

Rogation Outside at a variety of locations



Rogationtide

This resource is largely drawn from *Seasonal Worship from the Countryside* by The Staffordshire Seven and reproduced with permission from SPCK.

Hymn and song numbers refer to *Hymns Old and New* (Anglican edition, 1996) (HO&N) and *Seasonal Worship from the Countryside* (SWC).

Background

This was traditionally a time when Christians prayed for God's blessings on their crops and other aspects of their work on the land. A service was followed by a visit to various places in the neighbourhood. Often this was combined with 'The Beating of the Bounds', a very old custom from a time when it was important to know the boundaries of the parish. In many cases food and drink were supplied by the Church or wealthy people within the village.

George Herbert, the poet and country parson who lived in the Seventeenth Century, called this tradition 'Procession' and described it in the following terms:

The advantages of it are:

- Firstly, a blessing of God for the fruits of the field
- Secondly, justice in the preservation of bounds
- Thirdly, charity in loving walking and neighbourly accompanying one another, with reconciling differences at that time, if there be any
- Fourthly, mercy in relieving the poor by a liberal distribution of alms

Rogationtide Today

It is an opportunity to meet up with Christians who attend different services or another place of worship, or else people who do not regularly attend a place of worship. We can combine prayer for God's blessing on our local environment and the fruitfulness of the earth with:

- Prayer for God's kingdom coming and his will to be done
- Dedication of places, animals and objects to God (remembering that they are his already; it is our work with them that needs to be dedicated)

Practical points

- It is a good opportunity to make contact with local farmers; permission will be needed to walk over their land, and they can be invited to join in.
- If the service and walk are well-publicised, many people who rarely come to a place of worship will join in.
- Refreshments or a picnic somewhere along the route are often included.

- With a combined benefice or in a rural circuit, it is a good idea to meet or walk on a common boundary. A friendly farmer might be prepared to provide transport for the less mobile with a tractor and trailer!
- Fifteen different locations have been included, so everyone needs to choose the ones that are most appropriate.
- The style makes it possible for a number of different people to act as leader.
- Some locations would lend themselves to a circle dance (see Seasonal Worship from the Countryside page 165).
- Movement from place to place can be in the form of a procession with instruments, banners and singing.
- The sections can also be used on other occasions, for example as part of a service for children or for the environment as a whole.
- At some stage, a collection might be taken up for Christian Aid, since Christian Aid Week comes at Rogationtide.

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At the place of worship

Hymn

'All people that on earth do dwell' (HO&N 17) or 'Joy to the World' (HO&N 283)

Prayer

We come before you, our God and Sustainer,
remembering that you are the creator
and the source of all being.

Out of your love the universe was born.

From primordial darkness you put in place
all that is needed for life and growth
and saw that it was good....

You have put this world into our hands:
may we recognise your Spirit within it,
disturbing and challenging us to care for creation,
for the weak and the deprived.

Lord, we remember that we are called by you
to nourish the earth and its diversity of life,
to share the gifts you have given with one another
and with the poor of the world. Amen.

or

Verses from Psalms 24, 50 and 104 (NIV, adapted)

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world and all that live in it.

All the animals of the forest are the Lord's,
and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.

The Lord makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for us to cultivate,

bringing forth food from the earth,

wine that gladdens our hearts,

oil to make our faces shine,

bread that sustains our hearts.

The Lord makes springs pour water into the valleys;

it flows between the mountains.

The birds of the air nest by the waters;

they sing among the branches.

Reading (Isaiah 55:12-56:1, NIV)

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed. This is what the Lord says: 'Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.'

Acknowledgment and Forgiveness of Sins

We will present our failings, the damaged creation and the sufferings of ourselves and our animals to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loves them and died for them as well as for us. We will ask him to forgive and heal us; then we can go out to praise him and do his holy work in this community.

