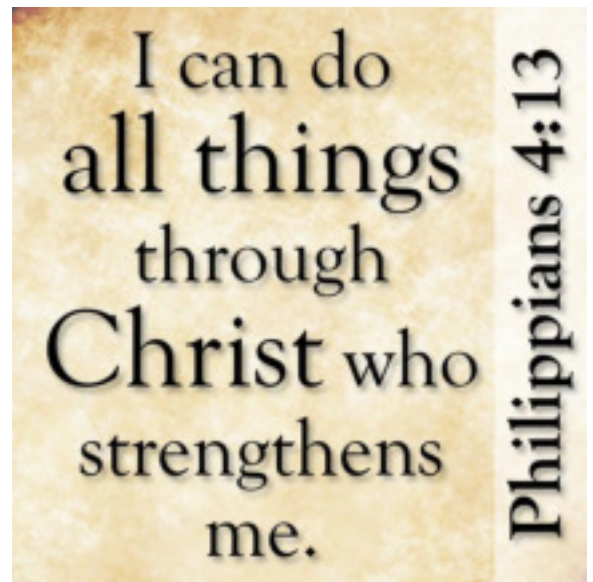


**PRESENTATION OF CHRIST
IN THE TEMPLE ~ 31 January 2021**

Here we are – unbelievably – at the end of the first month of the New Year. We have shown strength and resilience beyond what many of us perhaps thought possible; there have been countless wonderful and varied acts of kindness shown across our parishes and communities and we are indebted to those of our friends and family who have gone above and beyond in these strange times.

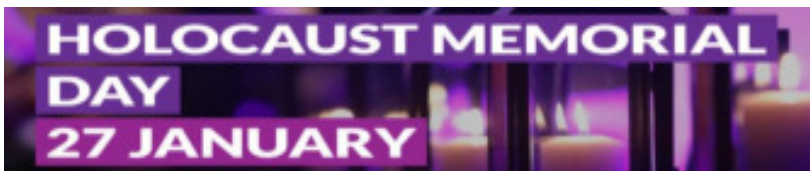
For many of us, the above Bible verse in Philippians 4:13 is a source of encouragement and comfort. So that, whatever we are attempting to do, whatever our goals are, whatever hurdles we face in accomplishing them, we can use the passage to gain the confidence that Christ will give us strength. ***“Whatever I believe, I can achieve.”***



So, as we head into the second month of this second year of the pandemic, may we take strength in our faith so that in times of uncertainty, we hold on to the belief that God is with us each step of the way.



PUBLIC WORSHIP is STILL PAUSED: We continue to monitor the situation and whether / when we might open our churches for Public Worship, and how we can plan for the coming weeks. We will keep everyone updated, but for now the churches remain closed – and that is a great sadness even though we know it is the right decision. Please do keep each other in your prayers, and let us know if there is anything more we could do that might help.



Holocaust Memorial Day is the day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. The theme for HMD 2021 is: **BE THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS**. It encourages everyone to reflect on the depths humanity can sink to, but also the ways individuals and communities resisted that darkness to ***‘be the light’*** before, during and after genocide. The quote opposite is by Corrie ten Boom who, as a concentration camp survivor, knew both despair and joy.



Wishing a very Happy Birthday to **Grace Cheeseman**
from St. Andrew's Church, BX, who celebrates
her special day on Friday 5th February.
The Lord bless you and keep you...



JOYOUS NEWS: Congratulations to Mary Lowe on becoming a great grandmother this week when her granddaughter gave birth to Charlotte Alice. Love and blessings to you all ☺ xx

Although our Church Services are currently paused, we include here the list from our Parish for those in our prayers: *If you know of others to be included, please contact me. DH*

Prayers of Intercession

Hear us dear Lord, as we pray for the sick, the suffering, and those in need. Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Our prayers and thoughts at this time are especially for:

Yvonne Ashmore; Charles Hill; Chris Maden;
...and any others known to us.

John Paton thanks everyone for their prayers and good wishes. He feels much better now and blessed to be back home.

For our community: **Staff and workers of Fortalice and Urban Outreach;**

We also pray for the departed:

Joyce Richardson, whose funeral took place at Overdale on Tuesday 26 January;
Evelyn Kennedy, whose funeral will take place at Overdale on Tuesday 2 February;
Ken Sharpe, whose funeral will take place at Overdale on Tuesday 2 February.

