

Prayers for the Month of February

2nd February:

Lord Jesus Christ,
light of the nations
and glory of Israel:
make your home among us,
and present us pure and holy
to your heavenly Father,
your God, and our God.

Sunday 16th February:

Almighty God,
give us reverence for all creation
and respect for every person,
that we may mirror your likeness
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

9th February:

Eternal God,
whose Son went among the crowds
and brought healing with his touch:
help us to show his love,
in your Church as we gather
together,
and by our lives as they are

Sunday 23rd February:

Holy God,
you know the disorder
of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your
goodness and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

'THE BULLETIN'

St Paul's Church

Part of the Great Baddow Team Ministry

Our vision: 'to love Christ and make His love known.'

A warm welcome to St Paul's
and we hope you enjoy your time with us.
After the service, do stay around and meet our church members.

Sunday Services for February

Sunday 2nd February:

Candlemas

10.00am Holy Communion
with *Children's Groups*

Preacher: *Phil Sheldrake*

Reading: *Luke 2.22-40*

Sunday 9th February:

Third Sunday Before Lent

10.00am Morning Worship

Preacher: *Jo Brown*

Readings: *Isaiah 58.1-9a*
& *Matthew 5.13-20*

Sunday 16th February:

Second Sunday Before Lent

10.00am All Age Holy Communion

Preacher: *Mary Cottee*

Reading: *Matthew 6.25-34*

Sunday 23rd February:

Sunday Next Before Lent

10.00am Morning Worship

Preacher: *Phil Sheldrake*

Readings: *Exodus 24.12-18*
& *Matthew 17.1-9*

Contact Us:

Rev'd Phil Sheldrake:

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[Phil's day off is Thursday]

St Paul's email: contact Phil direct or via our website

Web Page: www.stpaulsgreatbaddow.org

Social Media: facebook.com/stpaulsgreatbaddow

Noticeboard:

'Wellspring': Join us for our monthly Prayer Meeting, Monday 3rd February, 8pm at *The Vicarage*.

Our Next PCC Meeting: 10th February, 7.45pm for an 8pm start at St Paul's.

'Messy Church': Saturday 15th February, 10.30-12.30pm.

Deanery Synod: next meeting on Wednesday 19th February 8pm at Meadgate *The Orchards*.

'Last Orders': Mens' Fellowship: Next meeting on Monday February 24th, from 9pm at *The Running Mare*.

Our Parish Prayer Focus for February: Please pray that God will direct us to move in the power of His Spirit within our church and outside its walls. And pray for families & friends on *Baddow Road* and *Bramley Close*.

'Vicar's Thoughts' for February

As we enter February, I'm sure many of us have thought: "Well, that's January done with...one more month until Spring" (I certainly have!). Yet thankfully, even in February, we begin to see the morning light arriving earlier and the day lasting longer: daylight is winning, Spring is on its way!

As we start off our month with that wonderful reading from Luke 2, marking *The Presentation*, we're reminded again that the power of light in the darkness of our world is winning. The 'Light of the World' - just 40 days old at this point - has already been shining into the darkness of Bethlehem's streets. And now, as He arrives at Israel's capital city, here at last is 'the new temple within the old temple.' And as His mother stands there in the building where the Jews believed that heaven and earth touched, here now is **the** Light of the World, **the** person in whom God and humanity meet. The prophet Malachi was right: "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come." [Malachi 3.1b].

This is such a powerful moment. From now on, every time Jesus would come anywhere near the Jewish Temple, strange things would take place. Throughout His public ministry there would be this clash of powers between Jesus and the religious authorities because really, there just wasn't room for two temples in the worshipping life of Israel. Yes, He'd come to fulfil the Jewish Law and not do away with it, yet in doing so, Jesus would be ushering in something new into the national life of Israel and the rest of the world: the Kingdom of God - new wine into new wineskins. The child would grow up publicly declaring the love of His Father for all humankind, yet in coming to "that which was his own... his own did not receive him" [John 1.11] Ultimately, after many such clashes (inside and outside the temple), it would culminate in His death upon the cross: the sword that would pierce His mother's heart.

As we move towards longer daylight hours, may we carry that great hope within our spirits, that the "light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" [John 1.5]. We worship the 'Light of the World', the 'Bright Morning Star'. He has, as Isaiah declared, punched a hole in the shroud of darkness which covers the earth, and as our resurrected King, Jesus is coming back to drench the world in Kingdom light and do away with all suffering, pain, sickness, misery and death once and for all. He is our hope. And so, as many are fond of saying these days, "Don't worry: God has got this!", let us use the feast of *The Presentation* to lift our spirits above the darkness of Winter and take to heart the great Spring hope of the New Testament from John, the author of Revelation: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End...Yes, I am coming soon." [Revelation 22.13,20b]