Rochdale Parish Church
of St Chad

NEWS

(Please take one and pass it on)

Candlemas
2026

Welcome to
Rochdale Parish Church of St Chad

Thank you for joining us for worship today.
You are welcome to stay
for refreshments after the service.

This newsletter is for
Candlemas to **Ash Wednesday**.

The next newsletter will be on
Sunday 15 February,
covering Ash Wednesday (18 Feb)
and the beginning of Lent.

PLEASE SWITCH YOUR PHONE TO

*** SILENT ***

DURING THE SERVICE

Thank You

If you would like us to pray for
someone who is ill or who has died,
please add their name to the list
located on the desk
or speak to one of the clergy.

Please continue to pray for
UKRAINE and THE HOLY LAND
and also for all affected
by conflict and/or disaster

Dates for your Diary 2026

Sunday 1 February - CANDLEMAS

Holy Communion 11·15 am

Sunday 8 February - Matins 11·15 am

Wednesday 11 February

Friends Together Bereavement Support Group

10 am - 12 noon

Sunday 15 February - Holy Communion 11·15 am

Sunday 22 February - Holy Communion 11·15 am

Thursdays

5, 12, 19 and 26 February

Church cleaning at 10·30 am

Everyone Welcome!

18 FEBRUARY

Thank you, Lord,
for this new day,
and for the privilege
of travelling
a little further
in your company.

from: faithandworship.com

40 days after Christmas, on 2 February, we arrive at **Candlemas**.

Candlemas Day is one of the oldest holy feasts in the church calendar, having been celebrated since the 4th century AD in Jerusalem. A woman named Egeria, a 4th century pilgrim, is credited with having included an account of the celebration taking place in Jerusalem in her written record of an extended pilgrimage* from her home in Galicia, travelling across Europe via Constantinople to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. (*The 7th Galician monk Valerio of Bierzo claimed she made this journey during 381-384 AD.)

Today we remember the ritual presentation of Jesus at the temple, his first entry into the temple, also the purification of Mary 40 days after the birth of her son,

Simeon holding the baby Jesus and, with Anna, recognising him as the promised Messiah and the one who would be a light to the world.

Simeon and Anna were elderly; Simeon, who was visiting the temple for the day and had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, and Anna, who "...never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem". (*Luke 2:37-38*)

The story of Simeon holding the baby in his arms and saying that Jesus will be a light for the Gentiles is told in Luke 2:22-32

> *When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'*

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.

The candles also remind us of Simeon's words that have become known as the Song of Simeon, or the Nunc Dimittis (*Luke* 2:29-32).

Candlemas as we celebrate it today can be traced back to at least 543 and there is mention of The Feast of Lighted Candles by Bede and St Eligius, Bishop of Noyon 640-648.

Candlemas is halfway between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox, so winter is half over! It's also our last look at Christmas, we can begin to look towards Easter, and it will soon be the start of Lent.

In pre-Christian times it was a pagan festival of light with fires being lit to celebrate the strengthening of the sun's warmth over the coming months, and there was a Roman custom of lighting candles to scare away evil spirits.

It was also the day when the church's candles were blessed; in later years the people brought their own candles into church to have them blessed by the priest so that these candles would become *apotropaic*, and so ward off the evil spirits.

Some thought the candles offered protection against famine, illness and plague. /cont'd...

There was the blessing and a procession with lit candles to represent Jesus' entry as light of the world into the temple, and candles placed before a statue of the Virgin Mary. Candles were then taken home to be lit and placed in windows, a symbol of light in the darker days of the year.

Snowdrops (*galanthas nivalis*) were also another source of brightness closely associated with Candlemas, but it is considered unlucky to bring them into the house before Candlemas Day.

These flowers are known as Candlemas Bells because they often bloom early in the year, even before Candlemas, and are seen as a symbol of Jesus being the hope for the world by many Christians.

Many people think that the word Snowdrop means a drop of snow but it is from "drop" the old word for ear-ring, and its Latin name *Galanthas* means milk flower.

In Medieval and Tudor times it was traditional for greenery such as holly, ivy, laurel and rosemary to be used to decorate homes at Christmas time - but people didn't rush to take this greenery down on Twelfth Night and left it all in place until Candlemas Eve.

And if you missed taking down any, or all, of your Christmas decoration on Twelfth Night, 5 January, it's now time to do this.

Robert Herrick writes in his poem "Ceremonies for Candlemas Eve" :

DOWN with the rosemary and bays,
DOWN with the mistletoe ;
Instead of holly, now up-raise
The greener box (for show).

