



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living and telling the story of Jesus

Rural Forum 2024

Welcome

Monday 21 October 2024

Programme for the day

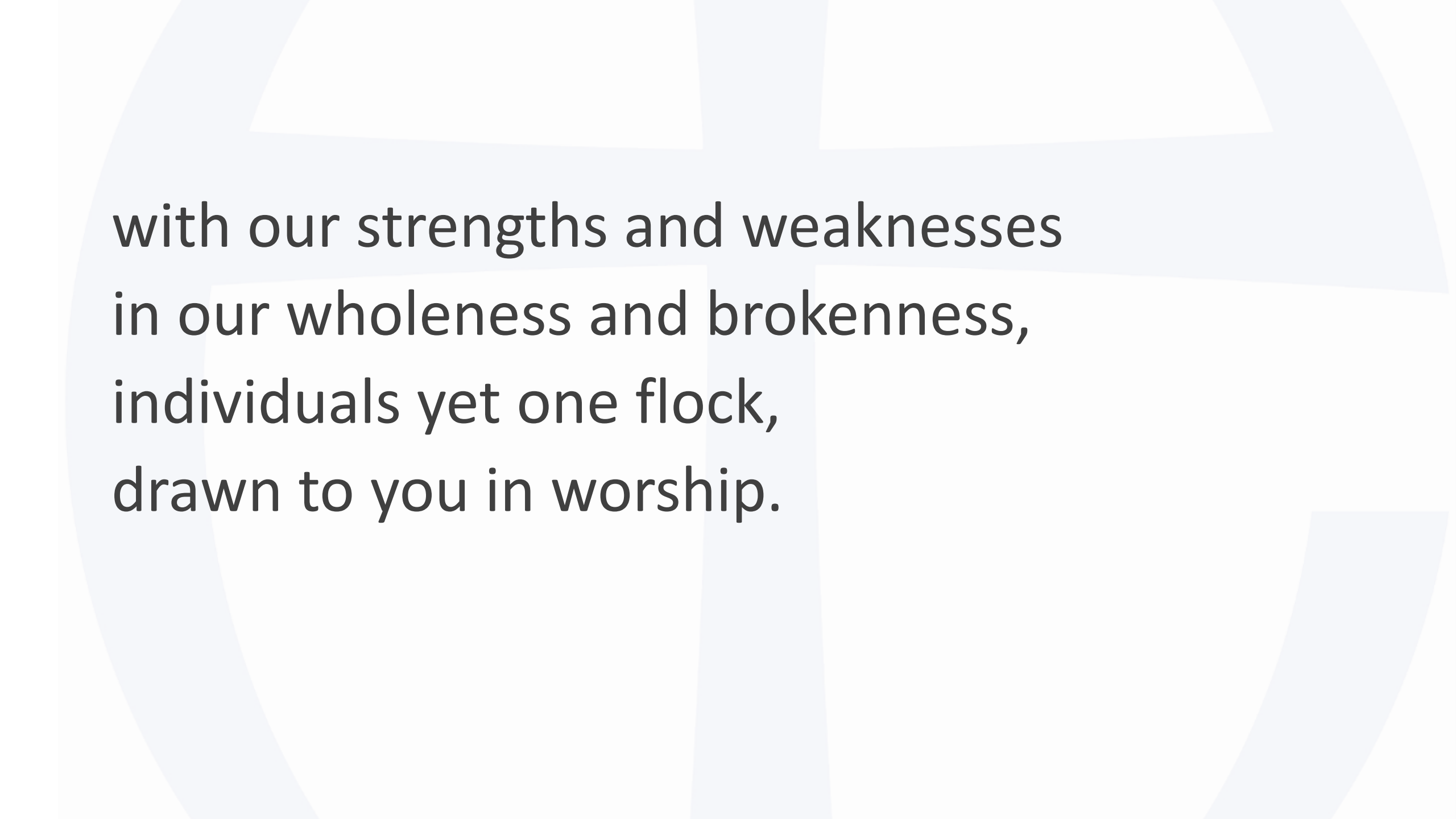
- 1000 Welcome and opening
- 1020 Beyond the mission statistics – what does growth look like in a rural benefice? Jo Neary
- 1110 Coffee
- 1130 Benefice of the future – experiences in the Diocese of Winchester, Simon Butler
- 1210 Bath and Wells rural strategy
- 1230 Lunch
- 1330 Deanery group discussions
- 1400 Workshops
- 1445 Q&A
- 1520 Farewell and closing prayer

Worship

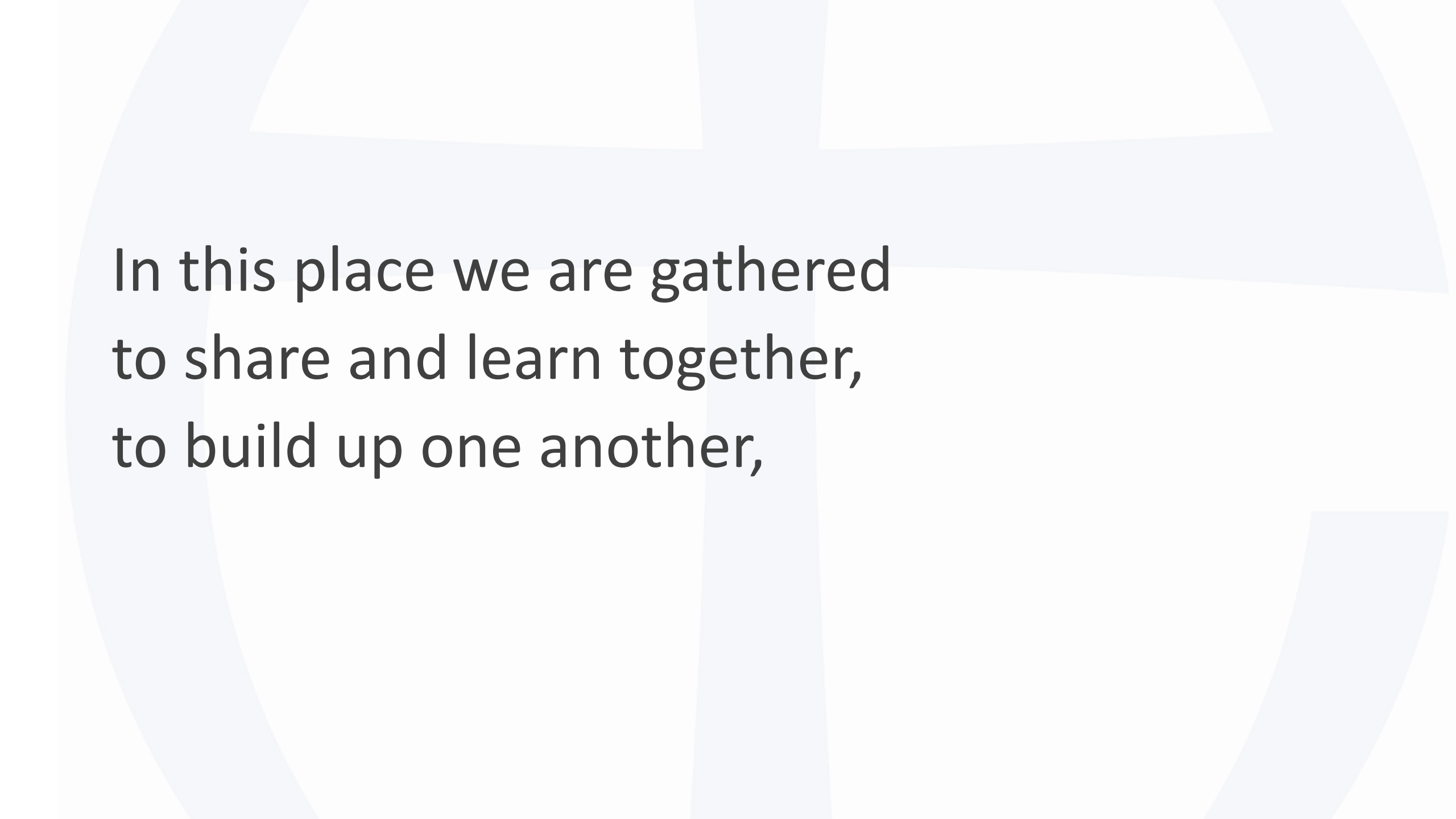
Please join in the words in **bold**

Opening Prayer

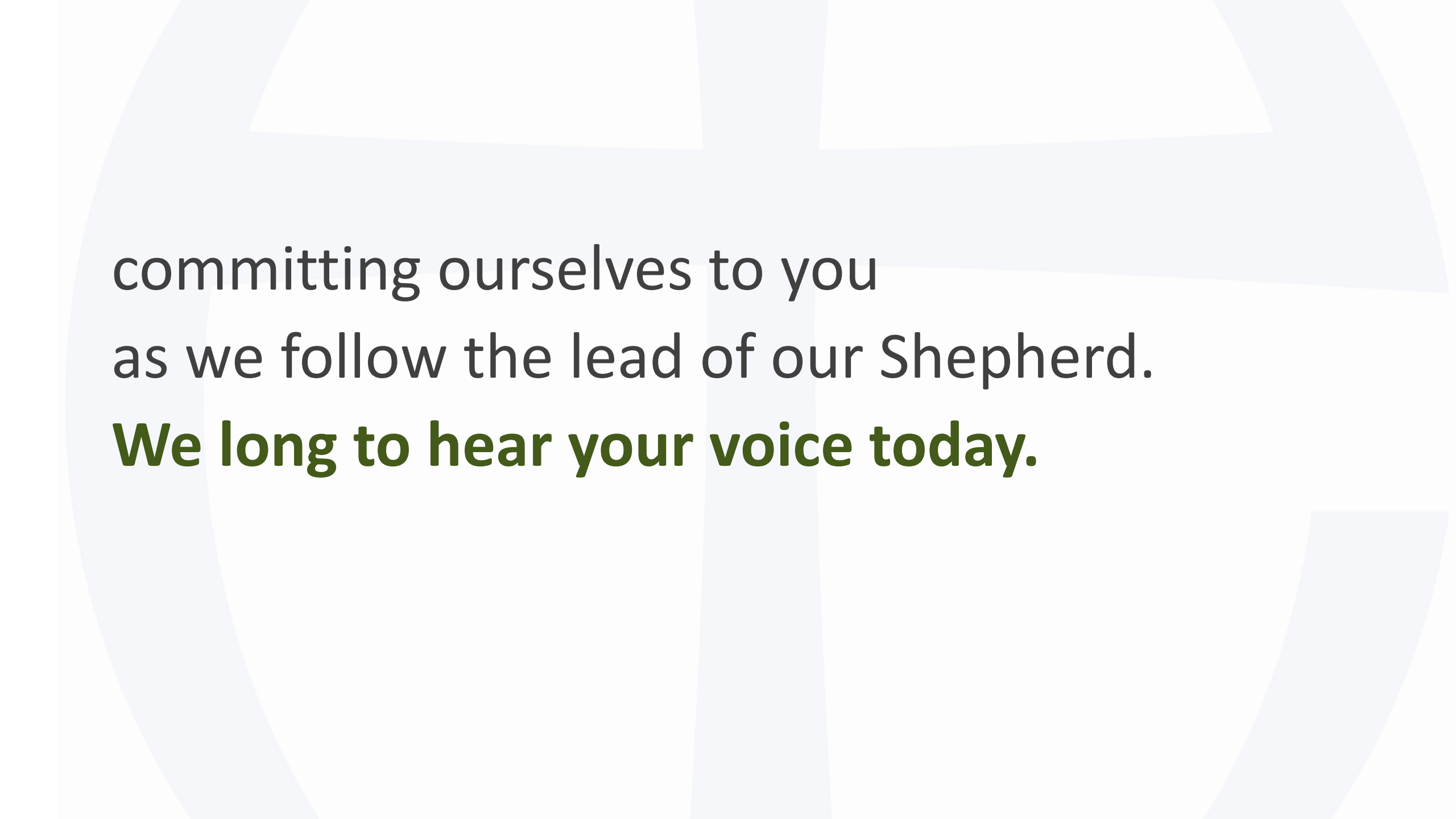
Good Shepherd,
you have gathered us in this place
with our joys and concerns,



with our strengths and weaknesses
in our wholeness and brokenness,
individuals yet one flock,
drawn to you in worship.



