

# Notes from the Riverbank

The newsletter for St Thomas of Canterbury Church in Goring, St Mary's Church in Streatley and St Andrew's Church in South Stoke

December 2017 – 44th edition

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● **Welcome to the forty-fourth edition of "Notes from the Riverbank."**

All contributions should be sent to Toria, the editor, by the 17<sup>th</sup> of each month at the usual email address [webcontent.thomandmary@gmail.com](mailto:webcontent.thomandmary@gmail.com). The on-line versions of the calendars are maintained by Glenn Cooke using the same email address. Bookings for the church or Canterbury Room should be made by contacting Jenny Hall at [jandjh2@btinternet.com](mailto:jandjh2@btinternet.com). We aim to produce the on-line and printed versions of each issue by the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.



### Christmas services in the Benefice

	Goring	Streatley	South Stoke
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December</b>			
Traditional Carol Service	4:00pm	-	4:00pm
<b>Christmas Eve</b>			
BCP Holy Communion	-	8:00am	-
Family Carols	9.30am	-	-
Traditional Carol Service	-	11:15am	-
Community Carols, Rectory Garden	5:00pm	-	-
Late night/Midnight Communion	11:15pm	11:15pm	9:45pm
<b>Christmas Day</b>			
Family Holy Communion	9:30am	-	-
Holy Communion	-	11:00am	11:00am

Services especially suitable for children



### Christmas Fair

The annual Christmas Fair was held in St Thomas' church on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> November and the buzzing atmosphere was a great start to the Festive season.



Children's colouring competition winning entries



Our very own Assistant Curate, Steve, in his Christmas-themed jumper

The event raised a grand total of £1153.72 which will be shared between church funds and our Mission Partner, Steve Poulson, who is working with street children in Honduras. (See below for an update on Steve's work.)

As always, the Children's colouring competition attracted a large number of entries which were displayed around the church pillars. The competition was split into three age groups and the judges Michael and Myrna declared the winners as Asha, Verity and Oliver; congratulations to all three of you! Steve Johnson announced the results at the Fair and the winners were presented with gift tokens.

Whether you looked after the reindeer while Father Christmas popped in to say hello, donated gifts for the stalls, helped to set up the Fair, made cakes, served on the stalls, helped on the lunches, cleared up afterwards or spent your money on the day, the organisers are extremely grateful to all involved in making this occasion such a highlight of the Church calendar, providing fun and fellowship.



Chris Tassell



### Pastoral letter: God with us

I find it quite unbelievable that we are back at the beginning of a new Church year as Advent approaches. There is a real buzz about the big shops and their Christmas adverts as they hope to get you through their doors using Paddington Bear, Moz the Monster, sharing a meal with good friends or even a carrot falling in love! Yet again I imagine that Advent will be subsumed by Christmas, forgetting the season of waiting; trying to rush us straight to Christmas day! But Advent is an important time for us, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of "God with us" at Christmas.

What do you look forward to at Christmas? Do you look forward to it? Christmas is supposed to be a wonderful time. One when we gather round the table and eat ourselves silly, when we exchange gifts with loved ones or just have good quality time with our family and friends. Yet Christmas can also be a difficult time, full of memories of loved ones no longer with us; memories of difficult family relationships or just a lonely time.

What about the true meaning?

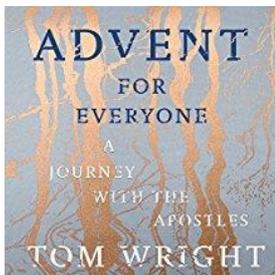
The verses I have been coming back to when thinking about Advent and Christmas, particularly where our Benefice is concerned, are those of Matthew 1: 22 & 23 which say: *All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

What an amazing truth to be reminded of again as we approach Advent and Christmas. The baby born in a manger was planned, prophesied and fulfilled. Here is God coming to earth to "be with us"!



TO BE WITH US! You and me!

Advent means "coming" and we are waiting for Immanuel to come. Not just to celebrate his coming that first Christmas, but we also look and wait for Jesus to come again, when He will make all things new. And as we approach a new year, I wonder how you would describe the one just finishing? Each one of us have a different experience, yet Immanuel is with us, was with us and will be with us as we approach another year, with all the potential that a New Year brings. Because if God is for us, then who can be against us! (Romans 8:31)



If you are still contemplating a book to read for Advent, I am going to be working my way through Tom Wright's *Advent for Everyone*. Why not join me?

Wishing each one of you a blessed, peaceful Christmas.



Steve, Assistant Curate



### Some good reads

Over the years there are a few books that I have found particularly helpful in terms of the growth of my relationship with God. The first one is the Bible of course. My regular reading has been enhanced with the support of other books, particularly a series of daily Bible readings by Tom Wright, former Bishop of Durham and a leading New Testament scholar. He has written one book on each book of the New Testament called "... for everyone" ("Matthew for everyone," "Luke for everyone" and so on.)

Another book I can thoroughly recommend is "The Practice of the Presence of God 2015 edition" which is a delightful account of how a monk's relationship with God developed wonderfully through his daily work.