**Dear Lord,
we are sorry for our failure
to acknowledge that the Creation belongs to you,
and we are responsible to you for its wellbeing.
Please forgive us for thoughts, words and actions
unworthy of sons and daughters of God,
who are also brothers and sisters
of birds and beasts. Amen.
O Lord of life, forgive us all our offences and heal us.
Help us to love and to serve you
through loving and serving those around us,
especially those we meet on this day's journey.
Give us the grace to cherish your whole creation
from the lowliest to the highest part. Amen.**

Procession to the Door

Let us now leave this place of worship, built to the glory of God;
Let us go out into the glory of God's creation.
Let us seek for the 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.

Hymn

The following hymns have a number of verses so the first verse can be sung at this point and further verses at the other locations. Instruments such as tambourines, cymbals and brass make a good accompaniment.

'When morning gilds the skies' (SWC page 92)
'All creatures of our God and king' (H O & N 9)
'All things bright and beautiful' (H O & N 21)
'God whose farm is all creation' (H O & N 179)
'You shall go out with joy' (H O & N 571) (this has a single verse which would be repeated at each location)

Other hymns are suggested in the text, appropriate to one location

At a wood

You will find something more in woods than in books

Trees will teach you what you cannot learn from a master *(St. Bernard)*

Open our hearts to the lessons you would have us learn here.

Send us out with the peace and serenity we find here.

Reading

Prayer

We give thanks, O God, for all the different kinds of trees in the world, all with their own properties and virtues - for wood which gives us warmth, is used for building, provides paper for our everyday use, and is turned into furniture because of its strength and beauty. We thank you for the flowers, animals and birds which live in and among trees, finding safety, shelter and food. Forgive us when we waste the precious gifts that come from trees and when we destroy them heedlessly. Amen.

Hymn

'You shall go out with joy' (HO&N 571) *(to be sung and to be accompanied by either a circle dance or a chain in and out of the trees)*

At a house or cottage

Reading (Matthew 7.24-7, authors' own version)

Everyone who hears my words and carries them out is like someone building a house on a foundation of rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, but it did not fall. Everyone who hears my words and does not carry them out is like someone building his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Prayers

May God bless *this* house and those living in it;

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

May God bless *all* our houses and those who live in them;

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

May the Lord be praised for the animals
who share our homes and lives.

**We thank you, Lord, for designing a world
in which animals can live with us
and be our companions.**

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

Prayer

Father in heaven,
whose Son came to earth
and lived in a human family,
we thank you for the blessings
of life together and the gift of children.
Teach us to live in harmony,
listening to the needs and views of others.
May your name be kept holy
and your will be done
in the small everyday things of life,
so that your kingdom is built in our homes,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn

'Rock of ages' (HO&N 437) *or*
'Little drops of water' (See Rogationtide Hymns)

At a meadow or pasture

Responses *(if animals are present)*

O let the works of the Lord

bless the Lord.

O let the beasts and cattle

bless the Lord.

O let all who care for God's world

bless the Lord.

(From the Benedicite)

or (if animals are not present, Psalm 23: 1-3, NIV)

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures

And leads me beside quiet waters,

He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Reading (Deuteronomy 11: 13-15 NIV)

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today - to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul - then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

or (Psalm 147: 7-11 Author's own translation)

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make music to our God on the harp.

He veils the sky with clouds

and provides the earth with rain

and makes grass grow on the hills;

he provides food for the cattle

and for the young ravens when they call.

He does not delight in the horse's strength,

and he takes no pleasure in a runner's fleetness;

the Lord delights in those who fear him,

who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Prayers

For a meadow (to be mown for hay or silage)

O God,

who gave your servant Joseph the wisdom

to plan ahead in time of plenty,

bless these fields in their growing time

and bless [the farmer's][our] endeavours to conserve grass,

so that your animals may have sufficient food for the winter,
and praise you by their health and fertility
until the spring comes once more. **Amen.**

For a pasture (with animals grazing)

O Lord, who sends the rain and the sun
so the grass may grow,
giving food for your animals;
bless these fields,
that they may glorify you
by giving abundant nourishment to the animals pastured here.
Give us the love and wisdom to look after our animals
and through our care of the fields
pass them on to the next generation in good heart,
worthy of the trust you have placed in us. **Amen.**

Hymn

'The Lord my pasture shall prepare' *or*
'Loving Shepherd of thy sheep' (HO&N 325) *(especially if children are present)*

At the village green

Opening Words (Based on Psalm 133: 1)

Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is:

Brothers and sisters, to dwell together in unity.