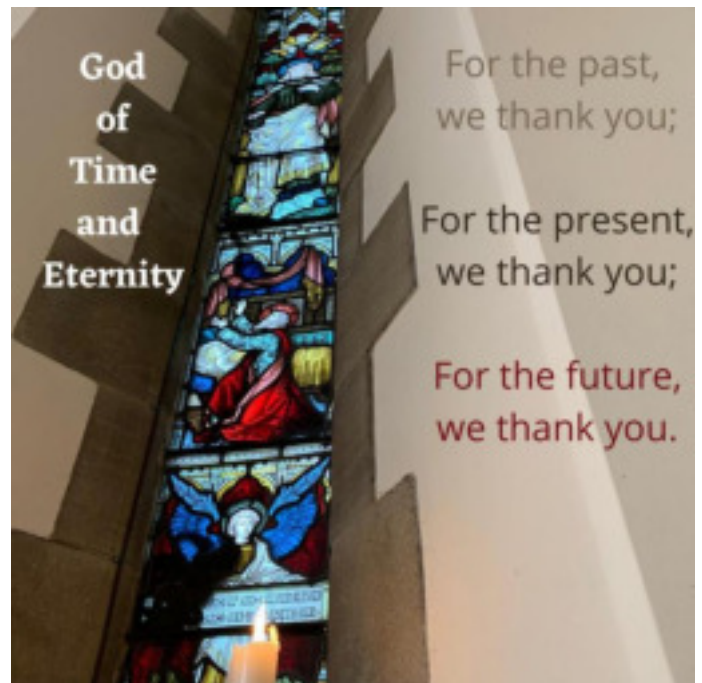
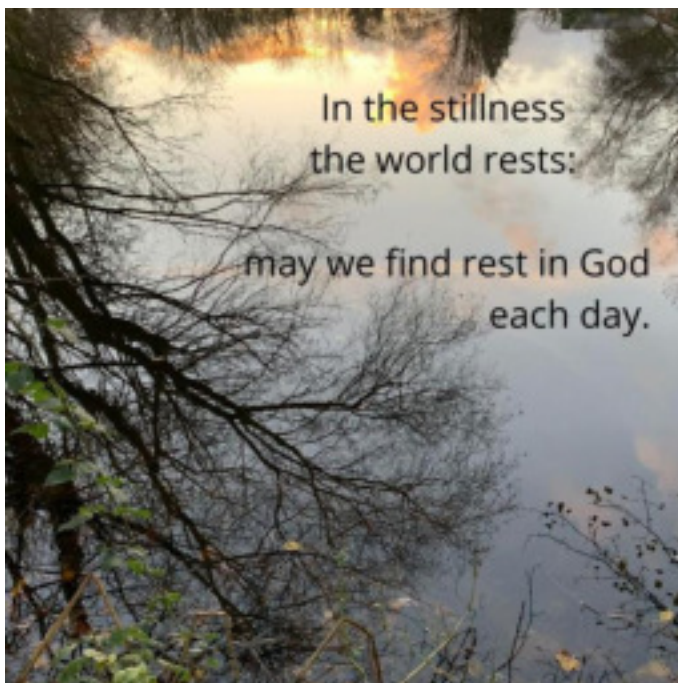
We remember too those who mourn, that You may provide comfort and help in their loss and sustain them through their grief.

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ; according to your promises, grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

James Hall; Jocelyn Mary Foster; Helen Kay; Jack Derbyshire;
James Seth Barnes; Thomas Lawrence Marsh;

You are the Alpha and the Omega; may we one day rejoice with you in heaven.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and all the human family to your unfailing love. Amen.



Our Team Rector, Canon Peter Reiss's letter this week:



Maybe this week is the week when we should put in lots of pictures of puppies and kittens and videos of gurgling babies – humans are almost hard-wired to smile at such. And it is really important that we try and lift our spirits, and lift the spirits of others, kindly and well, not in some manic demanding way.

Encouragement and feeling supported – two things that help make us more human. And if they do us good, how can we help support and encourage others?

This Sunday we would be celebrating **Candlemas**, or **the Presentation of Christ**, together in our churches, albeit a few days early. The actual day is Feb 2nd which is 40 days from the birth of Jesus and traditionally signals the end of the longer Christmas and Epiphany period. We would change the 'colours' in church back to green for 'ordinary time' just for a couple of weeks before Lent starts and the church goes purple. The liturgical seasons remind us of the passing of time and the rhythm of the year, and so does nature, as we begin to see bulbs sprouting – yet to see a hardy snow-drop in flower! God has given us the short cycle of the day, and the longer cycle of the year to help us with time. When we can't mark the occasions as we would like, then time can seem to merge and lose its rhythm and that can be disconcerting and depressing. We are actually creatures of considerable habit, who have preferred patterns, daily, weekly, yearly, and it is now nearly a year of disruption because of Covid.

