

**"Fed by the Bread of Life"**  
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Dear Friends,

The theme for this service is "Fed by the Bread of Life". It was suggested by the many news reports about poverty and hunger not only in far off places in our world, but also on our own doorsteps and by reflection on the work that many Christians are engaged in as volunteers with and supporters of food banks.

Please feel free to 'customize' your service to your own congregation... e.g. ... The hymns are only suggestions - if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, feel free to use those. On page 3, there is a participatory reflection, on contributing to the 'Great Feast'. You will need to prepare members of the congregation to bring forward food items to a table (or box) labelled Food Bank, and to say a few words, as printed or as they wish. Others might like to have put food there already - to be sent to your local food bank afterwards, of course! You will also need to prepare for the prayers of intercession, to express current concerns. This is *your congregation's* service of worship to God, so make it as individual as you think appropriate!

I have suggested that you use 2 leaders and 4 readers, plus members of the congregation, but you can adjust this too.

*Chris Odell (Sheasby)*

## “Fed by the Bread of Life”

**Welcome:** Welcome to our service this morning, in which we will be thinking about what it means to be ‘Fed by the Bread of Life’. We prepare ourselves for worship by singing our first hymn....

**HYMN:** - There’s a quiet understanding.... *StF 36; MP 678* **OR** Jesus, stand among us.... *H&P 530*

**Call to Worship: Leader 1** (*from Isaiah 55, paraphrased*)

The Lord says, "Come, everyone who is thirsty - here is water! Come, everyone who is hungry – here is bread. Why spend time and money on what does not satisfy? Listen to me and do what I say and you will enjoy the best food of all."

In our worship today, let us seek God’s word for us, and offer him our thanks and praise for all his many life-sustaining gifts to us.

**HYMN:** – Seek ye first the Kingdom of God....*StF 352; H&P 138; MP 590.*

**Introduction to the theme of the service: Leader 1**

We all experience different kinds of hunger. We ourselves may know only the dull pangs of physical hunger that come from a meal missed or delayed. But there are many people who have to live every day with the pain, anxiety and weakness of long term hunger for food. As human beings we have other hungers, too; we hunger for love, for meaning in our lives, for happiness, for peace, for beauty, and many more. The Bible tells us that God can meet all our hungers – hungers of both body and soul. As our Creator, God cares and provides for us. As our Saviour, God shows us his love and offers us forgiveness and a rich and meaningful life. As the Spirit, God feeds us with togetherness, peace and joy, equipping us to share his love with others.

**Prayer of Adoration: Leader 2**

Response – For the way you love and feed us: **Thank you, thank you, Lord.**

Loving Creator God, we praise you for your generosity to humankind:

You made this world to be our home, filling it with all we need for life;

You fed your wandering people in the desert with manna from heaven,

Satisfying their thirst with living water as you led them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Like a good shepherd tending his sheep, you care for our needs.

For the way you love and feed us: **Thank you, thank you, Lord.**

Loving Saviour, we praise you for coming to live among us as the Bread of Life:

For sharing with us our hunger and physical limitations

And challenging us by showing concern for the hunger of others;

For offering us real life nourished by your love and forgiveness

And inviting us to feed on you in the bread of the Eucharist.

For the way you love and feed us: **Thank you, thank you, Lord.**

Loving Holy Spirit, we praise you for the way you transform our everyday lives:

Bringing into our lives the joy of sharing what we have with one another;

Uniting us in love as companions at the table of the Lord;

Inspiring us to hunger and thirst for righteousness in our relationships

And satisfying us with the peace that comes from your entering our hearts and lives.

For the way you love and feed us: **Thank you, thank you, Lord.**

**Reading: Reader 1** – Psalm 107:1-9 (*can be read responsively from StF 825 or H&P 872 or the following can be reproduced in print or on the screen...*)

"Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good; his love is eternal!": Repeat these words in praise to the Lord, all you whom he has saved.

