

I am the Vine and you are the branches {John 15: 5a}

Opening Prayer

Faithful God,
You give yourself to the world through Christ Jesus.
We come to you seeking the threads of lives,
that help make us partners to continue Christ's mission.
May your Spirit be our nourishment.
Amen

**Feed on him in your heart, digest his power;
Let his life slow-release itself into your blood,
Stream through your senses, energise your thought.
Recall his presence thankfully,
A constant savouring.**

{Watching for the Kingfisher, Ann Lewin}

Where heaven and earth meet may we be ready to walk the open road.

**Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me,
Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.
Christ under me;
Christ over me;
Christ beside me;
On my right, and on my left.
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
This day be within and without me.
Amen**

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world and knows our every word and deed.
We open ourselves to the Lord and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

In a dark and disfigured world
we have not held out the light of life:

Lord have mercy.
Lord have mercy

In a hungry and despairing world
we have failed to share our gifts:

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy

In a cold and loveless world
we have kept the love of God to ourselves:

Lord have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

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

Hymn

Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
fresh from the word!

Sweet the rain's new fall,
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dew-fall
on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness
where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
born of the one light,
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
praise ev'ry morning
God's re-creation
Of the new day!

{Eleanor Farjeon 1881-1965}

We proclaim the Church's faith in Jesus Christ.

**We believe and declare that our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, is both divine and human.**

God, of the being of the Father,
the only Son from before time began;
human from the being of His mother, born in the world;
**fully God and fully human;
human in both mind and body.**

As God he is equal to the Father,
as human he is less than the Father;
**Although he is both divine and human
He is not two beings but one Christ.**

One, not by turning God into flesh,
but by taking humanity into God;
**truly one, not by mixing humanity with Godhead,
but by being one person.**

For as mind and body form one human being
so, the one Christ is both divine and human.
**The Word became flesh and lived among us;
we have seen His glory,
the glory of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.**

{from the Athanasian Creed}

Reading Psalm 80

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken You might;
come and save us.

Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

How long, LORD God Almighty,
will your anger smoulder
against the prayers of your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.
You have made us an object of derision to our neighbours,
and our enemies mock us.

Restore us, God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

You transplanted a vine from Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
You cleared the ground for it,
and it took root and filled the land.
The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches.
Its branches reached as far as the Sea,
its shoots as far as the River.

Why have you broken down its walls
so that all who pass by pick its grapes?
Boars from the forest ravage it,
and insects from the fields feed on it.
Return to us, God Almighty!
Look down from heaven and see!
Watch over this vine,
the root your right hand has planted,
the son you have raised up for yourself.

Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire;
at your rebuke your people perish.

Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, LORD God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning is now
And shall be forever.
Amen.**

Reading Isaiah 11:1-3; 5, 6 -10.

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn

Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
always only for my King;
take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect and use
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine:
it shall no longer mine;
take my heart: it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever only, all for thee.

{ Frances Havergal 1836 – 1879 }

Reading John 15: 1-17

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

I am the vine.
You are my branches.



Jesus knows that nothing is totally organic. Even when the gardener follows the instructions. Correct conditions. Shady, sunny or bog areas. Feed and nurture throughout the growing season. During dry days will water according their needs.

The plight of any gardener are pests. Fly over the boundaries. Creep up underneath. Many pests remain hidden until the leaves or fruit appear. Then the fruit is no longer any good and cannot be given to another. The pest has poisoned the soil. It cannot be eradicated.

We can draw parallels with our present predicament. We value God's love. Relish the gifts God gives us. We promote peaceful living. Our conversations underpin basic human requirements. Happily, debate climate and environmental issues. Then along comes a virus and exposes international injustices. All levels having the sense righteousness conforms to know justice.

Am I going to ask our government to give away our vaccines – not until we all have had the offer of both? Make sure we are saved first. But then this inequality means pandemic will last in full force until the poorer or corrupt nations have been vaccinated.

While it feels an honour to be chosen to speak on social equality, being an activist for political, social and economic issues, as Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough discover, is a thankless task. There are those who will be swayed by "fake news."

Even believers can be open to manipulation. Faced with knowing commitment dreads every footstep and decision. Our conscience reminding us we are never going to be guiltless. We are not always reliable witnesses. We will not always be unpolluted.

It certainly feels impossible be the generous bridge between political, social and economic ideals and reality. What fruit can we produce when faith pulls back our trust.

To understand how to handle such tensions, it will be helpful to remind ourselves on the history of God's provision and God's presence especially during desperate times. Those events of great suffering, redemption and love.

Each narrative nearly always is characterised by a sequence of events. In which there are characters whose motives and actions structure the plot. They do this in such a way that also impacts on individuals and other groups.

Good starting point is the Exodus narrative. This speaks of the departure of the slave community under the influence of God. Israel had been chosen to show God's plan of salvation. The promise that the land would be the place of life that opposes death. It will be filled with God's divine presence. God himself will live among humans. Heaven and earth functioning as one. What an honour. What a responsibility for humans to bear God's image.

