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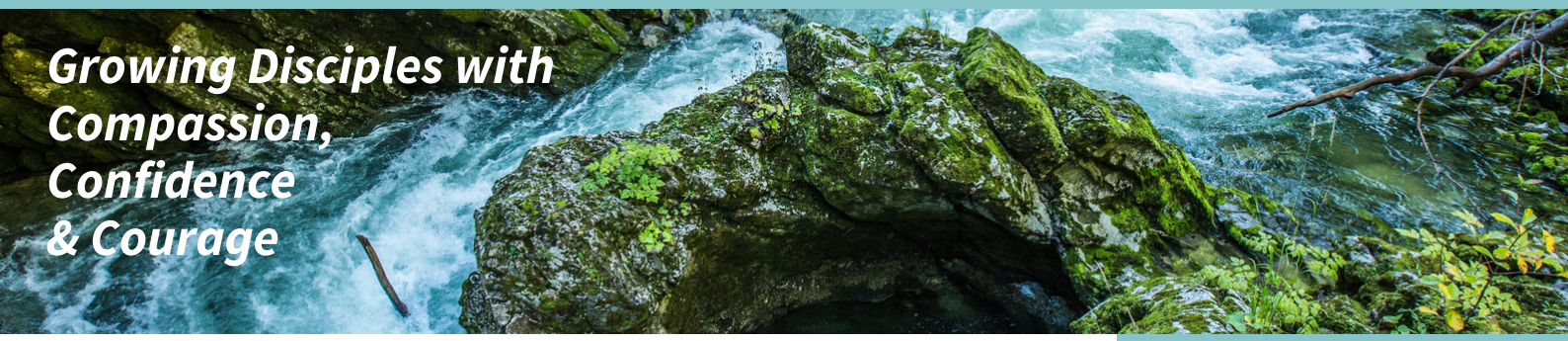
THE RIVERFOLD NEWSLETTER



A Letter From The Riverfold: A Thin Place: Finding the Eternal in Changing Seasons

BY THE REV LOUISE BEARDER
Priest In Charge of the Blyth, Scrooby & Ranskill
Mission Associate for The Riverfold, Family of churches

I recently returned from a time of retreat and holiday on the Isle of Iona, that small, windswept island off the west coast of Scotland. For centuries, pilgrims have journeyed there seeking peace, prayer and renewal. Iona is often described as a 'thin place'—somewhere the distance between heaven and earth seems beautifully small, and the presence of God feels especially close.

Away from the noise and demands of everyday life, I found space to be still, to listen, and simply to rest in the presence of our Creator. It reminded me of the words of Psalm 46:10 'Be still and know that I am God.' Sometimes, we need to step away from the busyness of life to rediscover the God who has been with us all along.

Returning home to our beautiful corner of the world, I am reminded that we do not need to travel to a remote Scottish island to encounter the sacred. God is present here, too—in the familiar lanes of Blyth, Ranskill and Scrooby, in the kindness of a neighbour, in the welcome of our churches, and in the fellowship, we share across The Riverfold Cluster. Together, we are called to encourage one another, support one another and share the love of Christ in our communities.

As autumn gives way to winter, the leaves fall, the evenings draw in, and the landscape around us changes. These changing seasons can mirror our own lives. There are times of joy and new beginnings, but also seasons of uncertainty, loss and sadness. As Ecclesiastes reminds us, 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven' (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

On Sunday 8th November, we will gather across our parishes for our Remembrance Sunday services. In moments of silence, we will honour those who gave their lives in war and conflict, remember the families whose lives were changed forever, and pray earnestly for peace in our troubled world. Remembrance invites us not only to look back with gratitude, but also to live today as people committed to peace, compassion and hope.

As Christmas approaches, we also recognise that this can be a difficult time for those who are grieving, lonely or missing loved ones. While the world around us may seem full of celebration, some hearts carry a quieter sorrow.

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'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven'

Ecclesiastes 3:1

To offer a space of comfort and reflection, we will hold a Blue Christmas Memorial Service at Ranskill Church on Sunday 13th December 2026. All who find this season difficult are warmly welcome. There is no need to pretend to be cheerful or to have the right words. We will simply make space for our memories, our sadness and our prayers, trusting that God's light shines even in our darkest moments. At the heart of all these changing seasons lies a wonderful promise from Hebrews 13:8: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.' Almost everything in life changes. Our circumstances change, our communities change, and those we love are not always with us as we would wish. Yet Christ remains faithful. The same Jesus who welcomed the weary, comforted the grieving and brought hope to the troubled is with us today.

