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Today is New Year's Eve. Before we count down tonight, what are your hopes for next year? No matter what age you are, you may have expectations for the future, because with expectations, there will be a driving force, allowing you to face the present and change the future. A person without expectations can easily fall into a situation, as is popularly described today: **lying flat or couch potato**. Losing the courage to change and the will to move forward and make progress.

The three wardens and I are planning the future ministry and development of the church and are preparing to write a proposal and submit it to the diocese, hoping that the diocese will help us with resources. Brothers and sisters, I invite you to pray for this. The church must move forward, fulfil its responsibilities as the Lord's church, and not 'lying flat'.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in your prayers, please also pray for your own service, and ask the Lord to give you the confidence, courage, and the gifts you need to serve the church and respond to the Lord's calling. Our Lord calls every believer to be salt and light for the world and to develop the church. I hope that everyone, together with me and the wardens, will work together for the Lord and the church.

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Today's gospel mentioned that Mary and Joseph, taking the baby Jesus, set out from Bethlehem and went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and dedicate Jesus to the Lord. They followed the law written in Exodus 13 and Leviticus 12. In the temple, they met two godly elders, first Simeon and then the prophetess Anna. The song of Simeon (i.e., Nunc Dimittis) sung by our Anglican Church during Evening Prayer comes from this text. Therefore, whether the Gloria, the Magnificat, or Song of Simeon, they are all songs related to the birth of Jesus. These songs have been sung for more than two thousand years and are the traditional canticles of the church.

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Simeon and Anna served the Lord devoutly throughout their lives, and their greatest wish

was to see the Messiah. Finally, in their old age, this expectation was realized. Perhaps for today's generation, you would find it difficult to understand that Simeon and Anna spent so many years waiting, and their expectation was just to see the coming of the Savior. Today, people are easily impatient because of the momentary and fast-food culture. However, it takes time for spiritual practice. It takes time to know God and to build a relationship with God. For many people, it is not easy. Perhaps we have to ask ourselves: why are we not so eager to know Jesus Christ deeply and unwilling to take the time to build it up? Why do we not feel that the return of Jesus Christ is so important and have less expectation?

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To understand Simeon and Anna, we need to look carefully at the sayings of Simeon. Simeon hoped to see the coming of God's salvation. His wish was not to gain anything for his own personal benefit, but for the benefit of Israel and all peoples. What he hopes to see is the arrival of Israel's consolation. Through this Saviour, Israel will regain the position that God chose them to be in the world and become the light of all nations.

It turns out that Simeon and Anna's wish was for Israel to get back on the right track, regain its freedom, its identity, and its glory. That was the promise God made to their ancestor Abraham:

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The Lord said to Abraham, **"I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."** (Genesis 22:17-18) In the time of Jesus, the Israelites had lost their country. They were being ruled by the Roman empires, suffering bullying, and having no real freedom. However, Simeon and Anna still had faith in God, believing that God would not void His promises and that God would send the Messiah to help the Israelites and guide them again. In fact, Simeon and Anna waited for a lifetime. Their patience, perseverance, and confidence made them role models for many generations.

Moreover, they did not just lie flat and wait, they served God continuously. The Bible

describes that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Simeon was righteous and devout. Anna was a prophetess who served God night and day in the temple with fasting and prayer. The two actively served God in their own way, waiting for the promise, and did not lose heart because of time and old age. What can we learn from them?

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In the first church I served, I met a group of elders who were very eager to learn. They were serious about their faith. Some of them would record the sermons and listen to and review them over and over again when they went home; they would also actively learn singing and music scores, and even try playing African drums. Some learned to lead games in fellowships and meetings, and also participated in many serving positions in the church.

They did not give up their pursuit of faith, even though they had little education or even illiteracy and were old. Instead, they very much looked forward to deepening their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. What we see in them is their enthusiasm for faith and service. Their age and education cannot stop them at all. I saw that God's blessings to them were also great.

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Brothers and sisters, it is very important to have expectations for faith. Expectations will bring motivation, and motivation will bring changes. It is also important to be patient and wait for God's actions. Maintaining a spiritual relationship with God during the process is even more critical. Otherwise, how can you discern God's actions and help in your life? The testimonies of Simeon and Anna, and the testimonies of many others, are a spiritual reminder to us today.