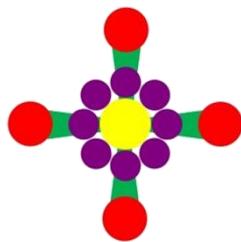


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
1st February 2026
Candlemas**



Today's Liturgy Prepared by Alison

Preparation

Call to Worship

Today the Lord is presented in the Temple
in substance of our mortal nature.

Alleluia!

Today the Blessed Virgin comes
to be purified in accordance with the law.

Alleluia!

Today old Simeon proclaims Christ
as the light of the nations and the glory of Israel.

Alleluia! Praise to Christ, the Light of the world!

Silence is kept

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us.

Prayers of Penitence

Call to Confession

Hear the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ:

'I am the light of the world.'

Whoever follows me shall never walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life.'

Let us therefore bring our sins into his light
and confess them in penitence and faith.

Prayer of Confession

Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.

We have wounded your love
and marred your image in us.

We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light.

Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The First Reading: Malachi 3:1-5

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The Gospel Reading: Luke 2.22–40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him 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 for 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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Robert

I attended the St Peter's Shipley Youth Fellowship in 1972. To go, we were "invited" to attend the Sung Evensong service. This service became a weekly occurrence, and my favourite parts were the Magnificat, but particularly the Nunc Dimittis, and this is featured in today's reading, the words of Simeon on seeing his God. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation; Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

These words have stuck with me over the years, and I still enjoy them even in the Book of Common Prayer language.

In today's reading, we see the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple. This ceremonial act of the family is to offer a sacrifice to God for the delivery and life of a new child, and a time to pray for the purification of the mother after giving birth. The usual animal gift would have been large, but because of Mary and Joseph's poverty, all they could offer were two doves. They still showed obedience to their faith to thank God for Jesus' safe arrival into their family.

In the temple, we find two old people: Simeon and Anna. Simeon has been waiting his entire life to see the promised Messiah. He had waited with patience, hope, obedience and trust for this promise of God to be fulfilled. Simeon was an ordinary man, just like us, but with an extraordinary faith, and God rewarded him. Anna was 84 years of age, a woman who had been widowed young and had spent much of her life living and working in the Temple. A life of hard work. Women were not allowed to teach or preach in the temple, so perhaps people did not see the contribution she made to the running of the temple and did not value her presence there. She saw the infant Jesus and recognised him as the Messiah.

Both Simeon and Anna respond with overflowing joy. A great lesson to us, about finding the joy in recognising Jesus, allowing ourselves to know the awe and wonder of our encounter that we have with Christ as we pray or as we meet him in the Eucharist. But amidst all the bad news that we hear today, there is still joy to be found. The joy we receive because we have a relationship with God, who loves us and insists on being part of our lives. So, Simeon and Anna teach us about finding joy at any age. Anna is so inspired that she runs out of the temple to tell others about Jesus. God takes the most ordinary of people and transforms their lives by his presence. Not choosing the scholars or people of power, but the humble and obedient, to reveal this great message.

Jesus came for us all so that we might know him and love him and truly experience that he knows and loves us. Let us pray that we can experience the joy and wonder of knowing Jesus and that our hearts are so full that we can barely keep our joy contained.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession with Astrid

Lord we come to you in worship, in praise and thanksgiving for so much in our lives, and because you have invited us, we come with prayers of intercession, bringing our anxieties to you and trusting in your mercy. We pray for the needs of the world, for victims of natural disasters and extreme weather conditions and we pray that wherever human greed or carelessness or lack of concern have contributed to climate change, there may be repentance and changing of ways. As we hear so much of wars and unrest around the world, let us pray for political leaders, particularly for those whose decisions reach far beyond their national boundaries. Lead them to speak and act with wisdom, honesty and courage. Lord we pray for the countries where war, terror attacks or oppressive regimes continue to bring so much misery – for the people of Ukraine, of Gaza, of Sudan, for all who have lost homes and family, for refugees from these and other countries that don't make our news headlines.

We pray too for the people who risk their lives to bring help to dangerous places and to bring reliable news to the rest of the world.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for our country where we have so many blessings but still so many problems, where people still struggle with high costs, inequalities and lack of opportunity. We pray for workers whose jobs are at risk and for our elected representatives and leaders. Lord grant us all wisdom and kindness in our dealings with each other.

Lord we pray for our neighbourhood, our villages, the parishes of the benefice. Lord help us to support each other and be of real help in our communities. We hold before you those among our congregations, our neighbours, and family members, in special need at this time, those we know and others around us whose names we may not know.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Lord we pray for your work in this place, for our church wardens, officers and administrators and for all who lead our worship in church or on line. We pray in words from the Benefice prayer group: Gracious and Sovereign God, you are the Good Shepherd who never leaves or forsakes his flock. We thank you for the faithful ministry that has gone before, and we entrust the future of our church into your hands. Raise up a rector after your own heart – someone filled with wisdom, humility, courage and compassion. Prepare the heart of the one you are calling even now and prepare our hearts to receive them with grace and support. May your kingdom come, and your will be done in our church family.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Risen Saviour Jesus Christ.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us,
lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you kept faith with Simeon and Anna
and showed them the infant King.
Give us grace to put all our trust in your promises,
and the patience to wait for their fulfilment;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

The Blessing

Christ, whose glory fills the skies, fill you with radiance
and scatter the darkness from your path.
Amen.

Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,
gladden your eyes and warm your heart.
Amen.

Christ, the Dayspring from on high,
draw near to guide your feet into the way of peace.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**