In this place we are gathered
to share and learn together,
to build up one another,



committing ourselves to you
as we follow the lead of our Shepherd.

We long to hear your voice today.

Response

From the beginning of creation,
in each generation,

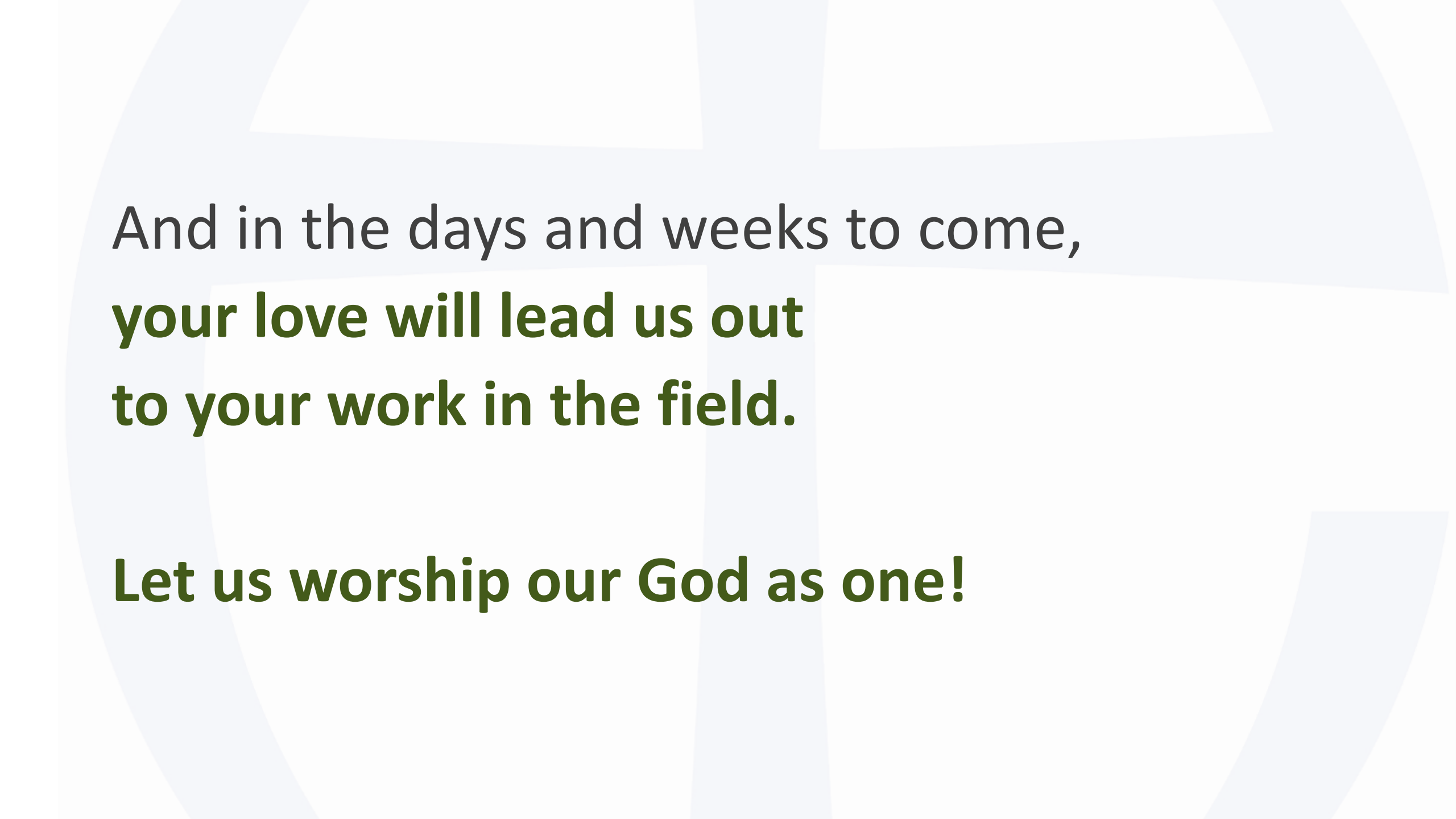
your love has called us into being.

From dawn's first rays till evening's close,

your love enfolds us and sustains us.

From our scattered and varied lives,
your love has drawn us here today.

In our meeting, our listening
and our giving of ourselves,
your love will guide us through this day.



And in the days and weeks to come,
**your love will lead us out
to your work in the field.**

Let us worship our God as one!

Song

Come, now is the time to worship.

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship.

Come, just as you are before your God.

Come.

**One day every tongue
will confess You are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose You now.**

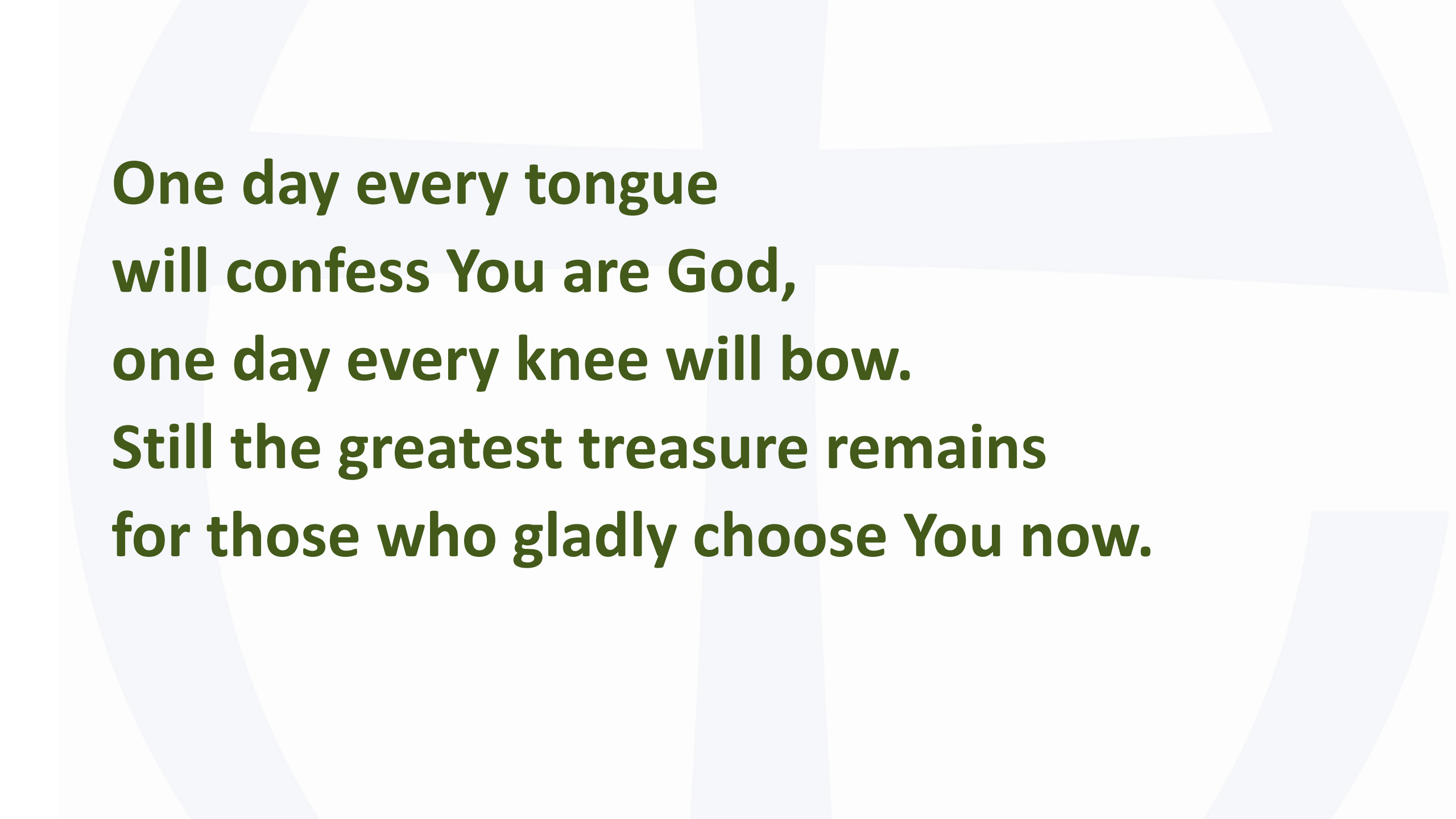
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Come, just as you are before your God.

Come.

Reading: John 10:11-18 (GNT)

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. ¹² When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them.

