

April 2009 – forthcoming events						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5
		10am Bumps & Babes	9.30am & 11.15am Toddlers 10.45am Toddler Praise 3.30pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh		7.45am HC 10.30am AAW 4.45pm Deeper 6.30pm W&S
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Power House Day	10am Re:Fresh 12pm Restore 6.30pm Souled Out 7.45pm LEF 8pm Holy Week Reflective Service	8pm Holy Week Reflective Service	7pm Passover @ Christ Church 8pm FLOW	10am United Service @ Castle 2pm Hour at the Cross	3pm BIOS - Young Adults Worship & Social	7.45am HC 9.15am AAW 10.30am HC 6.30pm W&S
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	10am Re:Fresh					7.45am HC 10.30am Thkg 6.30pm HC
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm PCC	9am Re:Fresh 3.30pm Blend 5pm Break:thru 7pm Sublime 8pm Baptism Course	10am Bumps & Babes 8pm MGMG	9.30am & 11.15am Toddlers 3.30pm Blend 8pm ReSource	9am Re:Fresh 8pm Men's Night	8am London Walk 11am Dave 7pm Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am SoW 4pm APCM
27	28	29	30			
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm LST	9am Re:Fresh 12pm Restore 3.30pm Blend 5pm Break:thru 7pm Sublime 8pm Baptism Course	10am Bumps & Babes	9.30am & 11.15am Toddlers 3.30pm Blend	<b>Key to abbreviations</b> AAW = All Age Worship APCM = Annual Parochial Church Meeting HC = Holy Communion LEF = Ladies Evening Fellowship LST = Leadership Support Team MGMG = Music Group Monthly Get-together Thkg = Thanksgiving SoW = Service of the Word W&S = Word and Spirit		

**Plus some key dates for your diary:**

- 3 May Baptism by Immersion & Confirmation
- 11 May Powerhouse
- 17 May HOST Lunch
- 24 May Big Church Day Out
- 27 June Church Picnic

**Homegroups meet on:**

- Tuesday 8pm
  - Wednesday 10am and 8pm
  - Thursday 8pm
  - Friday 9.30am (Woman to Woman)
- If you are interested in joining one of our homegroups, please contact the Church Office

If you wish to contribute an article to Encompass, please contact co-editors Chris Mottershead: csmott@talktalk.net (tel 01732 351815) or Teresa Dumasy: t-dumasy@waitrose.com (tel 01732 352584)

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APRIL 2009

**CRUCIFIED CHRISTIANITY**

In the 8th century, the Venerable Bede, the father of English history, wrote not only of how the English were converted to Christianity, but how the gospel played a major social and civilising role in this country. The opening clause of the Magna Carta in 1215 acknowledged the importance of the Church and its right to propagate its views. Our National Anthem begins with the word 'God'. Our English flag is a cross, the red reminding us of the blood of Christ. Our literature, art, architecture, and legal system are permeated by the Christian faith. Christianity is woven through our country's heritage.

Yet, three recent media stories – Nurse Caroline Petrie was suspended for offering to pray for a patient, primary school receptionist Jennie Cain faced disciplinary action after sending an email asking friends to pray for her daughter, and a dedicated foster mother who had cared for foster children for more than 20 years was struck off its list of approved carers by her local council because her

16-year-old foster daughter decided, of her own volition, to convert from Islam to Christianity – have highlighted what seems to be a growing intolerance to Christianity. The Christian heritage of this nation is under attack as people try to silence Christianity, just as the Jewish and Roman leaders tried to silence Jesus by nailing him to a cross.

I am not suggesting a modern day Crusade, for the model Jesus left us was not one of armed resistance but of sacrificial love. Rather, as we once again celebrate how the grave could not contain Jesus, as we perhaps despair at the treatment meted out to Christian men and women in our modern day culture, are we willing to hold high the cross, that symbol of love, of hope and of salvation, and to stand up for our faith, whatever the cost?

Rev Mark Barker  
Vicar

**HOLY WEEK AT ST STEPHEN'S**

This year there will be a series of reflective events at the church throughout Holy Week.

Re:Flect services on Tuesday and Wednesday 7-8 April at 8pm will include quiet time, readings and prayers. A FLOW meeting will take place on Thursday 9 April on the theme 'to CROSS paths'. There will also be a simple meal followed by Passover service on 9 April at 7pm at Christ Church. On Good Friday there will be an opportunity to meet at the church from 2-3pm for 'One hour at the Cross': a service to reflect on the events of that first Good Friday, including some traditional hymns and times of prayer.

