

January 2013 – forthcoming events						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Bank Holiday	11am HC	10am LTF	9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm TES
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12.30pm Contemplative prayer 4.45pm Kic cell 7.30pm Central Gathering	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC	9.30am Toddlers 3pm Blend	9am Re:fresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am HC 6.30pm TES
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
4.45pm KiC cell 8pm SRC	9am Refresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC	9.30am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh	10am D&T 10am HotS	7.45am HC 10.30am Bpt 6.30 HC
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
4.45pm KiC cell	9am Refresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC	9.30am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Refresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am Celebration Bring & Share lunch 6.30pm United Service
28	29	30	31			
4.45pm KiC cell 8pm PCC	9am Refresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC	9.30am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	Key to abbreviations : HC = Holy Communion TMS = The Morning Service TES = The Evening Service BB = Bumps & Babes HotS = Healing on the Streets LTF = Ladies Thursday fellowship YE = Younger elements OE = Older Elements D&T = Dads and Toddlers MITM = Men in the Morning		

Homegroups meet on the following days:

- Tuesday 8pm
- Wednesday 10am & 8pm
- Thursday 8pm
- Friday 9.30am (Woman to Woman)

If you would be interested in joining one of our many homegroups, please contact the Church Office.



St Stephen's Church Office: 35 Waterloo Road, Tonbridge
Kent TN9 2SW

Church office open 11am-4pm Monday
10am – 4pm Tuesday to Friday

Tel/Fax 01732 771977 Website www.ststephenstonbridge.org

Email enquiries@ststephenstonbridge.org

ENC COMPASS

THE MONTHLY ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH NEWSLETTER

The Year Ahead

January 2013

In mid-November Peter Brierley spent a day with the PCC looking at the conclusions from the survey we completed as a church earlier in the year. As a result, we began to consider what is the vision and direction of the church.

It is seven years ago since I last launched vision with the church, and although I have spoken about it on various occasions since, I wonder how many people would be able to say what our vision is. Since then we have seen this vision being worked out in our teaching, in our groups and ministries, and maybe especially through our 'Shaping Up' project, as we created a church building 'fit for the 21st century'.

At the heart of this vision, are three questions and our answers:

Who are we?

St. Stephen's is the Church of England parish church in south Tonbridge. We are affiliated to the New Wine Network and strive to be:

- ♦ **Biblical:** we believe that the Bible is inspired by God and is therefore the basis of all our teaching.
- ♦ **Spirit led:** we believe that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and look expectantly for his work in our lives.
- ♦ **Christ-centred:** we believe that we are to live Christ-centred, God honouring, prayerful lives individually and as a church.

Why do we exist?

Our purpose statement: St. Stephen's seeks to be a church that is:-

Powered by the presence of God and shaped for the purposes of God.

These purposes are:

- ♦ To glorify God and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit **Worship**
- ♦ To serve others with the compassion, grace and generosity of Jesus **Ministry**
- ♦ To proclaim the good news of Jesus through words, work, and witness **Evangelism**
- ♦ To build a Christ-centred community that welcomes and accepts all **Fellowship**
- ♦ To grow in faith, love and knowledge of God and in the character of Jesus **Discipleship**

What guides how we do things?

We prayerfully look to put these into practice using the following values:-

- ♦ **Generous:** to reflect God's grace, encouraging each other to use all that God has given us for the benefit of all

- ♦ **Genuine:** to live lives of integrity, open and real with one another
- ♦ **Fun:** to seek to have fun together.
- ♦ **Passionate:** to live whole-hearted lives for God, doing the very best we can so that we bring honour to God.
- ♦ **Relevant:** to help people connect faith with every day life, believing in a God who speaks and acts today.
- ♦ **Inclusive:** to be a church that is outward focused, compassionate, caring and accessible to all.
- ♦ **Empowering:** to help and equip everyone to discover and use their God given gifts, and to teach and raise up servant leadership in every aspect of church life.

This is our vision, but it seems the right time for the PCC to look at this afresh and see whether we are fulfilling it, but more importantly to consider what our direction and focus should be for the next five years.

