



Notes from the Riverbank

The newsletter for St Thomas of Canterbury Church in Goring,
St Mary's Church in Streatley and St Andrew's Church in South Stoke

October 2015 – 22nd edition

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● Welcome to the twenty-second edition of "Notes from the Riverbank."

All contributions should be sent to Toria, the editor, by the 17th of each month at the usual email address webcontent.thomandmary@gmail.com. The on-line versions of the calendars are maintained by Glenn Cooke using the same email address. Bookings for the church or Canterbury Room should be made by contacting the UB Parish Secretary Jenny Hall at jandjh2@btinternet.com. We aim to produce the on-line and printed versions of each issue by the 25th of each month.



Pastoral letter: Prayer Changes Everything

Do you remember Andrew Lloyd-Webber's acclaimed musical *Aspects of Love*? It was back in the eighties and the song that really struck a note (please forgive the pun) was *Love Changes Everything*. That's how I see prayer, as changing things. If you take out the word "love" and replace it with "prayer" it fits Andrew Lloyd-Webber's tune perfectly.

I'm aware that this edition of Notes from the River Bank will coincide with the National Prayer Weekend and that you will be experiencing or I hope, will have experienced something of what prayer means to you, to our churches and benefice, to the Christian community in these villages and eventually I trust in a wider context to the nation as a whole.

Many people I meet are reticent about speaking of their prayer life. It's almost as private as if I were to ask about their sex life, which of course I wouldn't! I think the reason may well be embarrassment, the fear of being unsure of the right way of going about it, that it may not match up to the prayer life of others and what is expected of them, their prayers aren't good enough, or they may feel they haven't experienced any positive result so does prayer really work!

The first thing I would say is that there is no right way to prayer. Pray as you can, not as you can't. We are all made in God's image and have within us the ability to pray. However we are all made as individuals and as such will find our own individual way of praying. There is no right or wrong way to pray. Some will find it easier to pray with formal set prayers as in a Sunday Service, but that of course leaves the problem of the rest of the week! As the hymn goes "Seven whole days, not one in Seven." Some will however find it easier and more fulfilling to come before God as an individual, perhaps still with set prayers as a way into their time of prayer. There are those who may pray as the spirit moves them to do so, either on their own or in small groups where they feel comfortable to speak out their prayer again as the spirit may

lead them. The importance of prayer is that it does change things, it builds up our relationship with God, strengthens our love for him and those for whom we pray. The way we pray should be in the manner that suits us as individuals, finding the most suitable way may take time, but pray we must just as Jesus did.

Take a look at the index in your bible and read though each passage indicated to see how many times prayer is mentioned and its significance within the passage. It may be a good way to get started if quiet individual prayer is new to you. Take time to meditate on the passage, see what it's saying to you and how you would like to respond to it in prayer. Look on-line or in a large book shop for the many, many books on prayer. I'm sure you will find something to suit you.

I am more than aware of the "Marys" and the "Marthas" among us, and how difficult it can be for a Martha to be a Mary when it comes to prayer time. No one has ever set the length of time we should allow for prayer. It will depend very much on individual personalities. "Marys" may feel comfortable with a longer period of time when for "Marthas" a short time may be all they can cope with. For some it's easy, for others there is always something trying to distract. However never forget the importance of an arrow prayer. Psalm 46:10 tells us to be "Be still and know that I am God." That is all we are asked to do, it doesn't say for how long. You might like to say these following words as you begin to pray: "I'm here, Lord, hiding nothing from you, holding back nothing from you; I simply wait in your presence. For when I wait for you I am found by you."

God loves us with an unconditional love and he wants our love too. Prayer is our means of having a personal relationship with him. We speak to him and as with any conversation we listen for him to speak to us. Like many relationships it may take time to hear exactly what is being said or see what God is doing, but anything worth doing is worth working at.

God hears our prayers, he knows the needs of his people and answers their prayers in accordance with what is best for each individual. I hope this National Prayer Weekend has already brought you blessings and that there are more to come as you focus on the importance of prayer for yourselves and those you love, your church and community, for Christians everywhere and for those who have not yet come to know the good news of Jesus Christ. Prayer Changes Everything.



