

Benefice of Goring & Streatley with South Stoke



Sunday 2nd May

Easter 5

Alleluia, Christ is risen..... He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Welcome to Church

The Collect, the prayer for this week

Almighty God,

who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ

have overcome death and opened to

us the gate of everlasting life:

grant that, as by your grace going

before us

you put into our minds good desires,

so by your continual help

we may bring them to good effect;

through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.



This weekend:

10:00am Outside all age service in the Vicarage garden

led by Jo who is looking forward to encouraging you to engage and chat about the Bible readings

10:00am Holy Communion at St Mary's

11:15am Holy Communion at St Andrew's followed by APCM

The service from St Mary's will be available by Zoom.

The services in the Vicarage garden and at St Mary's will be ticketed.

Our churches are open every day for private prayer and for public worship under the following guidelines:

- Please book by contacting the parish office in advance. (Ben or Jill via email vicarofgsandss@yahoo.com or phone 875651) so we have a list of who is coming. By **Saturday 8pm at the latest**.
 - wear a face covering
 - sanitise hands on arrival and when leaving church
 - go to your seat straightaway on arrival
 - only enter into conversation after the service **outside the church**
 - **keep socially-distanced at all times** from those not in your 'bubble'
- Thank you.

We do look forward to worshipping with you on Zoom or in person. 😊

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 (*please see above*)

Psalm 22, 25-end

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
I will perform my vows

in the presence of those that fear you.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the Lord shall praise him;
their hearts shall live for ever.

27 All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.

28 For the kingdom is the Lord's
and he rules over the nations.

29 How can those who sleep in the earth
bow down in worship,
or those who go down to the dust kneel before him?

30 He has saved my life for himself;
my descendants shall serve him;
this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.

31 They shall come and make known his salvation,
to a people yet unborn,
declaring that he, the Lord, has done it.

Readings

Our readings today are Acts 8: 26-end, Psalm 22: 25-end and John 15: 1-8.

Jo Allen has written a reflection on today's readings:

I tapped the floor with my feet and dust began to swirl, the dry heat had made the ground hard. I had that tacky feeling in my mouth you get when your body is pleading for water, as the sun beat down on my skin, slowly melting the sun cream I'd lathered on just an hour before. Grateful for my head covering, I joined my friends and sat on a stool. We were wearing culturally appropriate clothing and the skin we were allowed to show displayed our privilege. We were sitting in the place of honour as our Indian brothers and sisters shared their stories of God's incredible power and love in their village, and in the next village, and the next one after that. The stories were endless because God was meeting people and growing churches at an extraordinary rate. Then one lady was pointed out, she was like all the other women there, the lines on her face displayed both her poverty and her age, but the joy in her expression showed something very different. She clearly knew Jesus. She was the church leader in that village and she was blind.

In Acts 8 Philip is whisked away to share the good news revealed in the scriptures with a eunuch. I'm not sure Philip would ever have expected to be sharing the gospel with a high ranking eunuch, from Ethiopia. This is a major event in the gospel of Acts, and not just because Philip does some incredibly fast traveling in the spirit, but because this was the gospel being shared with someone unexpected. In India when the gospel was shared in a rural village, the first person to receive Jesus was a blind woman, who then went on to nurture a whole church and from which other churches grew. Our God is the God of the unexpected, the God who shows us that his love is for everyone. Yet the most surprising part of Philip's story is that the Spirit was already aware of the eunuch's curiosity (8:29).

We often speak of the Spirit at work in the church, but we neglect the Spirit at work in the lives of those around us. If we recognise that the Spirit is in the world sharing God's love already, according to this passage we are simply being asked to join in.

Who in our community would we least expect Jesus to save? Consider asking God to show you where he is already at work and how you can join in. Let's expect the unexpected.

