

## February 2014 – forthcoming events

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Key to abbreviations : HC = Holy Communion MITM = Men in the morning DT=Dads & Toddlers SOW = Service of the word TES = The Evening Service AAS = All Age Service					HotS = Healing on the Street YE = Younger Elements OE = Older Elements LTF= Ladies Thursday Fellowship BB = Bumps & Babes SRC = Standing & Resource	
					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
					10am HotS 6.30pm Youth band	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm TES
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
12.30pm Contemplative prayer 4.45pm KIC Cell 7.30pm Central Gathering	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am LTF 10am MITM 3 pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm HC
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh 7.30pm Valentines Dance	10am D&T 10am HotS 6.30pm Youth band	7.45am HC 10.30am HC 6.30pm TES
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
	9am Re:Fresh	11am HC	10am MITM	9am Re:Fresh	10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am Bpt 6.30pm TES
<b>HALF TERM</b>						
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>		
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh		

Homegroups meet on the following days:

- Tuesday 8pm
- Wednesday 10am, 1.30 & 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.



# ENC COMPASS

THE MONTHLY ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH NEWSLETTER

## 'Episcopally led and synodically governed' February 2014

The Church of England is often described as 'episcopally led and synodically governed'. The canons or laws of the Church of England state that the diocesan (episcopal) bishop is 'the chief pastor of all that are within his diocese, laity and clergy, and their father in God'. Bishops have a particular responsibility for apostolic teaching and doctrinal orthodoxy and are to be themselves 'an example of righteous and godly living'. They also have responsibility for worship, with the right 'of conducting, ordering, controlling and authorising all services'. They are ministers of unity, charged 'to set forward and maintain quietness, love and peace among all men' and 'to promote peace and reconciliation in the Church and in the world and... to strive for the visible unity of Christ's Church'.

Both the 1662 Ordinal and the Common Worship Ordination Services understand bishops to be the successors of the Apostles as pastors of Christ's flock. As such, each bishop is not only a guardian of the apostolic faith but also a leader in mission (an apostle being one who is sent out), charged with 'proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission.'

The dioceses of the Church of England are accordingly governed by their bishops. However, bishops have never enjoyed absolute power. They are subject to the laws of the Church of England, and since 1969 they have been required to govern their dioceses synodically – that is to consult the representatives of the clergy and laity in the diocesan synod on matters of policy. The Synodical Government Measure 1969 stipulates that 'It shall be the duty of the bishop to consult with the diocesan synod on matters of general concern and importance to the diocese'.

Democratic election is the means by which the representatives of the clergy and laity in the diocesan synod are chosen, but that does not mean that the Church is a democracy. The role of a diocesan synod is primarily *advisory* and *consultative*, but it is not an executive body with powers of 'government'.

The General Synod's legislative role contrasts with the mainly advisory and consultative role of diocesan synods, but it is a parliament, not a government or a body with executive powers. It legislates by measure and canon. Measures need approval by both Houses of Parliament and, when they receive the royal assent, become part of the statute law of the realm. Canons do not require parliamentary approval.

But synodical government starts more locally, firstly within the local parish setting with the PCC or Parochial Church Council. This is made up of clergy and authorised lay ministers (eg Readers), and members of the church elected to represent the people. The general functions of the PCC are:

- For the minister and the PCC to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish;
- to promote in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
- to consider and discuss matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest;
- to give advice to the diocesan synod and the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council;

The PCC also consists of members of the church who have been elected to serve on the Deanery Synod, with clergy and representatives from other local churches. The Tonbridge Deanery consists of Anglican Churches in Tonbridge and Edenbridge, and the villages in between, and is led by the rural dean – presently Mark Brown, the vicar of St Peter & St Paul Tonbridge. The deanery synod acts as an intermediary between the PCCs of each parish in the deanery and the diocesan synod. Its lay members also elect the deanery's lay representatives to the diocesan synod and its diocese's members of the House of Laity in the General Synod.

