

SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

*The Benefice of the Guitings, Cutsdean, Farmcote, Upper and Lower Slaughter
with Eyford and Naunton*

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2026



Rev'd Anne Curtis

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the blessings of our Benefice life together,
and pray that we may continue to be a blessing to one
another during this time of vacancy.

We pray for Anne who you are calling to serve among us.

Grant her vision, courage and love.

Grant us open hearts to welcome and work alongside her.

That together we may serve your kingdom faithfully,

In this place and in this time.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Rector: Our new Priest-in-Charge will be in post in early 2026.

Rev'd Sue Pestell (Associate Priest): Email: susan.pestell@gmail.com
07514 542934

View online at www.achurchnearyou.com

Churches and School working together to share God's love in our communities

CHURCHWARDENS

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(Vacant)

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Naunton (GL54 3AX)
(Vacant)

Safeguarding Officer: Jane Pickup

**Temple Guiting (GL54 5RW) and
Cutsdean (GL54 5RX)**

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SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

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**DEADLINE for the next issue
20 MARCH 2026.**

*This magazine is free to parish residents. Otherwise, the charge is **50p per copy.***

Temple Guiting Church of England Primary School

Head Teacher: Mrs Ann Barry

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www.templeguiting.glos.sch.uk

DEAR FRIENDS

The weather is windy, cold and grey as I write this. I felt all at sea driving down to HMP Leyhill this morning, as the wind buffeted the car.

The weather at the moment is rather all at sea, sunny, crisp and frosty one day, constant pouring rain another, and like today, buffeting cold wind; providing plenty to talk about for a nation that likes to talk about the weather.

When I was quite young I'm sure we knew what to expect of the seasons - there was a solidity and certainty about them. The changes of the seasons, like the seasons of the church, give us a rhythm to life as we live in the moment *and* look forward.

We are currently in the season of Epiphany, a part of the Christmas season, which will end on 2nd February. We will have a few weeks of ordinary time before Lent starts on the 18th February. A change from celebration and decoration to devotion and simplicity, taking time to draw closer to God before the great feast of Easter.

Further on in the magazine you will find information about our Lent Wednesdays. Each week we will have a speaker on different callings both in the Church and secular life.

In the meantime, as I looked more closely at the trees in all their winter splendour, I saw that new buds are beginning to appear. Signs of change, signs of hope. It made me think of a verse from the prophet Isaiah:-

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"
(Isaiah 43.19)

Talking of new things, we won't be very far through Lent when we will have a service of licensing and welcome for our new Priest-in-Charge, the Rev'd Anne Curtis.

You will be most welcome too, to join us and meet Rev'd Anne on Sunday 1st March in St Mary's, Lower Slaughter at 3pm.

As we go forward together, with Rev'd Anne in our communities, may we look for the new things God is doing, perceive them, spring up and join in.

With love and prayers

Sue

MORNING PRAYER AROUND THE BENEFICE

FEBRUARY

- 4th - in St Mary's, Temple Guiting
- 11th - in St Peter's, Upper Slaughter
- 18th - in St James, Cutsdean
- 25th - in St Faith's, Farmcote

Please note that Morning Prayers in St Michael and All Angels, Guiting Power at 9.15am on Tuesdays will continue during the Vacancy.

MARCH

Anne, our new Priest-in-Charge, is a very prayerful person who is keen to increase and encourage us all in our daily prayer lives across the Benefice, so Morning Prayer will revert to the pattern practised before the Vacancy, as below, except for Friday (Anne's day off). This will be reviewed in due course as Anne gets to know us.

Monday: St Mary's, Lower Slaughter

Tuesday: St Michael and All Angels, Guiting Power

Wednesday: St Andrew's, Naunton

Thursday: St Mary's, Temple Guiting

Friday: St Peter's, Upper Slaughter (to be confirmed).

