

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
1 st November All Saints Day	9.30 Family Communion & Blythswood	Revelation 21 vv 1-7 p1249 John 11 vv 32-44 p1078	
Monday 2 nd November All Souls Day	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Romans 5 vv 1-11 p1132 John 5 vv 19-25 p1069	
8 th November 3 rd Sunday before Advent & Remembrance Sunday (DS)	9.30 Holy Communion, Act of Remembrance & Parade	Jonah 3 vv 1-10 p928 Mark 1 vv 14-20 p1002	
15 th November Trinity 24 2 nd Before Advent	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 24	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Daniel 12 vv 1-3 p898 Hebrews 10 vv 11-25 p1208 Mark 13 vv 1-8 p1019	
22 nd November Christ the King	9.30 Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Revelation 1 vv 1-8 p1233 John 18 vv 33-37 p1087	
29 th November Advent Sunday Year C	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 p796 I Thessalonians 3 vv 9-13 p1187 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1056	
6 th December Advent 2	9.30 Family Communion & Gift Service	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 1-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
1 st November All Saints Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Revelation 7 vv 2-12 p1238 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968	
	11.00 Holy Communion, Blythswood & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 25 vv 6-9 p708 Revelation 21 vv 1-7 p1249 John 11 vv 32-44 p1078	
Monday 2 nd November All Souls Day	9.30 am Holy Communion	Romans 5 vv 1-11 p1132 John 5 vv 19-25 p1069	
8 th November 3 rd Sunday before Advent & Remembrance Sunday (DS)	10.50 Holy Communion, Act of Remembrance & Parade	Jonah 3 vv 1-10 p928 Mark 1 vv 14-20 p1002	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 10 v 33 – 11 v9 p696 John 14 vv 23-29 p1082	
15 th November Trinity 24 2 nd Before Advent	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Daniel 12 vv 1-3 p898 Hebrews 10 vv 11-25 p1208 Mark 13 vv 1-8 p1019	
22 nd November Christ the King	11.00 Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Revelation 1 vv 1-8 p1233 John 18 vv 33-37 p1087	
29 th November Advent Sunday Year C	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 p796 I Thessalonians 3 vv 9-13 p1187 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1056	
6 th December Advent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 1-25 p1025	
	11.00 Holy Communion & Gift Service	Malachi 3 vv 1-4 p961 Philippians 1 vv 1-11 p1178 Luke 3 vv 1-6 p1029	
Holy Communion 9.30 Wednesdays Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 Thursdays Halling	
4 th November	Romans 13 vv 8-10 Luke 14 vv 25-33	5 th November	Romans 14 vv 7-12 Luke 15 vv 1-10
11 th November	Titus 3 vv 1-7 Luke 17 vv 11-19	12 th November	Philemon Luke 17 vv 20-25
18 th November	Revelation 4 Luke 19 vv 11-28	19 th November	Revelation 5 vv 1-10 Luke 19 vv 41-44
25 th November	Daniel 5 vv 1-28 Luke 12 vv 12-19	26 th November	Daniel 6 vv 12-28

Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul : and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me : thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. Surely thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.



Blythswood Care

We shall again be collecting shoeboxes for Blythswood to distribute in Eastern Europe and beyond for Christmas. Leaflets will be available in church with suggested contents. These include sweets (not chocolate), small toys, hats, scarves, gloves, toothbrush, toiletries (not talc), underwear, socks, etc. Please bring your boxes to one of the services

on 1st November.



Assisted Dying?

Until 1961, suicide in this country was against the law. Traditionally, suicide was regarded as a particularly serious breach of the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, particularly serious because there might be no opportunity for repentance and because suicide is the ultimate act of despair. Despair is the opposite of faith, of faith in God and of faith in the love of your family and friends. For that last reason, some people have described suicides as selfish. Suicides haven't considered the effect of their actions on those who are left. However, it seems quite pointless that suicide should be illegal. Why should the state interfere in your own personal decisions about your own life? What is the point of punishing someone for trying to kill himself? Such a person may well be mentally ill. He is surely already in great distress. In what way would the threat of punishment help the situation? Someone who is feeling suicidal needs compassion and support, not threats. It was for this reason that the Rev'd Chad Vara founded the Samaritans in 1953.

Decriminalising suicide does not mean that society regards someone taking his own life with indifference. We try to prevent suicide by persuasion, by offering help, even sometimes by heroic deeds. Tragically a man died just recently, climbing out on a ledge to persuade his friend not to jump. The Suicide Act 1961 still made it an offence to encourage or to assist someone to commit suicide. Deeply unhappy or mentally unstable people should be protected from their darkest impulses, not helped to act on them.

All this is relevant to the debate about ending the lives of those who are terminally ill or in great pain or who are so disabled that they feel that their lives are meaningless. As the Law stands, people in any of these conditions (like anyone else) can

perfectly legally take their own lives. Whether or not they should is another matter, as we saw in the first paragraph.

The problem which is seldom out of the headlines these days is what happens, if the patient would like to kill himself, but is physically unable to do so? What if he would have to depend on a relative or a friend, a doctor or a nurse to obtain and administer the fatal dose? The relative, friend, doctor or nurse would be assisting suicide and therefore breaking the Law. A lot of people would say that an individual has the right to decide to die and that it cannot therefore be wrong to help him to kill himself if that is his intention but he is unable to perform the deed for himself. If the person has a really good reason to want to die, it could be argued, this is a very different situation from someone who is temporarily deeply depressed or mentally unstable. There would appear to be a world of difference between assisting someone to carry out a settled intention and coercing somebody in a period of weakness to do something that is not in his best interest.

There are now guidelines that family and friends should not be prosecuted in such cases even though they are still technically breaking the Law. As has been pointed out, this creates an anomaly in that amateurs can help you to kill yourself, but doctors and nurses can't, and they would be the ones who would know how to do it in the gentlest possible way. Also, of course, if people are fit to travel, they can go to Switzerland or some other jurisdiction where what they want is legal. Those who cannot travel are denied that option. So it all seems very unsatisfactory and many people think that the law should be changed. According to opinion polls, 80% country would like to see assisted dying legalised, but parliament disagrees, as do the Church and the bodies officially representing medical professionals.

The 80% tend to work on the principle that your life is your own and nobody else can ultimately tell you what to do with it. Doctors and nurses are public servants and you should be able to demand that they give you the treatment you want, including to end it all. We have come to regard health and fitness almost as ultimate values. We certainly no longer see any virtue in suffering. Many people assume that after death there is simply nothing or that, if there is something, what that something is will in no way depend on how you have lived and died. For many people, the clincher seems to be that you wouldn't allow a dog to suffer, so why wouldn't you put a suffering human being out of his misery? I'll come back to the principles, but the practicalities do also need discussing.

For a start, I think there must be something to the slippery slope argument that, once we allow assisted suicide in a small number of hard cases, it will inevitably become routine and a normal way to die for a growing proportion of the population.

Consider what has happened with regard to medical abortion. The objection to abortion is that it is always wrong to take innocent human life. The embryo, foetus or unborn child is human and a life. He or she is also innocent. However, the case was made that in certain extreme circumstances – the mother had been raped, pregnancy and childbirth would endanger her physical or mental health, the family couldn't cope with another child, the expected child would be badly handicapped – abortion would be a lesser evil than a live birth. So the Abortion Act was passed in 1967 to provide for what many people expected would be a limited number of hard cases. In 2014, there were 184,571 abortions carried out in England and Wales. You may believe that it is a woman's right to choose and that the embryo or foetus is not properly regarded as an unborn child. If you believe that, this figure will not bother you. But if you believe that the Abortion Act was designed to allow the taking of human life as the lesser evil in a few desperately hard cases, that figure must worry you. It should also worry you if you believe that assisted dying will ultimately be limited to a small number of hard cases.

A similar thing has happened with divorce. The wedding service promises lifelong love for better,

for worse and the underlying expectation is that the marriage bond is indissoluble. Over the last few decades, however, divorce has been made much easier, again with the intention of helping desperately unhappy people whose marriages have gone extremely wrong. The effect has been to create a situation in which 42% marriages are expected to fail – nearly half. Again, you may believe that this is a good thing, that almost half the population cannot be expected to make and fulfil a lifelong commitment to someone else, but, if you believe that marriage really is meant to be lifelong and divorce only for a few very hard cases, the figures are alarming and you may ask whether altering the Law to make divorce easier has created a situation in which people no longer try as hard to overcome their difficulties. Likewise assisted suicide?

