

# Connect

February 2011

Issue 9

## St Mary Stelling ... "Kent's most extraordinary Parish Church"

### Welcome!

Welcome to the February edition of **Connect**. **Connect** exists to provide news and information, and keep us all in touch with what is happening in and around the Church and the Church Family.



We have slightly delayed this issue to include Margi's final service as our vicar. It is a clear reflection of the love that we all have for Margi, and the impact that she has had on the whole of our

community, that there was standing room only in the church! As it was Candlemas Sunday, we were each given candles and encouraged to share our light with our friends and neighbours, and not hide it away where it can't be seen! A group of children from both churches sang an adapted version of Peace, perfect Peace, and the singing for the rest of the service gave Margi a rousing send-off. No doubt there are some of us in the church who feel a little apprehensive about the future without the clear guidance that Margi has given us over the last few years.



We may rest assured that we will remain as much in her prayers as she will in ours. We can also take great

comfort from the considerable work and effort that is going into planning for the future life and work of our church. Margi has equipped us well as a church to keep our light shining brightly as a beacon in our community and the wider world.

### Services February



- 6<sup>th</sup> Family Service with Nick Hunt
- 13<sup>th</sup> Family Communion with Rev. Norman Woods
- 20<sup>th</sup> Family Service with Geoff Wright
- 27<sup>th</sup> Family Communion with Rev. Reg Humphries

We also have an exciting 'Songs of Praise' service planned for March.....

Verse for the Month... "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" 2 Corinthians 5 v 17

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### Margi's Diary



I have just returned from my final united service at Upper Hardres, as your parish priest. It was a very special

time with about 100 people there and with a great sense of worship and thanksgiving to God for the time we have shared together over the last 8 years. I was amazed to receive so many cards, the beautiful flowers, the cake and the very generous cheque for £690, thank you to everyone for your kindness. It just happens this is about the amount it costs to go on a trip to Uganda to visit the work of AICM so perhaps this is how it should be used at some point!

It is with sadness that I leave Stelling Church - I will miss you all and our worship together but I know God is calling me on to new things and He continues to call you on too. He tells us to ask Him if we lack anything in order to 'be church' but He has already given you many gifts and resources but perhaps He is also encouraging more to move out of your comfort zones and to

dare to offer for new areas of service and to take risks! Know too that if He calls you He will also equip you - it is never up to us but all about receiving His grace.

So finally, thank you all for your friendship, support, encouragement and I will continue to watch with great interest all that happens at Stelling Church and be praying for you as you go forward with God.



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### After Sevens

(The week-night youth group for school years 7-9, a joint venture by the Church in the Hall and St Mary's)

Firstly, we'd just like to say "THANK YOU VERY MUCH" to Margi for letting us use her home over the past few months. The Rectory has been a great place to meet and we will miss it....

We'll be trying out a new venue in February - we're going to try using the Cabin or the Upper Room at the church and see how we like it there.

January has seen a new member James, joining us - welcome James! - if anyone else in year 7 or above would like to try it out, please do come along.

### February/March dates:

Tuesday 8 February  
NO MEETING ON TUESDAY 22ND FEB  
- HALF TERM  
Tuesday 1 March  
Tuesday 15 March  
Tuesday 29 March



### MAN WANTED!!!

After Sevens could do with a new male leader.. Nigel has stepped down (many thanks Nigel for your support at Youth

Alpha and After Sevens) and the current leaders are Jane from the church, and Andy Edney and Michelle Huggins from the Hall, so another man from the church would balance the leadership up nicely. After Sevens is great fun - the main qualifications needed are to be able to take quite a bit of noise and eat a lot of snacks. The group meets fortnightly, but with four leaders, you only have to do a turn once every four weeks, so it isn't too onerous. We use the Urban Saints material which has billions of ideas, and the leadership is shared so that nobody ever has to do the whole lot. We'd also like to do a few occasional extra activities (such as our outing last November)... if you think you could help out, do get in touch with Jane, 01227 700416, [janeparsons2007@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:janeparsons2007@tiscali.co.uk)

