

REVD. CHRISTOPHER THOMSON – PROFILE

The Reverend Christopher Thomson comes to join us at St Barnabas, Purley and All Saints, Kenley, from the united benefice of St. Mary the Virgin, Bletchingley and St. Peter and St. Paul, Nutfield.

Before his entry into the priesthood, Revd Chris had worked within, and later managed, a bespoke handmade furniture business for approximately eighteen years. The company was based in South London, and Chris very much enjoyed being part of the team working there. His duties ranged right across the board, from emptying bins to representing the company on an international level. One of the most enjoyable and valuable dimensions of the job was that it allowed Chris to meet people from all walks of society, all classes, age-ranges and races. Chris says that the interpersonal skills and professional and practical versatility required to make a success of this career has proved invaluable experience for ministry.

Chris was born in Wiltshire and spent the first nine years of his life enjoying various locations in the West Country. From this time, his love for the countryside grew. He now has a deep appreciation of God's presence in his created world, and often enjoys walking in the countryside and mountains. When Chris' father left the army his family moved to South London and it was here that he grew up.

This brought Chris to a tough area – with a lot of crime and deprivation – which was a marked contrast to where he had lived before. He attended a very difficult secondary school where it was a challenge to study simply because taking care of oneself had to be the top priority. Nevertheless, Chris' original passion for academic study never waned, and on leaving school he was able to begin a self-imposed long-term programme of academic courses, which culminated in his degree work in Philosophy and Theology at Greenwich University.

During this time Chris also trained to be a Reader in the Church of England, a position he was to hold for eight years, before responding to the call to ordained ministry. This took Chris to Westcott House, Cambridge, where he trained residentially for two years, and successfully completed the Cambridge University Bachelor of Theology for Ministry Degree. As part of his post-ordination training Chris has also completed a post-graduate diploma with Christ Church, Canterbury, which he will now be turning into an MA. It was while at Cambridge that Chris met his now wife Donna Lazenby, while she was researching her PhD in Theology (based at Queens' College). Donna is now herself training for ordained ministry at Westcott House, and will be ordained Deacon in the Diocese of Southwark this summer.

Chris loves classical music, and has enjoyed the choral dimensions of the liturgy experienced in Cambridge chapels and during his curacy. He also enjoys an eclectic mix of music.

During his curacy Chris researched a variety of appointments that were advertised, but the vacancy for Priest in Charge at Kenley and Purley struck him with what he believes was the Holy Spirit's stamp when he discovered, and explored, the vacancy. His progress through the interviewing stages and his meeting with the congregations and people of both parishes confirmed his sense of calling to work among us, and he was delighted to find this instinct reciprocated! Chris is glad to be able to offer to us the experience of having completed a curacy in a newly formed United Benefice, and is therefore well placed to make this journey with us, sensitively, at Kenley and Purley.