



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

February 2016 – 25th edition

- All enquiries 01491 875651 or stthomasmaryandrew@gmail.com



Price per printed copy

● Welcome to the twenty-fifth 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: Some thoughts from your Associate Priest

This year the Liturgical Calendar moves the church very quickly forward: Christmas, Epiphany and (by the time this is being read) Candlemas are all in the past, and there is hardly time to take a breath before Ash Wednesday and Lent are upon us.

New Year's resolutions may well have been made and broken, perhaps because they haven't been thought about carefully enough, or enough effort put into keeping them. Lent is very different. The resolutions we make for Lent are not just promises we make to ourselves for ourselves, but promises we make before God as a way of strengthening our faith and resolve to follow him and the Christian way more closely.

The New Testament tells that after Jesus was baptized "full of the Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil." This was to prepare and strengthen Jesus for the ministry that lay ahead. It was the Holy Spirit that led Jesus to a place apart where, as Luke says, Jesus "ate nothing at all during these days, and when it was over, he was famished." Jesus resolved to fast for forty days and strengthened by this resolve with the power of the Spirit he overcame three great temptations. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit he returned to Galilee where he began to teach and was praised by everyone.

For early Christians the period of forty days before Easter were the days of instruction and preparation for those seeking admission into the Church? As such, those forty days have come down through the centuries to us as Lent, a time for modern day Christians to take a closer look at the way we live our life in Christ. All, I'm sure, will admit to falling short of what is expected of us as Christian people. We are fallible human beings, but that cannot be an excuse. Lent is a time to look inward and to ask a few questions of ourselves: What are our short-comings? Are there ways we can overcome them? Do we need help to overcome them, and do we have the resolve and strength to do so?

Psalm 121 points in the direction for resolve and strength "from where will my help come?" The answer is immediate: "my help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Jesus received help and strength while fasting in the wilderness through his relationship with the Spirit. Many Christians today fast regularly as part to their drawing closer to the Lord. Jesus was sustained by his Father through the power of the Spirit in prayer.

It is through prayer that we too find help and strength for ourselves. Traditionally Lent has been a time for giving up, sacrificing what we particularly like or perhaps to which we have become addicted. However the "giving-up" should be done consciously as a "prayer in action." Lent can also be a time of commitment to do something extra and in busy lives that might mean having to giving up something else!

We are fortunate in the Benefice to have well tried-and-tested Lent groups. If you haven't experienced being part of a group before, now is an opportunity to do so, to meet with others in a safe, comfortable and friendly environment. You don't have to be theologian to join in – just have a desire to learn more and to grow in Christian faith.

If groups really are not for you there are plenty of Lent books available on-line or from a Christian Bookshop. Why not set aside some regular time to read a chapter from your Bible and then to pray? You may be surprised how God speaks through his word. If walking is a favorite activity, try prayer walking. As you walk, pray for occupants of the houses you pass, children in the school, people in the surgery or at the dentist, those who pass by you. You might like to take different routes and pray for different things you see or that you feel God is asking you to pray for. The newspaper often gives an opportunity to pray for situations much farther afield that are in need of God's healing touch.

Lent is a time to commit to something new as well as giving up something if that is how you like to mark this season of preparation. Jesus fasted for forty days; we are not asked to do that, but to do what we can to strengthen our relationship with him whether by prayer or by "prayer in action." May we all live Lent to the best of our ability, we will then come to a joyous Easter.



Liz Dowding, Associate Priest

PS. I have various Lent Books if anyone would like to see them and perhaps find something you might like to use. Tel: 873140

From The Vicarage...



Christingle Service for everyone on Sunday 31st January

The Christingle Service is especially suitable for families with young children, but we'd love everyone to come! It is a very special occasion with lots of candles as we celebrate Jesus as the *Light of the World*.

We begin with Christingle-making over tea in the Morrell Room at 3.15pm; the Christingle Service begins at 4pm in St. Mary's Church, Streatley. Everyone welcome!



Pancake Party

Please pray for the Year 4 Class of Goring Primary School as they come to St. Thomas' for a pancake party on Friday 5th February as their introduction to Lent.



