

Benefice of Goring & Streatley with South Stoke



Sunday 10th January

Epiphany 1

Welcome to Church

In this season of Epiphany, we celebrate and ponder all that is revealed and shown in Jesus.

“O God, may your saving light and love shine in us and through us, to the world you love.”



Update on services

Although under the current government guidance communal worship is permitted it has been decided that due to the level of COVID infection locally all services will be online only for the next two weeks with a single Sunday service at **10am** streamed from one of our churches.

How do we remain human? How do we foster the divine image in us?

We have some rich, full offerings for you for this winter-time and spring: We invite you to join a fortnightly group who meet online / by smartphone for an hour. Between meetings we will watch a 20 minute video on prayer and the depths of the Lord’s Prayer, which we will discuss – talking, listening and learning together.

This is going to replace our Lent Groups this year. Give it a go, sign up.

If you need help on the tech side we can talk you through step by step over the phone or arrange for someone to come to your door and do it for you.

Homegroups: Starting in January 2021

What: The Prayer Course

When: Leaders: Clive Windebank and Mary Scriven,
Alternate Tuesdays, 11:00am-12:00pm

Leaders: Simon and Sylvia Merritt,
Alternate Thursdays 7:45-8:45pm

How: Online via zoom

Sign up online: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/E645Q2/

Or phone Judith Aguda: 01491 871493

Or email: judith.aguda@gmail.com

Ben Phillips, Jo Allen and Judith Aguda

Compline and cocoa

On these cold winter nights you are invited to make yourself a hot drink and join us on Zoom for a daily chat at 8.45pm. We will say Compline (Night Prayer) together at 9pm – a simple gentle service. Please call 875651 for an order of service. The Bible reading each evening will be taken from Luke's gospel. We will pick up the story in chapter 2, when the angels depart from the shepherds having announced the birth of Jesus.

Cocoa and Compline will be every weekday evening Monday-Friday beginning on Monday 11th January.

If you would like to volunteer to help by leading the responses please contact the church office or a member of the ministry team.

The Zoom link for each evening is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86845195061?pwd=UmVIU2RUZW5KT1ZleTFuM1VHWXZvZz09>

or if you enter Zoom directly: Meeting ID: 868 4519 5061 Passcode: 245518



This weekend:

10:00am Holy Communion streamed from St Mary's by Zoom

The Zoom link for the service is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82661277602?pwd=cHZiK2hNdFJsanI2WW5POUEyWUs4UT09>

If you enter Zoom directly: Meeting ID: 826 6127 7602 and Passcode: 038739.

For those who are not able to join us in church or by Zoom 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.

Suggested wording for you to say:

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

*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.*

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 Acts 19: 1-7, Psalm 29 and Mark 1: 4-11.

Judith Hogg has written a reflection on the reading from Mark:

Crowds were flocking to the river, a longish journey over quite rough terrain, people from all walks of life, including tax collectors, soldiers, priests. Why were they doing this? There was some weirdo who lived in the wilderness, dressed like one of the prophets of old, like Elijah, who was preaching and dunking people in the River Jordan. He wore a garment of camel's hair with a leather belt holding it together, and fed on locusts and wild honey. He must be mad, so some thought, but nevertheless there was curiosity, or perhaps a searching for something more. Maybe he was Elijah come again.

The Jewish nation had been living under the rule of a foreign power most of the time since they had returned from captivity, some 500 years earlier. They knew the Exodus story well, how they had been delivered from a harsh tyrant in Egypt, which they celebrated every year at Passover. All they wanted was for God to rescue them from their Roman oppressors in a similar way. At that time there was an atmosphere of expectancy. The trouble was that they were looking for the wrong thing. They were looking

for freedom from oppression, a more comfortable life, rather than freedom from sin and a turning away from rebellion against God.

Things weren't helped by the religious authorities, who were more concerned with outward appearances and petty rule keeping, often forgetting the reason for the rules. They loved to be seen wearing long flowing robes and praying in public. But amongst the common people there was a thirst for reality in their religion.

And so people from all around flocked to see this character, John, on the banks of the Jordan. Amongst them were spies sent by the priest and Levites, whom John addressed as a brood of vipers. How rude! But that is what they were. John was preaching a message of repentance, not of God making life easier for them through freeing them from the Romans, but of giving them a new God-focused life. They were to turn around and renounce their sinful ways and go in God's way, renouncing their trust in their self-righteousness and good deeds or even religious observance. This was not quite what they had expected. This was demonstrated by baptism, being immersed in the water of the River Jordan, a picture of washing away the past. Ceremonial washings were well known to Jews, as were baptisms, for all Gentile proselytes had to undergo baptism to wash away Gentile uncleanness! But for a Jew this was almost unimaginable and some couldn't stomach it, for it meant renouncing pride.

It strikes me that we so often ask God for things to make our lives more comfortable, to get us out of a mess, but fail to repent of the sin and seek to walk in God's ways. It would seem that repentance was a step too far for some who came to hear John, it wasn't what they came for, but others welcomed it and were dipped in the dirty Jordan water. This was a new beginning. Maybe our nation's problems are due to turning away from God and His ways and like Daniel we may need to repent on behalf of our nation (Dan 9:4 ff).

