

JULY 2009 – FORTHCOMING EVENTS						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Key to abbreviations HC = Holy Communion Thkg = Thanksgiving SoW = Service of the Word AAW = All Age Worship W&S = Word and Sprit		1	2	3	4	5
		10am Bumps & Babes	9.30am & 1.15am Toddlers 3.30pm Blend 8pm Equipped to Lead		7pm Mix	7.45am HC @ St Eanswythe's 10.30am SoW @ Judd 6.30pm HC @ Christ Church
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PowerHouse Day 4.45pm KIC Cell	12pm Restore 5pm Break:In 7pm Sublime 7.45pm Ladies' Evening Fellowship 8pm Baptism Course	10am Bumps & Babes	9.30am & 11.15am Toddlers 3.30pm Blend 4pm Mix Forum	7pm Music Group Social		7.45am HC @ St Eanswythe's 10.30am HC @ Judd 12.30pm Y&C Leaders BBQ 6.30pm W&S @ Christ Church
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm PCC	12pm Restore 6.30pm Souled Out	10am Bumps & Babes	9.30am & 11.15am Toddlers 3.30pm Blend 5pm Youth Band	Blend Residential		7.45am HC @ St Eanswythe's 10.30am Thkg @ Judd 6.30pm Service @ Christ Church
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm Standing & Finance	12pm Restore				New Wine 7.45am HC @ St Eanswythe's 10.30am AAW @ Judd 6.30pm Service @ Christ Church	
27	28	29	30	31		
New Wine				8pm Men's Night		

Plus some key dates for your diary:

3 August	PowerHouse
11 August	Soul Survivor
28 August	Men's Evening
19 September	Walking Group Exhibition

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)

St Stephen's Church Office: 34d Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge

Church office open 10am-4pm Monday to Friday. Tel/Fax 01732 771977

Address for correspondence: St Stephen's Church, 37 Waterloo Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2SW

Website www.ststephenstonbridge.org Email enquiries@ststephenstonbridge.org

JULY 2009

LOOKING AHEAD

As we prepare for the builders to move in, I have begun to think about the future and what the next five years will hold for us as a church. In spending time thinking about vision, it seems to me that there are many questions to consider, for instance:

- What will we do with all the space we have after Phase 2 is complete?
- Can we and should we expand Re:Fresh?
- What will happen when Jim finishes training in two years time?
- When do we start thinking about Phase 3?
- How do we become more involved in the community of Tonbridge?

...and this is just the start. I have some ideas, but following discussions at PCC and within the Leadership Support Team, it seems right to call the church to pray about the future and to be part of developing vision, and I want to encourage each and every person at St. Stephen's to be involved.

Over the next five months we are going to be out of church and as a result Powerhouse, our monthly prayer day needs to change. We will still meet each first Monday in the Community Centre but for an hour at 9.15am and at 8.00pm only, and each month we will be looking at a different aspect of the wider community and rather than have prayer stations we are going to be spending much more time listening to God and seeking his vision for us. We will carry this on until 8 February when there will be a church meeting to hear and discuss and pray about what has come out of these Powerhouse Days.

I will then take some time to reflect and pray, before a PCC and Leadership Support Team awayday on 20 March

where we will talk about and I hope agree a five to ten year plan. This will be presented to the church at the Annual Meeting on 25 April. Please be praying for this process.

A book will be available on Powerhouse Days for words, pictures, ideas etc to be written down, but if as you spend time at home praying you feel you have a word from God or something you want to share, either email or write it down and give it to me.

Over the last five years we have grown both spiritually and numerically, home groups have multiplied, giving has more than doubled and we have nearly completed three building projects. It has been an exhilarating few years. It is now time to look to the next five years and I am excited about what God may have in store for us. Please join me as we explore this together.

On a totally different subject, I want to thank Teresa who has been editor of Encompass since its start in September 2007. In August she moves away from Tonbridge, and so this is her last edition, but she has been instrumental in obtaining articles, designing and making Encompass an interesting, relevant and pithy monthly newsletter, helping us all to be more informed about the world, the church and the people who we sit next to in the pew. So thank you, Teresa, and bon voyage. If you would be interested in helping edit Encompass in the future do have a word with me.

Mark Barker
Vicar



Encompass needs new editors! We are looking for one or two individuals to edit Encompass on a monthly or two monthly basis (if two individuals) as of August. Please contact Mark Barker or the current co-editors, Chris Mottershead (csmott@talktalk.net or 01732 351815) and Teresa Dumasy (t-dumasy@waitrose.com or 01732 352584) if you are interested. We are always looking for articles too, so if you would like to contribute something to any section of the newsletter, please get in touch.