Starting Lent well

Do come and join the Church Family as we mark the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday (10th February) with two Communion Services:

- 10.30am in Goring, and
- 8pm in South Stoke

Lent is a time of reflection and penitence so if you would like to receive a cross, in ashes, on your forehead at the beginning of Lent, this will be available at both services.



Marriage Preparation Course

Several couples will be married in the Benefice this year. Each of them will attend a marriage preparation course to enrich their relationship.

Would you please pray for the four couples who have joined the Benefice course as they meet on 30th January and 13th February, and for Paul Boughton and Liz Dowding who are leading the course.



The Bishop is coming!

We are delighted to be able to welcome our Bishop, Colin Fletcher, to the Benefice on Sunday 7th February. There will be just two main services in the Benefice that day and the Bishop will be speaking at both of them. You may choose between:

- 9.30am Family Service @ Goring (with Goring School Choir singing; a crèche is available);
- 11.15am Holy Communion @ Streatley.



Visiting Preacher

On Sunday 21st February we look forward to the return visit of Roger McKinlay who will preach at both Goring and Streatley. Roger is a lay minister, an engineer and a former president of the Royal Institute of Navigation.



Stewardship Renewal

A note for your diary that we will be launching this year's Stewardship Renewal on Sunday 28th February. A letter of explanation will be sent to all members of the Electoral Rolls. If you are not a member of the Electoral Roll of one of the parishes, but would like to know more then please come to a service on 28th February or call the Vicarage for an information pack (tel. 875651).

We are very grateful for the wide support of the ministry of the churches in Goring, Streatley and South Stoke which enables us to thrive as a Christian Community.

Thank you!



The Revd. Paul Boughton



St Thomas' Christmas Fair

The annual St. Thomas' Church Christmas Fair, was held on the 28th November and despite the gloomy weather outside there was a bright festive mood inside. The event raised a grand total of £1654.82 which will go towards the Church and Tear Refugee Crisis Fund.

Once again the childrens' colouring competition attracted a large number of entries. The competition was split into three age groups and the judges Michael and Myrna Anderson declared the winners as Benjamin Howes and Coby Lappard (under 5), Darcy Bell (5-7 years), and Grace Reynolds (8 to 11 years). The winners were presented with Inspirations gift tokens.



Whether you donated gifts for the stalls, helped to set up the fair, made cakes, served on the stalls, helped on the lunches, cleared up afterwards or spent your money on the day, the organisers are extremely grateful to all involved in making this occasion such a highlight of the Church calendar.

 Chris Tassell



Ecumenical Lent Groups

Once again, people from all the Churches in Goring, Streatley and South Stoke will be joining together in small house groups to follow an Ecumenical Lent Course during the five weeks before Easter. This Lent, our course will be *Approaching Jesus* by Cathy Madavan and the cost of the booklet is £5.00.

After Easter, all the groups will meet together on 5th April for an Easter Celebration. There will be two sessions to choose from – a morning session 11.30am to 1.30pm, and an evening one from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

Please join us on our journey through Lent towards Easter. Everyone is welcome. Just sign your name on one of the lists which can be found in all of the churches.

 Judy Crawford, Sally Horton, Alun Hughes, Richard Knollys and David Rattue
(Ecumenical Lent and Advent Planning Committee)



RIDE+STRIDES 2015

This year Henry Parkinson cycled round 30 churches and raised a total of £505. He says that it helped that it was a lovely day and that there were no technical hitches. The hospitality which he enjoyed at various churches meant that calories expended were balanced by calories consumed! "Well done, Henry!"

One half of the money raised goes to Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, and the other comes to St Thomas' so many, many thanks to Henry and to all those who sponsored him. <http://www.ohct.org.uk/>

 Brenda Kerr Muir



Collection for the United Society

The United Society (formerly USPG) is an Anglican charity that works in partnership with local churches around the world, mainly Anglican, but sometimes of other Christian denominations, to improve health, provide education and reduce discrimination, and to respond to emergencies. Its work helps to raise the profile of the Church and the gospel.

This year, in addition to its longer-term development projects, its emergency work includes funding churches in Lebanon that are providing education for Syrian refugee children and helping churches in Ethiopia to provide food and shelter for refugees from South Sudan.

Please contribute, if you can, to our collection for the United Society at St Thomas' on Sunday 14th February.

 Patsy Calder