Holy Communion
for Advent 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'.



Hymn – Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit,
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne. *(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)*

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 first candle at this point.

Advent Wreath Prayer – Advent 1 (The Patriarchs)

Minister: Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

The Collect

Minister: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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 64:1-9 NRSV)*

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence - as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil - to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord
All: Thanks be to God.

New Testament Reading *(1 Corinthians 1:3-9 NRSV)*

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

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Minister: This is the word of the Lord
All: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading *(Mark 13:24-37 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 Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

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: As we prepare for the coming of the Lord, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant that the whole Church, as a faithful servant, shall be vigilant to know and diligent to perform the will of her Master. In watching and in penitence, may your people make ready for the coming joy of the Nativity.

Guide all in authority, to discern the signs and to act with wisdom and justice. Open their minds and direct their wills to look beyond the immediate advantage to the lasting good of all humanity.

At this Advent time give us grace to serve by example and by deeds those who are close to us, our families, friends, and neighbours, and those with whom we work. As we look towards the season of Christmas, may we remember with humility and gratitude the great love of the Father in sending the Son.

Have mercy on all who are suffering from natural disasters and relieve their distress. Come to those who are in darkness and lead them to recognise the signs by which their lives can be guided.

We pray for those who have known the coming of the Lord at the end of their lives. May they rest in the peace to which he has called them, and may we be reading for our calling, and receive mercy.

We pray in the name of Christ, whose words will never pass away.

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.
As 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: O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; 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

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 – Lo! he comes with clouds descending

Lo! he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluya!
God appears, on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at nought and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing
shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen! let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
claim the kingdom for thine own:
O come quickly!
Alleluya! come, Lord, come! *(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)*



Special Christmas Services in your Parish Church and across the Benefice

Saturday 12th December 2026

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

Tuesday 15th December 2026

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

Friday 18th December 2026

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

Sunday 20th December 2026

4pm in **All Saints, Hundon** – Carols by Candlelight
5pm in **St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish** – Carols by Candlelight

Thursday 24th December 2026 (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

Friday 25th December 2026 (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**

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