

Candlemas is a Christian festival commemorating the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, also known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On Candlemas, many Christians brought their candles to church to be blessed for use for the rest of the year. Note that the correct spelling is "Candlemas" "Candlemass" (with two 's') is the name of a Swedish 'doom metal' rock band.

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Dear Friends,

Today's feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple reminds us of the intergenerational nature of our vocation to as a church. In the Gospel, we meet the baby Jesus and his parents in the Temple in Jerusalem. They are there to fulfil the requirements of the law to give offerings to mark Mary's ritual purification after childbirth and to redeem Jesus who as their firstborn Son belongs to God. The offerings they bring, two doves, are the offerings of the poor. Amid the hustle and bustle of the Temple no-one notices yet another poor couple with child, no-one sees anything special. No-one that is, except two elderly characters, Simeon and Anna.

Simeon's encounter with Jesus and his parents is striking. Here is one who has lived a long life, been faithful to God, learnt the virtue of patience, is aware of his mortality but, against all despair or fatalism, still awaits eagerly for God's promised consolation to Israel. In a moment of endearing attentiveness, Simeon sees the baby Jesus, catches him up in his arms and sings a song of joyful celebration to God. Now at last he can die in peace, his eyes have seen God's salvation in the person of Jesus. Here in his arms is the light of the world. Simeon embodies that wonderful way in which those who have lived long lives, who have suffered much, have learnt to see what really matters most. They do not stand on needless ceremony but speak truthfully from the heart, full of youthful vigour.

What is so powerful about this encounter is precisely that it takes place between the baby Jesus and the old man Simeon. This is repeated too in Anna's response to Jesus. Again here is someone who has lived a long life, who has had her share of tragedy, who has led a life of devotion to God, and, upon seeing the child, praises God and goes out with joy to proclaim God's salvation. The universal experience of an adult comforting a child is here reversed. The child's presence comforts the adult, allows the adult to say words of comfort and truth beyond their own capacity and strength. As those who are old, facing death, Simeon and Anna can speak with authority. They have no time for platitudes.

And when Joseph and Mary are amazed by Simeon's words, they echo countless parents through the ages whose hearts have been touched by words of delight spoken about their child by someone who has themselves loved and lost. But Simeon's words of joy also carry words of warning. This child, he tells Mary, will be destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, a sign of contradiction. And a sword will pierce Mary's soul.

Through the eyes of those who have lived long and seen much, we are reminded that the consolation of God's redemptive love, revealed in Christ, is fulfilled through suffering, that is, through the cross. To delight in the world God has made and value the dignity of people in it, in other words, to follow the light of Christ, we must be ready to open ourselves to the suffering and violence in our world and meet it with fearless, often costly, compassion, truth, justice, peace, patience, humility, self-knowledge and joy. For this we need each other. We need the young and the old working and praying together. This is the hidden and vital treasure of parish life. The experience, lessons and stories of previous generations need to be heeded as we confront challenges new and old, as the waters of the oceans rise, poverty bites, corruption kills, and tanks roll across Europe. Let us attend the voices of the Simeons and Annas in our midst, for our sake and the sake of our children's futures.

With my prayers and blessings  
Fr Angus

Friday is my day of rest unless the matter is very urgent.

It is now possible to donate to St George's using your smartphone by scanning the QR Code shown on the right. If you are unsure on how to use it, please seek advice from our Treasurer, Alison Davis, or Fr Angus.



## **This Week's Diary - January**

Monday 30th - St George's Tots in the Centre – 10:30am to 12:00pm

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> – St George's Church Choir in the Centre @ 6pm

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> – WRAP Community Choir in the Centre @ 7.30pm

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> **February** - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 11.30am

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 9.30am

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> - Fed and Nourished event, formerly the Pop up Pantry – 10.00am

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> – Parish Mass - 10.00am

**Don't Forget** - The next **WRAP-CHAT** meeting is this coming Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, 3pm in the Centre, £2 at the door. Refreshments available at the start of the meeting.

This month we look forward to welcoming Claudia Deamer from Digital Ambassadors, Digital, Safety & Wellbeing, part of West Sussex County Council. Claudia will be bringing us up to date on how to protect ourselves online, password security, scam prevention and any other issue relating to protecting ourselves. There will be an opportunity of asking questions at the end.

Please do put this date in your diaries, we hope to get a good attendance for this informative event.

## **Pancake Party for families with young children, including Pancake Races on Sunday 19th February.**

The season of Lent is approaching. But before the fast comes the feast in the form of pancakes. There will be time for crafts, a story and singing in church, and pancakes in the church centre, including pancake races. Please encourage any families with young children to come and join in. The afternoon begins at 3:30pm on Sunday 19 February and will finish around 5pm. There is a suggested donation of £3 per family at the door. All children must be accompanied by an adult. If you would like to come, please register on Eventbrite. If you are able to volunteer, please speak to Fr Angus. We are particularly looking for people to help serve the pancakes in the kitchen and anyone who can help supervise craft tables. Thank you!

**The Friends of St Mary's Churchyard** At last Monday's meeting of the PCC it was agreed to set up a group to be known as the The Friends of St Mary's Churchyard. This group is to be operated as a sub-committee of the PCC, thereby retaining charitable status and giving overall control to the PCC. Membership will be open to all, and we hope to form links with the local community.

### **The Friends of St Mary's Churchyard**

This newly formed group has the aim of maintaining the churchyard and managing it for wildlife – for wildflowers, birds, bats, hedgehogs and all the rest of God's creatures.

We hope to raise the profile and appreciation of the churchyard, not only as a nature sanctuary but also as a treasure house of local and family history. The leaders are to be John Fitch and Sam Kelly.

The group will have its official launch on **Saturday 11 March at 2 p.m. in the Centenary Centre.**

Do make a note of the date and plan to attend, whatever your interest: e.g. recording wildlife, installing nesting boxes, creating a photographic record, researching individuals buried there, clearing vegetation, mowing paths.

Recently a working party consisting of John, Sam, Breege and Peter cleared back brambles near the most recent graves. Previously the invasive Russian Vine was cleared from the SE corner of the churchyard, opening up an attractive view of the lakes beyond.

The latest edition of the **Diocesan Newsletter** containing Lent course information and training events is available on-line at: <https://mailchi.mp/chichester.anglican.org/4fhipiw85y-1031967?e=faea5ff59f>

Diocese of Chichester **Pilgrimage to the Holy Land** (6-13 February 2023): If you are not able to be on this pilgrimage you can still join remotely (entirely free of charge).

You will receive a daily update by e-mail, with photographs and a full report, about what has happened. You will also receive reflections and talks given at the different sites we will visit.

If you are interested in doing this, please contact Marc.sacher [marc.sacher@chichester.anglican.org](mailto:marc.sacher@chichester.anglican.org)

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