

Order of Service 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (Holy Communion)

***The Good Cross***

Welcome

Hello and welcome to Hearsall at Home for 18th September 2022. Today we remember our late Queen Elizabeth on the eve of her funeral, and we ponder the power of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Call to Worship

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1: 18 - 24

We sing together that classic old song, *Amazing Grace*...

Hymn (WT 15 /BPW 550) **Amazing Grace**

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now I am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

My rebel soul, that once withstood  
The Saviour's kindest call,  
Rejoices now, by grace subdued,  
To serve him with its all.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

Yes, when this mortal flesh shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess within the veil  
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

### Poem

There have been many tributes to the late Queen, and I want to repeat one of them now - the poignant new poem written by poet laureate, Simon Armitage, in honour of Queen Elizabeth.

#### **Floral Tribute** by Simon Armitage:

Evening will come, however determined the late afternoon,  
Limes and oaks in their last green flush, pearled in September mist.  
I have conjured a lily to light these hours, a token of thanks,  
Zones and auras of soft glare framing the brilliant globes.  
A promise made and kept for life - that was your gift -  
Because of which, here is a gift in return, glovewort to some,  
Each shining bonnet guarded by stern lance-like leaves.  
The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,  
Hands that can rest, now, relieved of a century's weight.

Evening has come. Rain on the black lochs and dark Munros.  
Lily of the Valley, a namesake almost, a favourite flower  
Interlaced with your famous bouquets, the restrained  
Zeal and forceful grace of its lanterns, each inflorescence  
A silent bell disguising a singular voice. A blurred new day  
Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and  
Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots,  
This lily that thrives between spire and tree, whose brightness  
Holds and glows beyond the life and border of its bloom

### Prayers

Loving Lord of life and death, we feel sadness at the loss of our remarkable Queen Elizabeth. She meant a range of different things to many millions of individual people:

- a source of love and support to her family
- a voice of wisdom to the leaders of the world
- a symbol of unity in a diverse country
- a life of service in a power-hungry world
- a fine example of Christian faith in an increasingly secular society

We thank you for all in her life that brought stability, encouraged what is good, and helped us believe that your love can be expressed in the actions and words of the real world. Amen

### Prayer of Penitence

Lord, many of us may have been pondering the shortcomings of our own lives. Some of us act too hastily without due reflection on the impact we have on others. Some of us are too cautious and are over-concerned with defending what we already have. Many of us think of our own needs before the needs of others. Some of us tend to think that our view must be absolutely correct and find it hard to imagine another perspective.

But what of you? What about me? As we sit in the presence of our holy and merciful God, what would you name before him? For what do you seek forgiveness? In the quietness, open your heart to him...

### Assurance of Forgiveness

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

So, as we honestly confess our sins before him, through his mercy, and through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for us all, we receive his forgiveness once more.

### Prayer of Adoration

Lord, you are the One in whose existence everything else and everyone else is rooted. You are the Alpha and Omega, the creator of all, the guiding light of the nations, the saving power of humanity and the sustainer of the universe. We praise and adore your holy name. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

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.

We celebrate the joy of giving...

### Offering

Lord, receive the gifts we offer and bless our world through them. For Jesus' sake.  
Amen.

Our prayers of concern for the world are led by Revd. Roger Woodward.

### Prayers of Intercession

We come now to share some of the thoughts and concerns of our hearts and minds with God. He is waiting to listen to us and hopes that he might also get a word in. Let us therefore make ourselves comfortable and prepare ourselves for a conversation with God. There will be times of silence for us to listen for his still small voice. The prayers are based loosely on Ecclesiastes 3 and the first line of an old familiar hymn.

#### ***There is a time for planting and a time for pulling up:***

We remember the planet on which we live. Those areas of this world where deforestation has been justified to provide land for growing crops, areas where people experience the reality of climate change and have to rethink the types of crops they plant. Areas where flooding has devastated a nations way of life and people have been left with just the clothes on their backs. We remember particularly the people of Pakistan, as they endeavour to rebuild their own lives and the life of the nation.

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

#### ***A time for killing and a time for healing, a time for war and a time for peace:***

We remember those parts of the world where people have been forced into war to defend their way of life, particularly, we would again remember the people of Ukraine as they defend their country and endeavour to build a new life. We remember those many thousands of people who will live with the physical and mental scars of war all their lives. Give wisdom to those world leaders seeking for peace across the whole globe. May we all be peacemakers within our own communities.

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

#### ***A time for tearing down and a time for building, a time for tearing and a time for mending:***

Father, it is much easier for us to begin something new from scratch, an organisation or a building, than it is to decide when something has served its purpose and needs revitalizing or tearing down. We pray for a clear vision for the future you have for our fellowship and buildings here. Guide us and give us the courage as we have to make difficult decisions.

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

### **A time for sorrow and joy, for mourning and dancing:**

We remember those who are known to us who are ill at this time.

We pray for those whose life here is coming to an end and those who care for them and comfort them. We give thanks for the Hospice Movement and their dedicated staff. We remember with deep affection the late Queen Elizabeth. We thank you that although called to high office, she followed the example of her Lord and Saviour and became a servant to her people. Be with her family as they gather with an international congregation on Monday to give thanks for her life.

For all who mourn, may they know something of your eternal love.

We remember too those who rejoice for life is being very good to them, a new birth, a special birthday, a joyful celebration. May they know how to celebrate and have real joy, fun and laughter with family and friends.

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

### **A time to be silent and a time to talk:**

Forgive us Father when we are more concerned to hear our own voice than to listen to what you and others may be saying to us. Give us the wisdom and generosity not only to listen to others but also to hear what they are saying. You have given us two ears and one mouth - may we give twice as much time to listening as to speaking.

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

Help us Father in all our living to stay in constant conversation with you, sharing our thoughts and listening for your voice, Amen.

We hear two short Bible readings now which point to the saving power of the cross.

### Bible Readings

#### **Numbers 21: 4 - 9**

##### *The bronze snake*

<sup>4</sup> They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go round Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; <sup>5</sup> they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!'

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, 'We sinned when we spoke

against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.' So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

### **John 3: 13 - 17**

<sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

In our heart's eye we go now to the cross of Jesus, where Jesus was lifted up to show the world how much he loved us all... We sing, *Come and see...*

### Song (WT 60) **Come and See (We worship at your feet)**

Verse 1

Come and see, come and see,  
Come and see the King of love.  
See the purple robe and crown of thorns He wears.  
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer,  
As He lifts the cruel cross.  
Lone and friendless now, He climbs towards the hill.

*Chorus*

*We worship at your feet  
Where wrath and mercy meet  
And a guilty world is washed by love's pure stream.  
For us He was made sin,  
Oh help me take it in.  
Deep wounds of love cry out, 'Father forgive.'  
I worship, I worship the Lamb who was slain.*

Verse 2

Come and weep, come and mourn  
For your sin that pierced Him there  
So much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail  
All our pride all our greed  
All our fallenness and shame  
And the Lord has laid the punishment on Him

*Chorus*

*We worship at your feet  
Where wrath and mercy meet  
And a guilty world is washed by love's pure stream.  
For us He was made sin,  
Oh help me take it in.  
Deep wounds of love cry out, 'Father forgive.'  
I worship, I worship the Lamb who was slain.*

Verse 3

Man of heaven born to earth  
To restore us to Your heaven  
Here we bow in awe beneath Your searching eyes  
From Your tears comes our joy  
From Your death our life shall spring  
By Your resurrection power we shall rise

*Chorus*

Lord, please speak through my humble words to us all. Amen.

Sermon

***The Good Cross***

I confess that a part of me has delighted in the Shakespearean language, the extravagant costumes and the archaic ceremony associated with the death of the Queen and the proclamation of the King. A great Elizabethan era has drawn to a close; a fresh era has dawned; and our nations have used theatrical speeches and



elaborate protocol to emphasise these realities to ourselves and to the world at large.

Tomorrow we lay to rest the body of our impressive Queen, Elizabeth II, of happy memory. As a Baptist church we are less equipped than some to contribute to all the pomp. Theologically, we believe that church and state should not be systemically intertwined. Culturally, we tend to be more at home with plain speech, and we are slightly suspicious of carefully rehearsed rituals and high-falutin speeches. What's more, we emphasise freedom of conscience and we affirm that people have the right to oppose our unelected monarchy, even as others may celebrate it.

But today is surely a day to mourn, to give thanks, to ponder and to remember the life of a woman who was such a huge figure on the world stage. And as Baptists, we may especially want to celebrate the simple faith at the heart of the Queen's character.

### 1: The Queen was a servant to the nation

Our late Queen was first of all a **servant to the nation**. As you will have heard so many times, at a young age she dedicated her whole life, whether long or short, to the service of her people. If we regard the monarch as holding the greatest office of state in the land, for the incumbent to see her high office through the lens of service is most striking, especially to those in our current world who are unfamiliar with noble Christian ideals.

According to John 3:13, *No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man*. We follow a Saviour who did not sit in heaven in splendid isolation and allow the world to go its own way. No, he *came from heaven* in the words of John; and he *made himself as nothing*, and *took the form of a servant*, in the words of the apostle Paul.

For Elizabeth II, being a Queen was not a matter of receiving, but of giving. It was not a matter of shoring up the glory of her own position, but of serving her people. Speakers on Radio 4's *The Westminster Hour* last Sunday evening considered it remarkable that our sovereign so often signed herself as "your servant". This is an example for all those in any public office. All officials should ask themselves: Are you in your office to establish your own reputation, or to serve the people at large?

Even ordinary folk such as you and I can ask ourselves a similar question. Are we here to establish our own reputation, or to serve those around us? Take a moment and consider some specific ways in which you may serve your neighbours.

## 2: The Queen was a follower of Jesus Christ

Those commentators I heard last week really did find it remarkable that a Sovereign should see herself as a servant. But we don't find it so remarkable, do we? We, as Christians, know very well where this attitude springs from. Service is a key component of Christian discipleship.

Those who follow Jesus seek to live according to his teaching and his example. We follow him by being people who are truthful, merciful and inclusive. And, in particular, we follow him by seeing ourselves as servants in the world around us.

People have expressed great appreciation for the Queen in recent days. This is more than the politely positive speech required by convention following a death. People genuinely saw in Queen Elizabeth something rather special. That specialness was seen in things such as her sense of humour, her considerate public speech, her humble attention to the plights of her citizens and the joyous twinkle in her eye which she bestowed on so many.

But her unique spirit was fed and watered by her sincere faith. Her Majesty was an unashamed, committed and settled follower of Jesus Christ in her public service and in her private life. Her attendance of church and the references she sometimes made to her faith when she spoke were not only what was required by form. No, she had a genuine faith. She was, indeed, a settled follower of Jesus Christ.

In many liberal spheres, it's fashionable to ridicule religious faith. Some wilfully ignore the subtleties and profundity of faith. The people of the western world are like children sitting in the branches of a great old oak praising the view they enjoy there, whilst at the same time giving instructions for the axeman to fell the tree.

We hear again today that super-familiar verse in our gospel reading: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

In Jesus we find what life is all about. In Jesus we connect with a life beyond our own short lives. This world does not need religious maniacs, bickering churches or hard-hearted bigots. But how it **does** need settled, caring and intelligent followers of Jesus Christ, as her Majesty was. Are you such a follower? How would your neighbours know that you are? Are you ashamed of the gospel - or is it really the power and wisdom of God to offer life to all?

### 3: The Queen set an example to all Christians

There's something a little more subtle I want to explore about the way Queen Elizabeth followed Jesus. Our gospel reading went on to say: *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

Elizabeth's faith had room for the faith of others, even whilst she herself was always a loyal follower of Jesus. In fact, she had room for the faith of others **precisely because** she was a loyal follower of Jesus. As she spoke of the diverse religions of her realms, she modelled great respect for them. The faith of Sikhs, Hindus or Muslims was neither a problem nor a threat to her own Christian faith.

Her Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save it through him. To believe in Jesus is not a mandate to find all that's wrong with others.

A bigot or a fundamentalist may feel insecurity in the company of those who are different. Even a more open-minded Christian might sometimes struggle with how to make sense of faith in a multi-religious world. But a true and settled follower of Jesus shows their faith very clearly in their conduct towards those who differ. By their humane, curious, respectful attitude to all peaceful followers of other religions and philosophies, they prove the robust nature of Christian faith. Such a Christian stance was modelled by Elizabeth II.

### 4: The Mystery of the Cross

Now we read in John's gospel that Jesus Christ would be **lifted up** - this also means he was exalted, and in John, this refers to his crucifixion. And the Book of Numbers chronicles a more primitive time in the history of religious experience.

The children of Israel had been given the opportunity to enter the promised land. They gave way to fear at the reports that giants lived in Canaan's land. They

grumbled at the lack of food and water in the wilderness. They criticised their leaders.

In the incident about the snakes, they had sinned by moaning again. They detested what they called 'This miserable food'. There was no water. Why ever did Moses bring them out of Egypt?

And God had punished their moaning by sending poisonous snakes their way. Those bitten were dying. Incidentally, it's estimated that, in the Book of Numbers, around 15,000 Israelites are recorded as being killed by God for their moaning and rebellion during those wilderness years. Sometimes we do indeed meet a wrathful God in the Old Testament.

Anyway, on this occasion, in response to Moses' prayer, God tells Moses to make a bronze snake as an antidote to the bite. Anyone simply looking at this bronze snake that had been raised on a pole, well, they would be healed from the snakebite.

John's gospel uses this story to illustrate the cross of Jesus. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross. Anyone who sees him with a simple faith will be saved from their sins and given life everlasting.

Now there are various theories about how the cross 'works'. Penal substitution, propitiation of divine wrath, moral influence, the unmasking of the nature of evil and many more ideas have been suggested.

But you know, at the core of it, it's very simple, and that's what the comparison with the snake story from Numbers brings out. *Just look at it and be healed!* We've mentioned the servant heart of Jesus. Here we sense how far his servant heart goes.

How easily a man of Jesus' skill and power might have avoided the crucifixion. But love compelled him to submit to this evil. He experienced the greatest evil the world at that time knew and continued to pray in love for mercy for us all.

Crucifixion was not rare. Sometimes thousands were crucified on the same day. It was practised in the pre-Roman world and then embraced by Rome, especially for slaves, foreigners and the lower classes.

It was and is a most agonising way to die as the victim struggles to balance the impulse to breathe with the terrible pain each breath exacts, and he tries to raise himself upon his mutilated arms to gasp some air.

Women as well as men were crucified. Crucifixion has been used throughout the centuries and is still occasionally meted out in our era. So-called Islamic State has revived this barbarous practice in recent years.

The punishment inflicts maximum pain for maximum time. It can last as long as three days and nights. Our word 'excruciating' derives from the word crucifixion. It's intended as the most graphic way of deterring crime or opposition, usually to the power of an empire or a state. *This is what the state can do to you if you step out of line.*

Where on earth is God in this world of violence and state brutality? Ever since the cross of Jesus, we know how to answer that question. God is **with** the victim, sharing their agony and giving hope that even this - the worst that life can throw at you - is never the end of the matter. For on the third day Jesus rose again. Empire never has the last word.

Queen Elizabeth certainly demonstrated a way of being a high ruler with a humble heart. In the creation of the Commonwealth, she forged a response to the achievements and brutalities of the British Empire that was creative, life-giving and inclusive. Of course, as some are reminding us, there is much more work to do in putting right the wrongs of the empire, but Queen Elizabeth laid a strong foundation.

Last Sunday, I invited us all to consider whether we personally had specific sins of which we might need to repent. We learnt that our sins are not merely little perturbations in the fabric of human life, but an affront to God himself, for each of us is made in God's image, so a sin against a person is a sin against God.

But we also learnt of the mercy, maternal compassion and unfailing love of God, who can choose to not see us as our sins deserve. Today we connect all this with the cross.

The sins we may inflict on God when we sin against each other, do not cause him to treat us as those sins deserve. We look at Christ, lifted up on the cross, and we

know that in spite of it all, as we trust him, our sins are absolutely forgiven, for he carries on loving.

But this experience is not to be a blank cheque to us, as if sin has no consequence. On the cross, God shows us the true nature of sin. As we sit and ponder the cross, our hearts are transformed.

It's so simple - like glancing at a bronze image in the desert to be cured of a poison. It's so profound, for it connects us with a love that is greater than anything we could have ever devised in our imagination.

We look at Jesus on that old rugged cross and we know that we are sinners and that we are loved. We look at that cross and we know that our sisters and brothers and friends and neighbours are also sinners and are also loved.

It's the meeting place. The honest place. The loving place. The place that breaks down all the barriers that divide us. We are all good and bad together. We are all loved together. All we can do is kneel and be loved. It's the good cross.

Lay it all at the foot of the cross. Lay it all down. Let your sins be forgiven and let your heart be cleansed and let your spirit become steadfastly fixed to the one reality that endures: love.

### Conclusion

Her Majesty's noble heart and faithful service were impressive indeed. But even they just give us a hint of the breadth and depth and height and length of the love of God. There is nothing you can do to stop him loving you. He loves you in your sin. And he loves you yet more, so that you no longer stay in that sin, but learn to grow in love.

May our late Queen rest in peace. May she rise in glory to the joys of life eternal. May we, like her, follow Jesus with a settled heart, living a life of loving Christian service.

As we prepare now to receive holy communion, we sing *Before the throne of God above...*

Song (WT 38) **Before the Throne of God Above**

Verse 1

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea,  
A great High Priest whose name is Love  
Whoever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on His hands,  
My name is written on His heart.  
I know that while in heav'n He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart,  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see Him there,  
Who made an end to all my sin.  
Because the sinless Saviour died  
My sinful soul is counted free,  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me,  
To look on Him and pardon me.

