



Welcome to
St John the Baptist, Midsomer Norton
The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
31st January 2021

Sunday Services on YouTube

During lockdown we will be recording and uploading the 9.30 service to YouTube. You will be able to watch the service from around 11am each Sunday. The link to our YouTube channel is on the front page of the [church website](#).

Please pray for:-

The Residents of: Duchy Road, Duchy Close, Overdale & Princes Street.

The Sick:- Rachael Macfarlane, Miranda Cooper, Rose Stenner, Paul & Margaret Knott, Irene Leet, Fr Roy Boots, Nicholas Hambleton, Betty Chiplin, Ethan Horwood, John Lewis, Patricia Flagg, Pat Gilham, Bishop Peter Hancock, Vince Marriot, Christopher Watts, Faye McDermott.

Years Mind:- (S) Richard Shearn (M) Gladys Gregory (T) Enid Carter, Leonard Lovegrove, Audrey Gill (W) Eric Rogers, Lilly Purnell, Ethel Hill, Helen Westbrook, John Daniels, Hilda Broughton (T) James Sinkins, Alfred Robinson, Rita Bazell (F) Andrew Reed, Norma Bearup (S) Marjorie Shearn, Florence Chivers, Harry Shearn.

The Collect

Almighty and ever-living God,
clothed in majesty,
whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple,
in substance of our flesh:
grant that we may be presented to you
with pure and clean hearts,
by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

A Reading from The Letter to the Hebrews chapter 2 v 14 – end

Since the children share flesh and blood, Jesus himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

This is the Word of the Lord;

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia.

This child is the light to enlighten the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.

Alleluia

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke chapter 2 v
22 – 40.**

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord’), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, ‘a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.’

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ

A Reflection from Fr Guy

“It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.”

None of us finds waiting easy, whether it’s waiting for a bus, a house move that goes wobbly or falls through, or just getting through to a call centre and speaking to someone!

However, the Coronavirus pandemic has forced us to wait, and it’s difficult! We queue outside the Post Office with masks on, keeping our distance. We wait for the letter, call or text for our vaccination appointment. We can’t wait for the time when we can go on holiday. We long to be able to visit loved ones in care homes or in hospital. We have to wait for these long, dark, uncertain days of lockdown to be lifted, who knows when.

We may think that biblical characters never had to wait for God to act. However, a closer reading of the Bible shows that this is far from the case. King David, for instance, had to wait many years for the crown God had promised him, enduring persistent persecution from King Saul for much of that time. And the apostle Paul may have been called by God to be missionary to the Gentiles, but he too had to wait a number of years before he began his famous missionary journeys and spent some of the intervening time in obscurity in Arabia and Damascus.

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that the expression “wait for the Lord” is common in the Bible, especially in the psalms, reflecting the fact that God does not always act as quickly as we would like. In today’s Gospel we learn about two more characters who had to wait a long time to see God’s promises fulfilled. Luke shows Mary and Joseph carefully following the requirements of the Jewish Law, in order to root Jesus firmly in Judaism as he seeks to show Christ as the fulfilment of the Hebrew scriptures.

He goes on to do this through Simeon and Anna, who see Jesus as the messianic figure they are awaiting: the one their scriptures, such as the prophecies of Isaiah, point to. They had been waiting patiently for this messiah for a very long time, although there were differing views on what he would be like. One popular hope was that he would be a kingly warrior who would defeat their Roman oppressors and set up a political kingdom like King David’s. Simeon’s words to Mary, however, offer the first indications that Jesus’ messiahship will not bring worldly power and success: he describes Jesus as “a sign that will be opposed” and warns that a sword will pierce Mary’s soul, foreshadowing Jesus’

terrible death in which he will be crucified by the Romans rather than overthrowing them.

So what can we learn about waiting for God to act? We can wait with hope and not fear. God can be trusted to act at the right time. Anna and Simeon have to wait for God, but the Lord eventually answers their prayers. God does not work to our time frame, but we can trust in God's love for us and be assured that if God seems slow to respond, there is a good reason why.

When God *does* answer our prayers, it may not always be in ways we expect, but will always be for our best. Many hoped for a military messiah but were sent a suffering one instead. Today we can appreciate how important that was, for Christ's suffering means that he understands our struggles and his death brings us forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

Anna and Simeon stay close to God as they wait, praying and fasting. It is easy to drift away from God and become bitter when the Lord does not seem to be acting. Prayer can be particularly hard at such times and we can be tempted to give up. However, if we are honest in prayer about our struggles and feelings, such times can bring us closer to God. We will not always understand God's ways, but we can receive the strength to keep trusting if we lean on the Lord rather than going it alone.