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### Sunday Cool and the Upper Room

The Sunday morning children and youth leaders had a very positive meeting on 20 January, with lots of discussion about the way forward for our Sunday groups. The main decision that has been taken with immediate effect is that, due both to the numbers of leaders available and the numbers of youngsters coming along at the moment, both Sunday Cool and the Upper Room will be meeting in the Cabin. We want to continue to offer something specifically geared towards the older ones, so we're going to try starting off our sessions jointly, then split into the two groups for separate activities. We hope this will meet all the children's and young peoples needs, though obviously with such a wide age range it is difficult to gear things appropriately... but our aim remains for all the children and young

people to have fun whilst getting to know God...

The youngsters should by now all have had a questionnaire about church, so please encourage them to fill them in and return them to Jane - we want to hear what they think about what goes on on a Sunday morning. Particularly under consideration is whether we should continue to have a monthly family service where the children and young people stay in the church throughout, or whether they should go out to the Cabin every Sunday, coming together as a church family all together for the "special" services such as Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest etc. If you have any particular views on this, please have a word with Jane or another member of the PCC.

### Messy Church

Unfortunately, we have had to call a halt on Messy Church, as, with Margi leaving, we really don't have anyone to take on the overall co-ordinating and overseeing role. What with snow and Christmas, we only managed two sessions, but those two were good fun and we met some new families... anyone who came along to Messy Church is of course very welcome at any time to any of the Sunday morning services. Although we don't have the resources to do Messy Church at the moment, who knows in the future? And for anyone who really loves Messy Church, there is a very large and lively Messy Church at Barham church on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, 4.00-5.30pm. - you can find out more at [http://web.me.com/stephenhardy1/barhamdownschurches.org.uk/Messy\\_Church.html](http://web.me.com/stephenhardy1/barhamdownschurches.org.uk/Messy_Church.html) or by Googling "Barham Messy Church"

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### Money Matters!



The headlines are:

- The net result for 2010 was a shortfall of £2,671.24. The details are in the financial statements at the back of the church.
- Our receipts reduced by approximately 25% against 2009.
- This is the second consecutive year where we have incurred a deficit, and this is a cause for concern.
- We have bank reserves of just under £17,000.

It is clearly essential that we continue to control costs and encourage giving in 2011.

We need to pay our ever-increasing bills, but as Christians it is not just about paying bills. It is also about fulfilling our mission and ministry.

The Bible offers loads of good reasons for giving; for example, 'Giving should be joyful, generous and a response in gratitude to God' (2 Corinthians 9, v7), and the Bible also gives us the important principle of giving in proportion to our means.

**An extra £2 per week each will make ends meet.....**

If each of us gave an extra £2 per week, we could fulfil our ministry and mission and balance our books in 2011. Making full use of the Gift Aid Scheme

is a good way of maximising our income - the church can reclaim the tax on donations, which means for every pound you give, we receive an additional 25p, with no extra cost to you.

- If you have joined the envelope scheme - please make sure you use your envelope number, and ask me for envelopes if you need any.
- Many people give by Standing Order mandate, and this greatly assists financial planning. I have plenty of forms if you want to switch to this method!

May I ask you to prayerfully review your own giving?

Geoff - Treasurer

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### .. notes from the PCC..

Your current PCC is made up of Geoff, Ros, Nigel, Trent, Nick, Jane and Pam. Our most recent meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January began with drinks and nibbles at Geoff and Julia's to wish Margi well for the future and to thank her for all she has done over her years at Stelling .....

and then to business...

PCC meetings usually include regular updates from the relevant people about the children & youth work, the deanery, anything the church wardens want to say particularly, and a look at the finances. With so much to talk about with the start of the interregnum, some of the usual items

were deferred to the next meeting, and this is just a brief summary of some of the matters that we did discuss:

**Children and youth:** On 20<sup>th</sup> January, the children & youth leaders' meeting was still to take place, so it was a case of watch this space. After Sevens could do with an additional male leader. Messy Church needs a co-ordinator if it is to carry on.

