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St. Margaret’s Uniting Church

Mooroolbark

Sunday 5th August, 2018 – Rev Arnie Wierenga

11th Sunday after Pentecost – Holy Communion

Welcome

All are invited to share morning tea following the service

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD:

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

GREETING

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.**

WE SING 'Here in this place new light is streaming' (TIS 474)

*Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away,
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
Brought to you here in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in, the blind and th lame,
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.*

2

*We are the young, our lives are a mystery,
We are the old, who yearn for your face,
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in, the proud and the strong,
Give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.*

3

*Here we will take of the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth;,
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt of the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you;
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy, and hearts that are true..*

4

Not in the dark of buildings confining,

*Not in some heaven light years away,
But here in this space, the new light is shining,
Now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever;
Gather us in, and make us your own;
Gather us in, all people together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER

WE LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD:

SHARING THE EARLY WORD

Lost Sheep – Image of God

WE SING 'I am the church' (TIS 467)

*I am the church! You are the church!
We are the church together!
All who follow Jesus all around the world,
yes, we're the church together!*

1

The church is not a building,
the church is not a steeple,
the church is not a resting-place,
the church is a people!

2

We're many kinds of people
with many kinds of faces,
all colours and all ages too,
from all times and places.

3

And when people gather
there's singing and there's praying,
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes
all of it saying:

4

I count if I am ninety
 or nine or just a baby;
 there's one thing I am sure about, and
 I don't mean maybe:

EPISTLE READING Ephesians 4: 1-6,15,16 *Unity in the Body of Christ*

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

... Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

THE GOSPEL John 6: 24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are

you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” ’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

... for the word of the Lord, **THANKS BE TO GOD.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

... In the name of Jesus Christ, I can boldly declare that we are embraced and loved by God, that we are created anew with a clean heart, and a right spirit is placed within us. **Thanks be to God.**

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

THE HOSPITALITY OF GOD

Once, a long time ago, I approached the table of Holy Communion as I had many times before. For a long time, I’d wanted to understand this meal, and this particular day, I sensed a profound knowing!

Except that it was as fleeting as a mountain-top experience. And I have no language, to share whatever knowing occurred. And yet faithfully, I’ve continued to gather at the table with others on this journey, to eat, drink, remember and believe, even though the nature of that belief can scarcely be known.

In a way I feel like those who’ve chased Jesus in their boats to Capernaum. They’ve just been fed with loaves and fishes and are hungry for more. So they hunt Jesus down because they want more of this food. And Jesus offers them a warning. In effect he says, ‘make

sure you seek the right thing. A good feed on loaves and fish may seem exciting, but like most things on earth, these things are fleeting. You will get hungry again if you seek stuff that goes mouldy.'

The dialog continues. The crowd knows its biblical history. 'Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness', they say. But manna also went mouldy. We eat, and whatever satisfaction it brings is fleeting. But Jesus want us to feast on a different kind of bread.

Hoping they are ready to understand more deeply, Jesus says, 'The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

I wonder what brings life to the world in your experience? What endures, what resists mould? What it is that salves the gnawing human restlessness to find meaning?

I was reminded a few weeks back, as Mick Jagger turned 75, of his famous song, 'I can't get no satisfaction.' It is the story of humanity, of our struggle, of our angst. It is said we keep trying to fill what some describe as a God-shaped hole.

Jesus said to Mick Jagger, to those who had chased him to Capernaum, and to you and me, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

And there it is – the holy grail, the answer to everything, that is if you dare believe Jesus.

The truth is most of the world doesn't believe it. And so we use sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll as an attempt to ease our restless souls. We eat and drink the kind of food that satisfies for a moment and is forgotten so soon that we eat more. We find attraction in bright and shiny things, and like bower birds gather more and more toys for our nests. The advertising industry is expert at exploiting this in us. We desperately want to satisfy that gnawing longing, but still can't get no satisfaction.

In case we didn't hear it before, or in case we didn't believe it could be true, again we hear Jesus say, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes

to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' Well Jesus, I want some of that. I want some real satisfaction ...

