



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 twenty-sixth 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: Do not lose heart!

Someone once said to me: "Growing old is not for the faint-hearted," and as the years go by, I am beginning to see exactly what they meant. Even if we have been blessed with good health, there is no way of avoiding the fact that as we get older we slow down and "wear and tear" start to take their toll. When we forget things like people's names we begin to worry about dementia. Niggling aches and pains make us anxious about our mobility in the future. We admire those who are already coping bravely with these sorts of problems and wonder if we will be as strong as they are when the time comes.

Of course, this is not only a problem for senior citizens. Many younger people have to cope with changes in their capacity to do things too, because of accident or illness, and for them it is even harder because of hopes and dreams which may not now be fulfilled.

The apostle Paul has something to say on the subject of diminished ability. We don't know exactly what he was suffering from, but he called it a "thorn in his flesh." In 2 Corinthians 12, we read that he prayed repeatedly for God to take it away from him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul then accepted his disability: "...for Christ's sake, I delight in weakness... for when I am weak, then am I strong."

In other words, when he felt he didn't have the strength to do something that God wanted him to do, he had to rely completely on God to strengthen him through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that God would have the glory, not him.

When we consider all that Paul achieved in spite of terrible hardships and suffering, that should be a great encouragement to us. Paul's experience of God's grace taught him never to lose heart. Whatever he suffered, he felt renewed inwardly day by day. (2 Cor. 4: 16)

As Christians, it is not the jobs we do or did which define us. Our identity is found in Jesus Christ. We are children of God and no amount of disability can take that away. We can never "retire" from being Christians any more than we can "retire" from being a son or daughter. Whatever our age or limitations, God will always have a purpose for our lives, and we can rely on him to give us his power to do whatever task he has prepared for us. How amazing is that!



Judith Aguda, Licensed Lay Minister

From The Vicarage...



Visit from our Bishop!

Goring church was celebrating at St Thomas' on Sunday 7th February. The Bishop of Dorchester was there, the Goring Primary School choir sang beautifully and the 2nd Goring and Streatley Scouts came to worship God as well. It was a highlight among our monthly Family Services which take place at 9.30am every first Sunday at Goring.

In keeping with the differing styles of the two churches, the celebrations continued at St Mary's in Streatley later in the morning when the Bishop celebrated God's love for us in a service of Holy Communion, set in a well-filled church, with the united choirs of the two churches. The Bishop's visit concluded with a feast of wonderful aperitifs (or was it lunch?) in the Morrell Room, thanks to the generosity of members of the congregation.



Palm Sunday

The beginning of the end – that's Palm Sunday. And it all begins so well, with a triumphant crowd welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem. But then we go on to hear of events of later in the week.

In Goring, the service will be indoors and we will begin at 9.30am.

In Streatley, we will leave the church at about 11.05 to walk to the crossroads where we will begin the service at 11.15am. Soon after, we will begin a triumphal entry – with a horse! – into Streatley, reminding us of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on an ass. Once inside the Church building, we are reminded of what the Holy City held for Jesus.

Do come to join whichever service suits you best.



Celebrating Easter

Have you ever lived through the whole of Easter? No, not just been alive through Easter, but put yourself through the emotional roller-coaster of the weekend?

That is precisely the purpose of the daily services from Maundy Thursday to Easter Day.

On Maundy Thursday we recall the last supper: Jesus washes his disciples' feet as a sign of serving them and shares a last meal with them. Then, knowing that he has been betrayed to the hateful Jewish authorities, he waits in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying and asking his followers to pray with him. We live through this with Jesus in the 8pm service at South Stoke.

On Good Friday, Jesus is tried on false charges, condemned to death by a judge that allowed crowd pressure to overrule his judgement and then crucified: his death being hugely significant for every one of us. This we will remember on Good Friday, both at the service of Meditation at Goring at 2pm and also at a Family Service at the Lock at 3.15pm. We are left having heard that our Lord Jesus has died for us.

