

February 2024

Senior staff message



Archdeacon Nicky writes...

February begins with Candlemas, remembering the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Traditionally, church candles for the coming year are blessed, Christmas decorations left up after twelfth night taken down and candles lit in the windows of people's homes.

Midway between the winter and spring solstice, we long for the coming of the light, looking for signs of new life. Green shoots begin to emerge from the barren earth. Buds sprout on bare tree branches. Gradually beautiful landscapes of snow drops, crocuses and blossom form once more.

And just when we think Spring is finally coming, our Bible readings take us into the wilderness remembering Jesus's temptation in the desert. We will eat Shrove Tuesday pancakes before embarking on a Lenten season of self-discipline, denial, prayer and study aiming to deepen our relationship with God.

This year Ash Wednesday coincides with Valentine's Day when people across our diocese will think about love in all its different shapes and forms. Cards will be written, gifts exchanged, chocolates eaten, flowers bought, romantic surprises planned, commitments remembered, renewed and begun as people hope and dream and long for a fairy tale happy ever after.

And what can we as Christians offer to those we accompany on their journey through this spiritually significant month?

We have the light of Christ shining in the darkness and the promise that the darkness will never overcome it.

We have the gift of hope and new possibilities - life in all its fullness freely available to all who will receive it.

We have opportunities to wipe the slate clean, start afresh and know in the depths of our being what it is to be forgiven, accepted and loved by God.

We have communities of believers across the whole of the diocese. Fellow travellers who can strengthen our resolve to grow in discipline and self-denial and help us draw closer to God.

We have the best news and greatest gift to share with all who will receive it. The gift of God's friendship and covenantal love revealed in Jesus.

So, as we move through these Christian and secular celebrations, may we make the most of the opportunities they bring to deepen our relationship with God and make new Christians as we serve our local communities and journey together through winter into the newness of Spring.

Nicky

The Ven. Nicky Fenton
Archdeacon of Derbyshire Peak & Dales