



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 2016 – 34th edition

- All enquiries 01491 875651 or stthomasmaryandrew@gmail.com



Price per printed copy

• Welcome to the thirty-fourth edition of "Notes from the Riverbank."

All contributions should be sent to Toria, the editor, by the 17th of each month at the usual email address 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 the UB Parish Secretary Jenny Hall at jandjh2@btinternet.com. We aim to produce the on-line and printed versions of each issue by the 25th of each month.



Special services at Christmas

Goring

Streatley

South Stoke

Sunday 18th December

Traditional Carol Service

4pm

7pm

4pm

Tuesday 20th December

Family Carol Service



4pm

-

-

Christmas Eve

Noisy Nativity



3pm

-

-

Carols in the Meadow

-

6pm

-

Late night/Midnight Communion

11.15pm

11.15pm

9.45pm

Christmas Day

Holy Communion

8am

10.30am

10.30am

Family Service followed by HC



9.30am

-

-

...and every Sunday

Main service



9.30am

11.15am

11.15am



Services especially suitable for young children

What is the difference between the churches?

In **Goring**, most services are less formal. Every Sunday during term-time there's a crèche and Sunday School during the main service. In **Streatley**, most services are more traditional, while in **South Stoke** there is variety in the village church.



Pastoral Christmas Letter

Bethlehem today is hemmed-in by illegal Jewish settlements for it has been occupied since the Six Day War in 1967 and hardly free. It was not free in Roman times either. Caesar Augustus had ordered a Census to be taken which necessitated every male with his family to return to the town of his birth to register and so it was for Joseph. The town was heaving with people. Some were there with political grievances and yearned for a change of government. Some with business worries for it was the worst time to leave a business. Some left relatives behind because they were sick and could not be moved. Some came on their own because they had lost their family, and some came determined to have a night out on the town. It was in this town with all the disturbance of the Census that Jesus was born. It was no accident because the place of his birth was prophesied by Micah and by Isaiah as well as the nature of his birth: "a young woman who was a virgin will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel (God with us). This will be a sign." And yet people were too preoccupied with business, boredom or sadness to notice. Some felt guilty and in need of forgiveness, some would hate themselves for what they did that night on the town, and others needed grace, peace and hope. It was very much like our world today and although "God came in" in the person of Jesus, there was no room for him then or now.

Joy Davidman, an atheist and communist, was kicked out by her husband along with her two young sons. Somehow she got in touch with Professor CS Lewis having read his book "Mere Christianity." He too had been an atheist. She found herself on her knees. "For the first time in my life I felt helpless; for the first time my pride was forced to admit that I was not, after all, master of my fate and the captain of my soul. All my defences were down. The walls of arrogance, cocksureness and self-love behind which I hid from God went down momentarily and God came in."

It is easy to explain away Joy's experience. People suggested to her that her experience of God was the invention of a desperate mind! Far from it. Joy explained that she was just as worried after the event of praying as she was before. "No – it was terror and ecstasy, repentance and rebirth... And God came in." Joy's words actually refer to her conversion experience, and her story was told in the film "Shadowlands". Joy's words describe what happened when she fell on her knees and prayed – God came into her heart and life. God will come into the lives of all who, like Joy, ask sincerely and humbly. Deep inside all of us there is a hunger for something more. In the book of Ecclesiastes the writer says: "He has set eternity in the heart of people yet they cannot fathom what God has done from the beginning to the end". "And God came in." In the Babe of Bethlehem, He gives us the answer. It is the risen Christ who says: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in." When Joy came to kneel before the Lord, her barriers against God went down, then God came in. It can be the same for us.

"And God came in." Those four words succinctly describe the message of Jesus, particularly the message of Christmas. Room or no room?



The Revd Canon Peter Downham

From the Vicarage...

● Traditional Christmas Carol Services

Come to your parishes' traditional Christmas Carol service on Sunday 18th December:

- Goring @ 4pm with the united choirs of the Benefice;
- South Stoke @ 4pm;
- Streatley @ 7pm with the united choirs of the Benefice.

