

All Change!

Malachi 3¹⁻⁵; Psalm 24; Hebrews 2^{14-end}; Luke 2²²⁻⁴⁰

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace. [Luke 2²⁹]

Today I feel like the priest, Simeon - seeing the potential in what was before him, yet knowing that it would mean change for him personally with much wider ramifications.

God had prompted Simeon by the Holy Spirit to be in the Temple when the infant Jesus was brought there to fulfil the promise that **he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah.**

✠ Simeon knew that his life could now draw to its close - his work was done: that gave rise to Simeon's Song, the *Nunc Dimittis*, embracing the personal change that would come to him: **Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace.**

✠ That priest had the vision to see what the Messiah would not be contained within the expectations in Israel: **your salvation... a light for revelation to the gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel.**

Vision is what matters. It is when we put ourselves second to what God shows as a possibility that we begin to put faith into action. The vision that we have for the future here I am convinced is fairly clear. It comes in three parts.

✠ **Physical:** we take leave of the building as we know it as we sing Simeon's Song. The vision is clear - the create a warm, flexible space where the altar is clearly at the centre of life and worship. Whatever the attractions of this space, contemporary or historic, we are clear that we do not worship a building but are also clear that everything about this space should help us lift our eyes to God and allow us to build relationship with one another. What we invest into this space matters because it communicates to those around us the worth we place on both God and each other!

Thank you to all of you who have shared the vision for this reordering - especially those who have worked towards it when it wouldn't have been their preference - and have had the patience, indulgence and forbearance as the processes within the Church of England have ground slowly towards agreeing it all.

✠ **Spiritual:** this is the most important aspect of what happens. We are about to become a pilgrim people - will it be 6 months in the wilderness or 6 months towards the promised land? What will God be teaching us and where will God lead us?

We have an opportunity to discover new things about God - about his love, his grace, his forgiveness, his joy, his comfort, his peace, his challenge, his calling, his leading. There is so much for us to discover about God and then the need to share it. This isn't a social club nor a museum - this is where we experience God!

✠ **Community:** the Parish system in the Church of England is one of the great gems in our tradition: everyone who lives in this Parish is a member of this Church and is under the 'cure of souls' of the rector of this Parish (whether they like it or not).

Our task is to ensure that in this new chapter of our life together that this become a place where all are welcome and that our space becomes their space. How tempting it is to have something new and want to keep it for ourselves, but that isn't really sustainable. Of course, we can demand that this place will be respected and we should be careful that no-one runs off with the family silver, but in our minds now we have to be clear about this being a place of welcome and a space for our community.

Like Simeon, we have cause to be grateful to God for being here to not just witness but to be part of this hope becoming reality.

Like Simeon, we may struggle with embracing the new and releasing the familiar.

Like Simeon, we have to trust God through his Holy Spirit to unfold his plan for us and for the Christian witness in this Parish into the future.