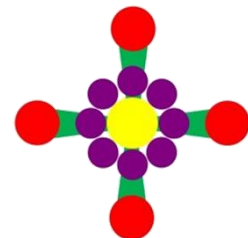


The Benefice of  
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme  
31st January 2021



## Candlemas Written Service

### Worship led by Suzy

*The Feast of Candlemas marks the end of the celebration of Christmas. We remember how Jesus was presented by Mary and Joseph in the Temple. We hear the story of Simeon and Anna. The name Candlemas comes from the tradition that on this festival the church candles are blessed in thanksgiving for the gift of light. **You might like to have a candle ready to light.***

### Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

The Lord of glory be with you. **The Lord bless you.**

### Introduction to the Festival

Dear Friends, forty days ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we recall the day on which he was presented in the Temple, when he was offered to the Father and shown to his people. As a sign of his coming among us, his mother was purified, as we now come to him for cleansing. In their old age Simeon and Anna recognized him as their Lord, as we today sing of his glory. In this service we celebrate both the joy of his coming and his searching judgement, looking back to the day of his birth and forward to the coming days of his passion.

### Penitence

'I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness  
but shall have the light of life.'

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,  
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,  
in what we have thought, in what we have said and done,  
through ignorance, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.**

**We have wounded your love, and marred your image in us.**

**We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.**

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,**

**who died for us, forgive us all that is past;**

**and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.**

The almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins,  
time for amendment of life, and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## Glory to God

Glory to Christ, Son of Mary;  
born a child,  
he shares our humanity.

**Glory to God in the highest.**

Glory to Christ, Son of David;  
born to rule,  
he receives gifts from the wise,

**Glory to God in the highest.**

Glory to Christ, Son of Man;  
born our Saviour,  
he is the light of the world.

**Glory to God in the highest.**

We celebrate the coming of our God  
with all the voices of heaven:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

## The Collect

Let us pray that we may know and share the light of Christ,

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 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.**

## The Reading: Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him 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 turtledoves 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.**

At the Presentation of Christ in the Temple we mark the end of the Epiphany season – the light of Christ has come into the world; and has been seen and recognised. Jesus has revealed himself through signs and wonders to be the Messiah and those who were prepared and blessed are able to recognise God's purposes being fulfilled. God's active presence in the world as he seeks to bring all to completion and the salvation of the whole of creation.

Simeon was a devout Jew who was 'waiting for the consolation of Israel'. He had been told that he would see the Christ before he died. His words are important because he declares, not just that Jesus is the one sent by God whom the Jews have been waiting for; but that in Jesus he 'has seen God's salvation – a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'. This is news to the Jews – that the salvation is not limited to them, it is for all people.

Anna being from Asher is part of that message that the salvation is for all people. She is a representative descendent of the northern tribes and serves as a reminder that Jesus was sent to reunite the people.

There is another theme here as well. Luke's account is written with a clear emphasis on the equality of the sexes. Male and Female are equally valued and important in God's eyes. Where there is an annunciation to Mary there is also one to Zechariah. Luke stresses the salvation to both women and men. Where there is a prophet there is also a prophetess – Anna – she too recognises the Christ, gives thanks to God and begins to speak of Jesus 'to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel'. God is fulfilling his promise for salvation, the hope that Israel will be restored after the exile, the hope that the Jews might be freed from oppressors, all that has been waited for is at last here in this infant.

Finally, Simeon and Anna serve as an example of how prayer serves to attune the will of the individual to the will and purposes of God. People of prayer are more open to receive revelation. Luke reveals ways in which God is already guiding salvation history, and prayer is a means of human perception of, and thus participation in, what God is doing. There is a theme and a strong emphasis on the importance of prayer running all the way through Luke's Gospel and important understandings or revelations come through prayer or to people steeped in prayer. (Reading Luke: Bartholomew, Green and Thisleton)

Simeon and Anna are prayerful people, devout and waiting, whose diligence is rewarded. They see the Christ, the Son of God, the revelation of God in the world is gifted first to them. They declare Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and the light in the darkness of the world.

This passage, and this festival, remind us that God values us all equally – men and women, whatever nationality or language or other cause for division we might find. Jesus was sent on a mission to unite people.

