



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

November 2017 – 43rd edition

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• Welcome to the forty-third 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 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.



A recital of choral music

Following Eve's delightful description in last month's Riverbank of the church choir, I couldn't resist including this colourful photograph of the combined choirs of St Thomas' Church, the Trebles, and Watership Cantabile. It was taken at the end of a concert they gave on 8th October in aid of St Thomas' organ fund.



Their musical director Michael Howell said in his introduction that some of their pieces would show-off just why the "bottom heavy" organ needed refurbishing. That may be true, but the skill of organist Bryan Almond made it difficult to tell. The musical programme took us through several hundred years of music from Gibbons' *This is the record of John* written in the early 1600s to Michael's own composition *The star song, a carol to the King* written about six years ago. We even had hints of a demented American stadium organ with Vaughan Williams' exciting *Let all the world in every corner sing*.



Toria; photo by Robin Middleton



Some thoughts from your Associate Priest

There are times when thoughts, ideas, actions come quickly and clearly to mind, easy to understand, to articulate, to carry out. At other times they just seem to float around randomly, hazily, as in a fog and almost out of reach. They don't seem to make much sense, but at the same time it's almost impossible to dismiss them and, more to the point, it can be frustrating trying to find in them some order and meaning.

I recently heard about the death of someone I have known as a passing acquaintance for many years as our sons were at primary school together. I had a compelling urge to attend her funeral, but I couldn't work out why it should seem so important. Yes, there was always a cheery conversation when we met and over the years as grandchildren arrived I loved the soft toys that appeared in one of the upstairs windows. Her house was tastefully decorated at Christmas and through the summer the garden was a riot of colour which always gave me great pleasure. But above all else I knew from others she was a person who truly lived out her Christian faith.

With these seemingly rather random observations and disconnected thoughts falling over each other it was almost at the last minute I felt they were important enough prompts to attend her funeral. It's not the first funeral I've attended at a Roman Catholic Church and it probably won't be the last. It was right from the very first hymn I knew I was there for a purpose. The words of that hymn "I the Lord of Sea and Sky" are based on Isaiah ch. 6: Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, who will go for us?" and I said "Here am I; send me!" Just for a few moments I was in another place and feeling the same amazement I had years ago on hearing "I the Lord of Sea and Sky" for the very first time. My answer to that same question had been "here I am Lord; send me."

Where was this going? It was a beautiful service with much food for thought. My schooling was a Catholic convent so many of the prayers are still reasonably familiar, but very quickly I was back in time again. As we sang "Soul of my Saviour" and "Hail, Queen of Heav'n, the ocean star" I was back at school with my earliest experiences of God as a spiritual being rather than just the God of Sunday School Bible stories. It felt I was on a journey in reverse, but for what reason?

There are times I believe when God speaks very clearly and we must respond. On other occasions he seems to give pointers, perhaps gentle hints, maybe just a thought and we have to work out what it is he is asking of us before we can respond. Fran's funeral was one of these occasions. It gave me the opportunity to go back to the beginnings of my Christian journey and in the days that have followed to come forward again with thanks, recalling the high and lows of the journey, the many people who have shared and still are sharing the journey with me, the experiences of God's amazing goodness and his faithfulness when the going gets tough. It has renewed my wonder and amazement in a God who works out and continues to work out his plan for each one of us day by day.



Liz Dowding



Anniversaries

It would have been hard to miss the twentieth anniversary on 31st August of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. After all, there was plenty said and written. Meanwhile, the 30th October marks the anniversary of another significant event in the life of this nation. Whether it receives the same volume of publicity, we'll see. And yet in terms of its impact, this was significantly greater than even the death of Diana.

On 30th October 1517, a relatively unknown lecturer of theology in Wittenberg (in what today we know as Germany), one Martin Luther, nailed 95 theses (short statements) to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In these 95 theses Luther laid out what he saw as being the shortcomings of medieval Catholic theology. It would be wrong to assume that Luther was seeking to start a revolution; he wasn't. He was merely seeking to start a debate. And it would be wrong to assume that he alone was responsible for what became known as the Reformation; he wasn't. But his actions that day were the spark that lit the flame.

So why, five hundred years on, is the Reformation so significant? A big question, with little space to answer!