Liz Dowding



Goring Chamber Choir: One family – a community sings

Goring Chamber Choir, together with singers from local primary schools and the church choirs of St Thomas' and St Mary's will be giving a concert on Saturday 17th October at 3pm in St Thomas' Church, Goring.

The concert will be conducted by Frances Brewitt-Taylor. Tickets £5 (children free with a ticket) obtainable at Inspiration, Goring, from a choir member, or at the door.



Graeme Pearce





Harvest Festival – Sunday 4th October

You are all invited to Harvest Festival on Sunday 4th October. Harvest services will take place as follows across the three churches:

St. Thomas', Goring	Harvest Family Service	9.30am
St. Mary's, Streatley	Harvest Holy Communion Service	11.15am
St. Andrew's, South Stoke	Harvest Family Service	11.15am

We would really welcome your gifts of non-perishable food at the Harvest Services. Please bring your gift to the service and they will be donated to Reading Foodbank, (St. Thomas' and St. Andrew's) and to Refugees (St. Mary's). Both causes would be particularly grateful for tinned spaghetti, tinned vegetables, tinned potatoes, tinned fruit, small bags of rice, tinned meat, long-life milk and toilet rolls.

A box in the porch of St. Thomas' will be there throughout the year for your donations to the Reading Foodbank, and we have recently received a message from them thanking us for our support. Thank you very much for your generosity.



The Rev. Paul Boughton



Bank Holiday Teas at St. Mary's

Despite the appalling weather there was a steady stream of visitors to St. Mary's for afternoon tea on Bank Holiday Monday. The church looked bright and welcoming with its white tablecloths and vases of flowers, and in addition to the comfort of a hot cup of tea and homemade cake a lovely programme of music was provided by Tanya Houghton (soprano) and David Crowe (piano) which entertained everyone during the whole afternoon. A delightful group of visitors from Austria were tickled pink at being able to sit and have tea in church, and insisted on being photographed raising their cups to the camera, and some visitors from Australia were particularly interested in the history of the church, commenting on its beauty and the delightful music.

Our thanks to all those who contributed to the success of the afternoon, whether providing the gazebo and equipment from the Morrell Room, baking wonderful cakes, serving, and most of all, washing up. The aim of the afternoon was outreach to the community, but as a spin-off we raised a very welcome £100 for church funds.



Mary Scriven



Welcome!

During October we are pleased that Jessica Dyer and Emily Webb will be joining the Worldwide Church Family in Baptism! Will you please pray for Patrick and Andrea as they bring Jessica, and also for Richard and Lizzie as they bring Emily, promising before God to bring up their children as Christians within the Church Family.



The Rev. Paul Boughton



Celebrating the music of John Rutter

John Rutter is one of the most famous British composers of the 20th Century. Writing mainly choral works, he has written carols, anthems and larger works such as his Gloria and Requiem. His anthems are hugely popular and sung regularly by many Church and secular choirs.

In celebration of John Rutter's 70th birthday on 24th September 2015, we are holding a service of praise at 4pm on Sunday 4th October at St Thomas' Church, Goring-on-Thames. The United Benefice choir will be singing many of Rutter's most well-loved anthems including *All things bright and beautiful* and *Amazing Grace*. Do join us.



Elizabeth Parkinson



Christian Aid – Can you help?

Thank you to everyone who has supported Christian Aid in any way in recent years. Between us, many thousands of pounds have been raised during Christian Aid Week in May each year to help some of the world's poorest communities – always working through local partner organisations to ensure that funds are used wisely and providing a Christian response to people in desperate need whatever their faith.

I am just beginning my second year of training for Ordained Local Ministry and I am no longer going to have the time to act as Christian Aid coordinator for the benefice. Currently it is the house-to-house collection in Goring and Streatley which raises over three quarters of the total amount each year. Could you volunteer to act as coordinator next May? I would be willing to work alongside you to show you what needs doing. Or do you have an alternative vision for how we might support Christian Aid which you would like to put into practice? Do please come and talk to me if you would be interested in helping. If nobody volunteers then I regret to say that we will be unable to organise a house-to-house collection next year.



