

# Times of celebration

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## Anniversaries and landmarks

## Occasions for commission rededication and recommitment for service

### A litany of prayer and thanksgiving for an anniversary or celebration

On this anniversary day we thank you, Lord,  
for our church here in ...

We praise you for all the joy we have known in this fellowship,  
and we pray for all those who together  
make up this community of your people,  
so that our church may be a real home  
for all who share its life.

We pray for those who bear responsibility for leadership:  
for  
*our minister, elders and teachers, ...*

that they may be guided by your wisdom  
and sustained by your strength.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for our young people:  
for  
*the Pilots, Junior Church, Youth Group ...*

that they may grow in faith  
and renew the vision of the church.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for those who work to enhance our worship:  
through singing and music,  
through the reading of the scriptures,  
through the arrangement of flowers,  
*through ...*

that they may be channels of your grace  
and find joy in your service.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for those who meet for Bible study, and for prayer,  
that through their devotion the whole fellowship may be enriched.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for the groups that meet for friendship and recreation:  
for  
*the women's fellowship, the ...*

that in them people may find true fellowship  
and discover Christ in their neighbour.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for all who maintain the fabric of our church:  
for  
*the maintenance team and the caretakers,.....*

and for all who hold office in the church,  
that they may be ever aware that they are workers in your kingdom.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

We pray for all who use our premises,  
that they may find us welcoming and hospitable.

*All* Lord, we give you thanks for their work and witness  
**and we pray your blessing upon them.**

Lord God, you have called us to share the joy and fullness of life  
that you give in your Son, Jesus Christ.  
Grant that our church may be a blessing to all in this neighbourhood,  
so that more and more people may come to love and trust you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

Wendy Baskett

## **Petition and intercession for a church anniversary or celebration**

Lord God  
we offer our prayers to you today  
for our church here in ... ;  
that your Holy Spirit may inspire our worship  
and lead us into deeper fellowship;  
that we may continue to pass on our faith,  
hope and love to succeeding generations;  
that we may serve the community in which we live  
with commitment, vision and enthusiasm;  
that within our fellowship there may be found  
comfort for the sorrowful,  
strength for the anxious,  
compassion for the sick,  
and concern and love for all.

We pray for the minister and elders of this church;  
for all who hold positions of responsibility  
in worship, teaching, caring or administration;  
and for each member with their particular gifts;  
that together we may fulfil our calling  
eagerly, conscientiously, and with imagination,  
strengthened by your Spirit  
and upheld by one another's prayers.

We pray for those for whom we are particularly concerned:  
those who are ill, at home or in hospital;  
those who are housebound or unable to get to church;  
those who are bereaved or face losing someone they love;  
those who are worried or depressed;  
and for those who no longer come to church,  
that they may be drawn back into our fellowship.

Lord, we thank you  
for the lives of your faithful people in every age  
and especially for members of this community  
who have been witnesses to your love.

*We remember especially ...*

We, with them, are the living stones  
with which you build your church.  
We pray that we, too, may remain faithful to our calling,  
as did your Son, Jesus Christ,  
that by your grace our lives may be the examples  
on which those after us may build,  
to your praise and glory.

*All* **Amen.**

Wendy Baskett

## Loving gracious God

Loving gracious God,  
we come before you  
as we mark another year in the life of this church.  
We give you thanks for your guidance,  
your prodding and your leading over this past year.  
We give you thanks for all  
we have accomplished in your name,  
but we also know sometimes  
we have missed the mark.  
We thank you for all those with whom  
we have had contact over this last year,  
Whether it was for joyous reasons  
or sad ones, or for whatever reason  
they found themselves here in this building.  
May we through that contact however brief  
have shared something of your love for all people.  
Today we thank you for the past year  
and all it has contained.  
At this anniversary time we cannot  
stand only looking backwards,  
we must also look forward.  
So at this time we thank you  
that you will walk with us into the coming year  
in the life of this church.  
May we who this day celebrate and remember  
the past year in our constant walk with you,  
go forward in hope and joy,  
into your future.

