

The Parish of St David, Exeter

Parish Newsletter for Sunday, 26 January 2025

Our services this week at St David's:

Sunday, 2 February 2025 – Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

9.30am Parish Communion with celebrant, Mike Clark, and preacher, Catherine Blundell (*Live-streamed on Facebook*)

6 pm Evening Prayer led by Robert Mitchell

Tuesday, 4 February, (Gilbert, founder of the Gilbertine Order, 1189) 9.00-9.30 am Zoom Morning Prayer. Please join us using this link

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77269635517?pwd=Lb40Ha9TejMxaaXMc7XrFokjutLaZ1.1>

Meeting ID: 772 6963 5517

Passcode: 0q5ZR4

Thursday, 6 February (Martyrs of Japan, 1597), 10.30am Holy Communion led by David James

Sunday, 9 February 2025 – 4th Sunday before Lent

9.30am Parish Communion with celebrant and preacher, Sarah Cumming

6 pm Evening Prayer led by Robert Mitchell

For services this week at St Michael's and All Angels CD, please see:

<https://www.stmichaelsmountdinhams.org.uk/worship/>

Message from the Vicar and Churchwardens

1. The notices today include two sermons –

We are fortunate today to have the sermon Catherine will be preaching and also that preached so relevantly by Simon Taylor last week in the pulpit swap for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Our thanks to both of them.

2. St David's Primary School – request for our help

St David's Primary School are compiling a list of hymns for the pupils to learn and have asked for our help! Do you have a favourite hymn which you could suggest? Any seasonal classics which could be included? If there is a specific reason for your choice, please include it. Send your suggestions to Sarah at rev.sarahcumming@gmail.com by Saturday, 22 February.

2. Compilation of a New Electoral Roll

This is another gentle reminder of the need for everyone who wishes to to complete an Electoral Roll form. Many thanks to those who have already done so. *Forms are on the table at the back of the church. Please hand completed forms to Sue Wilson or Alice Francis, or speak to them if you would like to know more.*

3. Covid & flu: sensible precautions

With Covid and flu very much about, a gentle reminder that if you are coughing/sneezing and/or feeling unwell, out of consideration for others, please refrain from attending church, and where possible, join us via the live-stream.

Visiting and home Communion

If you would like to be visited or phoned by someone from the church community, please let Howard Friend know by ringing him on 07733 739453; for Communion at home, either for yourself or someone you know, please contact Ian Cartwright on 07813 795616.

Date for your diary – Parish Quiz Night, Saturday, 22 March 2025

Do come and enjoy this very popular event. Tickets will be on sale shortly and will include a Ploughman's Supper. Would you like to make up a team?

Parish Magazine – this is out today so do pick up a copy. Many thanks to the Editorial team. *Please note there is a new email address: newleaves@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk*

Tuesday Friendship Café

St David's Church is normally open on Tuesday mornings from 10.30 am to 12 noon as a drop-in for people to find a Christian welcome and company. All welcome.

Wednesday Walks

Wednesday walkers meet and enjoy convivial conversation, gentle strolls, the changing of the seasons and a coffee together. Would you like to join us? We'd make you very welcome! We meet at 9am at the door at the west end of St David's and we leave promptly. If you'd like to join us please just turn up, or speak to Helena in church.

Knit and Natter

Please see Glynis for details of future meetings.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be advertised early in 2025. Please contact Alan Baker if you would like a reminder alan.baker1963@outlook.com

Parish lunch

The next parish lunch will be on Thursday, 27 February at Exeter College's @34 restaurant at 12 noon. A group will be walking over from the church at 11.45, for anyone who doesn't know the way. Thanks, Sue Wilson and Jenny Baker

Request for help with research from a student – “Hi, I am Jasmine. I am a third-year undergraduate student at Exeter University, studying Anthropology. For my dissertation project, I will be studying St David’s Church to help me answer my dissertation title ‘Exploring the ability of individuals, over the age of 60, to talk about their health and well-being, particularly in light of their religious beliefs.’ (working title). With all data I collect anonymised, I shall complete observations and semi-structured interviews with volunteers from St David’s Church congregation. If you would like to get in contact with any questions about this study or to become a participant, please email: jj530@exeter.ac.uk or chat with me after the Sunday Morning Service. Thank you for having me!”

The Iron Bridge – notice of closure – the bridge is now closed for major works (*13 January 2025 for 22 weeks*).

Your Prayers are asked for...

those who are suffering including:

Caroline Speed-Andrews; Ann Barnet, Maggs Bedford; Delia Bloom; Libby Clapham; Andrew Francis; Hazel Gowland; Eileen Jarman, Roger Luscombe; Anne Smith; Sarah Wood; Clive and Jeanie; Beth; Charlotte, Paul and Grace; Will, Dave

those who have died recently

In our Parish Cycle of Prayer please pray for:

The YMCA and the Thirsty Group (monthly faith discussion)

Please also pray for:

Our church

Our country and its leaders, both political and religious; for all those affected by the ongoing weather, and those trying to put things right, both here and especially in Los Angeles; everyone affected by the Washington air crash

Our world, for wisdom for its leaders and a wish for peace not war, for the peace process in Gaza

Sunday, 2 February 2025 – Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

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.

