

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

A belated Happy New Year to you all! Though it may be that, a month into 2012, still in the winter time, and possibly having broken most of our New Year resolutions, some of us aren't feeling all that fresh and new any more! The old and the new can come fast on each other's heels, and interact in unexpected ways in our lives, we often find.

A link between the old and the new is one of the things highlighted in the Feast of Candlemas, which falls at around the time that this edition of the magazine is due to be published. The traditional date for Candlemas is 2nd February, though we shall also be celebrating it on the previous Sunday, 29th January. The Gospel story for this feast gives us the wonderful image of the elderly Simeon and Anna – both well past retirement age in today's terms – showing the spiritual insight to recognise the Saviour of the world in the babe brought into the temple by Mary and Joseph, and joyously proclaiming this to all who would hear them.

These two old people, with the wisdom and awareness coming from their longstanding and close relationship with God, serve to remind us all of what we can gain from those in the latter stages of life. In these times, when the care of the elderly is an increasingly prominent issue both for our politicians and for society as a whole, it can be good to recall Simeon's and Anna's roles in the Gospel story, as well as giving thanks for those older people who have loved and guided us in our lives.

The feast of Candlemas acts as a bridge or transition between different things in another way, too. As we remember the infant Jesus being presented in the temple, we also hear Simeon's words of warning to Mary: "this child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed...and a sword will pierce your own soul, too". Alongside the celebration that the Messiah has come among us, we are reminded that his life will be one marked by opposition and suffering. And so our thoughts are led onwards, away from the babe in the manger, and towards the Christ who will suffer and die for us on the Cross, towards Lent and the Passion.

This turning of our faces towards the Passion will enter another stage later in February, with Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, falling on 22nd February this year. During Lent, we hold an additional Eucharist each Saturday morning at 11am, and evening worship takes place every Sunday evening – do look at the *Pews News* for more details of each week's events.

We hope that these additional opportunities for worship will help us all to make Lent a positive time during which we can grow in faith and prayer, and so become better prepared to celebrate the joys of Easter when they arrive.

This spring will also see us moving towards undertaking the necessary repairs to our church roof following the substantial lead theft which took place before Christmas. The faculty applications to obtain permission for this work are already in hand and we will keep everyone informed as things progress. Returning to the theme of connections between the old and the new, I am sure that all of us will want to support the work and fundraising which will be needed to ensure that this beautiful and ancient church continues to be at the centre of our community for many generations to come.

Yours in Christ

Catherine