



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### Luke 2: 28-32 'Simeon's Prayer of Thanksgiving'

<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup> 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

"You're a star!" This accolade has been well deserved by many during this past year, as people have come together to help others with pooled resources and skills.



I started writing this on the shortest and darkest day of the year. Up in the starry night

sky the two planets Saturn and Jupiter almost seemed to coalesce, forming a very bright 'star' – the first time for four hundred years. This has led to the inevitable speculation as to whether this could have been the 'Star of Bethlehem' 2000 years ago! Leaving aside the astronomical star and the astrological magi, as Andrew Lloyd Webber intimated, Jesus Christ is a 'Superstar' of the Epiphany scene. Besides the magi, the devout elderly Simeon shares a starring role in the Epiphany narratives when he encounters the infant Jesus with his parents in the temple. No doubt his eyes lit up as he expressed his joy, hope and sense of fulfilment in the Song of Simeon otherwise known as the 'Nunc Dimittis' (see above). He saw Jesus as the saviour and the light for both the Gentile world and the Jewish people.

Family members and friends are often regarded as 'stars' who light up each other's lives. Sadly, this year many meetups have had to be 'virtual'. Likewise, many long-distance lorry drivers (who like the stars in the sky above that we so often take for granted) were not able to get home in time to meet up with their loved ones in time for Christmas. For those suffering bereavement it can seem as if the light of their lives has been extinguished. For them especially we pray for a coalescing of the Christian star qualities of light, love and hope.

Nowadays, many people associate 'stars' not so much with the night sky but rather with celebrities. In the New Year's Honours List they often seem to get the limelight rather than the many unsung heroes, but on occasions these star celebrities come 'down to earth' in a way we can all appreciate. The light of so many children's lives in the UK is dimmed by poverty which is a national disgrace. We give thanks that stars like the footballer Marcus Rashford and actress Emma Thompson have (like Saturn and Jupiter) coalesced to focus a campaign on behalf of children and their families living in poverty.

Stars emit light caused by an explosion of energy. Apparently planets – unlike stars – do not produce their own light. Because they are nearer to us in our solar system they reflect the light of our nearest star the Sun. May it be that in 2021 we as 'Emmanuel lights' can likewise emit and reflect the light of Christ with the energy and fire of the Spirit in our hearts.

**Prayer:** Christ, be our light! Shine through the darkness  
Shine in our hearts, shine through us all today. Amen.