Reading (Matthew 25:34-40 NIV)

Then the King will say to those on his right 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'.

And the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'.

Prayer

From petty feuds and jealousies,
From talking too much about our neighbours:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From forming into groups that exclude others,
From lack of proper trust and sharing:

Good Lord, deliver us.

For the pleasure of having friends nearby,
For the opportunities to plan and play together:

We thank you, Lord.

For those who spend their time and talents
To improve and beautify our surroundings:
We thank you, Lord.

or

O God, whose Son was content
to share the life of Nazareth,
help us to bring his peace
into every house and every enterprise.
May we be good neighbours,
thinking more of what unites us
than what separates us.
Give us the love
to comfort the sorrowful
and offer help to those in trouble
through your Son, our guide and pattern. **Amen.**

Hymn

'Bind us together, Lord' (HO&N 60)

'Let there be love shared among us' (HO&N 298)

At the sea-shore

Reading

How many are your works, O Lord, in wisdom you have made them all. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small, where the ships go to and fro. There is the great Leviathan, whom God created to frolic in the waters. (*Psalm 104: 24 - 26*)

O seas and floods, bless the Lord
Praise him and magnify him for ever

O all fishes and other creatures that live in the sea, bless the Lord
Praise him and magnify him for ever.

O all birds that fly over the sea and find your food in the sea
Praise him and magnify him for ever.

Let all those who entrust themselves to the sea in ships
Praise him and magnify him for ever

May all those who get their living from the sea
Be protected by God's power and mercy.

May all those who have been bereaved by the sea
Be comforted by God's compassion and mercy

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
who chose fishermen to be your apostles,
and taught your disciples from a boat,
bless the work of those who go down to the sea in ships,
and occupy their business in great waters.
They see the works of the Lord,
and his wonders in the deep.
Increase in us the sense of awe
in the presence of your power,
and our dependence on you for our protection,
so that we may know your presence in danger and in joy,
and glorify you in the way we live our lives
in dedication to you our saviour and redeemer. Amen.

Hymn

'Eternal Father, strong to save' (HO&N 114)

At an orchard, fruit farm or vineyard

Opening Words

Praise be to you, my Lord, for our sister Mother Earth,
who gives us her fruits in due season.

(St. Francis of Assisi, c.1181-1226)

Responses (Based on Jeremiah 17: 7-8)

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord;

they will be like trees planted by the water.

They do not fear when heat comes;

their leaves will be always green.

They have no worries in a year of drought;

and never fail to bear fruit.

Reading (John 15: 1, 2, 5 NRSV)

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

or

(Luke 13: 6-9, AV)

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

or

You often say, 'I would give, but only to the deserving'.

The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture.

They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish.

There are those who give and know not pain in giving,

Nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue.

They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space.

Through the hands of such as these God speaks,

And from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

(from Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)

Prayer

Father of all,
whose first design for us was
that we should live in paradise
in the garden of Eden,
surrounded by trees of many kinds;
and who wonderfully restored us to grace
by means of the blood of your son
symbolised by fruit turned into wine:
we dedicate our work in this place to you.
Work with us, and bless us
so that we may glorify you
by producing food for your children
which is wholesome and nourishing,
and gives pleasure to those who partake of it,
thus may your kingdom come,
and your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven. **Amen.**

or

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your last supper
offered to your heavenly Father
the fruit made into wine,
bless the fruit of these trees, plants and bushes
so that those who look after them
may be prayerful as they tend them,
and ever mindful
of the great work you have done for us
by means of your blood shed on the cross.
To you be glory and honour throughout all ages. **Amen.**

Hymn

'For the fruits of his creation' (H O & N 138)