COMMUNITY MINISTRY - we have shared in these services

Baptisms

“May God guide and protect them”

Maxym Kevin Meltsov on 23 November 2025 at Temple Guiting.

Weddings

“May God bless them”

Blessing of the marriage of Brenda Oguntade and Raymond Melkonian
on 1 December 2025 at Stone Barn, Upper Windrush

Funerals

“May God grant them light and peace”

Funeral of Anthony Wilson on 24th November 2025;
Committal at Cheltenham Crematorium followed by a
Service of Thanksgiving at Naunton

Funeral and Burial of Jean Marie Bird on 3rd December 2025
at Guiting Power

Memorial Service for Tom Rucker on 7th December 2025
at Upper Slaughter

During the Vacancy, if you are looking to enquire about different parts of our life together, please contact:

Baptisms – Moira Anderson at moira@andersonpage.com

Weddings – Rev'd Sue Pestell at susan.pestell@gmail.com

Funerals – Ruth Waller at ruth1waller@outlook.com

ZOOM ACTIVITIES AND LINK

We continue to offer worship on Zoom for all who would like to join us. The Sunday services continue with a 9.00am Morning Prayer on the first Sundays 1 February and 1 March; please see full schedules for details.

Our regular Zoom services and events will be hosted through this link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/7250161799?pwd=xjPTuC2IjbPDnWRZiKZiihGcwmvJgY.1>

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Passcode: kG7BFy

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BIBLE STUDY ON ZOOM

Please contact Sue Pestell if you would like to join us as we explore and learn about the Bible Readings from the Sunday before our meeting.

LENT

Ash Wednesday this year is on 18th February, which will be marked at a service of Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes.

Our Lent Talks start on Wednesday 25th February, continuing on 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th March, all at 7pm and will be looking at Callings or Vocations in and outside the church. What or who do we think about when we talk about calling and vocation?

We often think about it as being the preserve of the medical professions, teachers, local councillors, social workers - people who provide a service to others perhaps. In our Lent Wednesday talks we will be considering some of those, but we will also be thinking about our vocation as humankind. There will be a range of speakers, including the Rev'd Anne Curtis, our new Priest in Charge. More information for venues and speakers will be in the Benefice Weekly News email.

SPREAD THE WORD ASSEMBLIES

Most of you will know that a team of us, a mixture of clergy and lay people, lead an assembly each week in Temple Guiting School. You will also know that we have great fun and that the children are an immense inspiration to us.

If you would like to join in with the team, we would love to have you. No special giftings or acting skills are required – just a sense of wanting to share the Bible with children and allowing your own inner child out!

If you would like to observe what we do before committing, you'll be most welcome to come along.

WIDER CHURCH NEWS

NORTH COTSWOLD DEANERY SYNOD - the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th February.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

All of these activities are for everyone, and with no charge:

Community Space at Lords of the Manor – On the second Tuesdays of these months, we will be hosting a space at Lords of the Manor Hotel in Upper Slaughter from 11am-12noon. Come along for coffee, tea, biscuits, a warm, lovely space and time together, on **Tuesdays 10 February and 10 March**.

St Andrew's Coffee Shop – Every Thursday from 10.30am-12.30pm, come along to share drinks and biscuits and chat in the church in Naunton.

Coffee and Cake in the West End, St Mary's Church, Temple Guiting

Come and join friends and neighbours for real coffee and homemade cake at **10.00am on Fridays 13 and 27 February and 13 and 27 March**. (No charge, but donations welcome).

'VILLAGE VOICES'

A very informal group of singers from local villages who meet on alternate Mondays, mainly in St Mary's Temple Guiting. We're in search of altos, tenors and basses. Call Ali Clifton Barnard on 07583 415065 if you'd like to join us.

WISE WORDS

Sammy Davis Jr once said “Real success is not on the stage, but off the stage as a human being, and how you get along with your fellow man.”

