

February 2017 — forthcoming events

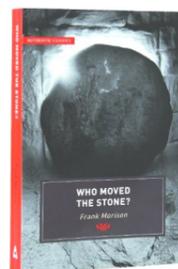
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
<p>Key to abbreviations: AAS = All Age Service HC = Holy Communion OE = Older Elements TMS = The Morning Service AT = Afternoon Tea HGL = Home Group Leaders PD = Prayer Day W2W = Woman to Woman BB = Bumps and Babes HotS = Healing on the Street SOW = Service of the Word WOAM = Women on a Mission CC = Community Centre MITM = Men in the morning TES = The Evening Service WLTD0 = Who let the dads out CG = Central Gathering OC = Open Church TG = Thanksgiving YE = Younger Elements</p>						
		1	2	3	4	5
		10:00am OC 10:00am BB 11:00am HC 7:30pm CG	10:00am MITM 10:00am Toddlers	9:00am Re:Fresh 9:30am W2W 12:30pm OC	9:00am Re:fresh 10:00am HotS 7:00pm The Mix 7:30pm Comedy Night	7:45am HC 10:30am HC 11:00am SOW at St Eanswythe's 6:30pm TES
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27	28					
midday OC	9:00am Re:Fresh 12:30pm OC 5:00pm YE 7:00pm OE					

Interesting reads (continued)

Who Moved the Stone?
Frank Morison

Originally published in 1930, the author claimed that this was the book that "refused to be written". Frank Morison, another investigative journalist and a self-confessed Christianity cynic, set out to disprove the Christian faith by showing the resurrection of Christ to be pure fiction. However, upon deeper study, Morison discovered the truth. As a result, he became a Christian and wrote this book.

ISBN-10: 0310295610 / ISBN-13: 978-0310295617



ENC COMPASS

THE MONTHLY ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Love your neighbour

February 2017

We live in a nation that over many centuries has had a vast impact on our world, and, during the days of the British Empire, people went out from these shores all over the globe, bringing much that was good and some that wasn't to the lives of people from very different cultural, ethnic and faith backgrounds. As the Empire collapsed, many of the people from these nations started to come to Britain, and more recently we have welcomed people from all over the world for economic and political reasons.

As a result we live in a very diverse community – people from very different backgrounds to us are now literally our neighbours. Even in our own church we have people from many nations – and this has changed even in the 13 years I have been here; and now our staff team is beginning to resemble the United Nations! And this diversity brings strength and depth and new insights and much joy.

Three doors down from me live a Muslim family, and it was a great honour to be invited to the funeral of the father a few months back. I had never been to a Muslim funeral before and it was most interesting (if very different to a Church of England funeral!) As I walked towards where the burial was going to take place, the crematorium staff rushed over to intercept me as they thought I was going to the wrong funeral, but I was struck by the welcome I was given by the many Muslim people gathered by the grave.



It has also been a real blessing to be part of a small group meeting on a regular basis to look at Scripture together. This includes three Christian ministers and the Imam from the Mosque in

Tunbridge Wells, and so far we have compared and contrasted what the Bible and the Koran say about Abraham and Moses. It is fascinating to see the similarities and differences, recognising that our faiths come from the same root even if they have taken different paths.

I therefore feel enriched by these relationships, and rejoice to call people from very diverse backgrounds my friends. And so when I heard recently of someone on our church



doorstep being called names because of their nationality (they were from Eastern Europe) it angered me. And when Imam Yasser said that his wife had been intimidated whilst shopping in Tunbridge Wells because of the way she was dressed, I was shocked. And when I saw in the local press that the Mosque received Christmas Cards, purportedly from Christians, that were abusive, I responded "Not in my name".

And I believe that this would be the response of Jesus as well, for the Gospels are very clear "Love your Neighbour" – and when Jesus started to talk about who is our neighbour, he used the example of a Samaritan, someone who the Jews hated and despised – they even went out of their way to avoid walking through the places where Samaritans lived.

We may not be people who would be abusive or who would intimidate anyone whatever their background, but it is easy to put up walls to keep people out, to pull up the drawbridge and keep ourselves separate. But Jesus' message is not "don't be offensive or abusive to your neighbour", rather it is an active verb - "love" them.

