us yesterday with their views on Cuxton village, ideas for signs to promote the village shops, playground models and told us about the forces of pushing and pulling. They had done some great work on design technology and science.

Mums and grandmas enjoyed our Mothers day assembly. They listened to songs, poems, riddles and children talked about their mums whilst showing some lovely paintings. The children ended by singing a lovely song and many mums were quite emotional at the end. My thanks to Caroline Thomas for all her hard work in putting the posies of flowers together for each child to give to their mum, which we hope were appreciated.

We celebrated red nose day on the 16th March. Sharon and Jane our cooks baked about 850 fairy cakes and decorated them. With their help and parents contributions we raised approximately £200 for Comic Relief. The children enjoyed the day all dressed up in big clothes with coloured hair!

The year 2 children attended the Medway Schools Music Festival at the Central Hall Theatre in Chatham and I was very proud to be told we were one of the best schools there!

The friends of Cuxton schools have worked extremely hard. They have sold plants and cuddly toys for Mothers day and organised egg rolling in both schools. Earlier in the week they held a pamper evening which by all accounts went really well. We do so appreciate their financial support and enthusiasm but they are desperate for committee members from the infant school parents to help, so please come and see us and we will put you in touch with them as the Summer fayre will soon be upon us!

Well I think that is about all our news this side of Easter. I do hope you and your families enjoy the bank holiday time together,

With all good wishes from the children, staff, governors, Sandra Jones
Head Teacher.

Old Kent Saying: Where you began is where you will end. That which is between is but the journey.

Nature Notes March 2007

There have been some beautiful spring days this month and as I have tramped across the fields and trod the muddy paths of the woodland, I have been able to observe wild flowers and new buds bursting forth. We have experienced strong winds, heavy showers, very warm days then a plunge back into Winter. Daffodils have bloomed early, catkins have turned brown and hawthorn bushes have burst into leaf while also displaying some of last Autumn's red haws. The air has been full of birdsong so beautiful to the ear. I have seen peacock, red admiral and yellow brimstone butterflies; in fact, I saw my first peacock butterfly on New Years Day. We have been taking Murphy to St Mary's Island where he could practise his lead work. We have watched gulls hovering over the moored boats where the water has sparkled in the sunlight and felt the full force of the wind.

March 1994

I drew violets, celandines and bluebells.

Billowing black clouds release their rain as the wind pummels and pounds through the trees, causing the branches to creak and crackle as they become entangled one with another.

The sun re-emerges causing the spiky beech buds to glisten and sparkle. Gulls wheel and dive over the ploughed fields in the valley, their calls echoing against the hillside woodland.

March 1996

The month of March has seen Winter hold its grip on the countryside, with daffodils tightly budded and little hint of leaves on the trees, except for elder leaves bravely bursting forth and the occasional branch of hawthorn struggling to produce its young shoots. Catkins and pussy willow continue to grace the woodland paths, while clumps of snowdrops adorn gardens and secret areas of fields and verges with their pearly daintiness. Frosts, showers of sleet, mists and icy winds, however, have not prevented the birds from singing, and there is busyness amongst them as they prepare for nest building. It feels as though we have been suspended in time, but as we have come to the end of the month, violets and daffodils have burst into flower. Spring has arrived at last.

March 1997

March has entered with cold winds and overcast skies, but daffodils brighten the garden and birds are singing their nest-building songs. With the progression of the month, the temperatures rise bringing large bumblebees to the flowers. Celandines unfurl their golden petals and hawthorn bushes break forth with tender green leaves. Clear evening skies reveal the moon, stars and the comet Hale Bopp displaying its long tail, with the contrasting temperatures occasionally resulting in evening fog and overnight frosts. The sun lights up the greens and golds of weeping willows the delicate branches of which bend towards the fresh brown earth. Skies are a combination of pale blue, patched with dark grey and pale wispy clouds. Cold winds return with some much needed rain, but the earth remains dry and footpaths on the marsh display wide cracks. As the month draws to a close, the daffodils are beginning to fade, but tulips take their place, while the delicate primroses continue to flower in profusion. The last day of the month is beautiful. In the garden, I watch bees and two ladybirds on the heathers, and then a holly blue and a fritillary join them. A heron flies gracefully up river flapping its wings. In the afternoon, we walk on the marsh beneath golden sun and cloudless skies. Gulls float on the water and blackthorn gleams a brilliant white.