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday 1 February

- 9am Zoom Morning Prayer
- 10am Holy Communion at Guiting Power
- 11am Matins at Upper Slaughter
- 3pm Wild Worship at Temple Guiting Village Field
- 6pm Evening Service at Temple Guiting

Sunday 8 February

- 9.30am Holy Communion at Farmcote
- 11am Holy Communion at Lower Slaughter
- 11am Matins at Naunton

Sunday 15 February

- 9.30am Holy Communion at Cutsdean
- 11am Holy Communion at Upper Slaughter

Wednesday 18 February – Ash Wednesday

- 7pm Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes at Naunton

Sunday 22 February

- 9.30am Holy Communion at Naunton
- 10am Family Holy Communion at Temple Guiting
- 11am Morning Praise at Lower Slaughter
- 6pm Evening Service at Guiting Power

SERVICES IN MARCH 2026

Sunday 1 March – St David's Day

- 9am Zoom Morning Prayer
- 10am Holy Communion at Guiting Power
- 3pm Installation Service for Rev'd Anne Curtis at Lower Slaughter

Sunday 8 March

- 9.30am Holy Communion at Farmcote
- 11am Holy Communion at Lower Slaughter
- 11am Morning Praise at Naunton

Sunday 15 March – Mothering Sunday

9.30am Holy Communion at Cutsdean
11am Holy Communion at Upper Slaughter

Sunday 22 March – Passion Sunday

9.30am Holy Communion at Naunton
10am Family Holy Communion at Temple Guiting
11am Morning Prayer at Lower Slaughter
6pm Evening Service at Guiting Power

Sunday 29 March – Palm Sunday

11am Benefice Holy Communion at Cutsdean

Our apologies if services have to be cancelled or altered at short notice.

NEWS FROM THE PEWS AND VILLAGE EVENTS

FARMCOTE

Sitting down to write this halfway through January, Christmas seems a long time ago. We had our usual well-attended carol service on Christmas Eve. Candle-lit and beautifully decorated, it was a real Christmas card scene, which belied the snowdrops already peeping through on the grass verges! Already a few of the warmer hedgerows are shyly showing green buds, but it is easy to read too much into early signs of spring.

This year we shall have extra cause to celebrate the arrival of spring when it does happen, as our new priest in charge, Anne Curtis, is to be licenced to our benefice on St David's Day, March 1st, and we at Farmcote look forward to welcoming her to our ancient church.

Lorna Eayrs

TEMPLE GUITING SCHOOL

Happy New Year

We ended last term with two wonderful celebrations of Christmas. Our Year 6 pupils led our school carol service in church, sharing the Christmas

story with confidence and reverence, and it was a joy to welcome so many families and friends to celebrate with us. Some of our children also took part in the village carol service, helping to support and strengthen our wider community through song and festive celebration.

Since returning to school, we have enjoyed beginning the new term by learning about Epiphany. During our *Spread the Word Worship*, children helped the team retell the story of the three wise men travelling to Bethlehem, bringing the story to life in a memorable and engaging way. The children did a fabulous job - especially those who volunteered to dress up as a camel, which certainly added a touch of fun, laughter, and humour to the storytelling!

Across the school, children have also been busy setting up their class worship tables, carefully thinking about what each item represents and how these symbols help us reflect, pray, and worship together. It has been wonderful to see the thought, creativity, and care that has gone into creating these special, reflective spaces within each classroom.

In Class 1, children have been learning about toys, comparing modern toys with those from the past and exploring the different materials they are made from. This has sparked lots of curiosity and thoughtful discussion.

Class 2 have been studying animals in Science, learning how to classify them into different groups. They have also begun their new topic on

China, and in Maths the classroom has been transformed into a shop, where children are practising buying and selling using money - much to their delight!

In Class 3, children have started an exciting art study on David Hockney.



They have recreated *Garroby Hill* using acrylic paints, and the finished pieces are proudly displayed in the classroom. The children thoroughly enjoyed exploring examples of his work and even noticed a resemblance between his famous round glasses and those of our wonderful reading volunteer, Mr Taylor -a comparison they were very pleased to share with him!