As to food for this festival... it was honey cakes in pagan times, in France it's crepes (but not to be eaten until after 8 pm), pancakes in Germany, both symbols of the sun because of their round shape, tamales in Mexico, boxty in Ireland.

In Spanish speaking countries Candlemas is also known as *Candelaria* and there is the tradition that whoever had found the baby Jesus figure inside the *Rosca de Reyes* (Kings Cake) at Epiphany (Jan 6) is then obliged to bring food to the Candaleria gathering on 2 February.

The farming year began at Candlemas and farmers' wives in the South Tyrol would make a special meal for the maids and farm workers who had agreed to work for another year, also baking yeast doughnuts filled with cranberry jam known as "door nails" *(Tuernaegel or Kniachiachl)* to "nail down" the workers to their year on the farm.

There is folklore associated with the weather at Candlemas and how it would affect the weather for the remainder of winter. Our folklore has mention of the badger coming out of his sett to test the weather on 2 February; if the weather was good enough for him to see his own shadow then the weather would remain cold and the badger would return to his sett to sleep for 6 more weeks.

In the USA and Canada they celebrate Groundhog Day. A groundhog is released from its burrow and if it's a cloudy day, and so it sees no shadow, then it will be an early Spring. However, if it's a sunny day then the groundhog will see its shadow, return to its burrow, and there will be another six weeks of winter weather. The largest celebration takes place in Punxsutawney PA, where the tradition began with German-speaking Pennsylvania Dutch immigrants from Europe. The German tradition they brought with them designated Candlemas as "Badger Day" *(Dachstag)* where if a badger emerged from its sett on a sunny day it would cast a shadow, predicting another four weeks of winter. In 1961 the groundhog was named Punxsutawney Phil and is at the centre of the event (and has a 40% success rate with predictions!).

As with some of our other festivals, there is an associated traditional poem:

If Candlemas Day be fair and bright
Winter will have another fight.
If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain,
Winter won't come again.

If Candlemas be dry and fair
The half o the winter's to come and mair;
If Candlemas Day be wet and foul,
The half o the winter's gane at Yule.

We'll have to wait and see how accurate the poem is for us this year!

Linda G.

It's **CANNED FOOD MONTH** - perhaps give a few extra tins to

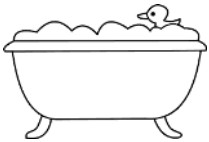
Rochdale foodbank

2 FEBRUARY

WORLD READ ALOUD DAY
and
YORKSHIRE PUDDING DAY

9 FEBRUARY

READ IN THE BATHTUB DAY
and
CHOCOLATE DAY



10 FEBRUARY

NATIONAL UMBRELLA DAY
and
TEDDY DAY

14 FEBRUARY

VALENTINE'S DAY

15 FEBRUARY

REAL BREAD WEEK

17 FEBRUARY

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY (RAK)

This month's full moon will be the Snow Moon, on **2 February.**

It will be the last full moon of the meteorological winter, with its name coming from the heavy snowfall typical in the Northern Hemisphere at this time of the year. This full moon may also known as the Storm Moon or Hungry Moon, and in Celtic culture is known as the Ice Moon.

VALENTINE'S DAY

On 14 February we celebrate Valentine's Day, giving our loved ones flowers, love messages, chocolates, gifts, etc., but if you explore the origins of the celebration then it's not long before you're made aware that the day has a murky and cruel history in contrast to hearts and flowers.

There is mention of at least three people named Valentine, all of them martyrs, in early records that give their deaths as being on 14 February... a priest in Rome who ministered to persecuted Christians, a bishop of Interamna (Terni) and a martyr in the Roman province of Africa.

However, the story as we know it follows the execution of a priest named Valentine in Rome on 14 February, around 270AD, in the time of Emperor Claudius II.

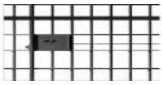
Roman rule employed many cruel practices in order to subdue the people and the Emperor was not finding it easy to recruit men to become soldiers in his army due to their preferring to stay home with their wives and families. So a decree was brought into law that banned all engagements and marriages in Rome, but Valentine thought this was unjust and continued to perform marriages in secret, in defiance of the decree forbidding this. Inevitably, these marriages came to the attention of the Emperor and that meant it probably wasn't going to end well.

But how did Valentine's death and execution bring him to be associated with today's celebration of love? The story goes that he was arrested and brought before the prefect of Rome and while under house arrest became friends with the judge's daughter, healed her blindness and went on to baptise the family and their servants. Claudius' attitude towards Valentine mellowed, but when he tried to persuade Claudius to become a Christian this was met with a refusal and led to Valentine being condemned to death by beating with clubs and then beheading if he didn't renounce the faith.