March 2007

The sun shone brightly during the last days of the month, but north-easterly winds blew reminding us winter was giving way reluctantly to spring. On the 25th, I walked to Bush via the fields, Mays Wood and North Wood. I found celandines, primroses and white and mauve violets. Bluebell plants and ramsons displayed their fresh green leaves in Mays Wood. The fine weather continued until the 29th when it was cold and grey, but the 31st was bright again and pleasantly warm in the shelter of the garden.

Elizabeth Summers

From the Registers

Baptisms

25 th March	Matthew Suranyi	Charles Drive
15 th April (conditionally)	David Fenton-Scott	Essex Road
15 th April	Havana-May Eiffert	Chatham
15 th April	Lorraine Michelle Eames	High Halstow
15 th April	Ronnie Arthur Eames	High Halstow
15 th April	Kenny John Eames	High Halstow
15 th April	Ellie Rose Eames	Hig
15 th April	Daniel Paul Thomas Buxton	Poplicans Road

Silver Wedding

10th April Keith & Bernadette Blackburn St Michael's

Funeral

20th March Robert Bertram Ranger (84) Station Road Halling

Edwin Hoskyns on the Oxford Movement

(You may have seen in *Link* the Vicar of Snodland's article on reforming the Church and what we can learn from the Victorian period. The Oxford Movement was one of the great C19 reform movements. Hoskyns was one of the great C20 influences on the Church. What can we learn for C21?)

"It [The Oxford Movement] had changed our churches from auditoriums for a preacher into houses of prayer. It had recovered Holy Communion as the centre of the religious life of the church. It had, as a later development, introduced ritualism as a useful means towards the winning of the common people. It had given us open churches, instead of churches that were locked from one Sunday to the next. It had put clergy under discipline. It had recovered the observance of the Church's year. It had introduced Gothic architecture. Without separating Church and State, it had ensured the independence of the Church from the State."

Lent and Easter 2007

Thanks to all those involved in preparing flowers and assisting to lead the worship on Mothering Sunday. Thanks also to everyone who worked with the Church in observing the season of Lent, that time in which we examine our lives in the light of the eternal Resurrection. The Lent Lunches raised around £300 for Christian Aid. We look forward to Christian Aid Week itself to add considerably to this total. (We had also raised £103 for Andrew Daunton-Fear, our CMS link mission partner in the Philippines at our January lunch, which is good but leaves us with a lot to do if we are to exceed our 2006 total of £634.80).

Easter – as always – was wonderful. Maundy Thursday we met for the Supper the Lord gave us in both our churches. The Passion Play helped us to enter into the spirit of Good Friday. At the Easter Vigil it was good to welcome once again Paul Watkin. Now he is training for priesthood, he was able to assist in the conduct of the liturgy, which, I thought, enhanced what we did. (I wish I could persuade more of you to take part in this extremely beautiful and moving act of worship each year.) Both churches were beautifully decorated for Easter Day. Thanks to the cleaners and flower arrangers. We do, however, need more help with church cleaning. At St Michael's for some time the cleaning has been left to only two people. I am sure we should be able to do better than that. Halling Church had twelve chocolate Easter bunnies, one for each apostle. Max ate Judas before the Vigil even started. Over night, the church mice had two more! Thanks also to our ringers, organists and singers and all of you who took part in our celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. Then there was the wonderful Easter Egg, scores of children enjoying looking for eggs and running about in the sunshine. Thanks to those who organised it. You will be pleased to know we made c£270 for our Church.
Roger.



Dickens's Country Protection Society

Thanks to all members who attended the AGM. We should like to have seen more there, but there was a very welcome exchange of views. All the officers were re-elected unopposed and the committee was re-elected en bloc.



Cuxton WI

There were several birthdays this month and birthday cards were given out. The Record of the last meeting was read out as correct. Matters Arising were discussed and the Reps gave their reports. The Craft Group are busy making Cuxton's entry for the Kent County Show competition, Cookery met and enjoyed a war-time recipe meal and the Walking Group had walked round Camer Park and Shorne Country Park on a rather rainy day, but enjoyed it nevertheless. An appeal for Denman College to raise funds for new buildings and refurbishment resulted in us all giving coins in a Steradent tube!! (Smartie tubes are no longer.) We have also been asked to knit woolly hats for sailors and patterns were available. The report of the Annual Council Meeting at Tunbridge Wells in March was read out by our delegate. Flower of the Month was won by Valerie Ryan.