Moving on from the slippery slope argument, there are other practical issues. You might make a mistake! One young man was saying on the radio lately that he had very much wanted to die when he first became paralysed, but he wasn't able to commit suicide and couldn't ask anybody else to help. Now, although still paralysed, he is glad that he is still alive. When we are young and fit, we can't imagine that we would want to live with disability or pain or even into extreme old age, but it is quite astonishing what courage quite ordinary people find in themselves when they have to face up to illness or handicap. Life is generally preferable to death, especially if you are surrounded by people who love you. There is also a great deal that can be done professionally or through charities to improve the lives of people suffering from the most terrible diseases. As someone who thankfully has always enjoyed good health I wouldn't presume to tell other people never to give up except that I have seen so many ordinary people continuing to experience fulfilling lives even when severely disabled or in great pain. Don't book a trip to Switzerland as soon as you receive a terrifying diagnosis. Better to try to contact people who may be experiencing what you are experiencing and to find out about people and organisations who can help you. There are more reasons to be hopeful than you think.

Some people envisage making a living will stating their wish to die if they ever became incapacitated and unable to communicate. Imagine, however,

lying in a bed unable to speak and changing your mind. You don't want the doctors to end it all for you, but you can't tell them.

Under the recently proposed legislation, the right to die was supposed to depend on doctors assessing that you had less than six months to live. Doctors really don't know, however, how long anybody has got left. In any case, if we accept the pro-assisted dying philosophy, why should someone with a year left of disability and pain be made to suffer on when someone with only six months can be put out of his misery?

It was also proposed that only those over eighteen would be allowed to ask for assisted suicide. But why force a 17 year old or a 16 year old to continue to suffer? What about a severely handicapped baby or small child, hopeless of recovery, but too young to decide for himself? Should parents or doctors or social workers decide for such a child? If you wouldn't allow a dog to suffer, why would you allow a child to suffer?

Then what about medical and other professionals who didn't agree with assisted suicide? Would they be made to act against their consciences? The Abortion Act exempted doctors and nurses who objected to carrying out abortions on grounds of conscience. [It didn't however exempt other medical professionals from assisting. Neither could it deal with a situation in which a hospital might decide it could not afford to employ staff who would not be prepared to carry out abortions.] In 1967, however, the Christian conscience was much more respected than it is today. There is no exemption for registrars or hoteliers who object to gay marriage. Would there be conscience clauses for doctors and nurses who insist that their vocation is to save life, not to end it? Would such conscience clauses survive in an increasingly secular society?

Then there is that question of the impact on family and friends. People in favour of assisted dying often seem to envisage that a family would come to a consensus. In reality, even close, loving families find it hard to discuss issues of disease and death. You may not know what your loved ones really want for you. You may not know what they want from you. One adult child may not be able to bear to see Mum suffer any more.

Another may not be able to bear the thought of losing her. Another may be thinking that Mum no longer has any quality of life and the cost of her nursing home care is coming out of his children's college fund. They might all be one family. Mum might not know what any of them is thinking and none of them might know what Mum really wants, though they might think they know! Mum might think she's a burden when in reality her family can hardly face losing her.

And finally, we come back to the slippery slope. The chronically sick and severely disabled cost a great deal to look after. If it becomes normal to end for them the lives of those whose quality of life doesn't look much, what a temptation to cash-strapped NHS hospitals and Social Services departments to make it easy for seriously ill patients to decide to give up on life.

I said I would come back to principles. It is not correct to believe that our lives are our own and that it is up to us what we do with them. Our lives are a gift from God. We are responsible to Him for what we do with our lives. Other people are God's gift to us, as we are to them. We cannot live fulfilled lives if we are self-centred and selfish. How we live and how we die are not matters for us alone. We have a responsibility to care for other people even when we need care ourselves. Quite often, I see patients in their hospital beds effectively ministering to their visitors, other patients and ward staff. Nobody's life is meaningless or without value. We are promised that we shan't be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. We can always depend on God whatever happens to us. It isn't for us to decide to end our lives, lives which belong to God, lives which impinge on the lives of so many other people.

You wouldn't let a dog suffer. Nevertheless, all life is precious, even animal life. I would never wantonly hurt or destroy life. I do believe that farm animals should be kept humanely and that, when an animal has to be killed, whether in the slaughterhouse or on the hunting field, it should be done with compassion. I would not put down a loving, faithful family pet except as a very last resort.

Human life is, however, qualitatively different from animal life. We are made in God's image and, for that reason, human life has even greater sanctity than other life. You can't argue from what you would do to a sick pet to what you should do to a sick child or to an accident victim or to a senile old lady.

In the past I'm sure that trusted family doctors sometimes administered large doses of painkiller

to dying patients, knowing that the end would be hastened. Soldiers on the battlefield put dying comrades out of their misery. It is legitimate to refuse or to withhold treatment. The border between deliberately killing someone and allowing them to die is sometimes fuzzy, but if we don't maintain the distinction, we finish up denying our essential humanity and that is more to the point than any slippery slope argument. Roger.

Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee, as for this Kingdom in general, so especially for the High Court of Parliament, under our most religious and gracious Queen at this time assembled: That thou wouldest be pleased to direct and prosper all their consultations to the advancement of thy glory, the good of thy Church, the safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and her Dominions; that all things may be so ordered and settled by their endeavours, upon the best and surest foundations, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These and all other necessaries, for them, for us, and thy whole Church, we humbly beg in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ our most blessed Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

All Souls Day

On the 2nd November each year, the Church commemorates the Festival of All Souls. It is a day specially set aside to remember the faithful departed. In the words of the Creed, we believe in *the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body.*

In other words, we believe that we can trust God for those whom we love but see no longer. Death is not the end, but a new beginning, a new phase of existence. Our love for them and their love for us continues within the love of God. The things we have done wrong on earth can be forgiven if we ask God in Christ. Our personality, our soul, is not extinguished by death, but finds its fulfilment in God's love. These are the kinds of thoughts to remember when we think about our loved ones who have died.

In this parish, we remember by name on All Souls Day all those whose names are in the Books of Remembrance, those whose funerals we have arranged in the last year and any other individuals we are asked to commemorate.

The All Souls services this year are on Monday 2nd November at 9.30 am at St John the Baptist's Church Halling and at 7.30 pm at St Michael and All Angels' Church Cuxton. At both services we remember all those whose funerals we have taken in this last year and people from the parish we have heard about. If you or other members of your family or friends would like to be present at either service, you would be most welcome. If there are other names you would like remembered, please give them in writing to the Rector.

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Trinity 14 2015 – Refugees

Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719, Psalm 146, James 2 vv 1-17 p1214, Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 35¹⁰.

What a contrast! The prophet's vision is of a time when God's people will come home rejoicing. Our news media are full of reports of refugees and would be migrants fleeing their homes, where there is war and persecution and terrible economic hardship, undertaking dangerous and dreadful journeys in the hope of making a new beginning here in Europe, where we are so blessed. We enjoy peace and security. Our shops are full of good things. Our children go to school. When we are sick, the NHS looks after us. When we retire, the state provides us with a pension. Yes, we complain; yes, we could have better public services and even more comfortable lives than we enjoy already, but, compared to much of the rest of the world, and especially the places these refugees are coming from, we are already living in paradise. They wouldn't run these appalling risks if they weren't desperate to get away from their homelands and to find somewhere safe to live and to bring up their families.

I haven't got the answers which have eluded our commentators and politicians. Nobody, presumably, would say that we shouldn't provide homes for any of these refugees. Nobody would say that we should take them all. So the question is quite simply, how many should we take? I don't know the answer to that one, but I do know that, in framing the answer, we must be guided by what St James calls in our epistle, the royal law of love. That means compassion for the would be immigrants and it also means proper consideration for the communities they will be coming to. It is too easy to create ghettos in what are already the poorest areas of our towns and cities. It isn't fair to bring more competition for housing, jobs and public services into areas where there is high unemployment, a shortage of affordable housing and already overflowing schools and hospitals. Neither does it make sense if the newly arrived are not made welcome and encouraged to integrate into British society. Government, local government, local communities – all of us in fact - have to plan wisely for the arrival of possibly large numbers of desperate people.

I am sure that our government is also right in providing assistance to the countries which border war torn regions and which are much poorer than we are and are having to deal with far greater numbers of refugees than we are. I am also sure that our government is right to target ruthless people traffickers who exploit the desperation of these people for their own profit, taking large sums of money off them, packing them into lorries or trains or unseaworthy boats and then, sometimes, just abandoning them to horrible deaths.