**He has rescued you from your enemies and has brought you back from foreign countries, from east and west, from north and south.**

Some wandered in the trackless desert and could not find their way to a city to live in.

**They were hungry and thirsty and had given up all hope.**

Then in their trouble they called to the Lord, and he saved them from their distress.

**He led them by a straight road to a city where they could live.**

They must thank the Lord for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

**He satisfies those who are thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.**

**"Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good; his love is eternal!"**

**Comment: Leader 1** The writer of that psalm tells us that if we listen to what our Creator God wants for us, if we seek to live as he wants us to live, then our thirst will be satisfied, our hunger assuaged. But we cannot deny that something has gone wrong with creation. God's loving plans for us have not come to fruition – too often hunger stalks the lands....

**Poem: Reader 2** – 'Hunger' by Robert Laurence Binyon

I come among the peoples like a shadow.

I sit down by each man's side.

None sees me, but they look on one another,  
and know that I am there.

My silence is like the silence of the tide  
that buries the playground of children;  
like the deepening of frost in the slow night,  
when birds are dead in the morning.

Armies trample, invade, destroy,  
with guns roaring from earth and air.

I am more terrible than armies,

I am more feared than the cannon.

Kings and chancellors give commands;

I give no command to any;

but I am listened to more than kings  
and more than passionate orators.

I unswear words, and undo deeds.

Naked things know me.

I am first and last to be felt of the living.

I am Hunger.

**Old Testament Reading: Reader 3** – Job 24: 1-11 (GNB)

**Prayer of Confession: Leader 2**

Creator God,

We, like Job, long for a day of justice for the poor and needy.

But we sadly confess to you that, too often, we are the people who benefit

From powerful systems and governments

Who 'prevent the poor from getting their rights

And force the needy to run and hide'.

Forgive us, Lord, for not doing all we can

To support organisations working for change,

With our money, words or prayers.

Forgive us our selfishness in seeing only the price of what we want

When we shop for food and goods

And not the cost to those who have produced it

Or the cost to our environment.

Forgive us that we have made this world a hungrier place.

Help us to change in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life,

Who came to offer forgiveness and a new start. **Amen.**

**HYMN:** God forgave my sin in Jesus' Name....*StF 424; MP 181*

**Comment:** *Leader 1* – In our next reading, we see Jesus feeling a great sympathy for those who have heard him come to preach, but are growing hungry as the day goes on. His sympathy turns to action, as he blesses the gift of food from the boy, and is able to provide food for all...

**New Testament Reading 1:** *Reader 1* - John 6: 1-14

**Reflection/ participation:** *Leader 1*

At the end of a service of Holy Communion, we often pray 'We thank you, lord, that you have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all people'. Every Holy Communion and, indeed, every meal should be for us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet shared with all. Perhaps that miraculous picnic of the 5,000 was such a foretaste. But the boy had to offer his loaves and fish. And the meal had to be shared. We have to play our part in offering the banquet. We need to bring food to be shared with those who have none. We need to make our offering of money for the work of Christ's body, the Church. What will you bring for the great feast?

**Offerings:** *Members of the congregation bring out items to the food bank table, with these or similar words:*

1. I bring rice as a staple food to share at the banquet.
2. I bring water, so no-one will thirst.
3. I bring fruit and vegetables, necessities for health.
4. I bring meat that children might grow strong.
5. I bring tea for cheer and chat.
6. I bring sugar for energy and sweetness.

**Leader 1:** Your offering of money will now be collected...

**Offering Prayer:** *Leader 2*

Lord, we bring to you our offerings of food and money, asking that you will bless them and us to be used to feed those hungry for food and love in your needy world. In Jesus Name. **Amen.**

**Comment:** *Leader 1*

The crowds were amazed by the way that Jesus fed the Five Thousand. But Jesus tells them that he has much more to offer than the filling of empty stomachs. He can fill empty lives as well....

