



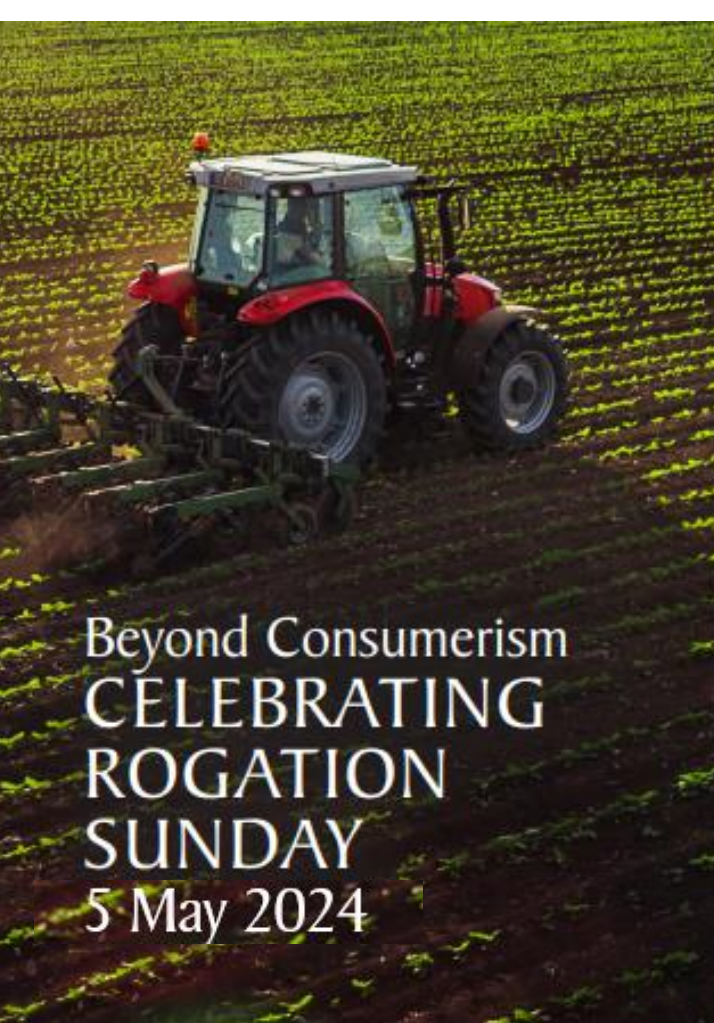
Beyond Consumerism
**CELEBRATING
ROGATION SUNDAY**

5 May 2024



Arthur Rank
Centre

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS



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Reflecting on Food and Social Justice

This year's worship resources continue to relate to the Arthur Rank Centre's *Beyond Consumerism* project. Here we explore Rogation rituals alongside food and social justice. Alongside locally grown produce, we are used to round-the-year imports of a vast array of fresh food often at the expense of those who have grown it. This year let us remember to ask for God's protection and blessing on farming communities and their crops not only here at home but around the world.

Rogation Days are the three week-days before Ascension Day, but may often be celebrated on the Sunday before. Rogation comes from Latin, *rogare* which means 'to ask'. Traditionally, the church congregation would walk round the parish boundaries. As they walked, they would ask for God's blessing on the land and God's protection on the growing crops. Claims over land and the exact position of boundaries could be the source of dissent and bitter feuds between villages, so this was a time to encourage friendship between neighbours with the reconciling of differences, proper care of the boundary markers and the wider environment, and charitable giving to the poor.

Key Texts

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7. 7 – 12)

The equivalent passage from the Sermon on the Mount in Luke's Gospel includes the verse:

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6. 38)

It is interesting that the examples of 'asking' in Matthew's Gospel involve food. The Lord's Prayer too involves us asking God to give us our daily bread, or in other words sufficient sustenance for the day. In the Bible, asking and receiving also seem to be inextricably linked with giving, and giving good things generously. Underlying this is the fundamental principle: do to others as you would want them to do to you.

'Beating the bounds'

Traditionally a common feature of Rogation days was the ceremony of 'beating the bounds', in which a procession of parishioners, led by the minister and churchwardens would proceed around the boundary of their parish and pray for its protection in the forthcoming year. The idea was to give everyone a mental map of the parish boundary, especially the children who would need to know this information in the future. Children especially were encouraged to hit the boundary markers with a stick, so that they remembered where the edges of their villages actually were. And after all, every child loves to carry a stick!





Map your area - a great opportunity for all generations together

In theory, modern surveying techniques have rendered 'beating the bounds' obsolete, but it is still worth drawing up a map of your area. It's a great all-age activity and helpful for young people especially to relate local landmarks and footpaths to a map on paper or screen. And I can guarantee you will make some interesting discoveries.

On investigation, I discovered that beating the bounds could be difficult in the Walgrave group of villages. In places our boundaries run through Pitsford Water! The area covered by the benefice is actually much larger than I anticipated. It includes large swathes of farmland with village boundaries running down field edges, bridleways and streams as well as through the lake.

Take time to discover:

- In these days of multi-benefices, circuits and mission partnerships, what is the area covered by the whole group?
- How do these areas intersect and overlap?
- How does this relate to our ecumenical friends?
- How does this relate to mission in the area?
- Where are the vantage points and significant places for prayer?
- How can we draw all the churches together for a memorable all-age Rogation walk?

Today, Rogation offers an opportunity to strengthen a sense of community, identity and place, and to ask for God's protection and blessing not only locally but also further afield. As we consider food and social justice, we want to raise awareness of farming situations around the world as well as at home.

