



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

December 2015 – 24th edition

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Price per printed copy

● Welcome to the twenty-fourth 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.



Christmas Pastoral Letter

Recent research seems to indicate that two in five children do not connect Christmas with the birth of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to comprehend this when over 35% attend church schools founded by one or other Christian Denomination. If this is true, we have a lot of work to do to turn the tide. Our own schools in the Benefice are actively aware of this and have several planned events and visits to the different churches before term ends. The Scripture Union are seeking to respond to this situation by giving children an exciting opportunity to step inside the Christian Story through a state-of-the-art digital Bible game, hosting hundreds of Christmas Unwrapped events in local schools and distributing thousands of copies of their new Christian Bible comics. A gift of £40 to the Scripture Union can help forty children not only hear, but read, play and experience the greatest story ever told. What better way to begin the Season than sharing God's gift to the world with children who don't know Jesus?

However, despite the saying "Christmas is for children," Christmas and its message is for all ages. Other recent research reveals many do not believe Jesus was a real person despite the writings of his near contemporaries who were not his disciples, affirming him as a teacher and miracle-worker who many believed to be God (Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, for example). In John's first letter:

"What we have seen with our eyes and heard, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you... his Son, Jesus Christ."

His disciples and many others were clear God had broken into the world in the person of Jesus. Matthew tells us that Mary named him Jesus ("Saviour") as she was instructed "because he will save his people from the consequences of their sins." The angels' greeting was "Peace with God, goodwill towards men." The shadow of the cross lay behind the manger.

The Christmas lights are already on in many towns and cities and commercialism has free reign (*sic*). Of course the giving of presents is a reflection of God's gift in Jesus Christ, but let us try to keep things in perspective. It is a time for giving, it is a time for family gatherings, but it is also a time for worship and praise. Perhaps we need once again to become as little children, to wonder at God's gift in Jesus and to respond to him as God and Saviour with our hearts and lives. That would truly be a HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

 The Rev. Canon Peter Downham



Appointment of New Assistant Curate

I am delighted to announce that the Bishop has confirmed that Steve Johnson will be ordained to serve his title as Assistant Curate in this Benefice with effect from July next year, subject to him completing his studies at theological college.

I expect you would like to know a little about Steve. He is married to Lindsay and they have two young daughters. Prior to ordination, Steve's experience has been in youth work and Mission Societies (having worked with CMS and Christian Aid). Now he comes to this benefice to continue his training as a priest in the Church of England. We look forward to the Johnson family moving into a Benefice house next summer when Steve has completed his studies. Steve will be ordained at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on Saturday, 2nd July 2016. Please pray for Steve and Lindsay as they prepare for this exciting new stage of ministry and for this next phase of Steve's training.

 The Revd. Paul Boughton



A greeting from Steve

I don't know where the time has gone! It has been a great privilege to be studying at Ridley Hall, Cambridge and this final year seems to be flying by. Before we know it, June will be here!

As a family we are excited for what God has in store for us in the next phase of ministry and it is wonderful to know that that starts with you all in the Benefice of Goring and

Streatley with South Stoke. We are looking forward to being with you from June next year, getting to know you, working with you, and walking with you.

Until June there are a lot of essays to write, a home to pack up and goodbyes to happen. We are holding onto Psalm 139 and would be grateful for your prayers for these things and settling into an area that is both a little familiar and completely new territory!

 Steve, Lindsay and their daughters



Advent United Benefice Services

We are marking the first Sunday of Advent this year (29th November) with two United Benefice Services. At 10.30am at St. Andrew's Church, South Stoke, we will have a United Benefice Service with Holy Communion where we will sing a beautiful setting of the service based on Schubert's *Deutsche Messe*. A service not to miss!

Then at 4pm the United Choirs of the Benefice will sing at the Advent Carol Service at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church, Goring. This is the pre-Christmas service to invite your friends to and will be followed by refreshments. Two services to relish!



Christmas Carol Services

Do come to your parish Christmas Carol Service on Sunday 20th December as follows:

- Goring @ 4pm with the United Choirs of the Benefice
- South Stoke @ 4pm
- Streatley @ 7pm with the United Choirs of the Benefice

On 20th December the morning services will follow the normal Sunday Service pattern.



Christmas Eve

You are invited to the following services on Christmas Eve!

Noisy Nativity

Come dressed as your favourite nativity character and join the angels, shepherds and wise men on their journey to Bethlehem to visit Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus. Noisy Nativity will take place at 3.30pm on Christmas Eve at St. Mary's Church, Streatley. Some costumes will be available in church. Everyone welcome!

Torchlight Procession and Carols in the Meadow

This year's torchlight procession will start at 6pm on Christmas Eve and will be followed by Christmas Carols sung around the bonfire at 6.40pm. Don't miss it!

Midnight Communion

There will be Midnight Communion services in all three churches – Goring, Streatley and South Stoke – this year at 11.15pm. Do join the celebration of the first Communion of Christmas!



Christmas Day

So that we may worship the one who is "the reason for the season" on Christmas Day:

- The Benefice Family Service will be at Goring at 10.30am and will be followed by a short said communion for those who would like to stay.

