

March 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
		MITM = Men in the morning YE = Younger Elements OE = Older Elements		9am Re:Fresh 7.30pm Steps Pamper evening	10am HotS 1pm Lets start a conversation.	7.45am HC 10.30am HC 6.30pm TES
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 7pm Lets start a conversation 8.00pm Lent course	9.45am Toddlers 10am LTF 10am MITM	9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	Mothering Sunday 7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 2.30pm Football 6.30pm TES
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm SRC	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	9am Re:Fresh 7.30pm Quiz	10am HotS 10am DT 6.30pm Youth band	7.45am HC 10.30am Thanks giving 6.30pm HC
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm Resource	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	11am HC 8.00pm Lent course	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh 8pm Friday @ 8	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	Palm Sunday 7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm TES
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm PCC	9am Re:Fresh 12.00 Restore 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE	10am BB 11am HC	10am MITM 3pm Blend 7pm Maundy Thursday Passover meal	Good Friday 10.30am Passion Play 2pm Hour at the Cross	10am HotS 6.30pm Youth band	Easter Day 7.45am HC 9.15am AAS 10.30am HC 6.30pm TES

The Women's World Day of Prayer continued...

The concluding hymn is always *The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended* which contains the verse:
*As o'er each continent and island,
 The dawn leads on another day,
 The voice of prayer is never silent,
 Nor dies the strain of praise away.*

This year's service is on Friday 1st March, and was written by the women of France. Its theme is: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' The Tonbridge service will be at St Saviour's Church, Dry Hill Park Crescent (Friday 1st March, 10.30am). The speaker will be Carrie Walshaw. All welcome, men and women.

St Stephen's is in need of someone who could represent our church on the townwide committee and be a part of next year's service. It would only involve about two or three meetings a year. Please speak to me if you are interested.

Sheila Bell (01732 352693)



Archbishop says: 'Stop Moaning, Start Doing' March 2013

The Archbishop of York's new book *John Sentamu's Faith Stories* focuses on the stories of 20 ordinary people who are making a positive difference in their local communities. The following is an extract from the launch of the book on the 17th February.

Paying tribute to the contributors the Archbishop said:
 These people..... are simply inspirational people. Through their hard work, devotion and humility they are the people that are helping to bring real joy, hope and transformation in the communities where they live. I have been struck by how many of these individuals have said to me 'I'm not special' or 'I don't deserve this recognition' – but actually this book is about how we need to stop *looking* for heroes in our society and start *being* the heroes in our society. In this age of celebrity, we are always looking for celebrities, but actually ordinary people are the real heroes and celebrities in our communities.

Everyone is special to God, and it's vital that we show God's love in practical ways. If someone needs warmth, you don't tell them to go and buy a coat – you should lend them your own. It's not revolutionary to show loving care to those in need, but it is a decency and humanity which sometimes is lacking in our society.

Some of you may have heard of the book *Love Life Live Lent*. Yesterday it was talking all about the generosity of God, about Jesus turning water into wine and how generous he was – 6 stone jars, 480 litres worth. That was a mighty booze up! The point is Jesus could have given them just what they needed, but instead he gave them a bit more. And today, the readings are from Micah 6 about caring for those in need – *'what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'*

The unhealthy 'me, me, me' culture that grew up in the 1980s, has threatened to poison our relationships and our sense of community ever since. The only way to build a wholesome society with a future, is for people to live differently, unselfishly and with hope in their hearts.

We are living within a community, if we like it or not – and if we want that community to be healthy and vibrant we have to contribute to it. Society and community are not things which happen separately to our daily lives – they are things which are an integral part of our daily life. We need to start living as though that's the case. The way we live affects others.

The person who came up with the original idea for the 'Faith Stories' project was a young man named Matt Woodcock. After giving up his job as a journalist, Matt went on to become a priest. But Matt was a bit of a moaner. He'd always be telling everyone how things were rubbish and should be better than they were. One day, his colleague finally snapped and said: *'Matt. Why don't you stop moaning and start doing something about it?'*

Matt was shocked, but was inspired by the challenge. He hadn't realised that it wasn't enough to simply identify the problem; he had to go one step further and start being part of the solution – especially if no-one else was going to do anything about it.

There *is* such a thing as society, and we all have our small part to play in making things better. We are interdependent beings living in community. If we do not dare to contribute our talents to help the flourishing of the Common Good, who will? Stop moaning and start doing something positive. No matter what age you are, what gender, wherever you live, whatever your job, you can make this country a better place to live.