After tea break, we were pleased to welcome Mr Steve Pendleton, who gave us a talk on St Dunstan's Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind. He had been extremely badly injured in a helicopter crash in Northern Ireland while

serving with the Green Jackets, which resulted in his losing a leg and being partially deaf and blind. He was a very amusing person and kept us laughing and I am sure his outlook on life helped him to conquer his disabilities. He spent three months at St Dunstan's where he learned to use a computer and live a normal independent life. He was 22 years old when he had the accident, and has since married and had three children. He teaches Braille. We could have listened a lot longer, and he left us all with a feeling of admiration for his courage and achievements.

Several members went to the District Quiz and Cuxton were very pleased to come third. Five of us went to the Home Economics Day at Ditton and listened to speakers on the subject of Cookham Wood and other Female Prisons, the National Parks, with beautifully photographed slides, followed in the afternoon by an excellent flower arranging demonstration. These were raffled off afterwards. A very enjoyable day and we learnt a lot!

Next meeting Thursday 3rd May Church Hall, Resolutions and Tombola.



Halling WI

With Evelyn in the chair our March meeting got underway. No birthdays this month. Minutes were read and signed, everything was in order. Correspondence was mostly reminders, The Great Milk debate, Outing to Little Bentley in Essex, District Quiz at Snodland and Home Economics day at Ditton. Betty Head will have a coffee morning on 11th April.

Our speaker for the evening was our old friend Mary Clarke. Her subject, something very dear to her heart, was "The Jewel in the W.I.'s Crown. Denman Collage. If you have never been to Denman College, I can assure you it is quite an experience. I have never heard anyone

who has been say that they hadn't enjoyed themselves, as well as learning a little. Denman is self-supporting and although it sounds expensive, the experience is great, you meet like minded women from all over the country. Having known Mary for a very long time I thanked her on behalf of all the members. Before Mary went home she judged our competitions. Flower of the month was won by Evelyn with a branch of yellow Mahonia. The competition, a piece of jewellery, was won by Mary Fennemore with a rather elegant necklace. Evelyn gave out the schedules for the Spring show, to include a cheese muffin recipe, and a knitted square, which will be joined together to make a

blanket, (the knitted squares not the cheese muffins).

On the 21st March , four members went to the Annual Council Meeting at Tunbridge Wells. It was a great meeting. Vibrant Flamenco dancers in the morning, and after lunch we had a Professor of Music who was stone deaf. He was a brilliant speaker, full of fun and we were all amazed at his antics.

Some of us have attended the Home Economics days. The Prison Governor was disappointing. We didn't get what we were expecting, but the speaker from the National

Parks had some wonderful slides of this Green and Pleasant Land. (Yes we still have a little bit left.) After lunch, the Flower Arranger was also a bit disappointing. Evelyn could have done as well, but it was a pleasant day out among friends.

Our speaker for April is another old friend, Ann Carter, her subject, Ceremonial London. This should be a good meeting providing we can all get there as it is rumoured the main road may be closed for the whole of W.I. week. Somebody has got a lot to answer for if the closure goes ahead. Phyllis Chidwick.

The English Bible.

How many people saw the excellent Channel 4 documentary on the English Bible the other night? It really was a fascinating and inspiring story. For a very long period it was against the law in this country to own a Bible written in the English language, to read aloud from it or to teach it to other people. The Anglo-Saxons had translated some of the Bible into their own language – Old English – but, following the Norman Conquest in 1066, everything official or ecclesiastical was in French or Latin. It was one way of keeping the peasants down. Knowledge is power and the knowledge of God is the most liberating power there is. Those churchmen who, for a variety of reasons, wanted to keep power in their own hands were very keen to keep the Bible out of the hands of ordinary people.

As power corrupted the Mediaeval Church, many clergy and laity became rich and ruthless, abandoning the simple Gospel of the Carpenter from Nazareth in favour of worldly status and luxury. One man who spoke out against corruption in high ecclesiastical places and advocated putting the Scriptures in the hands of the laity was John Wiclif born in the Yorkshire village of the same name in 1324. He wanted ordinary people to have the opportunity to participate much more fully in the worship, life and government of the Church. In particular, they were to be able to receive Communion every Sunday instead of merely attending Mass and to be able to read the Bible in their own language. Wiclif and his followers produced English translations of the Bible from the Latin manuscripts in use in the Mediaeval Church. These were copied by hand and passed around by those who wanted to read the Bible for themselves and to pass on the Good News to their neighbours. The people who made up this movement were called Lollards and it is an interesting fact that, although the possession and circulation of the English Bible was illegal and attracted severe penalties, there are apparently more bible manuscripts surviving from the Middle Ages than there are copies of any other works in English. It shows how popular the Bible was and one cannot help wondering whether people would be keener to read the Bible today if it were made illegal to own it. You couldn't treat the Bible with indifference if people were risking immolation at the stake for distributing it.

