

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Call to worship

We come with our curiosity and questions.

We come seeking answers.

We are grateful for our daily bread,
but we yearn for the bread of eternal life.

Let us seek to be fed and filled
with God's life and love.

Lord God, giver of life,
you bless us with all we need –
and with so much more.

Keep us from being so focused on physical needs
that we neglect our spiritual food.

Feed us with your word,
satisfy us with your presence,
and strengthen us by your Spirit –
that we may share your eternal life.

It was suggested in one of our meetings that we had a spot in our service for Prayer for our community so I would like to ask Pauline to lead our prayers for our Community in East Leake. [For those of you using the email service please spend a little time thinking of your community]

Prayers for our Community by Pauline

Hymn StF 94 To God be the glory,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SusuTxyFW-A>

Prayers

O God, giver of manna from heaven,
you provided for Moses' followers in the desert.
O Christ, bread of life,
you fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish.
O Holy Spirit of the living God,
here with us as we come together today,
we ask you to feed us with all that we need,
and that, thus fed, we might be satisfied. **Amen.**

Merciful God,
we thank you that you are to be trusted,
that you are faithful and provide for all our needs.
When we feel alone in the desert,
that is where we meet you.
In the wilderness of our lives,
we can turn to you and know that you will sustain us.
We worship you,
and we thank you that in you there is always hope. **Amen.**

Thank you, Lord, that we can trust you in all things.
Even when we don't understand,
when we feel lost and alone, we can trust you.
When we wander in the wilderness,
thank you that you are there by our side,
that you reach out and touch us with outstretched, open arms.
Thank you, Lord, that we are safe with you.
For you provide all we need,
that which is 'on earth' and that which is eternal.
Lord, when we fail to trust you in all things:
forgive us, and help us to trust you more.
When we complain that you have forsaken us,
you have left us, abandoned us:
forgive us, and help us to trust you more.
When we choose to go our own way
because your way doesn't seem to make sense:
forgive us, and help us to trust you more.

When we don't challenge injustice, and instead, accept things as they are:

forgive us, and help us to trust you more.

When we keep asking for more signs, more proof, more of everything:

forgive us, and help us to trust you more.

When we trust a little, then snatch it back:

forgive us, and help us to trust you more.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

When we have not trusted God with our lives and walked away, we can always come back into God's everlasting arms,

knowing that we are loved and forgiven. Amen

I would like to invite you to pretend to 'tear and share' a piece of bread with someone as the word 'tear' is spoken.

Generous and loving God, we tear up violence and share out peace.

We tear up fear and share out joy.

We tear up poverty and share our food.

We tear up cruelty and share out kindness.

We tear up all that divides and share our love for Jesus. Amen.

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord taught us Our Father.....

Monologue based on the Old Testament reading Exodus 16.2-4,9-15; -monologue Chris

I would like you to image a conversation between a group of Israelites grumbling about their life in the wilderness

Do you remember the good old days? Back in Egypt? Yes, wasn't it great.

Regular employment, food and board provided. The food wasn't too bad either...for a works canteen. As long as you like lamb stew and dry bread - Every day.

But now! Well, we've been wandering out here in the desert for years, and no sign of arriving anywhere, anytime soon.

It's Moses that I blame. He made such great promises, but here we are, out here and out of food. We should have stayed in Egypt rather than starving out here.

As a third friend joins them, they explain : We were just talking about how Moses has led us out here to die in the desert!

Haven't you heard? The new arrival exclaims. -Moses has done a deal with God – we're going to get meat every night and bread every morning!

How's that going to work? I haven't seen a delivery camel since we've been out here. And that's a lot of meat and bread for all our people!

The new arrival explains. Well, that's what I heard. Meat and bread. Delivered directly from God, every day. Well, actually, just on six days – but we'll get double rations on day six to see us through the sabbath.

They then reflected- Perhaps God did hear us complaining about Moses. and they supposed that they were also complaining about God in a way. But concluded- instead of letting us die, he has offered to feed us all. Perhaps he really does want us all to live!

Comments on today's Psalm 78.23-29;

Our Psalm recalls this event in the history of the Israelite's

God was annoyed by the lack of faith of his chosen people but the Psalmist recalls: **But God helped them anyway**, “even though he commanded the skies to open—he opened the windows of heaven—and rained down manna for their food. He gave them bread from heaven! They ate angels' food! He gave them all they could hold. **And he led forth the east wind and guided the south wind by his mighty power. He rained down birds as thick as dust, clouds of them like sands along the shore! He caused the birds to fall to the ground among the tents. The people ate their fill. He gave them what they asked for.”**

Hymn StF 706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kt3Qc04ulOM>

**Readings NT Ephesians 4.1-16;
Gospel: John 6.24-35**

Address

Just prior to our gospel reading Jesus has fed the five thousand, using the power of God and five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus then moves away from the vast crowds because of the pressures being created to make him their king, their leader and rescuer from oppression. The disciples decide to go out in their boat, they are caught up in a gale and Jesus reassured them – “Do not be afraid” as he walked towards them on the water. What an amazing and terrifying experience that would be. Can you image.....

Our reading picks up from here- The people follow to the other side of the lake and are amazed to find Jesus there with the disciples. They begin to ask questions and Jesus deflects there questions and talks about spiritual needs - the need to believe in him – to have faith and trust.

