



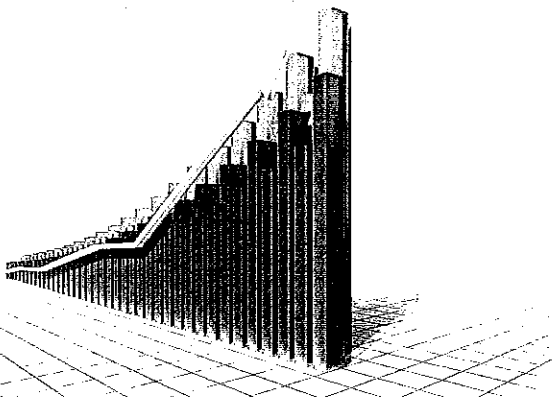
Spotlight

Highlighting past and
future events

An Easter Note

Greetings,

You often hear statistics that say fewer and fewer people come to church – well not at St Thomas'! During our recent Christmas services we welcomed 17% more people to Church than the previous year – if you were one of them I trust you really enjoyed your visit. It was great to see young people and old people alike celebrating God's greatest gift to the world – himself, in Christ Jesus.



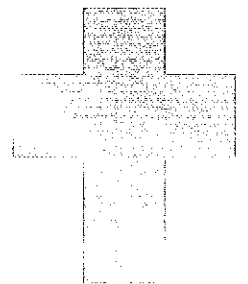
If you're like me you hate being interrupted half way through a film on the telly – when you return the programme's finished and you don't know how the story ended. Well, I'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to come along to St Thomas' again and find out how the Christmas story concludes.

At Christmas we celebrated Jesus' birth but of course that was just the start – he was born in a manger to die upon a cross. Easter is the wonderful story where we see how much God really loves us by his sacrificial gift of his own life for ours. What does that mean in reality? It means that through Jesus we can live our lives in HD (High Definition) we can live bigger, bolder, brighter lives with Jesus.

You're really welcome to come to St. Thomas' and join with lots of people who have found Jesus to be the answer. One lady who first came to St Thomas' at our recent Carol service said, "I started coming to Church at Christmas and haven't stopped. St Thomas' is a really lovely place to be!" With services to suit all ages & tastes Easter is a really fantastic time to join her and start coming to church.

So, however you come, whether it be with a sceptical, open or convinced mind, whether it be for just one service or with plans to make it a more regular thing, I'm looking forward to welcoming you to your Parish church this Eastertide.

Have a very happy Easter.
Rev Matthew Barnes
Rector



See back for Easter Services.

To find out more about what goes on at St Thomas' fill in the attached slip.

We believe in parents!

A report by the Children's Society ("The Good Childhood Inquiry", 2009) hit the headlines recently claiming that many parental life-choices were damaging children & families. It's a really interesting and challenging report that basically says that "children need good families to have a happy childhood". At St. Thomas' we don't believe parents need ear-bashing or condemning for "not being good enough" – rather, fun and practical help is what's needed to help us all improve our parenting skills and become better mums & dads - this is especially true for Dad's.

Father's are great – and yet if you are a dad you'll know that it's not easy, especially if your children no longer live with you – there's no course you can take or pill you can swallow to be a great dad yet the statistics tell us that a father's influence is vital in creating well-balanced, happy children. Work and other commitments mean that most of us dads try really hard, and do our best to love our kids, but we all know that we could do better.

So as a Church, we'd like to invite the Dad's of Brampton to join us for our first DAD-FEST over the



Father's day weekend. we'd like to invite you to join with us in a series of activities and events that will help you spend fun time with your kids (we're organising enjoyable stuff for dads & kids to do raft-building for older ones) and create really special memories. As well as this we're giving time over for Dad's (of all ages) to get together on their own and relax – we're organising a drinks tasting event together with an international speaker talking on "Top tips to be a better dad". Dad's & kids of all ages are really welcome - if you're interested in receiving more information about this fantastic opportunity and DAD-FEST please return the response slip.

(If you thought Church was just for the ladies then think again – At St. Thomas' we do lots of other things just for men – if you'd like to receive a copy of our activity programme then please use the response slip)

St Thomas' Scouts

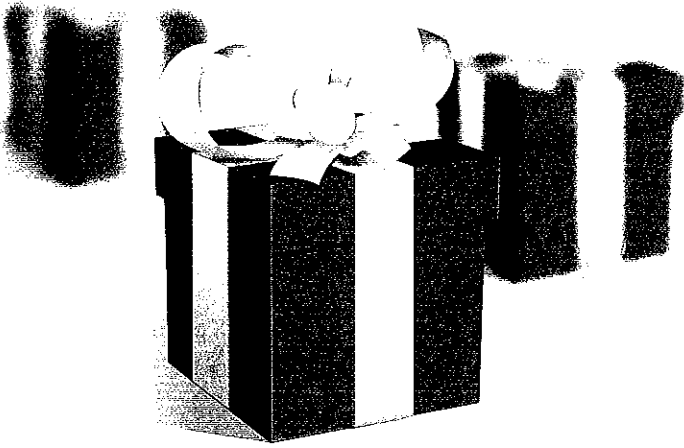
St Thomas' Church Scout Group, the 3rd Brampton, have been busy supporting Church activities recently. The Beaver Scouts, for young people aged 6 to 8 years old, recently visited Church to work on their 'My Faith' badge. They worked with Matt to create prayers, drew pictures of the impressive Church ceiling and learnt about God.



The Cub Scouts, aged 8 to 10 ½, performed a drama based on Flanders Fields to the congregation for the Remembrance Sunday Church Parade in November and the Scout Troop, for youngsters aged 10 ½ to 14, have helped clear the grave yard, held a fundraising car wash as part of their Community Award for the St Thomas' Development Project as well as supporting the successful Christmas Craft Afternoon.