¹³ The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴⁻

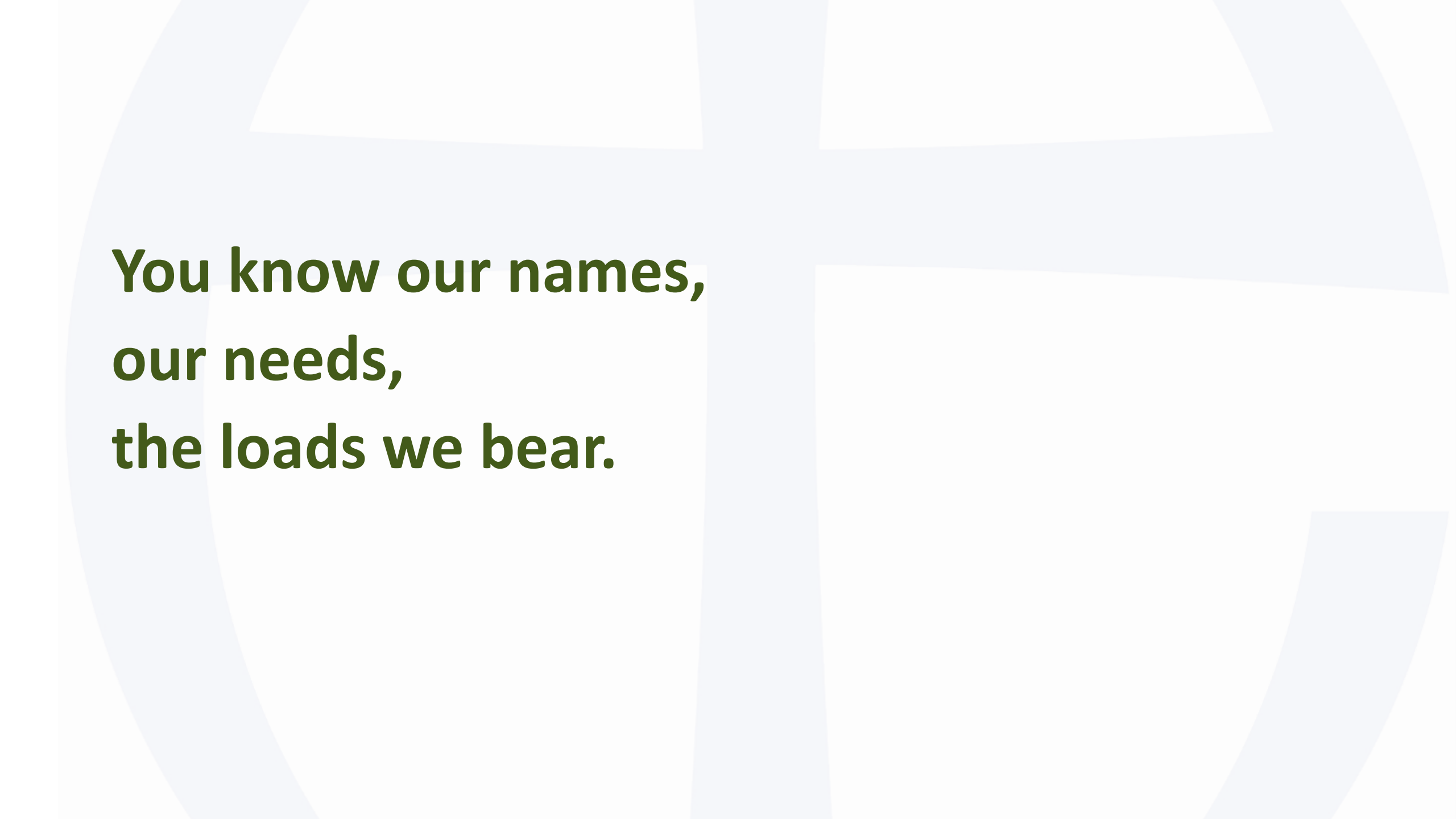
¹⁵ I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them.

¹⁶ There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become[a] one flock with one shepherd.

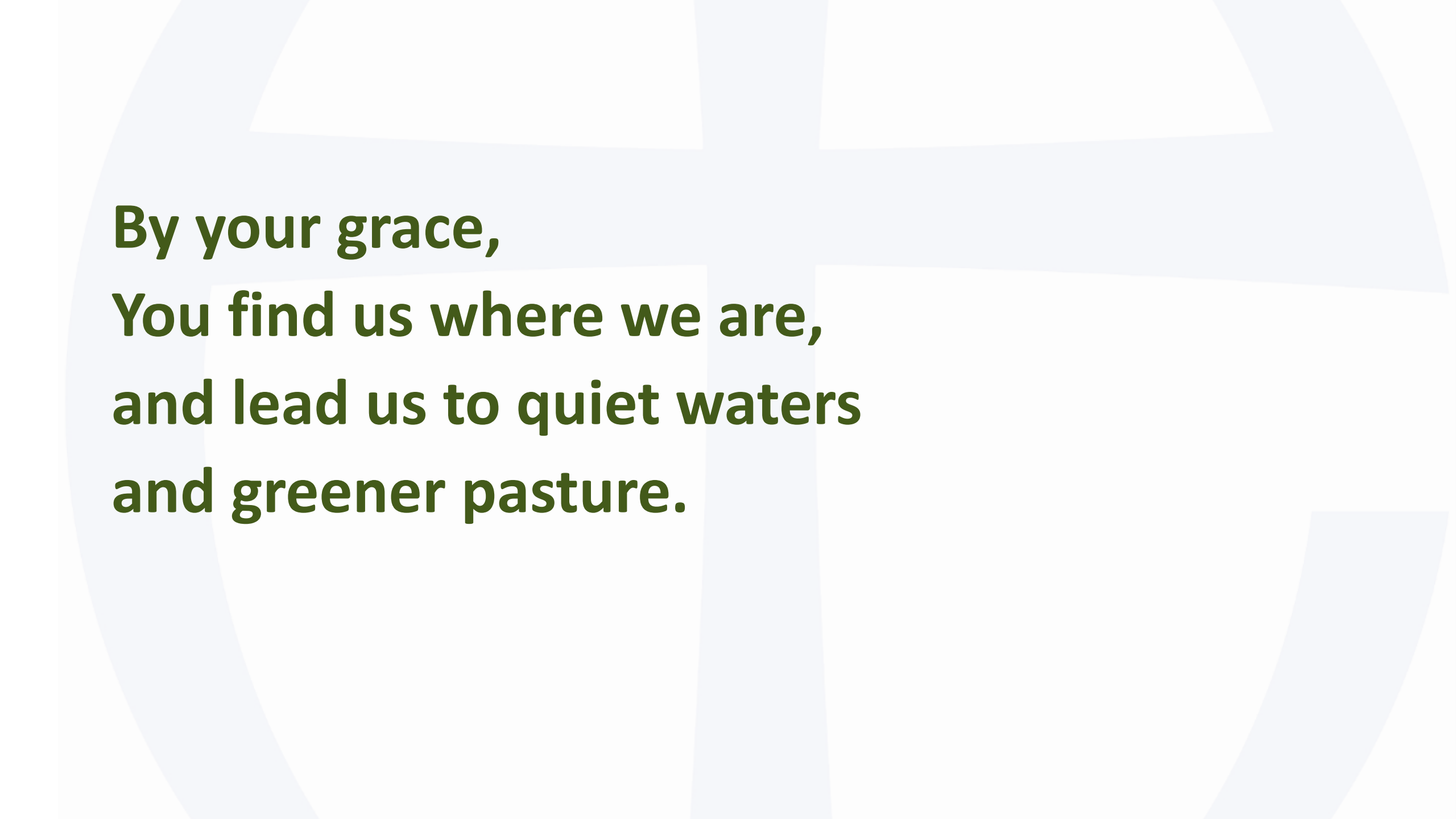
¹⁷ “The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸ No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

Praise

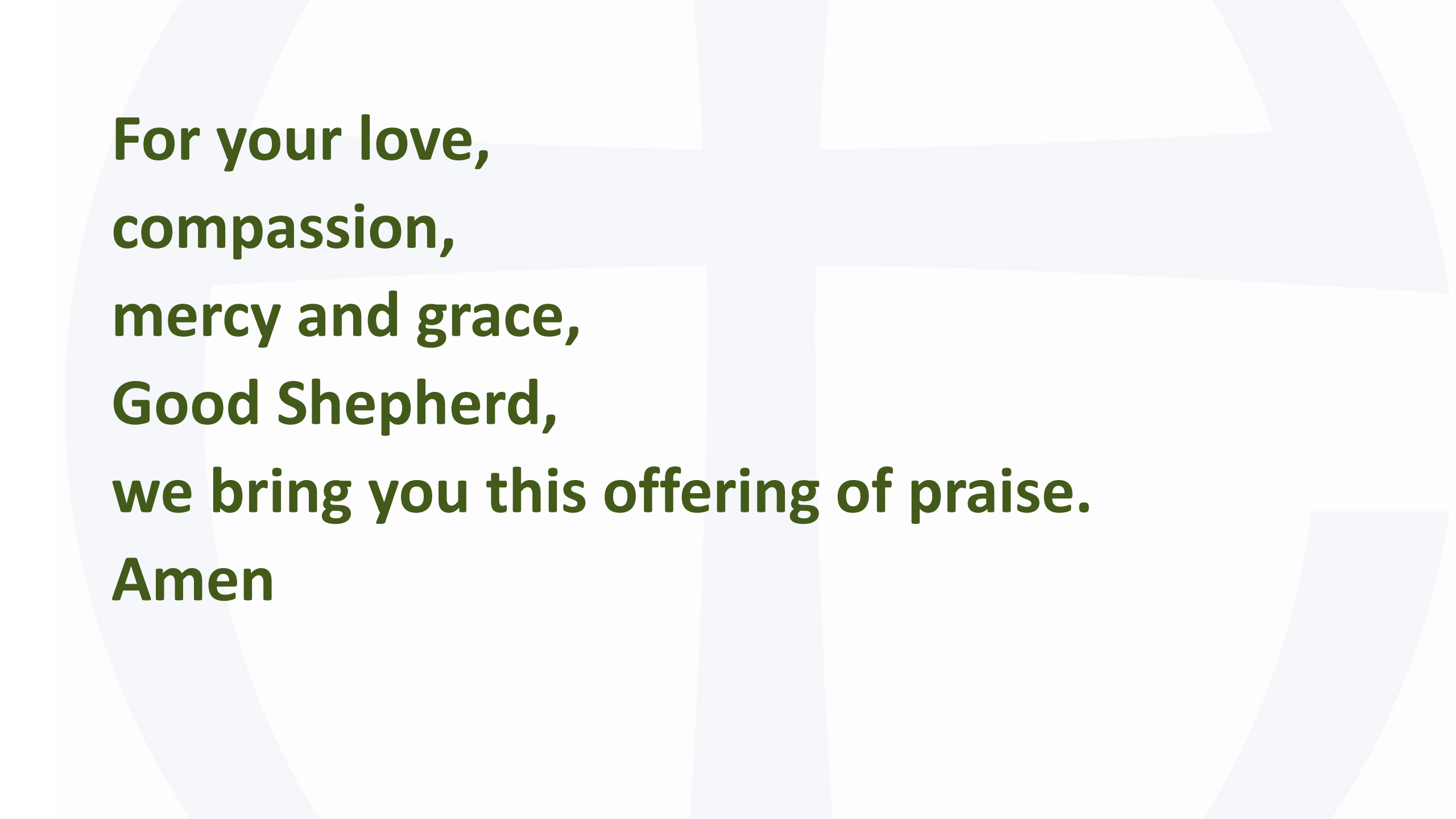
**Good Shepherd,
we lack nothing
when we follow your word
and your Way.**



