

BREAD

Carlops Parish Church Eco Service, 2014

Hymns are Church Hymnary, Fourth edition (CH\$) unless indicated otherwise

Welcome

A Warm welcome to everyone to church this morning. The theme of our Eco Service this year is “Bread”; the staff of life; the most basic, but most important of of foods.

Call to worship

In the breaking of bread and in prayer ...
Jesus is among us

In the telling of stories and in signs ...
Jesus is among us

In the sharing of resources and in justice ...
Jesus is among us

In this place and in this moment ...
Jesus is among us in joy

A great mercy and a sure hope ...

A new birth and a deep peace ...

A strong love and a rich blessing ...

God is leading us in joy.

First hymn – No 685: For everyone born a place at the table

...

Prayer

Our first prayer this morning was written by one of our members, Chris Levison.

Let us pray

We have heard about you, God of all power. You made the world out of kindness, creating order out of confusion, you made each one of us in your own image; your fingerprint is on every soul:
so we praise you.

We have heard about you, Jesus Christ; the carpenter who left his tools and trade; the poor man who made others rich; the healer who let himself be wounded; the criminal on whom the soldiers spat; the saviour who died and rose again:
so we praise you.

We have heard about you, Holy Spirit. You broke the bonds of every race and nation, to let God speak in every tongue; you comforted those who were disturbed and you disturbed those who were too comfortable; you converted souls and emptied pockets; you showed how love makes all things new and opened the doors to change and to freedom:
so we praise you.

We ask you Lord to hear our prayer of confession

Gracious God,
We do not keep true to you at all costs:
We praise the sacrifice and triumph of Jesus
Yet turn aside from the way of the cross:
We pay lip service to high ideals
But let the demands of every day
Divert us from real commitment.

And so we come seeking your forgiveness.
We know that we have sinned against you
in thought word and deed,
in what we have done and what we have left undone.
In your mercy forgive what we have been.
Help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be.

We remember those who have no bread:
the wretched of the world who are on a permanent fast,
not out of choice, but out of necessity.

Change our hearts and minds,
That our bread may be shared with the hungry.

Let us now join together in The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever. Amen

Children's address

In this country one of our main foods is bread. We make our sandwiches with it, toast it in the mornings, cut chunks of crusty bread to eat with soup, and even make bread and butter pudding with it.

But sometimes when we use the word *bread* we don't actually mean *a loaf of bread*. We use the word *bread* just to mean all the different foods we eat. For example, we say in the Lord's Prayer – Give us this day our daily bread – and we actually just mean everything that we eat to keep us alive. In our own prayers we might say “Thank you God for our daily bread, and again we mean thank you for everything we eat and drink.

Across the world people have different foods as their staple diets. So the daily bread in some countries might be rice, and in others pasta, and in Malawi the Mary's Meals that children get are a kind of porridge made with maize.

Of course for many people there is no daily bread because they are starving. So as well as thanking God for *our* food we should remember in our prayers those who do not have enough to eat and we should do our best to make the world a more equal place where the bread, the rice, the pasta and all the other foods are shared so that everyone everywhere can have enough to eat and give thanks for having their daily bread – no matter what type of food they eat.

Here is a poem by T W Brighton that may help us to remember some of the things and people for whom we, in this country, should give our thanks to God.

This is the world that God made

Out there is the field
That is part of the world that God made.

This is the wheat (*show a sheaf of wheat if possible*)
That was planted by the farmer
That grows in the field
That is part of the world that God made.

This is the flour that was ground by the miller (*show a bag of flour*)
That comes from the wheat
That was planted by the farmer
That grows in the field
That is part of the world that God made.

This is the bread that was made by the baker (*show a loaf of bread*)
That contains the flour that was ground by the miller
That comes from the wheat
That was planted by the farmer
That grows in the field
That is part of the world that God made..

This is the day when we say “Thank you”
To the baker, the miller, the farmer
And to God for giving us the bread by which we live
In this wonderful world that God made.

Prayer

We thank you God this morning for everyone involved in food production all across the world. We give special thanks and ask for your blessing on aid workers striving to feed the hungry and starving – and we remember those involved in delivering Mary’s meals to children in Malawi from kitchens like Carlops Kitchen in Mtenje.

Offering

Prayer

Heavenly Father we ask that you bless our offering. May it be used wisely in your service. Amen

Second hymn – No 245: It's a world of sunshine ...

Reading

This reading is a poem entitled I am the bread by Judy Dinnen

She gave me a loaf of bread
Warm and springy
Labour of love
The pale crust
Dusted with flour.

She gave me a loaf to pray with
To write about
To break open
To share
I hold it in my hands
Hold the warm, round shape
Feel its gift, its possibilities

I see in this loaf a way to be
Hands still with the holding
Heart full with the receiving
Lips parted for the thanking.
I remember the gift of it
Honour the grace in the gift
And the renewing
As we hold out our hands to receive.

This is everyday stuff
Everyday story;
Bread in the oven
Bread on the wooden cutting board
Bread on our plates -
So common we talk over it and beyond it;
Yet it remains central and (for the fortunate) always there.

Prayer

Our prayer of intercession was written by Janet Morley

O God our creator
Whose good earth is entrusted
To our care and delight and tenderness
We pray:

For all who are in captivity to debt
Whose lives are cramped by fear
From which there is no turning
Except through abundant harvest.

*May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.*

We pray
For all who depend on the earth
For their daily food and fuel
Whose forests are destroyed
For the profit of a few.

*May those who sow in tears
Reap in shouts of joy.*

For all who labour in poverty
Who are oppressed by unjust laws
Who are banned for speaking the truth
Who long for a harvest of justice.