I am also sure that our government is right to talk about bringing peace and security to the Middle East and Africa and also economic development to end poverty in these places. If only! I fear that that is a very long term project indeed. 3,000 years ago, Moses said that the poor we would always have with us. 2,000 years ago, Jesus said the same. It is still true and the reason is that we do not keep the commandments of God. If we did, there would be no war, no need for people to flee their homes. If we obeyed God's commandments, we would be generous in sharing the good things He has given us and there would be more than enough for everyone. If we obeyed God's commandments, we would love one another and there would be no more violence or dishonesty or infidelity, no more selfishness. What I am describing is the Kingdom of God – the Zion of Isaiah's prophecy. Christians are the ransomed of the LORD, returning singing unto Zion. It is a hard journey. It requires repentance on our part, repentance from all the sins which hold us back from offering our lives wholeheartedly in service to God and to humanity. It means confronting all the evils in society. It means being prepared to give up our own personal comforts for the greater good. It may mean facing up to ridicule and even persecution. It means being bold enough to evangelise, to spread the Good News, to preach the Gospel to the whole of creation. It means taking up our cross to follow Christ and being prepared to suffer with Him. There are deep valleys to trudge through, hills and mountains to climb, crooked paths which are hard to follow, rough ground which it is difficult to cross. Yet the ransomed of the LORD come with singing unto Zion. Elsewhere (chapter 40⁴), Isaiah says *every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.* At 55¹², he says, *For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* It is a hard road, but when we are working for the Kingdom of God, it is God's work that we are doing. It is a road we tread rejoicing. He is our beginning, our companion on the journey and our end. The canonical version of Mark's Gospel ends with the words, *and they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

Our calling as Christians is clear. We are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the leaven which leavens the lump. Our calling is to live God's perfect law of love and to work with Jesus to bring the whole creation into obedience to that holy principle. You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself. You can't have one without the other. As Christians, our calling is both to embody and to share that royal law, that perfect law of love. Amen.

Retirements

Valerie Brown comes to the end of her second term as treasurer at next year's Annual Meeting (probably April 30th at Cuxton, subject to ratification by PCC). We were very grateful to Valerie for taking on again a post she had once relinquished after a number of years of dedicated service. I am sure that everyone will want to express our appreciation for this additional stint.

Shirley and Peter Crundwell have served as leaders of the Social Committee for more years than anyone can remember. We owe them a lot as most of the things we do together, apart from church services, seem to have an input from, even when they are not organised by, the Social Committee. Under Shirley and Peter's guidance, we have had a lot of fun together and raised a substantial amount of money for the Church. They too are retiring at next year's APCM. We also want to thank them.

Sometimes people are reluctant to come forward and offer to take on these jobs, but I hope and pray that some of you will be able and willing. As they say, "the responsibility is ours". I allowed myself to entertain grim thoughts regarding what would happen if nobody takes on these roles. If the PCC, can't find a treasurer, responsibility for our money devolves to the churchwardens, but they already have far more than enough to do. Picture a world in which our income (such as it is) languishes in the safe because no-one pays it into the bank, bills go unpaid, gas and electricity are cut off, insurance lapses and there are no accounts to present at the APCM or to the various regulatory bodies. It would be highly improper and possibly illegal for the Rector to take on the treasurer's job. As for the Social Committee, you really don't want the Church's social life to be arranged by someone who thinks a good night is sitting in a favourite armchair watching DVDs or reading till about 9.00, then a nice cup of cocoa, a walk round the garden with Tommy and early to bed. We need someone with the drive and enthusiasm of Peter and Shirley. It could be you!

Roger.

Forthcoming Attractions

October 24th: 7.30 pm: Quiz for parish funds in church hall.

December 12th: 10.00 Christmas Coffee Morning in Church Hall.

December 16th: 12.00 Christmas Parish Lunch in Church Hall.

December 19th & 20th: Christmas Tree Festival at St John's.

Christmas Coffee Morning

This will take place in Cuxton Church Hall from 10.00 on 12th December. We shall welcome Santa. There will be many of the usual attractions and others beside. Do come along and enjoy this preparation for Christmas.

Christmas Tree Festival

This will take place at St John's Church the weekend of 19th & 20th December. Village clubs and societies and individuals are invited to produce and decorate a Christmas tree. Be as imaginative and creative as you like. Trees may be real or artificial. They need to be set up on Friday 18th. On the Saturday, the exhibition will be open to the public and there will be refreshments on sale. The exhibition will also be open on Sunday with our usual service of Holy Communion at 11.00 and our Christmas Carol Service, Nativity Play and Christingle at 3.00. Please contact Phyllis Chidwick or the Rector if you would like to display a tree. It would be nice if you could leave them in church until twelfth night, but, if you need them for your own domestic festivities, you can have them back after the Carol Service. We hope to have an enjoyable celebration with plenty of things to see and to raise something for church funds by way of visitors' donations.

Carol Singing in the Open Air

All welcome. Outside Cuxton Untied Reformed Church, Bush Road, Cuxton.

6.00 pm, Saturday 19th December.

Refreshments and mulled wine to follow.

The Silverstone Incident 1941

Thank you, all those of you who contributed information about the Silverstone incident. One of you was even able to supply a photograph and two were eyewitnesses to the event. Of course, they were children at the time, which is why we are trying to record people's memories of the people who died in the Second World War while there is still time.

