

Benefice of  
Goring & Streatley  
with South Stoke



*Sunday 28th November*

*Advent 1*

## Welcome to Church

### Happy New Year! (church speak)

Advent begins a new church year which starts with preparing our hearts and homes and lives to be fit and ready for Jesus.

It also happens to be a busy time for church wardens and all offers of help

are welcome. Could you help welcome and prepare for one of our special services, please? Or pray for us.

Also think how you can make space to keep your priorities right with Jesus at the centre.



### **The Collect**, the prayer for this week

Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;  
that on the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty  
to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him 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'  
**11:15am** Mattins at St Mary's  
**11:15am** Holy Communion at St Andrew's  
**4:00pm** Advent Carol service at St Thomas'

**We thank God for Steve and Lindsey Poulson's visit** last weekend for their inspirational ministry and witness. Mary Scriven and her team arranged a delicious lunch. Thank you to them and to all who support this life-changing work in Honduras.

## **Advent candles will be in our churches on Sunday**

Advent Candles and cards are now available and cost £4. Orders can be taken at the office.



## **Afghanistan Concern**

Thank you so much to everyone who has bought or made donations towards brand new pyjamas for the children so far. Out of 51 pairs we need just 17 more so if you would like to buy some please contact Ben and ask for the age, boy/girl requirements, or tell him you are happy for Lesley to shop for you and you donate the cost, by Tuesday at the latest, please. The pyjamas will be wrapped on Saturday 4th Dec at 10am and delivered that day to their Christmas party. Any spare funds will be used to buy new underwear for refugees via Care4Calais.

## **No morning Family Service at St Thomas' next week but:**

### **Christingle services –**

Invite your neighbours. Our support for vulnerable children in the UK through the work of the Children's Society is movingly given as we share in this lovely service with children here.



**Sunday 5th December St Andrew's at 11.15am**

**St Thomas' at 4pm \***

**Sunday 12th December St Mary's at 11.15am \***

\* = Booking needed on Eventbrite - see our website or call 875651.

(This helps us work out how many oranges to sacrifice and spike!)

Extra helpers and makers needed for these services please.

### **Parish Christmas cards**

We are hoping the cards with details of all the Christmas services will arrive any day now. If you are willing to help Wendy in sorting the Goring cards into the folders, please let her know and join a party in the Canterbury Room. Please keep checking in St Thomas' and pick up folders and explore our villages. Pray for each household as you go. We hope to get them all out before 5th December....!

### **Youth, Children's and Families' Worker**

As members of the three PCCs are aware, the benefice is looking to recruit a Youth, Families and Children's worker to take forward the ministry to these groups some of whom find formal church services quite challenging. We are planning a 3-5 year post and to offer the opportunity for day-release training alongside the role.

A small group comprising Jo Allen, Sarah Morton, Barbara Taylor and Brenda Kerr Muir are meeting to ascertain the best way to take this recruitment forward before the next round of PCC meetings in January.

We would really appreciate your prayers:

- Asking for God's guiding hand in all the decision-making
- That we go about the recruitment process in the correct way
- If required, that someone come forward with the offer of self-contained accommodation within the benefice

Please continue to pray for our children, youth, families and those who lead them, that they, with us all, draw closer to Jesus together.

### **Advent Attention to God**

Do consider joining in the daily Morning Prayer at St T or St M. A good way to listen to God and pray together. 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' **All Welcome** a one off is a start!

or try **Bible Reading Notes**

This can be helpfully done with an accompanying guide. Daily Bible reading note samples are on display in each church. Please have a look and consider ordering a set, or even giving them as the best and most original Christmas present to someone. If you can't get to church do ask Ben to drop them round for your inspection.

*Diary for this week:*

***Wednesday 1st December***

10:30am BCP Holy Communion at St Thomas'  
followed by coffee in the Canterbury Room.

The readings will be Isa. 25. 6-10a, Ps. 23 and Matt. 15. 29-37.

