



**Order of Service**  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**TiS 220** This, this is the God we adore

**Call to worship**

Faith gives substance to our hopes.

**In faith we gather in this time and place, trusting that God is with us.**

Faith makes us certain of realities we do not see,

**and gives us courage to live into the unknown.**

Let us worship God in spirit and truth.

**God be with us, so that we will trust you on our journey.**

**Opening Prayer**

Almighty God,

You sent Your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church.

Open our hearts to the riches of Your grace,

that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love, joy, and peace.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of this region.

**Welcome**

**TiS 154 Great is your faithfulness**

**Prayer of Confession**

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the sure foundation of our faith,  
and when our faith is weak

it is because we are not trusting your love and guidance but trying to go it alone.

Forgive us when we wander from your paths

and find ourselves lost and troubled or doing foolish things.

Keep us safe in your love

and so let our faith be sure and steadfast whatever we may have to face in life.

Help us to be more understanding and forgiving of others when we are hurt.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for your faithfulness to us, and for your willingness to forgive.

Give us the trust to have faith in you, the faith to hope in you, and the assurance you will surround us with the grace, hope, and wonder shared with us through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**Words of affirmation**

There is nothing to fear. God's hope is more tenacious than our despair; God's joy is more resilient than our grief; God's love is more compelling than our hate.

**By grace, we are gathered to God. By faith, we rest in God's promises of forgiveness and restoration.**

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**Offering and Dedication**



## Announcements

### Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession

Loving Lord and Father of all, we bring You now  
our thanks and praise for all You have given us  
and blessed our lives with.

Give us grace to accept Your gifts  
and help us to share them unselfishly, wherever we see need.

Dear Lord and Father of all  
we thank You for Your still small voice of calm  
that reaches out to us through the strains and stresses of life,  
and in that calm now we bring You our prayers for others and for our world.  
Heavenly Father teach us to pray with love and understanding and grace.  
Help us to see and to hear the needs that are all around us.  
Teach us, O God, to care.

There are those who are despised or avoided  
because they are troublesome or difficult, or because they are just different.  
There are those we just do not like,  
and those we think are somehow not worthy of our time.  
There are those we perceive as a threat to our way of life,  
and those whose needs are all too visible.  
It all seems too much for us alone to deal with.  
Yet we could help them if we cared: teach us, O God, to care.

And there are those for whom we do care, those we worry about and fear for,  
our own families and friends in illness, or troubles, or in danger.  
Father, our care for them is not in doubt,  
but teach us what we might do to help them more and to bring them comfort and strength.

In all the needs of the world, Lord, you are there.  
Thank you for your faithful presence.  
Amen.

### AN EARLY WORD

**TiS 619** Have faith in God my heart

**Bible Readings:** Luke 12:32-40 Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

### Reflection

There is a lot about the letter to the Hebrews that we don't know. We don't know who wrote it, nor exactly who it was written to, although the context suggests the recipients were a group of Jewish Christians. While some parts of Hebrews are not so well known, many will recognise the content of chapter 11. In these verses we are presented with a remarkable gathering of Old Testament giants of the faith whose stories we know and who continue to inspire.

Faith – the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.  
And by faith – by faith these members of what we might call the Hall of Faith went forward with confidence in God whose promises are faithful.

Why did the Hebrews author write this letter? It would appear from the previous chapter that that the recipients of the letter were dealing with difficult circumstances and uncertain times. They were under the threat of persecution and perhaps even death, probably due to their relationship with Jesus, and the personal costliness of following



Jesus was turning people away from the church. So the author carefully reminds them of these ancient Hebrews whose stories they would have known so well, and from whom they might draw encouragement and confidence.

The verses we heard today focus particularly on Abraham, who was instructed to gather his family and belongings and go into an unknown land. And he went. He was old, he was childless, he was vulnerable, he was uncertain. – but he went and eventually experienced the fulfilment of God's promises. It's one of many great stories of faith to offer a bunch of Jewish Christians who are fearing for their lives. The author uses the story of Abraham and others to urge people to hang on to their faith in God. He reminds them that Abraham's faith was not some wishful thinking about the future. It was a confidence in God's future upon which he acted in the present. Such faith was not based on the human capacity to have faith, but rather it was based on God whose promises are faithful.

