

The Bridgwater Drive Church, 25 July 2021. Written service circulated to all

Welcome to worship from The Bridgwater Drive Church. Today will be a Communion service here at Bridgwater. If you are a member of Christ Church watching at home and wish to celebrate the Lord's Supper, you may, however the Christ Church monthly communion was celebrated last week.

For those of you who were present, or watched, last week's service from Christ Church – you'll be getting a much more 'traditional' service this week, with a very well-known story – the feeding of the five thousand. All the hymns, however, are inspired by our reading from Ephesians.

Call to worship (inspired by John 6:1-21)

Rejoice, folks, Jesus is in our midst.
Feed us, Jesus, and fill us with hope.
Be glad, friends, Jesus has bread and fish to spare.
Free us, Jesus, from the pursuit of food that does not satisfy.
Sing for joy, people of God;
God gathers up the pieces of our lives, that nothing may be lost.
Thanks be to God!

Adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009*, © 2008 Abingdon Press

Hymn Word of the Father, the life of creation (tune *Was Lebet, Was Schwebet* R&S 187)

Word of the Father, the life of creation,
emptied of glory, among us you came;
born as a servant, assuming our weakness,
drank from the cup of our joy and our shame.

Each human child bears your image and likeness,
yet all are heirs to the sins of our earth;
once from death's flood you arose to redeem us,
water and Spirit now seal our rebirth.

Searching, you found us before we could name you,
Loving, you suffered our pain and our loss;
Strengthen each child through the faith of your people,
Born in the glory which streams from the Cross.

© Colin Peter Thompson, (Church Hymnary 4)

Opening Prayers

Sustainer of the hungry, like a mother you long to feed your children until each is satisfied.
Turn our eyes to you alone, that, aware of our own deepest longings,
we will reach out with Christ to feed others with the miracle of your love. **Amen.**

God of gentle rains and warm sun, God who encourages growth;
we are creatures who sometimes grow quickly, and sometimes get stuck.
God of freedom, of liberation, of binding ropes being cut;
we are bound in ways we don't always understand or recognize.
God of exodus and exile and homecoming,
God who calls us to leave where we are and come home;
help us to have the courage to make the journey and to trust in the path.
God of health and healing, God who wants us to be made whole;
we come as people who are wounded in body and in spirit, people who seek healing.
God who has laid out a way for us to live, who has given us rules for living in community;
we come as people who sometimes go astray, people who stretch the rules.

God of Grace, we come as people who live through that Grace.
And so we praise you for growth,
we rejoice in being set free,
we dance along the path that leads us home,

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we give thanks for healing received,
we relax in the knowledge that we are forgiven
and we live as people of Grace. **Amen.**

~ written by Rev Gord: <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/>

Offertory

You are reminded to send in your gifts for the work of the church.

God of abundant love, in you, nothing is lost.

Gather our offerings, as Jesus gathered up the baskets of leftover food.

Gather our efforts, as Jesus gathered the hopes of the people who looked for a true king.

Gather our service, as Jesus gathered people to God's heavenly banquet.

Bless the offerings we have gathered, that nothing may be lost. **Amen.**

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Bible readings: Ephesians 3:14-21 John 6:1-21

Enough is enough by Cheryl Lindsay of the United Church of Christ –

<https://www.ucc.org/sermon-seeds/weekly-seeds-more-than-enough>

I have amended this sermon a bit, but the bulk of it comes from Rev Lindsay and seems to follow on well from my sermon last week on words and actions.

Do you ever wonder where phrases like 'enough is enough' come from? Apparently this phrase was first identified as an English proverb in the 1500s, which equated *enough* with abundance - 'enough is enough' meant 'enough is good enough, we don't need anything more' – another way of saying 'enough is as good as a feast'.

But language evolves, because language articulates the meanings of our lives, and our lives are not static. Today, enough is enough reflects a committed refusal to continue with conditions as they are. The meaning has changed, and now 'enough is good, enough is all I need' has become 'I've had enough of that – no more'.

Are these two meanings all that different?

One of Jesus' most well-known miracles was the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus had amassed a crowd who noticed his work. The text says the crowd "kept following him," because, when faced with a crowd, Jesus would often try to escape them. He would take the opportunity to teach, and he would respond to human needs presented to him, but Jesus did not seek the crowd. So many conversations around the state of the church, centre around how do we increase our numbers - getting the crowd to come to us - rather than how can we be more faithful in following Jesus's example of telling God's truth and responding to human needs as we go about living our daily lives.