This does not mean that life will always be easy, but it does mean that we never have to face it alone. When we look back in remembrance, Christ is there. When we struggle with the present, Christ is there. And when the future feels uncertain, we can trust that Christ will be there, too.

Perhaps this is the true gift of a 'thin place': not that God is suddenly nearer, but that we become more aware of the eternal love that has surrounded us all along.

As we journey through the coming weeks, may we discover those holy moments in the ordinary things of life—in a quiet prayer, a familiar hymn, the beauty of the changing seasons, or the kindness of someone who takes time to listen. May our churches across the Riverfold Cluster be places of welcome, comfort, remembrance and hope.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Whatever season of life we find ourselves in, may we rest in that unchanging love.

May the Lord of all seasons bless you, your families and all our parishes, bringing peace to the troubled, comfort to the grieving, companionship to the lonely, and renewed hope to us all.

Amen.

Growing Faith, Nurturing Belonging: Celebrating Children & Families across The Riverfold

BY LUCY MCCANN

Children & Families Lead

It's been a busy, joyful and encouraging time for our Children & Families ministry across The Riverfold family of churches! From exploring inspiring stories of faith to celebrating the wonder of creation, there have been wonderful opportunities to help our youngest disciples discover Jesus, grow in faith and know they belong.

Rev Liz introduced children to the inspiring story of local faith hero Henrietta Stockdale and her formative years in Misterton. Our youngest children have also enjoyed interactive talks exploring Jesus as their friend, belonging and Baptism.

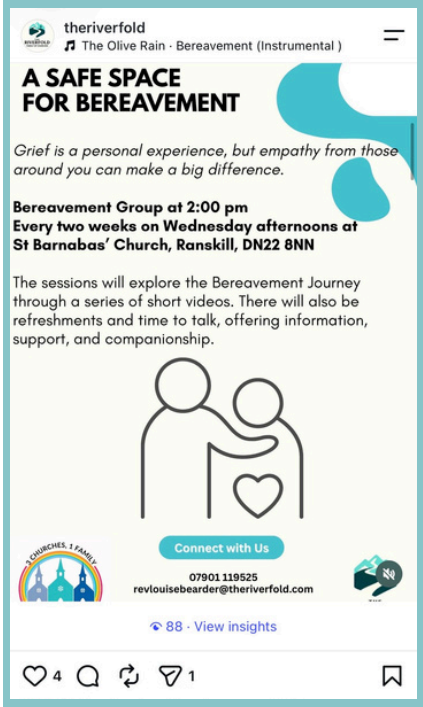
Rev Nigel visited Gamston, Ranby and Sutton-cum-Lound schools to explore the wonder of creation, encouraging children to appreciate the beauty of the world around them and give thanks for the harvest. Churches and schools also came together to celebrate this special season.

Making memories and building community at Beckingham, a wonderful team hosted an Autumn Craft Afternoon, bringing families together for seasonal creativity, friendship and fellowship. It was a lovely opportunity to connect and enjoy time together in a relaxed setting. Our ministry is about more than assemblies and activities. Prayer for our schools and their communities remains at the heart of what we do.

We welcome prayer requests and seek to offer a caring, pastoral presence wherever we go. It's encouraging to hear that our communications are reaching more families, helping them discover activities across our churches and find opportunities to encounter God.

Follow us on Instagram: For latest updates

https://www.instagram.com/theriverfold/



Our last two Riverfold Monthly Prayer gatherings have been a real blessing and a great success! It's wonderful to come together in prayer, worship and fellowship as a church family.

Tuesday 24th November | 7–8 pm

St Bartholomew's, Sutton-cum-Lound

We look forward to seeing you there! Everyone is welcome.