***Thursday 2nd December***

11:30am Memorial service for David Watts at St Thomas'

***Saturday 4th December***

8:15am Prayer Breakfast at St Thomas', Goring

10:30am Christingle making in the Canterbury Room

12:45pm Marriage of Andrew and Alex at St Mary's

***Sunday 5th December***

8:00am BCP Holy Communion at St Thomas'

9:30am Holy Communion at St Thomas'

11:15am Holy Communion at St Mary's

11:15am Christingle service at St Andrew's

4:00pm \*Christingle service at St Thomas' (see above for information on how to obtain tickets)

Suggested wording for those unable to join us in person:

*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 25: 1-9**

- 1 The Lord is king and has put on glorious apparel;  
the Lord has put on his glory  
and girded himself with strength.
- 2 He has made the whole world so sure  
that it cannot be moved.
- 3 Your throne has been established from of old;  
you are from everlasting.
- 4 The floods have lifted up, O Lord,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their pounding waves.
- 5 Mightier than the thunder of many waters,  
mightier than the breakers of the sea,  
the Lord on high is mightier.
- 6 Your testimonies are very sure;  
holiness adorns your house, O Lord, for ever.

## **Readings**

Our readings today are 1 Thess. 3: 9-end, Ps. 25: 1-9 and Luke 21: 25-36.

Judith Hogg has written a reflection on the readings:

Down the ages there have been times of great expectation as some have worked out a calendar predicting Jesus' return in glory. People have left their jobs and waited in anticipation, only to have their hopes dashed and to live in disillusionment. How foolish! Jesus made it quite clear that not even He knew the date of His return, so how could we hope to do so?

Others have said that Jesus has already returned, perhaps to have taken some of the elect from the earth. Yet Jesus said that every eye would see Him, so there would be no doubt about it. He said to His disciples at His ascension that He would return in like manner to that in which they had seen Him go.

Yet others have given up hope in a literal Second Coming since more than 2,000 years have passed. Peter tells us that with the Lord a thousand years is as one day, so that makes it just over two days that has passed!

Jesus made it quite clear that He would return again in glory to take those who trust in Him to be with Him for ever and that we would see Him face to face. He promised that He would rise from the dead, and His return is no less certain. What a glorious future awaits His followers!

The passage in Luke's gospel is confusing because it talks about two events intertwined: He predicts the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the

Temple in AD 70, and His own return at the end of time, before both of which there would be suffering and persecution of His followers. His followers would be in the firing line of bitter attacks. But this passage is more about the vindication of Jesus as His prophecies were fulfilled, than a detailed timetable for us to follow.

What does this mean for us today? How are we to prepare for Jesus' return? It is both an exciting and an awesome prospect. We want to be pleasing to Him, yet I suspect that we are fearful of the regrets we may have, the times we have been disloyal, the ways in which our behaviour has been totally dishonouring, the times when we have failed to tell people of Him and what He means to us.

So firstly, John tells us that the one who has this hope purifies himself, seeks to be pure, even as Jesus is pure, that is, seeks to live a truly godly life. We can regularly ask God to search our hearts and put His finger on the things that offend Him, to cleanse us and to enable us to be different. This, of course, is a life-long process.

Secondly, Jesus emphasizes in several parables the need to be active, not just waiting. He says that those who are blessed, are those He finds doing His works on His return. Those He praises are those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe those in need, welcome the stranger with hospitality, visit the sick and those in prison. When we do these things for others, we do it to Him.

But thirdly, but not least, we are commanded to tell others, to share Jesus with our friends, so that they, too, may welcome Jesus' return. Yet many of us find this really difficult to do naturally. We may feel tongue-tied, not know how to answer their questions, maybe not know our faith well enough, just not know how to start and shy away from it, or just fear rejection and so keep quiet. It is important to remember that this is God's work, in which we are simply joining in. The Holy Spirit goes before us, making people receptive to the message.

To help us with this, we are running a sermon series in January and a course on Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings to explore this subject further and to help us to share Jesus with our friends. If this is a problem for you, make sure you come along.