Dare to be different. Dare to care. Dare to try. And dare to fail.

When we were learning to get up and walk as little babies, most of us did not just wake up and start walking one morning. We tried and failed, and tried and failed – but we were encouraged and encouraged, and eventually we got up and walked.

Most of all, we need to dare to be the fantastic person God created us to be. We are living in a society which constantly says: *'I don't think you are good.'* I want you to be the person God created you to be. Every epic journey starts out with a single step. Put one foot in front of the other and start turning your aspirations into actions.

The stories in this book show how Christians can live out their faith through practical expressions of love. We need to seek out justice, hope for better and aspire for more – not because we are superhuman, but because we are simply 'human'. Endowed with the creativity by the God who created us, ordinary people can do.

Preparations for the Passion Play

March has arrived and Easter is upon us (or at least it will be in a bit). With it comes the arrival of the Tonbridge Passion Play. No doubt some of you will have heard about this production, but for those of you who haven't, it's a play depicting the final week of Jesus' life from Palm Sunday to Easter and it is to be enacted on the castle lawn at 10:30am on Good Friday (Friday the 29th March).

Rehearsals have been going on since January and it certainly promises to be a stellar show, from all sides. Not only that but it will most certainly be a powerful piece. Speaking as someone who has been there in rehearsals there has been a real sense of unity that's not often seen in other productions. There is a real sense of God's purpose, and it's clear that he has big plans for that Good Friday. Something's coming, and I encourage any and all who can make it, to be a part.

Behind the passion, we have an amazing group of supporting staff for costumes, props and stage crew, all led by our wonderful director Helen Longley. And not to mention all of those have been supporting the play prayerfully and financially. The passion play does incur a considerable cost, especially as it's performed in open air outside, so those who can help with their prayer and support are greatly appreciated. Other than that, it's going to be a play for all, Christian or not, old or young, so I just encourage you all to spread the word, tell as many people as you can! It's going to be a great day, and we're going to be telling the greatest story, so don't forget to be there to witness it.

Josh Kennedy



Pictures by Manu Palomeque www.manupalomeque.com courtesy of Kent Life magazine <http://kent.greatbritishlife.co.uk> March Kent Life, on sale 21 February, includes a four-page feature on Tonbridge and the Passion Play

Learning to trust God

'For I know the plans I have for you' declares the Lord 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29 v. 11

At first I was bewildered. Suddenly life had changed drastically. I was someone who had enjoyed tennis twice a week, was physically fit. I never took an aspirin; now I found I was on 30 tablets a day and told to lie still on my back as my spine was in danger of collapsing. Every time a doctor appeared it was bad news – another vertebra has collapsed, you have an embolism, a chest infection. I was angry with God. Why could He, who loved me, let this happen to me? I did not want to talk to Him or read my Bible. After four weeks in hospital I went home, only to find I could not stand or walk.

BUT the past year, although very difficult at times, has exceeded all my expectations. In many respects, I have actually had a wonderful year! I have received such love and prayer support from our church family, our own family and from our friends that it has bowled me over. The NHS have provided excellent care, not to mention the Hospice who were on call 24 hours a day with nurses visiting regularly. I have corresponded and met up with friends I have not seen for years, and each day for weeks there was a card or letter of encouragement and assurance of prayer. I have seen amazing answers to prayer which I would never have experienced as the previous healthy person.

I am now walking again without back pain, which my doctor says is remarkable, and we are living a more normal life, though somewhat quieter. We want to thank you all so much for your constant prayers, and to all those who have visited and so faithfully provided meals for us. We have learnt a lot over the past year, but most of all we have learnt to trust God through the bad times as well as the good. How rich our lives can be in our loving Heavenly Father – yes I am glad to say I am back on track spiritually!
Joy Johnson

Who's Who

Hello. I'm Gill Payne. I have lived in Tonbridge since 1984 and I started coming to St Stephen's about ten years ago. I love its friendliness and vision. I am now retired after 37 years of teaching Physics, first in the Midlands, then Southern India, London and finally Sevenoaks. I realize that the word 'Physics' can be a conversation stopper but for me it produces a sense of wonder and joy! What an amazing God to produce such a universe.