What happened was this. On 4th March 1941, there was an air raid targeting the Shorts Aeroplane works at Rochester. A parachute mine was dropped in the Medway and did not go off. The next day, the tug "Silverstone" was toeing four oil lighters to Aylesford and the mine's parachute became entangled around the propeller. The resultant explosion severely damaged the tug and killed all eight men on board. The oil caught fire and burned for several days, despite the efforts of the Halling fire engine and several vessels which pumped river water onto the flames. The tug's engine, perhaps surprisingly, was salvaged and fitted in another vessel – the "Kara". The tug herself had been built at Hessle in 1935 by R Dunston. After the war, she was renamed "Mercedes" and finally sent for scrap in 1969. There is supposed to have been a service taken at St Michael's by the Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev'd Christopher Chavasse, in memory of the eight who died in the explosion, but so far no-one has come forward with any memories of this. Can anyone help, please?

St Michael's Draw: £10 each to Vivien's family & Mr MacDonald, £5 to Mr Bogg – drawn by Mrs Bogg.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Swatton (6), Mrs Chidwick (9), Mrs Mitchell (67), & Mrs Fuller (78) – drawn by Mrs Mattingley.

Church Finances

Last month's magazine included the rather alarming information that, in order to meet our financial commitments, we need something like £15 - £20 per week from each person on the church electoral roll. Somebody asked me how much weekly contribution we would require if everyone who lives in the parish contributed. These figures are very rough, but we would be solvent if everyone who lives in Cuxton and Halling were to give just under 50p per week – or £25 per year. The Church does exist to serve the whole community. So any donations would be gratefully received. If you can gift aid any donation you make, it is worth 25% more to us. There are gift aid envelopes in church or contact Jack Payne 716368.

Friends of Kent Churches Ride & Stride



Suzanne, Mary and I took part in this event this year and raised £363 of which half will go to FKC and half will come back to our parish. Thank you, Sue and Mary for walking and also all those who sponsored us. Roger.

[I was rather amused to catch up with a party of club cyclists doing the ride in matching lycra and all the gear. There was I – cheap trainers on their last legs, shorts from a store at the lower end of the market, no shirt, no shades and definitely no helmet. I felt quite proud to be a role model for all those ordinary, decent people who just want to do their own thing, minding their own business, without being harassed by the fashion police, health and safety campaigners or anyone else who would like to run our lives for us!]

Hope

Things could get us down. We've had some low attendances in both churches during the Summer. As you will have seen, some people have come to point of retirement from the jobs they have been doing in the Church. The financial situation is dire. If we want to hope, we need to ask ourselves two questions.

- 1) What is God's Will for His Church in Cuxton and Halling?
- 2) What is God's Will for each one of us individually.

The Church exists first and foremost to worship God. Following on from that, we exist to proclaim His Word, to build one another up, to care for one another and to transform the world. Everyone of us has something to give: our prayers, our time, our talents, everything which God has given us.



Cuxton WI

We were interestingly entertained by Ann Hall who talked to us about the history of Belly Dancing. She wore some lovely costumes during her performance and had a collection of multi coloured shawls in fine materials. She told us how the dancing started in the USA in the cowboy saloons and in the small towns that sprung up as many immigrants started their new lives in the country. They brought with them their own customs and ways of dancing and, when state fairs began, all the varying peoples, including the native Indians, began to dance and show off to each other. Their dress at the time was very decorous and even a glimpse of a part of naked body was highly disapproved of by the strict rules of the day. These dances then evolved into a mixture of new and traditional. Eventually people returning to Egypt and Turkey and Eastern European countries took with them the new dance themes and developed these into the sort that we know today. Returning to our business section we all agreed that the produce show that Chris had

organised had been one of our best with so many members bothering to put in an entry. Sheila Ralph, who had kindly judged it for us, was very impressed by the standard of entries and went home full of lemon drizzle cake! The Christmas Tree festival at the church was discussed and several people said that they would help with a tree.

Two interesting days are coming up - the Arts and Craft day at Ditton and the Home Economics day in Snodland. These are for members only but there are often good speakers and it is well worth going. The Drama rep had just organised a visit to see "Wicked" in London and is now thinking about "Beautiful" and "War Horse". All other in house clubs are busy and we now look forward to the winter months with lots to keep us occupied.

Next meeting Thursday November 5th when Wilf Lower will tell us about life behind the scenes in television's golden years. Church Hall. 7.30pm all are welcome.

