



Resources for Celebrating Candlemas in 2024

The Anna Chaplaincy team in Rochester Diocese is pleased to share resources for Candlemas in 2024. Candlemas is a special time in Anna Chaplaincy with its focus on the prophet Anna, after whom our ministry is named. Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends are community-based, commissioned to support older people of strong, little or no faith, especially those in advanced old age living with frailty or dementia.

Celebrating older people - We would like to suggest Candlemas as a time to focus on older people in family, church and community, thanking God for all that they bring to our lives and their faithfulness in discipleship and as volunteers in church and society. Could you interview a member of the congregation in their 80s or 90s as a way to learn about their story of life and faith?

Praying for those working and ministering alongside older people - Candlemas is also an ideal opportunity to affirm and pray blessings over all those in our congregations working and ministering among older people. We have a growing team of Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends across the diocese, and many others who are committed to pastoral ministry with older people and involved in visiting and leading worship in local care homes. Could you encourage others to explore a vocation to Anna Chaplaincy or other forms of ministry among older people? Might you explore regular giving to a Christian charity resourcing ministry among seniors?

Countering negative ideas - We want to challenge ageism and celebrate demographic changes that mean people are living longer. To promote positive messages, download free images from Centre for Ageing Better's age-positive image library (ageingbetter.resourcespace.com) – here are two examples:



Anna Reflects – a monologue for Candlemas

I didn't miss Simeon for a few days: I'd been to Hebron, helping my great-niece Sarah with her fourth baby (another daughter) and when I got back I was that worn out, so it wasn't until Wednesday (was it?) – when I was talking to Dorcas in our usual corner of the Court of the Women that she told me she hadn't seen Simeon in the Temple for the last week, and that Benjamin had said that he'd had a stroke.

Well, of course, I went straight round to his room in Shoemaker Street to see how he was. Thankfully, it wasn't a stroke, though it had been a nasty heart attack which had left him very weak.

As soon as he saw me, Simeon got very excited and tried to get out of bed. He grabbed my hand: *'Thank God you've come'*, he said *'I saw him, I saw his eyes. It was him. I know it was!'* Saw who? I knew whom we would have meant if we'd been talking hopefully about the Messiah in the Temple, but surely he didn't mean that? Simeon was shaking and coughing and getting more and more agitated. *'Calm down,'* I said, and poured him a drink of water.

After a while he recovered himself and began to tell me his story: how this young couple, Miriam and Joseph had come to the Temple to offer the sacrifice for their first-born, Jeshua, and then asked Simeon to bless the child – I'd seen him do it so often in the past!

'But then', Simeon went on *'as I looked down at the child, and saw him looking up at me, I suddenly knew that this was the Messiah we have been looking for for so long, and more than that, that I was looking into the eyes of God himself!'*

Could it really be so? We'd waited and hoped so long, that it seemed incredible that our hopes should finally be fulfilled – and in this way: not a great angel coming down from heaven, but as a little baby only recognised by one old man. But as Simeon talked, I recognised that this was God visiting his faithful, patient servant. I rejoiced for him, and for myself, and for all the faithful watchers and waiters when they came to hear the news.

But meanwhile, what was I to do for Simeon? He was very weak and relaxed now that he had told me his story. He was ready to go, and who would wish to hold him back from sharing permanently in that life which he had seen for a moment in a baby's eyes? And that indeed was what happened: I stayed with him for a couple of days, doing what I could, but he slept most of the time, and on the third morning he just slipped away.

How was I going to tell people about Simeon's vision? My first thought was to rush into the Temple and tell everyone – perhaps even try to speak to the High Priest about it. But then I paused: this was still in the reign of King Herod, and there were nasty rumours circulating about how he had ordered a massacre of children in Bethlehem. And in any case, who would believe a garrulous old woman like me? And where was the proof? Where was this child? Safe up in Galilee, and perhaps that was where God planned... to keep him safe.

But the faithful people, the ones like Simeon and myself, they should know, and be reassured that their hopes would be fulfilled. And so, we spread the news among the

old people, the ones who the people in power never think about, and certainly never listen to. Perhaps it will always be us old ones who keep hope alive and who pass the story on: we have our secret, and we know that, though it may not come in our lifetime, God's coming to his people, whoever they may be, is sure, and that our hopes will be fulfilled, here and in heaven.

By John Lansley, editor of Plus magazine, Christians on Ageing.

(Permission to use so long as he is credited).

Christian organisations resourcing ministry among older people

Christians on Ageing: [Christian Council on ageing – for older people and their life of faith and hope. \(christiansonageing.org.uk\)](http://christiansonageing.org.uk)



Faith in Later Life: Faith in Later Life



Embracing Age: EmbracingAge



Anna Chaplaincy at BRF Ministries:
Anna Chaplaincy | Offering spiritual care in later life



Prayers about later life written for BRF Ministries by Martyn Payne

The Anna Chaplaincy prayer:

Faithful God, you have promised in Christ to be with us until the end of time.