There are many sermons that could be written about faith, but for me this sentence from one scholar says it all: "Faith is stepping out into the unknown with nothing to guide us but a hand just beyond our grasp."

Another person has written:

Faith is not something vague, uncertain, undefinable, or something which requires a leap of the imagination or worse, some kind of blind allegiance. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Faith is a response of trust and belief in what is reliable, truthful, certain, and real. To have faith is to believe and trust in someone or something. We believe in the power of electricity even though we can't visibly see it with the naked eye. We know we can tap into that power and use it to do things we could not do by our own human power. Faith in God works in a similar way. When God reveals himself to us he gives us the "assurance" and "conviction" that his power and presence and glory is just as real, and even more real, than our experience of the natural physical world around us. Things around us change, but God never changes. God is constant, ever true to his word, and always faithful to his promises. That is why we can have the greatest assurance of his unconditional love for us.

Does the letter to the Hebrews have any relevance for us today? I think yes.

We stand at a moment in history where we are faced with a multitude of uncertainties. Covid, cost of living, climate change, culture, scarcity of food and personnel for vital tasks, aggression and war, even conversations about a dying church. The sum total of all this and more makes us feel more vulnerable than we have for a long time. The Hebrews writer invoked the faithful characters of the past to encourage faith and steadfastness but didn't stop there. He invited his readers to look up and gaze with hope and confidence into the future, reassuring them of God's faithfulness. We are invited to do the same.

Who might we look back on from our past – those faithful people who have given us encouragement and hope on our faith journey? Remember them, and reflect on their example – but don't stay there. Lift your gaze then to the horizon, confident of God's faithfulness guiding you into the future. We may not be certain of what lies ahead, but together we step out into the unknown with nothing to guide us but a hand just beyond our grasp.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

**We believe in God: who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.**

**We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone.**

**Thanks be to God.**

**TiS 526 Lord Jesus Christ**



## THE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

### GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

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.**

When there was only the emptiness of chaos, God of our hearts,  
you dared to imagine that from things unseen might come wonders to behold:

stars too many to count in the night,  
flowers varied in colours and shapes,  
creatures that roamed, flew, swam.

You spoke the Word which brought all this into being  
for those who are created in your image of hope and love,

but we chose to trust temptation's lies  
and to hope in the emptiness of death.

In dreams, with words, with love, women and men continued  
to call us back to you, who would fill us with grace,

but we always turned away, trusting power, hate, fear, injustice instead.

Then, you chose to become one of us,  
so we might see hope walking among us,  
so we might taste grace in fish and bread,  
so we might know love that never ends.

With those who have faith which astounds us,  
with those who long to see your beloved Community,  
we join our voices in praise and wonder:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest**

By grace, you set aside glory to become one of us, Christ of creation,  
so we might be filled with compassion we can share with others.

By faith, you told stories of servants, of prodigals, of children,  
so we could see ourselves as who God longs us to be.

By trust, you dared to let death wrap its cold arms around you,  
so we might be released into the comforting embrace of resurrection's hope.

Now you come, Holy God, pouring out your Spirit on the gifts of the bread and cup  
and on your people gathered here.

May the bread which is broken give us the strength to go and choose love, not hate;  
to share hope, not fear; to gather people together, not divide them.

May the cup of grace nourish us to be the ones  
who offer compassion without conditions, who offer justice and grace to all,  
who will love without reservation.

And when all time has come to an end, we will sit at the table in your backyard,  
feasting with our sisters and brothers under the stars we never stopped counting,  
rejoicing with them in your grace, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER



BREAKING OF THE BREAD

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks that we have been fed and renewed by Christ's life in us and we go now to share that life with others. Send us out from here equipped with the power of your Spirit to follow Jesus and to spread the message of his love and compassion to all whom we meet. Amen

**The Peace**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

**TiS 569 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer**

**Blessing**

God calls us to the edges and sends us into the unknown.  
**All we need for the journey will be provided.**  
Faith takes the little that we have  
**and with each act of love and justice we will see it is enough.**  
**Thanks be to God forever. Amen.**

**TiS 779** May the feet of God walk with you

