

## SHEPPARTON WORSHIP SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2020

### *Gathering as God's People*

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light

***The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.***

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

***In him was life and the life was the light of humanity***

O come, let us adore him

***Christ the Lord.***

**HYMNS 224** *Joy to the world! The Lord is come*

#### PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

### *Receiving God's Word*

#### AN EARLY WORD

#### THE READINGS

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet

***a light to our path***

**First Reading** **Isaiah 61.10- 62.3**

**Psalm Response** **Psalm 148**

**The Gospel** **Luke 2. 22-40**

For the Gospel of the Lord ***glory to you, O Christ, Light of the World***

#### REFLECTION

For the world, Christmas 2020 is finished! Christmas decorations have been sold off at half price or less. Boxing Day sales have included returns of unsuitable gifts. Striped candy canes are already being replaced by St Valentine's Day chocolates - or even hot cross buns.

But the church has just begun to celebrate Christmas: this is the third day of Christmas - when, the song tells us, gifts of three French hens are appropriate. We are blessed to have twelve days to celebrate God's greatest gift - of Jesus, born as a human, but our thoughts are already turning to New Year' Eve.

The Gospels are moving us on, too. Luke takes us forty days to the Holy Family's visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. There, two rituals are to take place: Mary's purification after the birth of Jesus, involving her sacrifice of two pigeons, and the presenting of the first-born son. These rites are important enough to bring the little family on a journey very roughly from here to Seymour - but Luke says nothing about them. He wants to tell us how the Good News of God's gift breaks through, reminding the family of Jesus of the incredible gift of God. And so two very old people take centre stage.

Simeon is righteous, devout and constantly looking toward God's salvation.

God has promised that Simeon will not die until he has seen the Lord's Messiah.

We will explore Simeon's response to God's gift of Jesus, and Simeon's prophetic words to Mary. What has 84-year-old widow Anna to say to the Baby?

*What does God's incredible gift of this Baby mean to Simeon? to Anna? to us?*

*Does God's Christmas gift hold more meaning for us this year than ever before?*

This is the last Sunday in 2020, a year we may be very glad to end, after COVID-19, lockdowns, separation from loved ones, lament for the losses - and thanks for the supports given. How do we look forward to 2021? Which hopes enliven us? which crises provide new challenges - and new possibilities, especially for churches?

*What might it mean for you, for me, to be a sign of the Incarnation for others in 2021?*

#### OUR RESPONSES

**HYMN 324** T 485 *Lord, bid your servant go in peace*

#### DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** including prayers for stateless people

St David's Albury, Uniting Goulburn NE

## 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  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen*

## ***Being Sent on God's Mission***

**HYMN 238**    *Good Christians all, rejoice*

## **WORD OF MISSION**

### **BLESSING**

The blessing of God,  
loving Father, newborn Son, living Spirit,  
go with us and with all those we are given to love  
this day, into 2021, and always  
***Amen, amen, amen!***

## **A PRAYER FOR THE TURNING OF THE YEAR**

from Joan's skeletal version of her service for Sunday December 27

In our looking into 2021

***may the God of hope be with us.***

In our lamenting the losses of 2020,

***may the God of peace be with us.***

In our celebrations of Christmas,

***may the God of joy be with us.***

In our caring for the world,

***may the God of love be with us.***

In our living of life in all its fullness,

***may we know that God is with us.***

*Rev'd Jenny Adams, Church of Scotland*