Finally there is one more book by Tom Wright: "How God became King." This is a book that reminds us what the four gospels are about and gives us a much fuller picture of who is Jesus. With Christmas coming you might like to ask friends or family for one of these books or even begin to build up a library of Tom Wright's "For everyone" series.



Paul Boughton, your vicar



### Goring Chamber Choir presents "A Shining Star"

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 3:00 pm in St Thomas' Church, Goring

Our Advent concert of Christmas carols is filled with radiant light. Sparkling stars shine over the Christmas scenes: the shepherds, the child in the manger, the three kings. The beautiful songs may come from Spain or Sweden, but are all bright with stars, and are mixed with seasonal poems to lift the spirit. Familiar congregational carols complete the programme. The choir will be accompanied by Steve Bowie. Tickets £12 and £10 from Inspiration in Goring, from a choir member, or on the door. <http://www.goringchamberchoir.org.uk/>



Graeme Pearce



### St Mary's New Year Coffee Morning

Come and join us (and please bring friends and neighbours) for our New Year's Coffee Morning at Gatehampton Manor on 10<sup>th</sup> January from 10:30am. This is a Bring and Buy event, so anything is welcome from cakes to unwanted Christmas presents. Everybody will be made most welcome, with fellowship around a log fire. There is lots of parking in the Courtyard, and the proceeds will go towards the running costs of St Mary's. Phone Tina Farr (874031) for further details.



John Rogers



### News from Honduras

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November Steve Johnson and I spent 50 minutes on Skype talking with Steve Poulson. He looked remarkably relaxed and settled and gave us a clear picture of the life he is leading in Honduras. Steve has been in his apartment for four months and his residency is now through. He is gradually getting into a routine, learning patience with the much slower culture and has found a supportive English-speaking Church. With evidence of Christmas approaching, however, he is starting to feel the reality of being far from home. Steve's latest prayer requests:

- Sabbath rest, that he may continue to respect his day off;
- Protection when he is driving and the reliability of the car because he drives a lot in dangerous areas;
- For safety throughout the period of the Presidential election, which takes place on the 26<sup>th</sup> November. This causes unrest and is a "fairly worrying time," with a curfew likely. His house is just five minutes from the Presidential Palace so he will be leaving his flat to stay in the children's home;
- For his role within each project, particularly in Radio Christmas (72 hours of radio);
- Prayer for easy wins to build more trust. He is very aware of the power of prayer in his work with the gangs.

There will be opportunities to give over the Christmas season to Steve's work and half the proceeds from the St Thomas's Christmas Fair will be donated to this.



Sally Baker



### **Gary Jordan, Classical guitarist**

Gary Jordan will be presenting a Classical Guitar concert in St Mary's on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February beginning at 7:30pm. The programme will be a variety of music from England, Spain and Latin America, including works for lute by John Dowland, John Rutter, Augustin Barrios and Isaac Albeniz.

Ticket prices are £10 full, £9 concessions, available on the door. For advance booking please email [StMarysConcerts@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:StMarysConcerts@hotmail.co.uk). For further information about Gary, go to <http://www.garyjordanguitar.uk/>

 Stella



### **Explore!**

We live in a wonderful part of the country, with so many places to explore and discover, but I wonder where you go when you are working through life's big questions? No matter what questions you have, you can be sure that you are not alone in asking them!

Last year, the Anglican churches of Goring and Streatley with South Stoke ran an Alpha Course in which over 20 people each week explored life's big questions and the Christian faith, looking at what it has to say about the meaning of life. Each of the sessions looked at different issues around faith, followed by small group discussions at which no topics were off limits and much lively debate took place. Among the comments from participants on last year's course were: "Give it a go and you won't be disappointed." "Just come; you will be surprised how good it is!"

Alpha is run all around the globe, in cafés, churches, universities, prisons, homes and bars. It is free, and everyone is welcome! No two Alphas look the same, but they generally have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation. We too are undertaking another Alpha course, which will start on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018 in the Canterbury Room at St Thomas' Church, Goring at 7:30pm.

There are many ways in which you can get involved.

As with last year's course, we will begin with a meal, hospitality is key to mission. To make the evening go smoothly, we will be looking for people to provide meals, help serve and wash up. So as not to put the onus on one Church, we need the whole Benefice to step up again to meet this challenge. Patsy Calder is coordinating the catering side of things. Prayer is essential to Alpha. Judith Aguda will once again be coordinating our corporate prayer for Alpha, but it would be good if the whole Benefice committed to praying each day for the course and those joining it. You can also join us on the night, come along and pray as a group.

And finally, each one of us should be praying about who we can invite to join the Alpha Course. Why not give them a postcard or offer to come along with them? I am so excited about running another Alpha course and to see what God will be doing in

the lives of all that come along. This is what the Church is called to do, so let us each play our part and help make a success of the opportunities God gives us.

Please do get in touch to offer help or if you have any questions. To book your place, email [alpha@thomandmary.org.uk](mailto:alpha@thomandmary.org.uk) or phone 873770.