So despite ourselves we find an invitation to the Table, a bigger and more inclusive Table than we could ever imagine. These words from Iona Abbey:

The Table of Bread and Wine is now to be made ready. It is the Table of company of Jesus, and all who love him. It is the Table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified himself. It is the Table of communion with the earth, in which Christ became incarnate. So come to this Table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more; you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time; you who have tried to follow Jesus, and you who have failed; come. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

This is an invitation into the hospitality of God. This is not the moment to work out a deep eucharistic theology (although there is a time and place for that). This is not the moment of seeking proof of the existence of God. This is not a place for arguing doctrine. This is a place to join the host, Jesus Christ, and to eat and drink together.

We are invited to share an immersive moment, an embodied action, a rehearsal of the kingdom of heaven. This is an invitation into the mystery of God's presence, to participate in simple actions until mystery overtakes us in a knowing deeper than words. Here we do as Jesus first did. Fr. Richard Rohr suggests this is a place where we "eat" the truth more than we ever understand it. As first done by Jesus, time and again we imitate as we join his meal, his way, his body.

But the thing about Jesus, was he was always extending the invitation, so much so that it upset the sensibilities of many. How upsetting that he would invite sinners, or people not like us. Tax collectors, prostitutes, those with horrible diseases, those who were poor, those struggling with mental health issues, those locked away in prisons on faraway islands.

This table is a great equalising place. It is a place where those we cannot love or abide with, are invited. And guess what – we are invited

to abide with them and love them, as they belong to God, just like you and me. That includes people from different faiths or ideologies. It includes people who are portrayed as belonging to African gangs. It includes people who seek asylum and are trapped offshore. It includes people who see marriage and sexuality different to how we see it.

So come, says Jesus. Come all of you. Come and be loved, be fed, belong. Come, but then go and love, feed and invite others to belong. It is so deep and profound a truth that we need to chew it over time and again until this food changes us from the inside.

But now, let us eat and drink together. Let us find love and welcome. And let us chew over divine blessing as we become the Body of Christ for the sake of the world.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD:

OFFERING

*During the offering WE SING 'Put peace into each other's hands'
Words: Fred Kaan LicenSing*

*Put peace into each other's hands with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways, in touch with God's creation.*

*Put peace into each other's hands like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye: our life is meant for caring.*

*As at Communion, shape your hands into a waiting cradle;
the Gift of Christ receive, revere united round The Table.*

*Put Christ into each other's hands, He is Love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance and share it like a treasure.*

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION:

PRAYER OF APPROACH

QUESTIONS OF INSTITUTION

What is this meal of bread and wine?

Why do we eat bread?! !!

What does the wine help us remember?

... Your presence in a loaf of bread. **Your presence in a simple cup.**

Remember me, Jesus said, **and we remember.**

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

...

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving continues, all singing:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed, is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

INVOCATION

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 for ever. Amen.**

WE SING 'Bread for the world' (ATW 473, © Bernadette Farrell)

*Bread for the world
A world of hunger
Wine for all peoples
People who thirst
May we who eat
Be bread for others
May we who drink
Pour out our love*

Lord Jesus Christ
You are the bread of life
Broken to reach
And heal the wounds
Of human pain
Where we divide your people
You are waiting there
On bended knee
To wash our feet with endless care

Bread for the world
A world of hunger
Wine for all peoples
People who thirst
May we who eat
Be bread for others
May we who drink
Pour out our love

Lord Jesus Christ
You are the wine of peace
Poured into hearts once broken
And where dryness sleeps
Where we are tired and weary
You are waiting there
To be the way which beckons us
Beyond despair

Bread for the world
A world of hunger
Wine for all peoples
People who thirst
May we who eat

Be bread for others
May we who drink
Pour out our love

Lord Jesus Christ
You call us to your feast
At which the rich and pow'rful
Have become the least
Where we survive on others
In our human greed
You walk among us
Begging for your ev'ry need

Bread for the world
A world of hunger
Wine for all peoples
People who thirst
May we who eat
Be bread for others
May we who drink
Pour out our love

THE COMMUNION

THE PEACE

The peace of Jesus Christ always be with you. ...
and also with you.

SHARING FROM THE CHILDREN

SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD:

WE SING TIS 411 'Filled with the Spirit's power'

1

Filled with the Spirit's power, with one accord
the infant church confessed its risen Lord:
O Holy Spirit, in the church today
no less your power of fellowship display.

2

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,
that unity may be our great desire:
give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,
and readiness in each to work for all.

3

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace
in your strong care all those of every race:
like wind and fire with life among us move
till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

SENDING OUT & BLESSING