This Sunday, the reading includes three generations of people: the prayerful old man and woman, Simeon and Anna, who have been waiting patiently, trusting God that they would see the one who would be the glory of Israel. I am in awe of their ongoing prayerfulness and faith.



And there are the parents with their baby, bringing the baby, as the Law required, busy parents, with a young baby, but wanting to do as God requires. Again I am in awe of their faith and commitment and it is lovely that their paths cross – the older people who don't seem to have family themselves now, and the young parents with the baby.

And although we can't be in our church buildings – we can't present anything or even go there to pray – we can hold each other, younger and older in our prayers and we can remind ourselves of the church family and thank God for them. Online this week the service has contributions from all generations which reflects this

And I hope we can feel encouraged and supported, encouraging and supporting, whether younger or older. Yes we have to navigate so many further trials, home-schooling puts huge demands on homes, and our teachers continue working so hard; for some isolation is beginning to hurt; for some, the Brexit paperwork is proving a further head-ache or disappointment, or there are other things which add pressure to work; health workers are facing ever more challenges; some have to live with ongoing pain with hospital appointments delayed or cancelled; none of these will be sorted overnight. Simeon and Anna were patient faithful people who had seen so much and been through so much.

Simeon and Anna encourage me to be prayerful, focused on God, and hopeful. And Mary and Joseph encourage me in their faith and commitment. And yes I would still like to hear a baby gurgling and see some cute puppies, but I also want to make space to rest in God and focus on Jesus for that is where a deeper peace will be found, and where our hope is anchored.

~ *Peter Reiss*

Peter Reiss has written a reflection this week on the Gospel Reading: **Luke 2:22-40**

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Forty days after birth, Jesus is brought by his parents to the Temple, as the Law required. The 40 days falls on Feb 2nd, traditionally known as Candlemas, but we remember and celebrate this event this Sunday.



Only Luke records the event, and the encounter with Simeon and Anna. For us, it is a bit of time-wrench as we have got used to the adult Jesus engaged in ministry, calling his disciples, changing water to wine, over the past few weeks, and now, we are back with Jesus, the infant, and with his parents around him. As with Christmas we are back with a story where others speak about Jesus, rather than Jesus speaks, and those others are a couple of much older people, devout people who have been praying and hoping.

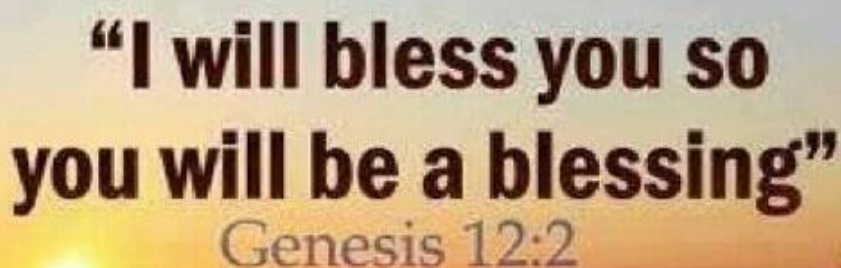
Simeon senses (somehow by God's Spirit) that this baby being brought to the temple, this baby which seems no different from any other baby brought by parents, is 'God's salvation', 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of God's people Israel'. And Anna also has this insight.

In this passage there is a wonderful mingling of the Law and God's Spirit. As Mary and Joseph do what is required by the Law, so Simeon is guided by God's Spirit to speak of Jesus. There are some who say that Jesus came to abolish the wretched Law which had trapped people in its tentacles, even going further to complain about the legalism of Judaism and Jews. This is just ignorant. Jesus came to fulfil the Law, and to speak against those who twisted it to their own ends or to exclude others. Luke presents Jesus as the child of devout Jewish parents who fulfil the Law in what it requires and in doing so God's Spirit enriches the moment in a most surprising way.

And Jesus will be found teaching in the synagogue, contending for the Temple to be a house of prayer; The Holy Spirit of God is on this prayerful man and woman who attend the Temple regularly, and will come upon the disciples at Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, from where the Gospel will be shared to the ends of the earth. **For Jesus is both the glory of God's people Israel AND a light for the revelation to the Gentiles.**

At a time of Roman Occupation – a time of hardship and uncertainty, two prayerful old people are given a truth from God and they share it, they speak it, they make it known. In this multi-generational passage, we see the devout young parents being blessed by the older generation as both look forward to the (as yet unknown) ministry of this little child.