**You know our names,
our needs,
the loads we bear.**



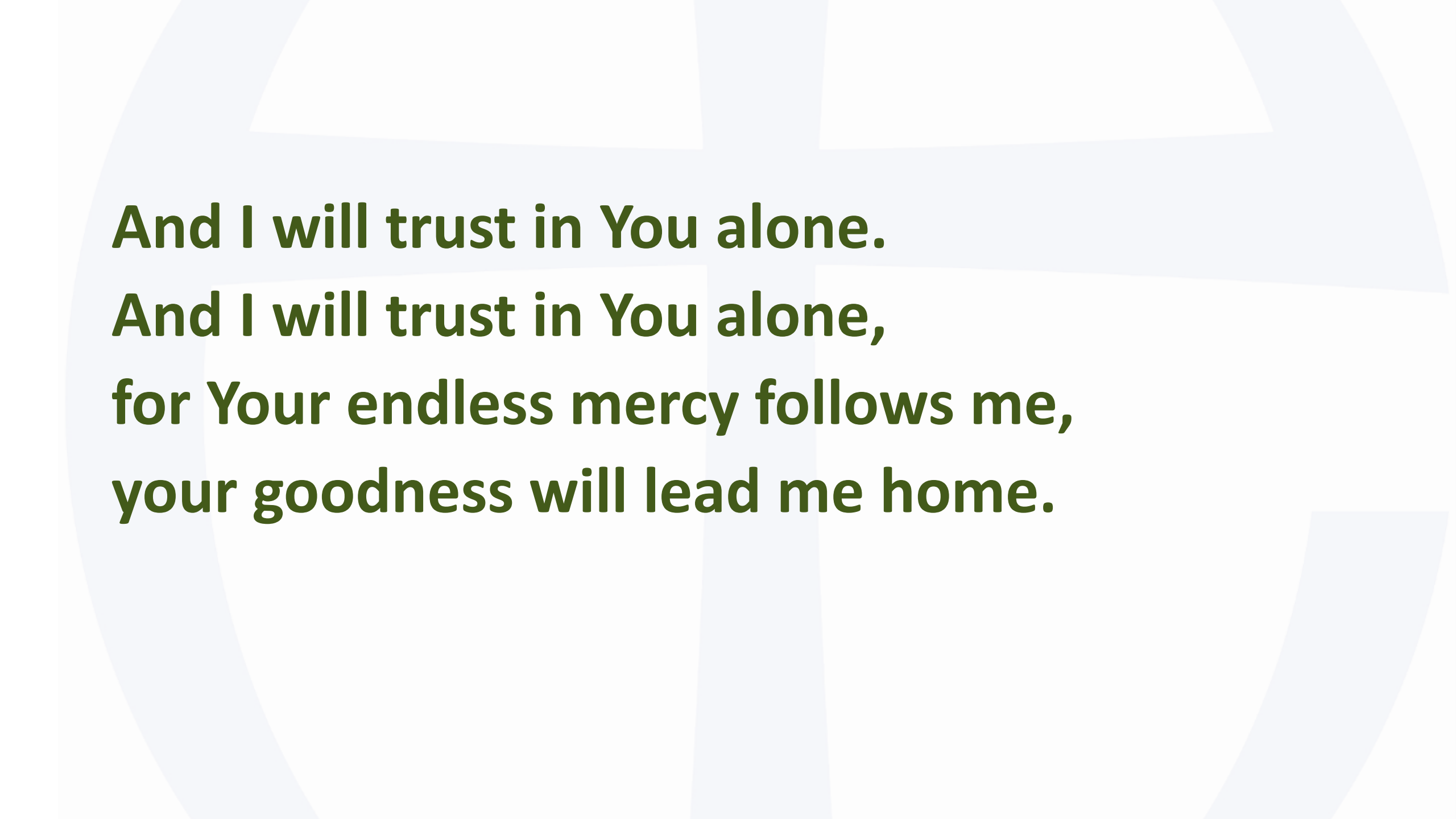
**By your grace,
You find us where we are,
and lead us to quiet waters
and greener pasture.**



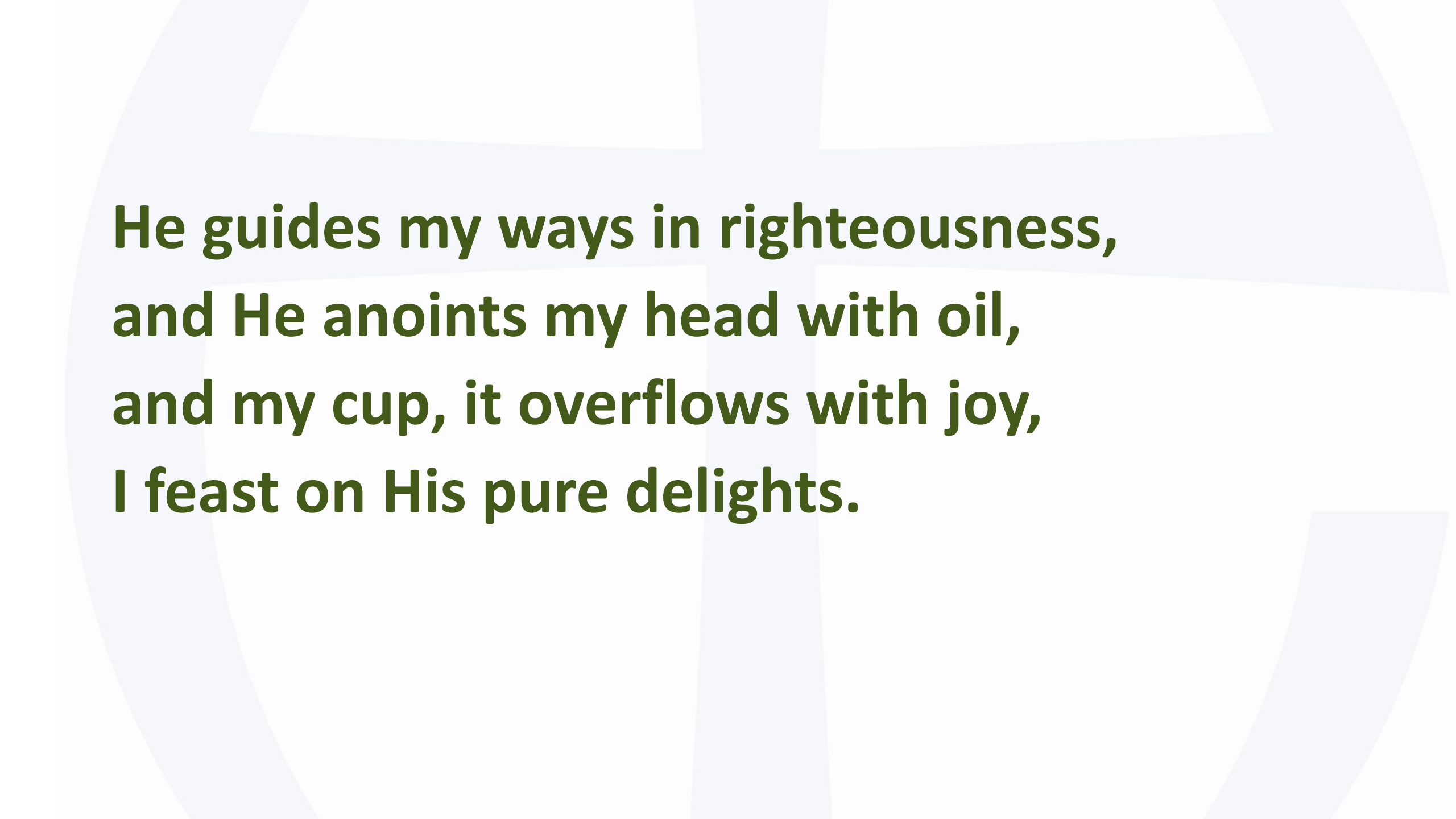
**For your love,
compassion,
mercy and grace,
Good Shepherd,
we bring you this offering of praise.
Amen**

Song

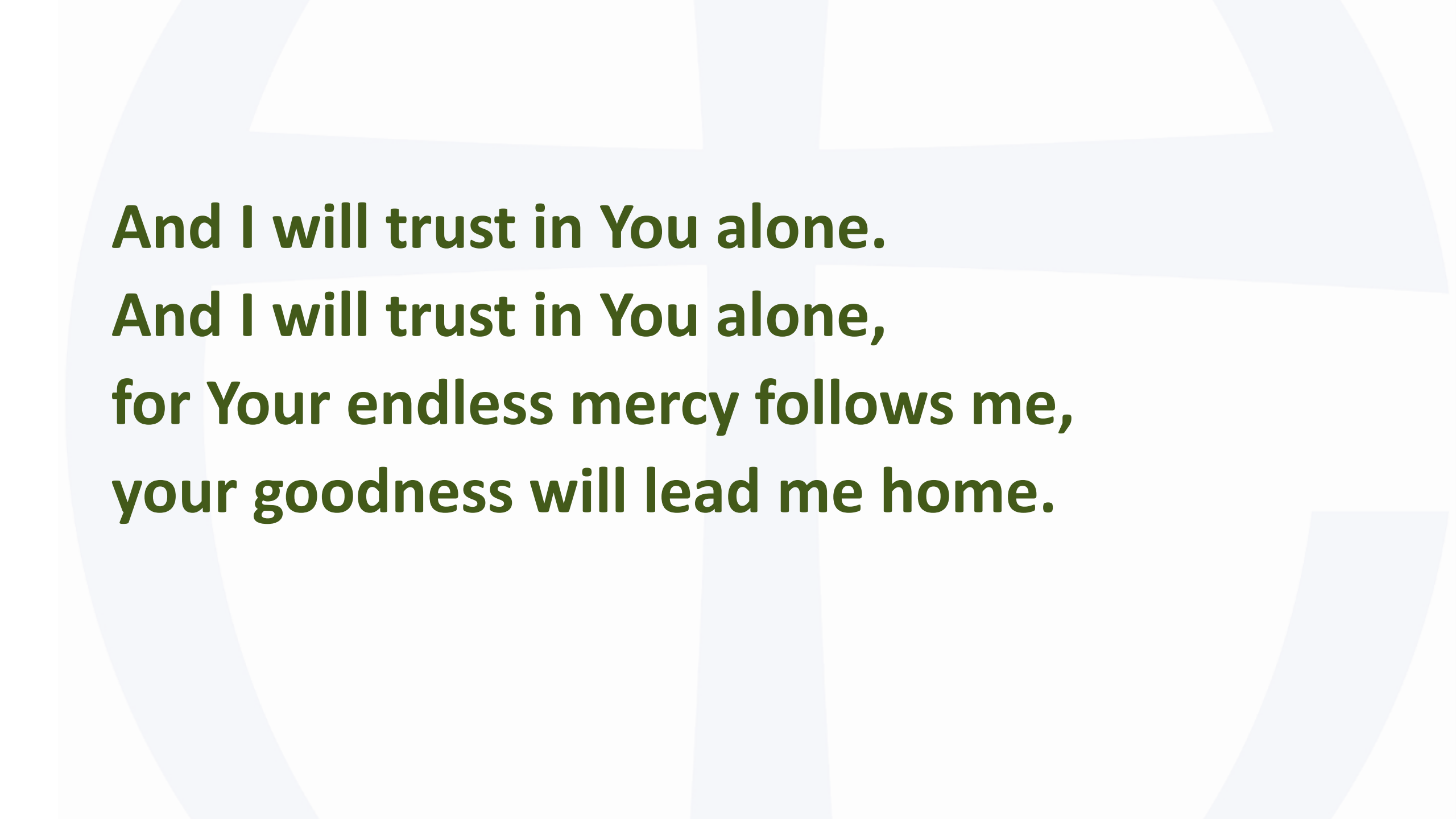
**The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.**



