

The Rainbow



March 2021

Evening Candlemas Service includes dedication of new candles

By Mimi Merritt

Christ Church held an evening prayer service on Candlemas, which occurs every year on February 2, 40 days after Christmas, and is known as the feast of the presentation of Jesus Christ.

The beautiful prayer service included the dedication of new altar candles and candlesticks that were given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Joe and Kitty Graham, longtime active and beloved Christ Church members.

The Candlemas feast, which is based upon an account of the presentation of Jesus in Luke 2:22-40, celebrates the day when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus into the Temple, following Jewish Law. There, Jesus was greeted and recognized by two elderly people: Anna, a prophetess, and Simeon, a “just and devout” man of Jerusalem (Luke 2:25). Simeon had been promised that he should not die before seeing the Lord’s Christ.

Upon seeing the baby Jesus, Simeon prayed the following words, which have come to be known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, or the Cantic of Simeon:

“Lord, now let your servant depart 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.” (Luke 2:29-32)

Thus, Jesus was proclaimed a light to the world.

To celebrate that light, and to share it, candles are traditionally blessed on this day.

On February 2 this year, in our time of the pandemic, the Christ Church Candlemas service was held online to commemorate this event in Christ’s life and to bless the new altar candles for the church. Viewing participants were invited to light candles in their own windows at home to “shine the Light of Christ” out into our world.

A Candlemas Poem

T.S. Eliot, American born but longtime British citizen and considered one of the 20th century’s major poets, converted to Anglicanism in 1927 and became a church warden at St. Stephen’s on

Gloucester Road in London. During his conversion, when he was turning 40, he wrote the poem "A Song for Simeon," which is seen by many critics and scholars as a discussion of the conversion experience. In the poem, Eliot retells the story of Simeon.

A Song for Simeon

By T.S. Eliot

Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and
The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;
The stubborn season had made stand.
My life is light, waiting for the death wind,
Like a feather on the back of my hand.
Dust in sunlight and memory in corners
Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.

Grant us thy peace.
I have walked many years in this city,
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,
Have given and taken honor and ease.
There went never any rejected from my door.
Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's children
When the time of sorrow is come?
They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home,
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation
Grant us thy peace.
Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,
Now at this birth season of decease,
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
Grant Israel's consolation
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.

According to thy word.
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation
With glory and derision,
Light upon light, mounting the saints' stair.
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,
Not for me the ultimate vision.
Grant me thy peace.
(And a sword shall pierce thy heart,
Thine also).
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,



A snowy day in our beautiful columbarium.

A photo by Don Williams

I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.
Let thy servant depart,
Having seen thy salvation.

Writer's note: In 1999, when Rob and I spent four months in London with our children during a teaching exchange that placed Rob in classrooms at Imperial College, we leased a flat in Kensington, just a couple of blocks off Gloucester Road. St. Stephen's was just a neighborhood walk away for us and a welcome oasis. Though I knew Eliot's more famous poems, like "*The Waste Land*" and "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*," I did not know "*Song for Simeon*" then. I wish I had.



"What are you giving up for Lent?" *By Father Chad Slater*

It's almost a routine question around this time of year, but yet this year it doesn't seem to be asked nearly as much.

Abstinence and fasting are meant to encourage us to reflect on Christ's suffering and his dying on the cross—to keep our mind on the sacred in the midst of busy lives in a secular world. But how do we faithfully continue any semblance of abstinence and fasting when the last year of our lives has seemed like nothing but sacrifice and denial?

In what seemed like an instant, we sacrificed human touch and fellowship by physically distancing from friends and family. In the last year we have missed out on graduations, classes, worshipping with our church family, dinner parties, taking trips we had long planned for, concerts, and going to the gym (although I'm not going to lie and pretend like I miss that). We made lines outside of stores. We searched shelves for disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizers, all the while desperately trying to find patterns for face masks or someone or someplace to buy them at. In the blink of an eye, toilet paper somehow became more valuable than gold. In the past year, our society and our government have been confronted with what actually constitutes justice and equality. We came to realize how many of our friends and family have widely differing perspectives from ours on those matters. Many of us have become disillusioned.

Do we really need to give up coffee, chocolate, or Facebook this year?

My answer is "Yes" and "No."

The prophet Joel tells the people of Israel, "Rend your hearts and not your garments." In other words, he is telling us to forego outside signs of "cheap" repentance and do the hard work of turning our souls closer to God. I believe the past year that what we have experienced has made all of us "rend our hearts."

