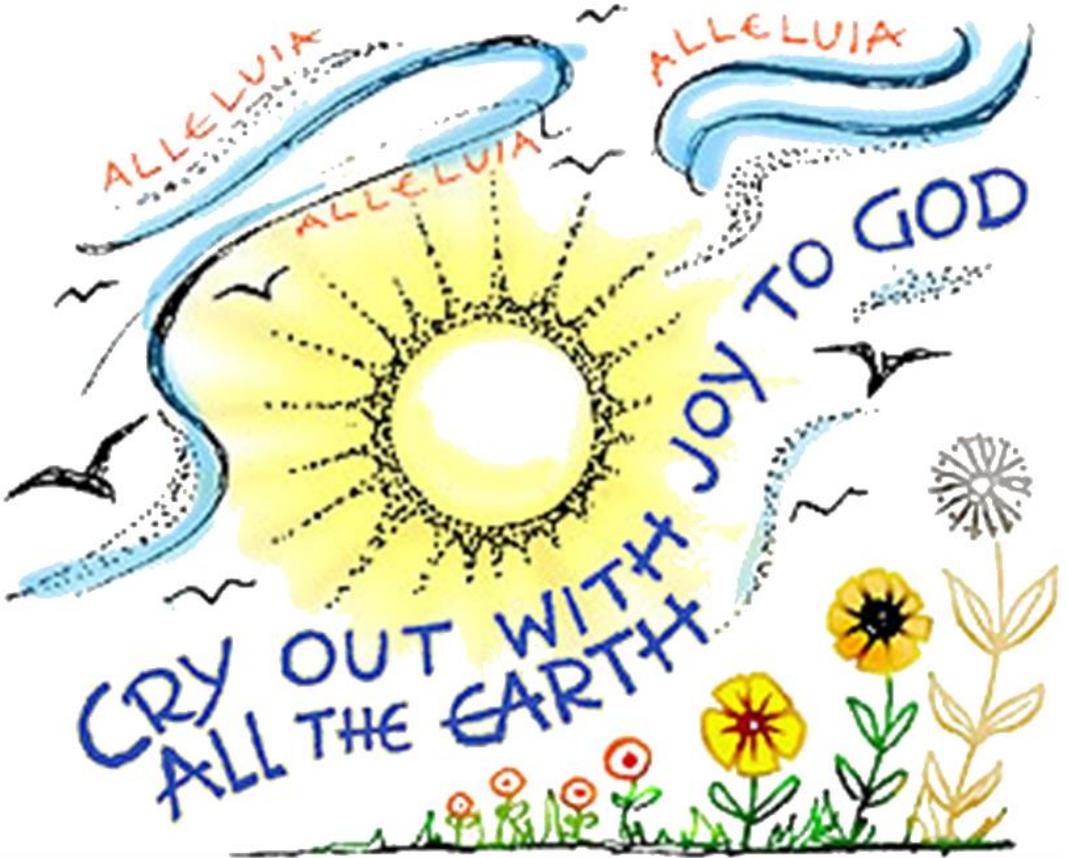




**Chet Valley Churches**

# **Easter Communion**



**Rogation Sunday**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

*The word "Rogation" comes from the Latin verb rogare, meaning "to ask"*

# Welcome

*Good morning and welcome to the Chet Valley Benefice for our service on Rogation Sunday. It is 10.30am. We remain isolated in our own homes. Let us each light our own candle as we gather together for worship, reminding us of Jesus, The Light of the World. If you would like, why don't you place on a table, close by you, a piece of bread and a glass of wine.*

## The Greeting

The Lord be with you **and also with you.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

## Hymn: *We Plough the Fields and Scatter*

**We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand.  
He sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.**

*All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above;  
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.*

**He only is the Maker of all things near and far;  
He paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star;  
The wind and waves obey him, by him the birds are fed;  
Much more to us, his children, He gives our daily bread.**

*All good gifts around us...*

**We thank thee, then, O Father, for all things bright and good:  
The seed-time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.  
No gifts have we to offer for all thy love imparts,  
But that which thou desirest: our humble, thankful hearts!**

*All good gifts around us...*

## Prayer

**God of heaven and earth, You call us to share in the care of  
creation and to bring food and fruitfulness from field and farm.**

**Hear our prayers on this Rogation Sunday  
For all who make their living on the land,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



## Confession

*The minister introduces the confession*

Let us ask God to have mercy on our troubled land,  
and to prosper the work of our soiled hands.