See the April diary overleaf for a schedule of events and details of the Easter services, which will include all-age services on Palm Sunday (10.30am) and Easter Sunday (9:15am), when there will be a 45-minute celebration service on the theme 'seeing and believing'.

There is also a United Service at The Castle at 10.00am on Good Friday, an opportunity on this important Christian festival to worship with Christians from across the churches and to be a witness within the town. Either meet at the Castle at 10.00am or if you want to walk down with others, meet at St Stephen's at 9.30am.



## ANN RAYNER

Ann and her twin brother were born in Oxford in 1938. Aged three, they moved to Worcester following their father's death. Their mother went into service; they were reunited in 1948 in Tonbridge.



Ann attended St Stephen's Sunday school and Campaigners. She became a Christian through Rev Graham Hobson's ministry. She was a Sunday school teacher and a Campaigner leader.

In 1952, a missionary exhibition at church stirred Ann's thoughts as four missionaries spoke to young people.

Ann met her husband Kenelm through church activities and they were married in 1961. Mission interest continued and, in 1970, they flew out to Tanzania to set up an agricultural project for the Morogoro diocese and were warmly welcomed in Gairo village. Ann assisted with office work, training Sunday school teachers and accommodating visitors. Their son, Mark, was born in 1971. In 1975, Kenelm was taken ill and died in Nairobi hospital on Boxing Day.

Ann returned to the UK in 1976, becoming involved in Campaigner leadership again. She was also a dinner lady at Sussex Road School. When Mark left school, Ann worked with the South American Mission Society for nine years.

In 2008, Ann and Mark visited Tanzania where they received a great welcome on arrival in Morogoro. They felt it to be a privilege and honour to attend the retiring bishop's event and to be a part of the enthronement and consecration of the new bishop.

There was much joy meeting Stanley Kobadi and Daimon Maube who worked on the Agricultural Project. Many happy memories were stirred when they visited Gairo and they were invited into their old home.

Ann would like to thank everyone for their prayers and support.

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

### Jesus and David Walliams

We see him in flouncy dresses ('I am a leydee!'), as Sebastian lusting for the Prime Minister, as Andy the gormless carer, as the dour receptionist ('Computer says no') and much else besides. Love or loathe his freak parade of characters, David Walliams has been hard to avoid as one half of the Little Britain duo.

So who is the real David Walliams? On his recent appearance on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs, he revealed that he's racked by despair and a fear of loneliness: 'When I'm with my own thoughts I start to unravel myself and think really dark thoughts, self-destructive thoughts.'

Questioned about swimming the English Channel in 2006 to raise £1 million for charity, he said it stemmed from his feeling that he wasn't a good person. 'It was about putting myself through something that was incredibly painful and difficult and I was definitely looking for some sort of redemption. I have lots of self-loathing and this was something I could be proud about.'

Saved from being a bad person by virtue of a painful and difficult act. If he only knew it, David Walliams was lifting the lid on the Easter story. Yes it does take a painful and difficult act to redeem bad people. But for all the courage and training that David Walliams poured into his quest, it could never produce the redemption he wanted. Self-rescue is impossible. Someone has to do it for us.

The good news is, someone has – which is what we'll be celebrating this Easter. As the Bible tells us, 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

By the end of the programme and his eight songs, mostly about lost love, David Walliams still sounded as condemned as ever. The luxury he chose to take to his fictional desert island was a gun so he could shoot himself if he got too lonely. And given the chance of taking a Bible, he replied, 'I don't want the Bible. I don't like it.'

I think I see another David Walliams character – the man looking for a cure for his inner pain, who keeps on so nearly finding it but tragically never does.

Graham Jones

## ROCHESTER DIOCESAN CONFERENCE, 19-22 JANUARY

### Sheila Perkins reflects on a few days spent at the conference at Butlins, Bognor Regis

The conference takes place every three years. It did not look promising. The forecast was for cold and occasionally wet weather. And no-one from St Stephen's wanted to go.

Initially Mark had suggested that, as my husband John was attending the conference with his church, I might like to go along too. But things quickly escalated. We were then asked as a church to lead the charismatic worship each evening. Only 30 minutes, they said. But there was no equipment, no worship group, nothing. Except space. What an interesting challenge – to pray and watch God sort it out.