*All* **Amen.**

David Coote

## A time for rededication

*Leader:* We come Lord God  
to rededicate ourselves to your purposes.

*All:* **Gracious God  
as a body of your people  
and as individual members of that body.  
We come now to rededicate ourselves to the task you have set  
before us your church.  
We also at this time rededicate ourselves anew to living a life that  
reflects your presence with us and your love for each one of us.**

**We rededicate our lives to your service  
and the service of others,  
just as our Lord came to serve.**

*All:* Loving God renew and strengthen in us  
the joy of knowing you,  
and our faith and trust  
in your Son our Saviour.

**Amen.**

David Coote

## The challenge of the call

This dramatic reading may be included in a service of commissioning  
or rededication focusing on the challenge of call

### Water from the Rock

*Narrator:* The whole Israelite community left the desert of Sin and made a camp at Rephidim, where they quarrelled with Moses, saying ...

*People:* Give us water to drink,  
for we are thirsty and ready to die.

*Narrator:* Then Moses cried to the Lord,  
*Moses:* What am I to do with these people?  
They are almost ready to stone me!

*Narrator:* And the Lord answered Moses:  
*God:* Take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.  
I will stand before you on the rock of Horeb.  
Strike the rock and water will come out of it for the people to drink.

*Moses:* I struck the rock with such force, that the water simply gushed to the surface.  
Like slitting an artery, the glistening fluid bled from its source and spurted forth and everyone got drenched.

*Is 1:* For the first time in ages our thirst was assuaged and we were able to drink again.

*Is 2:* Extravagant, gaping mouths snatched greedily at every passing droplet, freeing shrivelled tongues from the imprisonment of drought.

*Is 3:* Torn and blistered feet found soothing relief in the sudden miraculous appearance of rock pools.

*Narrator:* The people danced for joy  
*Is 1:* We had been desperate for water for days. Not since Marah had we been blessed with such a prodigiously sweet outpouring.

*Is 2:* The desert, with eager determination had once more sought our rasping throats and wrung them dry, until scored and scorched, they felt like sandpaper, leaving us choking on our own dry spittle.

*Is 3:* Oh yes. We had been desperate.

*Moses:* So desperate in fact that they turned on me.  
*Is 1:* Why did you bring us here, to this forsaken hellhole?  
*Is 2:* To watch our livestock die?  
*Is 3:* To see our children perish?

*Moses:* Then they gathered rocks to stone me.

*Narrator:* Desperation can drive a people to the very edge. It may sharpen the instinct for survival but in the end, in extremity, it turns even those of mildest disposition into beasts who then turn on each other. It also shortens memories.

*God:* How quickly they have forgotten the cruel oppression of their Egyptian overlords, and the miraculous escape across the Sea of Reeds. Now, suddenly, years of intolerable slavery take on an almost rosy glow, and they begin to reminisce about 'the good old days'. But I have heard it all a thousand times before. Moan, moan, moan. The same old scratchy record. Poor Moses you've certainly got your work cut out.

*Moses:* So Lord, tell me what to do?  
I'm really struggling with this one.  
Give me Pharaoh any day.

*Narrator:* Thirst and frustration finally gives way to rage.

*Is 1:* We've had enough and he should know it too.

*Is 2:* Our leader.

*Is 3:* The man who speaks in secret with our God, in private session, behind billowing clouds of smoke.

*Is 1:* Striking bargains.

*Is 2:* Negotiating terms.

*Is 3:* It's all very well but we never get a say.

*Is 1:* Let's face it, the man who performed so dramatically in public, on our behalf, in front of Pharaoh, just a little while ago ...

*Is 2:* Waving that magic stick of his, that swallowed snakes and all, and struck the Nile and turned it red with blood ...

*Is 3:* Well, he now looks pretty unconvincing.

*Is 1:* He's not the fighter he was.

*Is 2:* It's a different ball game out here in the desert and it's not what I'd call liberation either. Egypt may have been servitude, yes, but at least we knew where we stood. We were fed and had a roof over our heads.

