

Church at Home

Sunday 31st January 2021

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Candlemas (2nd Feb)

*'My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.'*

Luke 2: 30-32

This coming Tuesday is Candlemas. This festival draws to a close the Christmas and Epiphany seasons and traditionally marks the start of Spring - often heralded by the first snowdrops. We desperately need signs of hope during this long and difficult lockdown; so, the promise of Spring on the horizon is welcome even though the news about controlling the virus is still mixed and the vaccination programme has a long way to go yet. Simeon's song and Anna's enthusiastic witness encourage us to believe that there is hope even though it may be still some way off – just as the full revelation of the light of Jesus for the world was beyond their lifetimes, and yet they believed it would happen.

The Bible readings for Candlemas:

Malachi 3: 1-4 - In the last book of the Old Testament we read about the coming of the Lord into the Temple, to put everything right and to offer everyone a clean, new start.

Psalms 24: 7-10 - The Psalmist sings about the glorious arrival of The Lord of glory into the heart of the God's Temple. It is likened to a triumphant King returning after a victory on the battlefield.

Hebrews 2: 14 -18 - Just as the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people, so Jesus enters heaven on our behalf. He is able to understand our weaknesses and so he can both empathise with us and help us.

Luke 2: 22 - 40 - Mary and Joseph take their young child to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to God. Simeon and Anna recognise him as God's promised Messiah.

Before we sing, read or pray

Take a moment to be quiet before God bringing before the Lord the week that has passed, with all its ups and downs, successes and failures.....

Remember that the Lord is patient and kind, slow to anger, and full of steadfast love. God understands what we are going through and offers in Christ to come alongside and inside us by his Holy Spirit to pick us up and help us start again, all because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Suggested hymns:

[God is love](#)

[God is love](#)

[Hail to the Lord's anointed](#)

[Nunc Dimittis](#) (solo artist)

[Nunc Dimittis](#) (Ely Cathedral choir)

[Like a candle flame](#)

[Hear the call of the Kingdom](#)

[Immortal invisible](#)

[Love divine, all loves excelling](#)



By Aert de Gelder – Unknown, Public Domain

First thoughts on today's Gospel

All life is a gift from God and so every child that is born is a special sign of God's generous love to the world. To help people remember this, the Jewish laws said that the first-born child in a family 'belonged to God' and that there needed to be a special ceremony to celebrate this. Jesus was Mary's first-born son and, because Bethlehem wasn't far from the Temple in Jerusalem, they went there for the service; however, it didn't turn out quite as they expected! An elderly man called Simeon began singing praises to God about how special Jesus would be. Simeon was a man of prayer and like many in Israel was waiting for God to come and rescue his country just as God had promised in the Old Testament. Simeon recognised that this rescue had arrived in the birth of a baby and he was so glad to have seen him with his own eyes before he died. He sang some important things about Jesus, but he also spoke some sad words to Mary, because the way Jesus would one day rescue the world would in fact break her heart. His song is known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, from its first words in Latin. This 'canticle' is part of Evening Prayer and Compline in the Anglican Prayer Book. Although Simeon and Anna in today's story are not related to Jesus by blood, they could be seen as spiritual grandparents. They rejoiced in his birth, for which they had patiently waited; they foresaw the special purpose of his life; and they couldn't help but tell others of the news of his arrival. Proud 'grandparents' indeed!



Candlemas by Malcolm Guite

*They came, as called, according to the Law.
Though they were poor and had to keep things simple,
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,
For God was coming with them to His temple.
Amidst the outer court's commercial bustle
They'd waited hours, enduring shouts and shoves,
Buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,
Had made a killing on the two young doves.
They come at last with us to Candlemas
And keep the day the prophecies came true
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,
The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.*

For our prayers, let us remember:

