

All Age Plough Sunday



Hymn numbers, unless otherwise stated, taken from Hymns Old and New (New Anglican Edition 1996)

Background

This appears to be a very ancient festival, revived by the Victorians. Traditionally it is celebrated on the first Sunday after Epiphany, January 6th. Often the plough was fêted and drawn through the streets to be blessed in church. This was thought to ensure food for the coming year. The following day, Plough Monday, was the first day that work in the fields recommenced after Christmas.

When to Use

Nowadays, with a good deal of ploughing taking place in the autumn, this service may be held on any appropriate Sunday which coincides with the start of the ploughing season or even during the week..

Preparation

A ploughshare, or some other part of the plough, is brought to the door, escorted by those who are to take a speaking part in the service and by other representatives of farming life. The leader (and choir) receives them at the door.

Welcome

A farmer or farm-worker:

We come as representatives of our community
to offer our work to the service of God.

Leader:

We welcome you in the name of the One
who made us all, people, animals and all the earth.

Hymn

We plough the fields and scatter (HO&N 534) or O Christ that holds the open gate

The leader (and choir) lead the way into the Church or Chapel, followed by those carrying the ploughshare which is placed at the front.

Verses from Psalm 104 (NIV, adapted)

Praise the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendour and majesty.
wrapped in light as with a garment.
You make the clouds your chariot,

you ride on the wings of the wind.
You make winds your messengers,
flames of fire your ministers.
You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills, giving drink to every creature.
**You cause grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for man to cultivate,**
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
**oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.**
The moon marks off the seasons,
and the sun knows when to go down.
**You bring darkness, it becomes night,
and all the beasts of the forest come creeping out.**
The sun rises, and they steal away;
they return and lie down in their dens.
**Then people go out to their work,
to their labour until the evening time.**
How many are your works, O Lord!
**In wisdom you made them all;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.**

or (Based on Psalm 24, Genesis 8, Isaiah 28)

The earth is the Lord's:
And everything that is within it;
The wide extent of the world:
And all who live there.
The Lord looked upon the earth:
And filled it with his blessings.
As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest:
Summer and winter will never cease.
When farmers plough for planting, do they plough continually?
Do they keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil?
When they have levelled the surface,
do they not plant wheat in its place and barley in its plot?
**Their God instructs them
and teaches them the right way.**

Prayer

O Creator God, who works
through our hands and our minds,
as we strive to renew the face of the earth
and bring your kingdom;
help us to feel reverence for the power you give us,
and to love the small part of your creation
which you have entrusted to each of us.
Amen.

Our Acknowledgment of Sin

All kneel and a farmer's wife (A) and son or daughter (B) lead the people:

A: When we are ungrateful for the rain, sun and frost,
And forget they are God's gifts to us:

O God, forgive us.

B: When we are blind to the mystery of germination
And forget it is God's handiwork:

O God, forgive us.

A: When we are careless with our beasts,
And forget they are God's creatures:

O God, forgive us.

B: When we are unkind to those who work with us,
And forget they are God's children:

O God, forgive us.

A: When we are careless about our work,
And forget we are God's co-workers:

O God, forgive us.

B: When we ill-treat the land
And forget we are God's stewards:

O God, forgive us.

Declaration of Forgiveness

May God the Father forgive our misusing of his creative work;

May God the Son take up into His cross the sufferings of our land, our animals, our families and ourselves.

May God the Holy Spirit give us the strength and power to overcome our troubles, weaknesses and temptations.

May God the Holy Trinity forgive us all our sins. **Amen.**

Hymn: God, whose farm is all creation (HO&N 179)

Our Gratitude for God's Gifts

All now stand and a representative of the Young Farmers, or other person connected with the land, leads the people:

From God comes every good and perfect gift:
The rich soil, the smell of the fresh-turned earth:

Come from God

The keenness of a winter's frost and our breath steaming:

Come from God.

The hum of the tractor, the gleam of a cutting edge:

Come from God.

The beauty of a clean-cut furrow,
the sweep of a well-ploughed field:

Come from God.

Blessed be God in all his gifts:

And praised by all his works.

Hymn: Lord, bring the day to pass

An Address may be given

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth (HO&N 137) *or* For the fruits of his creation (HO&N 138)

A collection can be taken for a rural charity

Blessing of the Plough

Towards the end of the hymn, representatives of farmers, farm-workers and Young Farmers take their places round the ploughshare.

All remain standing

1st Speaker: The plough is the foundation of our work
and a symbol of our labour :

2nd Speaker: For the soil to be broken up and the seed sown,
we must first plough the fields.

3rd Speaker: For the green corn to grow and the ripe grain to be reaped,
we must first plough the fields.

1st Speaker: For the bread to be baked and the people fed,
we must first plough the fields.

2nd Speaker: For prosperity to come to our farms and families,
we must first plough the fields.

3rd Speaker: So we bring this ploughshare here
for you to give your blessing upon it
and upon all the work done on our farms.

1st Speaker: God speed the plough:
the plough and the ploughman,
the farm and the farmer.

2nd Speaker: God speed the plough:
the beam and the mouldboard,
the slade and the sidecap,
the share and the coulter.

3rd Speaker: God speed the plough:
in fair weather and foul,
in rain and wind,
in frost and sunshine:

God speed the plough.

Let us pray:

O God, who gives each of us work to do for your sake,
we ask for your blessing on this plough
and upon all the machines that enable us
to do our work upon the land.

We ask you to prosper throughout the year
the work done on our local farms.

May the farmers' hopes be fulfilled in a plentiful harvest;
may your people be fed with wholesome food;
may town and country, united in gratitude to you,

be drawn nearer to the understanding
and true service of each other:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

or

O God who has entrusted the soil to our keeping,
help us to give a good account of our management:
that as we keep our land in good heart,
so we may ourselves be kept rich in Christian living:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing of the people and Dismissal

May God bless you in winter and summer,
at your ploughing, your sowing and your reaping.
May God give you sunshine and rain in due season;
May God, who gladdens the face of the earth,
give you joyfulness of heart.
May God, who has called you to work on the land
set your affections upon himself.
And may the blessing of the Trinity,
three persons and one God,
remain with you and those you love for ever. Amen.

Silence is kept for a short time.

Hymn Immortal, invisible, God only wise (HO&N 242)

The ploughshare may either be carried out at the end of the service in the same way as it was carried in, or be left in its place until everyone has gone.

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