Saturday is a rather empty day; Jesus has been crucified and once confirmed as dead, taken from the cross and buried. It seems that it's all over. But at 8pm we gather at Goring in anticipation of what we know happened on Easter Day. A service of vigil, into which bursts the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

Easter Day brings the wonderful news of the resurrection of Jesus to a new and eternal life; this is a new life that he invites you and me to share. No wonder that is the greatest celebration we know as Christians. A day when every Christian person is asked to celebrate the very heart of their faith by worshipping God together for his victory over death. In the Benefice we will do this in each parish, with the Easter Family Service being held at 11am in Streatley.

If you have yet to "live through the whole of Easter," do seize the opportunity this year; I feel confident that it will affect your faith in God. And if you have "lived through the whole of Easter" before, you already know why we mark every day of the most important weekend in the history of humanity.



Being a good steward

If you entrust something that is precious to you to someone else, you hope that they will look after it and return it to you in very good condition. In short, you hope that the person to whom you entrust your precious belongings will be a good steward. Jesus told various parables about this.

We are reminded annually that God asks us to use well all that he has entrusted to each of us: our abilities, our time, our wealth and possessions. That will be at the heart of the Stewardship Renewal on Sunday 28th February.

If you are a member of one of the churches (an electoral roll member of Goring, Streatley or South Stoke), you should have a letter to collect from your church on Sunday 28th February, asking you to review your share in God's work through these

church communities in the light of the ministry that is planned for this year. Excitingly, this includes Steve Johnson and his young family joining us at the beginning of July; Steve will be ordained in Oxford on 2nd July and then come to the Benefice as our assistant curate.

If you are not a member of one of the churches but would like to support the church, do ask at your church for a copy of the Stewardship Renewal letter.

God calls each of us to use what he has entrusted to us to enable Christian ministry. I am so grateful for the generous way that so many people do just that. Thank you!



What is there for children?

One of the priorities of our ministry is to make it possible for parents who long to see their children grow up with faith in God, to do just that.

As parents we send our children to school every day so that they won't miss a crucial part of the syllabus. Did you ever sit an exam where a question made you wish you had caught up with the lesson that you missed? In the same way, *Tom Toms* teaches the Christian faith to a syllabus; that means that a child who attends each week will cover the essentials of the faith at a level appropriate to their age. That helps children to have an age appropriate faith and in due course develop a mature adult faith in Jesus Christ.

Before long I hope we will also be able to offer opportunities for adults to refresh their faith in God, not only from the teaching and prayers in services of worship but also with other openings. Do look out for news of these.

I am so grateful to the team of leaders who make *Tom Toms* possible by giving their time and energy to prepare and to teach our children, week by week. And also to Sue who oversees the syllabus. Thank you so much!

That's why we make sure there is something for the whole family, at least every week in term time, be that a regular Family Service or *Tom Toms* (Sunday School!) and a service that enables you to worship God, to learn from the Bible (well, God, actually, we hope) and to meet him as we remember the death of Jesus for us.

May we have the courage to lay, now, the foundations of learning, Christian friendship and prayer, which can give us the joy in years to come of seeing our children and grand-children grow up with a mature adult trust in our loving heavenly Father, confident that their eternal future is secure.



The Revd. Paul Boughton



Paul Page Piano Recital, St Mary's Church

Paul Page played a stunning set of piano pieces and also gave our new piano some very thorough exercise! We were treated to Mozart's *Sonata in F* (K332) as the main item in the concert; added to this were works by Scarlatti, Schubert, Granados, Shostakovich, Chopin and Thomas Hewitt Jones thus taking us for a lively gallop through time from the 18th Century to the present day. The concert was a wonderful experience and certainly brightened up a dark January evening.

