



Weekly Worship



Sunday July 28, 2024

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Come, come and follow Jesus,
**across the waters of our fear,
where we will find peace.**

Come, come and follow Jesus,
**up the mountain of our longing
where we will be fed in abundance**

Come, come and follow Jesus,
**where every fragment will be gathered
so that nothing may be lost.**

Spirit of life, be with us in the time.
Awaken our senses to your presence
and our lives to your unfailing love.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

May the light of Christ that defeats all darkness
shine in us and through us, this day and always.

Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters. (name the Traditional Custodians). We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.



Singing: All creatures of our God and King TiS 100

OR: Come as you are TiS 693

OR: Holy holy holy Lord God Almighty TiS 132



Prayer

Holy mystery,
We come before you kneeling,
in our minds, if not our bodies,
because you name us as your children
and claim us as your own.

We praise and bless you
for the riches of wonder we notice around us:
the billowing clouds,
the roaring seas,
magnificent rainbows,
lashing rain.

Flights of migrating birds in the sky
and whales breaching in the ocean
remind us that it's warmer elsewhere.
Once dormant bulbs burst into flower
with the fragrant promise that Spring is coming.
Sunrise paints pinks and oranges
that return at the end of the lengthening day.

We pause in wonder and gratitude
at the awesome abundance of life.

time of quiet

Holy mystery,
in the middle of all this wonder,
we bring our confession.

When our actions have been driven
by fear instead of love,
Giver of life: **Forgive us**

When we have failed you
by refusing to share what we have,
Giver of life: **Forgive us**

When we have limited your work
by our own stubborn resistance,
Giver of life: **Forgive us**

We pause in confession
to bring you the things we need to lay down,

time of quiet

Prayer continues

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Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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Prayer continues

Giver of life: **Forgive us**

Siblings in Christ,
we make wrong choices,
we take wrong turns,
but be assured;
we are grounded in grace and growing in love.
That grace brings us back
and give us the power to try again,
to live the way of unimaginable love.

We are forgiven. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Listening

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21
John 6:1-21

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting

Rev. Amanda Nicholas

In abundance and challenge God is present

Often we are confounded and yet pleasantly surprised by the way in which the readings of the day resonate with the way the world is moving around us. I suspect this is reflected in our openness and attention to listening for what God may be revealing in that moment. Of course, then, it is no coincidence that when we open the gospel of John this week, it was a story of God's provision, power, presence and peace.

In John 6:1-21, we see one of Jesus' most recognisable miracles – feeding five thousand people, One of only a couple of scripture stories to appear in all four of the gospel books. What interests me about this reading is the approach John takes

to this reading, the things that are of importance to make known in the writings.

Matthew's gospel draws our attention to giving detail to the number of people who were gathered noting that it was about five thousand men besides women and children. For Mark, the emphasis is on the vividness of the setting and the gathered crowds while Luke's gospel places the emphasis on the disciples' interactions, participation and response throughout the event.

For John, however, the heart of the reading is to reflect the miraculous nature of God's provision through the way Jesus gathered, blessed and distributed the loaves and fish, enough so that everyone was satisfied and there was an abundance left over.

There was a perceived impossibility about whether the ask was indeed something achievable. It could have been so very easy to decide that it was too difficult a task to feed everyone and that it wasn't the business of Jesus and the disciples to feed the multitudes gathered leaving each person to fend for themselves and yet as we read on we see quite clearly that what is thought to be impossible is more than possible, God's providence is clear and abundantly present. We can get sidetracked by trying to appease our own wondering in the "how" of this miracle that we miss grasping the intent of the story. What we do see is that God is present in Jesus and provides with abundance that which is needed. It is important to note that God's providence may not always be in the obvious form as we read here of fish and loaves enough for all but God is nonetheless present in all things. It shouldn't come as a surprise then as we approach the end of the reading we see Jesus meeting the needs of the disciples again, only this time it is in the way he provides a calm and peaceful approach amidst their distress as the seas become rough and the wind picks up. When Jesus walks across the water to them calling out to them not to be afraid their fear immediately is eased and they want to draw Jesus in nearer to them, we don't read that Jesus got into the boat with them, we do read, that the boat reached its destination and the

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Reflecting continues

story picks up the next day with Jesus proclaiming about God's provision in the bread which comes down from heaven. God through Jesus provides for the needs of gathered crowds and the disciples in physical and tangible ways. The quiet, gentle and peaceful presence of God's power and provision for all, enough to ground them and sustain them so their journey may continue.

As a whole church we find ourselves on the cusp of new visions and all that goes with it. The 17th assembly met recently and at the heart of the Church's meeting were Threads of Love, a theme that will enable us to weave the most amazing tapestry if we are willing to be guided by God's provision for us in the coming months and years. There are many threads to be woven, unwoven, untangled and perhaps even cut off, sewn in or patched over. It can be tempting to lean into feeling like the disciples in the boat, scared of all that is going on around us, feeling out of control, ungrounded and lost. Or like the disciples in the gathered crowd when the need for food became apparent and there was little to be found. If we lift our gaze just a little higher and look around, we too will see Jesus moving towards us, the gentle reminder of a generous God who provides all that is needed when we simply ask the question "How can we feed all these people?".

Singing: Let us break bread together TIS 511

OR: Feed us now bread of life TiS 538



Offering

Giver of life, Holy mystery, Love unbounded here we offer these gifts; money, time, energy, hospitality, our lives. Accept them, bless them and use them, so that all may be fed and no one is hungry. And all the people say: **Amen**

Notices

Today is *National Tree Day*. July 30th is *World Day Against Trafficking in Persons*.

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

Holy mystery,
We bring our prayers for the world,
for our community and for ourselves.

We cannot hear the story of Jesus feeding the multitude without acknowledging the many people who are hungry in our world at this time.

We bring before you those who have inadequate food to feed themselves and their families.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

We hear the hunger of the earth, for respect, care and consideration for all things living.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

We lift up those who hunger for companionship, feeling isolated, forgotten and alone.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

We remember people in prisons, locked up in body, mind, or spirit, craving freedom.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

We hold in our hearts those people who hunger for home; the displaced and dispossessed.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

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We bring to you all who suffer; aching for words of comfort, in pain, grief, disease or distress.
God of abundance: **teach us to share.**

God of all, we bring you the prayers of our hearts, knowing that you hear us and are able to accomplish so much more than we can ask for or imagine.

time of quiet

We pray together then, as Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Singing: Let us talents and tongues employ TiS 537

OR: This is the truth we hold TiS 469

OR: Eternal light shine in my heart TiS 548



Blessing

Based on Ephesians 3:20, 21

Now to the Holy Three-in-One who, by their power at work within us, is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to them be glory in the church to all generations, forever and ever.

Go in peace,
strengthened in your inner being,
with power through the Spirit,
to live in the love that surpasses knowledge,
as Christ dwells in your hearts,
through faith.
And all the people say: **Amen**

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