At a farmstead

Opening Words

Start outside the gate

Leader Peace be to this house and farm. (See Matthew 10:12)

Farmer Grace and peace to you from God our Father
and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7, REB)

All Open for us the gates of righteousness;
we will enter and give thanks to the Lord. (See Psalm 118:19)

Farmer (opening gate) This is the gate of the Lord
through which the righteous may enter. (See Psalm 118:20)

Reading (Deuteronomy 8: 11-14, 17-18 NIV)

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands and his decrees... Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large... and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers...

or

Poem: A Winter Milking

All is quiet and dark but there is wakefulness:
The farmer pulls on his boots, the cows stir in their shed.
Light comes out of darkness, the machine springs into life.
The cows go swaying o'er the sanded yard,
Breath steaming, udders swinging
Each in her place and known as she enters the parlour.
A trinity of creator, man and beast
Linked in the giving and receiving,
Held in God's heart but present here on earth.
Hear the gushing of the milk from willing teats,
The rhythmic, almost hypnotic pulsing of the milk along the line
Until it reaches the dairy and is discharged
Into the gently foaming, slowly chilling tank.
A procession of cows passes through the parlour,
The farmer knows which might have problems, might come bulling.
It is a world apart where on a good day all is harmony and pleasure.
The morning milking is the farmer's dawn prayer.
(Noel Lovatt)

Prayer

We thank you, heavenly Father,
for the hard work which takes place here,
and ask your blessing on the family
and on the whole enterprise.

We thank you for the working animal,
and for the machines
which take the toil out of our labour.

Keep all the food,
equipment and materials in this place,
safe from disease, pollution and theft,
so that they may play their part
in bringing in a harvest,
to feed and clothe your world. **Amen.**

Responses

For the stirring of new life
throughout the countryside

Thanks be to God.

For hard work with crops and animals
that both wearies and satisfies

Thanks be to God.

For the security of a home
with warmth, food and family

Thanks be to God.

Bless, O God, this house and farm
and those who live and work here.

Give them health and strength in their daily labours

And thankfulness for all your gifts.

(Psalm 121:8 RSV)

The Lord keep your going out and your coming in

From this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

Hymn

'For the beauty of the earth' (H O & N 137)

'God whose farm is all creation' (H O & N 179)

At a cornfield

Responses

As a man sows, so shall he reap.
Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.
Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies,
It remains a single seed.
But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
And gives life to humankind and beast.
Lord, give us a good harvest
that your children may not go hungry.
But feed us also with yourself,
the true and eternal bread.

Reading (Isaiah 28:24-29 REB)

Will the ploughman spend his whole time ploughing, breaking up his ground and harrowing it? Does he not, once he has levelled it, broadcast the dill and scatter the cummin? Does he not put in the wheat and barley in rows, and vetches along the edge? Does not his God instruct him and train him aright? Grain is crushed, but not too long or too finely; cartwheels rumble over it and thresh it, but they do not grind it fine. Even this knowledge comes from the Lord of Hosts, whose counsel is wonderful and whose wisdom is great.

Prayer

May the blessing of God be upon this field
and on all the cereal crops
and cornfields of our countryside.
May they receive rain to swell the grain
and sun to ripen it.
May the harvest be safely gathered in and stored.
May we see ourselves as harvesters for eternal life -
'For look! The fields are already ripe for harvest'. **Amen.**

Hymn

'God, whose farm is all creation' (HO&N 179)
'I am the bread of life' (HO&N 222)

In a garden

Reading (verses from Genesis 2, authors' own version)

The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the human being, whom he had formed, to till it and to keep it. And the LORD God walked in the garden at the time of the evening breeze.

or (Luke 23.42-3, NRSV, adapted)

One of the criminals who was crucified with him said: 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus replied: 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in the Heavenly Garden.'*

*'Paradise' comes from a Persian word meaning 'pleasure garden'.

Responses

God has made so many different kinds of plants for gardens.

God has made so many different kinds of people for his world.

Some plants need to be in the sun; some like to be in the shade.