 Stella



Children's Society Boxes

In Goring and Streatley there are around forty people who keep special boxes in their homes to collect for The Children's Society. The amounts they collect vary between £5 and £100, and this year when I gathered-in the boxes we had raised a total of £1,300. This was then doubled by the Gatehampton Trust thus making a considerable donation to the invaluable work that is carried out helping disadvantaged young people have meaningful lives.

Some people have had their boxes since 1992 when we raised only £225. They have been joined by others which accounts for the larger collection because despite inflation, the individual collections have remained much the same. Nowadays less cash is used, but it is still there and notes and cheques are also welcome.

There are no projects running nearby, but in deprived areas various projects look after runaways, child-carers and nursery/family groups. The Society also advises the Government on matters such as The Children's Commission on Poverty. Do visit www.childrensociety.org.uk to find out more.

If you would like quietly to help this valuable work with young people by keeping a box in your home please contact rhonabell@gmail.com to find out more.

 Rhona Bell



Malcolm Walker

Many of you will already know that our former organist, Malcolm Walker, died of cancer just before Christmas at the age of 73. Nine of us from Goring, mostly from the Church Choir, went to Exeter Cathedral on 18th January for his funeral. A congregation of several hundred people, representing Malcolm's many and varied interests, heard our former choir lead, Professor Dame Julia Slingo, give a moving eulogy, capturing both Malcolm's remarkable talents and loveable character. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Malcolm's widow, Diane.

 Pauline Garrett



Women's World Day of Prayer Service 2016

This year's service will be in the Goring Free Church on Friday 4th March at 1.30 pm. The service has been prepared by the Christian women of Cuba, expressing their hopes and fears for their country. The same service will be held throughout the world in over 170 countries, in over 60 languages and 1000 dialects and involving more than 3 million people. Over 6000 services will be held in Britain alone!

Despite the title, the service is not only for women – men are very welcome too. There will be tea and cake served in the Free Church Hall after the service.



Judy Crawford and Judith Aguda (WWDP Committee)



Thank you, Pam

Pam Carter has cleaned St. Thomas' Communion Silver for many, many years; more years than she or I wish to remember! Pam has worked tirelessly, mostly unseen, to keep the Communion Silver polished to a standard fit to grace the table of the King of Kings. On behalf of the PCC and the family of St Thomas, Pam, we offer you our grateful thanks for your dedication to this ministry.

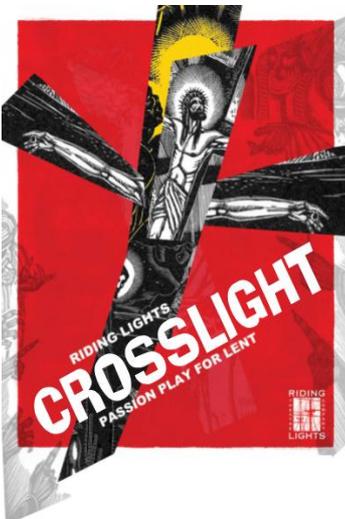
Sadly Pam has had to relinquish this important job and we now need to find a volunteer to take up where she has left off. Pam has left the silver in an excellent condition so it will not be an onerous task.

If you feel you could take up the ministry of silver cleaning (there isn't a great deal of it) please contact Brenda Kerr-Muir, David Beddall or the Revd Liz Dowding.

Again Pam, a big thank you for all your years of service.



Liz Dowding, Associate Priest



Riding Lights: a passion play in Cholsey

Riding Lights, the leading Christian theatre company in the UK, are coming to perform *Crosslight*, a passion play for Lent at St Mary's, Cholsey on Saturday 19th March at 7.30pm. It looks like it is the only performance of *Crosslight* in the diocese, so Cholsey's the place to come!

Some of you may well have seen *Inheritance* by Riding Lights at Dorchester Abbey about three years ago, so you will know how good they are and what a moving experience it is.

Tickets are £12 or £8 for students and under 18s. Tickets can be purchased from our church office: phone 651812, by email mail@cholseychurch.plus.com or online through our website: www.stmaryscholsey.org