

2nd SUNDAY before LENT 2023: Sunday 12th February – 18th February 2023

Greetings from Eileen

Dear Friends,

Our hearts go out to the people in Turkey and Syria – devastated by the earthquake taking a rising toll already more than 19,000 people. Our churches are appealing for donations via Christian Aid and DEC to support emergency services, provision of medical supplies and essential needs. The situation on the ground is truly difficult to conceive despite what we see from television coverage. Surely we must give thanks as each day we awake and go about our lives in safety, even in comfort and plenty.



Prayer for the Turkey and Syria Earthquake Appeal

God of time and space, we cry to you for your children – our neighbours – in southern Turkey and northern Syria, following the earthquake that has devastated hundreds of lives. Only they and you know what it is like to experience such trauma in the middle of the night.

We give thanks for the aid that is already being given and for the promises of help that have been made by many nations.

Comfort, we pray,

those who are trapped in collapsed buildings;

those who have lost loved ones;

those who wait for news and

those digging through rubble to save others.

Grant the gift of hope so that those caught between life and death know that you are with them and that others are ready to support them as they seek a future that overshadows the experiences of today.

We ask this in the Name of Jesus, who endured so much for love of them.

Amen



We also continue to hold in our prayers **the people of UKRAINE** and do what we can for those facing peril in Ukraine and those who have sought refuge in this country. It will be a year on 24th February since they have been forced to defend their homeland and still their aggressors persist. If we are tempted into apathy, let us consider how it might be if we were faced with such a situation. Let us not harden our hearts to their plight. Appended is our Bishops' letter to us, and here is the link to a prayer from Christian Aid: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/prayer-ukraine#:~:text=We%20implore%20you%2C%20O%20Merciful,looking%20for%20mercy%20and%20compassion.>

In our parishes, we are lifted up by partnering of our primary schools and churches in Ingleton, Staindrop, and Gainford. Our Missioner Claire Mead has begun a programme of developing Mini Disciples, Worship Leaders, and Collective Worship, and in Ingleton their school choir participated in St John's Church Family Praise Service. On Monday 13th February, Bishop Paul and Diocese Director of Education Canon Paul join Gainford St Mary and Gainford Primary in celebrating their award as the **first partnership to receive the national Church of England Growing Faith Foundation Certificate**. All are welcome to the service at 2.30pm in church and the celebration exhibition and tea afterwards in the school.

PLEASE COME AND CELEBRATE WITH US AT OUR

Growing Faith Foundation Partnership Award Service

MONDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2.30PM
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, GAINFORD

THIS IS SUCH A SPECIAL DAY FOR US SO WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOU CELEBRATING OUR FANTASTIC ACHIEVEMENT WITH US.

SERVICES this Sunday 12th February 2023

9.15am St Mary's, Staindrop – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)
 9.30am St Andrew's, Winston – Service of the Word (Lay-led: Lynne Lobley and Simon Edens)
 10.45am St Mary's, Gainford – Service of the Word (Lay-led: Peter Graham and Simon Edens)
 11.00am St John The Evangelist, Ingleton – Communion (Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop)

We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

MIGHT THIS BE FOR YOU? AN OPPORTUNITY AND AN INVITATION

We are greatly blessed with caring and flourishing parishes and parish churches. They are diligently and joyfully looked after. But many who have been doing this on behalf of us all are getting on in years or have needs that prompt them to hand over the baton. Many hearts and hands sharing the joy of the Lord make light and inspiring work! **Will you be among the hearts and hands that enable the inspiring continuity of our churches?** If you are daunted in some way, come and speak to a member of the present PCC or speak to me. This is part of bringing heaven's glory to earth. I look forward to your call on 01325 733154 or email me: ekgharrop@gmail.com

NOTICES:

- ✦ **PCC MEETING: Staindrop St Mary** Monday 13th January 6.30pm at Sarah Fell's
***New members are welcome.** If you wish to know more or might be interest to help in any way, I'd welcome a chat especially if you are not sure about being able to commit to being on the PCC. Call or email me: 01325 733154 ekgharrop@gmail.com*
- ✦ **You are invited to our EPIPHANY BIBLE JOURNEY! The 2nd session** is on **Wednesday 15th February at 7pm in St Mary's Church, Gainford.** To find out and to register your interest contact Cressida Heath c/o stmarys@gainfordwinston.church This is open to anyone from all 4 parishes and anyone interested from further afield.
- ✦ **WARM & WELCOME Gainford:** Come to relax and enjoy time with others in a Warm Space with a warm welcome from 10am to noon every Friday in Gainford Village Hall. Yummy home made cakes and scones, with tea, coffee and hot drinks are free. Donations are welcome but completely voluntary. For more information contact Wendy Broderick: warmandwelcomegainford@gmail.com