The important thing is that Jesus notices the need before him and invites the disciples to participate in fulfilling it: The theme in the feeding story is abundance, stunning in its quality, and quantity. Jesus' concern for feeding the crowd comes as a surprise, for there is no sign

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that they expect him to provide lunch. The story seems to demonstrate responsibility toward the hungry. The crowd does not ask to be fed; rather, it is Jesus who takes this daunting task upon himself. The story emphasizes the wonder inherent in Jesus' ability to feed such a big crowd with a mere five loaves and two fish, but perhaps the larger miracle is the concern to provide for others in the first place.

Philip and Andrew demonstrate an orientation toward scarcity, the opposite of generosity. Jesus asks where the necessary supply may be located, but Philip responds to a perceived obstacle instead. They lack the funds that Philip assumes makes Jesus' question immaterial. Andrew gets closer in identifying a young person who has brought provisions, but he focuses on the limits of those resources rather than the possibilities.

How many possibilities for ministry have been thwarted by initial objections based on a scarcity orientation? We don't have enough funds to keep the lights on if we open our doors to community needs without receiving compensation. We have a few members who are passionate, but not enough to maintain a sustained outreach. There's not enough money, time, or energy to do a thing so we can't even allow a moment of consideration or curiosity for how it might be done?

Fortunately, Jesus shows us how to overcome these objections. He lets the questions breathe but provides no oxygen for them. He neither affirms nor disputes them. Instead, he makes use of the meagre resources from the boy and gives instructions for the crowd to follow. It is remarkable that this is an unexpressed need that Jesus meets. The crowd does not ask for, nor expect, this act of generosity; however, when presented with the gift, they are ready to receive it.

Isn't that what attracted them to Jesus in the first place - the unexpected that transforms, heals, and restores? They had heard of his works healing the sick, but this was different - yet the same. Scarcity is a sickness, not of the individual body, but of the community that has resources it withholds out of fear of deprivation. Do we really imagine that only this one young person had packed a lunch? Or, was this the only person unafraid to share? Was this the only one who had not learned the societal lesson that enough is never enough? That giving to someone else means taking from me, my family, and my household.

I do not question that Jesus had the ability to make the loaves and fishes multiply, and that could be the whole story, but I do find myself wondering if the subversive miracle is that Christ frees us from the mindset of scarcity to embrace the good news of abundance? Wouldn't it be an even greater miracle if after Jesus takes that bread and begins to distribute it, others opened up their bags and shared what they had previously decided to

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keep only for themselves? Could the lesson be not just that Jesus can multiply, but that the miracle doesn't happen until we stop clinging to what we have and place it in God's hands? Here is a young person breaking through and providing the catalyst for the miracle that takes place. Not just because he had food, but because he shared it and it was received by those in authority. How many times are efforts to lead by those deemed too young, too inexperienced, too new to the community, too old, too quiet, too loud, been ignored because we lack the imagination to see them, hear them, and amplify them?

That young person did not have enough for everyone, but he had something to offer. It was more than enough. It was a start. In moving forward with these seemingly meagre provisions, **Jesus releases us from having a fully researched and resourced plan before embarking on the work of the ministry.** While the disciples worried about how to pay for it, Jesus instructs everyone to sit down. To be still. To wait. To be present. To rest. Those who sat down were nourished by the meal that Jesus stirred up in the kitchen of possibilities.

Of all the miracle stories of Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand is the only one common to all four gospels. John's telling has a significant difference. Jesus receives the bread and gives thanks for it, but this account omits his breaking of the bread. Even without that detail this narrative has overtones of the Lord's supper we will celebrate today. Why this omission? Because John wants us to concentrate not on brokenness but on *unbrokenness*. An unbroken Christ takes the resources from an uncounted person (women and children did not count in the 5000) and uses them to demonstrate the abundance of God's creation. This story does not encourage us to sit and wait for Jesus to wave a magic wand to feed the hungry without any participation from us. It invites us to bring what we have, place it in God's hands, and to trust that what we have is more than enough. It's a call to notice the need we aren't expected to fill and fill it anyway because that's what love looks like. It's a compulsion to be the agents of God's restoration and abundance manifested in the world.