Worship Options

A Rogation Celebration: In varied terrain, it is almost impossible to trace all the exact boundaries. Travel by car may now be essential in larger parishes. Search out some specific vantage points with good views to provide the focal points for prayer. Be aware of farms, churches and other community buildings. Why not take a picnic and make it a whole community day out.

A Rogation Service in church: This might include time outside looking out from the edges of the church yard. Alternatively, if you are blessed with AV equipment, you could show some images of key locations and boundary markers around the area.

A Processional Prayer Walk: This could be extended over the three Rogation days. Visit one or more villages each day to incorporate a whole group of churches and farming communities.



Helpful Resources

Common Worship Times and Seasons, 2006, CHP, p. 609 – 618.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/churchs-year/times-and-seasons-4#mmm359>

Together for a Season: all-age resources for Feasts and Festival of the Christian Year, ed. Gill Ambrose, 2009, CHP, p.31ff

Ploughshares and Firstfruits, Chris Thorpe, 2020, Canterbury Press

Arthur Rank Centre's 2021 Rogation resources are still available online at: [Rogation Sunday 2021 - The Arthur Rank Centre](#)

Music Suggestions for Rogation

'Come let us worship our creator', Geoff Weaver, 2005, God's Green Planet, RSCM, easy to sing unaccompanied outside.

'From the highest of heights' (Indescribable), Jesse Reeves, Laura Story, 2004, StF 48, SoF 1775, MP 1170

God in his/such love for us lent us this planet, Fred Pratt Green, StF 727, CH4 240 MP 832

'It's a world of sunshine, a world of pain', Iain D. Cunningham, CH4 245, catchy and easy to sing unaccompanied outside.

'Nourished by the rainfall, the earth can come alive', Pablo Fernandez Badillo, translated by John L. Bell, CH4 138,

'Sing out the earth and skies', Marty Haugen, 1985, GIA Pub. Call and response; lively folk-dance style

'Who can measure heaven and earth?', Christopher Idle, AM 822

We are the Tenants of the King, Joel Payne, Resound Worship, downloads available from www.doxecology.org/resources

'You made a universe so full of wonder', Ally Barratt, Tune: Finlandia, available from the Jubilate website: <https://jubilate.co.uk/songs/you-made-a-universe-so-full-of-wonder>

A plea for social justice and a pledge to live differently.

Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship, (AM) Singing the Faith (StF)

Hymns Old and New: One Church, One Faith, One Lord (HON)

Church Hymnal 4th Edition (CH4)

Mission Praise (MP)

Songs of Fellowship (SoF)

Globe Prayer: An All-Age Prayer Suggestion for use in church or outside

You will need an inflatable globe. The globe is thrown from one member of the congregation to another. The person who catches the globe chooses a country to pray for, asking God's blessing and protection on the growing crops native to that particular place. This also gives ample opportunity to share prayer needs of countries which struggle with drought or flooding, poor pay or unsafe working conditions.



It's a scandalous reality that millions of farmers and workers are still living in poverty despite working hard to provide the products we love. Unfairness in global trade is rooted in centuries of exploitation. Across the globe, hard-working producers are unravelling this legacy, turning the exploited into entrepreneurs. They're fighting for a fair deal, supported by Fairtrade, earning their way out of poverty and transforming their communities.

Rogation Prayers and Blessings

Generous God, source of abundance,
you provide sufficient food to sustain us day by day.
We ask for your protection on our growing crops,
our fruit and vegetables,
that in due time we may enjoy a plentiful harvest.
We ask for your provision for those struggling with the cost of living;
that we might share generously what we have.
We ask for your mercy for those who are exploited and treated harshly.
Help us to campaign together to ensure safe working conditions,
fair trade and justice for all.
We ask you to hear us, generous God,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Remember, Lord, your mercy and loving kindness towards us.
Bless this good earth, and make it fruitful.
Bless our labour, and give us all things needed for our daily lives.
Bless the homes of our village(s) and all who live within them.
Bless our common life and care for friend and neighbour.
Hear us, good Lord.

Amen.

Rejoice in God your Creator;
enjoy all that he has made.
Be faithful stewards of His creation,
always serving your neighbour.
May God guide you and encourage you,
may you choose paths of righteousness and justice,
that with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
you may be co-workers in God's world.

Amen.



Church in action *together with the community*

Finally, use Rogation as a springboard into action. We made a New Year Pledge on Plough Sunday to stand alongside the farmers, to champion fair trade and to challenge injustice and the exploitation of others. Have you turned this pledge into action?

Here in Walgrave, I am proud to belong to a generous, caring and inventive village community. In the past year, our group of villages has welcomed and hosted numerous Ukrainian families. The local pub has hosted a coffee morning, accompanied by delicious homemade cakes supplied by willing volunteers. Initially set up to support the Ukrainians both socially and financially, it is now well established as a whole community gathering. All donations are used to support the poor in our villages and beyond. Furthermore, a small group has pioneered a new very reasonably priced community shop in the pub's old skittle alley aptly named 'Skittles' and run primarily by volunteers. It sells fresh artisan bread, locally sourced fruit and vegetables, and meat from a butcher in a neighbouring village.

If you want to make a difference in your community, Rogation might spark action together where you are. Why not get involved in a local Farmers' Market? Set up a Fairtrade stall to help those fighting for a fair deal break the stranglehold of poverty prices. Or establish a locally grown stall with surplus fresh produce from local gardeners and allotment holders. This is an ideal time to listen to God's promptings for new possibilities for church and community.

How will you take action?

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