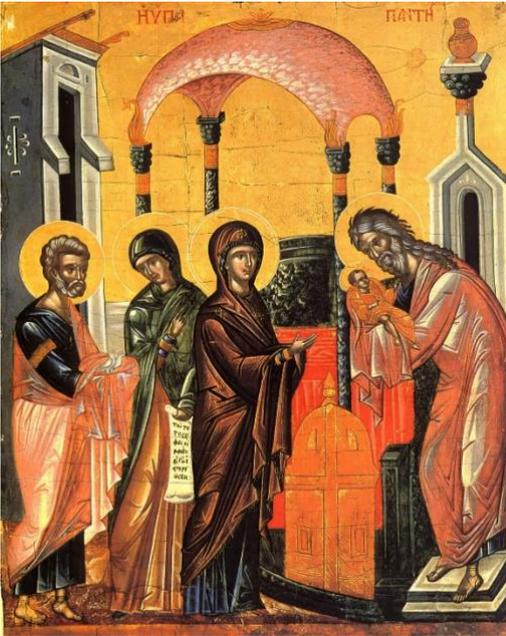
- The families and businesses of the village who are under increasing pressure as this lockdown continues
- Our leaders as they work out how best to balance concerns over the still high infection rate and expectations surrounding the rollout of the vaccine.
- For those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital, and those whose lives have been badly affected during this crisis.
- For all health care professionals, many of who are under severe pressures at work
- For world leaders as they work out how best to support developing countries who also face this pandemic

Add any particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond

Church Leaders Contact: - **Roger** - 01992 815 838. **Martyn** – 01992 814121

For further reflection and activities for the whole family



Forty days after Jesus was born, his parents took him on his first big 'outing' – to the Temple in Jerusalem. Imagine the whirlwind of thoughts and emotions these first-time parents must have experienced around the extraordinary events of Jesus' birth. The words 'anxious', 'confused' and 'stressed' come to mind! But at the Temple God met them at their point of need – through another generation. At the Temple they found hope, encouragement and blessing for their calling as parents, and their newborn child was enfolded in the embrace of loving elders. Mary and Joseph were no longer so alone. They and their child had been lifted up and carried forward through the active love and faith of the wider people of God.

From the very beginnings of Jesus' life, he was caught up in a ministry of generations. His growth into the fullness of his calling and purpose as the Son of God took place in a thick and rich web of inter-generational community. Luke tells us that Jesus grew physically, mentally and spiritually in the town of Nazareth; he was nurtured by a network of relatives and friends of different ages. Jesus' own life experience reflected God's design for the healthy growth of children and young people: it is meant to be the product of a community of generations, living, sharing and growing together. Sadly, for many children and young people today there is no Anna or Simeon...and even when there are, this pandemic has pulled them apart. There are also very few 'Nazareths' left in our wider society. The generational threads that used to weave their way into the fabric of growing up are missing. During the last 100 years, steady changes have occurred in society that have separated families and segregated age groups, not only in educational settings, but also in life in general. Faith communities are, or can be, places where families, singles, couples, children, teens, grandparents - all generations - come together on a regular interacting basis. The presence of different generations within the church is a great gift and an asset! *(adapted from an online article)*

[Here](#) is the story on video

[Here](#) is a song about the story

[Here](#) is a reflective version of the story with wooden figures and wondering questions

[Here](#) is an animated cartoon version of the story

Questions to consider together:

This story takes place about six weeks after Christmas. What new things about Jesus do we learn from what Simeon says? What sort of people were Simeon and Anna? What can we learn from them? Mary and