**And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
for Your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

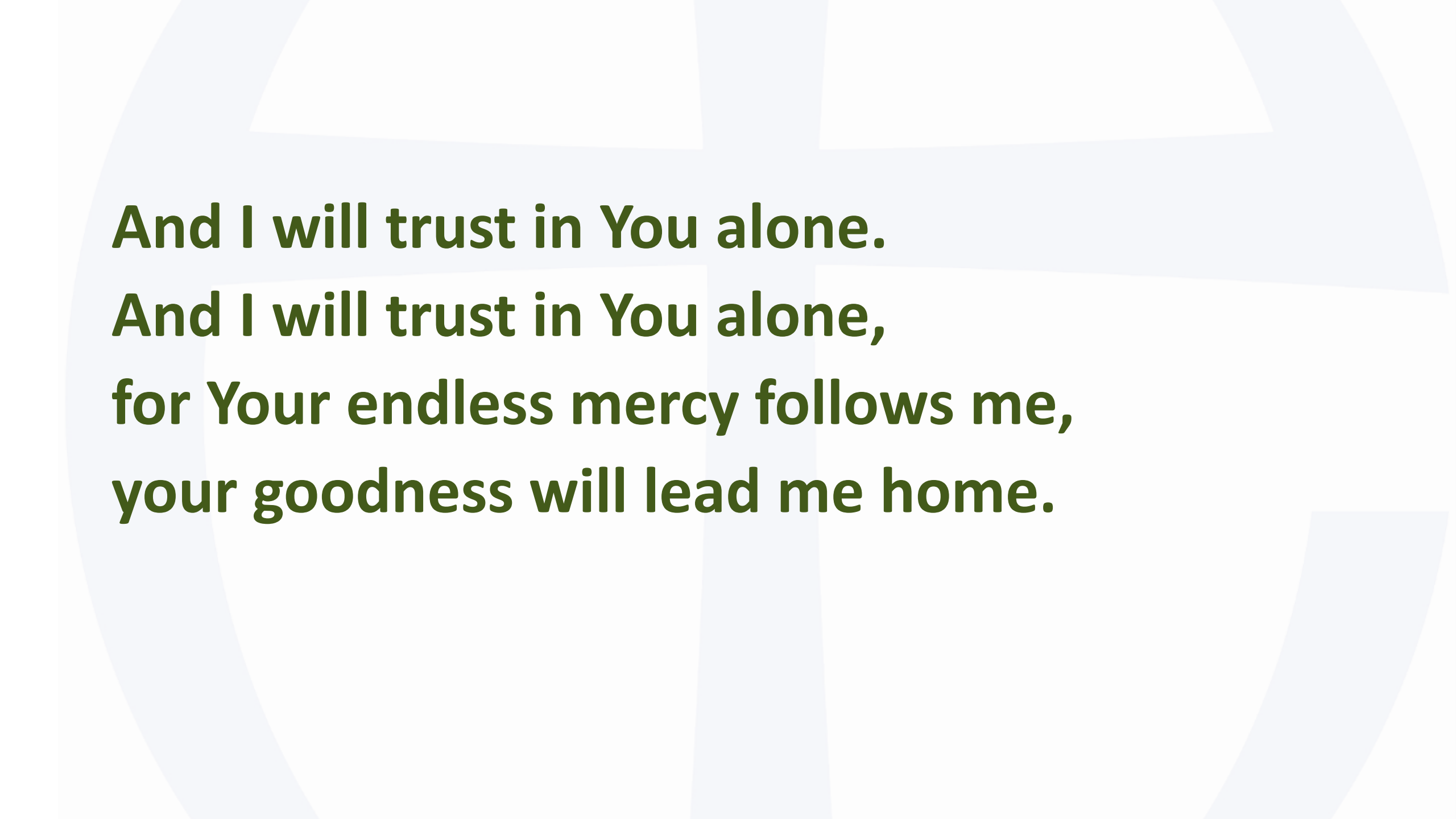


**He guides my ways in righteousness,
and He anoints my head with oil,
and my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.**



**And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
for Your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

**And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
for You are with me,
and Your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.**



**And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
for Your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

Closing Prayer

Good Shepherd,
you call us by name
and speak to our innermost hearts,
more deeply than our conscious thought.

Something in us knows your voice,
sparks in recognition and responds.

**Ready us to make your call known
all around us.**

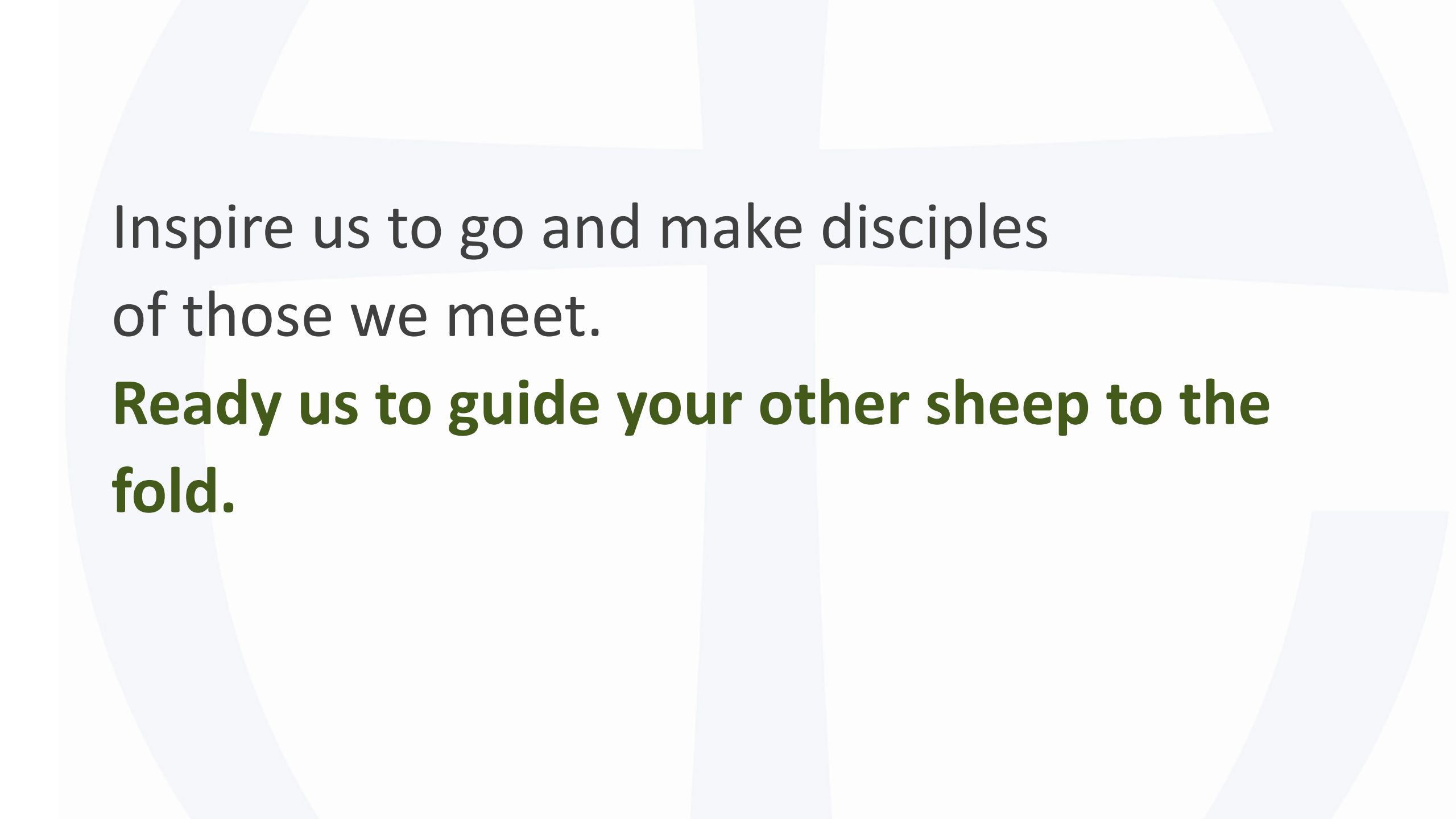


Keep us listening for your Living Word.

In our stillness, help us listen.

In our busyness, help us listen.

For your grace, help us listen.

