

## Family of faith

### Notes on the Bible readings

- This passage revolves around two elderly people who have faithfully waited for this moment. Simeon and Anna represent quiet lives that have been devoted in service to God, which are nearing their end. They embody a spirit of patient waiting. But it is at this point that God interacts with each of them as they recognise the baby brought by his parents for the customary purification, as the one who would redeem their people.
- Simeon's words of blessing move us from Mary's domestic focus to the cosmic significance of Jesus and the revelation that his birth will be for Israel and the Gentiles. However, his words are also quite disturbing as he speaks of oppression and tells Mary a sword will pierce her soul.
- The fact that both Simeon and Anna are named speaks of their importance within the story. There is great power in a name, it identifies you from others and signals something of the divine role God has for you. Who can we name as those in our own journey of faith who have had an impact on our growth and development?

### Later in life

In a world where media attention is focused mostly on the young, do some research – you could share this out within a household – to find out about how our society tends to view and treat older people. The Age UK website is a good place to begin. Why is there a need for such a charity in the UK (and is this the same in other parts of the world)? What are the key issues, and what might you – individually or together – do to help?

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### Questions for reflection

- ▶ How important/influential are older people in your life?
- ▶ What value is placed on wisdom and experience in today's world?
- ▶ How would you improve support for the older generation?



### A prayer of approach

*We come with all we have – body, frailty, energy – and we approach you, who welcomes all, knowing that you sustain us at all ages, and in all ages, calling us to love. Amen.*

### A prayer for others

*Today we honour Simeon and Anna. Old, both, they had a light that sustained them. They both held strongly to what they knew they hoped for. May we – people of all ages – be held together by what sustains us. Whether seven or seventy, may we know what is most important.*

*Today we pray for people who are ignored because of their age. In an era where youth and beauty are praised, we have so often ignored wisdom, experience, longstanding faithfulness and perspective. For all who have felt overlooked, for all who have love and wisdom to share, we pray. God in your mercy, hear us. Amen.*

### A personal prayer

*I have marked my birthdays. I have marked some with joy, some with sorrow, some with hope, some with change. With each year, may I find myself called deeper and deeper into a story of love: with the people around me, for the community of people and for those denied justice. Amen.*

### Live your faith

Find out about an aspect of the work of Age UK (or a similar charity) in your local area. Is there something you can do to help or support the work?