From 18th December, morning services will follow the normal Sunday Service pattern.

● New! Family Carol Service

As well as the traditional Christmas Carol Services in each church, this year there will be a Family Carol Service with the Junior Choir at 4pm at St Thomas' Church, Goring on Tuesday 20th December followed by cake! This service would be ideal for young children, but everyone of all ages from across the Benefice is welcome!

● Christmas Eve

Do come and join in the following services on Christmas Eve!

Noisy Nativity

Come dressed as your favourite nativity character and join the angels, shepherds and wise men on their journey to Bethlehem to visit Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus. Noisy Nativity will take place at 3pm on Christmas Eve at St Thomas' Church, Goring. Some costumes will be available in church. Everyone welcome!

Torchlight procession and carols in the Meadow

This year's torchlight procession will start at 6pm on Christmas Eve and will be followed by Christmas Carols sung around the bonfire at 6.40pm. Don't miss it!

Midnight Communion

There will be Midnight Communion services in Goring and Streatley this year at 11.15pm and an earlier, 9.45pm Holy Communion at South Stoke.

● Christmas Day

So that we may worship the one who is *the reason for the season* on Christmas Day:

- The Benefice Family Service will be at Goring at 9.30am, followed by a short said Communion for those who would like to stay;
- There will be a Christmas Holy Communion at Streatley at 10.30am;
- South Stoke's Christmas Holy Communion will also be at 10.30am.

I wish you and your family a very happy and peaceful Christmas!



The Revd Paul Boughton



Update on Paul's health

I am pleased to let you all know that Paul is out of hospital after his surgery last Saturday (19th November). The Consultant is pleased with how the operation went, and further treatment is planned in December. Paul and Liz are very grateful for all your prayers and kindness.



Carolyn Ahanchian, PA to the Revd Paul Boughton



Glad Tidings Goring Chamber Choir Advent and Christmas carol service

GLAD TIDINGS! Goring Chamber Choir is singing carols for Advent and Christmas at 3pm on Sunday 11th December in St Thomas' Church, Goring.

We shall start with *Advent tidings* by Andrew Parnell, a new arrangement of *Sleepers, wake!* The theme then progresses through the annunciation to Mary, her role as *A spotless rose*, the arrival in Bethlehem, Jesus' birth, a quick look at kings and shepherds, including Kodaly's *Christmas dance of the shepherds* accompanied by flute, and ending with Rutter's carol *All bells in Paradise*. There are carols for all to sing and the organist is Steve Bowey.

Tickets are £12 and £10 obtainable from Inspiration in Goring, from a choir member, or on the door. <http://www.goringchamberchoir.org.uk/>



Graeme Pearce



Lest we forget: Remembrance Sunday 2016



Adrian Turner's photos from the Remembrance Service at St Mary's, and one by John Rogers from Streatley School's Remembrance Service.

In Goring...

The day dawned, sun shining and fresh for the service by the War Memorial. More than 200 people of all ages were there, including representatives of the Parish Council and a large contingent of young people from the uniformed organisations. The short Act of Remembrance was conducted by the Revd Liz Dowding, assisted by the Revd Nigel Gordon Potts and Father Antony Conlon. The Fallen of the village in two World Wars were remembered by name before the two minutes silence, ably marked by Bugler Phil Jones. There was also a fly past by two helicopters from RAF Benson. Wreaths were laid and prayers were said for all: to have the commitment and courage to serve God and humanity in the cause of peace and the relief of poverty and suffering.

While members of Goring Free Church and Our Lady and St John continued to their own services, many people continued to the service for Remembrance Sunday which followed in St Thomas'. This sombre service with traditional hymns and words was enhanced by two exquisite anthems sung by the choir; the clear, young voices of the treble section lifting the melodies. The Vicar Paul Boughton preached an inspiring and challenging sermon based on "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." The service concluded with the hymn *Thine be the Glory, Risen conquering Son* sung to Handel's rousing tune, followed by the *National Anthem*. We all went home, encouraged to serve God and one another, to pursue peace and to seek justice and the good of all.

