

A Shared Meal While Apart

22nd April 2020

To my Noranda Uniting family,

While we are separated from one another, we've been able to stay connected through phone calls and emails: to encourage and support each other, and to keep each other sane in what are very strange and confusing times. During this time, we've been able to experience worship in one way or another, whether that be through online or streamed worship, or through watching *Songs of Praise*, or by simply spending time with God in quiet reading, reflection, and prayer.

However, one thing that was an essential part of our community together was in our eating and drinking together. Every community celebrates with food and drink and that's no less true for us: having a cuppa together after church, celebrating over birthday cakes, joining together for soup Sundays, cooking and catering for Toddler Jam and funerals and other events, and most importantly when we gather together to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion.

In fact, all through the bible, we see the importance of people eating and drinking together. A colleague of mine once described Luke's gospel as one long progressive dinner. There are even some biblical scholars who suggest that the primary purpose of the burnt offerings in the temple were an attempt to share a meal with God.

In our story for this coming Sunday (Luke 24:13-35), we see that Jesus isn't revealed through all the wise words spoken on the road, but through breaking bread together. It's only when that happens, the wise words start to make sense. In the same way, it's only when we put those words of community, of love, of hope, of reconciliation, into action that those words start to make sense. And often, the best and easiest way to put words of community and reconciliation into action is through breaking bread together.

So, for this coming Sunday, I would like to propose that we have a shared meal together, that we break bread together, from our own homes. I would like to invite us to join together in our own homes this Sunday for lunch at 12:00 noon, so that we can know that we "break bread together" while apart.

I have included a prayer for us to say before the meal, to remind us of what we're doing and to invite God into our meal. I encourage you, after the meal, to say a prayer of thanks and to ask God to be with those whom you can't be with at this time. If you wish, you might like to light a candle or add something to the table

that adds a sense of sacredness to the meal for you. If possible, it would be great to take a photo so that we can share these with each other to remind ourselves of what it means to be part of a community.

With love and hope,
your minister,
your brother in Christ,

Ivan

A Prayer Before the Meal

Dear God,
we know that you are here with us in this place,
but we know that you are also with the other members of our community,
just as you have been and will be with all people in all times and places.
Together with all faithful people from all times and places,
we say together the prayer Jesus taught us:

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.

As we break bread today with our brothers and sisters,
even though we are spread out in different places,
we ask that you bless this meal and bless all of us who partake of it,
that through the simple things of food and drink,
you may be made known to us: that we might know the risen Christ
just as those disciples in Emmaus did so many years ago
when you broke bread with them.

Unite us in faith through this meal;
remind us that although we are apart,
we are still one people under you:
blessed and held by you for the glory of God.
Enable us to proclaim God's glory in everything we do.

In the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.