*Is 3:* To be honest, I don't think he's up to it any more. Past his sell-by date if you ask me but then he's getting on.

*Narrator:* The honest broker becomes the convenient whipping boy, a scapegoat for a thousand smouldering resentments.

*God:* If I were you I'd hit someone or something.

*Moses:* I brought the staff down so heavily that I only missed their heads by a whisker.  
I suppose it was my way of re-asserting authority. (His or mine you may ask) or it could have been sheer exasperation.  
Any way, whatever ... it did the trick.

*God:* It was most impressive. The moment the rock was struck, a huge jet shot up over their heads and everyone got soaked. Quite amazing really. One for the record books I'd say.

**Moses:** Dear God, will we always be driven to the limits before we encounter your saving hand?  
**God:** Probably.  
**Narrator:** So Moses did this in the sight of the people, and he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord saying ...  
**People:** Is the Lord among us or not?

Helena McKinnon

## **Strike the rock**

Great God, do you know what you are asking?  
This Rock of your is Holy ground to us – a precious stone,  
that moulded by the years has shaped our own lives too.

### **Strike the rock.**

It has been both sure foundation and building block, for from it we have cut and carved the stone that built the great cathedrals, churches, chapels to your name.

### **Strike the rock.**

Your people too have made their mark. Through centuries of service and self-sacrifice, history has born witness to that boundless love entered in and paid the price.

### **Strike the rock.**

Together we weathered storms of fire, flood and persecution. But now age, erosion, indifference and internal wrangling eat at the very fabric of our faith – both walls and worshippers are wearing thin and there seems more life outside the church than in.

### **Strike the rock.**

This rock has been our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of need.

A home, a sanctuary, a house of prayer, where those who seek your solace come to plead.

And yet, you ask that we should take your hand and smite the Holy Ground on which we stand?

### **Strike the rock.**

So Moses raised his staff and struck the rock.

And so he did.

And dare we do the same?

Release the living water from its core that all may drink,  
be satisfied and want more?

Helena McKinnon

## At an induction or recommitment

I recommit myself to the Holy One,  
to the company of Christ's friends  
and the highway of the Spirit of Wisdom.  
I concur with the gospel call to repentance,  
looking inside myself and round about  
for those things which impede  
God's commonwealth of justice and peace.  
I embrace life on the margins of church and society,  
a sentinel, fully sentient,  
hunting for and gathering together  
gifts to be used in the building of community.

Janet Lees

## Vineyard Kyrie

Vine-grower God, we have forgotten it is your vineyard.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

True Vine Christ, we have forgotten we are your co-workers.

*All* **Christ, have mercy.**

Fruitful Spirit, we have forgotten how to co-operate.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

Retrain us; prune us for a new harvest,

In which first and last are reversed.

*All* **In your mercy, hear our prayer.**

*(This could be used with any of the Kyries at number 5 in Rejoice and Sing)*

Janet Lees

## The Body of Christ

That's us, the Church!  
How gross it is.  
No longer lithe and supple  
Full of energy.  
Now twisted and deformed,  
Lethargic in the extreme.

Once I dreamed  
As all young men do  
Of a vibrant renewed Church.  
United yet not uniform.  
Exhibiting its rich diversity  
In all aspects of its life.



Can we break free,  
From the straitjacket of tradition?  
Remove the ritual's noose  
That would choke  
Any outreach of the spirit,  
Beyond the enmeshing structures.

Uniting together with one mission,  
Affirming all we hold in common,  
Spelling out the differences,  
Respecting each other in love,  
Acknowledging our ignorance  
About each other and our faith.

If we are unfit  
Our bodies suffer.  
Likewise within the Church.  
Shed the weighty burden  
Of outmoded structures and customs,  
Adopt a healthy spiritual diet.

As Christ's human body  
Was broken and scarred  
So the Church bears signs  
Of conflict and dissent.  
Yet healing is possible  
Gained through this timeless victory.

Y Mochyn Daear