



Sunday 1st February 2026

The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

Candlemass

Candlemas, oddly, is not a *single* feast at all. That is to say, it partly corresponds to post-partum purification of Mary in the Temple, in accordance with the Law (Leviticus 19); and partly to the redemption of the first-born son (described in Exodus 13). St Luke tells this story with a view to ensuring that we understand that not only Zechariah and Elizabeth, but also Joseph and Mary were observant Jews, 'living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord' (Lk 1:6).

The liturgical feast also commemorates the prophecies we read about in the day's Gospel readings. Simeon sees the babe in arms and proclaims the *Nunc dimittis* ('Now, dismiss...') which pronounces the double blessing of Jesus, 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel'. He added that some of Israel would rise, and some would fall, depending on their open or secret response to Jesus. Mary, too, would experience the utmost desolation: 'a sword will pierce your own heart, too.' Then Anna, who had been waiting in the Temple for just this day went about telling everyone who, like her, had been waiting for the redemption of Israel about Jesus.

As is the case with many observances, this holy day attracted other traditions and significances. We should notice that Candlemas comes *roughly* halfway between the shortest day in winter, and the spring day when night and day are equal length. The blessing of candles for use in the rest of the year became common, and these are especially used, two crossed and placed against the worshippers' throats on 3 February, the feast of St Blaise (insert your own 'blaze' joke here).

So, many festal meanings and traditions converge on this Feast of the Presentation, or the Purification, in honour of Jesus, the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel, with candles that honour the Blessed Virgin Mary and that may be used to bless throats, and revel in the multifarious splendours of this multiply-blessed holy day!

WELCOME to St Helen's this Sunday. 8.00 am *Holy Communion*. 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist (First Sunday)*. The 10.30 am service at St Helen's today can be accessed on Zoom from 10.15 am on: Meeting ID: 865 5159 6523; Passcode: 626891.

FOR TODAY'S SERVICE

Readings: Hebrews 2.14-end; Luke 2.22-40

Service Setting: Aston

Hymns:

Processional: 94 Hail to the Lord who comes

Gradual: 244 Virgin-born, we bow before thee

Offertory: 392 Bright the vision that delighted

Anthem: Eccard, When to the temple Mary went

Post Communion: SP33 New light has dawned, the son of God is here

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.**

or

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. **Amen.**

THE COMING WEEK AT ST HELEN'S

ON WEEKDAYS 9.10 am *Morning Prayer*.

ON MONDAY 9.30 am *Baby and Toddler Group* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON TUESDAY 10.30 am *Mothers' Union AGM* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON WEDNESDAY 10.30 am *Holy Communion*. 7.00 pm *PCC Meeting* in the Parish Centre Lounge.

ON THURSDAY 6.30 pm *Life Drawing Class* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON SATURDAY 9.00 am *Oxon Ringing School (silent)* in the church. 2.00 pm *Private Party* in the Parish Centre Hall.

ON SUNDAY 10.30 am *Sung Eucharist*. 5.30 pm *Taizé Prayer*.

PROGRAMMES, EVENTS & NOTICES

Mothers' Union AGM meeting to be held In the Parish Centre on Tuesday 3rd February at 10.30am. There will also be a Bring and Buy.

Shrove Tuesday. We are having a pancake party on 17th Feb at 6pm in the Church Centre, All welcome. Pancakes, choice of toppings, tea/coffee/squash and very friendly company. Tickets (so we know how many pancakes to cook) available after church from 1st Feb or contact Pat Hudson, patricia.a.hudson16@gmail.com.

Our diocese has just begun the process of appointing a new Bishop of Oxford, following the retirement of Bishop Steven in July this year. Anyone living, working or worshipping in the diocese can contribute their views via an anonymous on-line form:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/news/share-your-views-on-our-new-bishop.php>.

We are urged to complete this short questionnaire as the "See in Vacancy" committee is keen to hear from as many people as possible, by 4th Feb. For the direct link to the form and a set of questions see: [Consultation - Diocese of Oxford](#).

Church Twinning Barn Dance. Fancy a knees-up, a ploughman's dinner and fun company? Abingdon Church Twinning is organising a Barn Dance fundraiser on Saturday the 28th of February in Trinity Church Conduit Centre. Alan Fisher from Abingdon Baptist will be the caller, and all proceeds will support church twinning. Limited spaces! Put on your dancing shoes, and get your tickets from your Church Twinning reps:
anne.dodd28@gmail.com or Elizabeth Simpson; simpsonem123@gmail.com.

Photos for 2027 calendar: DCC has agreed for us to create a 2027 calendar of St Helen's church and environs. Please look up and observe, look around and reflect. Take a snap of interesting details and views. Then choose the best and send them by the end of February with a suggested caption to Mary Anderson at Mary.fulani@gmail.com for consideration. Good luck!

The February edition of the Parish Magazine will be published on February 8th. Do contribute! (by the end of Feb 1st). Email candle@abingdonparish.org.uk.

Please pray for the residents of River Close, Riverview Terrace, Ruskin Avenue and Saxton Road.

Intercessory prayer requests to clairembolton@googlemail.com.

For health, consolation & wellbeing: Sarah Stevens, Katie Stuart, Alli, David, Anne Smithson, Loelia Lyon, Vanessa Madden.

Next week's readings: Genesis 1.1-23; Romans 8.18-25; Matthew 6.25-end

Team Rector	The Revd Dr Jennifer Brown jennifer.brown@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Team Vicar	Vacant
Associate Priest	The Revd Dr A. K. M. Adam (AKMA) akma@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk
Wardens	Ms Margaret Horton and Mr David Pope
Director of Music	Dr Peter Foster
Assistant Organist	Mr Andrew Shouler
Parish Administrator	Mrs Jackie Cunningham
Caretaker	Mr Robin Day
Parish Safeguarding	Mrs Pat Hudson safeguarding@abingdonparish.org.uk
St Helen's Safeguarding	Mr Emmanuel Chukwuma

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday, 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (closed on Fridays).

Phone: 01235 520144. Checked on Fridays, morning and afternoon.

E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk; Website: abingdonparish.org.uk/StH

A copy of this Newsletter is posted regularly on our website.