1st reading - Malachi 3.1-5

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

Gospel 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 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 for 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

Sermon by Catherine Blundell for Sunday, 2 February 2025 - Candlemas

A few years ago my mum sent me an article from a magazine. It said:

‘Now I am older...

I’m not grouchy, I just don’t like traffic, waiting, children, politicians...

I’m awake hours before my body allows me to get up.

I’m smiling all the time because I can’t hear a word you’re saying

I'm very good at opening childproof caps with a hammer.'

I tell you this because age is a part of our gospel reading. We have a 40 day old baby, two young parents, and two older people who, unlike my mum, were waiting, patiently.

Today is Candlemas and theme of Candlemas is light. So the young and the old experienced light and dark, day and night, and for one of them, shadow between the two.

Light and dark

This is a bit random but ponder your fridge. It sits there, humming to itself, until you open the door and light banishes the darkness. I wonder why the fridge gets a light, our freezer doesn't have one, and our oven only lights when I press the right button to reveal the cremated offerings therein.

Anyway, back at the fridge, every so often the light doesn't just illuminate the food but also something sticky, suspicious and probably ancient. All you can then do is roll up your sleeves and toss out that which is trying to evolve into a new life form.

Light in the darkness. It shows us show us how things really are.

In our bible reading we meet Simeon and Simeon isn't described as old but we can guess a bit about his age by the words of the Nunc Dimitis. The first bit of which I can't say without using Prayer Book words.

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

Stop on the words 'A light for revelation', which is interesting because light and revelation are similar things. Revelation is disclosure, the act of making something evident, and light is needed to clearly see that which is revealed.

What we do know about Simeon is he was a righteous man. For him, scripture is revelation, the disclosure of God's plan but, in a flash of astonishing clarity, when Simeon saw the infant Jesus, he saw not just the revelation of God's plan, but something more precious. Simeon saw hope.

We don't know how Simeon made this leap of faith but, and I have no evidence of this, I wonder if Simeon knew Mary. He then connected the prophecy in Isaiah that hints at a virgin birth, with this young woman who was with child before her betrothal.

The, maybe he had heard the rumours of angels in the Bethlehem sky, and the visit of the shepherds to the young mother. That, fused with the Holy Spirit's promise he would see the salvation of Israel, made everything clear.

However, he scooped up the child, held hope in his hands, and stood on the promise that light had come to the darkness. Not just for the old faithful Jew, but for the darkness dwelling gentile.

Light and dark. Let's now think about day and night and do it through the eyes of Anna.

We know little about Anna other than father's family, she had a husband, and we are told, she is very old. So, her identity might come from the men in her life she had her own agency. Verse 37 and 38, Anna was a devout, faithful, a woman who virtually lived at the temple. Day and night, she will have seen its rhythm, the feasts the festivals as she waited, prayed, and fasted. Then, one day, two young parents arrived. She would have seen this happen many times before but today something was different. Again, how Anna knew is not clear but, as Simeon held hope in his arms, Anna did 2 things, verse 38, she gave thanks, and she passed on the good news.

What a cracking response Anna had to Jesus. She didn't need to step into the limelight, be the focus of attention. No, she gave thanks, and passed on the good news. It couldn't be easier.

Then, often wonder what the people who met Jesus went on to do with their day. Did the elderly Anna finally go home, put the dinner on and her feet up. Job done? Was that day enough for Simeon, retirement beckons? Or as Mary and Joseph slipped away did they keep on praying and hoping? I think they did because of the shadow Simeon said would fall across the new mother.

There was light in the darkness, the rhythm of day and night, but the shadow of a sword fell across the scene.

We have to wonder why Simeon and Anna are in these bible stories. Mary and Joseph must have met hundreds of people on their trip to the temple. There would have been traders, family members, priests, and other devout souls but Luke's gospel remembers Simeon and Anna.

Maybe because, ironically for good news, the gospels always remind us of the painful realities of life and if Mary was delighted by Jesus' reception, an unexpected pregnancy and no room at the inn would be the least of her troubles. Simeon says to her, a 'sword will pierce your own soul too' and over this happy scene falls a chill.

Maybe it was Simeon's age that gave him the wisdom to know that this new mother's life, and the life of her child, would not be easy. He wouldn't have known the bringer of light would one day have to go to the darkest place of all, but through Simeon, Mary was warned her 'yes' to the angel would come at a painful cost.

It's a shame to finish on a dark note. So, let's cheer ourselves up.

Another thing about Candlemas. It is the official end of Christmas. Yes, it is finally all over for another year. Just over 300 and something days until the next one....

Seriously, that first Candlemas was, for Simeon and Anna the highlight of a faithful life. They saw salvation. I suppose the challenge for us to wonder how we can share the hope they found in Christ.