Some of us need to be at the centre; some of us are retiring.

Some plants hug the ground and others reach for the sky.

Some of us have a lowly role in life and others have great ambitions.

Some plants grow in rich soil

and bring forth flowers, seeds and fruits in abundance.

Some of us are full-nourished

and produce marvellous ideas or creations that enrich the lives of all.

Some plants do best in poor soil but it takes all their strength to survive.

Some of us are so straitened in our lives that survival is our only achievement.

Prayer

O Lord, we need to accept

that you made us all so different,

with our own temperaments and talents.

Like plants, we cannot change our nature,

yet you rejoice in each one of us being special.

Help us come to terms with who we are

and what we are called upon to do;

wherever our lives are planted,

grant that we may praise you and glorify your name. **Amen.**

or

We thank you, heavenly Father,

for this beautiful garden,

and for all the loving work that has made it so.

Bless this garden,

so that through its peace and beauty

we may find a place of

refreshment in a busy world.
We praise you for the wildlife,
the small, hidden creatures,
the bees gathering nectar,
the singing birds, the busy insects.
Help us to be generous,
sharing the abundance that you give.
May all your creatures here live in peace with one another,
in accordance with your design and our future hope,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn

'For the beauty of the earth' (HO&N 137) or
'God whose farm is all creation' (HO&N 179) or
'Morning has broken' (HO&N 337) or
'Lord Jesus hath a garden'

At a place of hospitality

Reading

There was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was Beautiful, and it stood just by the highway-side. So I saw in my dream that he made haste and went forward, that if possible he might get lodging there, and went on till he came and stood before the gate where the porter was. Then said Christian to the porter, Sir, what house is this? and may I lodge here tonight? The porter answered, This house was built by the Lord of the hill and He built it for the relief and security of pilgrims. So Watchful, the porter, rang a bell, at the sound of which came out of the door of the house a grave and beautiful damsel, named Discretion, who ran to the door and called forth two or three more of the family; and many of them meeting him at the threshold of the house, said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Then he bowed his head, and followed them into the house.
(from John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress)

Prayer

We thank you Lord, that just as Martha and Mary
welcomed you into their home after your weary travelling,
so the people in this place of hospitality
welcome and look after those in need of rest and refreshment.
We bless you for their dedication and long hours of service,
and pray that you will strengthen and support them,
assuring them that in welcoming the stranger,
they are welcoming their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn

'Fill thou my life' (HO&N 129) or
'From heaven you came' (HO&N 148)

At a field of vegetables or roots

Reading: The Parable of the Different Soils

(Based on Matthew 13: 1 - 9)

A farmer went out to sow his field. There was a footpath through it, too hard for the seed to take root so it rotted or was eaten by the birds. Some of the ground was on rock with little depth of soil, so that the plants could not develop deep roots nor could the ground hold much moisture. The plants sprang up quickly but soon withered away. Some of the soil was deeper but impoverished so that it grew nettles, docks and thistles as well. The plants took root but the weeds grew more quickly so the plants were choked and died. But some soil was well-tended and fertile, in good heart, and the seed that fell on it put down deep roots, grew tall and strong and yielded a rich harvest.

Responses

O Lord, save our hearts from being as the footpath,
too hard for your word to take root.

**O Lord, save our hearts from being as the rocky ground,
where your word cannot be nourished
and withers away.**

O Lord, save us from being as the poor soil
where your word is overpowered
by the cares and worries of our everyday life.

**Bless us and make us fertile soil, in good heart,
where your word flourishes
and brings life to ourselves and to others. Amen.**

Prayer

Lord God of all creation,
we give you thanks for the plants
which sustain and nourish
both humans and animals.
These humble vegetables and roots
are full of good things
to keep us and our animals in good health.
Teach us about the importance
of the humble things in life,
and of humility in our own lives,
following the example of our blessed Lord
who in his great humility
took our human flesh
and lived on earth among us,
and now reigns in glory. **Amen.**

Hymn

'He that is down need fear no fall' (SWC page 94)

At a wild or uncultivated place

Reading (Luke 12: 24, 27 REB)

Jesus said: 'Think of the ravens: they neither sow nor reap; they have no storehouse or barn; yet God feeds them. Think of the lilies; they neither spin nor weave; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendour was not attired like one of these'.

