

Benefice of Goring & Streatley with South Stoke



Sunday 9th January

Baptism of Christ

Welcome to Church

Happy New Year.

I hope you were blessed in your celebrating of Jesus' birth and the hope and promise of our faithful God With Us. This Good News and who Jesus is is not for private secret enjoyment and comfort, but a gift to be offered and lived. How? Why? Really me? So many questions raised which we hope to address in a sermon series planned to begin next Sunday **and also a mid week course. Please do sign up for the course and explore this together.**



We delight to be together in a kind and considerate Covid aware manner – we have learned now how to make our churches as COVID safe as possible. Loneliness and isolation lead to illness of a different kind.

Please do come (unless you are ill or isolating) and please wear a face covering.

Holy Communion, Hold out a flat hand please, to receive the wafer bread dipped in wine, so the priest does not touch your hand. Thank you.

This Sunday we are also Zooming at 9.30am.

The Collect, the prayer for this week

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

This weekend:

- 8:00am BCP Holy Communion at St Mary's**
- 9:30am Holy Communion at St Thomas' and by Zoom**
- 11:15am Family service at St Mary's**
- 11:15am Holy Communion at St Andrew's**

To enter Zoom directly: Meeting ID: 826 6127 7602 and Passcode: 038739

Zoom request for Wednesdays

We can always Zoom a Wednesday morning service so long as you ask by the night before, or we would love to give you a lift to the service.

Bereavement course – Heal the Gap

Please pray for this group as they begin on Sunday and for Matt and Melissa who are leading it.



Sharing Jesus: our sermon series and groups for January



At Christmas we focus on the hope of Jesus Christ, and many of us want to share this hope with our friends and family, but often struggle with how to do it. We have designed a sermon series and a mid week course to create a space where we can learn how to share Jesus together.

We will begin with looking at who we are sharing, followed by sharing Jesus through prayer, action and speech, ending with how we can share Jesus in our changing culture.

Join on a **Tuesday Evening** at 7:45pm or a **Thursday morning** at 10:30am in the Canterbury Room, as we delve deeper into each topic and learn skills to help us Share Jesus. Starting the week of 17th January.

Please contact the office (vicarofgsandss@yahoo.com / 875651) or see the sign up sheets in our churches to join.

We are looking forward to growing together.

Reflections in the newsletter

Each week a member of the ministry team writes a reflection and chooses a hymn. Do you find this helpful? Feedback on whether we should continue with this would be appreciated. Please e-mail vicarofgsandss@yahoo.com or speak to Ben.

Accommodation required

Do you know of anyone in the village able to offer, ideally long term rental, but short term might be better than nothing: a widowed, retired lady with 2 indoor cats is looking as her current landlord has had to sell the house: "I'd Ideally like 2 bedrooms if possible and a small garden or outdoor space as I am a keen gardener and enjoy sewing and various crafts." In walking distance of Goring where v involved in running community groups. By end of February. Please contact Ben if you are able to help in any way. Thank you.

Goring Chamber Choir Concert in St Thomas' this Saturday

A final reminder about this concert which takes place at 3pm with Carols and Anthems for Epiphany. Tickets are £10 (under 18s free). Please e-mail Elizabeth Parkinson (parkinsonfamily1@btinternet.com) if you would like a ticket or, alternatively, they can be obtained from Inspiration in the village.

Morning and Evening Prayer

Do consider joining in the daily Morning Prayer at St Thomas' or St Mary's. In our churches as follows:

8.30am on Mondays at St Thomas' **plus** Evening Prayer at 4:30pm

8.30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays at St Mary's

8.30am on Fridays at St Thomas'

This week we pray for our bereavement group course and those attending. For all employers dealing with staff off sick.

We are also asked to pray for Mary Bulmer, Matthew Brown, Ivor Wilson, Jean Dixon, Jo More, Jo Harvey, Page Sayers, Clive McCann, the Gregory Family, Jenny Fay, Rose Fay and all their families.

RIP We lift to God the recently departed including Sonia Didcock, Bob Jennings and Diana Monk and on the first anniversary, Doreen Landel. We pray for their families and friends.

