

SUNDAY 31ST JANUARY PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

Thought for the Week: "Candlemas" - "Putting Jesus at the centre."

There is an old prayer, known as the Nunc Dimittis, that goes:

"Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word.

For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which

Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Thy people Israel."

At its heart it speaks about an old man called Simeon who, having longed and prayed for years for the coming Messiah and the liberation of Israel, who had attended the Temple in Jerusalem faithfully, one day held the baby Jesus in his arms and glimpsed both the fulfilment of his hopes and dreams and indeed saw in the eyes of this child pure love and the face of God Himself (See Luke 2:22-40). And, although he and a lady called Anna had been faithful to this hope and dream of liberation and salvation for so much of their lives, perhaps neither Simeon nor Anna ever thought they would see its fulfilment in their own lifetime. But now they did.



Such an impression did Simeon and Anna's story of meeting this baby make upon the early Church that Simeon's prayer and Anna's story were included in Scripture and handed down from generation to generation for hundreds and thousands of years, whenever people talked about how God made His impact and impression upon a waking world.

One of the many blessings of living next to a Church is that, come rain, come shine, come daylight, come nightfall you see the way light and the elements interact with the stonework and the beauty of the building. For me, a magical moment exists when, at around the time of dusk each day, when, if you switch all the lights on in Church, the image of Jesus shines forth from the central panes of the stain-glassed window that forms the east window directly beneath the Cross above and the light of the steeple behind.

Stained-glass is an amazing thing. First you have to work out the design and create the intricate stonework that will support each of the panels. Then, for the glass itself, you need to cut out and lay out all the lead work which will hold the glass together. Then, you need to choose the various colours for the pieces of glass themselves. And, then, even when all is assembled and completed, you need to introduce some form of light source, either externally from the Sun, or internally from an electric light source for the window and the picture it contains to come alive.

“Candlemas” (2nd February – 40 days after Jesus’ birth) and the story of Simeon and Anna’s experience are a way of reflecting upon all this. The stonework to me represents the structure and organisation of the Church, with its buildings, structure, and meetings. The lead represents the discipline and commitment to a prayer life, to the reading of Scripture and worship. The coloured glass represents the fruit of that worship and prayer life, which perhaps only over time comes to be seen as being able to point clearly to Christ; rich colours, bold colours, in the picture at the head of St Andrew’s Church in Congresbury predominantly the colour of red that represents sacrifice.

But all this can seem nice, if an awful lot of effort, until we let the lights be turned on or allow the sun to stream in, and then the full beauty of the stained-glass window comes into its own and, more importantly, Jesus comes alive. There hopefully comes a moment for each of us when we suddenly glimpse that all this was meant to be for a living relationship, a life giving, Spirit filled relationship with none other than the person both at the centre of the window and who Simeon and Anna spoke so passionately about two thousand years ago when they held him in their arms as a baby. Jesus then becomes someone who was meant not simply to be contained or understood, but someone to shine forth, just like, this window into an awakening world.

Candlemas, is all about us asking who and what do we place at the centre of our stained-glass window, and will we let Him shine?

Matt Thomson.

P.S. Maybe, if it helps, take the words of Simeon’s Prayer (the Nunc Dimittis) and either pray them through, either in thankfulness that God’s salvation has been revealed to you, like through Simeon, through Jesus, or, to say and pray the same words, but asking God to enable these words to become true for you, “Help me Lord, one day to pray like Simeon...Lord, now lettest thou Thy Servant be able to depart in peace...”

Locking Deanery “Service of Light” 2021 – Sunday 31st Jan at 4.00pm.

This year’s annual gathering of the twenty seven churches that make up the Anglican Locking Deanery, and which places Jesus the Light at the centre of all that we do and are, is coming round again this Candlemas. This year’s service is being held “online” and is open to anyone with an interest share in it.



The Speaker is: Rev Bob Key who heads up the “Thy Kingdom Come” national prayer movement which we have used and referred to on many occasions.

All you need to do is go to the Locking Deanery website (please see the Link) and click on the YouTube button at the centre of the advertising screen. Link: [Service of Light – Welcome to Locking Deanery](#) (Press “Ctrl” and “left click” your mouse over this link).