Responses

O all you green plants, shrubs and trees,
O all you insects and creeping things,
Praise the Lord who made you and sustains you.

O all you birds and animals who hide yourselves
O all you stones and rocks, giving shelter,
Praise the Lord who made you and sustains you.

O heat and cold, rain and sun, dew and frost,
O night and day, air and wind, summer and winter,
Praise the Lord who made you and sustains you.

Poem: Wild Flowers

The old church stands down Old Church Lane, where it has stood for years.
It's seen the people come and go, their laughter and their tears.
It's hard to think that fine old church once colourful and new,
But long before the church was built, the wild flowers grew.

The village folk all gather down upon the village green,
To have a fête and celebrate, and crown the village queen.
To have a joke and have a laugh of how things used to be.
Village without the village folk, it wouldn't be the same.
But long before the village folk, the wild flowers came.

Lorries, heavy lorries all thunder through the lanes,
Revvng up their engines and leaving diesel stains;
Tainting wayside verges, with tar and oil and grease,
Rumbling, shifting noises of now forgotten peace.
But with the help of sunshine, and early morning rain,
The never failing cycle, wild flowers bloom again.
(*Wilf Ward, 1948-*)

Prayer

We worship you, O Holy Spirit,
whose creative power includes the wild and unknowable,
reflecting the mystery and power of your Godhead.
Help us to acknowledge and embrace
our fear of what we do not know or understand,

not to destroy but to protect the wild, free places of this planet,
so that we can save them for future generations.
We praise you for their diversity and exuberance,
and for their special place in your world.
Breathe on us your grace and power
so that like the wind we are free to go
wherever you take us,
not knowing where we come from
or where we are going,
but rejoicing in your wildness and your protection,
who was sent as a companion for us
by our Saviour and our Creator, one God,
world without end. **Amen.**

Hymn

'There are hundreds of sparrows' (HO&N 498)

'Who put the colours in the rainbow' (HO&N 557)

At Water

Reading – Exodus ch.17 vv.3-7

But the people were thirsty for water. So they told Moses they weren't happy with him. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? Did you want us, our children and our animals to die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the Lord. He said, "What am I going to do with these people? They are almost ready to kill me by throwing stones at me." The Lord commanded Moses. He said, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take some of the elders of Israel along with you. Take in your hand the wooden stick you used when you struck the River Nile. Hit the rock. Then water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses hit the rock in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Let us pray;

We give you thanks for the gift of water and pray that we may use it wisely and responsibly, leaving it fit for use by others.

We pray for God's blessing on the harvest from water, both rivers and sea, and for all who spend their lives working with water. Amen

At a field

Let us pray;

Especially today we pray for the farming community;

For subsistence farmers in the third world, that they may feed their families;

For commercial farmers seeking to balance the demands of making a profit in difficult times and responsibly caring for their land and livestock.

We pray that they may also find some time and energy for their own needs and the needs of their families.

For the distressed, the depressed and the defeated, that they might find the help that they need.

For those who have the energy, insight and expertise to succeed despite the problems, that they may shine out as a beacon of hope.

We ask your blessing this morning Father for all who work to help those involved in farming and rural life, for the Farm Crisis Network, Agricultural Chaplains, rural Clergy and all who work to support those who work with your creation. **Amen**

Reading – Isaiah ch.28 vv.24-29

When a farmer ploughs for planting, does he plough continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil?

When he has levelled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field?

His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.

Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick.

Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it for ever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing-cart over it, his horses do not grind it.

All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in council and magnificent in wisdom.

Let us pray;

May the blessing of God be upon this field and on all the cereal crops and cornfields of our countryside.

May they receive rain to swell the grain
and sun to ripen it.

May the harvest be safely gathered in and stored.

Amen