Diary for this week:

Monday 10th January

2:00pm Funeral of Bob Jennings at West Berkshire crematorium

Wednesday 12th January

10:30am Little Lights at St Mary's

10:30am BCP Holy Communion at St Thomas'

The readings will be 1 Sam. 3. 1-10, 19-20, Ps. 40. 1-4, 7-10 and Mark 1. 29-39.

Saturday 15th January

8:30am Prayer Breakfast in the Canterbury Room

Sunday 16th January

8:00am BCP Holy Communion at St Thomas'

9:30am Good News service at St Thomas'

11:15am Holy Communion at St Mary's

11:15am Mattins at St Andrew's

3:00pm Wild Church meeting at the top of the Coombe

For those who are not able to join us in church on Sunday morning it is our hope that you will be able to take time to stop, find a special place, switch off all distractions, light a candle perhaps, and join in spirit, and by God's Spirit worship and be built up together.

This is the day which the Lord has made....

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

The Lord is here, His Spirit is with us.

Lord Jesus, lead us as we come before you now.

The Collect (*please see above*)

Psalm 29

1 Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;

the God of glory thunders;
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
4 The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation;
the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
7 The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forests bare;
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
9 The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.
10 The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Readings

Our readings today are Isa. 43: 1-7, Psalm 29 and Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22.

Peter Downham has written a reflection for Epiphany:

We have just entered Epiphany (the appearing) in the Church's year when we recall the words of Simon when the baby Jesus was presented in the Temple when he burst out with praise, He is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" and it was to the three Gentiles he would next be revealed. They were literally wise men skilled in philosophy, medicine, natural science and astrology who, seeing this great light, wondered about its significance.

About 7 B.C. there was a brilliant conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter and in the years 5-2 B.C. an unusual astronomical phenomena. What they saw we cannot say but they were familiar with the widespread belief that a king would be born in Judea who would bring a reign of peace and claim homage from all the world. The Roman historian, Suetonius, who in his "Life of Vespasian" writes there had spread over the Orient an old and established belief that is was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world. The Jewish historian in his "Wars of the Jews" wrote that a belief among the Jews that about that time "one from their country should become Governor of the habitable earth". Jesus came to a waiting

world and among them the Wise Men who had seen His star in the East. How then was He welcomed?

Firstly there was the reaction of hatred and hostility. Quite naturally the “Wise Men” came to Jerusalem having seen this star in the East and went straight to the fountain head, King Herod, to enquire about one born to be King of the Jews. Of course Herod was nervous his throne and position would be in danger. He had no reason to rejoice, rather his fears were aroused. He had no desire to be disturbed and dethroned. His hostile reaction led to the murder of children in Bethlehem hoping to catch this child in the net.

Sadly some people react to Jesus and His claim on their lives with the same hostility. Unwilling to submit to Jesus’ rule in their lives they turn away in defiance and anger. The death toll of Christians worldwide is witness to this.

Secondly there is the response of indifference. When the Chief Priest and scribes were asked where Christ was to be born they turned to the prophet Micah 5 v2 “But you Bethlehem... out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel”. They had heard of Jesus’ birth, knew of its location BUT it did not make the slightest difference. They continued with their religious rounds and left it at that.

It is possible to know facts about Jesus and yet to be utterly unmoved by this great event and the claims that were made. Matthew 1 v21 Mary is told “You are to give Him the name of Jesus (which means Saviour) for He will save His people from their sins”. Just like the priests Jesus is not relevant to where many people are in reaction to His claims on their lives. However we need to hear again Charles Wesley’s paraphrase of Lamentation 1 V12 “Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by, is it nothing to you that your Saviour should die”.

