



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 eighteenth 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: Put on the spot!



When the young Leon Brittan appeared on the prestigious steps of the London School of Economics, he was in for a surprise. Indeed, he was to be 'put on the spot'! His small welcoming party immediately found themselves in a very embarrassing situation. They, and a large gathering of Christian students already gathered together in a lecture room were expecting to be addressed by a prominent academic theologian. And the one now standing before them was a budding politician, a non-practising Jew born of Lithuanian parents. So, what was to be done now?

Leon, later to become Baron Brittan of Spennithorne, was not one to be deterred. His driving intelligence allowed him to cope with almost anything that came his way. He proceeded to the hall and engaged the young students almost at once, putting them on the spot. "How is it possible that young, highly intelligent men and women, such as you, gathered here today, can think of themselves as sheep? And yet", he might have continued, "this is the image we have in the New Testament. Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd and his followers, a flock of sheep. Sheep are not intelligent creatures. They are incapable of making decisions for themselves. They are unable to control their movements; and they can get themselves into the most bizarre and perilous scrapes".

Unfortunately, I don't know how the discussion went from that point. But put yourselves 'on the spot'. Would you remain silent and let others do

the talking or might you, possibly, stand up and give an account of yourself as a thinking person and as a Christian, not at all “ashamed to confess the faith of Jesus Christ”, as the Book of Common Prayer puts it?

Let me give a personal response. I may have answered the charge in the following terms:

"The decision to follow Christ is rational and it is personal. It is based on who it is will lead us and where it is we shall be taken. Mr. Brittan, you have asked us a religious question and we must therefore answer you in religious terms, as quaint as that might be in the context of secular politics. For us, Christ is not a political leader, not even a purveyor of moral imperatives. He holds within himself the full authority of God himself. So, it is not surprising, then, that we put our trust in him and will follow him – but along the way we will, like everyone else, make our own decisions, making allowances for our own weaknesses and failures. We do not have a party manifesto. Nor do we have a particular party ideology. We are essentially guided by Christ and God's Holy Spirit.

Politics, we are told is the art of the possible. We look upon ourselves as responsible, intelligent and rational as any other group of students. But even your own leader would admit that politics can take us only so far along the road of understanding. We look beyond this time and place. We might add, a greater than Margaret Thatcher is here! As our national bard very nearly said; "there are more things in heaven and earth, (Mr. Brittan) than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

Like many people in this country, we will be corralled into the voting booths this month and indeed, as Christians, we will be pleased to be a part of this secular, shepherding and democratic process. But from time to time in life, I find myself in a perilous place and need the kind of help that is not available in any human institution, however well governed. And then I am happy to be found and collected and taken to a safe place – just like one of those crazy sheep!

 Leighton Thomas

● Dates for your diary



Ascension Day Service

Please come to the United Benefice Ascension Day Service on Thursday 14th May at St. Thomas' Church, Goring at 8pm. This will be a very special service with Holy Communion and singing from our wonderful choir.



Holy Communion with Archdeacon Judy French

I am delighted to give you advance notice that Archdeacon Judy French will be officiating at the Holy Communion Services on Sunday 21st June at St. Thomas' Goring at 9.30am and at St. Mary's, Streatley at 11.15am.

These services promise to be very special so I hope you can make one of them. (You are of course very welcome to come to both!)

 The Rev Paul Boughton

● Janet Pound Piano Recital



We are delighted to announce that Janet Pound will be giving a piano recital from 3pm to 4pm on Sunday 24th May at St Thomas' Church, Goring.

Janet will be playing a variety of pieces from her popular repertoire. There is no charge for the recital, but donations will be gratefully received towards Church expenses and the upkeep of our community piano. The recital will be followed by refreshments in the Canterbury Room. Everyone welcome.

 Elizabeth Parkinson

● **Christian Aid Week 10th – 16th May**



Four times a week, in a remote corner of Ethiopia, Loko makes a back-breaking eight-hour trip to gather wood. It's a task she dreads, but she steels herself to do it because if she doesn't her children will starve. She prays to God as she walks. "I ask him to change my life and lead us out of this," she says.

Just £5 could give Loko a loan to start her own business buying and selling tea and coffee, freeing her from her desperate task and allowing her to spend more time caring for her family.

The charity Christian Aid works with those of all faiths and none to support some of the world's poorest people. Work is always done with local partner organisations to ensure that funding is used wisely and directed to where it can be of most benefit. This year Christian Aid Week is focussing on the plight of women in Ethiopia. As always I need lots of people to help with the house-to-house collection in our villages. Please contact me if you could possibly help with this.

There will be various events during the week for Christian Aid:

Sunday 10th May: Special Service at 5pm

A special service in St Thomas's Church at 5pm, including a short film about Christian Aid's work in Ethiopia. Everyone is very welcome. Refreshments will be served after the service.



Monday 11th May: Bread and soup lunch

You are invited to a delicious bread and soup lunch from 12 noon until 2pm at Oriel House, Thames Road.

10th – 16th May: House-to-house collections

A house-to-house collection will take place in Goring and Streatley. We always need more collectors to ensure that everyone in our villages gets an envelope.

Please give as much support as you can. Thank you.



Wendy Middleton (875435)