



The Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple; The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Candlemas

On Sunday 3rd February this feast was celebrated throughout the Christian world. Here, in Stratton Deanery 16 church members from various churches in the area gathered in the ancient Poundstock Gildhouse and Church to mark this important day with a special service of prayer and discussion.

Although it was a very cold winter morning, spirits were high as we looked forward to meeting up with old friends and sharing this time together. We began with a time of worship, sitting at the large circular tables in this ancient historic building. The theme was “A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel” about Simeon and Anna in the Temple. This celebrates the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah and looks forward to the coming ministry of Christ and his redemption of the World through the Crucifixion. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple was the old title of this special day before it became known as Candlemas.

Six readers led us in the service until the break for Lunch. This was a meal of three different kinds of soup, fresh crusty bread followed by a variety of cheeses and fruit. The lunch was free and donated by the Worship & Spirituality group members. Donations were requested for the St. Petroc’s Society and thanks to everyone’s generosity, £100.00 was raised for the charity.

Following Lunch, we gathered round the tables, lit candles that we had brought with us from our morning services and read again the story of this day from Luke 2: 22 - 40. Fr David Barnes led us in a discussion on what Candlemas meant to us and how we felt we should share the gospel message of hope for all people.

After our prayers we set off up the very windy path through the churchyard dotted with patches of beautiful snowdrops to the church! The challenge was to keep the Light of Christ burning as we ventured out into Gods world! One or two did manage to get within feet of the door before failing but most of us did not even try. In church we re-kindled our flames and assembled round the font. There at the place of baptism, we turned our prayers to our baptism – “*We stand near the place of new birth. All: Let us shine with the light of your love.*” We affirmed our Baptism commitment signing one another with the sign of the Cross on our foreheads with Holy Water. Then with the light of Christ burning in our hearts back to the warmth of the Gildhouse for tea and biscuits before departing for home.