



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

May 2014 – 8th edition

- All enquiries 01491 873128 or stthomasmaryandrew@gmail.com



Price per printed copy

● Welcome to the eighth 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: Some thoughts from your Associate Priest



The waiting is almost over; ten and a half months without an incumbent. A strange period of time when responsibilities are devolved mostly to the people of the parishes (but nothing must change), as a suitable new person is sought. Many in the wider world find the idea of an interregnum – "a period when normal government is suspended, especially between successive reigns and regimes" (Concise Oxford Dictionary), unbelievable. "Where is the familiarization? The hand-over? The making it easier and quicker for the new person to get to grips with the job?" they ask.

I believe we can all think of good reasons why it's so, not least that an interregnum gives us time to look at things differently, not to take things for granted, to offer our time and talents in ways we might not have thought of previously, to draw closer together in our churches and in the benefice.

A great deal has been achieved during the interregnum and, as far as I'm aware, without too many hiccups! We can be pleased and confident as we hand over the benefice to Paul that it is in good order and I believe will continue to be so. It would be foolish of me to try to thank individuals for all their help and support during this time as I would surely leave someone out! However I would like to thank our retired clergy for all the extra services they have taken, and the visiting clergy and speakers who have added greatly to worship in the parishes.

The arrangements are almost complete for Paul's arrival and we turn towards a new chapter in the life of this United Benefice. A chapter that will no doubt bring changes as time goes by. We cannot stand still if we as Christians are to be taken seriously, and as Christians take seriously our discipleship in these villages. Christ has no hands but our hands to do his work today. He has no feet now but our feet to lead mankind in the way. He has no tongue but our tongues to tell them how he died. He has no help but our help to bring them to his side. (Annie Johnston Flint) It is us – you and me – who are responsible for bringing others to Christ, bringing more people into our churches, spreading the word, keeping our churches viable, making them visible as places where all are accepted and loved. It's not just the task of the Vicar; we all must work together in love as a Christian community.

The poem *Blame the Vicar* by John Betjeman always makes me smile because there's an element of truth in it:

When things go wrong it's rather tame to find we are ourselves to blame,
 It gets the trouble over quicker to go and blame it on the Vicar.
 The Vicar, after all, is paid to keep us bright and undismayed.
 The Vicar is more virtuous too than lay folks such as me and you.
 For what's a Vicar really for except to cheer us up? What's more,
 The Vicar should be all pretence and never, never give offence.

...

And when we quarrel, heal the rifts.
 When we are rude he should be meek and always turn the other cheek.

...

Dear People, who have read so far, I know how really kind you are,
 I hope that you are always seeing your Vicar as a human being.
 Making allowances when he does things with which you don't agree!

The poem goes on with dire consequences!

In this joyful season of Easter-tide, let us step out in confidence, together with our risen Lord, as we welcome Paul and his family, and to resolve to continue working together as brothers and sisters in Christ to write the next chapter of Christian witness in this benefice. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed.



Liz Dowding

● Report on the concert by Steventon Choral Society at St Mary's Church



On 5th April over 50 members of Steventon Choral Society came to give a concert in St Mary's Church. The main items were Karl Jenkins beautiful and moving *Armed Man*, the Mass for Peace that he wrote for the Millennium, and Schubert's lovely *Mass in G*. Steventon Choral Society also sang three pieces by Rutter, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* by Pergolesi, a choral version of Pachelbel's *Canon in D* and Haydn's *The Heavens are telling*. It was a wonderful evening of enchanting music which the audience all enjoyed and appreciated. On top of this enjoyment, over £450 was raised for the St Mary's Piano Fund.

 Stella

● Retiring collection for the Church Housing Trust



The Church Housing Trust supports projects all over the country to help homeless people, usually in hostels, providing food, shelter, medical aid and often training in practical skills such as cooking and the use of computers to prepare them to go on living independently. Most temporary residents of these hostels find their lives transformed after receiving support, encouragement and training which gives them the confidence to start a new life.

At Mike Jackson House in Aldershot, a hostel specifically for ex-servicemen and women needing temporary care, the CHT has recently contributed to the construction of a new log cabin in the grounds, which can be used for therapy sessions, and where residents can relax in peaceful surroundings. In Reading, the CHT raised nearly £22,000 to provide a community kitchen within a hostel run by its partner, Riverside English Churches Housing Group.

Please help to keep homeless people off the streets by contributing to the special collection on 11th May. Thank you.

 Norma Bryant

● Christian Aid Week



Christian Aid Week this year is from 11th to the 17th May. This year, our events to support Christian Aid are spread across the month. Do please come to as many of them as you can. As always I need lots of people to help with the house-to-house collection in our villages. Please contact me if you could help with this.

- **Thursday 1st May:** You are invited to a delicious bread and soup lunch from 12 noon – 2pm at Oriel House, Thames Road.
- **Sunday 4th May:** The Discoverers youth group will be holding a cake sale in the Canterbury Room after the 10am Family Service in St Thomas's Church.

- **Sunday 11th May:** There will be a special service in St Thomas's Church at 5pm for Christian Aid. It will include a short film about their work. Everyone is very welcome. Refreshments will be served after the service.
- **11th to 17th May:** 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.

The charity Christian Aid works with those of all faiths and with 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 those affected as a result of conflict. For a growing number of people across the world, the horror of war is a part of daily life. Right now, fuelled by the devastating violence in both Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the numbers of people driven from their homes by war is on the rise. It currently stands at 42 million people. We can't turn our backs. We must act now. Together we can send people living in fear this message: you are not alone. We're with you, helping you to rebuild your lives, and working for peace.

- £15 could provide blankets for refugee children to protect them from bitter night-time temperatures.
- £40 could provide enough good quality and nutritious food for two refugee children for a month.
- £150 could help us provide specialist emotional support for a child deeply traumatized by the horror of war that they've witnessed or experienced.

Please give as much support as you can.

 Wendy Middleton; phone 875435



● **Goring and Streatley Festival**



From Friday 27th June until Sunday 6th July the festival is an extravaganza of music, dance, theatre, comedy, literature, workshop, fringe and fun!

For more details see the festival's web at:
<http://goringandstreatleyfestival.org/>