

# ST. JOHNS CHURCH DONISTHORPE

# GRAPEVINE

## FEBRUARY 2020



### IS THERE MORE TO FEBRUARY THAN WE MIGHT THINK?

Dear All,

It's February; I wonder how many of us would admit to this not being our favourite month of the year? The excitement of Christmas lies behind us and the full beauty of spring still to come. February is often known as 'February fill dyke' and this year, I think we'd all agreed we don't want it to live up to that name!

Yet when we look at it, February is a full month with some good things going on. Perhaps it is a good time to wonder and ponder on the different aspects of February, while we still feel like hibernating, as we prepare for Lent starting on February 26<sup>th</sup>.

February 2<sup>nd</sup> is Candlemas, a festival of lights. It falls on the midpoint between the shortest and longest days. It celebrates Jesus as the Light of the World, who came and comes to bring light to the lost and lonely, to the afraid, who comes in the dark. Perhaps we could ponder how we can help to spread light in the dark places of our world.

There are snowdrops, also known as Candlemas bells. They are symbol of hope. The story goes that when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden, Eve was about to give up hope that the cold winter would ever end. An angel appeared and transformed a snowflake into a snowdrop, a promise that winter does give way to spring. Where do we need hope?

As a reminder to give thanks for all who serve us, February 6<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the Queen coming to the throne in 1952.

There are many saints days, the best known being St Valentine on 14<sup>th</sup>. Many a grey day has been cheered by the arrival of a card or some roses. Little is known about St Valentine but it's believed he was a priest or bishop who ministered to persecuted Christians. It's said he defied the order of the Roman Emperor and married Christian couples. Perhaps we could give thought and prayer to the many, many Christians in the world who are today persecuted for their faith.

February 29<sup>th</sup> is with us this year. The tradition is that on this day women could ask men to marry them. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, St Bridget petitioned St Patrick to allow women a more active role in choosing their husbands. They were allowed to do so on this day every 4 years! In some places, men were fined if they refused. Perhaps we could pray for couples today, for the strengthening of the bonds of relationship, and of faithfulness.

Is there more to February than we might think? This year we even have a special Woodfield Team Weekend – come and join in (details in this magazine) and make February a really good month this year.

God has made it quite special.

Yours, Vivien

### LOOKING AHEAD.....

#### **CANDLEMAS: February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11am**

Candlemas marks the end of the Christmas season in the church calendar; it's a pivotal point when we look back to Jesus coming at Christmas and turn forward to Easter. We continue the theme of Jesus the light of the world, and our call to share that light. Another traditional part of Candlemas services was to bless the candles to be used in the coming year. So have you got a special candle you could bring along to the service?



## WOODFIELD FOREST CHURCH: 'Sharing the Light' Sunday February 2nd at 3pm

Meeting at the rear of St Laurence Church, Measham (DE12 7HZ). Join as we search for signs of new life and light. Warm clothes, wellies and waterproofs are the order of the day. There will be hot drinks but much to do!

## WOODFIELD TEAM WEEKEND: February 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>

### *Ode to Joy: finding joy in our walk with Jesus or how not to be a miserable Christian*

An exciting weekend to help us to get to know each other better across the Team.

The theme is 'joy' and it's hoped we'll have loads of fun together. More details will be available at church and on the website on [www.stjohnschurchdonisthorpe.co.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchdonisthorpe.co.uk). It would be good to have an idea of numbers so do let Vivien Elphick know if you're coming (01530 270354 or [vivien.elphick@btinternet.com](mailto:vivien.elphick@btinternet.com)). No set charge but we invite donations. Taking place at St Laurence Church, Measham DE12 7HZ

The outline of the weekend is:

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 7.15pm** – opening session with Bishop Peter Fox

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 9am** - bacon butties, laughter workshops and more from Peter Fox finishing with a 'bring your own' picnic lunch. Then we'll be having a film evening later on

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February 10.30am** – united Team service ending with bring and share lunch

## FAMILY SERVICE: Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February.

Come along – 11am start but we serve refreshments from 10.45am. A relaxed time with some singing, a Bible story and thought for the day, together with craft activities. It's good fun for all ages.