In our time of uncertainty and difficulty, whether we are younger or older, may we be prayerful, expectant on God; may we live through life such that we can pray, "Lord now let your servant depart in peace .." Simeon and Anna never saw the miracles or ministry of Jesus, not the crucifixion or the resurrection, but they had faith in God, and believed. They didn't seek glory or reward for themselves, and they never knew what impact their comments and blessing had on others.



**"I will bless you so
you will be a blessing"**
Genesis 12:2

***May we live our lives such
that it might be said:
he / she brought blessing
to others.***

~ Peter Reiss

Having chatted with Ruth Dover, I learned some wonderful news about her daughter, Rachel Copeland, with whom Ruth stayed in Guernsey. I contacted Rachel and asked if she would tell us her story ...and here it is:

I was awarded the British Empire Medal in the (delayed) Queen's birthday honours in 2020. The award was given for services to vulnerable families in Guernsey.

This has been a very humbling experience and completely unexpected. I have been privileged throughout my career as a health visitor to meet some incredible families at a life changing time for them and I can truly say I loved every minute of my work. I developed and led a teenage parent programme, some of our most vulnerable young people, and was so proud of how most of them were able to develop a loving relationship with their child while at the same time opening their eyes to a positive future for themselves, not defined by the label attached to them.

My retirement was never going to be a traditional one! I was part of the development of the 1001 Critical Days Agenda in Guernsey, a programme initiated in Parliament. I was one of the founders of Bright Beginnings Children's Centre which focuses on supporting the development of a secure, loving relationship between child and caregiver and I am a Director of a number of Guernsey charities which would come under the umbrella of social justice.

I have been so blessed in being able to do work that I love and I credit my family, my school and my faith with my commitment to service. It was always taken as read in our home that you served others and this was reinforced at school where our school prayer included the words "much will be asked of those to whom much is given". All pupils were expected to undertake work for others so I visited homeless families and elderly people from quite a young age. I love church worship but I have always felt called to be in the world to try to live out my beliefs.

It was so lovely that the award was made when my mother was with us in Guernsey and so she was able to go to the reception at Government House with us! We had champagne and there were speeches, a real occasion to remember!

With love and good wishes
Rachel xx

PS. You will know the person on the left of the photo! Next to her is our daughter in law, Phoebe, my husband John, our son, Matt, me and two dear friends. We are outside Government House after the champagne reception.



*Bill Braviner shares a different #MorningPrayer each day. Such beautiful words:
May God's love and life flow in us and through us that all may be blessed and enriched by Him.*

**Let our first devotion be to you and your kingdom, Lord,
that we may be filled with your love and your life.
May that love and life flow in us and through us,
into all our relationships and into the communities we serve,
that all may be blessed and enriched by you. Amen**

I share here a beautiful poem given to me by a very dear friend, who always cheers me whenever we speak:

In Thy Hand

I'm glad my times are in Thy Hand; it is so sweet to know,
That everything by Thee is planned, for me where e'er I go.
The hand that holds the ocean depths can hold my small affairs,
The hand that guides the universe can carry all my cares.

I'm glad I cannot plan my way, I'd rather trust Thy skill.
I'm glad the ordering is not mine, I'd rather have Thy will.
I do not know the future, and would not if I might,
For faith to me is better far than faulty human sight.

And that same lovely lady passed on these thought-provoking words to share, too:



God did not promise to give us explanations for every experience or to tell us the reason why He expects us to obey and trust Him, but we can certainly rely on every promise He has given us.

To the unbelieving world, it's unreasonable for anybody to trust a God they've never seen or heard, but we have all the evidence we need to convince us that God is dependable and has the power to accomplish what He says He will do. What He promises, He is able to perform. Even if the next step is hidden from view, can't we trust the unknown future to our well known God and loving Father?

"Faith can walk with God in darkness, and He will guide that step aright."

It has also been said: "God helps us as much by what He hides as by what He confides; He helps us as much by what he conceals as by what He reveals."

Unbelief is serious because it challenges the character of God and rebels against the will of God. "But without faith, it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6)

When our eyes are on ourselves and our circumstances, we lose our perspective and say and do ridiculous things. We have every reason to trust and to submit to God, also in the uncertain times in which we are living.

These thoughts have been a comfort to myself...



Following the wonderful daily 'tableaux of toys' created by Jo & Stephen Woods in their front garden next to Dunscair Woods during the sunny days of the first Lockdown, they had a calendar made of selected scenes to raise funds for Walmsley Parish Community Hall. This raised £500 – and the toys are dressed up here for their virtual presentation ☺! Huge thanks to Jo and Stephen for their innovative idea and generosity. (There are still some calendars left @ £5 each...!!)