We spent the last few days of our India trip with a pastor and his family in the bustling city of Mumbai. I will never forget the pastor's wife viscerally describing the time she was stuck behind a fish truck in the scorching heat of Mumbai when she was several months pregnant. It made me grateful for our cold English winters. As we left a member of their church handed us a book called 'cultivating the inner life'. It seemed a fitting end to a busy mission trip; we had spent a few busy weeks in India, it was now time to abide (to dwell in God's love).

Serve and pray, abide and go, that's the rhythm of Jesus in the gospels. Throughout my Christian walk people have described abiding essentially as dwelling in the presence of God through prayer, hinting at the mystical idea of prayer as communion with Jesus. We are then able to serve from this rooted place of love. Yet, our chapter in John 15 expands this idea of abiding, dwelling in God's love, to include the action of loving another in its very definition.

The rhythm of spending time with God in prayer, basking in his love for us and then going out to share his love with the world is healthy and good, but it divides the action of prayer and loving our neighbour. John 15 tells us that loving our friend *is* abiding in Jesus. The very act of giving away the love we have been given emulates what Jesus did for us on the cross, as John 15:13 signifies. It is foundational to know God's love for us, but if we do not give that love away John 15 shows us that we do not abide in Christ. I can name several people in our own congregations who are brilliant at abiding in Christ, who give of themselves over and over again to welcome and to take time caring for others; thank you. It makes me ask where am I giving away Jesus' love? You may say it's easy for a vicar, that's what I'm paid for, but there are countless times that I have the urge to do something simple like taking flowers round to a friend, praying for someone who's sick or simply calling someone who's been a little lonely and I don't do it. Being reminded that the love I give to another is abiding in Christ helps me to realise that I need to listen to those nudges as and when they arrive.

What are the nudges you are ignoring? Is there anyone you could love today?

Hymn

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| My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus blood and righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest friend But wholly trust in Jesus name | <i>Christ alone; cornerstone Weak made strong; in the Saviour's love Through the storm He is Lord, Lord of all</i> |
| When darkness seems to hide His face I rest on His unchanging grace In every high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil | When He shall come with trumpet sound Oh, may I then in Him be found Dressed in His righteousness alone Faultless stand before the throne |

Prayers for this week

Thank you to Brenda Kerr-Muir for this week's prayers.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father. O God, the creator and preserver of all, we pray for people in every kind of need.

We give you thanks for all the blessings of our lives: for your continuing preservation of our world; its joys and successes. We thank you for the decrease in Covid-19 infections and successful roll-out of the vaccination programme. May we continue to be mindful of the needs of others.

We pray for those countries struggling under surges of Covid-19 infections and deaths with health services overwhelmed particularly remembering those in India. We ask that you support all the people and especially the health workers as they witness such trauma and grief.

We pray for those in authority. We pray for the Queen and her ministers. May they show wisdom and justice in their decision-making, give them integrity and may they seek the common good.

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

We pray for the good estate of the catholic Church; guide and govern us by your good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life

We pray for our Bishops, Steven and Gavin, our Vicar, Ben and the Ministry Team. Give them wisdom and courage in their decision-making.

We pray for our young people. Some are preparing for exams; all are trying to

find their way forward in life often without many of the usual social interactions. We pray for toddlers who may be struggling to develop language skills deprived of mixing with their peer group or only amidst adults wearing face-coverings.

We pray for all engaged with Discoverers' and TomToms and the recently started, Little Lights group.

We pray for Steve Poulson and the children and families he cares about. We pray for each other that we may be kind to one another.

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

We commend to your fatherly goodness all those who are afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate; comfort and relieve them in their need and give them patience in their sufferings. We also pray for their families and those who care for them

We remember those who have gone before us in the peace of Christ. We pray for their families and friends in their grief.