Collect for the 2nd Sunday before Lent

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
reigns supreme over all things,
now and for ever. Amen

Post Communion Prayer

God our creator,
by your gift
the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly
paradise,
and the bread of life at the heart of your Church:
may we who have been nourished at your table on
earth
be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross
and enjoy the delights of eternity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

First Reading: Genesis 1:1-2:3

¹ In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that

were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' ²⁹ God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you

not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ ‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.’

Sermon, Candlemas (translated to Sunday after): Rev’d Canon Eileen Harrop, 5th February 2023 (Malachi 3:1-5; Luke 2:22-40)

The special day that is referred to as Candlemas, concludes the season of Epiphany. In the coming of God through the incarnation of Jesus, God has made it possible for people to see him. In Jesus’ first sermon, commonly known as ‘The Beatitudes’, we are told who are blessed ‘to see God’. In Matthew, 5 verse 8, Jesus was recorded saying: “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*”

We may recall that thousands of years before God came to us in Jesus, that God had instructed Moses to avert his eyes because meeting God would be too great an experience for any person to bear. Because of human sinfulness, the holiness and glory of God would have overwhelmed him. By God’s grace, His coming in Jesus changed this.

The Amplified version of that particular Beatitude, says:

“Blessed [*anticipating God’s presence, the spiritually mature*] *are* the pure in heart [*those with integrity, moral courage, and godly character*], *for they will see God.*”

Elderly and Godly Simeon was such a spiritually mature man who had been anticipating God’s presence. That very day when Jesus’ parents came to the temple for ‘*their purification according to the law of Moses*’ bringing Jesus to be presented to God, Simeon was filled with the Holy Spirit. Simeon was described as being righteous and devout. He was recognised for his integrity, moral courage, and Godly character. His life had been continuously purified by the way he honoured his relationship with God, and on this day, God completed his purification filling him with his spirit. It was in this state that Simeon, who being pure in heart, is rewarded in seeing God. We are also told: ‘*There was also a prophet, Anna... of a great age, a widow. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day.*’ Here is another person, who had valued above everything her relationship with God that led her to a pure life.

In recent years, we have watched as the world is shaken by leaders of governments, of business, of public services, who do not seem to value such purity.

The prophet Malachi has delivered to us God’s explicit message about what is righteous and what is sin. God’s judgement will ‘*bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear God.*’

Those who conceive of trickery to impose evil against others are sorcerers. Those who are careless and callous about their marriage relationships and reckless in unfaithfulness are adulterers. Those leaders who proclaim promises and make vows to their people and nations but have intentionally not kept their word are those who swear falsely. All of us have known leaders of nations and of high-profile institutions who have been unashamed of these ways of leading and living. They have claimed vociferously that they are worthy with no regret for their unrighteousness.

Perhaps like you, I am imploring myself to pray fervently for our country. Listen to the next part of Malachi's words that God's judgement will fall against: *'those who oppress the hired workers in their wages; who oppress the widow, and the orphan, and those who thrust aside the alien'*. In the UK, we shall soon be wondering which public service has not come out in protest for unjust wages. Friends, I cannot and will not make a personal judgement on the rights or wrongs of the protests we are witnessing because I am not that worker who is crying out. Who am I to judge who is oppressed or not? But God knows. If those who have authority and in whom power to administer justice has been given choose to oppress, let us not be surprised when God's wrath befalls. When our bishops speak out in Parliament for the vulnerable elderly, children, and the refugee, they do so because this is God's word as prophesied. Prophets of old have lost their lives on human authority for speaking truth, and even today, some are scathing against our Archbishops. But God's judgement bears witness *'against those who oppress'*; *'who thrust aside the alien'*, and who do not fear to do this.

The Church and Christians are called to lives of purity. Integrity, morality, and Godliness should matter to us. I have no evidence that Simeon demonstrated courageous advocacy - this is a term I learnt from our Primary Schools as a Christian value. But we know that the people who knew Simeon and Anna, bore witness to their lives. Over more than 2 thousand years, all generations of Christians have also received their testimonies. Even if we have not been called to speak or act against unrighteousness and injustice, we are called to live righteously and to do justice. And like Simeon and Anna, we too can be among the pure in heart and we shall see God.

Amen