We are committing much of PCC time over the coming year to vision. In February, the leadership support team (John, Sheila, Matt, Glynis, Graeme and myself) will be going away for a weekend to pray and reflect in more depth so that we have something for PCC to start working on in March and beyond, with an awayday for PCC planned for May. Over this time, we will hopefully be consulting more widely with groups and individuals within the church. If you want to be involved, please watch out for opportunities or drop me an email with any thoughts or reflections, or if you feel God gives you any words, pictures or scriptures, then do pass them on to me.

I believe that within this process, all that we do – our services, groups, ministries etc. – should come under the spotlight of where we believe God is leading us, and it may be that some things come to an end, others change, and perhaps others start up. Our aim though is that by the time we are budget setting for 2014, this process will be led by the new direction and focus that God has laid on our hearts.

For your diaries there will be an open PCC meeting when we are looking specifically at the future of our mission partnerships on Monday 25th February at 7.30pm, and I will also be sharing more about where we have got to and what next at our APCM in April – date to be confirmed. Please come and be part of these, but in the meantime be praying for the PCC and leadership support team as we seek God's guidance and leading in this.

With best wishes for the New Year.

Mark Barker

If God Then What? By Andrew Wilson £8-99

I found this book stimulating and very exciting and would endorse the claim made by one reviewer: 'The best book on apologetics that has come from these shores for a decade. It will bring a smile to your face and present numerous eureka moments. And Andrew does it in a mad conversational style.'

Too often what is labelled 'Christian apologetics' comes across as boring and dogmatic; this doesn't. The subjects covered concern the existence of God and what Christians believe about sin and death, resurrection and life, all handled with a light touch and much good humour, but with intellectual integrity. The conclusion develops the question inherent in the title: if God then what?

If I may quote another reviewer: 'This book will not argue the skeptical reader into the faith, but they will not be able to dismiss Christians as mindless dogmatists afterwards!'

Well worth the read.

Norman Nibloe



Thought for the Month

Why all great art is religious

Above my desk is a postcard I bought after seeing the Van Gogh exhibition at the Royal Academy three years ago. It's a reproduction of *Cypresses* which Van Gogh painted soon after checking into an asylum in France. Of all the scores of paintings in the exhibition, this was the one that drew me back again and again. I couldn't get enough of it.

Why this one cast such a spell, I don't know. Maybe it's the fact that you can see every brushstroke. The picture doesn't pretend to be anything other than paint on canvas—the strokes fast and frenzied but also precisely controlled.

Like all great paintings, *Cypresses* is miraculous in allowing us to look through another person's eyes and so see the world differently. I never saw trees or moon or clouds looking like that, but Van Gogh did. The energy and movement in those cypresses helps me understand Isaiah's description of the trees of the field clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12). These trees are definitely clapping.

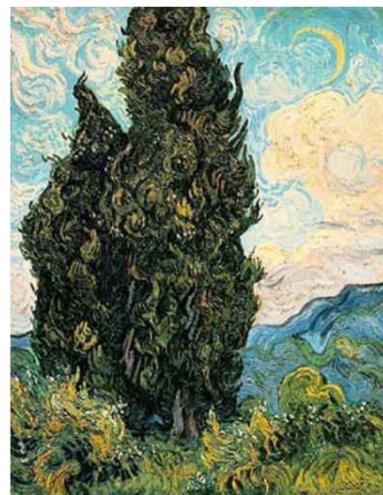
But the best artists don't just look *at* the subject, they look *through* it at something else behind and beyond. A painting

with the power to stop you in your tracks is one that says, 'There's more to the world than what you think you see. There's a reality that's just out of sight, but its traces are everywhere to be seen.'

Of course what art can only hint at is revealed in Jesus in that he is the reality behind the world we can see and touch. Regardless of the painter's religious views or what he or she happens to be painting, I'm sure God uses art to help us look through the surface of things to what lies deeper.

I don't know if Van Gogh in his flaky frame of mind was thinking of Jesus as he painted, but *Cypresses* touches and draws me in a way that can only come from God. And that's what makes it great.

Graham Jones



Improved garden from fund raising at STEPS

STEPS Pre-school has had a great start to its academic year, with staff and children having returned rested from the summer break. Occupancy levels have been really good, and continue to grow steadily.

The children have enjoyed the new layout of the hall and have been happily playing with our new equipment. During the half term break, Daniel and Ruth Lanstone and Claire Meunier, ably assisted by Hannah Lanstone, spent a lot of time working on the pre-school garden, for which we are very grateful. Please do take the time to look at the improved environment that has been created for the children.