Let us ask God to forgive our delusion of self-sufficiency  
so that we may praise him for his provision and goodness.

*Pause*

Lord, you give us this good earth,  
Yet we take your generous gifts for granted.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, you give us this good earth, but we squander its rich resources.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, you give us this good earth,  
But we fail to share your bounty with all of your children.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

*The president proclaims Christ's forgiveness*

May the God of love and power forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,  
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,  
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
We worship you, we give you thanks,  
We praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
You take away the sin of the world: Have mercy on us;  
You are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
Receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,  
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**



## The Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. Amen.

## Old Testament Reading: Genesis 8:20-9:17

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odour, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind. And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it."

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting

covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

## **New Testament Reading: Acts 17:22-31**

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

*At the end the reader says*

This is the word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

## **Hymn: For the Fruits of His Creation**

**For the fruits of his creation thanks be to God;  
For his gifts to ev’ry nation, thanks be to God;  
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,  
silent growth while we are sleeping,  
Future needs in earth’s safe-keeping, thanks be to God.**

**In the just reward of labour, God’s will is done;  
In the help we give our neighbour, God’s will is done;  
In our world-wide task of caring  
For the hungry and despairing,  
In the harvests we are sharing, God’s will is done.**



**For the harvests of his Spirit, thanks be to God;  
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God;  
For the wonders that astound us,  
For the truths that still confound us,  
Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.**

## **The Gospel Reading John 14:15-21**

*At the beginning the reader says:*

Alleluia, Alleluia. The seed is the word of God, says the Lord. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

*At the end the reader says:*

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

Spring follows winter. Summer follows Spring, then autumn and full circle to winter again. Whatever else is happening in our world at the moment, the seasons continue to cycle.

Since lockdown began, the furry pussy willow catkins have long gone. Starry blackthorn flowers, white on black spiny twigs, have given way in the hedgerows to the abundant creamy white of hawthorn in full flower. Sticky buds that were just opening are now full hands of green leaves on the horse chestnuts with white and pink candles of flowers adorning the trees.

And helping us be aware of the variety and exuberance are the rebel botanists, inscribing the names of plants on pavements for people to learn about things that they hadn't even noticed in their car-bound, rapid lives: Germander Speedwell; Red Campion; Herb Robert. Fabulous names!

And birds are singing, nesting, laying eggs and feeding babies. We have some robins in our garden busy darting to and fro with insects in their beaks. Swallows

and swifts have arrived. Cows have calved and are now out of doors. Woolly lambs are skipping around. Nature is wonderful!

I think maybe we are more aware of that this year as we have exercised our right to be out of doors for an hour each day.

We are coming to understand the rhythms and mystery of our fragile earth. The ebb and flow of life.

In our fields we have perhaps seen ploughing and sowing of seed, waking one morning to a faint whisper of green where all was brown. Or maybe have seen planting and earthing up of potatoes with the plants now just emerging from the ridges. Whilst the yellow rape flowers have faded and seed pods are filling out and ripening for harvest. There is a rhythm to agricultural life which mirrors that in nature.

And in the church there is a rhythm too: we move from Christmas through Epiphany to Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. We have Trinity Sunday, Ordinary Time punctuated by Saints Days and then Advent and back to Christmas. From white through purple, white, red, green, purple and white again.

There was a time when the Church year and the agricultural year were quite obviously linked. There were the four quarter days: Lady Day, St John Baptist's Day, Michaelmas and Christmas Day when farming rents were due and when tenancies changed hands.

When each parish in the countryside had its own priest, country people looked to him, always him, to bless and hallow the agricultural year so that the ground might be fruitful, the livestock healthy and human bellies and purses relatively full.

The agricultural year started with Plough Sunday around the time of Epiphany. Christmas festivities were over and done with and it was time to turn the soil so that the frosts could break it down ready for sowing in the Spring. Everyone gathered so that the priest could bless the plough to speed its course through the ground and also to acknowledge at the outset God's indispensable involvement in the whole agricultural cycle.

But it was not just the marking of Plough Sunday for which the farmers and the church gathered together. Years ago the parson of every rural parish was expected to celebrate all of the festivals of the farmers' year: Rogation Day, Lammas, Harvest. Church and farming life were very much intertwined. Today we are celebrating on Rogation Sunday.