I write this a few days before the "Love your Neighbour" initiative happening in Tunbridge Wells, when we are encouraging people from all backgrounds, cultures, and faiths to stand together as a statement against the current growing trend. But, whilst this is a one-off event, loving our neighbour isn't. For not only is it active, but also continuous. We are called to actively love our neighbour, and keep on doing so.

Why? Because we need to build friendships that cement our society together, crossing differences that can become barriers such as age, social background, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and faith. But more importantly, because this is the example that Jesus sets us and calls us to follow.

Mark Barker

Getting to know...

Rachael Plowman, Church Administrator

Having been brought to St Stephen's aged three by mum and dad, Edith & Denis Wills, Rachael Plowman has a long history of worship at St Stephen's and knows our church better than many. So what attracted Rachael to the role of Church Administrator? *Encompass* decided to find out a little more about Rachael and how she is feeling about her new challenge since she joined the office team in November.



Rachael, have you always lived locally?

Yes, I was born and lived in Pembury until the age of three and then lived in Tonbridge until I was 20; I then moved to Tunbridge Wells, married Malcolm in 2000 and our eldest daughter, Abigail, was born three years later.

We remained in Tunbridge Wells until 2006, about two weeks before our younger daughter Naomi was born, when we moved back to Tonbridge.

How has your faith developed during your time at St Stephen's?

I can still remember being at Sunday School, aged about five or six, and continued to be part of the children's work and then youth work throughout my teenage years. I then moved away from the church but became involved again through marriage preparation and children's work once Abigail was born. I have been to New Wine numerous times which is always fun and challenging (both camping and content!). My Connect Groups (which have changed and merged over time) have been a very important constant in developing my faith and have given me the space and time

to explore some challenging themes.

Have you worked for the church before?

Yes, from 2012 I worked for STEPS Pre-School as their Administrator; I felt that this would be a good link with the children's ministry I was involved in at the time (Core Team Leader for Little Stars). I have also volunteered at St Stephen's in a number of different ways over the years: helping with Sunday morning children's groups, organising our annual Light Party, running the toddlers' group for several years, lots of work on fundraising events such as the summer and Christmas fayres and the Made and Grown events.

What attracted you to the role of Church Administrator?

I felt the time was right to move on from STEPS, although I still passionately believe in the work STEPS does and the impact it has on the families in our community. I was keen to become more involved in the behind-the-scenes life of the church, and support the various and numerous ministries.

What have been your biggest challenges to date?

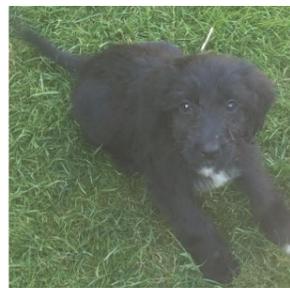
Initially undertaking two jobs at the same time: learning my new role, whilst trying to hand over the job of STEPS Administrator, and all at the busiest time of the year in the run-up to Christmas. Actually, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pat (*Hicks - Rachael's predecessor*) who has been a star in answering some really daft questions.

So how are you feeling about the role three months in?

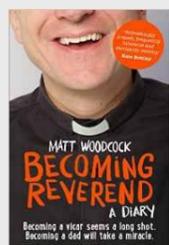
I am really enjoying working as part of the team and the job itself has, in many respects, exceeded my expectations. There is never a dull moment in the office and I find myself dealing with a myriad of tasks and challenges, making each day a bit of an adventure!

Finally, how do you like to relax away from work?

I really enjoy walking our puppy, Cilla, who is a joy to watch as she charges across the fields; at home I enjoy crochet and reading and immersing myself in Netflix!



Interesting reads



Becoming Reverend: A Diary Matt Woodcock

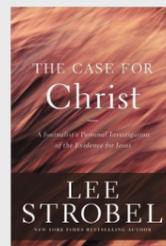
Formerly a newspaper reporter, Matt Woodcock is now a minister in Hull. Famed for the beer festival he organises in Hull Minster every year and for walking real camels through Hull town centre at Christmas, *Becoming Reverend* is Matt's honest and often hilarious account of his time spent training for ordination.