2009 is a special year for the St Thomas' Scout Group as it celebrates its sixtieth anniversary. The Group was established by former St Thomas' Church Rector, John Dawson Hooley in 1949 at St Thomas' School Rooms. We are keen to hear from former members about your Scouting experiences and discuss a possible reunion. To discuss this, or how to join and get involved, please call Ben Widdowson, Group Scout Leader on 01246 567409

An Easter Present



I knew Jonathan would give me a present, maybe really special. The smart blue bag with an elegant blue box inside whetted my appetite. I opened the tissue paper and found...only a small notebook. Oh dear was there nothing else? No, nothing, just a notebook. However as I examined it I discovered it was special even though quite different from what I had hoped. It is by me now; covered with fine leather, with wafer thin but top quality paper and designed to be the best notebook you could ever buy. So expectation, then disappointment followed by an unexpected but lovely surprise.

I reckon the disciples felt the same as me that first Easter. They knew Jesus was special and the longer they stayed with him the more they were sure he was exceptional. God had sent Jesus and announced that he was his son. That was a promise to savour which pointed to a bright future ahead. But then came that bitter disappointment as Jesus was arrested and executed like a criminal. Their hopes and dreams had come to nothing.

Now if we say that was the end of the story then we miss all the wonder and excitement of what actually happened. Just as with Jonathan's present the 'blue box' of the arrest and trial was only an outer wrapping for what was really taking place and which the disciples had no idea about. There was a precious but incredible gift for them hidden away if they only knew it.

So Sunday came, after the bleakness of Friday and the women found the empty tomb and brought

totally amazing news to the men - who just didn't believe them! Who would - they were only women and their word counted for nothing in that society. That, by the way, gives the lie to those who say the disciples faked it all: no-one would have based a story on the supposed claim of women. But the women were right - he was and is alive!! Does this unexpected, but lovely, surprise present of a living Jesus mean anything for us today? Absolutely! If we believe the story, and there is good evidence for us to do so, it means everything. It means we are not condemned to a measly seventy or eighty years of life but can see our present life just as preparation for real life ahead of us - a life without the grimness and pain we see all around us, a life on a restored earth with love, joy and beauty around us. Even if the evidence were far weaker it's a gamble I would gladly take.

To find out more why not come along to our next Alpha course? You will get an open and honest response to all those awkward questions you want to ask and will be able to meet with others exploring issues for this 21st century.

Next Alpha Course starts in September, contact the church office or complete the response slip to find out more.



An interview

Ashley was recently baptized at St Thomas', we took a moment to ask him a few questions...

When did you start coming to St Thomas'?
Just before Christmas we started attending the Alpha course at St Thomas', after a while we started trying out the various services available, and eventually settled on the evening service, which we felt was more suited.

What drew you to St Thomas'?
We started off by looking for a place to get married, on a day off we came down to St Thomas's, as we wanted a church wedding, we spoke to someone in the church office, who mentioned about the alpha course, and baptism preparation.

How did St Thomas' help with your decision about getting baptized?

I used to think that church had a set list of requirements or standards, but I very quickly learned this was not the case, St Thomas' was a very welcoming place, I found the Alpha course made it easy to ask the questions that I needed to.

If you find you have some questions that you wouldn't mind getting an answer for, then you can contact the church office, or fill in the reply slip attached.

"Easy to ask the questions that I needed to"



Easter events in the parish

Easter Services

Maundy Thursday (9th April)

7.30pm - Agape service with feet-washing
Light meal (soup & rolls) will be service

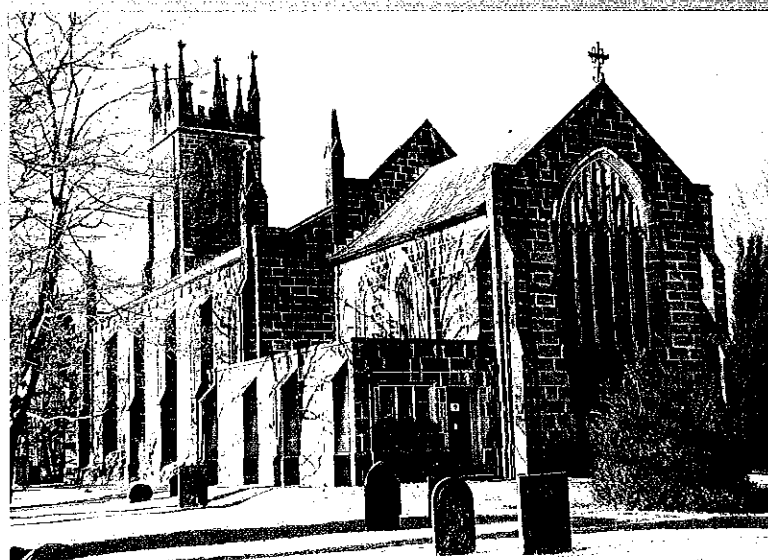
Good Friday (10th April) at St. Thomas'

10.00am The Zone, Good Friday activity zone
Fun and games for all the family.
Followed by a short
All-age Hot Cross Bun service at 11.00am

2.00pm Hour at the Cross

Easter Sunday (12th April) at St. Thomas'

Service at 10.30am and
Easter Songs of Praise at 6.00pm



Regular Sunday Services

9.00am - 11.00am - 6.00pm

Creche Available during 11am service

X-site 11am during the service (2.5 to 10+ years)

(energize¹) 4.30-6pm (approx 10-14 years)

(energize²) 8-9.30pm (approx 14-18 years)

For details of Children and Young People's activities and mid-week activities for all ages please contact the Church Office on 01246 558461 or visit our website

www.st-thomas-brampton.org