 Brenda Kerr Muir, Churchwarden



The Vicar has a new PA!

I am delighted to tell you that Jill Kirby will become my PA with effect from 5th December. Jill is a bell ringer, and regular member of the 8am congregation. She has worked closely with Carolyn over the last year to develop the collection of statutory fees and so has already gathered much background knowledge. There will be a period of handover from Carolyn to make the change as smooth as possible. I am so grateful to Jill and look forward to working with her. Do please make her welcome!

 The Revd Paul Boughton



Christingle Service

For the third year, we will be holding a Christingle Service at Candlemas (or as near Candlemas as we can fit) on Sunday 29th January 2017 in St Mary's Church, Streatley. As this service celebrates Jesus as the Light of the World, Candlemas is an appropriate time to light our Christingles.

Please come to the Morrell Room at 3.15pm to make your candle and for refreshments; the Christingle Service will take place at 4pm in St. Mary's Church, Streatley. Everyone welcome!

 The Revd. Paul Boughton



Coffee and cake take a break

As is customary, *Coffee and cake* takes a break for November and December. Thanks to the small, but dedicated band of helpers and cake-makers it has proved yet again to be a time very much appreciated by regulars, not so regulars, and some just passing through the village. We aim to be a safe place where people can drop-in to enjoy coffee, cake, company and where nothing is expected. A big "thank you" to everyone who has helped so willingly, and if anybody would like to help in the future we would be delighted to see you.

Normally *Coffee and cake* is on the last Saturday of the month (excluding November and December of course) in the Canterbury Room, Goring from 10.30am until 12.15pm. It takes place in Goring, but is not exclusively for Goring. It would be lovely to gather people from Streatley and South Stoke, or indeed anyone you may know who would like to spend time in the company of others. They will all be very welcome.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the coming year.



Liz Dowding, Associate Priest phone 873140



Janet Pound Piano Recital in St Mary's on 23rd October

On Sunday 23rd October, a large and enthusiastic audience were enchanted by a delightful series of pieces played by Janet Pound with her usual accomplished brilliance.

This time she was following an Autumn theme, the final three pieces, *Autumn Song* by Tchaikovsky, *Autumn Leaves* by Rebikov and *Automne* by Cecile Chaminade were directly autumnal. The first two evoked the images of falling and wind-tossed leaves, and the final one had the excitement of an autumn storm included. Janet also played pieces by Chopin, Beethoven and Schubert which she felt went with the spirit of the Autumn season.

It was a privilege to hear such virtuoso piano playing and all the pieces were very much enjoyed. We are hoping that Janet will be returning to St Mary's with another concert next July. Following the concert, we were all treated to a delicious tea in the Morrell Room so thank you very much to all the hard-working volunteers who provided the tea.



Stella



A merry Christmas, and a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year to all Riverbank readers!



Toria

**Thank you from the Parkinsons**

Dear Brenda & David,

As a token of our thanks to the Church Family at St Thomas' for all their kindnesses to Margaret over the last 10 years, we would like to give a donation to the Church to use as you feel is best.

There are too many people to name individually. The ministry team; the drivers; the members of pick-a-flick and Scrabble groups; the sidesmen; people who chatted to Margaret over coffee; and those who just welcomed her with a smile.

with love and thanks,

Elizabeth & Henry



Brenda Kerr Muir, Churchwarden

**Congratulations to Carolyn Ahanchian!**

Carolyn has been appointed Research Director of Arlington Research, an appointment which will use her professional skills to the full. She will leave her current role on 9th December. I am so grateful to Carolyn for being such a wonderful PA to me for the last two years. She has also handled the period of my illness with particular sensitivity, and navigated with charm the change from following a Parish Secretary to becoming the Vicar's PA.