An unbroken Christ would have us declare that enough is enough to systems that generate, perpetuate, and profit from scarcity. Enough is enough to billionaires racing themselves for a personal joy ride into space when world poverty is on the rise during a continuing global pandemic. Enough is enough to inequity. Enough is enough to racism and racial violence. Enough is enough to the unjust systems of this world.

But the unbroken Christ also warned us not to avoid the log in our own eyes. Enough is enough to the church that prioritizes the beauty of her buildings, or the history of them, over the needs of her community. Enough is enough to the church that functions with the same

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scarcity mindset as the rest of the world while proclaiming to serve God. The unbroken Jesus who saw the crowd, who saw the little children, who saw the widow, the marginalized and the oppressed, and declares that enough is enough of this broken world because God's enough is more than enough. Amen

Hymn Lord, we have come at your own invitation (tune *Epiphany* MP 65 / R&S 183ii)

Lord, we have come at your own invitation,
Chosen by you, to be counted your friends;
Yours is the strength that sustains dedication,
Ours a commitment we know never ends.

When, at your table, each time of returning,
Vows are renewed and our courage restored:
May we increasingly glory in learning
All that it means to accept you as Lord.

Here, at your table, confirm our intention,
Give it your seal of forgiveness and grace;
Teach us to serve, without pride or
pretension,
Lord, in your Kingdom, whatever our place.

So, in the world, where each duty assigned us
Gives us the chance to create or destroy,
Help us to make those decision that bind us,
Lord, to yourself, in obedience and joy.

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Lord's Supper

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

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.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.

You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.

You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations, and the gathered wisdom of many years.

You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up in difficult times where there was little peace.

He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.

He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.

He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.

For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.

And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.

You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,

to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

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This is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Most gracious God, we thank you for what you have given us.
You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.
Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living
may be part of the life of your kingdom,
and that our love may be your love
reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Holy God, bless our lives, sanctify us, and in your way, grant us our hearts desire.
Anoint us with your grace, that what we desire is also what you desire.
Help us to understand that our hearts' true desire is the love of you.
May the love of Christ urge us on, may we walk by faith.
Thank you, God, for all our blessings.
Holy God, bless those who govern –
Bless the leaders of nations, countries, towns, and cities.
And those who lead in various ways – social, political, and religious –
Bless us all. Fill the hearts of all with your wisdom.
Guide us in the way of justice and integrity for all. Guide us to walk by faith.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy God, bless those who fight for justice
for the planet and environment, for freedom and equality,
for a free press and the right to demonstrate
and we bring to mind places where injustice still reigns...
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy God, tend to those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit.
Tend to the tired, the dying, the poor and the hungry.
Help us to follow the love of Christ, a love which urges us on.
Help us to seek and serve Christ in others, bringing forth a new creation.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy God, we ask all this in the name of Christ, our redeemer.
Holy God, we ask all this by the Holy Spirit who activates your love in us.
Holy God we ask all this that your love may be like seed scattered—
manifesting in small and unexpected ways—the greatness of You.
May your love take root in our lives, and may we walk in faith. **Amen.**

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The Lord's Prayer

Hymn We sing a love (tune *Woodlands* MP 631/R&S 740)

We sing a love that sets all people free,
that blows like wind, that burns like scorching flame,
enfolds the earth, springs up like water clear:
come, living love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love that seeks another's good,
that longs to serve and not to count the cost,
a love that, yielding, finds itself made new:
come, caring love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love, unflinching, unafraid
to be itself, despite another's wrath,
a love that stands alone and undismayed:
come, strengthening love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a love that, wandering, will not rest
until it finds its way, its home, its source,
through joy and sadness pressing on refreshed:
come, pilgrim love, live in our hearts today.

We sing a burning, fiery, Holy Ghost
that seeks out shades of ancient bitterness,
transfiguring these, as Christ in every heart:
come, joyful love, live in our hearts today.

June Boyce-Tillman © 1993, Stainer & Bell Ltd.

Blessing

Just as God's Word was sent into the world to heal and redeem,
so God sends you into the world this day to be light and love, healing and hope.
Go now to be light for the world!
And may the grace and peace of God the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer
be with us today and remain with us always. Amen

The Bridgwater Drive Church sung Blessing.

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