

## New Year Message

*Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup> 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.'*

### **Acts 2:28-32**

We begin a new year with the spectre of Coronavirus, once again, causing us to carefully review worship opportunities. Restrictions have been tightened and some of our churches have decided to sit tight, wait for the storm to pass and then to re-open doors. Others continue with social-distancing and other measures in place. A difficult start to the year.

The words of Simeon, perhaps, resonate for some of us after the past two years. 'Lord, we have met you and know you; thank you; now let me go in peace.' It is tempting to 'give-up', to stop meeting in church all together, or even to leave the house and rely on Ocado and Amazon. We have seen the light of Christ and that is enough.

Yet, we have the follow-on story of Anna. A faithful woman in the midst of tragedy. No 'giving-up' with Anna. Patiently she had waited, rewarded by God, and her response is not one of; 'great, I have met the Saviour of the world, release me Lord.' No, Anna gives thanks to God and then goes and finds people to tell. Anna, in her old-age, wants life to carry on and for the world to know about Jesus.

The past year was challenging for us all and especially for myself. Yes, Circuit and Church provided specific difficulties, and I am grateful for all of the prayers, wisdom and support from so many, but, from a family perspective, this has been a journey of discovery. An aunt who lost her third and final son suddenly whilst in hospital. She has no grandchildren and it has been given to me the task of picking up the pieces for her. Both of my parents have been in hospital for weeks on end and changes in circumstances for our children have meant lots of mileage on my battered old Skoda.

My mum was fading away. I saw her in the hospital. We spoke about perseverance, (one of the words of the year for 2021) and spoke about life; how precious it is. She asked for a prayer. The result was my 'old' mum returned. She has always had a feisty streak in her; she has had a difficult life, and her determination to get better, to get out of hospital, to be useful again, came to the fore. She has got stronger week-by-week and she has encouraged my dad to do the same. Praise God.

There is something indomitable in the human spirit. God created us to be tough, to live life in all it's fullness, to embrace change, sorrow, joy and to live in relationship with God and with others. God has given us family, he has given us brothers and sisters in Christ, she has given us neighbours to care for and be cared for by. Created in the divine image we are created for relationship, for love and for being receivers and givers of this love. In Christ we are more than conquerors through him that loves us; and in Christ we are assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

So, as we prepare for new opportunities and challenges in 2022, let us know, like Simeon, that we have seen the Light of the world, and like Anna, let us be thankful, persevere, and continue to meet in the different temples we have been given by God to worship the blessed Trinity in....yes, church buildings, and yes, our dining rooms, community spaces, cafes and wherever we can gather to meet with others and give thanks to God, and to speak about the child whose birth we have just celebrated.

*Gordon*