This was only possible through the money raised at our fundraising events, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support in this respect, and encourage you to continue joining us for future STEPS events.

The children really enjoyed the build-up to Christmas. They were able to spend some time in the church taking in the decorations and listening to a story from the clergy. They had fun at their Christmas party and, of course, starring in the wonderful Nativity Service. They all looked fantastic and really enjoyed singing all the songs that they had learnt.

Please do feel free to contact me at anytime to find out more about what STEPS does on 01732 363642 or steps@ststephenstonbridge.org

Sylvia Shoebridge STEPS Manager

Balancing family, work and Christian commitment

A Perspective from Nicolas Heslop, council leader at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council



I was first elected when Peter, the oldest of our four children, was nine weeks old. That was nearly fifteen years ago. So, all four have all grown up knowing their father to be a local councillor and most evenings to be out at council meetings. Over the years, the commitment has increased and so have the demands upon my time and theirs as well. The best piece of advice I received after becoming leader at Tonbridge & Malling was simple but so true. It said, 'family first'.

The added challenge for those local councillors who also have full-time jobs is balancing the day-time commitment with the evening meetings and responsibilities in serving the communities they are elected to serve.

So while the advice is true, it is very easy for it to be forgotten within the hectic routine that faces most families. What matters is that when it is time to be with the family, it must come first. Diary and time management is also crucial.

Taking an active role within the local community is part and parcel of my role, and one aspect of this is as a practising Christian. I am the son of a retired clergyman so know all too well what it's like to be brought up in both a vicarage household and a church environment. What I take from that experience is how we can all make a difference to those less fortunate than any of us might be. The role of a councillor has both a strategic decision-making dimension to it but crucially it is also about being available to our own local communities. So, among the rushing about, attending meetings and so forth, it is the times when being able to help someone in need of help makes the day.

Nicolas Heslop

Standing in the cold leaves some feeling warm

Healing on the Streets is entering its fourth year and is a project dedicated to serving the community of Tonbridge through the continuity of being in the same place at the same time every Saturday morning. It offers grace through prayer and a listening ear to any who seek it. I have been inspired by the people we pray for – who are so humble in their need for God's healing power that they are willing and open enough to be prayed for in the middle of the street. What a challenge for us as Christians. When did we last take off our masks and be that vulnerable? I used to be so embarrassed by praying in public but now it feels so freeing! Like dancing in the rain or shouting on the top of a hill. God sets us free when we come to him broken and open. It is in the cracks and imperfection where God's glory is found and it is a privilege and miracle to see that happen on the streets of Tonbridge every single Saturday morning.

Healing on the Streets has broadened my concept of healing to encompass the mind, soul and body. Often the physical healing is only a step towards a much deeper, greater prayer for a person. One example is a woman in a wheel chair who requested prayer for her joints, which were causing her a lot of pain. Through further conversation it arose that there were other emotional needs weighing down on her that were a result of the loss of her legs. She had been an active member of the hospice, a volunteer, and she thrived on supporting others. Now she felt a loss of identity and purpose, had moved house and felt isolated. The opportunity to pray along with some suggestions for further support left her feeling freer and comforted.

The variety of requests received on Saturday mornings emphasises not only the great need and yearning there is in this town for God's Holy Spirit but also the incredible unpredictable power of God's miraculous healing process.

You might think that standing in the cold for two hours is the LAST thing you want to do on a Saturday morning but with hot coffee and the amazing encouragement you receive from people on the streets you can come away with a wonderful warm feeling in your heart.

Healing on the Streets is gradually growing as people in the town begin to not only accept it but also embrace the vision it is aiming to bring about. One Saturday in September we prayed for sixteen people in two hours! The success of anything is judged on its fruits and what has been wonderful with HoTs is the number of people who return, bringing others with them, not only people who come for continued prayer but also those who share their testimonies of healing with us.

We would love to invite everyone from church to have the opportunity to be part of this action of love for Tonbridge. It has increased my confidence in praying and it will refresh your perspective on just how great and how loving our God is.

Do speak to Sheila Perkins and have a look at our website: www.healingonthestreets.co.uk

Miquela Walsh