Throughout the pandemic, the sacrifices we experienced and the kindnesses we offered others were almost certainly more heartfelt than the clichéd ones we have practiced during Lent in years gone by. While recognizing some of it was mandatory, we did these things because we wanted to be a

unified community. We sewed masks not to do penance, but to show love. We ran errands for others not to make ourselves weak, but to keep others strong. We retreated unto ourselves not to invoke solitude, but to ensure the presence of others later.

If these acts of service and love over the last year aren't reorienting us to Christ, what could 40 days without coffee possibly do? (Besides make me unbelievably irritable). That's not to say, however, that we should abandon our spiritual care during this season of preparation for the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Now, perhaps more than ever, is the time to reflect on how to be a Christian—how to really live our lives for Him who died and rose for us.

We have experienced a Lent-like year; now is the time to reflect on what it has made us, taught us, and empowered us to know and believe. We don't have to give up something for that, but we do have to be prepared to take on what the answers to those questions will mean for us.

There is a difference between giving up things for Lent and what we have given up for the pandemic to be sure. With our Lenten sacrifices, there is no fear of the unknown; there is no despair. We know that in the end, we will be celebrating a new life given to us through the resurrection. We have a date circled on a calendar when our abstinence and fasting will end. As one author I recently read put it, "We have the benefit of standing on this side of the empty tomb." Our hope is assured. We turn to God in gratitude. We acknowledge God's steadfast love, grace and mercy. This pandemic Lenten journey has no end date on a calendar for us to look forward to. Instead, we must hold fast to that hope and trust in that assuredness.

The past 12 months have been difficult. We lost many things. But hopefully we discovered how Christ has walked with us, and we have understood how we can walk with others as new creations made by Christ. We don't need to challenge ourselves by giving up something else. We just need to continue to love one another with the same concern as we have shown over this last year. That, by itself, is enough to make us a people worthy of repentance.

My brothers and sisters, Easter is coming. A new day will arrive. I pray that we find that this past year serves to change us for the better by living lives now more attuned to what really matters—lives full of care and service.

"What are you giving up for Lent?" I'm giving up Lent this year and taking on love.

Amen.



Vestry Minutes for February, 2021 *By David M. Kersey*

The monthly meeting of the Vestry for February 2021 was held on Wednesday February 24. The meeting was pushed back one week, as the regular meeting date fell on Ash Wednesday. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the meeting was held virtually, by Zoom.

Present: Linda Ammar, Betty Nash, Peter Taylor, Vic Bowman, David Kersey, Elizabeth Clement, Tom Coughlan, and Father Slater. Absent: Alyson Bowling

The presence of a quorum was declared, and Father Slater opened the meeting with prayer.

Treasurer's Report: Vic Bowman, Finance Chair, presented the treasurer's report. The PPP Covid-19 government loan of approximately \$17,000.00 has been forgiven. The church has applied for another government pandemic related loan for approximately \$23,000.00. The income for this fiscal year has exceeded expenses, to date. So, the church is currently on firm financial footing, though we have exceeded the budgeted pledge income, to date, as some parishioners have front loaded their pledges and gifts. We have received 26% of the total pledged income in the month of January.

The investment accounts are down a little, due to regular market fluctuation. In March, the St. Lucy Fund income may be accessed, upon need and Vestry vote. Father Slater stated that there have been significant efforts made to reduce expenses in this unusual time, including cutting back on the building heat.

Betty Nash questioned whether the church can accept monetary gifts through PayPal. Father Slater advised that the Diocese has a PayPal account through which persons may make gifts and earmark them for particular parishes. There have been some problems encountered by users and Father Slater will be in communication with David Ramkey, Diocesan Treasurer, about those issues. It was agreed that it will be better to let the Diocese handle those on-line gifts for the church, so long as the process works, rather than the church setting up our own PayPal account.

Upon motion of Linda Ammar and second of Betty Nash, the report was unanimously approved, as presented.

Neither the Senior Warden nor Junior Warden had reports.

There were no committee reports, except that the monthly Food Pantry is to be held tomorrow, postponed from last week due to severe winter weather. There will be kerosene vouchers available.

Father Slater gave the Rector's Report. The church continues to work remotely, due to the Covid-19 crisis. We are experiencing large audiences for the online services. We have actually received gifts from persons previously unknown to the treasurer and presume that these gifts are from persons who are participating in the virtual worship.

