

connecting faith and daily life

Part of the family



Generous God, you provide all that we need to follow and serve you, as you make your love known throughout the world. Fill us with your light, so that it spills out wherever your love takes us. Amen.

John Witcombe *reflects on* Luke 2:22-40

Throughout these dark, short days of January we have been reading of God's light sparkling in our troubled world, bringing hope to those waiting for redemption. This week we will be celebrating Candlemas – the Feast of the Presentation. We have come, as it were, full circle from the beginning of Epiphany when we heard about the Baptism of Christ, when he responded to God in adult obedience.

In the Presentation, we recall the obedience of Mary and Joseph, bringing the infant Jesus into the Temple to fulfil the Law. As we ponder this young couple making their way into the Temple courts, we also imagine Simeon and Anna, with a lifetime of waiting rewarded

with the sight of God's promised Saviour, still a baby, but carrying in himself God's reconciling love, ready to reach out in forgiveness to a hurting world.

This is the continuing message of Epiphany – that God will provide what the world needs, and will be known to those who go looking for God – be they young or old, poor or rich, families, singles, from whatever background. Those who come to Jesus find themselves part of a new family, with all the rewards and challenges that brings – but it is this family which is the hope of the world.

Will you be a part of it? Will you play your part? God has called you into the light of Jesus Christ, and you are invited to carry that light wherever you go. ☺

New year, new life

Part 5 – a community of forgiven sinners

by Jane Williams

It was said of William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, that his main failing was that all his geese were swans. He found it hard to think ill of anyone, and that meant he sometimes misjudged people. But it also meant that people wanted to live up to his expectations. So perhaps it wasn't a failing. Similarly, God insists on trusting us despite our manifest failings.

It surely cannot be accidental that both of the people Jesus asked to ensure the spread of the Gospel in the early years had let him down badly. Peter denied all knowledge of him in his hour of need, and Paul persecuted and killed his followers.

The Church is a community of forgiven sinners, where we might find that we want to live up to God's expectations of us, not as a result of pressure, but out of delight. We don't need to make resolutions, just embark on our new life. ☺

“Nothing can bring a real sense of security into the home except true love.”

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist

Books of the Old Testament – *Nehemiah*

by Trevor Dennis

In 445BC Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judaea by the Persian emperor. At the start the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins, and we hear his account of their restoration. Judaea is surrounded by enemies who want to stop the work. The builders must carry weapons and guards are stationed outside the city to ward off any attack. When the walls are finished, the enemies hire false prophets and start rumours that Nehemiah

wants to establish himself as king in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah is faced with terrible poverty in the wider community. People are losing their land to moneylenders and selling themselves as slaves to their fellow Jews. He cancels all debts, restores their land, and refuses to collect taxes for himself and his entourage.

Among other religious reforms, Nehemiah follows Ezra in condemning mixed marriages. "I cleansed them from everything foreign," he says. And on that disturbing note the book ends. ☺