

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



11 AUGUST 2024

PENTECOST 12



WORSHIP AT HOME

THEME: I AM - Bread of Life

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Go to your prepared place OR prepare a space in the house; a comfortable chair, a lit candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

“The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”

“And also with you”

Focussing ... As we pause to contemplate this season after Pentecost – the growth and dispersion of the Christian communities, we consider the stories which highlight the God who calls out and accompanies on journeys towards unseen and undreamt places and peoples. We hear of and are invited to name our own experiences of the generous grace and mercy given for the whole creation, the richness of life unearned and undeserved. In the quietness and stillness of this time, be grateful to the loving creator/parent, who faithfully travels with us through the storms of our lives, especially when we feel alone, confused and despair.

Acknowledgement of Country: We come to meet this morning from all manner of places, and on the Country of diverse Clans and Nations of First Peoples’, and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Joining the scattered community

Here, with the community gathered on Sunday, we begin another week, weaving together the fabric of our lives, in all their different textures and colours, their changing forms and flows. Here we mark the things that have gone before and look forward in hope for newness to come. Here we celebrate each other’s place as one thread in the weaving and cherish the moments when the fabric of our lives become whole.

Greeting & welcome

The peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you**

Call to Worship

From the life of God the universe unfolded into being:

with the Spirit of God within it.

Out of stardust we came through birth to life:

Through the Spirit of God within us.

From God’s heart of love creation goes on till the end of time:

with the Spirit of God nurturing it, and within us.

Let us celebrate God’s gift of life, let us worship God:

with the spirit of God within us blessing all we do this day to the glory and praise of God.

Song – TiS 667 How shall I sing to God?

Prayers of praise & thanksgiving

Holy God, source and sustenance of all things, we adore you!

By the planets spin, through the turn of seasons,

for you wild flowers bloom, with you song-birds sing,

from you all families in the world grow,

through you all signs and acts of loving kindness, mercy and forgiveness come to life,

to you the lost return home,

on you the meek and outcast stand tall,

in you new life is given for all,

for you the Christ now rules all.

Holy God, the love that fills all things in every place, we praise and thank you!

Holy breath, holy wind and fire – you breathe in us, and we are made merciful - we praise you!

Holy counsellor, wind of life, Holy Spirit of truth – you shape light to live by within in minds and hearts - we praise you!

Holy shaper of community, you overcome our anxieties and build the Body of Christ in all its diversity and complexity – we praise you!

Holy inspirer of the fearful, voice of the voiceless, friend beyond compare – in your presence we find pure joy and ultimate pleasure - we praise you!

Holy friend beyond compare – we praise you!

Thanksgiving ...

Life-giving, life-renewing, life-sustaining God, we thank and praise you for the gift of yourself to all the children of this blue planet, earth.

Like a caring father you foster and cherish the life of us all, protecting, guiding, sacrificing, providing a creation with enough and abundance for all your children.

Thank you, ***life giving God!***

Like a brother you come among us in Jesus of Nazareth, arriving among our deceits and doubts and calling us to step free in trust and really live!

Thank you, ***today and always!***

Like a mother your Spirit is broodingly with us, offering new birth and healthy nurture, and with tough love making us strong.

Thank you, ***compassionate God!***

Wonderful is your name forever!

Confession and forgiveness - Psalm 130 (Good News Bible)

A Prayer for Help

From the depths of (our) despair (we) call to you, LORD. Hear (our) cry, O Lord; listen to (our) call for help!

If you kept a record of our sins, who could escape being condemned? But you forgive us, so that we should stand in awe of you.

We wait eagerly for the LORD's help, and in God's word (we) trust. (We) wait for the Lord more eagerly than watchmen wait for the dawn — than watchmen wait for the dawn.

Israel, trust in the LORD, because his love is constant, and he is always willing to save. He will save his people Israel from all their sins.

A TIME FOR LISTENING

Readings from the Bible – Read by Brenda Grootendorst

Lord, your Word is a light for our feet, **a lamp for our path!**

Ephesians 5.1-2

5 ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

John 6:35,41-51

35 **"I am the bread of life,"** Jesus told them. "Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty.

41 The people started grumbling about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 So they said, "This man is Jesus son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How, then, does he now say he came down from heaven?"

43 Jesus answered, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. 44 People cannot come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me; and I will raise them to life on the last day. 45 The prophets wrote, "Everyone will be taught by God." Anyone who hears the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 This does not mean that anyone has seen the Father; he who is from God is the only one who has seen the Father. 47 I am telling you the truth: he who believes has eternal life.



48 **I am the bread of life.** 49 Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. 50 But the bread that comes down from heaven is of such a kind that whoever eats it will not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live."

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Song: TiSD 523 Here, Lord, we take the broken bread

Prayer before the Word

May the spirit of God work in us that we may know that "This text is being fulfilled today even as we are listening".

