

Iona Service 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023 5pm

Theme: Anna and Simeon; passing on the light

Gathering Song: 🎵

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:  
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

**Leader:** Candlemas is celebrated as a winter festival of birth and light. It is also a story of living, ageing and learning. Simeon and Anna are able to recognise God in Jesus because of their years of struggling and loving, communal worship, the wisdom of age and prayers of a lifetime.

Like Anna and Simeon, may we pass on the light we receive, playing our part in God's story.

**Leader:** Come to us this night, O God,

**All:** **Come to us with light.**

**Leader:** Speak to us this night, O God,

**All:** **Speak to us your truth.**

**Leader:** Dwell with us this night, O God,

**All:** **Dwell with us in love.**

Song: 🎵

**Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy one, is here;  
come bow before him now, with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found – we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy one, is here.**

**Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire, with splendour his is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight – our radiant king of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.**

**Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place:  
he comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace –  
no work too hard for him, I faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.**

Dramatised Reading of Luke 2 v22 – v40

**Leader:** Listen now for the word of God

**Readers:** I stood in the Temple courtyard, waiting. I was not really sure why, or for what. I just knew I needed to be there in that particular place, at that particular time.

A couple came in with their baby.

They said they had come for a Presentation ritual, so he was obviously their first son. I greeted them.

The man told me they wanted to sacrifice two doves or pigeons.

I nodded, understandingly. The family must be quite poor, I thought. That was the cheaper option for those who could not afford a lamb or goat. I asked their names.

'Joseph and Mary,' the man answered.

'And the baby's name?'

'Jesus,' said his mother proudly.

Quite an unusual name that. I wondered why they chose it. It means Saviour.

'Where do you come from?' I asked.

'Nazareth originally, but Jesus was born in Bethlehem,' said Joseph.

'Why Bethlehem?' I enquired.

*(Micah 5:2:)*

***God said, Bethlehem, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah,  
but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel ...***

Reader 1: 'Because Joseph is descended from King David,' Mary answered. 'We had to go there for the recent census.'

I carefully held the sleeping baby in my arms and gazed at his face.

*(Isaiah 9:6–7:)*

***A child is born to us, a son is given to us and he will be our ruler ...  
He will rule with right and justice from now until the end of time.***

Was it possible that the ancient prophecies were being fulfilled at last?

Had the event I had prayed about so often, taken place during my lifetime?

The clues were all there. Surely this baby was the Messiah! With joy in my heart – and a big smile on my face – I blessed him.

Then I handed Jesus back to his parents.

Other prophecies soon came into my mind. The ones from Isaiah about how the Messiah would suffer.

*(Isaiah 53:6)*

***Like lost sheep, we went astray. He suffered for us. He was in pain.  
And we thought his suffering was a punishment from God.***

I told Mary about them as gently as I could.

She nodded and seemed to understand. Mary looked so young, but there was a maturity about her which was way beyond her years; I detected strength of character too. I think my words confirmed what others had already told her.

Mary began to tell me about the visit from the Angel Gabriel when she was told that she would be the mother of God's son, and then about all the unusual events surrounding Jesus' birth.

Sometime later, the family went home and I was left to reflect on the amazing privilege I'd been given to welcome God's Messiah.

*(Luke 2:29:)*

***Lord, now let your servant depart in peace ...  
with my own eyes I have seen what you promised ...***

**Leader:** For the word of the Lord

**All:** **Thanks be to God.**

**Leader:** Lord, like Simeon, may we grow old in hope and in wonder. Like Anna, may we be in love with you all our days. May we be open to truth, open to surprises. May we let your Spirit into our life. May we let your justice change our behaviour. May we live in the brightness of your joy. Amen

**Song:** 🎵 **Brother, Sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to, let you be my servant too.**

**We are pilgrims on life's journey, and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.**

**I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.**

**I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.**

**When we sing to God in heaven we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've know together of Christ's love and agony.**

**Brother, Sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to, let you be my servant too.**

**Prayers:**

**Leader:** We bring to God, someone whom we have met or remembered today.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Leader:** We bring to God, someone who feels isolated or powerless.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Leader:** We bring to God, a troubled situation in our world tonight.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Leader:** We bring to God, ourselves, our needs and our lives.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Leader:** We bring to God, things on our heart that we have been unable to do.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Leader:** We bring to God, our tomorrows.

**All:** 🎵 **Through our lives and by our prayers, your Kingdom come.**

**Song:** ♪ Put hope into each other's hands, and like a treasure hold it,  
protect it like a candle-flame, with tenderness enfold it.

Put peace into each other's hands, with loving expectation;  
be gentle in your words and ways, in touch with God's creation.

Put love into each other's hands, like bread we break for sharing;  
look people warmly in the eye: our life is meant for caring.

As at communion, shape your hands, into a waiting cradle;  
the gift of Christ is ours to hold, and share as we are able.

Put Christ into each other's hands, his love in fullest measure;  
spread light and hope, in lived out faith, love shared becomes our treasure.

**Closing responses:**

**Leader:** Loving God, may we grow old in hope and wonder, like Simeon.

**All:** Like Anna, may we be in love with you all our days.

**Leader:** As Anna and Simeon recognised you in the temple

**All:** may we recognise you in those we meet.

**Leader:** Like those who have gone before us,

**All:** may we treasure and live out our faith.

**Blessing:** Starmaker God, Lightener of the world, bless us and warm us into light and loving.  
May we be light and warmth for God's world.  
Amen

**The Grace:**

**All:** May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all,  
evermore. Amen

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*Common Ground © The Iona Community*

*Come All You People © John Bell*

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THE NEXT PERSHORE ABBEY IONA SERVICE WILL BE AT  
5PM ON SUNDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY.

A local service using Iona materials is now extremely rare outside Scotland. But this special service in Pershore Abbey has kept going through the years. The recent use of Zoom, has enabled those unable to attend the Abbey and those further afield, to access the service.

If you feel you could contribute to the service in any way, please don't be shy. The current team would really appreciate any kind of help including: welcoming people, reading, music, moving chairs, technical, etc.