



St Marylebone
Parish Church

**1.10 pm Holy Eucharist with prayers for healing
Wednesday in the Christmas Octave 2020**

This Christmas has been very strange. For some its been fine, for others its been anxious. Some have relished the quiet, others have felt isolated and lonely.

But whatever our experience of these holy days, and the journey we have been on through 2020 to get here, I pray for each and every one of you, that something of the small and simple joy of the stable of Bethlehem has broken through.

The joy and peace of who God is, and what the coming of Jesus means – even amongst the difficulties of life gives us cause for a still, small, immovable light of hope at the depths of our hearts – even if the surface is cold or weary.

And its from that place, that deep place, that today's first reading comes. St John knew trials and tribulations. He knew a hard life, deprivation, disease, loneliness and affliction; so it was from deep within (not up on the surface) that he writes to us today. The knowledge of who God is, how His coming in Jesus has changed everything, for everyone, forever, the hope of the Gospel, the truth that God is Love, the promise of eternal life, and the great reality of God with us – that is the furnace deep within that fuels St John. And it can and does fuel us too. Like those Christmas scenes – a cold windy wind. Dark, blizzard blowing, deep snow, hard going, bodies aching and throat rasping – the little light burning in the window that shines of hope and life and the promise of goodness.

The faithfulness of Anna and Simeon comes from the same place – years of waiting, unacknowledged. Uncheered and unsupported, uncherished and unrewarded – but only because of that small, deep hope. And they were not disappointed in their task, so great a reality is the hope Jesus brings.

The stable of Bethlehem and what it contains, however modest its proportions and humble its reality, however modest and humble (or even downright sad and difficult) our reality is, this stable contains a deep light of hope, of warmth, of love and life, a promise that can never be undone.