ALWAYS WONDERED, never asked...

Have you ever, during an unfamiliar church song, been alarmed to hear your lone voice left behind on a high note while everyone else has moved down an octave? Have you ever found yourself nervously hovering over your seat trying to second guess when the rest of the congregation are going to rise and fall so as not to be left marooned?

Fortunately life at St Stephen's is not too bad for the uninitiated. No fumbling in the service book to find the right page, no racing through the whole of the Old Testament to find the reading. It's all on the screens.

Yet if you're a newcomer to the Anglican Church, or even if you're not, there may be terms, references and rituals which puzzle you. Things you've wondered about, but never asked. And the longer you keep coming, the harder it is to confess ignorance.

Still, here goes. For starters, what is the difference between a vicar and a rector? None, so my little bit of homework tells me. But not so in the past and it all came down to money. A clergyman - the rector - assigned to a parish was entitled to a tenth of all its produce (the tithe). Some cunning rectors eyed up the richest parishes, took the job and most of the income, but resided elsewhere and appointed some poor cleric - the vicar - to do the work for a small fee. In 1603 a law put a stop to this and required rectors to reside in their parishes. Vicars and rectors are all paid centrally now so the titles are just a reminder of parish history.

Secondly, in the Apostle's Creed, what does 'catholic' mean: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church'? Wouldn't Henry VIII have words to say about that? More homework. I discover that 'catholic' is an adjective meaning 'universal'. Anglican churches are catholic in the sense that they continue on from the original universal church founded by the apostles.

And my final, more fundamental question. What are the rules, if any, which govern a vicar's (or rector's) shirt colour? We have Mark in bottle green, Sheila in vibrant pink and Jason in subtler pastel shades. Nothing wrong with bottle green, but what, for example, stops Mark going for crimson or khaki? My homework continues.

Teresa Dumasy

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

That splattered-on feeling

Someone in our home group said an interesting thing the other week: 'Whenever I'm convinced that God is going to do a particular thing or lead in a certain direction, he probably isn't.'

There's truth in that. We turn to verses that talk about God granting the desires of our hearts and fulfilling his purpose for us and we expect it to happen. Surely, we think, God wants me to get that job. Surely this longing I've had for so long is about to be fulfilled. Surely this intractable situation is about to change. I just know it!

Then it doesn't happen and we're left bewildered. We feel God has cheated us.

Is that familiar? Speaking for myself, I can sympathise with the writer of Lamentations when he complains that God has barred his way with blocks of stone. Or with Martha protesting that if Jesus hadn't dawdled on his way to Bethany, her brother wouldn't have died. Or with St Teresa who yelled at God in a moment of frustration, 'If this is the way you treat your friends, it's no wonder you have so few of them.'

It's hard to answer without using clichés. But the thing about clichés is that they're usually true. God operates at a deeper level than our own temporary concerns. His ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not necessarily ours. So when hopes and expectations seem to have been squished by a great big boot from heaven, we can either assume that God doesn't care or that something deeper is going on that we can't yet see.

When the psalm writers hit this question, as they often did, their response was to look back in time and recall God's faithfulness. It helps. Although I've sometimes felt splattered on by God (haven't we all?), I can look back ten or 20 years and see that no genuine need has been unmet, that most of the things I feared would happen never did, and that God has never stopped guiding even when I thought he had.

It's all a bit of a puzzle, really. But that's what you'd expect when dealing with someone who knows and sees infinitely more than we do. If Christianity wasn't sometimes baffling, it probably wouldn't be true.

Graham Jones

WHO'S WHO: Fran Brough

I was born in Mayfield in a Roman Catholic family. I always knew that God was around, but a friend introduced me to Jesus when I was 17 and that is when everything became real and God stopped being some distant being and became a real Father.



And as for Jesus, well, he was my best friend!

I went to West Kent College to train as a nursery nurse. My first job was in Hackney at the Mildmay Mission Hospital. I worked on the children's ward which cared for children with physical and mental health problems. After my time there I became a nanny in Hove, but returned to London 18 months later to start a job near Notting Hill. In all my time in London I never really settled into a church, probably because there were too many to choose from and so kept going home to my own church. It was there I got married and went to live in Hove again, where I stayed for 22 years. During that time I discovered I had got Multiple Sclerosis. This came as a shock, particularly as I had two children aged two and four at the time. My marriage broke up and after a lot of prayer with my prayer partners in Hove, I ended up in Tonbridge. I wasn't sure where else to go really.

