



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

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● Welcome to the thirteenth 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 Sue Melsher at suemelsher@parkway.co.uk. We aim to produce the on-line and printed versions of each issue by the 25th of each month.

● Pastoral letter: Images, Earthly and Heavenly



I note from a scientific magazine that an experiment has been devised in Switzerland whereby a thousand robots have been programmed to work constructively together for a particular purpose, and also to compete with one another as they fight to avoid contamination or destruction. Some robots are designed to kill. These creations are "born" to lie, cheat and bully.

Call me sentimental if you like, but I find this development rather sad. Of course, in this world of ours we will need the support of such augmented intelligences. But we also need to bolster such qualities as human honesty, integrity and fair play. We may well argue that the more these artefacts reflect "us" as we are, the more we are inclined to be impressed. "If they look like us and move like us and talk like us then they must be one of us."

But of course, they are not!

Perhaps some older readers will remember the Hollywood musical *My Fair Lady* and the song in which Professor Higgins (played by Rex Harrison) extols the virtues of his own sex and more particularly, himself:

*Why can't a woman behave like a man?
If I was a woman who'd been to a ball,
Been hailed as a princess by one and by all;
Would I start weeping like a bathtub overflowing,
Or carry on as if my home were in a tree?
Would I run off and never tell me where I'm going?
Why can't a woman be like me?*

The whole story revolves around a young flower-girl and a man anxious to mould the features of this virgin-soft human material into his own image. George Bernard Shaw tells a wonderful story.

We believe as Christians that we are created in the image of God inasmuch as we have some knowledge of right and wrong; we have power of free choice; we are able to recognize what is morally beautiful and ugly. As Christians we reach out towards the fullness and maturity of Christ. That "omega point" (as one theologian/scientist described it) marks the purpose of our human evolution and it brings about an interior impulse that leads to spiritual movement and responsible decision-making. Moreover, it is driven by the longing of Christ himself who in Gethsemane prayed for us: *"Father, may they be one in us as you are in me and I in you."* (John 17.21)

As a child I used to be quite embarrassed when friends said coyly that this little boy looked like his Father.

The ultimate truth is that we all bear the likeness of our heavenly Father and it is the longing of the Father himself that we should aspire to the perfect humanity that we recognize and celebrate in the Lord Jesus Christ.

 Leighton Thomas

● Bishop John's Pilgrim Walk



The 104-mile Thames Pilgrim Way is a brand new pilgrim route running through the heart of the Diocese of Oxford, which covers the three counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Rt Revd John Pritchard inaugurated the route with a ten-day pilgrimage, marking the end of his ministry as Bishop of Oxford. The pilgrimage started in Radcot on the 18th September and there were 10 daily walks along the Thames Path, each day covering about 10 miles finally ending at Runnymede after 104 miles on the 28th September.



And we're off!



Pilgrim Leader



Three Bishops

Streatley and Goring were on the sixth section from Moulsoford to Tilehurst. St Mary's was an unofficial feeding station where the walkers were provided with refreshments and the dogs with biscuits. After crossing the river to Goring, the pilgrims followed the river downstream to Whitchurch where Bishop John blessed the reconstructed toll bridge. Three bishops met on the bridge: Oxford, Dorchester and Reading, and were

then accompanied by primary school children from Whitchurch and Pangbourne to the picnic site on the Berkshire bank.

The intention is that the route should exist in perpetuity so that walkers of this part of the Thames Path can experience a different dimension to a much-loved and well-trodden route.



Adrian Turner

● Retiring collection at St Thomas': Kamuli Mission Hospital, Uganda



Some time ago Dr Jim McWhirter talked to us about the work at the Kamuli Mission Hospital and I have recently received an up-date on the improvements and progress that, because of your previous generous help, have been made possible. Jim writes:

My work now focuses across a range of hospitals but the torch is being carried forward very energetically at Kamuli by Dr Philip Unwin, a Henley GP, and his niece Dr Alice Unwin. Philip has raised £150,000 and is building accommodation for the nursing staff, doctors and visiting volunteers. Alice is organising a programme for medical students to visit on their electives and also other visiting qualified doctors and nurses to help at the hospital. Alice will be spending a significant amount of time at the hospital during this coming year. So, as you see, the work at Kamuli continues apace and it now has two fully refurbished wards, Maternity and the old operating theatre, which has been converted into a ward. My ongoing contribution at Kamuli is the computer based management system which will ensure that all these resources are used effectively and sustainably in the long-term. Best wishes, Jim

On the 21st December, please continue to support all the very necessary work being carried-out at the. Thank you.



Pat Nias

● One Hundred Years Ago



A commemorative concert on behalf of The Friends of St Mary's marking the one hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War will be held in St Mary's Church at 7pm on Remembrance Sunday, 9th November.

It will feature readings from those involved in the conflict, both at home and abroad; choral and organ pieces; poetry; with audience participation in popular songs of the time. The concert will be followed by home-made sandwiches, tea and coffee in the Morrell Room, in the style of the times. A small orchestra will entertain you from the Minstrels' Gallery with contemporary songs and other musical pieces.

Admission will be £8 either on the door, or, to guarantee a seat, in advance from either John Rogers (671532) or Liz Glover (872224). We hope that the evening will be thought-provoking and moving for all ages, with the spirit of hope shining through in true British fashion.



