



The Parish Churches of St Mary the Virgin, Gillingham,  
St Simon & St Jude, Milton on Stour and St Nicholas, Silton



*Open to God, Open to all*

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### **Sunday 1 February The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)**

CW Lectionary Heb. 2. 14 - end; Luke 2. 22 - 40

8:00am Holy Communion

St Mary's Church, Gillingham

10:00am Holy Communion

St Mary's Church, Gillingham

Hymns: 589, 396, 452, 113 (choir), 721

*Prayers for healing are usually available after the 10am service in the side chapel at St Mary's*

10:30am BCP Holy Communion

St Nicholas Church, Silton

10:30am Morning Worship

St Simon & St Jude, Milton on Stour

Hymns: Nunc Dimittis, 445, 404, This Little Light of Mine



#### **Collect**

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the nations and glory of Israel: make your home among us, and present us pure and holy to your heavenly Father, your God, and our God.

#### **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.

#### **For your thoughts and prayers**

Norma Morris, Adam Cooke, Steve & Mary Rae, Roberta Wyatt, Rita Burns, Allen & Pauline Bryant, Carol Hebden, Mary Andrews, Diane Whitford, Ann Lockyer, Jean Harding, Anne Clarke, Shirley Lynch and Sandra Harwood.

We commend to God's care all those who have died, especially Wendy Malet and David Banham, and we pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

#### **READING Hebrews 2. 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.

#### **GOSPEL Luke 2. 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.

The Parish Office is closed this week and will re-open on Tuesday 10 February

### Wednesday 4 February

10.30am Holy Communion at St Mary's Church, Gillingham

10:30am – 12noon The Gillingham Men's Group at Rawson Court

2:00pm – 3:30pm Dementia Friendly Gillingham 'Singing Together' at Rawson Court

2:00pm – 4:30pm Eden Café and TerraCycle recycling in the Vicarage School Room

*Also at Eden, there will be an opportunity to purchase a variety of handmade craft items by J K Hall including cards, notelets and bags. Commissions also taken. A donation from each item sold will go towards St Mary's Church Funds.*

### Thursday 5 February

10:00am – 12noon Eden Café and TerraCycle recycling in the Vicarage School Room

12noon Funeral of Wendy Malet at St Nicholas Church, Silton

2:30pm – 4:00pm Dementia Friendly Gillingham 'Sing-a-Song of Praise' at The Malthouse Care Home

### Friday 6 February

9.30am – 10am Informal Prayer Group at St Mary's Church, Gillingham

### Saturday 7 February

10:00am – 12noon Meditation in the Vicarage School Room

### Sunday 8 February The Second Sunday before Lent

*CW Lectionary Romans 8. 18 – 25; Matthew 6. 25 – end*

10:00am Holy Communion St Mary's Church, Gillingham

10:30am Matins St Nicholas Church, Silton

10:30am Holy Communion St Simon & St Jude, Milton on Stour

**Wednesday 11 February** - The first session for the Eden Café bunting project will be held today at Eden Café, 2:00pm – 4:00pm. Come along and join in! For more information, please speak to Caroline.

**Our Iranian friends** – Ramin and Fariba have had a very generous offer, free of charge, of some bedroom and lounge furniture. They just need help with hiring a delivery van which will be in the region of £75. Please can you help? Margaret 822193

### Bishop's Letter for February

It is rare to have the Feast of Candlemas, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, so close to the start of Lent, Ash Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February. With Easter very early this year, it means that there are only fifteen days between the end of the Christmas cycle and the start of the season of reflection, abstinence and study. Not much time to change gear!

Or to use a liturgical description, only two Sundays of Ordinary Time. The name 'ordinary Time' comes not from the fact that some days are just plain 'ordinary' but that all time is ordered as part of the divine nature. Our telling and re-telling of the Christian Year is not merely a nostalgic rehearsal but the re-living of the truths that shape our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Seeing life, and in particular living a Christian life as an expression of sharing in the divine nature is therefore anything but ordinary. If we believe that we are all created in the image and likeness of God, then how we live our lives can only ever be extraordinary, regardless of what happens to us. If God sees us and our 'ordinary' lives as a gift of himself, how are we to respond? I often wonder what God thinks of us when he sees what we do with this unbelievable gift.

The Christ-child was cared for by Mary and Joseph at his Presentation in the Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> Feb) cared for and carried. In Lent, we seek to care more for ourselves with a sacred sense of self-care. How different might this be if we see ourselves as uniquely held by God, whatever the world thinks of us, and, even as we try to better ourselves, see ourselves as a gift, created in the image of God. Yes, this means you.

Psalm 139.13-14

*You are the one who created my innermost parts; you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb. I give thanks to you that I was marvellously set apart. Your works are wonderful-I know that very well.*

+Stephen, Bishop of Salisbury