A report following our PCC meeting would usually go in the Parish Magazine but, as that has been suspended, it has been suggested that, for transparency, we could feature it in our weekly 'Parish News'. Thank you to **Derek Bailey** for preparing the following information:

NOTES ON ZOOM PCC MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2021

The PCC has been meeting regularly since the Pandemic started. The meetings have been held on Zoom and we are all seemingly getting used to meeting in this way, although it is not the same as seeing members face to face. The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) should have been held on 26 April 2020, but, it was put back until 18 October 2020 and was again held as a Zoom meeting. This year's APCM is scheduled to be held on 25 April 2021; we wait to see what will happen before then in this rapidly changing world we now all live in.

The latest meeting of the PCC was held on 12th January 2020 and the main issues were:

- **Damp in the Dimple Chapel** - This is still on-going but the Church Wardens have it in hand.
- **Trees in the Graveyard** – Mr. Topham has had the trees 'pruned' about which we raised concerns on his land north of the graveyard. (Although we had already paid for one dangerous tree behind church to be lopped!)
- **Diocesan & Deanery Plans** – The number of Deaneries in the Diocese is to be reduced from 20 to 7 and this will result in very major changes as to how the Diocese will now look and operate.
- **Worship Arrangements during COVID** – The PCC unanimously voted in favour of the suspension of services for the time being.
- **Parish Hall** – The new Parish Hall Manager, Gemma Gardiner, attended the meeting to introduce herself and gave a brief account of what her objectives are and what information she was gathering. She had provided the PCC with a detailed report before the meeting.
- **Treasurer** - Stuart Ormisher reported that it is very difficult currently to be able to budget or make any predictions. He is looking to move to digital banking which will help him enormously.

The next meeting will be on 9th March 2021



is inviting us to pray for our nation at 6pm each evening.



In response to reaching the terrible milestone of 100,000 deaths from COVID-19, the Archbishops invite all to call on God in Prayer. Starting on 1 Monday February we invite you to set aside time every evening to pray, particularly at 6pm each day. More than ever, this is a time when we need to love each other. Prayer is an expression of love.

We remember before God those who have died and we pray that God's love will surround all who mourn them, now and always ...



Gracious God, as we remember before you the thousands who have died, surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion. Be gentle with us in our grief, protect us from despair, and give us grace to persevere and face the future with hope in Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.

At the end of Chris Foster's beautiful prayers in last Sunday's online service, she prayed:

"Loving Lord Jesus, just as you turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana, your first miracle, we too ask for a miracle, a miracle of healing and hope for our own nation and the world against this deadly virus. We thank you for the scientists' incredible skills in producing the vaccines so rapidly and pray for a successful immunisation programme, for everyone to take up the offer of vaccination so that the tide may start to turn.



But Lord, because this Covid pandemic is unprecedented, we must ask, Father, what are you saying to us through all this, **what do we need to do to put things right?** We know we have failed to care for your creation properly. **Please help us - and nations to work together to heal the land, save the planet.** Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer."

May each of the dwellers upon this amazing God-created world take these words to heart.

May we who have so much, be generous to those who have much less;
May we who know peace and freedom, seek justice and peace for others;
May we who have been blessed, live out God's blessing for others.

Following on from the advice given in the 'Serenity Prayer' which I shared last week – mentioned by Kath Grieve - the image on the right seems to confirm that suggestion... 😊!!

If there is any other way that we can support you, please let us know. The contacts to get in touch with us are always at the end of this letter and we want to help you if we can.

Please do let us know if you have any news, poems, prayers ...or words to share. Thank you.

Love and blessings,

Reverend Carol Hayden,
Iain Stewart - *Church Warden*
Dawn Hitchen - *Church Warden*
+ *Authorised Lay Minister for Pastoral Care*

Angie Foster – *Assistant Church Warden*



We wish you **FAITH, HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE.**

If you need to speak with a church representative, please contact:

Dawn Hitchen dawn@walmsleyparish.org or telephone 304142.

Angie Foster angie@walmsleyparish.org or

Reverend Carol: revcarol@walmsleyparish.org or 01204 587150. Thank you.



PLEASE REMEMBER: For those who don't have internet or social media, do check out the Church of England free phone line: '**DAILY HOPE**'. Friends continue to tell me that they have enjoyed this resource. Please do use it.

The Church of England free phone: 'DAILY HOPE'

0800 804 8044 to listen to hymns, reflections and prayers.