In short, the Reformation challenged the prevailing theology of the day in some key ways. In terms of the question "How can any person come back into a good relationship with God?" Luther's response was that this can never be through works, but only by God's grace alone (*sola gratia*). In terms of the question "How does this grace come?" Luther's response was that this can never be through priests or the rituals of religion but only by Christ alone (*sola Christi*). (Does that remind you of a hymn?) In terms of the question "How do we find Christ?" Luther's response was through Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). And in terms of the question "How do we appropriate God's grace?" Luther's response was this can never be through human effort but only by faith alone (*sola fide*).

The Reformers of the sixteenth century were moved to put their livelihoods, homes, fortunes, and lives on the line to restore to the church these essential teachings of the gospel. Thanks be to God for those who five hundred years ago understood with burning clarity key Christian doctrines which today we frequently take for granted.

Do you have any anniversaries in your Christian life? Perhaps the occasion that you chose to follow Jesus Christ? A particular experience of God? Well, anniversaries are occasions for celebration.

In Christian love,

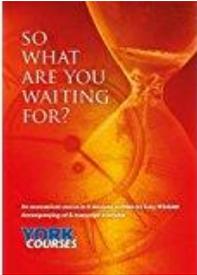


Paul



Ecumenical Advent Groups

The time has come to consider joining one of our popular Advent groups which will meet in small house groups to share our journey through Advent towards Christmas and Epiphany.



We will begin in the week starting 20th November and end with a combined Epiphany celebration in the Canterbury Room on 4th January. The course we will be following is "So what are you waiting for?", written by Rev Lucy Winkett, Rector of St James's Church, Piccadilly, and the cost of the course booklet is £5.00. Everyone is welcome so come and join us!



Judy Crawford and Alun Hughes



Transport for midweek Communion Services

There are a number of parishioners in the benefice who appreciate this shorter, more reflective Communion Service on Wednesdays at 10.30am in St Thomas of Canterbury. The timing of 10.30am makes it more accessible for some than the earlier 9.30am service on Sunday. There are other members of the community who would like to attend but cannot without transport.

The ministry team feel we need to find one or two, three or four willing people who would form a rota and give a small amount of time to offer transport for those unable to get to this Wednesday service on their own. The ministry of 'driving' is an important one if we, as a church family, are to keep our less able members together and in touch with worship.

If you think this is something you would be able to or would like to do please speak with one of the ministry team or call me Liz Dowding 873140. As an encouragement coffee is served after the service on the first Wednesday of each month!



Liz Dowding



The Three "C"s

Bishop Steven's vision for the Diocese is that we should all try, as individuals and congregations, to imitate Jesus by being more contemplative, compassionate and courageous. He has suggested that we should concentrate on being contemplative for the first year and try to discern where God is leading us. This doesn't mean that we should stop being compassionate and courageous, but rather that we should spend some time listening to God and finding out what he wants us to focus on.

With this in mind, we are planning to have a Benefice Prayer Breakfast on the third Saturday of each month. The first will be on Saturday 18th November in the Canterbury Room. Everyone is welcome! We will share a simple breakfast from

8.30am until 9.00am and then have a time of prayer, finishing promptly at 9.45am. There won't be any pressure to pray out loud if that's not your thing! The leader will begin with a few Bible verses and some opening prayers and then invite others to pray as they feel moved. Some may like to bring a prayer to read out, others might pray extemporarily, while others may just like to listen and say "Amen." The main focus of the prayers will be for guidance in the things we are currently doing in our parishes and for help to see where we should be going. If anyone has personal or family problems which they would like prayers for, they can speak to the leader who will arrange for someone to pray with them after the meeting.

Please try to make time for this important part of our corporate life as a Benefice. Prayer is the powerhouse of the church and enables us to keep "in synch" with God's plans.



Judith Aguda



Letter from Wallingford Foodbank

We have received a letter from the foodbank expressing their gratitude for all the gifts from our harvest services at St Thomas':

I am writing to thank the congregation of St Thomas' for the generous donation of food given as part of your harvest thanksgiving... The food is already sorted and stored ready for use in the Food Bank. We have had the busiest summer since we started some six years ago; our stock had become quite depleted and our financial reserves considerably reduced as we topped up the stock. In the last 12 months we have given three days-worth of food to over 1200 people in Wallingford and the surrounding area. Sadly, the need seems to go on increasing.

Thank you to everyone who brought gifts and to those who contributed to the box in the church porch. As you can see it is much appreciated.