What follows to the present day are people rejecting, ignoring or forgetting God's promise. Lack the trust that God will provide through His powerful divine presence people. Became uncertain and fearful. Fragile fights for freedom. A growing unwillingness to obey. Words mostly emphasis control, exclusion and loss.

Throughout time people have moments struggling to understand God provides a broader scope. This is His constant supply of love and goodness. Yet despite being well- tended by God, life has pockets of being fruitless.

It is helpful to hear the voices of the past when God seemingly is threatening people who revolt against him.

Jeremiah tells us; Yet I planted you as a choice vine, from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?

Isaiah also speaks about this separation; For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

To begin to grasp how we can handle such tensions in order to be fruitful we turn today to the prophet Isaiah. He calls us back to the remnant stump that is capable of new growth. Reminds us we belong to this faithful remnant. We are joined through David's line to Christ Himself. From this point we can capture and recapture that all the incomprehensible pieces of our story which grow from this felled tree. Commit afresh to the life the Lord has given us. Understand how faith replaces fashionable culture that consists of corruption, torture and all manner of distortion from goodness.

Also understanding everything is underpinned with prayer. God needs to hear our cries in times of distress. When the danger has passed, we need to remember to say thank you in praise for what he has provided.

150 poetic compositions are timeless. Our Psalmist today connects us to both I am the Good Shepherd and I am the true vine. He reflects the image that

whatever is at the foremost of our minds, we can be restored by the love and goodness of God. It is not so much our suffering but understanding what matters is the true vine of restoration.

You brought us out of Egypt.... And when it had taken root, it filled the land.

The history of God in the past cannot be ignored. For it presses home the point that God cares for us especially in drastic situations. The Kings, Prophets and priests. The Assyrian Empire in Judah and Israel. Persia's authority. The Jews resisting Greek culture. Religious collaborators and freedom fighters. Of course, the Roman Empire which Christ lived through.

We need to have some understanding of God before Christ took our human nature, because Christ builds on this knowledge.

John begins his Gospel doing just that; the Word made flesh, first born of all creation. The Word is I am the true vine of the divinity of God. What follows is the divine God makes himself present through His Son, to all nations. Jews, Gentiles, friends, sinners, educated and outcasts. All can approach and become attached to God.

It is from the vine, past present and future that everything flows freely into humanity. It is for those who hear the call to receive, cultivate the priceless treasures. Also give back to God the life we adore by bringing life to others.

Whom shall I send? Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I will go if you lead me.

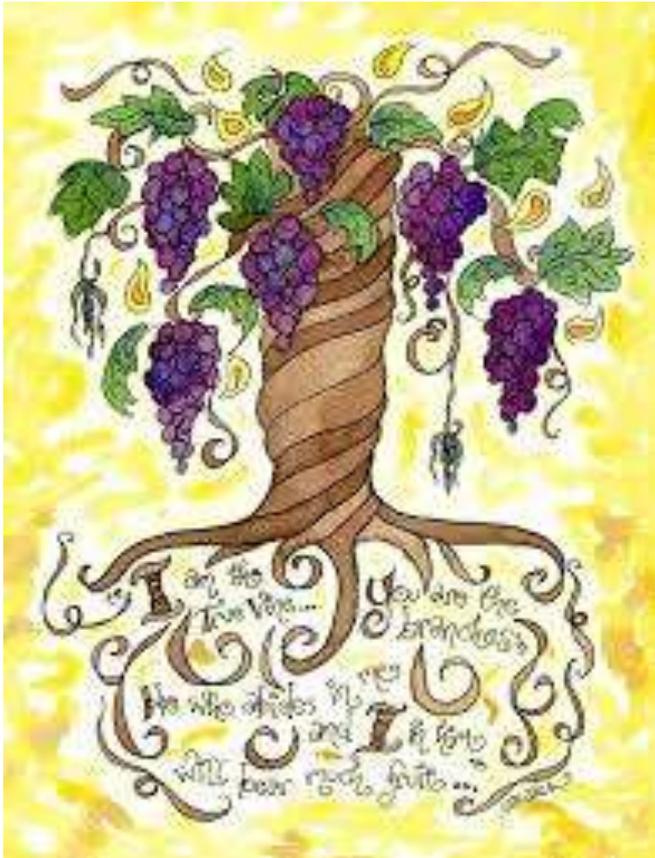
For this to maintain effectiveness we will need to be pruned from time to time. Like trees who remove their nutrients from weaker branches in order to give what nourishment there is in their roots to the healthier ones. This prevents the whole tree becoming too weak to survive.

When the pain is too harsh to do any pruning, then we must trust Christ to do the pruning for us. He is our gardener who feeds and nurtures us, who gives us understanding. Leave the pests for me. Don't waste energy when that can be used in more promising places. Cut back to the place where a new growth can sprout. From the time of pruning to the new life, takes time. Seasons in between of allowing healing to replace the emptiness. This is what we are doing – what can we do with the people and resources we have that keeps to the rules of this pandemic.

Finest bread I will provide till their hearts are satisfied. Whom shall I send? Here I am Lord, I will hold your people in my heart.