I lived in four different counties as a child and was a student in two others, so I am not sure where I should say I come from! I have family around the country. I enjoy photography, piano playing and attempting to keep fit with 'short' tennis and table tennis. I also do a small amount of volunteering at Burrswood Hospital.

I had a very Christian upbringing and learnt a Bible verse by heart every week in Sunday school from the age of four – something for which I have always been grateful. My faith became real as a young teenager but that was just the

start – life has been a journey through ups and downs and some questioning along the way, but of experiencing the love and grace of God and the wholeness He brings. I can't imagine life without a relationship with Jesus.

In church I help resource the 'Prayer Space' and enjoy finding ways of helping people to pray and meet with God by using pictures and symbols, as well as words. I am also part of the prayer ministry team and find that very encouraging – teachers are used to 'achieving' and getting others to 'achieve', but I know that, in praying, I am just called to be a channel for the love of God to touch another person – it's not about what anyone has to achieve but about who God is and what He wants to do – and what He does is always good.



Lay ministry in the Church of England

Some 12 years ago, as a newly-fledged reader, I walked to St Stephen's church for the evening service feeling like a person approaching the scaffold. The reason was that I was due to preach my first sermon in my home church which not only contained many St Stephen's folk but also a number of fellow newly licensed readers who had trained with me.

The three 'authorised' lay ministries in the Church of England are reader, pastoral assistant and evangelist. Apart from myself, Graham Jones and Sheila Bell are readers, while Edith Wills is a pastoral assistant and Stephen Barbor is an evangelist.

Rowan Williams, when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote as follows about these lay ministries:-

The letters of St Paul often tell us about all the gifts the Church needs in order for it to do its work and to be itself. Everyone has something Jesus Christ has given them which has to be shared with the whole community. Among these gifts is a cluster of things that all have to do with taking some kind of responsibility for the Church's growth and the Church's direction – the apostle, the prophet, the teacher, and so on. And while all sorts of different people may exercise these gifts in various ways, the Church has always organized itself on the basis that it needs some visible focus for this kind of ministry. It has worked on the assumption that the task of taking responsibility and nurturing the vision of the Church needs to be recognizable both in and beyond this or that local community, and so it has given some people the job of doing this in a very public and official way.

Readers are licensed by the Bishop of the relevant cathedral (in my case, Rochester) and are authorised to serve in their home church. Here is some of the wording of my own licence:-

'And we do authorise you to read morning and evening prayer, take part in the service of Holy Communion and to assist at the administration, take the Sacrament to the sick, preach the Word of God...conduct informal services and family services.. Also permitted to conduct funerals.'

What do I actually do at St Stephen's? I take funerals as needed and enjoy this ministry in the sense that it is a privilege to stand by and minister to folk in their time of loss and distress. I do some preaching, mainly at the 7.45am Sunday Communion service and the 11am Wednesday Communion service. I also act as chaplain to Restore (the St Stephen's senior citizens lunch club meeting on Tuesdays in the Waterloo Road building). We have a lot of fun at Restore and it is a privilege to serve older folk (and I'm no spring chicken!) in this way. From time to time, as a reader, I have preached at churches in the diocese who are in an interregnum (i.e. they have no vicar pending a new appointment) and it is rewarding to serve in this way. I also occasionally take services at St Eanswythe's in Priory Road.

One interesting task I was given (by Mark) was to draft an Agape Meal Service which has been used by some church Home Groups and the Women's Fellowship whereby our love of and fellowship with God and each other is expressed in the context of sharing bread and wine. It is a privilege to serve as a reader in the church; to support groups and individuals and to help in church services in the fulfilment of God's call to me.

Rodney Webber

The Women's World Day of Prayer

The Women's World Day of Prayer is a worldwide, ecumenical movement of informed prayer and practical action. Its origins date back to the 19th century, when Christian women in the USA and Canada initiated a variety of activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and abroad.

The service, always on the first Friday in March, is written by a different country each year. That country becomes the focus of the world's prayer on the day itself as we learn of their special prayer needs and everyday experiences. The first service of the day will take place on the island of Samoa and the last will be on American Samoa. From the time that dawn breaks over the island of Samoa until the last service, the world is circled in prayer by this movement, for 36 hours.

The symbol of the Women's World Day of Prayer shows four arrows converging from four points of the compass, four figures kneeling in prayer, the Celtic cross and a circle representing the world and unity through all our diversity.

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