 Steve Johnson, Assistant Curate



### **Organ Recital by Michael Howell on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October**

Michael Howell completed our St Mary's Concerts season for this year with a splendid Baroque Organ Recital on our Baroque style organ. Travelling backwards through time from Bach he included pieces by Bach, Buxtehude, Pachelbel and Sweelinck. My personal favourite which was *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (How Brightly Shines the Morning Star) by Pachelbel, a delightful twinkly piece of music full of starshine and the sounds of the Dawn Chorus. The audience very much enjoyed the wonderful music and a delicious tea provided by Friends of St Mary's in the Morrell Room to follow the concert.



Next year's St Mary's Concerts season begins on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February when we are delighted to be able to welcome professional classical guitarist Anastasiya Kryvanos for a concert beginning at 7:30pm. Our concert slots are fully booked by performers for next year but if you are interested in giving a concert in St Mary's in the future we still have some vacancies for the 2019 season.

 Stella



Merry Christmas, and a happy and healthy new year to everyone!  
This is a bumper double Christmas edition of Riverbank so we shall see you all in February 2018.  
Torja (editor) and Robin (technical support)

United Benefice of  
Goring & Streatley  
with South Stoke



## Benefice Calendar - December 2017

			<u>Goring</u>	<u>Streatley</u>	<u>South Stoke</u>
<b>Su. 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	Advent 1	Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
		Family breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.45		
		Family Service	9.30		11.15
		Benefice Advent Carol service	16.00		
Tu. 5 <sup>th</sup>		South Stoke Prayer meeting @ Stoke Abbas			14.30
We. 6 <sup>th</sup>		Midweek Holy Communion and coffee	10.30		
<b>Su. 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Advent 2	Holy Communion	9.30	8.00 & 11.15	11.15
		Discoverers	17.00		
		Stillness on Sunday – “The Coming”		17.30	
We. 13 <sup>th</sup>		Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
		Goring Primary School Carol Service	19.00		
Fr. 15 <sup>th</sup>		Streatley Primary School Carol Service		14.00	
Sa. 16 <sup>th</sup>		Benefice Prayer Breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.30		
<b>Su. 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Advent 3	Holy Communion	8.00 & 9.30	11.15	
		Traditional Carol Service	16.00		16.00
We. 20 <sup>th</sup>		Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
		South Stoke Coffee Morning			10.30
Th. 21 <sup>st</sup>		Pick-a-Flick & Lunch – ‘Jungle Book’	10.30		
		Discoverers’ Christmas social	15.00		
Fr. 22 <sup>nd</sup>		<b>No</b> Come on Board Scrabble			
<b>Su. 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Advent 4	Holy Communion		8.00	11.15
		Family Carol Service	9.30		
		Traditional Carol Service		11.15	
		Community Carols @ 17.00 (Rectory Garden)			
		Late night Communion			21.45
		Midnight Communion	23.15	23.15	
Mo. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas	Family Communion Service	9.30		
	Day	Christmas Holy Communion		11.00	11.00
We. 27 <sup>th</sup>		<b>No</b> Midweek Holy Communion			
<b>Su. 31<sup>st</sup></b>	Christmas 1	Holy Communion	8.00 & 10.30		

**Morning Prayer:** The ministry team pray the service of Morning Prayer together three times each week on Monday, Thursday & Friday at 8am during term time and 8:30am during school holidays.

**For more details:** call the Vicarage (875651) or look at the Website [www.thomandmary.org.uk](http://www.thomandmary.org.uk).

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## Benefice Calendar - January 2018

		<u>Goring</u>	<u>Streatley</u>	<u>South Stoke</u>
Tu. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	South Stoke Prayer meeting @ Crossways			14.30
We. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Midweek Holy Communion and coffee	10.30		
Th. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Epiphany celebration for Advent groups (Canterbury Room)	11.30 & 19.30		
<b>Su. 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Epiphany Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Family breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.45		
	Family Service	9.30		11.15
	Choral Evensong	16.00		
We. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	St Mary's Coffee Morning 10:30am @ Gatehampton Manor			
<b>Su. 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Epiphany 2 Holy Communion	9.30	8.00 & 11.15	11.15
	Discoverers	17.00		
	Stillness on Sunday – BCP Evening Prayer		17.30	
We. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	South Stoke Coffee Morning			10.30
	Streatley PCC - 8pm @ Gatehampton Manor			
Th. 18 <sup>th</sup>	Pick-a-Flick & Lunch – 'Churchill'	10.30		
Sa. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Benefice Prayer Breakfast (Canterbury Room)	8.30		
<b>Su. 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Epiphany 3 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Good News service	9.30		
	Mattins			11.15
We. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	South Stoke PCC - 8pm @ Crossways			
Fr. 26 <sup>th</sup>	Come on Board Scrabble (Canterbury Room)	15.00		
Sa. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Coffee & Cake (Canterbury Room)	10.30		
<b>Su. 28<sup>th</sup></b>	Presentation Holy Communion	9.30	8.00	11.15
	Mattins		11.15	
	Christingle service	16.00		
We. 31 <sup>st</sup>	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	Goring PCC - 8pm in the Canterbury room			

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