{Words from; I the Lord of sea and sky: Dan Schutte, based on Isaiah 6}

We must not simply just look towards Christ as our teacher, healer mediator or Advocate, but understand our life expands the vine. Who is Alpha and Omega. Genesis to Revelation. Both divine and human nature of God orders everything. Enables us to fulfil our life-long mission of sharing the hope of safety, a good harvest, forgiveness of God and the promise of being saved into an everlasting life.



Abba, Father let me be

Yours and yours alone.

*May my will for ever be more
and more your own.*

*Never let my heart grow cold,
never let me go.*

Abba, Father, let us be

Yours and yours alone.

{Dave Bilborough 1977}

Prayers

God of all ages:

For those whose vision led to the beginning of St Mary's Church, all churches in the Watton community and The Wayland Group.

We give our thanks and praise.

We pray for all who seek relief from injustices.

For those who seek to help people.

We remember the United Nations and World Health Organisation.

All charities.

We pray for the Peace-Keeping Forces helping those living in conflicts and war zones.

Lord, hear our prayer in hope

Our strength is in you.

Those separated from family and friends.

Those distressed from past hurts, guilts or resentments.

Those who are unwell in mind, body or spirit.

All bowed low by the weight of burdens.

Free them from fears and pain so they become one with you.

Lord, hear our prayer in hope

Our strength is in you.

We lift to you the church throughout the world. Praying for Archbishop Welby and Bishop Graham and Alan. Asking your blessing on Revds. Gerry and Kyla for their goodness and support. We pray for all who teach faith through their gifts that help to draw back the veil of separation. Bring us understanding that connects us to depth and breadth and cost of your love.

Lord, hear our prayer in hope

Our strength is in you.

We pray for all who weep this day. Hear our thanksgiving for the lives of people who have passed through darkness and entered eternal light and life everlasting. Be close to family and friends who mourn that they may see you and they too know life is eternal.

Lord, hear our prayer in hope
Our strength is in you.

We pray for Elizabeth our Queen, as we continue to hold her in through her private mourning. With our Queen we lift up all the Royal family. May they be comforted that as a nation we mourn the loss of a treasured personality with them. At this time, we pray for healing between royal family members. We give thanksgiving that Prince Philip is now resting peacefully by your side with all the Saints and loved ones.

Lord, in hope we pray
Our strength is in you.

Lord of life and love, we pray for the divine Spirit to live among us. Surround St Mary's and the wider communities that fills us with your love and peace. May we receive your wisdom that enables us to see your vision. May your out-stretched arms stand as a symbol of your whole heartedness towards us, day by day. Night by night. As we set the tasks of mission before us, may we commit to revealing your divine and human nature as one being.

Lord, in hope we pray
Our strength is in you.

Lord God, we thank you for your provisions that keep all your people in life and sustains through the seasons of life. We give thanks for the promise of spiritual harvest yet to come.

Lord, in hope we pray
Our strength is in you.
Amen

Quiet space for our personal prayers

Rejoicing in God's new creation,
as our Saviour taught us, 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.

Hymn

God is love; his the care,
tending each, ev'rywhere.
God is love; all is there!
Jesus came to show him,
that mankind might know him!

Sing Aloud, loud, loud!
Sing aloud, loud, loud,
God is good! God is truth!
God is beauty! Praise him!

None can see God above;
we can share life and love;
thus may we Godward move,
seek him in creation,
holding ev'ry nation.

Sing Aloud, loud, loud!
Sing aloud, loud, loud,
God is good! God is truth!
God is beauty! Praise him!

Jesus lived on the earth,
life and hope brought to birth
and affirmed human worth,
for he came to save us
by the truth he gave us.

Sing Aloud, loud, loud!
Sing aloud, loud, loud,
God is good! God is truth!
God is beauty! Praise him!

To our Lord praise we sing,
Light and life, friend and king,
Coming down, love to bring,
Pattern for our duty,
Showing God in beauty.

Sing Aloud, loud, loud!
Sing aloud, loud, loud,
God is good! God is truth!
God is beauty! Praise him!

{Percy Dearmer 1867-1936}

Closing Prayer

Jesus, Lord of time,
Hold us in your eternity.
Jesus, image of God,
travel with us the life of faith.
Jesus, friend of sinners.
Heal the brokenness of our world.
Jesus, Lord of tomorrow
Draw us into your future.
God of our pilgrimage.
Refresh and sustain us,
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

The Blessing

May you who are restless,
find rest,
and in rest, restoration
and the healing
of your hollow soul.
May peace be yours.

May you who are frozen,
find freedom,
and in freedom, the strength
to face the fire
and the thawing
of your ice-gripped heart.
May peace be yours.

May you who are conflicted,
find convergence, confidence
to be the one new child
of your old divided self.
May peace be yours

May you who live in tension,
find tenderness
and in tenderness the tendency
to kindness and the miracle
of majoring in mercy.
May peace be yours.

And you are without God,
may you find God
and in God
the grace and growth you need
for fruit and fullness
and the love that will last you
through the long haul
of a lived-for-others life
May peace be yours.

{Gerard Kelly}

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing;
And the blessing of Almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and those we love and those we find difficult to love,
this day and in all our tomorrows
Amen

We go in love and peace to serve the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.