

Candlemas all age communion 2022

In the Bible St Luke gave us a story in which we see different people doing their jobs. Let's see if we can remember who they were. I have some clues.

There was a husband and wife. **Mary and Joseph.**

Mary –blue cloth - job of being a mother, with God's help I can

Joseph - mallet – carpenter, also job of being a stepfather, provided a name, protection, a trade, a model of doing what God told him

Ducks – the sacrifice – reason why they had come , to do what the law said they were supposed to. Probably nervous, in the big Jerusalem temple with their new baby, but someone met them, and reassured them.

Simeon – walking stick - can I hold the baby, Making welcome, just what older people in church often do and think, sang a song recognising that Jesus would bring light to the world but also that his life would bring about conflict and suffering. Became a very famous song, used all over the world Nunc Dimittis.

Anna – wedding ring – can I hold the baby widow, low status, prayed a lot, told everyone Jesus was going to be important

We have forgotten one person

the baby - shawl

what was his job

to grow the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was upon him. Growing in stature tends to happen anyway but growing in wisdom is a sign of good parenting going on. Many people will have enjoyed Christmas but when they put their decorations away, baby Jesus goes back in the box, and that's the last time they think of Jesus. They forget that **he grew to bring light to the world through his life and teaching, and salvation through his death.** At Candlemas we look both ways , back at Christmas and ahead towards Easter.

In God's story everyone has a job, No-one is unemployed. Our most important work may not be paid. God has work for each one of us here in his kingdom. It could be praying, could be growing, could be parenting, could be waiting to die but as long as we are alive God has work for us to do.

Joseph found out in a dream that he was to have the job of being Jesus' stepfather. He had been going to break off his contact with Mary and her expected baby but when he woke up he acted differently; in obedience to what God had told him. We heard about the beginning of his being a dad, bringing his wife and baby to the Temple to fulfil the law. But there's a lot more to come.

Just over a year ago in December 2020, when we had had a very quiet locked-down Christmas, **I had a dream about our family in Orchard Park, which is the new development between the top of Arbury Rd and Impington.** It was very detailed, a bit strange this dream, and I kept it to myself for a while (pondering in heart like Mary). 11 January phoned Chris Lowe, the vicar, and talked to him. We started visiting Orchard Park skateboard ramp for our daily exercise, and then after Easter we went on a Sunday. We found them in the primary school hall where they were meeting with a few groups sitting socially distant and going outside for a hymn in the carpark. We have been most Sundays since. In the summer, I talked with the diocese about it agreeing to explore. **We are like Joseph, showing willing. Like Joseph, we want to obey God but one step at a time, without knowing the future.**

The church there has no building, but is a group of about 30 adults, with perhaps 25 children, and have made us very welcome. Simon and I are probably the oldest people, and there are people from different parts of the world. These people believe it is their job to let the light of Christ shine in Orchard Park. There are 900 houses, fairly densely packed, half owned, half rented, with nearly 3000 people living there. In some ways it is like anywhere else in the world, and like other areas of north Cambridge, but it is a new community. The people have no history together, and there are not many meeting places or activities there. There has been concern about levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and the school has a high percentage of children needing extra help. In some ways, it makes sense for me to be there, as most of my work before I came to Cambridge was in housing estates; in other ways it is less clear as it is a church which does not believe it is right for women to teach. Really, Lord? After 35+ years? But my ministry is often limited in some ways, and there is plenty that I can do. **I just have to offer what I can, and ask the Holy Spirit to work.**

So that is where we are. We still live in St Andrew's parish and value our ties to the community here. Tia is going to youth group here. Simon has a part in the finance committee, and I am on the hall committee. I am available to take services if asked. But on Sunday mornings we will be there and what time I have midweek will be spent there.

I'd like to finish by saying that lockdown has given us all time to think; and to ask **what is God's job for you now?** Maybe to grow, like the baby. Maybe to be a parent, to work or study, maybe to be a person of prayer waiting like Simeon or Anna, maybe **to shine as a light in a particular place or group of people?** We value your prayers for us as we take gradual steps of obedience. And we pray for you too that you would know where God wants you, and what to do. Amen

DPJ