In the end a number of St Stephen's members came, and they all had jobs to do. George Gilbert-Smith was on hand to help in the 'talking' sections. Richard Thomas from St Matt's High Brooms was persuaded to come along with his guitar and lead worship. Andrew Vaughan from Christ Church Chislehurst was drafted in to play drums. Norman Nibloe took along a bookstall and kindly allowed us to borrow his assistant James Crockford to play keyboards. Then the Bishop decided he couldn't manage without Martyn Burt, who in turn asked Tim Hatwell to join him (Tim is now vicar at Cudham and Downe, but curate at St Stephen's in the 1980s). Before we knew it we had a worship group. And what a group! It was exciting. People came forward for prayer and to join in the praying (we didn't really have a team for that either). Sometimes 30 minutes stretched to an hour and when we ran out of music and words we had to send them away.

The theme of the conference was 'One People, One Passion, One Purpose: Together'. The teaching was great, was based on Deuteronomy and so interwoven with the gospel message. The Bible studies were led by author Rev Dr Chris Wright. Norman sold out of Chris's books despite having top-up deliveries.

As for the rest of it, Butlins chalets are, well, Butlins chalets. Only they're better than I remember them and we were only two or three to a chalet. The food was plentiful. And it didn't really feel like a prison camp: the eight-foot steel fence was opened at least once a day for those of us mad enough to want to walk or run along the seafront.

The sessions were all good, the programme packed and I'd go again. In fact, I will make sure that I don't miss it.

Sheila Perkins

*contd*

6. Honour and respect one another and each other's ministries, always taking care to speak well of one another.
7. Engage with one another for mutual support, prayer and coordinated planning.
8. Keep the peace within the body of Christ by carefully receiving members who have informed their previous church leaders as to their leaving, seeking to resolve any conflict to the best of their ability.

## A VIEW OF THE HOLY LAND IN 2009



In February, a group of 20 Readers and Pastoral Assistants from the Rochester Diocese went to Israel to see the work of Bible Lands.

Bible Lands support institutions in Israel that serve and train Palestinian Christians in order to strengthen and encourage the Christian presence in the Holy Land, which has dramatically reduced over the last few years.

We were accompanied by Bible Lands' regional representative, Richard Jones, who prepared us for the three aspects of the ten-day trip. These were to see the Ancient Stones, the Living Stones, and the agents working for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews.

Each day was a long, emotional and action packed experience made intensely precious through sharing it as a group. Over the ten days we stayed in three areas, beginning in Nazareth, where we visited the Nazareth School of Nursing and the Galilee region. We also worshipped and shared fellowship with Nazarene Christians, some of whom went back five generations.

The second part of our stay was in Bethlehem, where we visited four schools and a day centre supported by Bible Lands, where gifts kindly donated by members of St Stephen's Church were gratefully received.

We spent our final three days in Jerusalem visiting more organisations supported by Bible Lands, namely the Four Homes of Mercy for the severely disabled and the Helen Keller Centre for the visually impaired.

We also had a stimulating visit to Musalaha (Arabic for reconciliation), who work with young Arabs and Hebrews and encourage the empowerment of Arab women.

Anyone wanting to know more about Bible Lands' work or a trip to the Holy Land, please visit [www.biblelands.org.uk](http://www.biblelands.org.uk)

Kate Anderson

## TONBRIDGE CHURCHES COVENANT OF UNITY

**At the United Service on 25 January, the Tonbridge and area church leaders signed a Covenant of Unity**, committing themselves and the churches to strive to work together for the sake of the Kingdom of God in this town. Here is the text of the Covenant:

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who has acted out of love for the people He Himself made, to bring them back from the darkness of sin, to His Kingdom of light and love. Jesus has called His people to work together for this Kingdom and to live out the values of the Gospel in our actions and through our words.

As leaders in the community of Christians in Tonbridge we have been entrusted as shepherds under the

Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, to care for one another and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We therefore joyfully covenant together that by God's grace we shall strive to:

1. Love God with all our heart, and serve the Church in love.
2. Celebrate and promote the Gospel.
3. Work together in mission whenever possible, not doing on our own what could best be done together.
4. Pray for and encourage each other and our congregations on a regular basis.
5. Encourage our congregations to work together in service and witness, sharing resources as we seek creative ways of presenting the Good News.

9. Follow the example of Christ by giving ourselves wholeheartedly for the growth of His Church and Kingdom in dependence on the Holy Spirit.
10. Remind the people of God that, mindful that Christ will come again, we must together live the Gospel of Christ in our community.

The Kingdom work in Tonbridge is bigger than any of us, but needs every one of us, for where there is unity God's blessing on all His people is great.

Mark Barker