As Advent and Christmas approach, keep an eye on A Church Near You for details of upcoming services and events. We're also looking forward to the launch of Little Lambs in Ranskill and Family Faith @ 4 in Gringley, planned for early 2027.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone across The Riverfold who makes this ministry possible. We are so grateful to our dedicated volunteers, whose care, time and willingness to serve make such a difference. As Galatians 5:13 reminds us, we are called to "Serve one another humbly in love."Please pray for our youngest disciples as they grow in faith, and for wisdom as we seek the best ways to nurture their relationship with Jesus Christ.

A New Chapter in Ministry for Idle & Sands Benefice in The Riverfold

BY THE REV NIGEL STONES

Mission Associate on Secondment

Idle & Sands Benefice

'*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding, In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths' (Proverbs 3:4-5)*

Many of you will know that, since June, I have been on secondment to the parishes of Idle & Sands. What began as a time of discernment and exploration has, by God's grace, led to a permanent appointment. I'm delighted to share that I will be licensed as Priest in Charge (Mission Associate) of Idle and Sands. The past few months have been filled with excitement,

prayer and discovery. I have been welcomed so warmly by the people of Idle & Sands, and it has been a joy to begin getting to know your communities, schools and churches, as well as hearing your hopes for the future. Throughout this time, I have been deeply conscious of the love, encouragement and prayers I have received from so many of you. Your friendship and support have meant more to me than I can say. Although this appointment marks a new stage in my ministry, it is also part of the continuing journey on which God has been leading me. I remain deeply thankful to our wider church family for the encouragement you have given me over the years as my passion for rural ministry has grown.My licensing service will take place at All Saints Church, Babworth, on Monday 9th November at 7pm. It would be wonderful to see you there as we gather to worship, pray and celebrate all that God is doing in this new chapter of ministry.

Please keep Lianne, me and all the churches in the Idle and Sands benefice in your prayers. As ever, we continue to walk together in faith, trusting in the One who calls us onward with renewed hope and a shared dedication to service. Every blessing, Rev Nigel.

With so many wonderful Christmas services taking place across our Riverfold churches — including Carol Services, Christingle, Blue Christmas, Crib Services and much more — we simply can't list them all! How lovely to have so much to celebrate! Please check the A Church Near You website or your local church noticeboards for details of services and celebrations in your area. Our next Riverfold Newsletter will be published in February 2027.
www.achurchnearyou.com

In the meantime, from all of the core Riverfold team, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a joyful New Year. Thank you for your continued prayers, support and encouragement throughout the year. May God bless you and your loved ones this Christmas, and may His peace, hope and love be with you throughout the coming year.

The Riverfold Churches in Focus: Our Journey Together

Rooted@4 has officially launched at Holy Trinity Church, Everton, and has been a huge success! It has been lovely to see people of all ages coming together to enjoy this new gathering, sharing refreshments, chatting and spending time together in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. With families and children joining in, the launch was a wonderful opportunity to build friendships, strengthen community connections and enjoy fellowship together. We look forward to welcoming even more people to future Rooted@4 gatherings!

Rev Liz and Churchwarden Stephanie Baines joined in the celebrations at West Stockwith Church's Patronal Festival in honour of St Mary the Blessed Virgin on Sunday 30 August. The highlight of the occasion was the cutting of a special 'birthday' cake by Rev Liz and Stephanie. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for the congregation and community to come together, celebrate the church's patron saint and enjoy fellowship on this special day in the church calendar.

Harvest has been celebrated across all our Riverfold schools, with a number of special harvest services bringing school communities together to give thanks for the food we enjoy and the people who work hard to produce it. At St Paul's Church, West Drayton, the Harvest Festival brought people together to reflect on the importance of farming, sharing, generosity and caring for our world. Across our schools, children and staff have been bringing in harvest gifts and celebrating the season, reminding us of the importance of community and looking after one another. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to making this year's harvest celebrations so meaningful.

Not-to-miss news:

A Special Advent Service with Bishop Paul

A date for your diary! Bishop Paul will be leading an Advent Service at St Peter's Church, Clayworth, on Sunday 13th December at 11.00 am. Everyone is warmly welcome to join us for this special service as we prepare for Christmas. We look forward to seeing you there!

🎶 Opportunity Worship Team Lead – The Riverfold

We're prayerfully seeking the right person to lead worship and serve what God is doing in The Riverfold!
If you feel called to this role, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Laura at laura@theriverfold.com

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