Memories of Sunday School

We are trying to compile historical notes on Sunday Schools in our parish. If you have any memories to share or photographs or artefacts you might be prepared to lend, please contact Jenny Beaney or the Rector.

No Need For Traffic Lights at Bush Road Junction!

We need to carry out some work on the trees in the Rectory garden for reasons of health and safety and aesthetic amenity. Medway Council tree supremo, Michael Sankus, says he will not allow us to do this unless we plant twenty four (now apparently reduced to twelve) field maples east of that big beech tree near my gate. Having consulted a compass, I see that these would have to be planted actually in Rochester Road. This should slow down the traffic or maybe stop it altogether. So no need for traffic lights. He probably really means, east by north-east, but even so, that would mean planting them on the site of a scheduled ancient monument, where I believe we are not allowed to dig any holes. Watch this space! It appears that these trees will cost the Church (i.e. you and me £756) and Mr Sankus is supposed to be *servicing us!*

Magna Carta Exhibition.

This is based around the Faversham copy of the Great Charter. It is open until 6th December, 10.00-4.00 weekdays and 12.00 to 4.00 on Sundays in the Lady Chapel of Rochester Cathedral. Admission to both the cathedral and exhibition is free.

News from The Academy of Cuxton schools

Dear Friends of our schools,

It has been extremely busy in the Cuxton schools since the beginning of term. Children came back after the Summer holiday feeling refreshed and ready for learning. We have had 57 children join us in Foundation and several other new children throughout both the Infants and Juniors. We wish them and their families a happy and successful time with us.

Already this term the children have been busy - a trip to Kent Life, a visiting author, a walk around the village, learning about their immediate locality and a trip to St Michael's Church. The Year 6 Children stayed in Ashford for 5 days at Grosvenor Hall on a residential. They had a fantastic time working together and learning new skills, trying new activities and for some staying away from home for the first time. We are very proud of them all. They returned tired and a little muddy but confident and excited about their time away. Staff were on their knees!

Staff have also been extremely busy. The school day is relentless in teaching and learning and developing children both socially and emotionally. Care and guidance is high on our agenda. Expectations are high. Classrooms are well resourced, bright and stimulating and the school as a whole is a wonderful environment to be in. We have had many favourable comments over the last couple of weeks from prospective parents.

The newest initiative from the Government are changes to the way we assess the children's progress in school. Therefore we as staff have been on intense training and parents have been invited into school for talks as to how this affects their child. There are also further changes for all schools to the Ofsted framework. Our Year 6 children have just sat the 11 plus test which determines which secondary school they will join. They are currently visiting a wide range of schools within Medway.

Today we have celebrated together Harvest and sung songs and recited poems to parents. Our collection this year will go to the elderly in our village. Children are keen to make a difference to others. We also have a school council that have written to the Parish Council with a petition regarding the traffic and parking conditions on Bush Road and the safety of children coming to and leaving school. We have not been successful so far in a bid for a crossing patrol. We end this term with a Maths week and Environment Day where we dig, weed, plant and tidy our school grounds. If you have any shrubs, plants or bulbs please donate them to us!!

Lastly, our building work..... It has not begun yet! However I am now told by Medway it will begin mid November and the completion date, including the Nursery is July next year!

That is all our news for now! Take care, Sandra Jones, Head teacher.

Tommy's Talking Points



First of all, Master and I want to say thank you. One day we came in to find a lovely new collar on the doorstep, a collar with our telephone number on it. This means that, if I get lost again, I can call home. Well, if I can't, maybe I can get a human being to do it for me. It was a mystery who left this collar for us. Enquiries were made and Master now thinks he knows who the anonymous benefactress was, but he will respect her wish for anonymity. Master was going to get around to buying a collar like this for me, but he kept putting it off. Normally only hunger is sufficient to drive him to the shops and then he only goes to the local shops unless there is some essential item like dog meal out of which we have run and which they don't stock. So we are going to the supermarket in the car today and he is wondering whether to pay the 5p charge for new bags or to endure the delay of disentangling all his old bags at the checkout. When we do go to the supermarket, he gets enough to last for ever and, not only is the boot filled with shopping bags, but so is the back seat. There is barely room for us.