This passage serves to remind us that God values people of prayer highly – he speaks and reveals his purposes to those who are prayerful. So, let us seek to be prayerful and united people. Uniting others and actively striving to avoid being the cause of divisions between other people. Let those who follow Jesus remember that He stands for love, unity and peace above all.

## The Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth:  
I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

**Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession led by Margaret Harrison

Lord Jesus Christ you said that when we gather together in your name, however many or few we may be, you will be in the midst of us. Be present with us now as we open your word, delight in your truth and glory in your name. Inspire us with wisdom, excite us with passion for justice and renew our faith that our lives may honour you in all that we say and do.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

During last week it was Holocaust Remembrance day. God of hope and consolation, we hold before you all who have died as a result of war. May we remember the cost, lest we forget the value of our freedom, the responsibilities it brings and the sanctity of peace. Sustain us in the building of communities where all can flourish.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for our government and for the new administration in America and for all influential countries, that all may work together so that the less affluent areas of the world can benefit from the advances made for the benefit of all people.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for all those who are working hard to keep us well and safe – the medical profession and scientists, our government, police, staff in supermarkets and shops, delivery drivers, farmers, teachers and all essential workers. Surround them with your protection, O Lord, and may dignity be upheld when fear and pain are met and may your compassion direct their actions. In all things keep them from losing faith in your goodness in humankind and sustain them for your love's sake.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We think especially of those in our benefice who are in any kind of need at this time. Heavenly Father, by your grace and through the patience and skill of those who care for others, may the sick and suffering be healed, those who are in pain be comforted, and those who are worried be reassured.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

In darkness and in light, in trouble and in joy, help us Heavenly Father to trust your love, to serve your purpose and to praise your name through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

## Presentation Prayers

Let us pray to the Father through Christ who is our light and life.

Father, your Christ is acclaimed as the glory of Israel:  
look in mercy on your Church, sharing his light.

Lord have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Father, your Christ in his temple brings in judgement on the world:

Lord have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Father, your Christ who was rich, for our sakes became poor:  
look in mercy on the needy, suffering with him.  
Lord have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Father, your Christ is the one in whom faithful servants find their peace:  
look in mercy on the departed, that they may see your salvation.  
Lord have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Father, your Christ is revealed as the one destined to be rejected:  
look in mercy on us who now turn towards his passion.  
Lord have mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord God, you kept faith with Simeon and Anna,  
and showed them the infant King.  
Give us grace to put all our trust in your promises,  
and the patience to wait for their fulfilment;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## The Peace

In the tender mercy of our God,  
the dayspring from on high has broken upon us,  
to give light to those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you

## We present ourselves

Father, in Christ there has sprung up a light for the righteous;  
accept the gifts we bring before you  
and grant that Christ may shine in us  
to the praise and glory of your name. **Amen.**

## We light our Candles

Lord God, the springing source of everlasting light,  
pour into the hearts of your faithful people  
the brilliance of your eternal splendour,  
that we, who by these kindling flames  
light up this place to your glory,  
may have the darkness of our souls dispelled,  
and so be counted worthy to stand before you  
in that eternal city where you live and reign,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



**A light to lighten the nations  
And the glory of your people Israel.**

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace.  
Your word has been fulfilled.

**A light to lighten the nations  
And the glory of your people Israel.**

My own eyes have seen the salvation  
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people

**A light to lighten the nations  
And the glory of your people Israel.**

A light to reveal you to the nations  
And the glory of your people Israel.

**A light to lighten the nations  
And the glory of your people Israel.**

Final Responsory

Father, here we bring to an end  
Our celebration of the Saviour's birth.

**Help us, in whom he has been born, to live his life that has no end.**

Here we have rejoiced with faithful Simeon and Anna.

**Help us, who have found the Lord to trust in your eternal promises.**

Here we have greeted the light of the world.

**Help us, who extinguish these candles,  
Never to forsake the light of Christ.**

Here we turn from Christ's birth to his passion.

**Help us, for whom Lent is near;**

**To enter deeply into the Easter mystery.**

Here we bless one another in your name.

**Help us, who now go in peace, to shine with your light in the world.**

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**