I moved into my house seven years ago with my two adult children and started to come to St Stephen's on Sunday evenings. I thought it seemed a nice church and I've been here since. Sheila Perkins asked me if I would help her at Bumps and Babes at Christ Church, so Jan Brown, Sheila Perkins and I ran a group there for a while. We later transferred it to Re:refresh at St Stephen's, bringing quite a few of our regular mums with us.

I am on the prayer ministry team and have recently joined the Healing on the Streets team. I am looking forward to see God bless people in many ways.

WOODGATE MINISTRY

Woodgate is a residential care home for the elderly with which St Stephen's has a long-standing connection.

My involvement with Woodgate began some eight years ago when I applied for the voluntary post of Chaplain to the staff at Woodgate, through Revd Bill MacDougall and the then Kent Industrial Mission. It is a post I still occupy and enjoy.

Woodgate is part of the Abbeyfield Society, a Christian organisation which runs homes for the elderly all over the country. St Stephen's has taken Sunday services there for many years and continues to do so, helped by a team of volunteers, none more regular than Helen Spencer, who helps out wherever she can, and Kelvin Webster, who is there most Sundays to ensure that everything is in place beforehand. There is a team of clergy, readers and others from St Stephen's, who form a rota to take these services. This now comprises Sheila Perkins, George Gilbert Smith, Peter Taylor, John Brown and me.

Nowadays the home is for residents with dementia, although this was not always the case. It is gratifying that, despite their predicament, so many of the residents come each Sunday. We regularly get 20 or more attending and a couple of relatives. It is also surprising how well they sing despite their problems and how much of the service they remember from happier times in their early life. It is important that they know that God still cares for them and that they can still relate to his love and sing his praise.

There is one other connection with Woodgate. Two of the staff bring six residents to the regular Tuesday meeting of Restore in the Community Centre, for lunch, entertainment and worship.

Our involvement with Woodgate is just another example of St Stephen's outreach within the community which brings God's love to those who might otherwise be forgotten.



Joe Clark

HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

With great support from the church family, last year we won £1000 to spend on equipment to further the work of the Mix and Blend. We won an award from the 'heart of the community' scheme run by AXA PPP through the local paper, The Courier. The opportunity arose to enter again this year so Matt Rodgers set to work preparing the application.

Proposing to deck the courtyard of the Community Centre, Matt put a lot of energy into exploring costs for the project and securing the best price. He then carefully pieced together an application which expressed the deep desire we share at St Stephen's to serve the community, showing how this new decked area would benefit all users of the Centre, including our youthwork in desperate need of more space.

After reaching the shortlist again this year (and securing us £50 in vouchers!), unfortunately we did not go on to win. We were amongst 21 deserving community projects. Although we did not win, we are utterly grateful for the immense support again showed by the entire church family, buying Couriers, texting and putting up with reminders every Sunday.

The money won last year is still blessing our work and the £50 we won this year is being put to good use too. So huge thanks for the continued support from the entire church and for sharing our passion, and let's give thanks to God for continuing to bless our ministry! Let us continue to work with those whom God has placed around us as we strive to love and serve the 'hearts of our community'.

Gavin Hicks

NO GOATS ALLOWED!

Jesus gives us a painful reawakening in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus tells of people being separated as a shepherd divides sheep from goats. What's the criterion? We realise the crux is whether we have put our faith into practical action - whether we had fed the hungry, befriended the lonely, cared for the sick. I'm sure I'm not the only one for whom that passage is continually convicting - not a guilt trip, but a reality check and call to action.

Surprisingly, Jesus talks about the little things we can do to love and serve people who have little - materially, socially or emotionally. A growing number of people with no food or home have been arriving at church these past few months, but these are just the obvious needs. We might have neighbours who are dreadfully alone, or who can't cope with the shopping or gardening. We only find

out by getting to know them.

Gemma Foster, Senior Pastor at Soul Survivor Watford, told a story at a recent service about a woman who was developing an alcohol problem through going to the pub each night. Thanks to a group of Christians, who cleared up and added a lick of paint at her house, the woman was able to enjoy being at home, so didn't feel the need to go out and drink every night.

Stories like that - and the one about sheep and goats - make me want to bring practical hope to others. If you know of people who we could serve practically to show them the love of Jesus, and you need advice, support, or a team to help, we'd love to hear from you. Also, keep in touch about stories of what you're already doing!

James Crockford
james.crockford@ststephenstonbridge.org
Tel. 01732-771977