

**Holy Communion**  
**for the 3rd Sunday of Advent**  
*(Gaudete Sunday)*



***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'.

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally observed as Gaudete or 'Rose Sunday', and it was seen as a splash of colour in the otherwise restrained atmosphere of Advent.



## Hymn – Long ago, prophets knew

1 Long ago, prophets knew  
Christ would come, born a Jew,  
come to make all things new;  
bear his People's burden,  
freely love and pardon.  
*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*When he comes,*  
*when he comes,*  
*who will make him welcome?*

2 God in time, God in man,  
this is God's timeless plan:  
he will come, as a man,  
born himself of woman,  
God divinely human.  
*Chorus*

3 Mary hail! Though afraid,  
she believed, she obeyed.  
In her womb, God is laid:  
till the time expected,  
nurtured and protected,  
*Chorus*

4 Journey ends! Where afar  
Beth'lem shines, like a star,  
stable door stands ajar.  
unborn Son of Mary,  
Saviour, do not tarry!  
*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*Jesus comes!*  
*Jesus comes!*  
*We will make him welcome!*

*Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000) © 1971 Stainer & Bell Ltd*

## The Gathering

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

**All: Amen.**

## The Greeting

Minister: 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

Minister: 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

Minister: Turn to us again, O God our Saviour, and let your anger cease from us:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Minister: Show us your compassion, O Lord, and grant us your salvation:  
Christ, have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Minister: Your salvation is near for those that fear you, that glory may dwell in our land:  
Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

## **Absolution**

Minister: 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 third candle at this point.

## **Advent Wreath Prayer – Advent 3 (John the Baptist)**

Minister: God our Father, you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age a son called John. He grew up strong in spirit, prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptized them in the Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us, who have been baptized into Christ, to be ready to welcome him into our hearts, and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

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

## **The Collect**

Minister: O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are

alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**All: Amen.**

### **Old Testament Reading (*Isaiah 35:1-10 NRSV*)**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

### **New Testament Reading (*James 5:7-10 NRSV*)**

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it

receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Reading (*Matthew 11:2-11 NRSV*)**

Minister: 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.**

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

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

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Minister: 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: Let us pray to God to open our lips to speak as messengers of his gospel.

May we who are the Church of Christ on earth hear his call to repentance. As we see the signs of his healing power, make us ready to receive him into our hearts at this time and to look for his coming in glory.

Come in mercy to the people who seek for help in the kingdoms of this work and do not look to the signs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Break through the doubt and uncertainty that cloud the vision, the false values that hide the truth, that all may know that salvation has come.

Make us faithful witnesses, to bring the knowledge of Christ into our homes, our work, our meeting with others. Guide all in this community so to seek that they may truly find.

Have mercy on the sick in body or mind, the disabled, the sorrowful. Lead them from the wilderness into the fertile land of your healing love, where they may be made whole.

Lord Christ who raised the dead, receive into your Kingdom the souls of the departed. As they saw the signs of your power in this world, may they enter into the fullness of your glory.

We offer our prayers through the one long expected who has come to be among us, Christ the Lord.

Minister: Merciful Father,

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

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## The Peace

Minister: In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in the darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**All: and also with you.**

## Preparation of the Altar

### The Eucharistic Prayer

Minister: The Lord is here.

**All: His Spirit is with us.**

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them to the Lord.**

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All: it is right to give thanks and praise.**

Minister: It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise, almighty God and everlasting Father; through Jesus Christ your Son.  
For when he humbled himself to come among us in human flesh, he fulfilled the plan you formed before the foundation of the world to open for us the way of salvation.  
Confident that your promise will be fulfilled,  
we now watch for the day when Christ our Lord will come again in glory.

And so we join our voices with angels and archangels  
and with all the company of heaven to proclaim your  
glory for ever praising you and saying:

**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.**

Minister: 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**

Minister: 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**

Minister: 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**

Minister: 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**

Minister: We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ  
comes again we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever. 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**

Minister: 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)*

Minister: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

## The Blessing

Minister: Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always.

**All: Amen.**

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

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

## Hymn – On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

- 1 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh;  
come then and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings from the King of kings!
- 2 Then cleansed be every Christian breast,  
and furnished for so great a guest.  
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.
- 3 For thou art our salvation, Lord,  
our refuge, and our great reward;  
without thy grace our souls must fade  
and wither like a flower decayed.
- 4 Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,  
and make us rise to fall no more;  
once more upon thy people shine,  
and fill the world with love divine.
- 5 All praise, eternal Son, to thee  
whose advent sets thy people free,  
whom, with the Father, we adore,

and Spirit bless, for evermore.

*Jordanis oras praevia* Charles Coffin (1676-1749)  
*Translated John Chandler (1806-1876)*

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(December 2025)





## **Special Christmas Services in your Parish Church and across the Benefice**

### **Saturday 13th December 2025**

6pm in St Peter & St Paul, Clare – Carols by Candlelight

### **Tuesday 16th December 2025**

7pm in St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare – Carols by Candlelight

### **Friday 19th December 2025**

6pm in St Mary the Virgin, Poslingford – Carols by Candlelight

### **Sunday 21st December 2025**

4pm in All Saints, Hundon – Carols by Candlelight

5pm in St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish – Carols by Candlelight

### **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

**For more information visit: [www.stourvalley.org.uk](http://www.stourvalley.org.uk)**