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

Heavenly Father, you have promised through your Son Jesus Christ, that when we meet in his name, and pray according to his mind, he hears our prayer: in your love and mercy fulfil our desires, and give us your greatest gift, which is to know you, the only true God, and your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

Electoral Rolls and Annual Parochial Church Meetings

The Annual Parochial Church Meetings are taking place. Those remaining are scheduled as follows with the respective Electoral Roll officer's contact

St Mary's – 4th May at 7.45pm : grahamharvey07@btinternet.com

St Andrew's – 2nd May at noon: Maureen Palmer via sarah.thompson@talk21.com

Parish Churches must update the electoral roll each year, and completely start again each 6 years. If you are not on since the last complete start in 2020 forms are available from the above officers and should be returned to them, or the Vicarage, or via the boxes in the Churches.

Paper copies of the annual reports and accounts for St Mary's and St Andrew's are available in the churches.

The annual meeting for St Andrew's will take place in St Andrew's after the 11:15am service this Sunday (2nd May).

The annual meeting for St Mary's will take place in St Mary's next Tuesday at 7:45pm. Please call the Vicarage (875651) if you would like to attend.

Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer is now taking place in our churches again as follows:

8am on Mondays at St Thomas'

8.30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays at St Mary's

8.30am on Fridays at St Thomas'

Do come and join us.

Christian Aid Week 10-16 May



The pandemic has made life even harder for people in developing countries and they need our help more than ever. This year we are planning to deliver envelopes to people's houses with a note asking them to take their donations to Jack's or Inspiration.

We won't be collecting outside the shops or at the station.

If you are able to deliver the envelopes in your road or one near you, please collect the relevant folder from St Thomas' Church on Saturday 8 May or Sunday 9 May. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Progress on St Thomas' Organ Project

We are pleased to tell you that the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) has approved the plans for our organ rebuild, so will support our application for a faculty. The application notice is now on the notice board outside St Thomas'. Once we have a faculty approved we can then begin applying for grants. Most grant bodies insist on a faculty having been already approved.

The DAC has also recommended a faculty for conversion of the lighting to LED so the notice for this is also there.

In our community **we are asked to pray** this week for Garry Alder, Pat Ankerson, Diana Monk, Jo Harvey, Peter Phillips, Mary Bulmer, and for Rose, and for all their families.

Please pray to discern who you/we know who is missing the greatest gift – who we/you can share our hope and knowledge of Jesus with.

We give thanks for the easing of restrictions and the start of Little Lights.

RIP We lift to God the recently departed including Jean Edwards and pray for their families and friends.

Diary for this week:

Tuesday 4th May

7:45pm St Mary's APCM (please see above for details)

Wednesday 5th May

10.30am BCP Holy Communion from St Thomas' and via Zoom
The readings will be Acts 15. 1-6, Ps. 122. 1-5 & John 15. 1-8.

Thursday 6th May

7:45pm The Prayer Course

Sunday 9th May, Easter 6

8:00am BCP Holy Communion at St Mary's

10:00am Morning service at St Thomas' and by Zoom

Daily Prayer...

See below.... Please join in.

Daily readings for the coming week

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| Monday am: | Ps 145 | Deut. 16. 1-20 | 1 Pet. 1.1-12 | pm: Ps 105 | Luke 4. 38-end |
| Tuesday am: | Ps 19 | Deut. 17. 8-end | 1 Pet. 1.13-end | pm: Ps 97 | Luke 5. 1-11 |
| Wednesday am: | Ps 30 | Deut. 18. 9-end | 1 Pet. 2. 1-10 | pm: Ps 99 | Luke 5. 12-26 |
| Thursday am: | Ps 57 | Deut. ch. 19 | 1 Pet. 2. 11-end | pm: Ps 104 | Luke 5. 27-end |
| Friday am: | Ps 138 | Deut. 21.22-22.8 | 1 Pet. 3. 1-12 | pm: Ps 66 | Luke 6. 1-11 |
| Saturday am: | Ps 146 | Deut. 24. 5-end | 1 Pet. 3. 13-end | pm: Ps 118 | Luke 6. 12-26 |

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