Before his execution, Valentine left the judge's daughter a farewell note, signing it "From Your Valentine", and this is said to be the inspiration of today's sending of notes and cards.

In those times there was a pagan festival of love, the Feast of Lupercalia, and the date of Valentine's death may have become associated with this, but Pope Gelasius decided to end the festival in 496 AD, declaring that 14 February would now be celebrated as St Valentine's Day.

Linda G.



The funeral escort was going to be very late setting off. Somehow, the paperwork had not gone to the right department in time. Scott – who I had assured was more than likely to be going to his brother's funeral because he hadn't been told otherwise by the previous day – was pacing up and down, asking what the **** was going on.

It was a rushed effort to get it sorted and embarrassment for myself, as one of the chaplains had made the error. The officer in the Manager's office on the Wing refused to leave the room whilst the phone-calls were flying because, he said 'He WILL hit one of us and I'd rather it be me than you' – pointing at the female wing manager. In the end, Scott went. He was unhappy, of course, but they got him there, and no one was hit.

Calm spirits are not always easy to find. Wayne had told me that he was staying calm because he was 'out in ten weeks and I've been a ****head'. It sounded promising. Two days later he had smashed an obs panel because he couldn't get hold of his vapes for a week due to a lack of funds. So much for the calm.

Yet despite the fact that Martin speaks at breakneck speed, has a grooved forehead through too many angry expressions and told me more of his story than I could have wished for – involving a machete that he said he shouldn't have picked up – sitting at close quarters with him recently has been a joy!

He describes a night- time dream that had him feeling he was physically picked out of his bed and compelled to kneel and pray in a way he never has before. He talked of feeling out of breath for minutes afterwards and of feeling completely different the next morning. He says he doesn't want drugs, has his eyes open to the stupid things others are doing, has broken off with certain 'friends' who have done him no good and he wants to be baptised.

Time will tell if he can stick it out but he is soaking up all we can offer of chapel, the Bible and our one-to-one sessions- and others have noticed a difference.

The man with the machete told me also about how he likes to take a few extra slices of bread at lunch so he can feed the birds who come to the windowsill.

He has befriended one pigeon in particular.

Birds featured on another occasion that week. Stuart spoke up in our last Bible study group to try to explain something that is a hard concept for people to grasp - the sense of having God's Spirit at work. We don't always feel or sense or find it easy to believe that God may

8								
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	9					4		

be with us but, said Stuart, 'It's like hearing the birds sing. Sometimes you hear them and sometimes you don't but it doesn't mean that when you can't hear, they're not there.'

At times, I am amazed. At the perception, at the more tender moments, at my own lack of expectation. Why should criminals not enjoy hearing the birds sing?

There were gruffer voices than birds singing at the carol service in December, but we filled the chapel with men, a few family visitors, church visitors and a higher number of staff than usual. Add in a sprinkling of chaplains, representatives of the 'Good News for Everyone' group and the stalwarts of the Salvation Army band and you have the ingredients for a really good celebration.

They were attentive, involved and keen. Why should they not like singing carols?

The sometimes stuttering readers of the familiar Nativity story and the mix of clapping, joking, singing and talking afterwards with their mince pies, as I looked out and considered what I knew of their lives, gave me cause to stop. This whole bizarre mix of the rough and awful things they have done, the lack of selflessness that can sometimes be apparent, makes the moments when there is real goodness and thoughtfulness shine out more.

I have treasured the card from Aidan, who has terrible handwriting and crossed out some of what he initially wanted to say. I have kept the poem from Luke.

And I am listening for the birdsong in their lives.

Hilary Edgerton, Chaplain
HMP Buckley Hall, Rochdale
January 2026

ST CHAD'S

Sundays

11.15 am

Choral Eucharist

(*Matins on 2nd Sunday of month)*

2.00 - 3.30 pm

Asian Christian Fellowship

CONTACT INFO

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M Butterworth

PCC Sec & Newsletter:
L Goddard

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L Goddard

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https://rochdaleparishchurches.co.uk
www.facebook.com/rochdaleparishchurches
@RochdaleStChads

To book a Wedding or Baptism/Christening at any of our churches please come along to church on Sunday morning or phone to make arrangements.

ST MARY IN THE BAUM

Sundays 9.15 am
Holy Communion*
* BCP service week 1

Churchwarden:
A Pollock 07974 191 246

ST LUKE'S DEEPLISH

Sundays 10.00 am
Holy Communion, Family Worship
or Service of the Word

Wednesday 11.00 am Morning Prayer

Churchwarden:
D Smithers 07794 2559865