Class 4 were fortunate to welcome two magistrates into school, who spoke to the children about the criminal justice system. This visit helped prepare them for the mock trial they will soon be taking part in and was both fascinating and informative.

We are very much enjoying this reflective and meaningful start to the new term and look forward to all that lies ahead.

Emily Chester, Class Teacher

CUTSDEAN

The January gloom is tangible with low hanging mists, the damp air, rain and mud! The joy of living on the high Cotswolds! But the snowdrops are appearing in pristine clumps of white and green, daffodils are pushing their way through the sodden ground, small buds are showing on the garden shrubs, the cycle of life goes on leading us inexorably to the season of Lent and Easter.



Looking back to Christmas, once again, our little Church in the farmyard was beautifully decorated to celebrate the birth of Christ at our Carol service which was very well attended. Ali Clifton Barnard and her friends, Ali and Mark, sang and played contributing to the joy of the occasion. Ted and Jeanette Smith opened their home for us to enjoy refreshments and Christmas cheer after the service. A big thank you to all who were involved with making the service a joyous, village event.

We are all looking forward to welcoming

Anne Curtis and her family to the Benefice and look forward, especially, to welcoming her to St James' Church, Cutsdean in March.

Ros Hartnell

GUITING POWER



I don't make New Year Resolutions, but all the same it's been the time of year to reflect on endings and beginnings and hopes for the latter... especially as the Snowdrops and early Spring flowers already begin to appear and cheer.

At the beginning of December we said a very fond farewell to Jean Bird with a full church for her funeral service which would have delighted her. Then we welcomed the Christmas season with a

beautiful tree (thank you Janet and Simon & Jenny) and beautiful services of Carols and celebration (thank you Sue). We welcomed in 2026, and now with Candlemas on 2nd February we end the Christmas season in the church when the Nativity scenes are put away, but we don't lay aside the Christ child. Lent begins on Wednesday 18th of February, a reflective season as we approach Easter. Full details of our services and Lent Talks can be found elsewhere in this issue.

We now thankfully approach the end of this year of Vacancy, and may I take this opportunity to thank sincerely all my wonderful Benefice colleagues for everything that we have continued, achieved and accomplished together. God has been much at work in us and through us, and we give thanks for His leading Anne to us.

On Sunday 1st March at 3pm at St. Mary's Church, Lower Slaughter, you are very warmly welcomed to attend the Licensing and Installation of the Rev'd. Anne Curtis as Priest-in-Charge of our Benefice. A joy filled celebration to welcome Anne & Tom as we look forward to the next joyful chapter in our Benefice life together. Do please join us (and yes, there will absolutely be joyful refreshments to follow the service!)

Simon Wallis

NAUNTON

Much has happened since I last wrote - mostly of a celebratory nature. The joy of the Christmas season will carry through to Candlemas on 2 Feb. After the 'big day', everything calms down quickly and life seems to be on hold for a few precious days!

The run up to what we traditionally call 'Christmas' on 25 December was as busy as ever it is within our Church and community. There were singing rehearsals for the St Andrews' Carol service held this year on 21 December and bell ringers a-ringing a plenty. We held our family Crib Service on Friday afternoon 19 December, which was as usual well attended by 22 adults and 17 youngsters. And our midnight Holy Communion on Christmas Eve. It's always good to see so many wider families gathering to spend time together at this time of year.

All quite a contrast to the story we imagine of the Holy family travelling to Bethlehem over two thousand years ago for the Census which is depicted as a tranquil, if arduous, journey through what subsequently became 'advent'. But surely this would have been a busy, congested and far from

peaceful trip for the heavily pregnant Mary, and her husband Joseph, who were unable to book a room ahead and had to rely on with the kindness of a stranger in the form of a resourceful Innkeeper. No online shopping / online booking for them. No worries except for having their immediate needs met. I bet they never thought that we'd STILL be celebrating all these many generations later!