**Reading:** *Reader 2* - John 6: 25-27, 34-35

**HYMN:** Jesus the Lord said 'I am the Bread....' *StF 252; H&P 137; MP 384.*

**Reading and Reflection:** *Reader 3* – Two verses from a well known parable in Matthew 25: "The righteous will then answer The Son of Man, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these members of my family, you did it for me!'"

Five Facts about food banks:

Aside from accepting donations such as baked beans and soup, what else is there to know about the organisations that provide emergency relief to people in crisis? Food bank use has increased at least 13% in the last year. Around 14 million people in the UK are living in poverty and Universal Credit has had a huge impact on the lives of people with a low-income. So apart from the fact that UK food banks need more support than ever, here are five things to know about food banks:

**1) Food banks provide more than just food** - many food banks provide essentials such as toiletries, nappies and pet food.

**2) Poverty affects your health** - both mental and physical health are closely associated with poverty - more than a quarter of adults in the poorest fifth of the population experience depression and anxiety.

**3) Food banks offer other important services** - for example, giving out information on finding emergency financial advice, welfare support, community groups, suggestions for other charities and support services and budget cookery courses. Sadly, social isolation often goes hand in hand with food poverty, and a warm welcome and non-judgemental conversation with a food bank volunteer can go a long way for somebody who is facing a crisis.

**4) Food bank use is the last resort for most people** - people accepting help from a food bank often feel it is 'shameful' and 'embarrassing'. They have been driven to the food bank after exhausting all other possible avenues of support.

**5) It's really easy to support your local food bank** - Supporting food banks is therefore a straightforward way to positively impact your local community and help the most vulnerable people in society. You could make a real difference.

**Prayer: Leader 2** A Food bank prayer written by volunteers at the Norwich Food bank:  
God of faithfulness, Your generous love supplies us with all that we need. We know that all we have is yours. We celebrate the work that you have done in (*your region*) through the Food bank by means of the generous support of many people.  
Through the Food bank we are able to offer food to the hungry, a drink to the thirsty and compassion to the strangers in our communities.  
Accept our offering of worship and service. May your Spirit empower us to be your hands and feet as we continue to serve those in crisis. We pray that you bless all those who give and receive. Increase the capacity of the Food bank; help the food to get to those who need it most. **Amen**

**HYMN:** There's a spirit in the air....*StF 398; H&P 326.*

**Comment: Leader 1** – The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost emboldened the disciples so that they could share the Good News of Jesus the Bread of Life, with a hungry world. It also bound them together in love, sharing in worship and sharing food and all they had together.

**Reading: Reader 1** – Acts 2: 41-47 starting 'Many believed Peter's message and were baptized,'

**Prayers of Intercession: Leader 2** - In our prayers, please join in with the response –  
Loving God, feed us: **feed us with the bread of eternal life.**

Let us pray for the hungry:

For those who hunger after peace and freedom; *for.....*

For those who hunger after food and medicine, shelter and education; *for.....*

Loving God, feed us: **feed us with the bread of eternal life.**

Let us pray for the hungry:

For those who hunger after health and wholeness; *for.....*

For those who hunger after friendship and company; *for.....*

Loving God, feed us: **feed us with the bread of eternal life.**

Let us pray for the hungry:

For those who hunger after forgiveness, peace and love;

For those who hunger for meaning and purpose and faith.

We pray for the work of this church here in .....

That God's Spirit might help us to share the Bread of Life with those among whom we live.

Loving God, feed us: **feed us with the bread of eternal life.**

**The Lord's Prayer: Leader 2** – Let us pray for daily bread for ourselves and all the world, as we pray together in the way Jesus has taught us, 'Our Father....

**HYMN:** Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah....*StF 465; H&P 437; MP 201.*

**Dismissal: Leader 1**

Let us go out into the world to share the Good News of Jesus, the Bread of Life,  
Ready to feed those who are hungry in body or soul, heart or mind. **Amen.**