- For those who prefer a choral communion celebration of Christmas, there will be a Christmas Holy Communion at Streatley also at 10.30am.
- South Stoke's Christmas Service at 10.30am will be suited to the whole family and be followed by Communion for those who wish to stay.

I wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas!

 The Revd. Paul Boughton



Special services at Christmas

	Goring	South Stoke	Streatley
Sunday 30 th November Advent Carols	4pm	-	-
Sunday 6 th December Advent Family Service	 9.30am	 11.15am	-
Sunday 20 th December Carol Service	4pm	4pm	7pm
Christmas Eve Noisy Nativity	-	-	 3.30pm
Carols in the Meadow	-	-	 6pm
Midnight Communion	11.15pm	11.15pm	11.15pm
Christmas Day Holy Communion	-	-	8am
Holy Communion with choir	-	-	10.30am
Family Service	 10.30am	 10.30am	-
...and every Sunday Main service	 9.30am	11.15am	11.15am



Services especially suitable for young children



Goring Chamber Choir concert: On Christmas Night

The Goring Chamber Choir Christmas concert will take place on Sunday 13th December at 3pm in St Thomas' Church, Goring.

The concert will include well-loved carols and a few new ones for the choir and congregation, and will be conducted by the musical director Frances Brewitt-Talyor with Michael Howell as accompanist.

Ticket prices are £12 (full), £10 (concessions) and £5 (students) and are on sale at Inspirations in Goring, from Choir members, and on the door (subject to availability). Refreshments will be sold at the interval. Proceeds will be in support of Crisis at Christmas.



Graeme Pearce



United Benefice Christingle Service

For the second year, we will be holding a United Benefice Christingle Service at Candlemas (or as near Candlemas as we can) on Sunday 31st January 2016 in St. Mary's Church, Streatley. As this service celebrates Jesus as the Light of the World, Candlemas is an appropriate time to light our Christingles. More details to follow in the January edition of Notes from the Riverbank.



The Revd. Paul Boughton



OpenDoors

Charity collection for Open Doors UK

The charity collection at St Thomas' on the 13th December will be for Open Doors UK. There has never been a more important time to support this Oxfordshire charity working to support persecuted and displaced Christians across the world. At the moment the desperate plight of Christians from Syria and Iraq in neighbouring refugee camps, many of them in real danger of starvation as international funds dry up and winter closes in, is placing an unprecedented strain on the charity's funds. At the same time the vicious anti-Christian violence of so-called Islamic State is matched in Africa, Afghanistan, Vietnam and elsewhere by other similar extremist organisations or totalitarian governments. Please don't forget them in their hour of real need. Thank you.



Garry Alder



Sue Ryder, Nettlebed

The collection at St Thomas' on 20th December will be donated to the Nettlebed Sue Ryder Hospice. Those of us with family or friends who have spent time there know what a wonderful place it is. The quality of care and love shown in both the Day Centre downstairs and in the palliative treatment rooms on the first floor is superb, impressive and moving. It needs money, and deserves our support. Thank you.



Alun Hughes



Kamuli Mission Hospital

In Uganda, as in other poor countries, many women deliver their babies at home or far from any medical help. If a woman develops an obstruction in labour she needs an emergency caesarean section. If this cannot be done she may die or deliver a stillbirth after days of agony in labour, and may suffer from a vesico-vaginal fistula.

Dr Brian Hancock and other UK doctors make visits to a number of hospitals in Uganda, but their main focus is at Kamuli, making about three visits a year operating on about 25 patients each time. In the last 10 years over 500 patients have been operated on at Kamuli. The cure rate depends on the skill of the surgeon and good after-care. National surgeons are encouraged and taught wherever possible so that they can take over this work in time.

To ensure that this work and other life-saving projects can continue, please give generously to the collection at St Thomas' Church on 25th December.



Pat Nias



Double the collection for WaterAid

This winter's WaterAid target is to supply clean water to more women in childbirth, so that they can drink clean water and wash themselves and their newborn babies in water that is not carrying infection. In many areas clean water is not available even in hospitals. Please contribute, if you can, to the collection for WaterAid at St Thomas' on 10th January. Money we donate will have twice as much impact as usual because the UK government supports this appeal and will double every £1 we give.



Patsy Calder



Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir

This acclaimed choir will be performing at St Thomas' Church at 7.30pm on Saturday 13th February. Amongst songs with themes looking towards Valentine's Day and St David's Day there may be a couple in Welsh and the opportunity for audience participation! The soprano Hannah Frazier-Mackenzie will also be singing. Refreshments will be served in the interval and it promises to be a wonderful evening.

Look out for the posters. Tickets will go on sale in the New Year at £10 and are likely to go fast. Chris Tucker has very kindly agreed to host the Box Office tel: 875094

More information at <http://www.oxfordwelshmvc.org.uk/> where you may find some photos of the choir's visit to the Goring and Streatley Festival in 2014.



Brenda Kerr Muir



A merry Christmas, and a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year to all Riverbank readers!



Toria