So now I can safely be let off my lead without getting lost! Well, it isn't as simple as that. For one thing, it's dark when we go out first thing in the morning now. He certainly isn't going to let me loose if he can't see me. We do still go into the woods if it isn't too dark. There has been a wonderful moon lately. One night it was called a super moon, because it appeared even bigger than usual because it was at its closest to the earth. That night there was a spectacular eclipse of the moon, but we didn't see it, because he needs his beauty sleep. We go into the woods if it isn't too wet. A few days ago, we went up there when it was too wet and he slipped over and sat down in a muddy puddle. He then had to be careful where he sat until he was able to change his shorts. When it is too dark and wet to go into the woods (one day in the dark he bumped his head on a low branch), we have to walk up the roads. I don't much like traffic, but he tells me that I shall be safe so long as we stay on the path where there is one and keep to the side of the road where there isn't. It's surprising how many cars there are on the road early in the morning with people going to work and school. It's a shame that everyone can't be a rector and do everything from home. There are some pretty gardens to see, which is nice. Some of the best are where tall plants have been allowed to grow somewhat unruly and

you can see the flowers or berries over any hedges or walls. There are also amazing views over the river valley to the North Downs on the other side. Sometimes, at this time of the year, the river is shrouded in mist. Master thinks we should all be very thankful that we live where we do. He likes saying the Benedicite Omnia Opera on mornings like these at Mattins, but who were Ananias, Azarias and Misael? [He says that they are the real names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were friends of the prophet Daniel, cast into a burning fiery furnace for defying a tyrant and mercifully delivered in the presence of one like the Son of God.]

Anyway, as I was saying, I still don't get as much freedom off the lead as I'd like. It's not just the dark and the damp; it's also his nerves. He says that walking is supposed to lower his blood pressure, but that this beneficial effect is entirely negated, indeed reversed, if I run off. So, generally speaking, I'm kept on my lead where I ran off before (Church Field), anywhere there might be other animals or birds, domestic, farm or wild – especially dogs – or where there are joggers or serious walkers. Some I might annoy. Some I might follow. I'm not allowed to do either, which considerably reduces my scope.

Notwithstanding the above, we have had some beautiful and long walks in this wonderful Autumn weather. One Monday (his day off) we walked up through the woods nearly to Dode Church and then back down the lanes, which run down the valley back into Cuxton. Master used to know a man who had been a fireman on the Southern Railway. He used to say that the view from the line between Cuxton and Sole Street was the best on the whole network. [The worst was the line between Canterbury and Whitstable which ran up a steep hill in a long tunnel. This meant plenty of hard stoking in an atmosphere full of smoke. That line was the first passenger railway in the world, but, later on, it was goods only. Then it was closed. Now it is a lovely cycle track (the Crab and Winkle), though watch out for the £1,000 fine if you ignore the sign to dismount where the council says you must!]

The late afternoon light of early autumn is golden and the sun was behind us. Master found himself thinking about the beauty of holiness, of lives lived in accordance not only with the beauty of Nature but also of the need for correspondingly beautiful behaviour. The God Who wrote the laws of science also gave us the Ten Commandments. Master used to own a hen budgerigar and, when he said to her *Pretty Budgie*, he also sometimes had to remind her that *pretty is as pretty does*, because sometimes she fought with her sister in a most unedifying manner! So I'm told! He was also led to meditate on the way the beauties of earth are but a foretaste of the infinitely greater beauties of heaven, when the faithful departed will know God as God knows us. It even moved him to preach a sermon on it and to sing the hymn *For All the Saints* in a new light.

What I really meant to write about this month was rules. For a start, squirrels don't play by the rules. I am fairly confident that I could catch a squirrel on the ground. There must be half a dozen of them in our garden and they eat all Master's walnuts. I asked him what walnuts taste like. He said that fresh, English are much nicer than the dry, foreign ones you buy in the shops, but it's a long time since he's had one. The squirrels evidently enjoy them too, if not too much. Anyway, squirrels don't play fair. In what should be a straight running race, they climb trees and fences and walls and I can't follow them. You should see my puzzled expression when they disappear upwards. Cats are no better. Just as I'm gaining on them, up they go, over the fence – though Master has a funny memory of his old dog, Ben, managing to climb the first few branches of a conifer after a cat which was trying to reach a nest of baby birds. Master thought that Ben was on a mercy mission, but the cat's owner insisted that it was only doing what came naturally. Foxes too disappear into the bushes where I'm not allowed to follow them. Why doesn't everybody play by the rules?

Master, however, says that I don't play by the rules. One of my favourite games is fetch. He throws a stick. I bring it back and drop it. He throws it again. Only sometimes I won't drop it. He can't catch me. So really the game is spoilt when I break the rules, but breaking the rules can be more fun than playing the game. Maybe I've given Master some more sermon material with that thought?

Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.