## Hymn

1 In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song; This Cornerstone, this solid Ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, When fears are stilled, when strivings cease! My Comforter, my All in All, Here in the love of Christ I stand.	2 In Christ alone! – who took on flesh, Fullness of God in helpless babe. This gift of love and righteousness, Scorned by the ones He came to save: Till on that cross as Jesus died, The wrath of God was satisfied – For every sin on Him was laid; Here in the death of Christ I live.
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<p>3 There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain: Then bursting forth in glorious day Up from the grave He rose again! And as He stands in victory Sin's curse has lost its grip on me, For I am His and He is mine – Bought with the precious blood of Christ.</p>	<p>4 No guilt in life, no fear in death, This is the power of Christ in me; From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand: Till He returns or calls me home, Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.</p>
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## Prayers for this week

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

In joyful expectation of his coming we pray to Jesus, saying *Maranatha*, which means come Lord Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and Judge. Increase in us an attitude of watchfulness and prayer so that we may always be ready to meet you, our lamps trimmed and burning, and our lives active in your service. We pray for the Church across the world that professes your name. May it be perceived as a serving community, giving itself in love for the well-being of others. Help us to live in the light of your coming and give us a longing for your kingdom.

*Maranatha .... Come, Lord Jesus.*

Come to your world as King of the nations. We pray for 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 fellow Christians who stand up for their faith and are persecuted for it. We ask that the spirit of reconciliation may triumph, that all people may worship in safety. We thank you for the visit last weekend of our mission partners Steve and Lindsay and for the message of hope they brought with them. May they return refreshed to continue their vital service with the street children of Honduras. *Maranatha .... Come, Lord Jesus.*

Come to your people with a message of victory and peace. We commend to you our homes and the members of our families, near and far. Unite us in your love and guard us by your power from danger and evil. Make us thankful for all the blessings of family life and keep us mindful of those for whom home has no meaning. We thank you for the communities of which we are part, for those who share with us in their activities and for all who serve their various needs. Help us to be good neighbours, that by love we may support one

another. Give us the victory over death, temptation and evil. *Maranatha ...*  
**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to us as Saviour and Comforter. We pray for those whom we know that are currently suffering through illness, for those still frightened by the pandemic, for the lonely and isolated, for those in care homes, and for refugees fleeing from tyrannical regimes. We thank you for all working in the medical professions, for the vaccines, and for carers. Break into our struggling lives and set us free to serve you for ever. *Maranatha ....* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to us from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory. Lift us up to meet you, with all your saints and angels, to live with you for ever.  
*Maranatha.*

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

#### **Daily readings for the coming week**

Monday <b>am:</b>	Ps 50	Isa. 25. 1-9	Matt. 12. 1-21	<b>pm:</b> Ps 71	Rev. ch. 19
Tuesday <b>am:</b>	Ps 47	Ezek. 47. 1-12	John 12. 20-32	<b>pm:</b> Ps 87	John 1. 35-42
Wednesday <b>am:</b>	Ps 7	Isa. 28. 1-13	Matt. 12. 38-end	<b>pm:</b> Ps 77	Rev. 21. 1-8
Thursday <b>am:</b>	Ps 42	Isa. 28. 14-end	Matt. 13. 1-23	<b>pm:</b> Ps 40	Rev. 21. 9-21
Friday <b>am:</b>	Ps 25	Isa. 29. 1-14	Matt. 13. 24-43	<b>pm:</b> Ps 17	Rev. 21.22-22.5
Saturday <b>am:</b>	Ps 9	Isa. 29. 15-end	Matt. 13. 44-end	<b>pm:</b> Ps 27	Rev. 22.6-end

**We pray for** all churches with projects funded by the diocesan Development Fund; that those projects would make a great impact in their communities.

**We are also asked to pray** for Elizabeth and Caroline Ainsworth, Ivor Wilson, Jean Dixon, Jo More, Jo Harvey, Clive McCann, the Gregory Family, Jenny Fay, Rose Fay and all their families.

**RIP** We lift to God the recently departed and pray for their families and friends.

For further information please check [www.thomandmary.org.uk](http://www.thomandmary.org.uk)