Thirdly there is the response of Submission and Worship. This was the response of the three Wise Men, they were seeking and God had spoken. In Parthia (present day Iran) no one could ever approach a King without a gift. The three gifts tell us something about the Christ child to whom they were given. Gold was a gift fit for a king and Jesus was born to be King, not of might but of love. He wants to rule in our hearts and lives – yours and mine. As the paraphrase puts it “The King of love my shepherd is”. Can we sing that and mean it? Frankincense is a gift for a priest whose ministry was to be a go between, opening the way to God. Jesus says John 14 v6 “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me” that makes it possible for us to come to the Father. Myrrh was for someone going to die as it was to embalm the dead body. It was a prophetic gift, pointing forward to Christ’s death at Calvary. As St Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians 2 v20 “the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me”. The response to this amazing sacrificial love is in a well known poster “Wise

Men came to worship Jesus – wise men still do”. The question we must answer is – are we among them?

Carol

<p>1 As with gladness men of old Did the guiding star behold, As with joy they hailed its light, Leading onward, beaming bright; So, most gracious Lord, may we Evermore be led by thee.</p> <p>3 As they offered gifts most rare At thy cradle, rude and bare, So may we with holy joy, Pure and free from sin's alloy, All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.</p> <p>5 In the heavenly country bright Need they no created light; Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down; There for ever may we sing Alleluias to our King!</p>	<p>2 As with joyful steps they sped, Saviour, to thy lowly bed, There to bend the knee before Thee, whom heaven and earth adore; So may we with willing feet Ever seek thy mercy-seat.</p> <p>4 Holy Jesus, every day Keep us in the narrow way; And, when earthly things are past, Bring our ransomed souls at last Where they need no star to guide, Where no clouds thy glory hide.</p>
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Prayers for this week

Thank you to Mike Codner for this week's prayers.

A prayer of Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well-pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the water of life when, having fallen in love with time, we have ceased to dream of eternity and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas where storms show Thy mastery, where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes and invited the brave to follow. **Amen**

Lord, as we are all united in baptism, we ask you to help us break down the barriers that keep us apart. As all things are made new in your son, renew your Church, we pray, that we may gather new strength for the mission that you have charged us with of spreading the good news. Also in this time of Epiphany help us to build our bonds with those of other Christian faiths and cultures around the world and other religions who share the love of God and of one another.

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling:

In your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, as your Holy Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, you brought light into the world. Look now, we pray, on the hidden corners of our world and lighten the darkness of ignorance and error, that the world may be truly free. Breathe something of your wisdom and compassion into the souls of those who have authority over others, that they may exercise it wisely.

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling:

In your mercy, hear our prayer

Pour forth, O Lord, your love upon this land and its people as we try to follow the example of your Son in whom you are well-pleased. Daily renew in us the desire to serve you and our neighbour and help us to overcome all pettiness in our dealings with each other.

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling:

In your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, look with pity we pray on those whose lives are bruised, whose hopes are quenched. Help them to feel the reality of your wonderful promise that you will be a constant presence to us through fire, flood and sickness, and that we shall not be overwhelmed since you are with us always, even unto the end of the world. And we bring to you family members and our friends in this Benefice all who are suffering.

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling:

In your mercy, hear our prayer

We commend to your love those who, washed in the water of baptism, were close to you in this life and are now one with you in the life eternal. May they rest in your love and the life of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, as you have called us, make us worthy of our calling:

In your mercy, hear our prayer

Merciful Father: **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen**

Daily readings for the coming week

Monday am:	Ps 2	Gen. 1. 1-19	Matt. 21. 1-17	pm: Ps 34	1 Cor. 1. 1-17
Tuesday am:	Ps 9	Gen. 1.20-2.3	Matt. 21. 18-32	pm: Ps 45	1 Cor. 1. 18-end
Wednesday am:	Ps 20	Gen. 2. 4-end	Matt. 21. 33-end	pm: Ps 47	1 Cor. ch. 2
Thursday am:	Ps 21	Gen. ch. 3	Matt. 22. 1-14	pm: Ps 61	1 Cor. ch. 3
Friday am:	Ps 67	Gen. 4. 1-16, 25-26	Matt. 22. 15-33	pm: Ps 68	1 Cor. ch. 4
Saturday am:	Ps 33	Gen. 6. 1-10	Matt. 22. 34-end	pm: Ps 85	1 Cor. ch. 5

For further information please check www.thomandmary.org.uk