Speaking of Advent, here's a photo of our Benefice Advent wreaths.

Much as many in our Village community are well resourced, we mustn't forget that we are all interdependent, relying on the kindness of one to another, known or unknown to us. We are fortunate as a community to continue to support our local Food Bank, Angel Tree (Prisoners families), Kate's Home Nursing and the local Salvation Army in Cheltenham. The offering from the midnight service went to the latter this year; the

Salvation Army does so much for those in need of love, a square meal and a place to shelter. Our Village Carol singing took a slightly different format this year; previously having been door to door over two nights, the new approach was to invite families to gather around a fire pit on the Boules court adjacent to the Hall to sing together. The bar in the hall was open for refreshments, and a jolly good time was had by all. Invited donations were shared between the Food Bank and Kate's Home Nursing. The Food Bank continues to receive food collections (in the courtyard of the old Baptist chapel) on a weekly basis; these gifts are hugely necessary and gratefully received by the team at Guiting Power local HQ.

As a village, and indeed around the Benefice and beyond, we have collected used Christmas cards (along with other occasion cards) which have gone to the Cobalt Unit scanning centre in Cheltenham. Volunteers will sort and over the course of the year make up new cards from them. It's such a worthwhile project and is a huge part of the income stream for the Cobalt unit. Thanks are due to everyone who has donated.

Other village events enjoyed were the Cheese and Wine at the start of December, the New Year's Eve Dinner at the hall and the first breakfast of the year on 17 Jan which possibly was the best attended yet!

Our monthly Cinema in St Andrew's is up and running for 2026 (first Tuesday of the month). The first screening was Downton Abbey, which was reasonably well attended considering the icy weather we've had!

Looking forwards, we have Rain or Shine theatre presenting a light-hearted drama on Sunday afternoon 25 Jan, and a Garden club talk on Sat 28 Feb to benefit St Andrew's Church. The speaker will be Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener at Great Dixter, and one of the most influential garden designers and horticultural educators in Britain today. For tickets / further info please contact barbara@markets-international.com or rickandcla123@gmail.com. Tel: 07710387069.

Wishing you all peace in 2026.

Moira Anderson

UPPER SLAUGHTER

As we move beyond Christmas and into the start of the year, January has certainly arrived with force. Freezing temperatures and long cold spells have set the tone for the early weeks of 2026 and reminded us that winter is still very much with us.

The Christmas services themselves were encouraging and well supported. The Carol Service was particularly well attended and remains one of the highlights of the church year, bringing together familiar faces and many who do not always attend regular services. Christmas Day offered a quieter but important moment of worship, and it was good to see such a strong congregation present for Holy Communion. These services continue to play a central role in village life and show us the value of St Peter's as a place of gathering and reflection.

Looking back, 2025 was a year of adjustment. Following Katrina's departure in the spring, we have spent much of the year in vacancy. During this time, worship relied more heavily on shared Benefice services and on the continued support of the wonderful Sue Pestell and visiting clergy. While this inevitably altered the usual pattern at St Peter's, it also showed the strength of cooperation across the Benefice and the commitment of a steady congregation. Attendance remained broadly stable, and support for the seasonal services was particularly heartening.

Behind the scenes, day-to-day church life has continued thanks to many quiet contributions. The SumUp contactless giving system continues to be well used, particularly by visitors, and has become an established part of how we support the church.

As we look ahead, we are very much looking forward to welcoming Anne Curtis as our new vicar. After a year of transition, her arrival at the beginning of March marks an important and positive step forward.

It is also a real pleasure to welcome two new baby boys to the village. Felix Boone, a new brother for Lily and Daisy, and Ozzy Curran, are a joyful reminder of new beginnings. It is wonderful to have babies growing up in the village, and we extend our warmest congratulations to both families.