*May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.*

For all who are in captivity
To greed and boredom
Whose harvest is choked
With things they do not need.

*May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.*

Turn us again from our captivity
And restore our vision
That our mouths may be filled with laughter
And our tongues with singing.

Amen

Third hymn – No 259: Beauty for brokenness ...

Address

This short poem entitled *A Bread Meditation* was found next to a loaf of bread in an alcove at Cartmel Priory.

Be gentle when you touch bread
Let it not lie uncared for, unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted.
There is such beauty in bread
Beauty of sun and soil
Beauty of patient toil
Wind and sun have caressed it
Christ often blessed it
Be gentle when you touch bread.

Bread matters is the title of a book written by Andrew Whitley who is based at Macbiehill, near Carlisle. He has been called Britain's leading exponent of the art of baking naturally fermented, organic bread and he gave a very interesting talk about bread in Carlisle Church earlier in 2014.

He told us that bread making goes back to the time of the Pharaohs in ancient Egypt, one of the earliest societies to produce more food than was needed for subsistence and that this enabled a more complicated society to begin to develop.

He also told us of times in history when scarcity of bread has given rise to revolution: the French revolution for instance.

Bread is life in the sense that our bodies need food.

Bread symbolises relationship and social cohesion. It represents sharing; the word com-pan-ion means, at root, "with bread" – one with whom we share food.

The word bread occurs many times in the Bible, 298 times in the Old Testament, 98 in the New Testament.

The “Feast of Unleavened Bread”, the Passover meal, is for the Jews a reminder of their epic Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, which they reached eventually after their long journey through the Sinai Peninsula. Unleavened bread is bread for a journey, a hasty departure.

Jesus’ parables about the mustard seed growing into a great tree and about the yeast which produces a great quantity of dough from the small initial mixture of flour, yeast and water are intimations of the great effects that God can bring from small beginnings. We can see this in the growth of Christianity from the first small band of disciples in the first century and in other instances where one person’s vision and determination has led to great changes and developments. Think of Rosa Parkes, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela.

In The Lord's Prayer we pray for “our daily bread”. Some scholars think that this may mean “our bread of tomorrow” and refers to the new age to come and its heavenly food. They suggest and that the prayer is a plea that this may be present here and now, helping us in our daily lives. But for most of us it means praying for sustenance and strength to keep going in our daily lives.

Fourth hymn – No 543: Longing for light we wait in darkness ...

Second address

In 1974 – that is exactly 40 years ago – Henry Kissenger, the then American Secretary of State, made a proclamation to the World Food Programme in Rome.

He said “We must proclaim a bold objective: that *within a decade*, no child will go to bed hungry. That no family will fear for its next day’s bread. And that no human being’s future and capacity will be stunted by malnutrition.”

That was *four decades ago* and we are no nearer to achieving that goal than we were after one decade – in fact we are probably further away from it.

Here is a passage from a book by Helen Fielding which may make us stop and think – Muhammad, who lives in a refugee camp, is speaking:

“Do you know what it is to walk for five miles to find water and to carry it home in an earthenware jar fastened to your back? To work all day, from the grey smoking mists of dawn to the last red rays of the sun, coaxing the dry earth with your bleeding, calloused hands to bring forth food for your children? To scour the barren mountains for firewood to keep your family alive through the freezing night, knowing that every branch that is cut, every tree that dies, is causing the earth to die with it, the desert to creep towards us? And to rejoice when the first green shoots burst from the soil knowing still, that if the rains fail, then we will starve, and if the rains come, then the insects may come too, and we will also starve?”

Of course we, in Scotland, do not know what it would be like to live that way – nor can we really even imagine what it would be like. But we can read and understand the information that is being put out by various scientific organisations about Climate Change and its probable effects.

Our daily bread may be at risk from changes in our global climate. The International Panel on Climate Change produced its latest report in March.

The report indicates that it is highly probable that our own burning of coal and oil to produce the energy which has powered the last 200 years of development, especially in the West, has been a major part of the cause of climate change.

One of the effects, if we are not able to halt the process of global warming, may be that the stability of our global food supply will be affected. More extreme weather will also affect harvests and the people most likely to be badly affected are those who are already poor. Justice demands that we do everything in our power to prevent further global warming. We must urgently try to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we are releasing into the atmosphere. Our children and grandchildren’s futures are at stake.

Sometimes it seems that our own individual efforts are too insignificant to be worthwhile, but Jesus’ parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven are both pointers to the great possibilities that, with God’s help, can arise from small beginnings.

Here are some sentences adapted from a speech by Chief Seattle in 1854

Every part of this earth is sacred
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.

The air is precious
For all of us share the same breath.

This we know: the earth does not belong to us
We belong to the earth.

This we know: all things are connected
Like the blood which unites one family.

Our God is the same God
Whose compassion is equal for all.

For we did not weave the web of life
We are merely strands in it.

Whatever we do to the web
We do to ourselves.

We end with the words of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rev John Chalmers when he addressed the General Assembly in May 2014.

“Changing the way we live and the attitudes that drive us, is a matter of deep spiritual significance. We cannot claim to love our neighbour as we love ourselves unless we are also working to make the earth a place which offers security and sustainability for our neighbour. And in today’s context, that (ie, neighbour) means all people, without exception.”

Closing hymn – No 706: For the healing of the nations ...

Blessing

As we prepare to leave
And embrace the challenge
Of our lives and our world
Let us ask for God’s blessing.
May God bless us with strength

to seek justice.
May God bless us with wisdom
To care for our earth.
In the name of God, the maker of the whole world,
Go forth in peace.

Triple Amen