In rural parishes, in years gone by, there might be a procession with hymns and prayers. The priest of the parish with the churchwardens and the parochial officials headed a crowd of boys armed with birch or willow boughs to beat the parish boundary markers—beating the bounds”.

Sometimes the boys were themselves whipped or even violently bumped on the boundary-stones to make them remember. The object of taking boys along

supposedly ensuring that witnesses to the boundaries should survive as many generations as possible.

I wonder if we should do that today as we go about our exercise?

Probably not! But as well as beating the bounds, priests would go through the fields of the many farmers, blessing their crops in hopes of a bountiful harvest in due course.

Perhaps now, more than ever, we sense the need for God's blessing on our earth—or rather God's earth, lovingly created and trustingly given over into our care.

Our earth—what a lot it has had to deal with this past year. We've seen fires ravaging Australia and California, destroying everything in their way and we are powerless to tame them. We've seen floods in our own country, sweeping through towns and villages. Such devastation by fire and flood is supposed to be a once in a lifetime event but I can remember quite a number of serious floods and fires in our country and I'm not so very old.

Perhaps many of us have even forgotten those disasters in the face of the current crisis—what poor memories we have! Now we have plague, pestilence, Covid-19—the first pandemic for 100 years, though the 4<sup>th</sup> epidemic of a new disease in fewer than 10 years.

I wonder, do we sometimes think that we have mastered nature? Or that we can do what we like without consequence? What foolishness!

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; *Psalm 24:1*

Do we feel it is somehow less relevant now to ask for God's blessing on the earth?

I think that today there remains with most believers a lingering sense of humility before Him who is the source of all things. In Genesis we read that God blessed man, male and female, when he had created them. He gave them dominion, careful and responsible stewardship, of the land in which they were living. He gave them every green plant for food and then every living thing for food.

*As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. Genesis 8:22*

*God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Genesis 9:12*

Have we forgotten our responsibility in the way that we fail to care for the land we have been so generously given? Maybe we have put our greed for cheap food, and our desire for food out of season, above our concern for the air, the land and the animals.

Has God forgotten God's promises?

Do we remember our responsibility when we see a rainbow?

Does God remember the promise when there is a rainbow in the sky?

We have some recollection of hope evidenced in the multitude of rainbows seen in our communities as a sign of support and encouragement for front-line workers, keyworkers in this pandemic. Perhaps we can search our memories a bit harder and rediscover our task in caring for creation.

As we gather to celebrate Rogation Sunday, let's come in gratitude for God's goodness along with a real sense of responsibility in stewarding the resources of the earth. Then we can honestly give thanks and ask for God's blessing on our farming communities and on those who work the land.

## **The Confession of Faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
Who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
Who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the church.

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **Rogation Day prayers**

Let us go out into the glory of God's creation. Let us seek for wisdom to understand the rhythm of life, our own rhythms and the rhythms of the earth;  
**to dance with the Spirit in the joy of God's creation,  
and to seek God's blessing.**

## **Prayers at Garden/Allotments**

Upon our gardens and allotments  
**send a blessing, O Lord.**

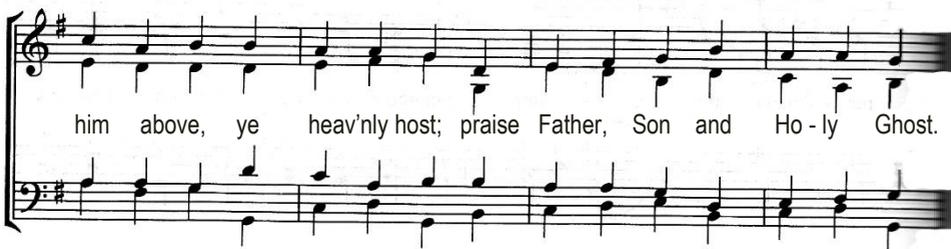
In the rhythms of preparing the ground, sowing seed

and enjoying the harvest,  
**may we find spiritual and physical nourishment.**

In our bounty, open our hearts to the needs of others  
**and give us the will to share the fruits of the world.**



Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all crea-tures here be - low. Praise



him above, ye heav'nly host; praise Father, Son and Ho - ly Ghost.



