** DEVON CHURCHES GREEN ACTION**

**CELEBRATIONS IN JANUARY 2019**

**Plough Sunday January 6th**

The observance of Plough Sunday on the First Sunday of Epiphany goes back to Victorian times, but behind it there is a much older observance, associated with the first working day after the twelve days of Christmas, hence ‘Plough Monday’ in some places.

In medieval times some ploughs were kept in the parish church, and some churches kept a ‘plough-light’. In days when work was scarce in winter, the observance looked forward to the time of sowing with the promise of a harvest to come.

Although the nature of farming has changed over the centuries, Plough Sunday is seen as a way of generally celebrating. Some church communities have also reintroduced it as a focus for asking a blessing on human labour near the start of the calendar year. It is an opportunity to cherish the land and human labour, and to remind us all of our dependence upon it and upon God.

Why not hold a Plough Sunday service in your church to celebrate farming and the work of farmers, at the same time recognising the real challenges that face farmers and rural communities.

If you can’t devote a service please, at least include these prayers in your time of prayer.

**Plough Sunday Prayer:**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:for in your abundant care you have given us fertile land, rich soil, the seasonsin their courses.You provide seed for sowing, water, light and warmth to bring forth themiracle of growth.You give us skill to work the land, to prepare and nourish it, that it may be fruitful.Prosper the work of our hands, and provide abundant crops for your people to share.Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.God speed the plough.

**The Blessing of Seed**

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:

in your goodness you have given us this seed to sow.

In it we perceive the promise of life,

the wonders of your creative love.

By your blessing,

let this seed be for us a sign of your creative power,

that in sowing and watering,

tending and watching,

we may see the miracle of growth,

and in due course reap a rich harvest.

As this seed must die to give life,

reveal to us the saving power of your Son,

who died that we might live,

and plant in us the good seed of your word.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

By itself the earth produces:

first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain shall appear.

**Readings**

Genesis 1.9-13 or Genesis 8.20 – 9.3 or Isaiah 55.6-11

or Ecclesiasticus 38.25-end

Psalm 37.22-38

1 Corinthians 9.6-14

Matthew 6.25-end

There is a time to sow, and a time to reap.

cf Ecclesiastes 3.2

A sower went out to sow, and some seed fell into good soil.

cf Mark 4.3,8

Those who sow bountifully will also reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9.6

**Blessing**

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who is the source of all goodness and growth,

pour his blessing upon all things created,

and upon you his children,

**Wassail!! – Another time to celebrate God’s creation.**

A wassail is a traditional ceremony to encourage new growth and a bountiful harvest to the apple trees. It usually takes place on the 12th Night  – this is now the 5th January, but *Old Twelvey Night* is 17th January,  as that would have been the correct date before the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752.

The wassail starts at dusk with the preparation of a special drink made in a wassail bowl. This seems to vary from place to place with anything from beer, warm cider or a sort of egg nog all being used.

The drink is carried to the orchard with everyone involved in the wassail.  There are rhymes to be chanted to the trees – these also vary from place to place.  Here are some: