

**March 2014 – forthcoming events**

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<b>31</b>	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 YB = Youth Band	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
4.45pm KIC Cell 8pm APCM					10am HotS 6.30pm YB	7.45am HC 10.30am AAS 6.30pm TES
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE Alpha 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC 7.30pm Central Gathering with Ash Wednesday service	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>
12.30pm Contemplative prayer 4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE Alpha 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend 8pm Man Time	9am Re:Fresh 7.30pm Steps Pamper Evening	9am Home Group Leaders 10am HotS 6.30pm YB	7.45am HC 10.30am Bpt 12.30 Newcomers lunch 6.30pm TES
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE Alpha 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh 7pm Ladies evening	9am PCC awayday 10am D&T 10am HotS 7pm The Mix	7.45am HC 10.30am HC Baptism families tea 6.30pm TES
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
4.45pm KIC Cell	9am Re:Fresh 3pm Blend 5pm YE 7pm OE Alpha 7.30pm Alpha	10am B&B 11am HC	9.45am Toddlers 10am MITM 3pm Blend	9am Re:Fresh 7.30pm Michelle Guinness evening	10am HotS	7.45am HC 10.30am SOW 6.30pm TES



**A letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York**

Following their meeting on February 13th 2014 the House of Bishops of the Church of England has issued a statement of pastoral guidance on same sex marriage. The statement comes as an appendix to a pastoral letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York addressed to the clergy and people of the Church of England, and the text of the letter is as follows:

**To the Clergy and People of the Church of England**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ  
We write as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ who are called to love one another as Christ has loved us. Our vocation as disciples of Christ in God's world is to hold out the offer of life in all its fullness. God delights always to give good gifts to his children.  
The gospel of the love of God made known to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest of these gifts. The call of the gospel demands that we all listen, speak and act with integrity, self discipline and grace, acknowledging that as yet our knowledge and understanding are partial.  
As members of the Body of Christ we are aware that there will be a range of responses across the Church of England to the introduction of same sex marriage. As bishops we have reflected and prayed together about these developments. As our statement of 27th January indicated, we are not all in agreement about every aspect of the Church's response. However, we are all in agreement that the Christian understanding and doctrine of marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman remains unchanged.  
We are conscious that within both Church and society there are men and women seeking to live faithfully in covenanted same sex relationships. As we said in our response to the consultation prior to the same sex marriage

legislation, 'the proposition that same sex relationships can embody crucial social virtues is not in dispute. Same sex relationships often embody genuine mutuality and fidelity...., two of the virtues which the Book of Common Prayer uses to commend marriage. The Church of England seeks to see those virtues maximised in society'.  
We have already committed ourselves to a process of facilitated conversations across the whole Church of England in the light of the Pilling Report. These conversations will involve ecumenical and interfaith partners and particularly the wider Anglican Communion to whom we rejoice to be bound by our inheritance of faith and mutual affection. They will include profound reflection on the meaning, interpretation and application of scripture to which we all seek to be faithful. They will involve particular attention to the lived experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. We believe that Christian understandings of sexuality have a vital contribution to make in our society's conversation about human flourishing. The introduction of same sex marriage in our country is a new reality and has consequences for the life and discipline of the Church of England. We seek to model a distinctive and generous witness to Jesus Christ in our pastoral guidance to the Church at this time which is set out in the Appendix to this letter – see <http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/02/house-of-bishops-pastoral-guidance-on-same-sex-marriage.aspx>  
The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for all people in all times and situations. We continue to seek God's grace and the prayers of the whole Church as we seek to proclaim that faith afresh in this generation.

+ Justin Cantuar + Sentamu Eboracensis

**Jesus Found!**

**Along with some of his disciples**

Some of you may remember me standing up in St. Stephen's Church some weeks ago to say I was looking for Jesus. Praise the Lord, he's been found! The passion play team and cast are delighted that Callum Helliwell, student at Hillview School, has taken on the role. He has already endeared himself to us with his lively sense of humour, sensitive acting skills and superb singing. He began acting at the age of eight. At 15 he gained a place at the National Youth Theatre in London and gave a live performance at the Southbank, in front of hundreds of people. He is currently studying Drama, Musical Theatre, English Literature and Language and Law.

He brings four disciples with him, also students at Hillview: Dylan Stallard, playing the part of Judas, James Love as Peter, Chris Arman-Addey as Andrew and Alex Styles as Philip. Ben Sales, well known musician at St. Stephen's, is the disciple John. We also have Alex Hayes from Christ Church, Tunbridge Wells as Thomas and Kristele Sadler, who worships at Hillsong, is taking the part of Mary Magdalene. It is a real privilege to rehearse with them. Their energy and enthusiasm are infectious!  
We're still looking for more disciples, temple guards and costumed crowd. Do come along to the Baptist Church on Sunday and take part in this exciting kingdom project. We'd love to see you.

Helen Longley  
Pictures on back page

Callum Helliwell who will play Jesus



Mary Magdalene and Disciples

## West Kent YMCA

West Kent YMCA aims to help disadvantaged young people gain a wider perspective on their abilities and opportunities in order to build a better future.

In Tunbridge Wells, Ryder House offers a home and support to 37 otherwise homeless young people (16-24 year-olds). Younger teenagers get help from the Horizon Project in remaining at or returning to school, by part-time or full-time vocational training, while U-turn offers 19-24 year-olds courses in a variety of skills, helping some to get jobs even before they complete the course.

The three YMCA warehouses not only generate valuable income but also enable volunteers to train as retail assistants. Vehicle 4 Change, our detached youth project, engages isolated young people, encouraging them to begin or participate in activities or interests, and equipping them to set goals and make a difference in their lives and in their communities. As a result, four 'Juice Bar' youth clubs, started by young people, now meet once a week in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

In 2013, seven apprentices were trained in fund-raising or youth work. One apprentice became the Young Volunteer of the Year in Tunbridge Wells. Another highlight was gaining the Employer of the Year Award from the London Learning Consortium.

Plans for 2014 include developing ten move-on flats in Tunbridge Wells for previously homeless young people, and forging closer links with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. But we face the possible loss of our Vehicle 4 Change as lottery funding ends, and attempts to obtain alternative funding have been unsuccessful.

Please consider becoming a friend, doing a sponsored activity, volunteering to assist in a warehouse or in one of our projects, making a donation, or using a skill (e.g. in construction, engineering or marketing) as an adviser on our Board. Or visit us as an individual or group; we encourage home groups to visit, get acquainted with what we do, and become one of our champions who signposts others towards us. Do visit our website [www.westkentymca.org.uk](http://www.westkentymca.org.uk) and don't forget to recycle furniture, white goods and clothing by donating to or buying from one of our warehouses.

To discuss becoming a friend of West Kent YMCA, call Carole on 01892 542209 or [Friends@WestKentYMCA.org.uk](mailto:Friends@WestKentYMCA.org.uk)

For more information, or to arrange a visit, call Rob Marsh on 07941 388852 or [Rob@WestKentYMCA.org.uk](mailto:Rob@WestKentYMCA.org.uk)

To donate furniture or goods call into our warehouses or ring 01732 361108 or 01892 615612.



CORNER

## Ordination? Me?!

Why on earth would I want to do that? Well, the answer is inescapably that God is calling me, and has been really for as long as I could remember; it was just a bit of a surprise when I realised what it was He was calling me to.

From the age of about three I had planted in my heart the desire to tell people about Jesus, through a very politically incorrect Sunday school song! One major problem was that I didn't really know him, and it wasn't until the age of 14 whilst on a bolting horse that I prayed and felt God answering my prayer that set me off on my journey of faith. It all fell into place aged 17 when I finally realised that it wasn't about what I could do for God, but that what God had done for me – and the relief and amazement was so overwhelming that I immediately wanted to share the good news of Jesus.

Life carried on and God has his own time schedule, so after training in Birmingham, working for the NHS, setting up a clinic in India for Leprosy patients, working for London City Mission in Vauxhall, getting married, working as a Parish Evangelist for an inner city church, I arrived in Tonbridge and St Stephen's in 1990.

I have two wonderful children, Jemimah and Jonathan, so they took priority over everything else, and the desire to be involved in the building up of God's kingdom had to be put on a back burner. It never went out, and to be honest was quite irritating at times.

When both my children were no longer teenagers, by which time I was the inclusion manager at Hillview, a dear friend at church asked me how I was. It made me reflect on the fact that I was not doing what I really believed God had called me to do and the niggling sense of call was still there. Then God really started to speak to me again, culminating in attending a funeral at which there was no priest which made

me incandescent with rage as it was such a sad occasion and a missed opportunity. I realised that God was stirring up the calling, so went to talk to Mark about it. I thought that perhaps God might be calling me to restart my reader training that I had begun in 1995. When Mark suggested that I should consider ordination, I nearly fell off the chair. But at the same time it was as if I had been standing by a huge window with a heavy curtain over it for many years, and suddenly the curtain was swept back with Mark's words and I could see an amazing view.

I then had to start the 'discernment process' visiting the DDO (Diocesan Director of Ordinands) and various other people who rightly scrutinised me and challenged me to within an inch of my life. There were times that I wondered why I was putting myself through all of this, but I heard a quote from Holst on the radio which I found helpful – 'Never compose anything unless to not compose it becomes an absolute nuisance'. To not have listened To God would have become a huge nuisance. I was also greatly encouraged by so many friends, some of whom didn't even know what I was going through, and who had very appropriate words and pictures for me just when I needed it.

After just over a year the Bishop's decision finally came last June on the day that I needed to hand in my resignation in order to start training in September. God's timing, His call and his gifts are irrevocable (Romans 11:29), and if at times I wobble and wonder 'why me?', I know that it is what He has called and equipped me to do through the sometimes very harsh training of life, and there is nothing else that I would rather do. My greatest desire has always been to see God's kingdom come, and to share his redeeming and saving love which He has poured out on me in abundance. God is full of surprises, and who knows what will happen next? Certainly not me!

Andrea Leonard

## 80% of all religious discrimination is directed at Christians

### A global catastrophe not shouted about

The worldwide persecution of Christians has continued to rise in recent years and noticeably so in 2013. While many of us take our religious freedom for granted here in the UK, living as a Christian elsewhere often involves the real possibility of martyrdom.

In September, Pakistan saw its worst attack yet on Christians, when 85 people died as they left the Anglican All Saints Church in Peshawar; two suicide bombers awaited them as they left after morning worship. A Taliban faction claimed responsibility for the attack arguing it was their way of responding to US drone strikes in the country. Last Christmas day a car bomb went off near a church in Baghdad killing at least 26 people. The church leader said that no worshippers were amongst the dead and he did not believe the church had been targeted. Nonetheless, the Christian community in Iraq has declined to an estimated 400,000 to 600,000 (some believe it might be as low as 150,000) and yet before the US –led invasion it numbered about 1.5 million.

This kind of violence is both outrageous and depressing. However, to fully understand what is happening to Christians on a global level we should note the findings made by the International Society for Human Rights, a secular observatory based in Frankfurt, Germany: 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world today are directed at Christians. This means Christians are by far the most persecuted religious body in the world.

The Pew Forum claims that between 2006 and 2010 discrimination against Christians has taken place in 139 countries; that is almost three-quarters of all nations. On average, 100,000 Christians are killed for their faith every year. That's eleven Christians killed every hour of every day. Christian martyrdom is taking place on such a significant scale it goes to the heart of human rights as a major issue.

It would be too easy to portray such anti-Christian persecution as action taken by extremists of the Islamic faith. The reality is, Christians encounter a confusing range of threats, with no single enemy and no one strategy to halt the attacks they face.

Yes, it was Islamic militants who stormed the Syriac Catholic cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation in Baghdad on 31 October 2010, killing the two priests celebrating Mass and a further 56 people.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, the militant Islamic movement 'Boko Haram' is behind almost 3,000 deaths since 2009, including 800 fatalities last year alone. The movement has made a speciality out of targeting Christians and their churches.

However, in India's northeastern state of Orissa as many as 500 Christians were killed by Hindu radicals in 2008. Thousands were injured and 50,000 left without homes. Many had to flee to camps. In Burma, the Chin and Karen ethnic group, strongly Christian, is considered dissident by the regime and routinely subjected to imprisonment, torture, forced labour, and murder. In October 2010, the Burmese military sprang helicopter strikes in territories where the country's Christians are concentrated.

North Korea is widely considered the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. About a quarter of the country's 200,000 to 400,000 Christians are thought to be living in forced labour camps for their refusal to join the national cult around founder Kim Il Sung. Since the end of the Korean War in 1953 that normalised the split between north and south, some 300,000 Christians in North Korea have disappeared and are presumed dead.

What is clear is that not only are Christians facing appalling discrimination, here in the West we hear very little about it. It might be cynical to suggest this is because most of the planet's 2.3 billion Christians today are disadvantaged and live in the developing world. They are often members of ethnic and linguistic minorities. Victims are mainly non-white and often fail to gain Western media attention.

Irrespective of the reasons behind this lack of awareness, it is an issue we should take more heed of. Pope Francis acknowledged this in comments during a General Audience last September:

'When I hear that so many Christians in the world are suffering, am I indifferent, or is it as if a member of my own family is suffering?' the Pope spoke to those attending. 'Am I open to that brother or that sister in my family who's giving his or her life for Jesus Christ?'

In 2011, Fouad Twal, the Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem, who leads a church which has seen a number of martyrs in its time, asked at a conference in London: 'Does anybody hear our cry? How many atrocities must we endure before somebody, somewhere, comes to our aid?'

You will know, I am sure, that we pray for persecuted Christians at St Stephen's; may those prayers continue. Perhaps some thought could be given as to what else could be done?

J Ramsden