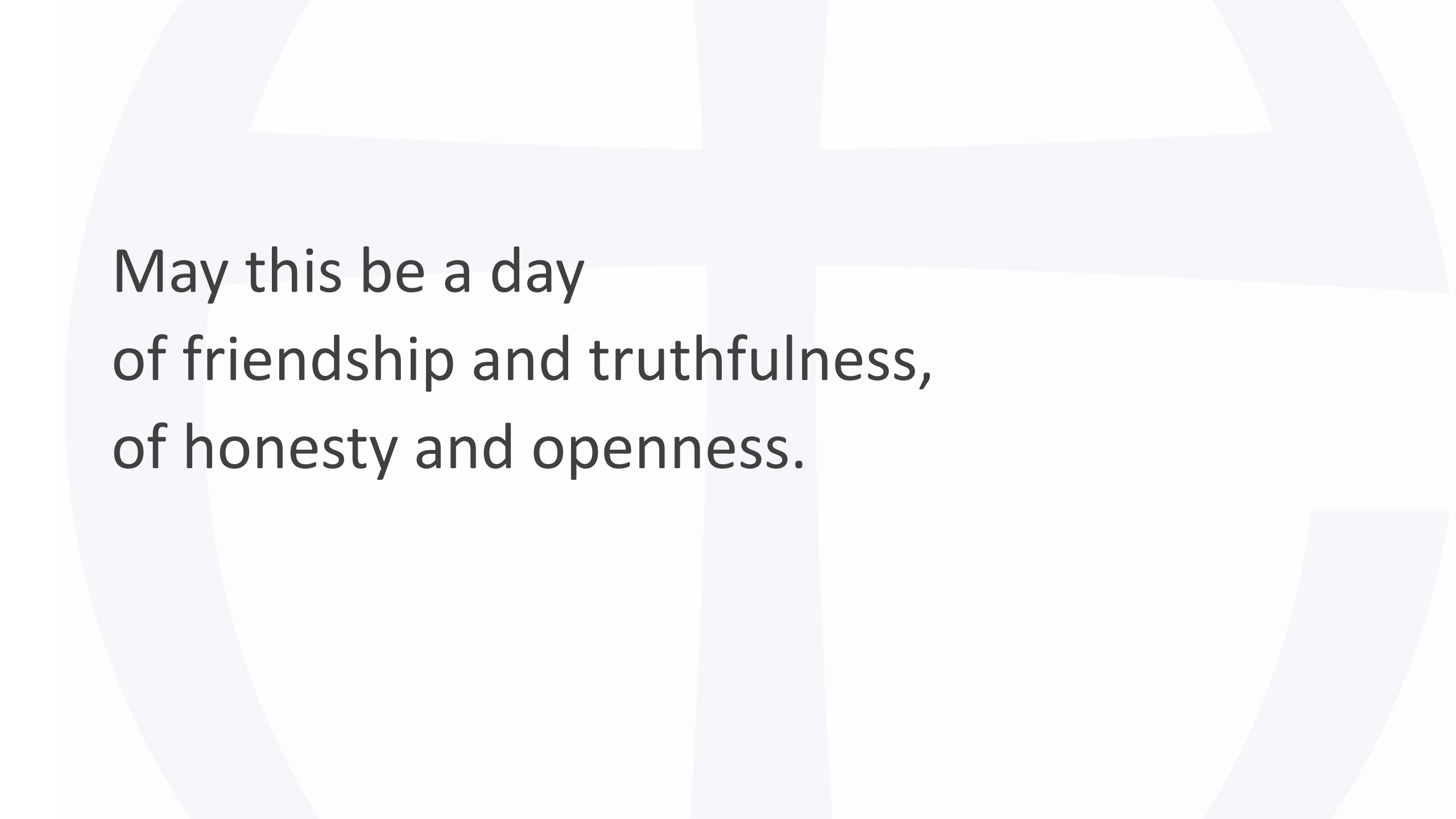


Inspire us to go and make disciples
of those we meet.

**Ready us to guide your other sheep to the
fold.**

Blessing

May this be a day
of giving and receiving,
of kind words and blessing.



May this be a day
of friendship and truthfulness,
of honesty and openness.

May this be a day
of knowing God's love afresh,
and bringing a smile to God's face
as we follow the lead of our Shepherd.

Amen

Beyond the mission statistics - what does growth look like in a rural benefice?

Jo Neary



What is the view like where you are?

What is bringing you life currently?

Who am I?

Rural Team Vicar in a multi parish team

Sarum college Tutor for Rural Ministry and Mission

I wonder how our experience of growing in faith shapes our attitude to church growth now?



What do we
count,
measure
and value?

REST

MARK 6:31

Values

Rest

Become

in the

of God

Hope

KINGDOM

not church

Gift

What do we count, measure
+ value ?

Living
together

Rep

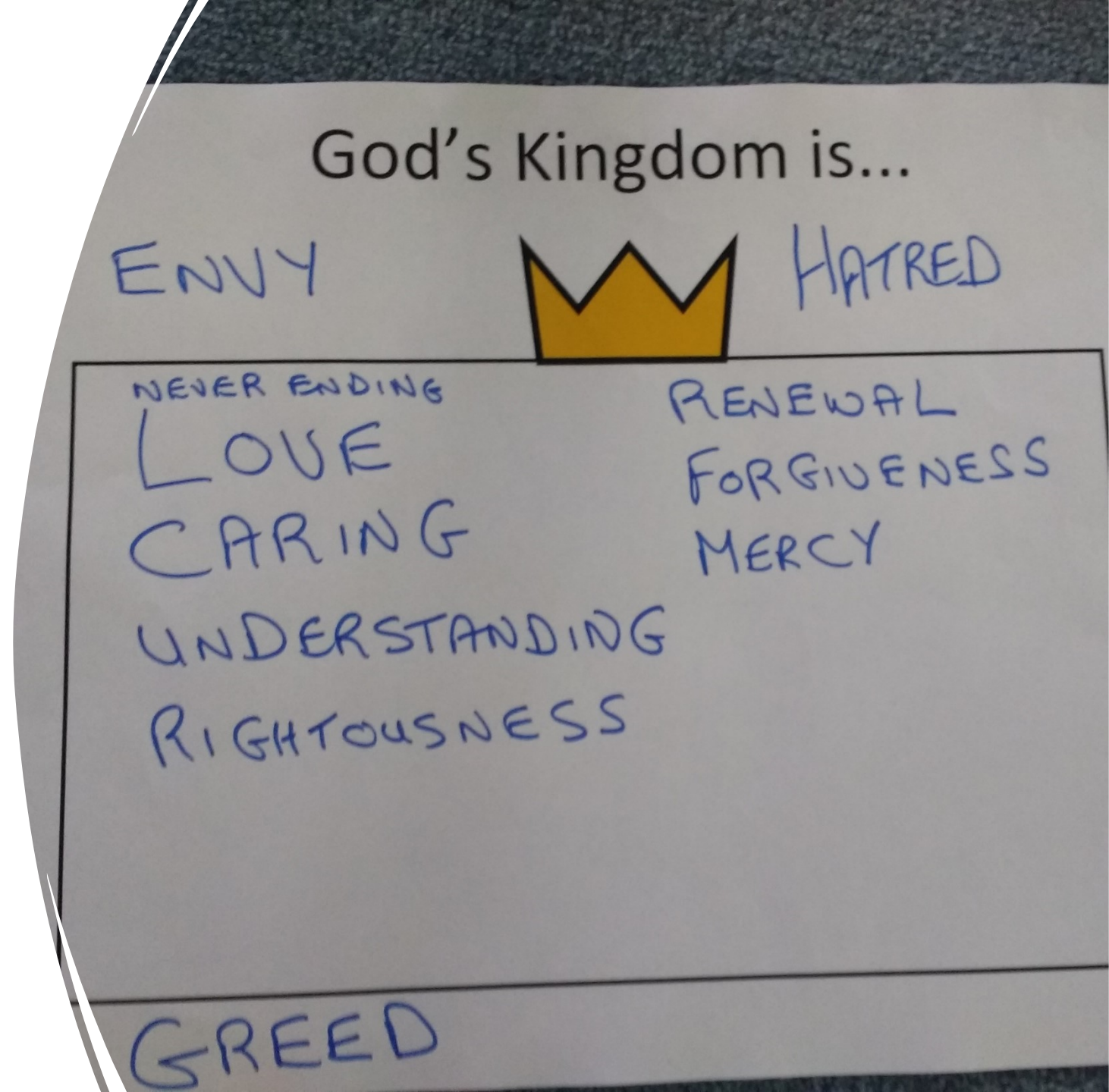
Living out

Christ's value

A provocative beginning

“growing the church one lash at a time.”

(Turner, Sarum College tutorial, 24.1.24)



Rural church growth – beyond the mission statistics

Are you growing?

Is your parish growing?

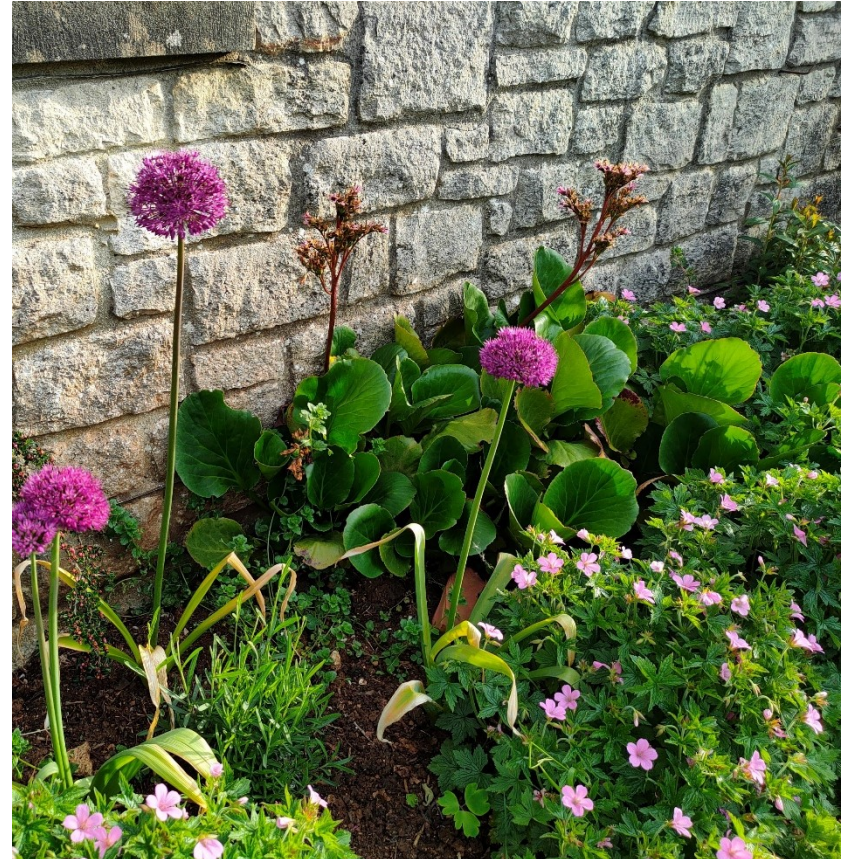
How do you define growth?

How do you measure growth?

Is growth the top of the agenda – if not, what is?

What are you measuring?

How do you know you are flourishing?



A word of caution.....

You are already doing an excellent job

Growing into a pattern of rest and sabbath might be your current calling

Growth is God's work – we are looking for the growth 1 Cor 3:6-7

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth

This is not always about doing more but being more attentive and intentional.



What would it look like to pray for growth?