**Ready Steady Stick**  
**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February**  
St Laurence Church, Measham  
**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February**  
Holy Rood Church, Packington  
**2-4pm**  
**This time we are exploring**  
**Jonah and the big fish**  
Crafts Bible Story Fun Friends  
@woodfieldchildrenswork To book or more details call Janin 07946376500

## ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT:

Ash Wednesday falls on February 26<sup>th</sup> this year. There will be a special service to mark the start of Lent at 7.30pm at St Peter's Church, Sweptstone.

The following week will see that start of our Lent course which will run for 4 weeks on Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings. see website for more detail nearer the time.

[www.stjohnschurchdonisthorpe.co.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchdonisthorpe.co.uk).

## COFFEEANDCHAT@CHURCH. Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 9 -11 a.m.

A chance to chat and to meet others socially over a cup of coffee (or tea) and a bite to eat.

**3T'S - TABLE, TALK AND TEA** - A much appreciated informal, friendly get

together. Anyone is welcome to come along, we meet in church on the third Tuesday of every month, 2.30pm - 3.45pm. Stay for the whole of the time or just drop in arrive when you can and leave as you wish. If you enjoy stimulating conversation, good

company over a cup of tea or coffee and cake, then 3Ts is for you! Join in with the discussion as you wish or just enjoy a cuppa amongst friends.

We round our conversations off with a song and a prayer. If you would like to join us, our meeting this month will take place on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February at 2.30pm in the Church.**

**LUNCH LIGHT** - If you are feeling the pain of bereavement and would like some company, a chat and a bite to eat, why not drop in to St. Johns on **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February between 12.30pm – 2.30pm.** There is a charge of £2. Telephone Janet 01283 215000, if you would like to come along, or if you wish to help out.



## LOOKING BACK.....

**TOY SERVICE IN DECEMBER** - The Marlene Reid Centre are very grateful for all the toys donated for children in need at Christmas. Thanks to the donations from us and others they were able to provide 146 children with a sack of toys to open on Christmas morning.

**MARY AND JOSEPH** - made their way safely round the parish going from house to house for lodgings.

**CHRISTMAS SERVICES** - were great with candles and a beautifully decorated church with much hearty singing of carols. Thanks to all who came and all who decorated. The Christingle Service was again a great atmosphere and raised money for the work of the Children's Society – thanks to you all for that.

### **WE HAVE RECRUITED A NEW WOODFIELD TEAM VICAR!**

Good news at last. Revd Rick Tett will be joining the Woodfield team of churches in the spring as team vicar. He is currently Assistant Curate in the Benefice of Eckington with Defford cum Besford in the Bredon Hill Group in the Diocese of Worcester. His licensing here will be on **Monday 16th March at 7.30pm** so keep that date free to come. However as he won't be able to move into Appleby Rectory much ahead of that date, he will not be starting work until beginning of April. Please pray for him and wife Deborah as they leave where they are and prepare to move.

Rick comes with much experience. He was a Church Army Captain from 2003 -2016; 1980-1996 saw him serving in the military. He has worked in urban areas and as a curate in rural parishes. So he will come to us with a wide experience.

### **AREA DEAN OF NORTH WEST LEICESTER**

At last a successor has been chosen for this role which Vivien has filled for some 8 years. It is Revd Gill Pinnington who is vicar at Christchurch Coalville. She will be licensed on February 19<sup>th</sup> so Vivien can then lay down the reins and concentrate on the Woodfield Team.

### **EXPLORE CHRISTIANITY**

This was mentioned in the December magazine. Life has rather taken over so we won't be launching this until after Easter. Do you want to know more about faith? Have you been struggling to answer the questions your children come home with from school? Do you think there may be something to it all but not quite sure? Then get in touch – we'll be offering a few sessions to explore what Christians believe.

It could lead on to baptism and/or confirmation if that is what you want but these are intended as open sessions. Get in touch with me (Revd Vivien on 01530 270354 or vivien.elphick@btinternet.com) and once we know who's interested, we can see when and where for the sessions. You might like to have a look at <https://christianity.org.uk/> in the meantime.