Candlemas has a bittersweet air about it, as we turn from Christmas and look to Lent. As the curtain closes on the Christmas story, we could do worse than ponder the lives of Anna and Simeon. They embody the wisdom of waiting, the virtue of patience, the strength to endure, and are rewarded for being there, for seeing God's promises fulfilled. Wherever we are on our journey of faith, as long as we don't dither or delay, it's better late than never. A gospel truth, if ever there was one.

Prayers of Intercession by Gary Lewis

For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect. Hebrews 2:16
Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are one of us. In your incarnation you know our joys and fears, our abilities and weaknesses and you hear our prayers as a friend and brother. We bring our intercessions to you knowing that you have been tested beyond what we can imagine and that you hear in love.
Lord, hear us.
Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, we pray for our church: for our bishops Justin, Peter and Ruth, for Guy, our parish priest, for our churchwardens and PCC. Build our Church to be a true Temple to your glory,

and a witness to the world. Feed us and nourish us that we may grow in the life of Christ. Fill us with your light that we may overflow with your love and tell the world of your glory.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, we pray for our Queen, our government and for all in authority. We pray for them especially in this week when the death toll from COVID has passed 100,000 souls and we feel the weight of decisions and difficulties that they bear. We ask Lord that you will give them both wisdom and consolation that they may act with confidence to keep taking decisions when there are no perfect or easy answers.

We pray for our people in the United Kingdom and beyond that we might have patience and discipline. We pray that we will be considerate of the needs and safety of others.

We thank you, Father, for the creativity and compassion that has given us hope in this difficult time. We thank you for the men and women leading the development and dissemination of vaccines and for all the staff of our NHS.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, we pray for all whose delight in your glory is dimmed by illness or worry. We pray for those whose names are on our prayer list and people known to each of us. Give relief to all in pain. Give peace to those who feel tormented. Give faith to those who are searching. May they all feel the reality of your presence and find moments of surprising joy.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, we give thanks that you have opened up the gates to your kingdom. We pray for those whom we love who have departed this life, that they may now be at peace with you.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord Jesus, we rejoice that when we meet you in our worship and in the Eucharist our eyes have seen your salvation, the light that lightens the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel. And so, praying with Mary, John and all the saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Post Communion

Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna,
who lived to welcome the Messiah:
may we, who have received these gifts beyond words,
prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes
to bring us to eternal life;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Amen.

THIS WEEK

TUESDAY 02 February 10am – 12 Noon Private Prayer

SUNDAY 07 February 9.30 am Holy Eucharist

Josie Mitchard's grandson Christopher Watts who has Covid is now back home and starting to improve.

Pat & Hilton have asked us to pray for their niece Faye McDermott again. She has complicated health problems which she has had to learn to live with, but she has now developed Covid which will be a huge milestone for her to overcome. Please pray for her and her family.

Somer Valley Food Bank

As we are no longer able to physically collect food in church on behalf of the Somer Valley Food Bank, members of the congregation may wish to make a financial donation by phone/online or give food at one of their collection points in supermarkets. Information is available here: [Ways to Give - The Trussell Trust](#).

Because of Covid Restrictions

A reminder to let Carol know by email or phone if you hope to be able to come to our 9.30am service on Sunday 7th February (carolmoore226@yahoo.com or 01761 412226). For the few of you who are going it is still very important to remember to socially distance.

Third National COVID 19 Lockdown

In the light of guidance from Her Majesty's Government, the Church of England and the Diocese of Bath and Wells, our Parish Church will be open for public worship, private prayer, and funerals.

The Parish Eucharist will be celebrated on Sundays at 9.30am. This this will be recorded and streamed on our YouTube channel at 11.00am.

The church will be open for private prayer on Tuesdays from 10.00am to 12noon.

During lockdown the population are asked to stay at home. Public worship is permitted so long as the provision can show that it is COVID-safe.

We encourage everyone to follow this guidance:

Persons with any symptoms should not attend church.

Persons shielding (Clinically Extremely Vulnerable) should not be in wider circulation during the third national lockdown (commenced 5th Jan 2021).

We advise that anyone with an underlying health condition such as asthma or heart disease or in the clinically vulnerable group through age (70 years of age and over) should not attend public worship at this time.

Definitions for CEV and CV are available on the NHS website.

Thank you for your cooperation and stay safe.

For further information please refer to our website www.stjohnschurch.org.uk