Wendy Middleton, 875435 wendy.middleton@tiscali.co.uk



Christmas Fair 2015

The Christmas Fair is to be held in Church again this year on Saturday 28th November from 11am to 2pm. Please make a note in your diary!

We will have the usual array of stalls, books, toys, plants, preserves, cakes etc. and of course the delicious lunches will be available. We have further supplies of the St Thomas' bone china mugs available, decorated with an image of the Church that proved very popular last year and is a great gift for friends and family. We have it on good authority that Father Christmas will be making an appearance too!

Proceeds from the Fair this year will be divided between the Church Fund and the TearFund Refugee Crisis Fund.

We are in need of donations for some of the stalls for the Christmas fair. In particular we require CDs, DVDs, prizes suitable for the raffle, bottles for the tombola, good quality books, nearly-new children's books and toys, bric-a-brac, cakes, preserves, toiletries and plants. We also need a few volunteers to help move the chairs and put up the tables on the 27th November at 4pm.

If you need items to be collected, contact Chris Tassell on 873280; they can also be brought to Church on the 28th November before 11am, or the evening before on the 27th November between 4pm and 6pm.

So do come along and join us for a day of fun and fellowship!

 Chris Tassell



Learning more about theology or exploring a vocation in Ministry

The Cuddesdon School of Theology and Ministry is running a three year part-time course for students who want to explore a vocation in ministry or simply learn more about theology. Students attend fortnightly lectures at Cuddesdon, Oxford on a Thursday evening between 5.45pm and 9pm, with the additional options of attending Saturday Study Days and a residential Summer School. Students also benefit from the wide range of theological resources and lectures, and the breadth and depth of teaching that is offered within the College; it also gives them the opportunity to be part of student life and mix with ordinands and staff.

The course begins with a free, no obligation introductory session on Saturday 3rd October 2015 and further information and places can be booked by getting in touch with Sophie Farrant, Development Director for Ripon College, Cuddesdon: tel. 01865 877422, e-mail: sfarrant@rcc.ac.uk.

The Cuddesdon School has an excellent reputation and is where Wendy Middleton is training. I think that the session on 3rd October would be time well spent!

There are also more opportunities this year to accompany Wendy on her training evenings. This term she will be doing courses on Leading Worship and Preaching on Wednesday evenings in Oxford. In spring 2016 she will be doing a module on Church History and Doctrine, and in summer a module on Christian Discipleship. Do contact her if you would like to know more (wendy.middleton@tiscali.co.uk or 875435).

 The Rev. Paul Boughton



Thank you, Alice

Alice Boughton has just spent the equivalent of two hours a week for a year working in the churchyard as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award. She has managed, sometimes with the help of press-ganged members of her family, to do so many tasks on her list that I have had to write a new list for the next Community Services workforce! Thank you so much, Alice. Your meticulous efforts are much appreciated.



Myrna Anderson



Do you have the occasional hour when you could help your Church?

St Thomas' is looking for some people to help with specific, practical tasks. It would suit those who prefer to be flexible in how they manage their time. Some of these opportunities have arisen because church members have either taken on other responsibilities and are having to let go of some, or they have found through "time passing" that they no longer have the energy to do the job as well as they would wish.

- Helping distribute paper copies of *Notes from the Riverbank* to those who actually deliver it to people in their homes; once a month.
- Preparing the Benefice Christmas card for distribution by sorting into folders road-by-road; once a year early December. This would suit a group of friends gathered over a cup of tea!
- Planning the practical aspects for the Christingle service – much-loved by the children of the villages – in aid of the Children's Society; once a year in January/February, jointly with St Mary's and St Andrew's.
- Helping manage the churchyard with a variety of small jobs. Would suit young people working towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award.

If you think any of these may be a way in which you can contribute to God's work through his Church, please talk to the Wardens, Brenda or David, or to one of the members of St Thomas' PCC to find out more. Many thanks.



Brenda Kerr Muir