Over the coming few years there are going to be some major matters being raised for discussion within the synodical structure of the Church of England, and some decisions which may either threaten or fracture both the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. It was my response to the initial decision on women bishops that made me realise I cannot just sit back and moan about what happened, but that I needed to be involved. This led me to stand and be elected on to General Synod.

I am due to attend my second General Synod from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> February at Church House in London. There are obviously some bits of a synod that are not that interesting, looking at parts of canon law in fine detail, for example (unless you are a person who is delighted with detail), but there were some parts of my first synod that I really enjoyed and I found the process fascinating. This coming synod, on the Tuesday we will be looking again at the proposal for women as bishops, but on the other days will be talking about the changes to the Girl Guides' Promise, the wearing of clergy robes, new safeguarding legislation, gender-based violence...

*continued inside*



New Wine Men's Day

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There is a visitor's gallery at Church House, and if anyone wanted to come and watch the General Synod in action, then I would be delighted to welcome you and show you round – do let me know.

In April 2014 at APCMs in each and every parish, lay representatives for PCC and for deanery synods will be elected. The deanery synod representatives in turn will elect the lay membership of General Synod in 2015. Can I encourage you to consider standing for these forthcoming PCC and lay deanery positions and perhaps even consider standing for the 2015 General Synod elections.

Synods may not have the obvious ministry appeal of running Alpha or praying for healing on the streets, but synodical decisions do have the potential to build a church and culture in which these things are both supported and expected to be part of normal church life. It is also through involvement in the synodical structure that we can champion evangelism, advocate good strategy, contend for the gospel, and influence the life of the wider church. In other words, there is much to be gained by full engagement with the synodical system.

If, however, standing for deanery, diocesan or General Synod is not for you, I nonetheless ask for your prayers for those for whom it is appropriate to do so.

Mark Barker

## Is there a course for you?

Tonbridge & Area Churches Together (TACT) is made up of different churches from Tonbridge and surrounding villages. If you are planning to get married, are already married, have children or maybe have problems in your relationship then you may find one of the courses that TACT is running very helpful.

The courses offered are non-judgmental and you will not be asked to share anything publicly unless you want to. The aim is to help individuals and couples during some key moments in their lives in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Marriage by Design (12<sup>th</sup> February and 15<sup>th</sup> February) is for couples who are getting married; the idea is to focus on your relationship and to think about what you want your marriage to look like. This will be held at Tonbridge Baptist Church.

Parenting Children (years 5-11) begins on 6<sup>th</sup> May at St Stephen's. This aims to strengthen parenting skills and manage problem behaviours by looking at ways of discipline in an effective yet loving manner.

Restored Lives (also starting in May at St Peter and St Paul) is for those struggling with relationship breakdown, either divorced or separated, now or in the past. There is practical teaching on how to move on as well as the opportunity to discuss the challenges that arise at the end of a relationship.

In the autumn term courses are planned for married couples (at St Stephen's) and parenting teenagers (at Tonbridge Baptist Church).

The chair of TACT is Mark Barker. Leaflets are available at the back of the church.



## New Wine Men's Day

The sound of 500 men singing is something quite stirring. When they are singing in praise to God it is something quite awesome. And so it was on one Saturday in January when nearly 500 men (including 20 of us from St Stephen's) joined together at the New Wine Men's day conference at St Barnabas church in Kensington, London.

The day began with worship – amazing worship. Worship where you felt the roof was about to be lifted off from the sound of men singing in unison & praise. There were talks throughout the day on **Courage, Friendship, Striking Whilst the Iron is Hot and No Guts, No glory** from eminent speakers such as Major General Tim Cross (retired British Army), Ken Costa (senior city investment banker) and Carl Beech (Head of CVM {Christian Vision for Men}). During the afternoon there was a choice of seminars with Mark Melluish (St Paul's, Ealing) or James Roberts (Connect Church, Chorleywood). A number of us ventured into the crypt for the session with James following a very impromptu and hilarious 30-second introduction! He spoke

on friendship and the need for us to have loyal and committed mates (using the story of Jonathan & David from 1 Samuel).

