

**Opening Hymn TiS 641 This is my will, my one command**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Beloved, we are called to love one another, because love is from God.

**God's love is poured in us from our birth.**

We are called to extend the love of God to all people.

**God's love is taught to us through the witness of God's faithful people.**

We are called to proclaim God's love in all that we say and do.

**In all creation, in all our relationships, may God's love be made known. Amen.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Jesus, when you call us friends and ask us to love one another,  
you invite us to participate in God's restorative purpose.

We enter this time of worship glad of your invitation  
and ready to be made fit for the task. **Amen**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

*"We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today  
and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging."*

**WELCOME**

**HYMN TiS 106 Now thank we all our God**

**A Mother's Day Prayer**

Dear God,

We thank you for mothers.

We thank you for all those who care for us  
in quiet, often unrecognised ways;  
we thank you for all those who care for others  
in patience and love.

We are sorry for those times when we have failed  
to care for others  
and pray that you will teach us  
to care as you do  
and that you will hold all mothers and care-givers  
in the light of your presence  
and guide them to you.  
Amen.

**Psalm 98 (shared responsively)**

<sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

**His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.**

<sup>2</sup> The LORD has made known his victory;

**he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.**

<sup>3</sup> He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness  
to the house of Israel.

**All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.**

<sup>4</sup> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;  
**break forth into joyous song and sing praises.**

<sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,  
**with the lyre and the sound of melody.**

<sup>6</sup> With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
**make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.**

<sup>7</sup> Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
**the world and those who live in it.**

<sup>8</sup> Let the floods clap their hands;  
**let the hills sing together for joy <sup>9</sup> at the presence of the LORD,**  
for he is coming to judge the earth.

**He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with equity.**

## **AN EARLY WORD**

### **HYMN TiS 164 The great love of God**

**BIBLE READINGS:** John 15:9-17  
1 John 5:1-6

### **REFLECTION**

“Abide” is not a word we use much these days. We do not often ask people, “Where do you abide?” It is probable you will come across the word more times while reading the Gospel of John than you ever will in daily conversation. In fact, if you read through just the first eleven verses of John 15 in the NRSV, you will find the word eleven times.

This sheer repetition reminds us of its importance as a theme in John’s Gospel. It revisits an idea that emerges in the Prologue to the Gospel of John; John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and lived among us.

Today’s passage is part of the long dialogue Jesus shares with the disciples after he has washed their feet and before he is handed over to the authorities to be crucified. He is trying to prepare them for his absence and instruct them in how to continue to live his ministry, even when they can no longer see him. “Abide in my love,” he says. “Make my love the house, the tent, the shelter in which you dwell and move around in,” he seems to say.

The word translated as “abide” can also be translated as “remain,” or “stay,” and after the year we have just had, we are very familiar with those words. After a year of lockdowns, isolation, and physical distancing, we know what it means to remain, to shelter in one place, to stay. We have become intimately familiar with the inside of our own homes and maybe with the interior of our own minds in ways we likely haven’t before. And we’ve had time to think about what kind of place we want to shelter in. Priorities shifted or became clearer, which prompted changes both small and large. Many people moved in the past year; some left bustling, crowded cities in search of a quieter, slower pace of life and a little more space. Some moved closer to family or closer to wherever feels like “home,” when the need for connection and a support network became impossible to ignore. And we have had plenty of time to think about what kind of home we want and need to abide in. Maybe you’ve done some painting or renovating or decluttering to make your home more comfortable, or created an office space or a quiet place in which to work or teach or meditate.

Whatever our circumstances, this past year has given us a deeper understanding of the word “abide” in the Gospel of John. We have become uniquely aware of the importance of home, of where we dwell, and of how we live within it. This past year, home has made all the difference, for better or for worse.

To listen to Jesus' words in this passage with 2021 ears is to be reminded that our homes reflect our priorities, and our home base affects how we live our lives. Jesus' invitation to abide in his love becomes all the more striking. We can imagine Jesus elaborating, "Let my love be the foundation under your feet, let my love permeate the walls that shelter you, and let my love form the roof arching over your head." Jesus' encouragement is not only to rest in God's love but also to live our lives in such a way that reflects the love that permeates our home - to live in such a way that when others see our interactions, it's clear that love is our foundation.

And yet just as building or making a home takes time, so does learning to let love be our home base. The disciples hid away in a locked room for a while before they ventured out to share the good news and carry on Jesus' ministry - before they realized abiding in Jesus' love wasn't so much about the physical space they inhabited or his physical presence with him as it was about the way they lived among others.

For us too, this passage can serve to remind us that whether home has been a refuge and comfort in the past year or a place we couldn't wait to leave, we also have a home in the love of God. It's a home we carry with us, like a tent, and it shows when we remember God's love for us and when we treat others as God's beloved.

It shows when we create a loving space to really listen to someone else, to be present with them in their need or struggle. That space is a home built by love.

It shows when we contribute toward building a shelter for those without homes. That effort creates a space for love to dwell.

It shows in small kindnesses between strangers and friends alike. It shows when we respond graciously to someone who disagrees with us. It shows in all the ways, large and small, that we allow the love of God to guide us.

This home is recognisable because, though it may involve sacrifice, it is also permeated with joy. As Jesus says to the disciples, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." Jesus knows that there is fullness of life to be found in abiding in love and that though his disciples' lives may be marked by hardship, all who abide in God's love experience the deep joy of dwelling there.

So just as we have learned to stay and to remain this year, may we also learn to abide: to abide in God's ever-present love, a gracious and hospitable dwelling, permeated with joy. Amen.

## **PRAYER**

How deeply you have loved us, Jesus;  
how willingly you stepped into our experience,  
how completely you empathised with all that we endure.

**Teach us to love as you have loved us.**

How sacrificially you have loved us, Jesus;  
how completely you gave yourself for us,  
how courageously you suffered for our sakes.

**Teach us to love as you have loved us.**

How restoratively you have loved us, Jesus;  
how generously you share your life,  
how extravagantly you make yourself available to us.

**Teach us to love as you have loved us.**

**We praise you for your love  
which is given so freely and so unconditionally.  
And we thank you for believing  
that we could learn to offer such love to each other.  
Amen.**

**HYMN TiS 588 In heavenly love abiding**

## **DEDICATION OF OFFERING**

We pray your blessing, O God, on these gifts - may they be used to bear fruit as the gospel is proclaimed far and near. We pray your blessing on us, that our lives may be authentic signs of Jesus' love and visible expressions of his joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

We pray that we might fully understand  
what it means to be friends with you, living Christ,  
that we will look with compassion on those grieving and in trouble,  
that we will stand up for justice and righteousness,  
that we will treat those who suffer with kindness,  
that we will work to restore relationships that have been broken,  
and be bearers of good news to those who have lost hope.  
We pray that we will open the arms of friendship  
to those who are lonely and lift up those who have been down-trodden and abused.  
Let us care for our community and tend the earth.  
We pray that the values that you have shown and taught us  
will be the values by which we live.  
May it be so.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:  
*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 for ever. Amen.*

## **HYMN TiS 587 Fold to your heart your sister and your brother**

## **BENEDICTION**

Friends you have been chosen to go into this world with the message of God's love.  
Bear fruit of hope and joy, peace and justice, with all that you meet.  
May God's peace be with you all. **Amen**