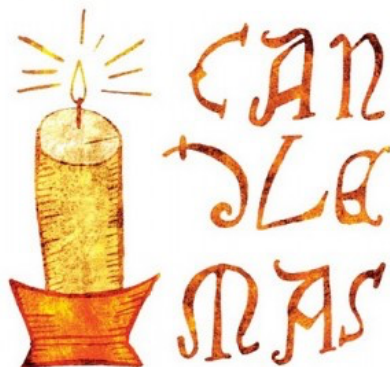


**Candlemas,
Sunday, 30th January 2022**



Dear Friends,

‘Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.’ (Luke 2:38)

Many of you will be saddened to learn of the death this week of the remarkable writer, comedian and actor, Barry Cryer, whose quick and witty repartee has brought laughter and light to many generations. Happily married for 59 years, our prayers are with Barry’s family. May his comedic light bring fresh joy to heaven! Many of his perfectly timed jokes have been aired in poignant obituaries over the past few days, and among them, this gentle little gem:

A man goes into a village shop and asks the shop-keeper, ‘Do you sell wasps?’

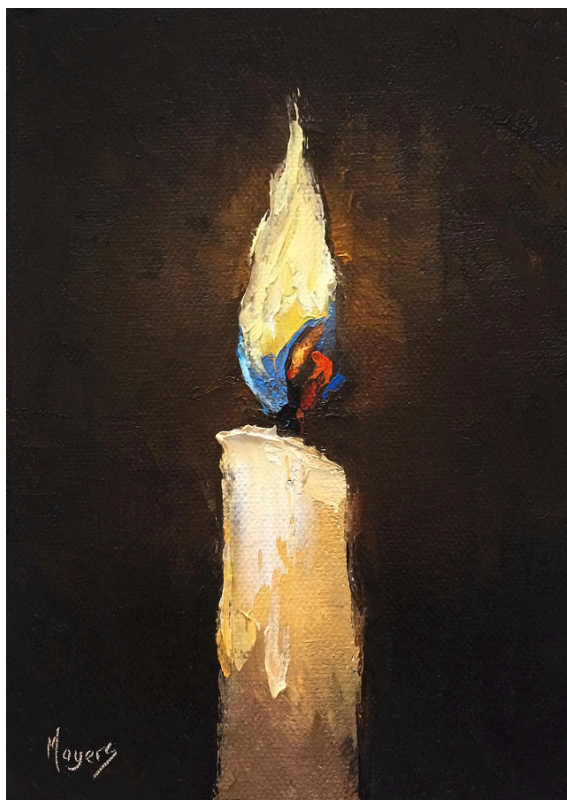
**‘No, Sir,’ the shop-keeper replies, ‘we certainly do NOT sell wasps!’
‘Oh,’ says the man ... ‘Only you’ve got one in the window!’**

On Thursday, national COVID regulations were relaxed, so we no longer need to wear face masks or self-isolate in public spaces. Individuals are now responsible for taking their own safety precautions. However, many shops, leisure facilities and public venues together with Winchester Cathedral and many parish churches in our Diocese have made the decision to encourage people to continue wearing face-coverings in enclosed spaces and observe social distancing of at least 1 metre.

Out of concern for our vulnerable parishioners, especially because of the number of local Omicron cases, our parish churches will continue to encourage people to wear face coverings or visors, even to sing, and to book seats with our Benefice Office in order to help us manage social distancing. You will be asked for your contact details for Track and Trace purposes, so to have registered in advance of the service with Caroline is an advantage on the day, and will help us provide you with a safe space to gather in our churches for sustaining worship and much-missed fellowship.

I hope you will all continue to value the wellbeing of others by wearing face coverings in public; keep meeting spaces well-ventilated, observe social-distancing measures and consider taking a regular Lateral Flow Test before mixing socially.

This **Saturday, 29th January at 5.30pm**, there will be a service of Evensong in Winchester Cathedral to say our 'goodbyes' and pray for Tim Dakin as he and his family prepare to leave Wolvesey Palace on 6th February. **Everyone is welcome**. On behalf of our Benefice, I have bought the Dakin family a beautiful candle as a leaving gift, to remind them that they go forward from this time in faith, with the light of Christ guiding their paths, even through the darkest days of their lives.