Father Slater raised the issue of returning to in-person worship. There was a full discussion about the benefits of meeting in-person, but also the risks of transmitting the coronavirus disease. Mercer and Tazewell Counties have just recently moved into the Orange category under the Harvard map, which may permit in person worship. It was agreed that the Vestry would monitor the status of those counties and will be prepared to have a serious discussion about returning for in-person worship at next month's Vestry. The tentative plan for consideration of in-person

worship is to resume worship on Easter Sunday. It was agreed that even when we return to the church, there will likely be restrictions, such as masks, no singing, social distancing, etc. The Vestry is committed to protecting both the spiritual and physical health of our congregation. It was unanimously decided to postpone in-person worship until the next Vestry meeting.

Father Slater explained that it is difficult for him to plan for celebration, not knowing if or when we can return to the church. At this point, he stated his intention to plan for a Palm Sunday Service outside, in the parking lot below the church.

Father Slater expressed his appreciation for the overwhelming response of the congregation to his assistance request for the local family in need who just purchased a new home. The gifts from the parish include washer, dryer, microwave, toaster, complete living room suite and many clothing items.

There being no further business, Father Slater adjourned the meeting with prayer.



Please Keep the Following in Your Prayers: Dorene Dimes, Bonnie Taylor, Joe Sanders, Lee Puckett, Sr., Mabeline & Elton Robinson, Bea Paine, Lynn Burney, Marilyn Denney, Donna Fortune, Bob and Peggy Walk, Susan Jewell, John Kersey, Martha Linkous, Sarah Irwin, Janet Slager, Kelly Cox, Dean Farmer, Haddon Lazenby, Jack Burchette, Nick, JL, Cis Barrett, Kathy, Randy Snider, Lane, Loraine, Sherry, Margarette Joplin, Emily Broome, David, Cady, Martin, Marion Lowe, Margaret Westfall, Harry, Ben Rose, Rev. Mark Seitz, Jay Kephart, Al Marra, Rich Longworth, and all Healthcare Personnel and Frontline Workers, Jack, Sheri, Dan, Kathy, Kathleen Nieman



MONTHLY MINISTRY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2021

FAMILY IN NEED

Father Chad reported that the response to the need for items to be given to the family in need was overwhelming which is no surprise as Christ Church parishioners are known for their willingness to provide for those who need assistance. Household items were in abundance and all of the children received warm coats!

FOOD PANTRY

40 food bags were distributed
30 kerosene vouchers were handed out
Bread was donated by Patty Richardson and Sheila Brooks.

Volunteers: Don Kersey, Betty Nash,
Peter and Patricia Taylor

March 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Saint David	2	3 10:30 am Online Bible Study “Hymns”	4	5	6
7 Third Sunday in Lent 10:00 am Morning Prayer	8	9	10 10:30 am Online Bible Study “Holy Martyrs”	11	12	13
14 Fourth Sunday in Lent 10:00 am Morning Prayer Daylight Savings Time Begins	15	16	17 St. Patrick 10:30 am Online Bible Study “St. Patrick” 7:00 pm Vestry	18 9:00 am Food Pantry	19 Saint Joseph	20
21 Fifth Sunday in Lent 10:00 am Morning Prayer	22	23	24 10:30 am Online Bible Study “The Annunciation”	25 Feast of the Annunciation 7:00 pm Online Evening Prayer Service	26	27
28 Palm Sunday Service Time & Info to be Announced	29 Monday in Holy Week Online Prayer Service 7:00 pm	30 Tuesday in Holy Week Online Prayer Service 7:00 pm	31 Wednesday in Holy Week Tenebrae Service Online 7:00 pm			

BIRTHDAYS

March 1 Jon Brannon
 March 2 Gladys Fortune
 March 2 John Georgis
 March 3 Catherine Beemer
 March 7 Ted Lewis
 March 8 Aaron Ingram

March 10 Diane Sudduth
 March 12 Jessica Cole
 March 13 Elizabeth Richardson
 March 14 Peter Taylor
 March 17 Paul Broyles, III
 March 17 Frankie Wilkinson

March 18 Walt Sowers
 March 22 Linda Gaines
 March 25 Kipp Cortez
 March 25 John Kersey
 March 28 Liam Cole
 March 29 Ann Czarnik Fernandez
 March 29 Elizabeth Sudduth

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
200 DUHRING STREET
BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA 24701

To our friends and family:



March 2021

Editor in Chief: Delia Kersey
Editor: Susanne Pulse (susannepulse@gmail.com)
Copy Editor: Mimi Merritt
Contributors: Linda Ammar, Bea Paine, Mimi Merritt
Graphic Design: Susanne Pulse