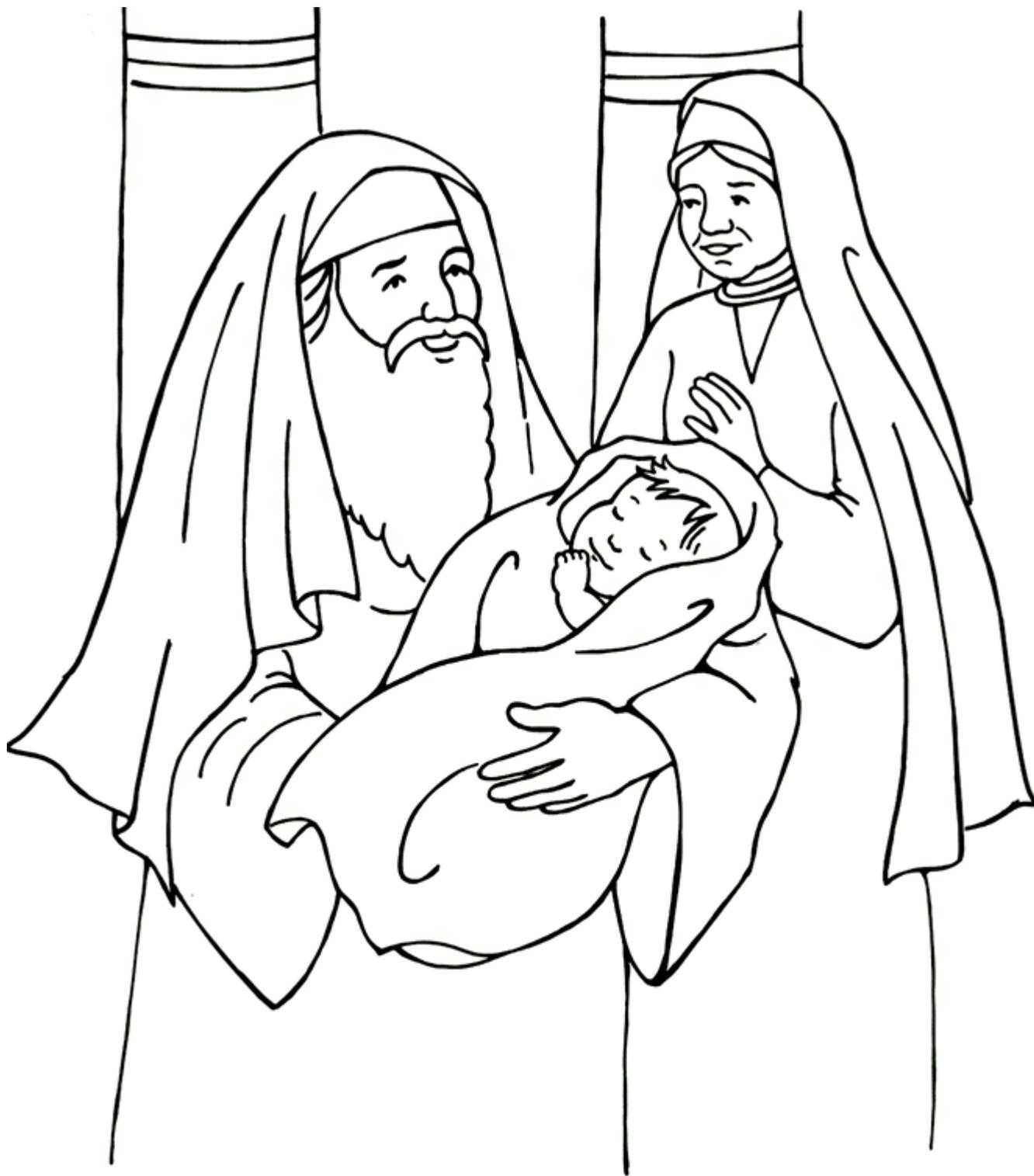
Joseph always knew that Jesus was special, so why were they surprised by what Simeon told them? The most important part of this celebration in the Temple was saying a big 'thank you' to God for the gift of a new baby. What could you give to God to say thank you for what he has done for you?



Visual aid: Use a walking stick as a visual focus for today's story

Prayer idea: Mary and Joseph wanted to say thank you to God for their new baby. Everyone in a family is a gift from God, so why not, in turn, each compose or say a short prayer of thanks for every person in your family. Thank God for each person's personality, gifts, funny ways, support and love. Make sure everyone has a chance to offer a thank-you prayer in this way, but for someone else rather than themselves.

Here is a picture to decorate as you talk about this story



Simeon and Anna Thank God
Luke 2