

# **Holy Communion for the 4th Sunday of Advent**



**JOY**

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***The Stour Valley Benefice***

*Cavendish, Clare, Hundon, Poslingford, Stoke-by-Clare & Wixoe*

## **Spiritual Communion**

The term 'Spiritual Communion' has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of the Eucharist, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ.

In joining with Revd Mark today who will be celebrating the Eucharist from his home, you too are able to join with him in communion. The Book of Common Prayer instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', although we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

### **Hymn – People, look east**

- 1      People, look east. The time is near  
        of the crowning of the year.  
        Make your house fair as you are able,  
        trim the hearth and set the table.  
        People, look east and sing today:  
        Love, the guest, is on the way.
- 2      Furrows, be glad. Though the earth is bare,  
        one more seed is planted there:  
        give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
        that in course the flower may flourish.  
        People, look east and sing today:  
        Love, the rose, is on the way.
- 3      Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
        guard the nest that must be filled.  
        Even the hour when wings are frozen

he for fledging time has chosen.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the bird, is on the way.

4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
one more light the bowl shall brim,  
shining beyond the frosty weather,  
bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the star, is on the way.

5 Angels, announce to man and beast  
him who cometh from the East.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
with the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

*Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)*

## **The Gathering**

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

## **The Greeting**

Priest: The Lord be with you.

**All: and also with you.**

## **Prayer of Preparation**

**All: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all  
desires known, and from who no secrets are  
hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we  
may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify  
your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## Prayers of Penitence

Priest: When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ, let us confess our sins.  
*(cf 1 Corinthians 4:5)*

## Kyrie Confession

Priest: Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of your kingdom:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Priest: You come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness:  
Christ, have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Priest: You will come in glory with salvation for your people:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

## Absolution

Priest: Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

If you have an advent wreath at home or wish to mark the weeks leading up to Christmas, you may like to light your fourth candle at this point.

## Advent Wreath Prayer – Advent 4 (The Virgin Mary)

Priest: God our Father, the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of your Son. Though Mary was afraid, she responded to your call with joy.

Help us, whom you call to serve you, to share like her in your great work of bringing to our world your love and healing. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world.

**All: Blessed be God for ever.**

## **The Collect**

Priest: God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**All: Amen.**

## **Old Testament Reading (*Isaiah 7:10-16 NRSV*)**

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Priest: This is the word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

## **New Testament Reading (*Romans 1:1-7 NRSV*)**

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God

with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Priest: This is the word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Reading (*Matthew 1:18-end NRSV*)**

Priest: Alleluia, alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (*cf Isaiah 40:3-5*)

**All: Alleluia.**

Priest: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

**All: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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

## **The Creed**

**All: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Minister: As we wait for the birth of the Lord, we pray for the Church and for the world he came to save.

Lord God, guide your Church into the way of truth and keep her free from false doctrine and all error. Give grace to her ministers, so that your purposes may be clearly known and faithfully proclaimed, to the glory of your name.

Come to the world where the truth is so often unknown, and the message of hope not understood. Teach those who hold authority over others to govern without fear and suspicion and to seek the way of peace.

Bring into our homes the joy of those who trust in your love, and share that love with one another. Give light to families where love has turned to bitterness and jealousy. May the tender protection of Joseph and the gentleness of Mary be with them.

Have pity on all whose sleep is troubled, who lie awake in darkness or are tormented in their dreams. In the night hours, may the sick and those who watch with them know your calming presence and the assurance of your love.

Give rest to the departed and an awakening to heavenly joy. As you were with them in this life, so let them now be with you for ever, no longer afflicted by the doubts and fears that they once knew.

We offer our prayers in the name of Jesus our Emmanuel, God with us.



Priest: Merciful Father,  
**All: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## **The Liturgy of the Sacrament**

### **The Peace**

Priest: May the God of peace make you completely holy, ready  
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**All: and also with you.**

## **Preparation of the Altar**

### **The Eucharistic Prayer**

Priest: The Lord is here.  
**All: His Spirit is with us.**

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

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**All: it is right to give thanks and praise.**

Priest: It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and  
praise, almighty God and everlasting Father;  
through Jesus Christ your Son.  
He is the one foretold by all the prophets, whom the  
Virgin Mother bore with love beyond all telling.  
John the Baptist was his herald and made him known  
when at last he came.  
In his love Christ fills us with joy as we prepare to  
celebrate his birth, so that when he comes again he  
may find us watching in prayer, our hearts filled with  
wonder and praise. And so, with angels and archangels,

and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your glory, and join in their unending hymn of praise:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Priest: Lord God, you are the most holy one,  
enthroned in splendour and light,  
yet in the coming of your Son Jesus Christ  
you reveal the power of your love  
made perfect in our human weakness.

Embracing our humanity,  
Jesus showed us the way of salvation;  
loving us to the end,  
he gave himself to death for us;  
dying for his own,  
he set us free from the bonds of sin,  
that we might rise and reign with him in glory.

On the night he gave himself for us all  
he 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 we proclaim the death that he suffered on the cross, we celebrate his resurrection, his bursting from the tomb, we rejoice that he reigns at your right hand on high and we long for his coming in glory.

As we recall the one, perfect sacrifice of our redemption Father, by your Holy Spirit let these gifts of your creation be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; form us into the likeness of Christ and make us a perfect offering in your sight.

Look with favour on your people  
and in your mercy hear the cry of our hearts.

Bless the earth,  
heal the sick,  
let the oppressed go free  
and fill your Church with power from on high.

Gather your people from the ends of the earth to feast  
with all your saints at the table in your kingdom,  
where the new creation is brought to perfection in Jesus  
Christ our Lord;  
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Priest: Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom in the words which our Saviour has taught us.

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

## **Breaking of the Bread**

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

**All:** **Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

## **The Agnus Dei**

**All:** **Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

## **Giving of Communion**

**Priest:** Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

**All:** **We do not presume to come to this your table,  
merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.**

**We are not worthy so much as to gather up the  
crumbs under your table.**

**But you are the same Lord whose nature is  
always to have mercy.**

**Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,**

**so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may  
be made clean by his body and our souls washed  
through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he  
in us. Amen.**

The Minister receives communion on behalf of all those in our community who are unable to be present.

## **Prayer after Communion**

Priest: Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**All: Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with  
the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

## **The Dismissal Gospel**

Priest: Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

**All: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." *(Mark 1:14-15)*

Priest: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## The Blessing

Priest: May God himself, the God of peace, make you perfect and holy, and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit, soul, and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always.

**All: Amen.**

Priest: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All: In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Hymn – O come, O come Emmanuel

- 1 O come, O come Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*
- 2 O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*
- 3 O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*
- 4 O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,

And close the path to misery.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*  
*Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

5 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*  
*Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*Latin 13th century, translated by T. A. Lacey (1853-1931)*  
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(December 2025)



## **Join us for our Christmas Services**

*(Christmas Jumpers Encouraged!)*

### **Wednesday 24th December 2025 (Christmas Eve)**

2pm in **St Peter & St Paul, Clare** – Family Crib Service & Carols

3pm in **All Saints, Hundon** – Family Crib Service & Carols

4pm in **St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare** – Family Crib Service & Carols

5pm in **St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish** – Family Crib Service & Carols

7pm in **St Leonard, Wixoe** – Carols by Candlelight

11.30pm in **St Peter & St Paul, Clare** – Midnight Mass

### **Thursday 25th December 2025 (Christmas Day)**

9am in **St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare** – Family Christmas Eucharist

11am in **St Peter & St Paul, Clare** – Family Christmas Eucharist