Come close to those who have lived long and experienced much. Help them to continue to be faithful, and within the all-age kingdom of God, to find ways to go on giving and receiving your grace, day by day. For your glory and your kingdom. **Amen**

Lord of our lives,
from the cradle to the grave, we celebrate this day
those who have the gift of years;
who dream dreams for the sake of our children;
who keep the story on behalf of your church;
and who hold wisdom to pass on to our young.
We rise up before them and call them blessed,
honoring them as our grandparents in the Faith,
within the all-age kingdom of heaven. **Amen.**

Lord of eternity,
keep safe those who are full of years,
who live in the shadow of death,
and who are taken where they do not wish to go.
Assure them of
your unfailing presence,
your timeless love,
and the fullness of your salvation
which is nearer now than when they first believed. **Amen.**

Lord God, as Anna found new confidence and joy
in speaking of the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ,
may all who have lived long
find similar renewal of faith and revival of hope,
at the twilight of their lives, on the threshold of heaven. **Amen.**

Lord of time and eternity,
who never cease to walk alongside us on our life's journey,
assure those facing old age of your continuing presence.
Comfort them when they face bereavement, limitations or illness
and grant them and those who care for them each day
a rich experience of your love at work in their lives.
In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Icon of the Prophet Anna Painted in 2021 by a Nun of the Benedictine Community at Malling Abbey

This icon was painted in traditional egg tempera technique on a wooden board coated with gesso, using eggs from hens that were raised on the Abbey estate by the Pilsdon-at-Malling community. This is a technique that has been used since the earliest Christian centuries for producing images to be used in churches and prayer spaces.

The community give permission for the icon to be used, as long as it is credited to the community. Mother Anne would be pleased to know where it is being used and to have copies of any materials produced using the icon. She says, *'it would be lovely to pray for those who use the icon'*. And *'we like to keep archives of any publications using work produced here'*. (email abbess@mallingabbey.org)



Intergenerational and All Age Activities

Roots on the Web has suggested activities for children's and all age groups at Candlemas ([Candlemas resources for children \(rootsontheweb.com\)](https://www.rootsontheweb.com/candlemas-resources-for-children)) which include the this enactment of the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple:

Prepare the story

Display on a table some building blocks, a baby doll, a blanket, a candle, a cross, a globe, and a picture of Jesus as a grown man. Invite the children to:

- build a 'temple' with the building blocks
- wrap the doll in the blanket
- light the candle (supervise carefully or use a battery one)
- identify the other objects/pictures.

Present the reading

Open the Bible at Luke 2.22-40.

Use the script below and the objects/pictures in *Prepare the story* (above) to tell the story. Instructions are in italics.

Thousands of years before Jesus was born, God gave Moses a list of rules. They said that every firstborn son should be brought to the Temple to be blessed. So Mary and Joseph took their baby, Jesus, to Jerusalem. *Build Temple with building blocks.*

Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He was a good man, who prayed every day for his country, Israel. The Holy Spirit had told Simeon that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. *Bring hands together in prayer.*

The Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple, where he met Mary and Joseph. He saw their baby son Jesus and took him in his arms. *Cradle the baby doll tenderly in your arms. Look down at the baby and smile.*

Then, to Mary and Joseph's amazement, Simeon began to praise God for their child. *Lift up the doll, lift your head and eyes upwards and smile.*

Simeon said, 'Master, now you can let me go in peace; I have seen your plan to save the world with my own eyes.'

Cradle the doll in one arm and lift up a world globe in the other. Look down at the baby.

Everyone will see what you've done; your plan will be a light which reveals you to foreign nations and brings glory to Israel.' *Cradle the doll in one arm and lift up the candle. Look down at the baby.*

Mary and Joseph were speechless with surprise. Simeon blessed them both, then he said to Mary, 'Although this child will save many, others will be against him. And through how they treat him, God will reveal what people are really like. But your own soul will feel like it's been pierced by a sword.' *Cradle the doll in one arm and lift up a wooden cross. Look down at the baby.*

At that moment, an old prophetess called Anna, who prayed and worshipped in the Temple, day and night, came and joined Mary, Joseph and Simeon. *Bring hands together in prayer.*

She also started praising God for Jesus, then began telling people about him, saying that he would save Jerusalem.

Lift arms up praising God and then open arms wide.

Having followed all the rules that God had given to Moses, Mary and Joseph went home to Nazareth. Jesus grew up to be strong and wise and God was pleased with him. *Show the picture of Jesus as a grown man.*

Further information about Anna Chaplaincy

For details of the work of Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends in Rochester Diocese, visit this page on the diocesan website:

[Older people and dementia - Diocese of Rochester \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/older-people-and-dementia-diocece-of-rochester).

Contact the Anna Chaplaincy lead for Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses Julia Burton-Jones for information about Anna Chaplaincy training and support. julia.burton-jones@rochester.anglican.org

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