This change of heart was to be demonstrated by practical actions, fruits of repentance, as we read in Luke's account. Some were to share food and clothing with those who were without, the dishonest were to repay their victims and so on.

But all this was a preparation for the One who was about to come and bring true freedom once and for all, Jesus. He would actually cleanse them from their sin and immerse them in the Holy Spirit, giving them the power to live a new life. God gives us His Holy Spirit when we first trust in Him, but we can

receive more if we ask, which is sometimes like an immersion, like a new beginning. Paul tells us to go on being filled with the Spirit, and Jesus said, "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?". God has so much more for us which He longs to give. Let us draw near to Him afresh and receive from Him.

Hymn

<p>Purify my heart, Let me be as gold and precious silver. Purify my heart, Let me be as gold, pure gold.</p> <p>Refiner's fire, My heart's one desire Is to be holy; Set apart for You, Lord. I choose to be holy; Set apart for You, my Master, Ready to do Your will.</p>	<p>Purify my heart, Cleanse me from within And make me holy. Purify my heart, Cleanse me from my sin, deep within.</p> <p>Refiner's fire, My heart's one desire Is to be holy; Set apart for You, Lord. I choose to be holy; Set apart for You, my Master, Ready to do Your will. (x2)</p>
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Prayers for this week

Thank you to Alun Hughes for this week's prayers.

Almighty and everlasting God, who by the guidance of a star led the Wise Men to adore the new-born King, we praise you for giving your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the light of the world, and for revealing in him your saving love for all mankind. We praise you for the light of the everlasting gospel sent forth to every nation and race to shine brightly among us. We praise you for your Church universal, the whole company of Christ's people, worshipping him and bearing witness to him in so many countries. Receive, O Lord, our praises and fill the world with the radiance of your glory, that all may come and render homage to Christ, their Saviour and their King.

Lord, in your mercy..... Hear our prayer.

Lord, you are the light of the world. In these troubled and difficult times let us stay close to this light and the comfort it brings. We pray for those who are fearful and in need of support; for those who feel lost and in need of guidance; for those who are uncertain and in need of reassurance; for families

where there is sickness. We give thanks for workers facing severe challenges in the National Health Service, and for carers in residential and nursing homes. We give thanks for the scientists who have so effectively researched and produced vaccines to counteract the coronavirus, thereby offering light at the end of a tunnel. We give thanks that our faith and hope remain undiminished, and undimmed.

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer.

We pray for our Mission Partner, Steve Poulson, and his ongoing work with street children in Honduras. We pray for all parts of the world where peace and joy are replaced by conflict and hatred, where the good news of the gospel is suppressed. We pray for Christians who stand up for their faith and are persecuted for it. We ask that the spirit of reconciliation may triumph, so that all peoples may worship in safety.

Lord, in your mercy Hear our prayer.

On this Baptism of Christ Sunday when we recall how the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan, grant that we who have been baptised in his name may rejoice in being your sons and daughters, and the servants of all. Lord, we need a star to set our journey through the world. Help us to see in the babe born in Bethlehem the eternal star which will lead us to the place where hope and love and mercy meet, so that we may kneel with shepherds and kings and find joy and peace in our hearts in Christ Jesus.

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

Christmas

Thank you to all those who contributed over the Christmas period whether to our services, the Christmas trail, by delivering Christmas cards or by joining in.

We are asked to pray this week for Angela and Pat following falls and breakages, those ill with Covid from our churches; and Jo Harvey, Peter Phillips, and for Rose; and for their families.

Give thanks for strengthening of Mary Bulmer and Jo More.

RIP We lift to God the recently departed including Varenna Allen, Alan Bates, David Watts and Nicholas Lamb and pray for their family and friends.

Diary for this week:

Monday 11th January

7:30pm St Andrew's PCC meeting via Zoom

Wednesday 13th January

10.30am BCP Holy Communion by Zoom only:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89470491237?pwd=aG5SVUxPUG85dnYvQUZRUmNtdGNwUT09>

Meeting ID: 894 7049 1237 Passcode: 385710

The readings will be Heb. 2. 14-end, Ps. 105, 1-9 and Mark 1. 29-39.

7:30pm St Mary's PCC meeting via Zoom

Sunday 17th January

10:00am Morning worship from St Thomas' by Zoom

Daily Prayer...

See below.... Please join in.

Daily readings for the coming week

Monday am:	Ps 2	Amos ch. 1	1 Cor. 1. 1-17	pm: Ps 34	Matt. 21. 1-17
Tuesday am:	Ps 8	Amos ch. 2	1 Cor. 1. 18-end	pm: Ps 45	Matt. 21. 18-32
Wednesday am:	Ps 20	Amos ch. 3	1 Cor. ch. 2	pm: Ps 47	Matt. 21. 33-end
Thursday am:	Ps 21	Amos ch. 4	1 Cor. ch. 3	pm: Ps 61	Matt. 22. 1-14
Friday am:	Ps 67	Amos 5. 1-17	1 Cor. ch. 4	pm: Ps 68	Matt. 22. 15-33
Saturday am:	Ps 33	Amos 5. 18-end	1 Cor. ch. 5	pm: Ps 85	Matt. 22. 34-end

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