To ponder ... Tony Floyd

In the good news called John the story that tangles announcements by Jesus about bread and life, the abolishing of hunger and feeding of a great crowd is continued. Here Jesus offers an image of himself and us which builds around an image of animals eating - *devouring* is the sense of the Greek word. Yet they are words which invite us into great intimacy, to consume Jesus and be consumed by him. Jesus is trying to get through to us in our faith journey a reality in the journey of ordinary nourishment: **We are what we eat!**

This is one of the opportunities for learning and knowing which is offered to us by the sacrament we share at the Communion Table. Here we can know, hear again, or hear for the first time, of the God who comes to us in the ordinary, meets us in the unexceptional, speaks to us through the inarticulate, and makes of us saints - holy ones, mirrors of God-self.

Rabbi Harold Kushner suggests that if, and when, we entertain any questions about God, the question most asked is **“Where is God?”** Kushner argues that this gives the impression that God is an object, located somewhere in time and space, and that if we can only find the right place or set of circumstances then we will ‘find God’.

The appropriate question, says Kushner, is **“When is God?”** and he also suggests a place that helps us answer such a question - the middle of Psalm 146.

When do you find God?

Whenever justice is given to those without power, whenever people share their bread with the hungry, extend freedom to the oppressed, lend a hand to the afflicted, the lonely, and the stranger - Whenever such actions and relationships happen - GOD IS. The passion and presence of God is made evident everywhere and in everyone is the heart of the Great Commission at the end of the Good news named Matthew where the disciples are sent into all the world to preach the gospel. Wherever we encounter these matters, the Bread of Life is at work ... nourishing, fulfilling, building up.

If this is true, then religion properly understood is not so much a series of propositions or beliefs about God, as it is an inventory in our lives. It is not so much a series of propositions as an inventory of moments, things we do, things that happen to us, people whose actions, words, lives touch us, in which we are able to see the presence and actions **of God**. Moments when the hungry are fed, we are fed ... and the Living Bread is in action.



“I am the living bread that comes down from heaven ... Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.” Brennan Manning wrote: *The central miracle of the Gospel is not the raising of Lazarus or the multiplication of the loaves or all the dramatic healing stories taken together. The miracle of the gospel is Christ, risen and glorified, who this very moment tracks us, pursues us, abides in us, and offers himself to us as companion for the journey! God crazed with love and*

drunk with love is embodied in Jesus dwelling within us.

Who needs God in a world that could be so beautiful, so holy, in a life that could be so full of meaning and satisfaction, if we only opened our eyes and knew where to look - or to look at all? Who needs God?

I know I do!

Do you?

When?

This Scripture invites us to live our lives with Christ in us. Live our lives as story, as God’s story, even though we have no idea what the next page will bring. We are not invited to simply live this life as “friends” of Jesus but as his disciples; disciples and models of the One who gives his life for his friends. Jesus is the Master, the Mentor, and the Maestro of our lives. Augustine once said: *Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words!* And the good news is . . . **“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.”**

Today, in every action we take, in every word we say, let us so be in Christ that we love God with everything in our soul! And let those around us see and rejoice at the Christ they see!

A TIME FOR RESPONDING

Song – TiS 680 God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind

Prayers of the People – Prepared by Heather Baxter

Our prayers of concern for others: the world, the church (including the peoples and governments of Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea), and ourselves ...

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

"Home is where the heart is."

I am using resources from Act for Peace as a basis for our prayers today.

From Ethiopia: "Home is truly everything. A place to sleep, a kitchen and facilities for washing clothes."

Today we pray for those who have no safe place to sleep – those on the streets, those sheltering in cars and disused factory sites. We wonder at their ability to access nutritional food, their challenge of keeping clean and presentable for the rest of society. We pray for the donors and clients of the Little Free Pantry.

From Jordan: "Home is joy. Once the door of the home is closed, the noise of the world disappears"

Today we pray for those who are trapped behind the closed doors of their homes – those who are abused by their partners, those who are providing slave labour in their search to become financially independent. We also pray for those for whom, when the door to their home is closed, the reverberations of war are continually in their ears, and their fear of being buried alive disturbs their sleep. We pray for the work of Act for Peace.

From Ethiopia again: "Home is a safe place to stay where I don't have to worry about the safety of my children"

Today we pray for those who are refugees – those who are on the road with their children and their small number of precious possessions, those who have taken risks in order to gain a better life for their children, those who are displaced in refugee camps with no timeline for returning home. We pray for the work of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and the Brigidine Sisters.

Home is where the heart is. Father you are our home. You are where our hearts are. We can trust in you in all of the situations that life throws before us – you are always alongside us. Give us eyes to see your grieving, hurting people. Prompt us into action when we see what is needed to ease the life's burdens of another person.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever Amen.**

A TIME FOR LEAVE-TAKING AND SCATTERING

Song – TiS 691 Faith will not grow from words alone

(IF YOU ARE ABLE, PLEASE REMAIN STANDING FOR THE BLESSING)

Blessing

The blessing and grace of God - **Who is in this place and every place**

The blessing and love of Jesus - **Who is among us, often unrecognised**

The blessing and presence of the Holy Spirit - **Encouraging us to welcome, and to feel at home...**

... Be with you all! Amen

Go in peace ... **to love and serve the Lord!**

Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

Music and Words reproduced with permission under CCLI licenses

Presider: Rev Dr Tony Floyd

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

NEWS & NOTICES