Charlotte Van Rooyen

LOWER SLAUGHTER

As I write this we are almost at the end of January already and, as is customary, half of January is spent looking back at the old year and forward to the new year.

Our Christmas services were all splendid. Our carol service and lessons led by Bishop Robert was wonderful, enjoyed by around 50 people. We sung the traditional carols, heard the traditional lessons and poems and afterwards enjoyed Christmas refreshments. Many thanks to all who decorated our church; it looked magnificent with its Christmas decorations and tree.

Our Christmas Eve midnight communion was also well attended with many of the guests at the hotels joining us villagers; I always think it is the perfect start to Christmas Day.

On Saturday 29 November we held a very successful Christmas Fair in the village hall raising greatly needed funds for our various repairs and maintenance projects at church. Grateful thanks to all who helped, donated and who came and supported us.

Now let us embrace the new year ... 2026 hard to believe, a quarter of the 21st Century has gone already! We are all looking forward to the arrival of Anne Curtis and her husband Tom, joining us in early March as our Priest-in-Charge - a new beginning for our Benefice.

Easter this year is early so Lent begins on February 18. Lent is a time for quiet reflection, also a time for joining with other churches in our Benefice to share bible readings and talks.

Again this year we plan to do joint fundraising teas at Chasleton House and are currently awaiting dates. This was a very successful venture last year with the 7 churches working together in Christian unity.

Signs are already starting to appear that the season is moving on. I have already seen carpets of snowdrops or as I prefer to call them candle mass bells on the verges and not long until the flower of hope will start to appear - the golden daffodils.

I hope everyone finds a new and fruitful year full of hope and wonder.

Marion Marshall

TEMPLE GUITING

Christmas, candles, decorations and food. All packed away – until later this year!

The Carol Service was wonderful and was well attended despite the torrential rain. The church looked so beautiful in the candle-light. The floodlighting outside provided a lovely atmosphere. Many thanks to Paul Hughes for providing this.

We were joined on Christmas Day by many visitors from around the world on holiday in the village. It was lovely to welcome them on this very special day.

January began with a sprinkling of snow. This week has been very dark and dreary. However, watching blue tits making their nest in our bird box brightens the day.

Looking forward, we will be hosting a Lent talk and we are hoping to arrange a Musical Evening on Friday 6th March. I might even be persuaded to organise another ‘Pop-up bar’! More details to follow on our Facebook page or the Village Noticeboard.

We are all looking forward to welcoming Anne as our new Priest. Her licensing service is on Sunday 1st March, 3pm in St. Mary’s, Lower Slaughter to which everyone is welcome.

Ruth Waller

HELPING THE NATURE WE LOVE

At the start of this new year, now is the time to think about how we can help nature on our doorstep.

Following a comprehensive assessment of UK biodiversity, the State of Nature 2023 report found that almost one in six species were threatened with extinction in Great Britain. A very concerning state of affairs.

However, there are so many simple things we can each do and, as the RSPB says, “small actions can make a big difference.” For example:



- Planting native trees and hedges, seed and nectar producing shrubs and flowers provide shelter and food for birds, animals and insects alike.
- Providing nest boxes gives birds somewhere to roost in winter and raise their young in spring, and bug hotels for insects and invertebrates – both great projects to do with children!

- Making your garden “hedgehog-friendly”. Can they access via gaps in wall and fences, to feed, forage and even hibernate safely?



- Having a pond in your garden – it doesn’t have to be large! A small pond attracts all manner of insects and, provided there is safe and shallow access, allows animals to drink and birds to drink and bathe. Do however ensure that animals can get safely out of deeper water.

- Keeping bird feeders and bird baths clean. This is **most important** year-round to keep birds healthy and disease-free, but especially so now with challenging weather and with the breeding season approaching.

If you need help, the RSPB (rsbp.org.uk) is a great source for information and advice about looking after and encouraging all manner of wildlife to our gardens - large or small.

Whatever you can do will help nature on your doorstep.

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