### **THE BEST IS YET TO COME – A REFLECTION ON SIMEON, ANNA and CANDLEMAS**

No matter how much we plan for things to be good, no matter how much we prepare, life is never perfect. I wonder if Mary thought that when she had let go of any dream or plan she had for everything to go smoothly in her own life.

I wonder if she grew up dreaming of a husband who would take care of her, for a baby or two to come along at the right time..... I don't think anyone would have planned to have an angel appear and tell her that she was pregnant, and near to full term, when they need to travel to Bethlehem for a census, and so give birth away from home, in an outhouse.....

And although the dedication of Jesus would have been different from our baptism services, we know how parents want these key events to go perfectly and it probably wouldn't involve two elderly people coming out of the shadows and going on about how wonderful our new baby was and well, how he would be a controversial character and cause distress and pain to his mother. Mary and Joseph call into the Temple to have a quiet moment to offer Jesus to God. But all of a sudden they realise that nothing will ever be the same again.

But even though none of this was what Mary and Joseph had in mind, I don't think they would have swapped this rollercoaster ride experience for anything. Mary had learnt a while back to let go of any control of her life, and allow God to lead her.

But let's go back to that Candlemas story, what do we learn from it for today? Well I think we can learn something about being patient as we go through life, and certainly both Anna and Simeon had plenty of patience. They showed how the most significant thing that had ever happened to them happened right towards the end of their lives.

Our society devalues older people and especially older women. They are supposed to inject botox into their faces to get rid of wrinkles, and spend a fortune on creams, even have surgery to make their bodies more perfect. And nowadays, many men do the same. It's as though we're not allowed to grow old any more. But the example of Simeon and Anna shows us that in terms of our own ministry and discipleship the best is always yet to come.

But no experience is perfect, life is bitter sweet. And this is true certainly of candlemas as a festival. It is a half and half festival, half joy, half lament. The sweetness of the birth of Jesus and the joy of Christmas, but the bitterness of now turning towards the cross and Lent and the reflection of what the Cross of Christ means in Christian life.

*But in terms of our own ministry and discipleship, the best is yet to come.* I wonder how that makes you feel. We often hear people say that they used to do such and such but now they are too old. As if the real work of the church is doing things, planning events, being active. But praying for church events and activities is just as important as running it. And picking up the phone to have a chat with a friend from church who hasn't been for a while is as much pastoral care as when the vicar visits someone in hospital.

In church there is no retirement age. While it's true, we don't actually value our elderly people enough, the story of Simeon and Anna challenges us about what ministry really is and who can do it.

Most people would have disregarded Anna as an elderly woman who didn't have much to offer the world because she was a bit religious, always in church praying. But because she was in church she was in the right place at the right time, and her wisdom and spirituality spilled out into those prophetic words said to Mary and Joseph.

Likewise if our gift is to be quiet, in the background, praying then continue to develop this, as our communities and churches need you and your wisdom.

The story of Simeon and Anna challenges us all, whatever age we are, what is our calling from God for today, and for tomorrow? How am I serving him and his people, right now? Is there anything else I could offer?

In our Woodfield Team of Churches, we need all hands on deck. We don't have the luxury of thinking I'm too old, or I'm not a good enough Christian. Who is! But there is a challenge for us all today. Am I living my unique calling within the family of my church and in my community? If the answer is yes, then that's great. Take time to value what you are offering and to be appreciative that you are in the right place at the right time. If the answer is no.... then it's time to do something about it.

*Text Luke 2: 21 - 40*

<b>WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FEBRUARY 2020</b>		
<b>Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Morning Prayer</b>
<b>Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10.00am</b>	<b>Tuesday Prayer Group at 12 Ivy Close</b>
<b>Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>9.30 – 11.00am</b>	<b>Coffee &amp; Chat (in Church)</b>
<b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Holy Communion &amp; Healing</b>
<b>Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10.00am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Family Service</b>
<b>Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>2.30pm</b>	<b>3T's Table - - - - Talk - - - - Tea</b>
<b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
<b>Friday 28<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>12.30 – 2.30pm</b>	<b>Lunch Light</b>