John Rogers

● Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal



As the Nation's custodian of Remembrance, which this year is on Sunday 9 November, the Royal British Legion is committed to helping everyone understand the importance of Remembrance so that the sacrifices of those who have given their lives, or been injured whilst serving their country and require support, are not forgotten. The support also extends to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families, so please give generously to this Appeal.



Tony Coward

● Christmas Fair 2014



This year, the Christmas Fair is to be held in St Thomas' Church on Saturday 29th November from 11.00am to 2pm. Please make a note in your diary! We will have the usual array of stalls, books, toys, plants, preserves and cakes, and of course the usual delicious lunches will be available. This year we will also have available the new St Thomas' bone china mugs, decorated with an image of the church – a great gift for friends and family.

We are in need of donations for some of the stalls for the Christmas fair, particularly 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.

If you need items collected please contact Chris Tassell on 873280; they can also be brought to the church between 4pm and 6pm on 28th November, or before 11.00am on the 29th November.

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

We also need a few volunteers to help move the chairs and put up the tables on the 28th November at 4pm.



Chris Tassell

● Ecumenical Advent Groups



People from all church denominations in Goring, Streatley and South Stoke will be meeting in small house groups to study an Advent Course during the five weeks before Christmas, beginning during the week of Monday 17th November and ending with a combined Epiphany Celebration in the Canterbury Room on Thursday 8th January. The course book *Making Room for Jesus* is £5, and lists on which to sign up are in all the churches. Everyone is welcome!



Judy Crawford

● How the Merry Opera Company came to stage *The Messiah*



Picture this. You are seated at a table in a restaurant in Norwich in June 2011 opposite the erstwhile Glyndebourne prodigy whom you have spent months trying to meet. Although you run a professional touring opera company with quite a track record, you are, compared to him, a mere novice. He has been teaching opera and stagecraft at the Royal Academy in London for over ten years and directs shows all over Europe, winning seriously top awards. And you want him to direct a show for your small opera company that is run out of a kitchen in West Kent.

And it's not even an opera that you want him to do. It's an Oratorio. This is not a new idea – English National Opera in London and the Opera in Vienna have done it quite recently, but with huge casts and choruses. But you want to be entirely different: an international opera director staging an oratorio as opera with just 12 singers and an organist, with every performer having the same amount to sing, so that none of them are purely soloists or purely chorus. You hope that, even if he thinks you are a fool, he will be too gracious to show it.

He eyes you steadily in silence and you begin to fidget with your wine glass. Then he says that he doesn't really know the piece. Whaaat? It is only Handel's *Messiah*, one of the most famous and best loved pieces of music of all time, and he doesn't know it?? He sees your reaction and then explains patiently that he doesn't know it in the way that a director should know his subject, because it's not opera, so he's never looked at it in that way and wouldn't know where to start. But after much discussion helped along by several glasses of wine, he agrees to give it some thought.

Six weeks later he comes up with an idea so original that it has enthralled more than 5,000 people across southern England. Every church we have visited wants us back, and we begin the fifth tour in three years with a performance on Saturday November 8th St Swithun's parish church in East Grinstead. People have emailed us with comments such as: "That was the Messiah I have waited all my life to hear", and "I have never been to a concert before at which the entire audience stood and cheered at the end", or "Thank you for showing me how opera can be such a fundamentally moving experience". Of course I am biased, but there must be something in it.

And it is extraordinarily original. As one Press reviewer wrote: "Out went the staid choir holding telephone book-sized music scores. In came 12 vibrant, passionate performers that ran, danced, grieved, exalted and LIVED the magnificent work throughout the church."



I hope you will come and see the performance at St Mary's on Sunday November 16th starting at 7:30. Tickets are £12 or £10 for concessions and can be obtained by emailing stmarysconcerts@hotmail.co.uk, by contacting Stella Robinson, or through Inspirations in Goring. For further information about Merry Opera please see <http://www.merryopera.com/>

which also gives details about the rest of the tour. I hope, too, that you will tell me afterwards what you honestly think of it.

 Matthew Quirk

● Harvest lunch

 We couldn't resist Adrian Turner's photos of Mary Scriven's harvest loaf and everyone enjoying this year's Harvest Lunch.



● St Mary's charitable giving



Our choice of home charity this year is the Church Urban Fund, which aims to help people in deprived areas of the UK. More information about the work of the fund can be found at <http://www.cuf.org.uk/> A total of £151.25 was raised through the sale of cakes and produce after services at St Mary's in September; this has been donated to the fund.

 Ann Hart

● 'ReadiFood' Food Bank

 Following our harvest services at St Thomas', the donated food was taken to the food bank in Reading. They were most grateful, so thank you to everyone who contributed. ReadiFood currently deliver about 120 food parcels a week to needy families and individuals in the Reading area. In order to continue to support them we have now placed a box in the porch at St Thomas' for donations of non-perishable food items, which will be emptied weekly. There is also a box in St Andrew's in South Stoke. The items particularly needed at the moment are:

Tinned vegetables/fruit ● Tinned ready meals ● Tinned meat pies ● Tinned meat (ham and corned beef) ● UHT milk ● 'Smash' ● Instant packet meals

Please do contribute. Thank you.

 Wendy Middleton