## **Prayers at a cereal field**

Upon the cereal crops and fields  
**send a blessing, O Lord.**

In the rain and in the sun, in the swelling and ripening of grain  
**May we plead that the harvest will be safely gathered and stored.**

Help us to sow the seed of your word,  
**and to see ourselves as harvesters for eternal life.**

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow...***

## Prayers at a potato field

Upon human labour **send a blessing, O Lord.**

In the planting and earthing up of common potatoes,  
**May we give thanks for the plants  
which feed both animals and humans.**

Teach us the importance of the humble things in life  
**And help us to learn the value of humility in our own lives.**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow...*



## Prayer for animals and livestock

Upon our animals and livestock,  
**send a blessing, O Lord.**

In our labours and our leisure, your creatures share our lives.  
**Help us always to treat them with consideration.**

In our desire for food, clothing and other products,  
**Help us never to exploit those entrusted to our stewardship.**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow...*

## Prayers at the river

Upon our waters and wild spaces  
**send a blessing, O Lord.**

In the ebb and flow of the tide, and the diversity and exuberance of the natural world,  
**May we find constancy and refreshment.**

Teach us to cherish your creation  
**And to work for the prosperity of all living things, great and small.**

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow...***



## **At a site of processing of raw materials**

Upon all who process raw materials and prepare them for distribution and sale send a blessing, **O Lord.**

As we work in partnership with you in your creation,  
**Help us to treat this bounty with respect and honour.**

We give you thanks for making the earth fruitful  
**so that it might produce what is needed for life.**

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow...***

## **In the graveyard**

For all those who have gone before us and upon those who mourn  
**send a blessing, O Lord.**

In our births and in our deaths, **let us find your rhythm.**

We give you thanks for the lives and witness of those who have gone before us,

**May we live up to all that was good and faithful in their lives.**

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow...***



**As we return home**

Upon our houses and those living in them, **send a blessing, O Lord.**

In our comings and goings

**May all our loving be as strong as the house built upon rock,  
withstanding the storms of life.**

We praise God for all who share our homes and lives, both human and animal.

**Help us to care for them all, remembering that you made them  
and delight in them.**

## **Collect**

Creator God, who sustains all you have made by the power of your Spirit, help us to rejoice in your bounty, to rely on your providence and to ensure the fertility of the land, as we work together with you to produce food for the body and delight for the soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **The Peace**

By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you  
**and also with you. Alleluia!**

Let us share the peace with each other in our hearts.

## **Hymn: *Now the Green Blade Riseth***

**Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.**

**In the grave they laid Him, love, who men had slain,  
Thinking that never He would wake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.**

**Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
Jesus, for three days in the grave had lain;  
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.**



**When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Thy touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.**

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving and Remembrance**

The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy, at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise, Holy Father, heavenly King, Almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

And now we give you thanks for your ancient promise that while the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, We proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

Accept our praises, heavenly Father, through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and as we follow his example and obey his command, grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood;

Who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; He broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper He took the cup and gave you thanks; He gave it to them saying: drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross; we proclaim his mighty resurrection and

glorious ascension; we look for the coming of your kingdom, and with this bread and this cup we make memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died: Christ is risen: Christ will come again.**

Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise, and as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty, renew us by your spirit inspire us with your love and unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, Father almighty, in songs of everlasting praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power  
Be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

## **Communion**

*The President breaks the consecrated bread.*

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**Though we are many, we are one body,  
Because we all share in one bread.**



*The President invites all to Communion.*

Come, for all things are now ready. Come with all your kin and share with all in need: the gift of healing for those in pain, the gift of forgiveness for those in sin, the gift of assurance for those in doubt, and the gift of hope for those in tears.

**May we who share these gifts,**

share **Christ** with one another and all our kin.

*If we wish, we share bread and wine.*

## **Prayer After Communion**

Living God, in this sacrament we have shared in your eternal kingdom. May we who taste this mystery forever serve you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

## **Hymn: The Lord's My Shepherd (Stuart Townend)**

**The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me lie in pastures green.  
He leads me by the still, still waters, His goodness restores my soul.**

*And I will trust in You alone, And I will trust in You alone,  
For Your endless mercy follows me,  
Your goodness will lead me home.*

**He guides my ways in righteousness,  
And He anoints my head with oil,  
And my cup, it overflows with joy, I feast on His pure delights.**

*And I will trust in You alone...*

**And though I walk the darkest path, I will not fear the evil one,  
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know.**

*And I will trust in You alone...*

## **Blessing**

May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in earth and the pulsing of Christ within you.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and those whom you love now and always, **Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving the earth!

**We go in peace, serving Christ and loving the earth.**