ISBN-10: 1781400105 / ISBN-13: 978-1781400104

The Case for Christ Lee Strobel

Using the persona of an investigative journalist pursuing his story, Lee Strobel uses his experience as a reporter for the Chicago Tribune to interview experts in science, history and philosophy about the evidence for Jesus as the son of God. In doing so Strobel is essentially retracing his own spiritual journey from atheist to believer.

ISBN-10: 0310345863 / ISBN-13: 978-0310345862



Continued on the back page...

You've got a friend in me...

Jesus taught us to love, cherish and care for each another and showed us that our love should be real and practical. At St Stephen's we want to follow that teaching; to offer the very best pastoral care for all. But we realise that in such a large church it is sometimes possible for those in need to feel unnoticed or even neglected. In February, therefore, we will be putting pastoral care up-front and central as we embark on a series of worship and action specifically relating to pastoral care.

We want to make sure everyone at St Stephen's sees that caring for others is part of ordinary discipleship – that it's not a "special forces" ministry. There's a bit of irony to church growth – as a church grows larger, it must also grow smaller. In other words, while we want to increase the number of people joining our church family, we must also make sure we are living out the "one another's" in the Bible and not letting anyone go unnoticed or overlooked (Acts 6). The gospel compels us to look outwards beyond ourselves to those around us:

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10)

So how do we achieve this, especially in those times when we feel ill-equipped to help? Were you aware, for example, that a Pastoral Care Team exists at St Stephen's? This team is ready, willing and able to come alongside people when things get a little difficult, helping them through sickness, anxiety or any other hardship? They will walk arm-in-arm

with those in need, supporting them and praying for them. Another way that we can support each other long-term is through our Connect Groups. Connect Group members share their Christian lives and journeys together by caring for, encouraging and growing with one another. Our Connect Groups, which meet on various weekday evenings, also have a lot of fun. So if you are not already a member of such a group why not contact the church office to arrange to visit one on an evening convenient to you.



At some periods in our lives we will be able to give care and support, and at other times we will need it. Over the forthcoming weeks we will be exploring:

- What pastoral care means
- How we, as a church family, can provide for each other and the wider community
- How extending pastoral care is a fruit of our understanding of the gospel

No mean feat, so I am going to need your patience, love, support and prayers. Thank you.

Eric Hornbuckle



Bishop Chavasse - a new Church of England Primary School for Tonbridge

Many people reading this will remember that in the autumn of 2014, Bennett Memorial School submitted a proposal to the DfE (Department for Education) to open a new Church of England primary school in south Tonbridge. The vision was to establish a new CofE primary school with an inclusive Christian ethos which would provide additional school places for the increasing population of Tonbridge; the proposal had considerable support from St Stephen's Church and the wider community. It was to be named after Bishop Christopher Chavasse, a former Bishop of Rochester, who co-founded Bennett with Lady Bennett, in recognition of his and also his twin brother's contribution to society.

The proposal was approved in the following March, 2015, and plans to establish the new school were started. However, difficulties in finding a suitable site meant delays. Then last November came the welcome news that a site had been secured next to the new Somerhill Green housing development (just off Woodgate Way) and plans are now progressing rapidly.

Bishop Chavasse will be a two form entry primary school

with a caring Christian ethos which is open to all children from the local community. It will open this September 2017 with two reception classes. Then in September 2018, as those children move up into Year 1, they will be joined by a new intake of reception pupils. This means the school will grow in size year by year - and consequently it will also be recruiting additional staff each year - until it reaches its full capacity in 2023.

So Bishop Chavasse will be a brand new primary school but it will also be part of the Tenax Schools Trust, which includes Bennett Memorial School. The Tenax Schools Trust is a local and growing Church of England multi academy trust (a group of schools which have joined together) which aims to provide outstanding education in this part of Kent and East Sussex. As part of that Trust, Bishop Chavasse will benefit from the mutual support and partnerships and, in particular, from the opportunities for professional development and access to primary expertise that already exists within Tenax.

The Trust is led by Ian Bauckham, the CEO, and its work is overseen by a Board of Trustees, which I chair. Each school within the Trust has its own Local Governing Body and one of the other trustees, Cherie Sargent - a very experienced former primary head teacher - is the Chair Designate for Bishop Chavasse. For more information on the school or the trust visit www.bishopchavasseshool.org.uk and www.tenaxschoolstrust.co.uk.

Jackie Evans