**Financial report:** The church's financial year runs from 1 January - 31 December, and we are required to produce a Financial Report each year. The meeting considered the report for 2010. The main issue is that our income from giving is down 25% on the previous year and there

is a £2700 shortfall on income over expenditure. To try and address this, Geoff as Treasurer will be encouraging all church members to use the gift-aid system so that income tax can be reclaimed, and to give regularly by standing order if at all possible - regular giving makes planning so much easier.

**PCC members:** from the recent questionnaire, 3 people have indicated that they would like to serve on the PCC, which is good news.. it is always healthy to have fresh blood and give others the chance to step down. Any one who wants to can stand for election at the Annual Meeting on 11 April. Each person elected serves for a 3-year term (though of course you can stand down at any time) and Trent is

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this year coming to the end of his term, so he will be deciding whether or not he wants to stand for re-election.

**Interregnum:** following Geoff and Ros' meeting with the Archdeacon, they were awaiting a response back from her to tell us what the next step was to be (a meeting of Upper Hardres and Stelling PCC with the Archdeacon has since been arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> March). It is possible, but unlikely, that we will get another "house for duty" priest in the village but more likely that we will become part of a larger centre such as Chartham. More news as it happens. Financially, we are still responsible for our parish share (ie our payment to the diocese) and jointly with upper Hardres for some of the

Rectory costs during the interregnum, and it is unlikely that we will get much of a refund. Obviously during the interregnum we won't have to pay Margi's expenses, but we will have to pay visiting clergy fees. Services are arranged up to and including Easter.

**Responses from the church questionnaires:** these were discussed in brief, but a further PCC meeting specifically to look at these and how to move forward with the ideas and comments was arranged for 15 February. If anyone has any further thoughts about this before then, please have a word with one of the members of the PCC.

### **Some Thoughts from Nigel:**

The Church needs you!... to participate in the family of God in the face of the challenges ahead of us as a Church. There is a need for the PCC to be frequently re-invigorated by an influx of new people with fresh and vigorous ideas. In particular, we are aware that Geoff has been requesting someone else to take on his responsibilities as Treasurer and Church Warden for some time. He has done wonderful job for the Church but we cannot allow him to 'burn out' under the weight of the administrative burden he has carried for us for so long while at the same time working at full stretch in a very demanding job. As we pray for God to raise up new leaders, please pray that you may be guided to use your skills to share in the work of the Church and the community. If you can help please speak to Ros or Geoff.

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## Prayer Corner



Let us thank God for the leadership and guidance that

Margi has given us for the last eight years. We pray that she may take up the new challenges in her life with the love and commitment that have so characterised her time at Stelling. We pray for the community that she will be joining when she leaves us and know that she will soon become a valued member of whichever church she joins for worship.

We pray that our church will continue to be a beacon for our community and reach out to all the people in our area.

We pray for the young people in our church and in our community. Guide and encourage those who work with our young people and help them to grow in faith and love for You.

We ask for God's guidance for each of us to ask him how we can best contribute to the life of His church.

We thank God for the improvements in Sophie Hunt's health. May the planned move to Putney go ahead smoothly and we pray for the well-being of Anne and Nick during a time of upheaval away from home.

Thank You for the work of Imtiaz and his colleagues at Release International supporting persecuted Christians worldwide. We think particularly of the Christians in Pakistan for whom life is made so difficult. May we share their

faith and strength and draw inspiration from the example that they set for us.

## Late News

The Stelling & Upper Hardres PCC's will jointly meet with Archdeacon Sheila Watson on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March. I don't expect to receive any further information about what the Archdeacon is going to say, but obviously if I do I will let everyone know. - Geoff

## Dates for your Diary

Plans are afoot for a Lent course in combination with the Hall and Upper Hardres. Further details will be available soon, but please talk with Nigel about this.

## Next Issue

Please can you send any reports/articles for the March issue of Connect to Geoff Wright by 21<sup>st</sup> February.

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