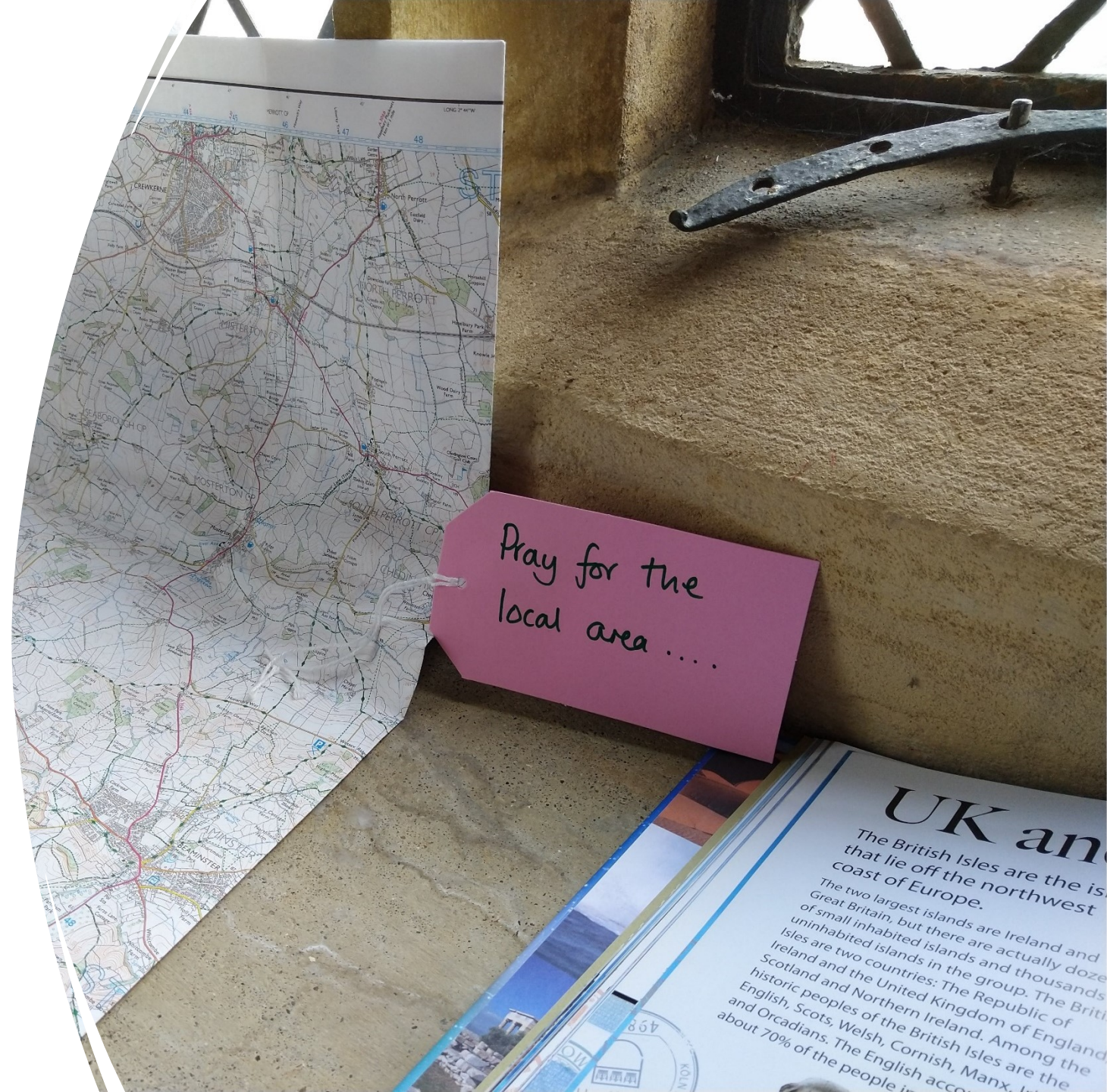
What do you want me to do for you?

When do we pray?

When do we pray for growth in all aspects?

When do we listen – to God, to communities, to ourselves, to each other?

Why don't we pray?



Challenges of context

How does the rural rhythm of growth and abundance and seasonality give us a theology for mission and church growth?



Does the church have the energy to participate in transformation, to be prophetic, to enable flourishing? Or are we....

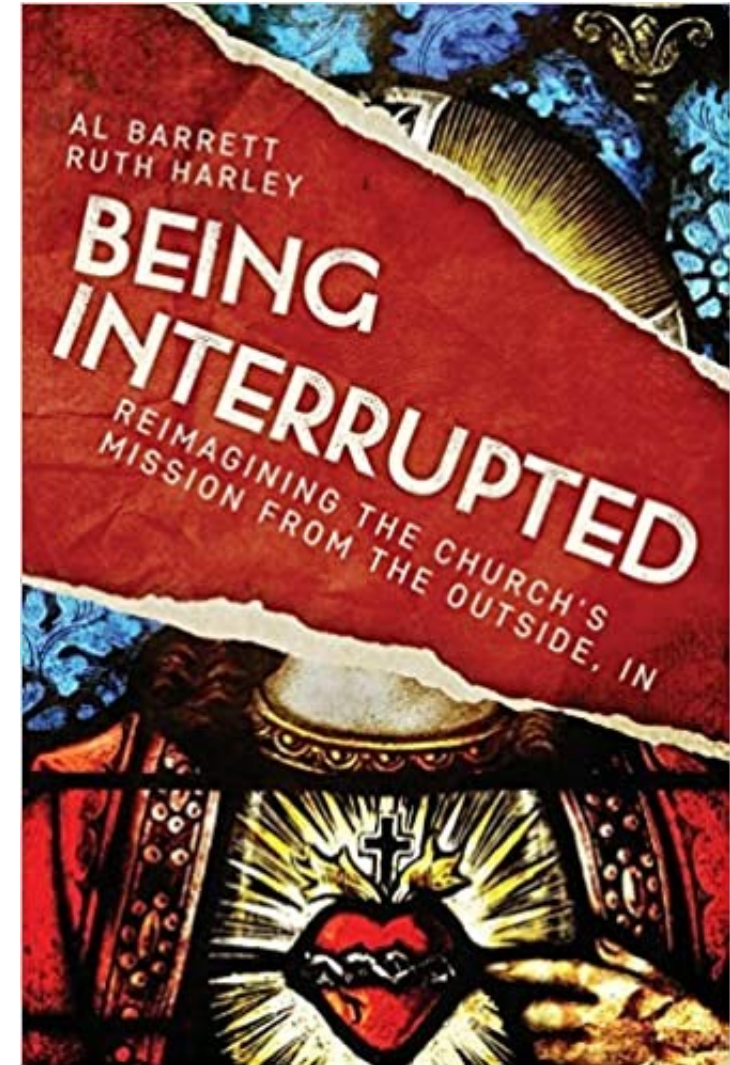
Getting distracted by other things.

Two economies of church

#1 “counting in”

#2 “giving out”

Is there a third way #3 “being interrupted”? Listening to what others say to us.



Mark 4:30-32

He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”



What does rural church growth look like?

Doing one thing well

Numerical growth

Doing something new – Fresh Expressions

Discipleship – deepening faith

Connecting into communities

Schools

Online



Do one thing well

Seaborough

Small church

Tiny congregation

Become a “festival like” church

Occasion services in the year

Personal invitations

Hymns and Pimms, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas



Numerical growth of congregation

Case study – Salway Ash intergenerational church.

Regular attendance 6-10 for CW Eucharist

Monthly intergenerational service 20-24

Responded to the request from families, evolved from all age

People attracted by the style of worship and discursive sermon

Deliberately accessible.



Fresh Expressions

Messy Church/ Gin Church

New congregation

Lay leadership

Team event

Aimed at families

Different time of day

Evolves to accommodate new seasons/needs

Challenges of monthly worship



AUGUST 2023

Swap children's toys, games, books and school uniform

Connecting into communities

- Foodbank
- Walk in Wednesday
- Summer swap
- Toddler and baby group
- Summer outreach
- Seasonal blessings
- Partnership working
- Listening



Schools

450 children each week

Worship (school and church)

Liturgy

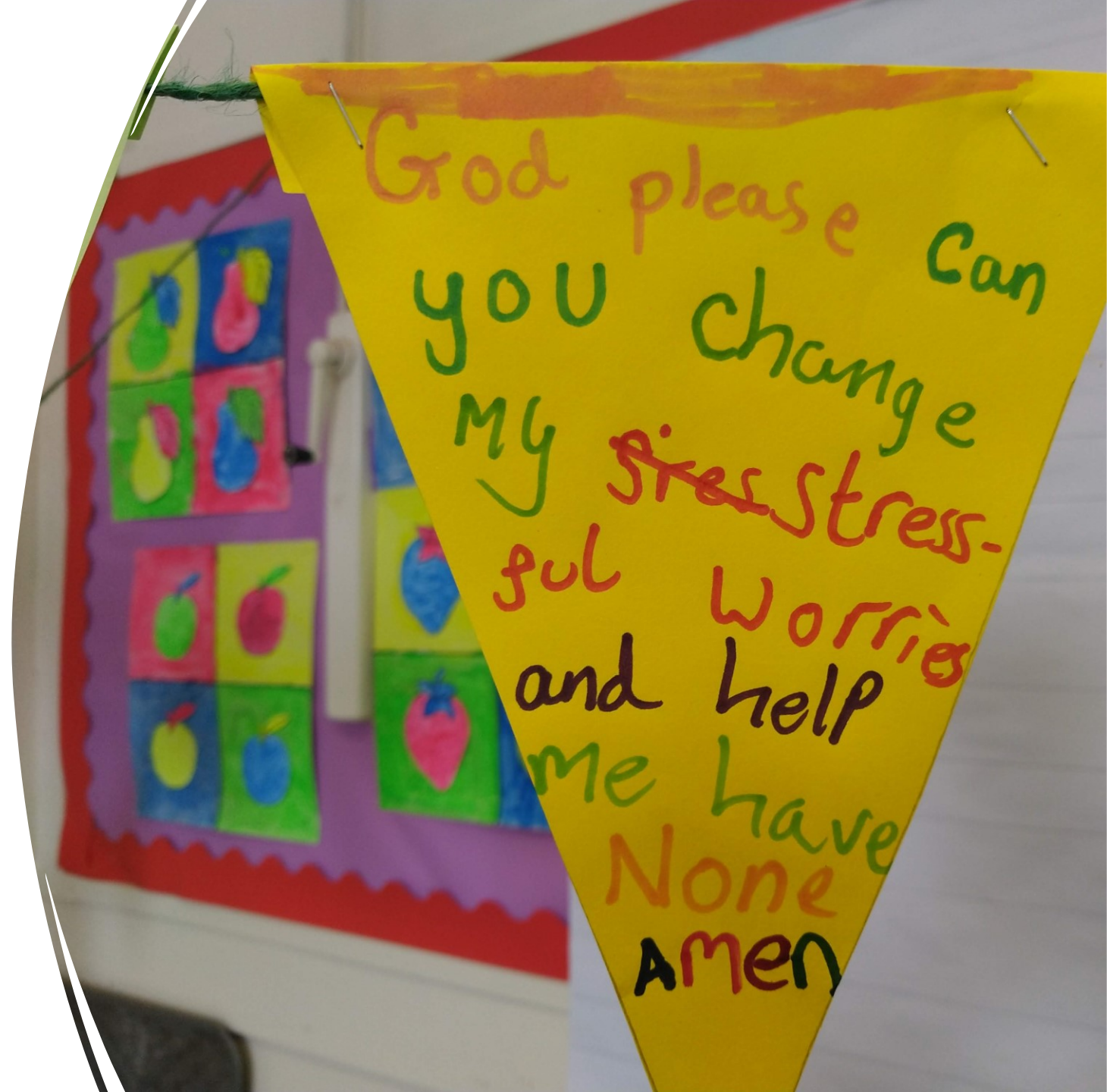
Bible study

Praise

Prayer

Governance

One off occasions



Online

Connecting wider than the parish

Accessible (or not)

Dispersed community

Hard to offer pastoral care

Surprising reach and impact

The screenshot shows a web browser window with multiple tabs open, including 'Photos - Google Photos' and 'Beamminster Team Churches - Yo'. The browser address bar shows 'youtube.com/@BeamminsterTeam'. The YouTube interface displays the channel name 'beamminster team' in the search bar. The main content area features a grid of video thumbnails with titles such as 'Rev Chat Episode 236 - "Humble Apostles"', 'Rev Chat Episode 235 - "More Than Camel"', 'Rev Chat Episode 234 - "The Children's Kingdom"', 'Rev Chat Episode 233 - "Hope in a Dangerous World"', and 'Rev Chat Episode 232 - "Tidying for Burglars"'. Below this grid, there is a section titled 'Worship at Home' with a 'Play all' button and a description: 'Join in worship from the comfort of your own home - or wherever your screen is. We've all the resources you need to join in with these video services, just follow the links in the video...'. The bottom row of thumbnails includes a forest scene, a camel, a Noah's Ark toy, and two women speaking.