Thank you so much for your ministry to us Carolyn; we wish you well.



The Revd Paul Boughton

**Friends of St Mary's: Progress report November 2016**

Welcome to this half yearly report which will keep you up to date with FoSM progress since the AGM in May.

We hope to raise around £8000 this year from the usual mixture of donations, fundraising events and tax recovery. This would be in line with previous years. In regards to donations we are very grateful to the members who continue to give regularly and cannot stress too much how we appreciate their generosity. Many are signed up for Gift Aid and, as a result, we have been able to claim a further 25% off their donations from HMRC.

On fundraising we organised the teas in the Morrell Room after both of Janet Pound's concerts held in St. Mary's. We also had a stall at the Picnic in Streatley Meadows. Again we are grateful to everybody who donated cakes sandwiches and plants for these events. We were also represented at the Streatley Parish Council Annual Assembly held in late May. However, our main fundraiser will be held in the Morrell Room on 3rd December. This is a "Singalong" with Roger Selman at the piano and includes a hot supper. This is such a popular event having been run by different charities in past years, that the 100 tickets available are already sold out!

We have been busy allocating funds for repair and maintenance projects as requested by the St Mary's PCC. So far this year we have expended £2500 on completing three projects: a new gate at the bottom of the churchyard, a new carpet for the Chancel and, due to a shortage of volunteers, a contractor to trim around the monuments and graves in the churchyard. As a result we are happy to report that the churchyard is looking in good shape. Our main outstanding commitment is to fund the restoration of the historic Lych Gate. Obtaining a contractor to carry out this work has been a problem and, as a consequence, the cost has considerably increased over the original estimate. It is now expected to cost around £10,000. Hopefully a contractor will be appointed early in the New Year. We have also committed a further £1500 to install a lightning conductor on the Tower.

We are always looking for more members. If you would like to join FoSM or make a donation to our worthwhile cause, then please pick up our brand new leaflet available at the back of the Church.



Graham Harvey



Life's big questions!

Where do you go when you are working through the big questions in life? No matter what questions you have, you can be sure that you are not alone in asking them! You may have heard about the Alpha course in the national press and this winter the churches of Goring and Streatley with South Stoke are

running a course, starting in late January. Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith and what it says about the meaning of life. Each looks at different questions around faith, followed by small group discussions at which no questions are off limits and much lively discussion takes place.

People like Bear Grylls and Benjamina from this year's *Great British Bake Off* have attended the course, as well as many thousands of others. Previous participants comment: "Each week I would arrive with a million questions, but gradually more than that, I arrived with a sense of hope." "Alpha is a place where you can be yourself, and can say what you think, and challenge everything." "This is the first opportunity I'd had to talk about faith without being judged."

Alpha is run all around the globe, in cafés, churches, universities, prisons, homes, bars; it is free, and everyone is welcome! No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation.

The course here will start on Thursday 26th January 2017 in the Canterbury Room at St Thomas's Church, Goring at 7.30 pm. It will start with a meal, so you don't need to eat first and could come straight from work. After this there will be the talk/video, followed by discussions, finishing at about 9.30 pm. This year there is an advertising campaign featuring the world-renowned TV adventurer, Bear Grylls, and his greatest adventure — finding a simple faith in God through Alpha. He says that the first step is the hardest. His challenge is to #TryAlpha!

As we prepare as a Benefice to invite people to #TryAlpha, there are many ways in which you can get involved. Firstly, prayer is essential to Alpha. Judith Aguda will 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. Secondly, hospitality is key to the course. In order 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 to meet this challenge. Patsy Calder is co-ordinating the catering side of things. Thirdly, we need to be praying about who we can invite to join the Alpha Course.

I am so excited about the course and what God will be doing in the lives of all that come along. Back in October, Colin Smith reminded us at the UB service that mission should run through the DNA of Church like the writing in a stick of rock. 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.



