

## Hope in a broken world

February 2013

A Lent course based on the film, *The Dark Knight Rises*

'Be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil and his schemes.' Ephesians 6: 10-11

It seems so soon after Christmas to be talking of Lent but it's only just round the corner. Lent is a time when we Christians follow our Lord from the wilderness to the Cross, sharing en route the lessons of his temptations, his conflicts and his suffering. As we seek to mirror these things in our own life we think about the role we play in bringing the light of Jesus into a broken world.

This year we will be running a Lent course entitled *Hope in a Broken World*, which uses the film *The Dark Knight Rises* as a way of triggering discussion on issues facing Christians in a fallen world today. The course looks at the nature of evil and of what we might do to combat the schemes of the devil. It invites us to break free from our own past in order to be a follower of Jesus and share in the hope that only he can give.

The film is based in Gotham City, Batman's home town, where on the surface all appears calm. But look beneath the veneer of peace and prosperity and we find seething bitterness at the economic injustice and corruption that underpins the city's social system. Discontent is embodied in the League of Shadows, a terrorist organisation headed up by the evil Bane. Bane has a vision of an alternative society based on violence and destruction and he sets about eliminating the rich and powerful by subjecting them to a show trial and then sending them to an icy death. Only Batman and a small band of imperfect followers stand in his way but even Batman seems to be a prisoner of his past.

The film makes a big deal of Batman's broken body and the suffering he endures for the sake of the city and people he loves. Gotham's ruthless terrorists, greedy elite and self serving public officials occupy a world which some may think is uncomfortably like our own. From time to time we may need new political ideologies, systems of government and stronger law enforcement. These and other human initiatives have their place but ultimately they will fail. We need a perfect human being to lay down his life and defeat darkness once and for all.

For those who want to attend the course, there are two basic alternatives:

**Open to all.** An open course will be held in the main church on 5 consecutive Wednesdays commencing 20 February. The first session will start at 7.30 and will involve simply watching the whole film which lasts 160 mins. The 4 subsequent sessions will run from 8.00 – 9.45 PM. Light refreshments will be served.

**Home groups.** For those who prefer to do the course within their own home group a Leader's Guide will be provided.

The course will have the following format:

- Week 1. *The Dark Knight Rises*. Watch the film straight through
- Week 2. **Broken World**
- Week 3. **Survival** in a broken world
- Week 4. **Freedom** from a broken world.
- Week 5. **Hope** for a new world.

More details of arrangements will be made in News & Notes over the coming weeks.

Hope you can make it and please feel free to bring guests. The course is open to the whole of Tonbridge.

John Perkins

February 2013 – forthcoming events						
Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Key to abbreviations : HC = Holy Communion DT=Dads & Toddlers SOW = Service of the word TES = The Evening Service BB = Bumps & Babes AAS = All Age Service HotS = Healing on the Streets LTF = Ladies Thursday fellowship				1	2	3
				9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS 6.30pm Youth band	7.45am HC 10.30am HC 6.30pm TES
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.45pm KIC Cell 7.30pm Central gathering	12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB	9.45am Toddlers 10am LTF 10am MITM	7.30pm Ladies Evening	10am HotS 10am DT 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 2.30pm Football 6.30pm TES
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12.30pm Contemplative prayer 4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm SRC	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	<b>Ash Wednesday</b> 10am BB 11am HC 8.00pm HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh 8pm Friday @ 8pm	10am HotS 6.30pm Youth band	7.45am HC 10.30am Baptism 6.30pm HC
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
<b>HALF TERM</b>						
	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore	11am HC 7.30pm Lent course	10am MITM	9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm TES
25	26	27	28	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.		
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm PCC & MAG open meeting	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC 8.00pm Lent course	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend			

## What do we think of Central Gatherings?

Central Gatherings began last September. Here's what people are saying:

'The idea of attending in home groups is good. When it comes to talking people feel relaxed with each other.'

'The prayer bit needs more time and not at the end. Maybe it could be in the middle and not so rushed.'

'I've enjoyed the subject material of them all, except one.'

'Heavy's not the word. It was like lead.' (With reference to the talk on predestination.)

'I'm ashamed to say I've never been.'

'Could we have some background music during prayer time?'

'The refreshments are a good idea.'

Comments courtesy of the Spickernell home group.

## The Prayer Space

Have you not heard, have you not seen? For a few years now there has been a prayer space in the chancel under the beautiful stained glass window – a wonderful place to be quiet before God. I wonder how many of you have visited it. If you haven't, let me introduce you to this very special part of our church.

This is a place to come if you feel you need to get away from the busyness of life, to just sit quietly and listen to God. You may need to pray for something specific, or for someone else. Or maybe just to come and browse. Every month there is a different theme and you will find information, leaflets, articles, and ideas for prayer. Sometimes you will find a puzzle, something for you to take home as a reminder, an activity to do as well as ideas of what you can pray for. A Bible and a prayer book are available together with poems, articles and a space to write your own prayers, comments or reflections. There are also candles for anyone to light if they wish to. You can visit whenever the church is open.

Often there are visual aids to the chosen theme, or to prayer generally. One example is the replica of the Olympic Torch during last summer when our focus was on teamwork and perseverance; this was also used in services and for other activities in the church.

This all began when the PCC agreed to setting aside a quiet space within the church for prayer and reflection. Miriam Barker gathered a few people together with the same vision and the prayer space was the result. Now Pauline Challis leads the group which meets each term to pray and choose themes for the next few months. Two people then plan in detail, prepare and set up the prayer space for that month. Group members are Sheila Bell, Karon Kullman, Gill Payne and Jean Wilson. If you would like to join us please talk to Pauline or any of the group.