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

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please tell us at notices@stdavidschurhexeter.org.uk

Please send notices/content/prayer requests or amendments to Hilary on todd.stdandm@gmail.com)

(All readings can be found via Oremus Bible Browser: <https://bible.oremus.org/> in the New Revised Standard Version (anglicized edition))

Text of last week's sermon given by Simon Taylor as part of the pulpit swap during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

1 Corinthians 12. 12-31a & Luke 4:14-21

Today we mark the international Week of Prayer for Christian Unity through this act of church ministers speaking at a different church to their own. In sharing ministry, we express that we are all part of the one body of Christ, all anointed by the one Spirit and all children of the one heavenly Father. Through this sharing, we are expressing that we can live well with each other - in our rich and wonderful diversity, we can be together and know a unity that we then offer to a divided and broken world.

The foundation of our togetherness is Jesus who calls us to love one another and to unite in bringing hope to the whole creation. We find inspiration in the many different images of unity found in the Bible - indeed, there are so many pictures of togetherness in the Bible that in this last week I was able to use them in our student Bible Study.

We played ecumenical Pictionary with students and chaplains drawing some of the biblical pictures of unity to see if others could guess them! One of the pictures we used is the one Paul develops in 1 Corinthians 12 - the church is like a human body - it is a body made up of various parts - all are different but all belong together in the one body and all are needed.

Paul uses this image to remind the Corinthian church that we are all members of the one church and we all belong to each other - "in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body" (v. 13) - whatever our tradition, background, nationality, gender, sexuality or status we all belong.

Whoever you are, you have a place in the church, the Body of Christ

- whoever you are, you can know love in the Body of Christ

- whoever you are, you have something to offer in the Body of Christ

- whoever you are, you matter in the Body of Christ

Paul emphasises that difference should not hinder unity - the foot cannot say to the rest of the body that because it is not a hand it does not belong. Just because we are not exactly like each other does not mean that we cannot belong together. Like a human body, the church is made up of different parts.

Indeed Paul is saying that diversity in our unity is essential - if the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?

(v 17). The different parts of the human body are needed to fulfil many different functions. We need the eye to see, the ear to hear, the hand to touch, the heart to pump and so on if the body is to work properly.

In the same way in the church, we need different people with their different gifts to fulfil our calling in Christ. Our different experiences, skills, knowledge and talents are essential for the Church to function as God purposes. We need musicians to play, listeners to listen, preachers to preach, cleaners to clean and so on.

Jesus welcomes each and every one of us so that here together both giving to each other and receiving from one another, we find a community in which we know love, hope and belonging.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul also emphasises that it is not just the stronger parts of the body like hands and feet that are needed

- v.32 - the parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. Some think he means more vulnerable parts of the body such as eyes or perhaps organs not seen within the body. Though they may seem weak, they are needed just as much as the bigger, stronger parts of the body.

Paul is saying that those who feel themselves small or unworthy - those who feel themselves to be weak, poor or vulnerable - are to be warmly welcomed within the Body of Christ and treated in exactly the same way as any other.

The church in Corinth had within it those who were very rich and those who were poor - and they were not treated equally. The rich enjoyed the best whilst the poor went hungry. Paul is horrified by this and uses the image of the church as a body to state that all have a place, all are needed and all are to be cared for in the same way.

The Church - the Body of Christ - then becomes a place where all find hope and healing in belonging, for we are liberated from society's class distinctions, judgementalism and bias to accept one another as Christ has accepted us.

In the church, the poor find good news as they are welcomed and loved every bit as much as those who are rich. In the Body of Christ our eyes are opened to see our true worth as beloved children of God.

Those who are held captive through feeling that their difference to others means they are unwanted and excluded are released to know that they can belong too and that what they offer is valued and needed.

Where we have been stigmatised by our mental health, our status or our sexuality then in the body of Christ we can find a place of welcome that frees us from being held captive to feeling unworthy and unlovable.

As a chaplain, I have encountered students who have felt rejected by a church because of their identity - but who have flourished when they have found a church that welcomes them as they are.

In a church community where accepted, loved and welcomed faith in Christ has deepened and they have given much back to Christ's body through using the gifts they have.

When the church lives truly as the Body of Christ, welcoming and accepting every member with love then we fulfil Christ's mission as given in Luke 4 - when we love, welcome and value one another with all our differences then

- good news is brought to the poor
- release is proclaimed to captives
- the blind see
- the oppressed find freedom
- the Lord's favour is proclaimed in our living and loving

Of course, the mission of Christ goes out from the Church too, but if we are to show the love of Christ to the world, then the love of Christ must be known,

affirmed and lived out in the church. Christ calls us to model the peace we offer to the world - a unity that holds together and celebrates diversity.

The Church of Jesus - the Body of Christ - is to be a place of healing and liberation, of welcome and hospitality, of sharing and generosity - a place:

- where love is witnessed in action
- where every member belongs
- where everyone is needed
- where diversity is accepted and celebrated

Where the Church is a body with its different members held together in unity and love - where all know they belong to each other and all are cared for, then here we see the anointing of the Spirit of Christ and his mission to bring the peace of God to this world being fulfilled.