Discipleship and Journeying with God:

You may like to explore one or more of the following as ways into renewing or growing your relationship with God and with Jesus during this time. There are three or four options listed here. Please see below:

The “Living Faith” Group is meeting Online on a Monday Evening at 7.30pm for an hour looking at “The Chosen” – the NEW STORY of Jesus for eight weeks (11th Jan to mid-March):

We are looking at the new ‘phenomenon’ which is the world crowd funded TV adaptation of the Life of Jesus called “The Chosen.” Series 1 has already been released and funding for Series 2 is just about complete and due to be released in the next couple of months.



We started a couple of weeks ago with the screening of the Story of Christmas, “The Shepherds,” which is a short film the director made which started the whole Project off.

The “Living Faith” group is a great opportunity for anyone who perhaps wishes to explore faith for the first time or who would like to revisit the foundations of their faith to join in, ask questions, or who simply wants to listen as we share what this remarkable piece of Christian television can say to us about the person of Jesus at the centre of our faith.

If you would prefer to watch “The Chosen” in your own time it can be obtained for free, via an App, which can be downloaded to your Smartphone or Tablet or at the Chosen YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/TheChosenSeries/videos> and, we will also be posting the discussion questions online, both at the website and on the Facebook Page, for people to ponder over throughout the week.

It is all very exciting. For further details of how to join the group please visit the website and Facebook pages: website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> PLEASE contact Kirsty Bowles (Lay Pioneer Minister) email: kirsty.bowles@newcreationchurches.org.uk or 07871 513151 to get the code for the Zoom meeting to join in (needed for Safeguarding purposes).

Matt Thomson

Rule of Life Tuesdays at 7.30pm

The Rule of Life Bible Study Group is meeting on Tuesday evenings 12th from 7:30 pm until 9pm via Zoom.

The plan is to journey with Jesus by studying various episodes and bible passages from His early ministry to learn how we can love Him more deeply and follow Him more closely as His apprentices and disciples. Our journey of six Tuesday evenings starts with the Epiphany celebration of Christ coming in flesh as our light and salvation.

This is a stand-alone set of sessions and you are very welcome, whether or not you attended Series One, the key thing is to get us all opening the Bible together, sharing and praying as we go deeper into the heart of God while renewing our own.

If you would like to attend, please indicate your interest to Nick and Sarah (nick@jarrett-kerr.com or 07768 921166) so they can send you joining instructions and Zoom details.

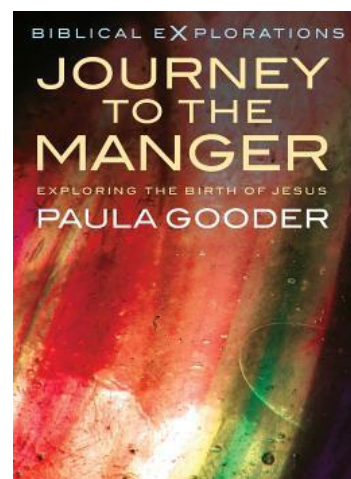
Daily Blog – What’s happening this week?

This week we will be continuing to look at the Story of Christmas in greater depth by exploring further into a recent book by Paula Gooder called, “Journey to the Manger.” Paula is a really good New Testament speaker and is now at St Paul’s Cathedral in London. She is a very engaging writer and speaker, and we look forward to sharing further the Christmas story through her eyes and through Scripture.

If you would like to follow the Daily Blog as part of your journey of faith, you can access via the “New Creation Facebook Page” :

<https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/>, via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or New Creation YouTube Channel :

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw/>



In addition:

“The Bible Project” (www.bibleproject.com) do a very good Bible Study Plan where you read a passage and a psalm each day, interspersed with videos giving overviews and really great background material. Its’s also available to download on a Smartphone or a Tablet as an App and the videos act as little milestones along the way so you end up looking forward to the next one or using it as a ‘reward’ for the section you’ve just read.



Hardcopy Bible Study Plans are also available from Eden, Amazon and also from many Christian organisations.