If we go back to the time when Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness his reply was that “people do not live by bread alone but also by the word of God.” Our Old Testament reading and the Psalm both remind us, that God provides for his people,-they, as we are called to trust him.

Our challenge is to ask questions of ourselves, to develop our knowledge and understanding, in order to find out what God wants us to do for him. To stretch ourselves, using the gifts we have been given, as Paul reminds us in his letter to the Ephesians. We have been given gifts, for the tasks we are asked to do- What we need is the faith, the confidence to Trust and Obey as the hymn reminds us:

When we walk with the Lord, in the light of his word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!

While we do his good will, he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Jesus gives us the living bread for he tells us “I am the bread of life”. Answering all our needs as we continue in our life of faith. One of our major gifts is our ability to share with others and in this present time of the pandemic it has become very noticeable how much we rely on personal interaction, a friendly “good morning” can mean so much. As restriction ease more opportunities arise. The church has adapted to these unprecedented times, using technology, giving us the possibility to meet and now develop our services and the church family. Our Tuesday chat session has come out of this pandemic, where we again can develop and question our understanding. Sharing with others, allows us to broaden our faith- we gain confidence, and this may lead to us sharing our faith with people outside the church- as we believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God, we do the work of God. Our lives reflect the living bread that we receive and then we can share it with others- whoever we meet in our daily lives. Don't be afraid to ask Jesus for help and guidance, to take that first step, for we are assured that our Lord Jesus Christ walks with us, feeds us, guides us and sustains us as we walk our life here on earth. Prayer is such an important part of our faith, our means of communication with God, we can share our ideas, seek guidance, reassurance and forgiveness.

A short prayer:

Lord, we know that bread is a symbol of so much more.
We use this bread as a symbol of all the food we enjoy: chocolate, crisps, celery, bananas...think of your own favourite food]
We use this bread as a symbol of all our needs: light, warmth, clothes
We give thanks for Jesus, who is the bread of life,
who is everything that we need;
and we trust that God, every day, will give us
what we really need for eternal life.

Amen.

Can you image the sales pitch and what it might offer

Today's special offer is 'The Bread of Life' – as much as you can eat!
Fast food? Junk food? Forget it! Health food? Real food? Forget that too!
What you really need is food that feeds your soul, food that nourishes your spirit, food that keeps you going not only all day but all

the way to eternal life. No other supplements needed. There's only one producer of this product: Jesus Christ. Franchises are available in a town near you: visit your local church now to ask about this special offer. Lifelong guarantee of quality and satisfaction (terms and conditions apply).

Life can be confusing, talk things through, listen to the ideas of others and be prepared to develop our understanding, so that we can all walk together in the love of Jesus Christ. I have adapted this sketch called

Does the Bread of Life have a best-before date?

Always a confusing date to the consumer

Do you understand these 'best before' dates?

Is that the same as 'display until'? Or 'use by'?

So what happens after those dates? Does the loaf self-destruct? Or go mouldy at

midnight?

Why do you ask?

There was someone talking about bread that endures for eternal life.

For eternal life? That's a long time – you'll have eaten it before tomorrow, so what

does it matter?

Don't forget about the manna that God gave the people in the wilderness: that only

lasted the day. If they collected more than their daily bread it went rotten.

That's why it's called daily bread!

Why not get fresh bread every day?

I'm not sure it was 'bread that you'd eat' that they were talking about, but something more...spiritual.

Spiritual bread? Does that contain nuts and wholegrains?

No, but it seems to contain belief in God, and trust for the future.

That sounds like really healthy bread! It gives life to the world, so that anyone who has it will never go hungry.

So, where do we get this bread?

From Jesus – he is the bread of life, if we believe in him.

Then give us that bread always!

Being his disciples here on earth and doing his will is our way of doing the work of God. Let us see how we can do God's work in the coming weeks, helping in our communities, befriending our neighbours, friends and all we meet. May he guide us and sustain us for all our days with the Bread of Life. **Amen.**

Hymn StF 663 I, the Lord of sea and sky.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UA2fMeXEKLA>

Prayers of Intercession

Response

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, giver of all good gifts,
we pray for all people who willingly use their time and gifts
in the service of others.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for all who set up and work in charitable organisations:
bless them as they so freely give of their time and talents.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for people who work together to bring healing, for all who
work in hospitals, homes, the community: bless them as they bring
blessing to others.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for those who dedicate their lives to serving God in
religious orders and communities:
bless them in their gifts of prayer, hospitality and service.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for people with the gift of words,
for teachers, writers and communicators:
bless the seeds that they sow.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for those who don't feel as if they have a gift, or feel as
if it goes unnoticed:

bless them with the knowledge that they matter to you.

Lord in your Mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for our church as a welcoming community,
constantly being built up by our love for you.

Bless us, Lord.

Amen.

Hymn StF 418 We have a Gospel to proclaim

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5wWRYq57EM>

Blessing

As we seek to do what you want, Lord,
may we bring bread to the hungry –
food for bodies and food for souls,
strength for the journey, and hope for the future.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Let us join together in The Grace

Music for end of Service. StF 57 Let all the world in every corner sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXldoDnvq4>

This service was prepared by Chris Watkins -

Local Lay Pastor at East Leake Methodist Church.

Prayers and Sketches adapted from Roots on the Web.