Wendy Middleton



Janet Pound piano recital

If you are wondering what you could do on a cold and dreary Autumnal Sunday afternoon, then look no further! From 3pm to 4pm on Sunday 19th November, Janet Pound will be giving a piano recital in St Thomas' Church followed by refreshments in the Canterbury Room. Janet has devised a delightful romantic autumnal programme with works by Clementi, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin and Debussy.



There will be no charge for the recital, but donations are welcomed to go towards St. Thomas' Church expenses.



St Thomas' Christmas Fair

The Christmas Fair is to be held in Church again this year on Saturday 25th November, from 11.00am to 2pm. Make a note in your diary! There will be an opportunity to browse books, plants, preserves and cakes, and of course the usual delicious lunches will be served.

The toy stall is a chance to "recycle" those good quality toys that have been grown out of and replace with something else. Phoenix cards will have the usual selection available; there will be a children's colouring competition, and naturally, Father Christmas will be making an appearance.

We need 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 good quality toys, bric-a-brac, cakes, preserves, toiletries and plants. If you need items to be collected contact Chris Tassell on 873280, or they can be brought to Church before 11.00am on the 25th November, or between 4pm and 6pm the evening before (24th November).

Proceeds from this year's fair will be shared between church funds and our Mission Partner, Steve Poulson, who is working with street children in Honduras. Do come along and join us for a day of festive fun and fellowship.



Chris Tassell

PS. We need a few volunteers at 4pm on the 24th November to help move the chairs and put up the tables.



Our apologies for the delay in publishing Riverbank last month; we were battling changes made to the web server without our knowledge.



Toria and Robin

St Mary's Trinity Altar Frontal

The green Trinity Altar Frontal is back in its rightful place at St Mary's, having been restored and repaired. The Frontal is made of wool and linen, and both time and moths had taken their toll. Repairs took a considerable amount of time to complete, and were a major undertaking.



Leighton Thomas conducting the 11:15 Holy Communion Service on 8th October with the recently restored Trinity Altar Frontal.

Bishop Colin re-dedicated the Frontal during our Harvest Communion Service, and it was lovely that the restorers Helene Lister-Cheese and Helen Saunders-Gill from All Saints Embroidery, Oxford, were able to join us.

We were also very pleased to welcome Rory and Shelagh Laird from Dollar in Clackmannanshire whose generosity enabled the project to go ahead. A plaque in memory of Rory's parents, Dickie and Bobbie, long-time worshippers at St Mary's, has been attached to the back of the Frontal.

Two gazebos were erected outside the Church, and refreshments were served after the Service; the weather was perfect for the celebratory occasion.

 John Rogers; photo from Adrian Turner

United Benefice of
Goring & Streatley
with South Stoke



Benefice Calendar - November 2017

		<u>Goring</u>	<u>Streatley</u>	<u>South Stoke</u>
We. 1 st	Midweek Holy Communion and coffee	10.30		
Su. 5 th	Advent -4 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Family breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.45		
	Family Holy Communion Service	9.30		
	Family Service			11.15
	All Saints' service	16.00		
Tu. 7 th	South Stoke Prayer meeting @ Stoke Abbas			14.30
We. 8 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
Fr. 10 th	Streatley Primary Remembrance service		14.15	
Su. 12 th	Advent -3 Holy Communion	9.30	8.00	
	Remembrance Remembrance service	10.50	10.50	10.50
	Sunday Food and Fellowship lunch (Morrell Room)		13.00	
	Discoverers	17.00		
	Stillness on Sunday – 'Christian Love and Charity'		17.30	
We. 15 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	South Stoke Coffee Morning			10.30
Th. 16 th	Pick-a-Flick & Lunch – 'Lion'	10.30		
Sa. 18 th	Benefice Prayer Breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.30		
Su. 19 th	Advent -2 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Good News	9.30		
	Mattins			11.15
	Piano recital by Janet Pound Followed by refreshments in the Canterbury Room	15.00		
Mo. 20 th	Ecumenical Advent Groups begin Please sign up via list in churches			
We. 22 nd	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
Fr. 24 th	Come on Board Scrabble (Canterbury Room)	15.00		
Sa. 25 th	St Thomas' Christmas Fair	11.00		
Su. 26 th	Advent -1 Holy Communion	9.30	8.00	11.15
	Sung Mattins		11.15	
	Discoverers	17.00		
We. 29 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		

Morning Prayer: The ministry team pray the service of Morning Prayer together three times each week on Monday, Thursday & Friday at 8am during term time and 8:30am during school holidays.

For more details: call the Vicarage (875651) or look at the Website www.thomandmary.org.uk.