Verse 3

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb,  
My perfect spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I Am,  
The King of glory and of grace.  
One with Himself I cannot die,  
My soul is purchased with His blood.  
My life is hid with Christ on high  
With Christ my Saviour and my God,  
With Christ my Saviour and my God.

#### Verse 4

I bow before the cross of Christ  
And marvel at this love divine.  
God's perfect Son was sacrificed  
To make me righteous in God's eyes.  
This river's depths I cannot know  
But I can glory in its flood.  
The Lord Most High has bowed down low  
And poured on me His glorious love,  
And poured on me His glorious love.

### Holy Communion

#### Invitation

The table of the Lord is spread. It is for those who will come and see in broken bread and poured out wine symbols of his life shed for us on the cross and raised again on the third day. The risen Christ is present among his people and it is here that we meet him. It is for those who know him a little and long to know him more. We invite all who are seeking him, and all who are weary of their sin and doubt, to come and share in the feast.

#### Prayer of Preparation

Loving Lord, we come to this table, not trusting in our own merits, but relying on your great mercy and forgiveness. We acknowledge our sin before you. In our thoughts, words and deeds; in our omissions and in our carelessness; we have erred in your sight. We are truly sorry and seek for your forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, whose blood was shed to bring us mercy. Amen.

#### Gospel Words

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.



Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

### Prayers for the Fellowship

Loving Lord, we pray for our life as a church. Grant each one of us a deeper and richer connection with you and make us agents of revival in a lost world. Break down any barriers among us, mould us again into a loving fellowship, and let our communal life be a living proof of your saving power. Amen.

### The Peace

Christ is our peace. He breaks down all barriers that would divide us and moulds us into the harmonious people of God. Let us share with one another a sign of peace.

### Song (WT 344) **Peace I Give to You (as a round)**

Peace, I give to you, I give to you, My peace. X2

*Chorus:*

*Let it flow to one another, let it flow, let it flow.*

*Let it flow to one another, let it flow, let it flow.*

Love, I give to you, I give to you, My love. X2

*Chorus*

Hope, I give to you, I give to you, My hope. X2

*Chorus*

Joy, I give to you, I give to you, My joy. X2

*Chorus*

Grace, I give to you, I give to you, My grace. X2

*Chorus*

Power, I give to you, I give to you, My power. X2

*Chorus*

### Words of Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and

said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving Lord Jesus, for this bread and wine we give you our thanks. A loaf speaks of the unity of a family gathered round a table; of the fertility of the earth; of the skills of farmers and bakers; and of provision for our bodies. Wine speaks of glad hearts; fruitful vines; the skills of vineyard growers and winemakers; and of people brought together in celebration. And now they speak, too, of your body broken to make us whole; of your blood spilt to make us clean; of the oneness of the church in earth and in heaven; and of the celebration in glory at the end of all time. For bread and for wine and for all they mean to us today, we give you our thanks.

### Breaking and Sharing of Bread

Jesus said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

We share bread together in communion with him and with one another.

### Sharing the Cup

In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

We drink the wine together.

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving Lord, we thank you for meeting with us as we have shared bread and wine together. We praise and bless you for your mercy when we were sinners;

for enfolding us in your body when we were alone;

and for calling us to live like shining stars of light, when we had become jaded.

United, we choose a life of loving fellowship;

forgiven, we rise to a life of worship;

sent out, we embrace a life of gospel-sharing in word and deed.

Take us this day and every day and make us living sacrifices and joyful witnesses of your everlasting, all-embracing love. Amen.

We sing a song of self-offering as we conclude our worship....

**Song (WT 195) **I will Offer up my Life****

Verse 1

I will offer up my life  
In spirit and truth,  
Pouring out the oil of love  
As my worship to You.  
In surrender, I must give my every part;  
Lord, receive the sacrifice  
Of a broken heart.

*Chorus*

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring  
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?  
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung  
As a praise of Your name  
For the things You have done?  
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part  
Of the debt of love that is owed  
By this thankful heart.*

Verse 2

You deserve my every breath,  
For You've paid the great cost,  
Giving up Your life to death,  
Even death on a cross.  
You took all my shame away  
There, defeated my sin,  
Opened up the gates of heaven  
And have beckoned me in.

*Chorus x 2*

### The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
And the love of God;  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us all, evermore. Amen

### Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you  
Wherever he may send you;  
May he guide you through the wilderness;  
Protect you through the storm;  
May he bring you home rejoicing  
At the wonders he has shown you;  
May he bring you home rejoicing  
Once again into our doors.