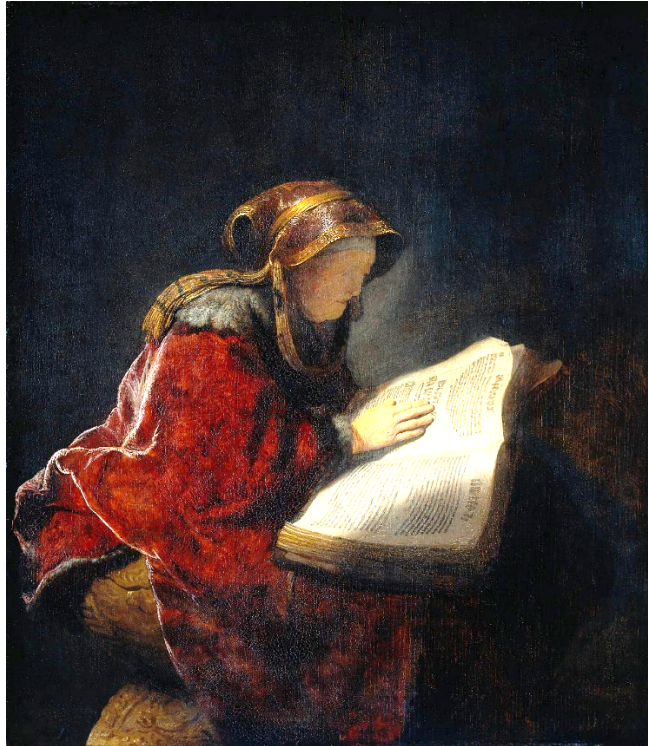
'Kindle' by Mike Moyers

Candlemas is an opportunity for us to worship God and rejoice in the gift of His Son, Jesus. It is a time for great celebration and for humble reflection on how we respond to God's grace. Join us this **Sunday, 30th January at St Mary's Church, Crawley at 10am**, from all across the Benefice to give thanks to God for Jesus.

Last Candlemas, my newsletter explored how God comes to His people; at work in our lives – in us and through us. His light fills us and fuels us to be His hands and heart as we share the gift of His love with others in the world. We looked at Simeon's faith-filled response to seeing the Christ-child being brought into the Temple by His equally faithful family. Despite their physical poverty, they were spiritually rich and obedient to the requirements of Judaic law which demanded they bring their first-born son to be consecrated before God, and make their sacrificial payment to the Temple.

But what of Anna? Her equally faithful presence in the Temple that day speaks into her grace-filled response to the tragedy of losing her husband after only seven years of marriage. Daughter of Phanuel and a member of the tribe of Asher, Luke tells us how the devout Anna observed rituals of fasting and spent her life in the Temple in prayer.

Though we don't know Anna's husband's name, we know enough about the culture of her day to realise that, without a husband or any children to support her, Anna would have been brutally ostracised by society. She sought spiritual solace and sanctuary from the painful situation in which she found herself, and, rather than succumbing to the misery and despair of loss, Anna opened her barren arms to serving God.



'The Prophetess Anna' by Rembrandt

Her prayerful obedience was rewarded by the gift of a prophetic wisdom. At the age of 84, as the aches and pains of her physical body increased, and when she might well have wondered if her value in the world had completely diminished, she was surprised by joy. God, at work in and through Anna, gave her, along with Simeon, the greatest of gifts – the joy of meeting the living Lord! Through God's grace and in the mystery of our faith, this aged woman, who had no status in her community was blessed and upheld by her Creator. Anna's name is remembered for evermore as being among the first to recognise the Messiah and hold Him in her now joyously full arms.

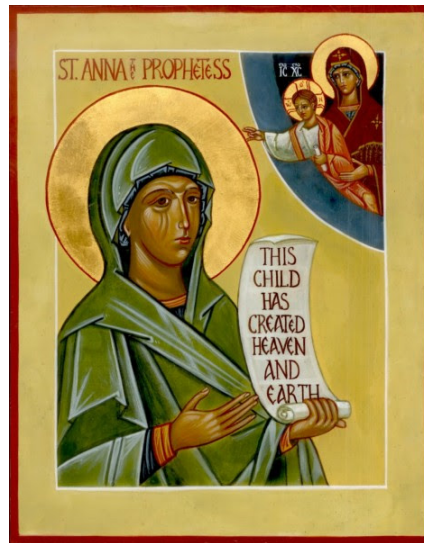
Like the wasp in the window, our lives aren't always straightforward. Luke's account of Anna's encounter with Christ helps us to see how God loves us and delights in our faithfulness, even as we come to the end of our lives. Anna is a wonderful role-model for us all. She teaches us through her devotion to God, that whatever we suffer in this life, however lonely we might feel or anxious about what the future holds, we too can experience spiritual joy if we rest in His love. And in so doing, can find fulfilment in focussing on the needs of others in prayer and active service in faith.

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for Candlemas

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.



Luke 2: 22-40 – Jesus Presented in the Temple

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord'), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons.'

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.'

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below.

We ask that you continue to wear masks and book services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>30th Jan</i>		Benefice Holy Communion			
<i>6th Feb</i>	Morning Prayer to mark 70 th Anniversary of HM The Queen's accession to the throne	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church – "Called to Serve"		
<i>13th Feb</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>20th Feb</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		8am – BCP Holy Communion	
<i>27th Feb</i>			Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – BCP Holy Communion
<i>2nd March ASH WEDNESDAY</i>	12 noon - Holy Communion with Ashes		Holy Communion with Ashes		<i>With Chilbolton</i>