Assistant Curate, Steve Johnson; stevejohn18@hotmail.com or phone 873770

United Benefice of
Goring & Streatley
with South Stoke



Benefice Calendar - December 2016

		<u>Goring</u>	<u>Streatley</u>	<u>South Stoke</u>
Su. 4th	Advent 2 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Family Service	9.30		11.15
	Evensong	16.00		
Tu. 6 th	South Stoke Prayer Meeting @ 14.30, Crossways			
We. 7 th	Midweek Holy Communion followed by coffee	10.30		
Sa. 10 th	Prayer Breakfast in the Canterbury Room	8.30		
Su. 11th	Advent 3 Holy Communion	9.30	8.00 & 11.15	11.15
	Discoverers	17.00		
	Stillness on Sunday		17.30	
We. 14 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	South Stoke Coffee Morning			10.30
Th.. 15 th	Pick a Flick & lunch showing 'It's a Wonderful Life'	10.30		
Sa. 17 th	Wedding			14.00
Su. 18th	Advent 4 Holy Communion	8.00		
	Mattins		11.15	
	Traditional Carol Service	16.00	19.00	16.00
Tu. 20 th	Family Carol Service *	16.00		
	Discoverers Christmas Party in the Canterbury Room	17.00		
We. 21 st	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
Sa. 24th	Christmas Eve Noisy Nativity *	15.00		
	Carols in the Meadow @ 18.00, Streatley			
	Late Night Communion			21.45
	Midnight Communion	23.15	23.15	
Su. 25th	Christmas Day Holy Communion	8.00	10.30	10.30
	Family Service * followed by Communion	9.30		

* Services especially suitable for young children

- Morning Prayer: South Stoke @ 9.30am every Friday, Goring @ 9.15am on 8th December
- Note no 9.30am service at Goring or an 11.15am service at South Stoke on 18th December
- Note no Morning Prayer on 22nd December or Midweek Holy Communion on 28th December
- For more details, call the Vicarage (875651) or look at the website www.thomandmary.org.uk

United Benefice of
Goring & Streatley
with South Stoke



Benefice Calendar – January 2017

		<u>Goring</u>	<u>Streatley</u>	<u>South Stoke</u>
Su. 1st	Christmas 2 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Family Service	9.30		11.15
Tu. 3 rd	South Stoke Prayer Meeting @ 14.30, Crossways			
We. 4 th	Midweek Holy Communion followed by coffee	10.30		
Su. 8th	Epiphany Holy Communion	9.30	8.00 & 11.15	11.15
	Stillness on Sunday		17.30	
We. 11 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
Su. 15th	Epiphany 2 Holy Communion	8.00	11.15	
	Good News Service	9.30		
	Mattins			11.15
	Discoverers	17.00		
We. 18 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
	South Stoke Coffee Morning			10.30
	Streatley PCC Meeting @ 20.00, at Gatehampton Manor			
Th..19 th	Pick a Flick & lunch showing '84 Charing Cross Road'	10.30		
Su. 22nd	Epiphany 3 Holy Communion	9.30	8.00	11.15
	Mattins		11.15	
Mo. 23 rd	Mum's Out Tonight @ 20.00, 18 Wallingford Road, Goring			
We. 25 th	Midweek Holy Communion	10.30		
Th. 26 th	Alpha Course @ in the Canterbury Room, please contact Steve Johnson to book a place (stevejohn18@hotmail.com)	19.30		
Fri. 27 th	Come on Board Scrabble in the Canterbury Room	15.00		
	South Stoke PCC Meeting @ 20.00, at Crossways			
Sa. 28 th	Coffee & Cake in the Canterbury Room	10.30		
Su. 29th	Presentation Holy Communion	8.00		
	United Benefice Service		10.30	
	Christingle Service		16.00	
	Discoverers	17.00		

Morning Prayer: South Stoke @ 9.30am every Friday, Goring @ 9.15am on 26th January

Note no Evensong on 1st January or Morning Prayer on 12th January

For more details, call the Vicarage (875651) or look at the website www.thomandmary.org.uk