Attempting to count.....

Sunday attendance

Fresh expressions/new worshipping communities

Small groups

Study opportunities

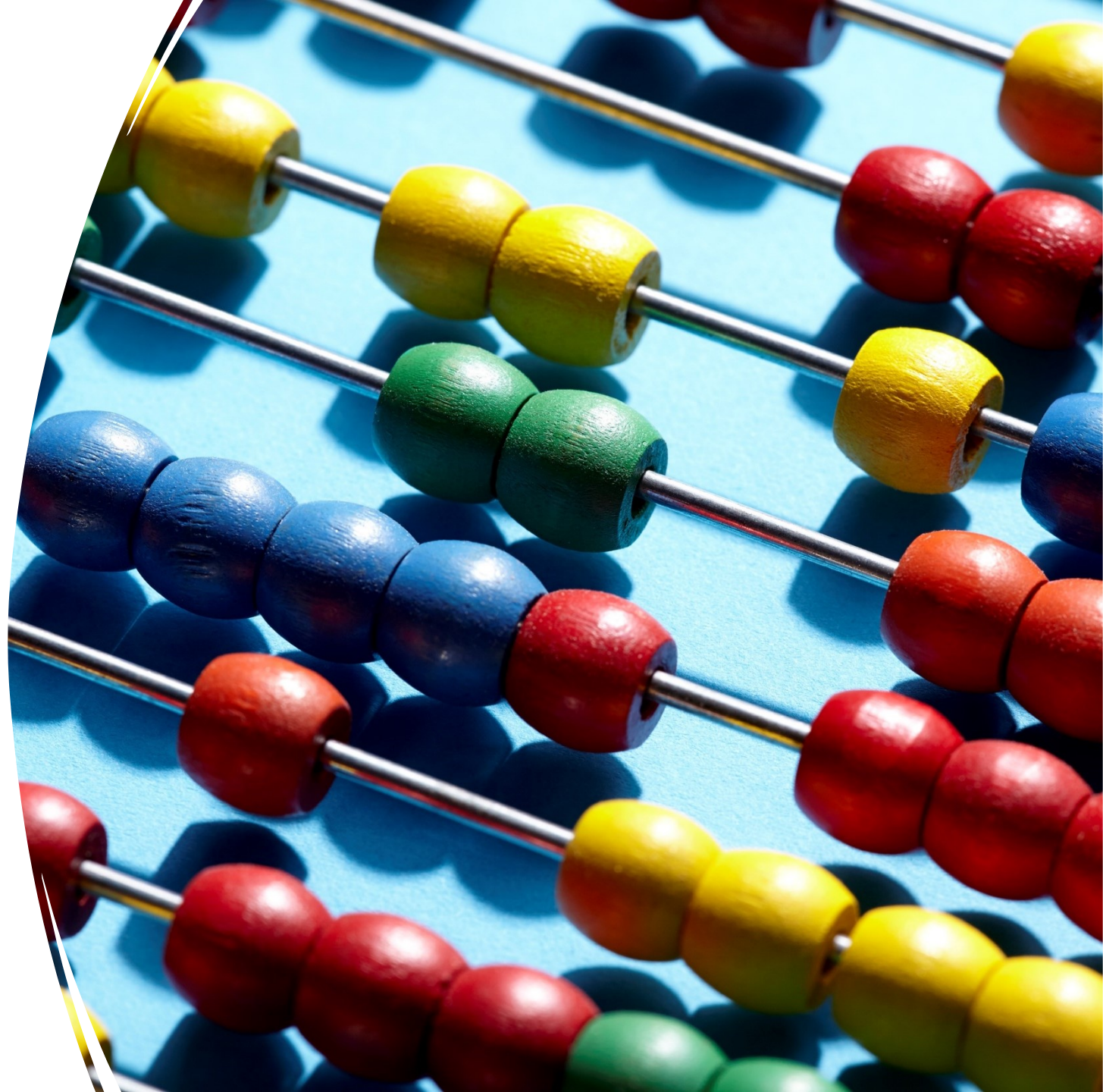
Occasional offices

Outreach events

New partnerships

Vocations

Online engagement



What is the desired outcome of mission?

God's mission, our mission, the churches' mission? Kingdom?

Go out, come to us or a third way?

Relationship, process or what?



What are the barriers to growth

What gets in the way?
Gatekeepers, structure,
resources, theology, worship,
liturgy, sacraments, vision,
prayer, buildings?



Naming the Elephant in the room

Q: What are your current issues and challenges around growth?

Q: What might need to die or what might need to develop for new things to grow?



Dual cropping

How might
pioneer activities
support the more
traditional church,
creating a mixed
ecology.



A match made in heaven

Growing peas and beans together delivered significant advantages: the peas quickly cover the ground, suppressing weed development, and the beans act as a scaffold for the peas.

<https://www.cla.org.uk/news/the-rewards-of-dual-cropping/>

Taking some risks

Where is the Spirit at work?

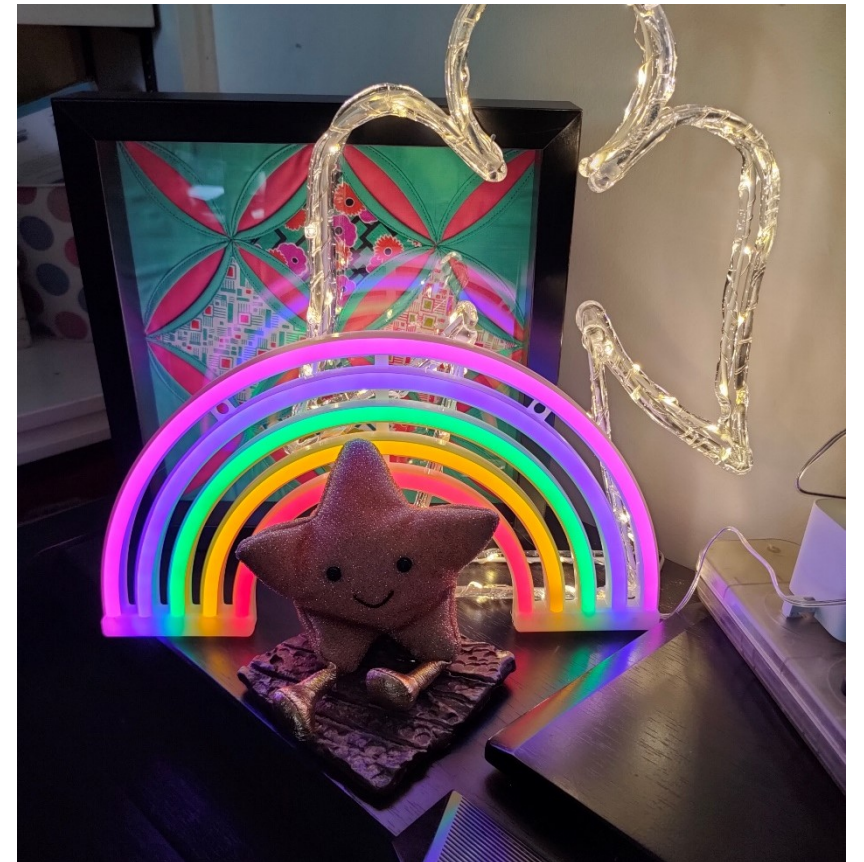
What space and time is there for prayer?

How is leadership supported and enabled for all ages?

Where are new ideas generated, discussed, trialled, evaluated, prayed for?

How are we intentionally creating collaborative spaces to experiment, innovate and imagine?

Who are we building relationships with – “the goal of evangelism is not to convince people to take on a Christian interest in the world but to help them open their very person to the person of Jesus Christ” Root, 2013, p70



Time to pray

—



Coffee

Please return to your seats by 11.30

Benefice of the future - experiences in Diocese of Winchester

Simon Butler



North Hampshire Downs
Benefice of the Future Pilot



- 12 Communities & Churches - 1 small market town and 11 villages
- Combined population 6500
- ASA 375-400 people
- 8 PCC's, 24 Wardens
- 8 Clergy, 4 LLM's, Youth Pastor, Pastoral Care Worker, 2 Admin staff



Learning 1:

The importance of understanding the phase of life the benefic is in and its history, formative moments and narrative.

Learning 2

Being clear about culture, priorities and how we are going to embark on the next phase of life and letting this drive decision making.





Learning 3

Significant change
needs significant
resources

ZONE

Discovering
God's
wonderful
world

Holiday Club 2022

FULLY BOOKED!



Learning 4
The value of the local

Learning 5

Encouraging shared
life and ministry



Rural Strategic thinking

Simon Hill

Rural churches:

- embedded in their local communities
- enabling people to encounter, engage with and grow in faith
- strengthening their heartbeat
- playing their part in transforming communities

Growing churches





Leadership and ministry shared





Fit for purpose buildings
supported and sustained
by the wider community

Discussion Groups – Start at 1.30pm

1. Bruton & Cary, Locking, Shepton Mallet - Upstairs big room
2. Axbridge, Chew Magna, Exmoor, Taunton – Main Hall
3. Frome, Glastonbury, Sedgemoor – Balcony upstairs
4. Ivelchester, Portishead, Yeovil – Music room upstairs
5. Quantock, Somerset South, Tone – Main Hall

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Afternoon workshops – Starting 2pm

Discipleship outdoors – Upstairs big room

Growing Good – Main Hall

Generous church check-up – Balcony upstairs

Growing faith with children, young people and families
– Music room upstairs

Discipleship and rural Fresh Expressions – Main Hall

Deanery group discussions

How does what we've heard feed into our context?

Where are we going?

Workshops

Q&A