Matt

What is happening “Church wise” in February (“CHURCH STILL ONLINE ONLY”):

Following the Prime Minister’s announcement earlier this week, that schools will continue to be working “online ONLY” until the 8th March, The two PCCs earlier this week decided to keep the Church Services also “Online ONLY” during this time.



I appreciate this is difficult for some people especially for those who don’t have or want to use technology. That is why there is both this Pew News Sheet, with its “Thought for the Week,” usually based on the Bible Reading for the Sunday and the Prayer Diary.

I am also very grateful to all the Church@Home co-ordinators who keep in touch each week and some of whom provide other material.

In addition, for those not online:

Other resources we can recommend are:

“Songs of Praise” BBC 1 (Sunday 12.25pm)

“Faith in Action” BBC 1 (Sunday 13.15pm)

“Premier Christian Radio Station” has Christian programmes including worship throughout each day. You can access the radio station on your TV if you have “Freeview” – Channel 725, or if you have a DAB Radio.

There was talk of BBC Radio Bristol hosting a Christian programme during this time but sadly I can’t find anything on their schedule as such for tomorrow.

And, for those able to go online:

Please see the Church website: www.newcreationchurches.org.uk or our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> for further details of how to join the service tomorrow.

Matt Thomson

TOYBOX

For many years St Andrew’s, Congresbury has supported two children through the charity Toybox, a charity committed to ending the global injustice of children living and working on city streets. Toybox began when a couple were prompted by their Christian faith and decided to act. Today they continue, motivated by that same Christian faith, to see a world in which no child is forced to live or work on the streets.

St Andrew’s support of two children costs £36 per month (£18 per child per month). We ask members who wish to contribute, to donate £1 per month, paid to the Church account annually (£12). This means that we need 36 members to participate to cover the cost. In 2019 we had 32 individual donors and we thank them for their generosity. Any amount not covered by donations is paid by the Church.

Due to the pandemic we did not collect contributions from members in 2020, meaning that the Church covered the entire cost. As Church finances are limited, we are asking members that have donated in the past to please make their contributions for 2021. If you are also able to give something to defray the costs paid during 2020, that would be greatly appreciated.

This, of course, is not just open to St. Andrew’s, Congresbury. Anyone from Banwell who wishes to donate is very welcome and shows a sense of unity between the two churches and New Creation

Cash or cheques (please mark them as being for Toybox) can be given to your Church @ Home coordinator to be passed on to Beth Ashton-Hilton, Treasurer, or dropped through the letterbox at 14 Weetwood Road, Congresbury BS49 5BN. Cheques made payable to **St. Andrew’s Congresbury PCC** Electronic Bank Transfer: Bank: **NatWest** Sort Code: **60-23-32** Account No: **72280484** using the reference “Toybox”.



Children’s Society Collection Boxes

It’s time to return your collection boxes for donations to be totalled and sent to the Children’s Society. Please either drop your box off at 14 Weetwood Road, BS49 5BN or ring Beth Ashton-Hilton on 01934 833592 to arrange to have it collected. Please DO NOT leave your box unattended in Church as we cannot guarantee security.

#ClapForHeroes - Thursdays at 8pm

As we are now well into another National Lockdown, we remember all of our critical workers by joining with the Nation in the 'Clap for Heroes' each Thursday evening at 8pm. The banners that have kindly been made for to show our support to those working are now proudly displayed outside both of our churches so please spare a thought and a prayer for all those working in essential jobs on the front lines to keep us all safe during these difficult times.

THURSDAY
AT 8PM



we could not do this without you!

NHS Teachers Paramedics Shop workers
Nurses teaching staff
Doctors Care Workers Cleaners Refuse & Recycling Collectors Volunteers
Vets Police Bus Drivers Nursery Staff
Postal Workers Delivery Drivers Good Friends Kind Neighbours

+ all other amazing essential workers! ♥

New Creation
Building Better Community



Please continue to pray for Bishop Peter Hancock and for his family:

As Christmas now passes, please continue to keep Bishop Peter and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Bishop Peter was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of Leukaemia during the Pandemic and has been undergoing treatment in hospital. He has stepped back from his role as figurehead of the Diocese for some time and so please pray also for Bishop Ruth, for Howard and their family, as she continues in this role in his stead.



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Building Better Community