Carl Beech had us crying with laughter with his tales of Sven the elk (you had to be there!) but drove the point home that we need to take every opportunity given to us to share the good news of Jesus. Simply saying 'I can't be bothered today' simply isn't good enough – we have no idea which piece of the jigsaw we might be in someone's journey towards faith.

There was also time for prayer - for us each to respond to how God is calling us in our individual lives and for us to let go of some of those things that are preventing us from getting closer to Him.

All in all, one amazing day. Graeme Warwood

Please note – all talks from the day are available at [www.new-wine.org](http://www.new-wine.org)

## An Atheist's view on life

I was recently sent the following by Clive Mansell, the Archdeacon of Tonbridge, which I believe has been doing the rounds on the internet recently. Read down 'An Atheist's View on Life' line by line and then, starting at the bottom, read back upwards line by line for 'A Christian's View on Life'. To make it easier for those who struggle to read upwards (!), I have printed out the latter below as well.

Some may want to quibble over details of belief or non-belief expressed here, but the juxtaposition of views prompts cause for thought.

Mark Barker

### An Atheist's View On Life

**I will live my life according to these beliefs**  
**God does not exist**  
**It is just foolish to think**  
**That there is a God with a cosmic plan**  
**That an all-powerful God brings purpose to the pain and suffering in the world**  
**Is a comforting thought, however**  
**It**  
**Is only wishful thinking**  
**People can do as they please without eternal consequences**  
**The idea that**  
**I am deserving of Hell**  
**Because of sin**  
**Is a lie meant to make me a slave to those in power**  
**The more you have the happier you will be**  
**Our existence has no grand meaning or purpose**  
**In a world with no God**

**There is freedom to be who I want to be**  
**But with God**  
**Everything is fine**  
**It is ridiculous to think**  
**I am lost and in need of saving**

### Versus A Christian's View On Life

(Now...read from bottom to top to see a different view.)  
**I am lost and in need of saving**  
**It is ridiculous to think**  
**Everything is fine**  
**But with God**  
**There is freedom to be who I want to be**  
**In a world with no God**  
**Our existence has no grand meaning or purpose**  
**The more you have the happier you will be**  
**Is a lie meant to make me a slave to those in power**  
**Because of sin**  
**I am deserving of Hell**  
**The idea that**  
**People can do as they please without eternal consequences**  
**Is only wishful thinking**  
**It**  
**Is a comforting thought, however**  
**That an all-powerful God brings purpose to the pain and suffering in the world**  
**That there is a God with a cosmic plan**  
**It is just foolish to think**  
**God does not exist**  
**I will live my life according to these beliefs**

## Tonbridge Russian School



## CORNER

When Tonbridge Russian School started in September 2008 it was made up of just a few families with children who'd graduated from Teremok (the preschool group for Russian speaking mums in Tonbridge featured in *Encompass* last month). Now we've grown and currently teach approximately 40 children aged from 3 to 16. Sessions take place every Saturday morning (in term time) at Christ Church, Tonbridge. We are very grateful to Christ Church for its support, and take part in the church's main events, such as the harvest festival service, by introducing Russian harvest traditions and giving our own donations. This year we decorated shoe boxes for donations to give to children who are less fortunate than ourselves. For the Christmas service our mums prepared a performance of traditional Russian songs.

All our teachers are mothers whose children attend the school. This makes us all feel part of a large family with our friends at the church, and creates a happy, positive atmosphere. The aim of the school is to share the Russian language and culture, not only with our children but also with anyone who is interested in learning Russian (both adults and children), as we believe people with a wider understanding of the world and multilingual individuals are valuable members of any society. It's a great opportunity for us to introduce Russian culture to the local community and to celebrate our heritage. We've had great success in teaching children for the last 5 years. Our older children are successfully sitting Russian GCSE and A-level exams. The results are all As and A\*s! We are very proud. For more information contact Svetlana Baker: [svetlana@russian-school.org.uk](mailto:svetlana@russian-school.org.uk)