So you have now heard and it would be good if you could see this special space for yourselves. Please make use of it. We invite you to give feedback and let us know if you would like anything else included.

Jean Wilson

## Someone asked me....

Why do baptismal fonts have eight sides? I didn't know... so I looked it up and thought you might be interested too! First – they don't all have eight sides, but our original font at the back, the portable one at the front and the temporary one for baptism by immersion all do. To find out the reason why we need to look in Revelation, the last book in the Bible. The visions in Revelation come in sevens, a perfect number, and as you get to the seventh each time you find that it expands into the next seven. When this happens for the last (eighth) time we have the vision of the new heaven and the new earth; the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth; the river of life and Jesus second coming (Rev 21,22).

The next time we have a baptism in church you may like to think of the promise of eternal life and the hope we all have of being together with God and the risen Jesus in a place that is full of light and love; a perfect place with no more pain or suffering or tears. It's that promise of hope for the eternal future that parents are promising to point their children towards as they bring them for infant baptism. None of us can guarantee that our children will walk with Christ all the days of their lives but we can promise to keep our eyes on eternity as we bring them up.

Perhaps that last sentence explains why some fonts are round to represent eternal life. You may also find a few three sided fonts made to remind us that we are baptised in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Sheila



One day God was looking down at earth and saw all of the rascally behaviour that was going on... So He called His angels and sent one to earth for a time. When the angel returned, he told God, 'Yes, it is bad on earth; 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are not.'



God thought for a moment and said, 'Maybe I had better send down a second angel to get another opinion.' So God called another angel and sent her to earth for a time.

When the angel returned she went to God and said, 'Yes, it's true. The earth is in decline; 95% are misbehaving, but 5% are being good...'



God was not pleased So He decided to e-mail the 5% who were good, because he wanted to encourage them, and give them a little something to help them keep going.

Do you know what the e-mail said?



Okay, I was just wondering, because I didn't get one either.

## Life in Wales

### News from Jenny Cooper, who has just moved to South Wales

After eight happy years in Tonbridge, at St Stephen's, and working with Jen Rees Larcombe at Beauty From Ashes, God has clearly led me 'to a land of hills and valleys and much rain' (Deuteronomy 11:11); where else but Wales, (Newport, Gwent) to be nearer to my family, and other reasons I have yet to discover!

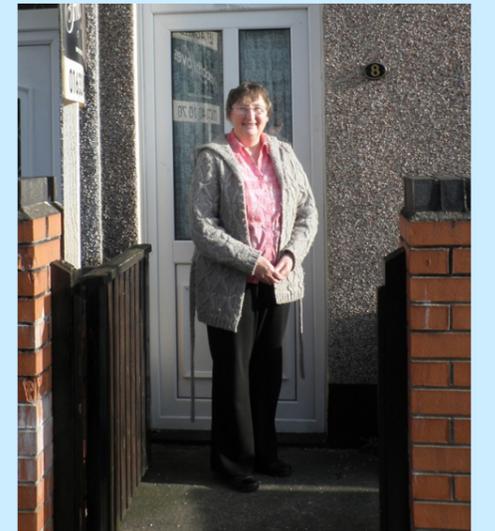
He has provided me with a lovely house to rent, and I have just accepted a job as a personal care assistant, working in the community mostly amongst the elderly and vulnerable people. Close to where I live is a community centre which was recently re-opened after a fire. People there are hoping to start activities of various kinds, including art classes, so I am keen to see if I can get involved.

I am feeling strongly drawn to a very lively church nearby, whose people appear to share my enthusiasm for showing God's love in the community.

I'm scared but excited to be somewhere totally new to me, hardly knowing anyone here, but already it has been great to see God's guiding hand leading me forward, and feel a sense of His presence encouraging me on. My family, including three grandchildren (and another one due in three weeks' time) are so happy that I am living near them, and it's wonderful to have time with them all now.

This is a good opportunity to say a big 'Thank you' to all those of you who have shown me such encouragement while I was at St Stephen's church. It has been a place of safety, acceptance and new growth, which was healing and challenging, and I so appreciated being 'sent out' with prayers and such love.

Jenny Cooper



## Who's Who

Andrea Leonard



Hello everyone, my name is Andrea and I have been coming to St Stephen's since 1990, so 23 years with a slight interregnum in the middle! When I first came I had a wee baby called Jemimah who has now grown up and is happily married to Gavin. Time has flown by, all sorts of things have happened, good things and not so good things, the best thing of course being the arrival of my son Jonathan in 1992.

The period in which I could not attend St Stephens was when I went through a very difficult divorce and eventually when the children and I returned it was like coming home, and a big relief. The youth and children's work was wonderful for Jem and Jo, they had such fun and formed long lasting friendships as well as growing their own relationships with God. I am a member of a wonderfully supportive home group who are expert on socialising and wine tasting, as well as, of course, having deep and profound discussion and Bible study!

I currently work at Hillview School as Inclusion Manager, which can be very challenging and very rewarding. Before I came to Tonbridge I grew up in Guildford, and was brought to Jesus by a New Forest pony called Rickie.

I was a student in Birmingham, worked in the Black Country for the NHS, and then worked in India with the Leprosy Mission. I then worked for a couple of years for the London City Mission, and three years for an inner city church. You might see me occasionally at the front in the prayer ministry team, or alternatively walking our two beagles in the park, or paddling down the Medway in my kayak.

So far my life has taken lots of twists and turns, and been very varied and sometimes quite scary. However, I can say that whatever has happened, in the highs and lows, God has been so very faithful and has never let me down; He is my Shepherd, my Saviour, my Friend and Redeemer. Why on earth would you follow anyone else?

Andrea Leonard