The Middle Ages ended with the invention of printing, the spread of sound learning and the political and ecclesiastical changes of the fifteenth century. In England, the movement to make the Bible in English available was growing, while in Germany the Reformation had already begun. Martin Luther challenged the corruption of the Mediaeval Church on the basis of what the Bible actually says. Luther soon made the Bible available in German. He also provided German service books and encouraged the laity to participate fully in Holy Communion, recovering a more biblical understanding of the Eucharist as a proclamation of all that Christ had achieved on the Cross and a participation in the Body of Christ by all faithful Christians, an inspiration to them to offer their souls and bodies back to God as a living sacrifice, rather than the later Mediaeval notion of the Mass as a sacrifice offered by the priest on behalf of the people. All this was a great inspiration to men like William Tyndale and Thomas Cranmer, who would become Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry

VIII. A lot of people think that the Church of England reformed and separated from Rome solely because Henry VIII wanted a divorce. This is not true. The movement for reform existed long before the King's divorce and, by and large, Henry opposed the Reformation. What really happened was that Henry's rift with the pope provided the English Reformers with the opportunity to advance their ideas in the national Church.

The New Testament was written in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew and (a little bit of it) Aramaic. A thousand years before the Reformation, St Jerome had translated these books into Latin and that translation (the Vulgate) had become the standard Bible for the Church. Naturally errors crept in as it was copied and re-copied. Hardly anyone in Europe in the Middle Ages understood Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic. Very few people could see the ancient manuscripts. So Wiclif's followers had had to make do. When Tyndale made his translation in the sixteenth century, however, he could do a much better job. He had more reliable manuscripts. He had a good knowledge of the biblical languages. The invention of printing made it possible to produce books in thousands rather than dozens. Tyndale effectively gave us the English Bible as we know it, a reasonably accurate translation into good English which is easy to read out loud and to understand. Initially, he was bitterly opposed by King and government and eventually died a martyr's death, in common with many others who strongly believed that the English should have the Bible in their own language.

Soon after Tyndale's execution, however, Henry changed his mind and the Bible in English was not only permitted but it was made compulsory for every parish Church to acquire a copy and to make it available to people to read. In these years of Reformation, Archbishop Cranmer also gave us the Prayer Book in English and made it possible for the laity to receive Communion both bread and wine every Sunday rather than receiving only the bread and only at Easter. All baptised Christians are full members of the Body of Christ – with all the privileges and all the responsibilities which this status entails.

Over the next century, the Reformation tide ebbed and flowed, with appalling persecutions on both sides. Various editions and translations of the English Bible were produced until the reign of James I. He got a large group of scholars to produce the Authorised Version in 1611 and this has become the accepted version of the Bible throughout the English speaking world. It is very much based on Tyndale's earlier work and it has been so successful because it fulfils the twin criteria of a good translation: it is faithful to the original authors' intentions and it is easy to read in the language into which they have been translated.

The desire that people should be able to read the Bible was a great boost to education and literacy. Because it is so well known and so well written the 1611 Bible has had an enormous impact on the development of the English language. (The programme thought it was second only to Shakespeare in this respect. I think it has had more influence than Shakespeare because it is simpler and more people read it.) Possessing the Bible has set the English people free from authority and free to think, not only about religion, but about other subjects as well. It is no accident that freedom, democracy and scientific and technological advance have been led by the Protestant nations of the world. We are busy squandering our religious heritage, deserting the churches for the shopping malls and abandoning the Bible for computer games. Where such a society will finish up I leave you to contemplate.

Roger.

Board

The following inscription is written on a board recently discovered in a house in Halling and presumably coming from St John's Church.

The Incorporated Society for Building Churches Granted £50 AD 1887 Towards Enlarging and Restoring This Church.
All the seats are for the free use of parishioners according to Law.

The reference to free seats is because in some churches the rich were allowed to rent pews. This helped with church finances which even in the C19 were not adequately covered by ancient endowments, glebe, tithe rents etc. Allowing the rich to rent pews and exclude the poor is not acceptable to Christians, however. Living off endowments is living off the generosity of those long dead and cannot keep pace with inflation! Compulsory tithes are unworkable and unreasonable unless everyone belongs to the established Church. We fall, therefore, back on the generosity of the present generation of Christians and what they give out of their love for God and commitment to His Church!