

WELCOME TO THE LORD'S TABLE

The Introduction

Five loaves and two fishes! 'But what are they among so many people?' asks Andrew, our patron saint. What indeed? They are the gift of a child and in the hands of Jesus they are used to feed 5,000 people!

In this miracle, Jesus is saying two important things. Firstly, no matter how small our gift, God can use it in a miraculous way! Secondly, the gifts of children are just as important as the gifts of adults.

In his day and even in our own, Jesus turns the world upside down because he values young people as individual human beings created in the image of God. 'Let the children come to me.' he says, 'Do not hinder them!'

But Jesus also sees that young people have unique gifts to share with others and in this way, they are called by God to exercise a ministry within the kirk. As the prophet Isaiah says about God's kingdom, 'A little child shall lead them.'

And so the children have read the gospel and led us in our prayers. Later on, they will bring our offerings of bread and wine to the Holy Table, confirming their place within the life of the kirk.

The Background

It's almost thirty years, since the General Assembly enabled children to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Through their baptism, they are already members of the kirk and are eligible to receive this means of grace.

Parents are the ones who discern when their children are ready to receive the Sacrament and this may happen at any time. We do not have a formal starting point nor do we specify that it should happen at a particular age.

In this we acknowledge that children are unique individuals and the development of the spiritual life takes a different shape within different people.

Some children may continue to receive the Sacrament without any formal acknowledgement.

This ceremony doesn't necessarily mark the first time a person receives the Sacrament but it's a public opportunity for children to take their rightful place at the Table and for us to reaffirm the value we place on young people through our word of welcome.

On two occasions, the children and their parents participated in workshops to explore the Sacrament and the life of the church. They baked bread and they had a feast of bread with favourite fillings – egg, ham and jam! And we thought about the words of Jesus, 'I am the Bread of Life.'

The Welcome

This morning, we are going to welcome five children to the Lord's Table. It has been great fun working with them and their parents and it's a great delight to welcome them here today.

The children are named individually, come forward to the chancel and stand in a semi-circle. The congregation is invited to stand.

Through our baptism, we all belong to the people of God. We are part of his family, his flock, his church. In love, God calls us here. In love, Jesus shows us the way. In love, the Holy Spirit inspires us all.

We are on a journey together sharing the story of God's love for the world. We celebrate this in word and song. We feed on Jesus in bread and wine. We make him known to others through our life and love.

As the people of God in this place, we value everyone. We offer our gifts and we receive the gifts of others as we play our part in the life of the church in this corner of Scotland and beyond.

A, B, C, D, E we welcome you in the name of Jesus to sit at Table with us, to share the bread and to drink the wine that we may enjoy the life of Jesus and give life to our world.

Aaronic Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.

The Presentation of Certificates

In order to confirm the sincerity of our welcome, we give you a certificate as a memento of this event. May God bless you in the breaking of the bread at this Holy Table.

Certificates are given and hands are shaken. The congregation is invited to sit down.

Act of Commitment

In welcoming **A, B, C, D, E** to the Lord's Table, we reaffirm our commitment to nurture one another in the faith. We say the 'Act of Commitment' together.

M There is one body and one spirit.

C **There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.**

M There is one God and Father of all.

C **God is above all and through all and in all.**

All **In the faith of the risen Christ,
we celebrate the unity
which is ours through our baptism
and we commit ourselves
to nurture one another in the faith,
to remember one another in prayer
and to encourage one another
to live together in joy, love and peace,
now and for aye.**

Prayers for Others

Let us pray

Lord,
enfold
A, B, C, D, E
in Your love
and inspire them
to continue their journey with You.

Be with their parents,
their family,
their friends,
their kirk
and all those who share with them
the gifts of Your Holy Spirit –
joy, love and peace.

Enable us to walk with You
to the lonely, dark corners of the earth
where people suffer
because of violence,
warfare,
illness
and death
and bring comfort
and healing
and new life.

In silence,
we remember with thanksgiving
the lives of those who have died
especially those most dear to us.

Go before us, O Lord, in all our doing
with Thy most gracious favour

and further us with Thy continual help;
that in all our works,
begun, continued and ended in Thee,
we may glorify Thy holy name
and finally by Thy mercy
obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord – Amen

A hymn is sung and the offering uplifted. The Sacrament follows in which the children carry in the elements with the elders during the Great Entry. After the Sacrament, the 'Welcome to the Lord's Table concludes:

The Candle Ceremony

A, B, C, D, E are invited to come forward with their mothers.

The Introduction

As you can see, we have the Paschal Candle in church today reminding us that Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the World.' We also have these smaller candles which have been made out of the left-over candles from Christmas – the purple candles in the Advent Ring and the red candles in the windows. The resultant colour is a reddish purple! The old has been turned into something new.

Invite the Session Clerk to distribute the candles.

In welcoming you to the Lord's Table this morning, the older generation passes on the faith to a new generation. Together, we share the light of Christ in all our endeavours.

The Session Clerk lights a taper from the Paschal Candle and passes it onto the first mother who lights her child's candle and passes the taper on to the next mother etc. Receive the light of Christ which has been passed down the generations from the old to the new.

Brighten up the world with joy, love and peace that everyone may know that Christ is alive today and forevermore.

And strengthened by the Bread of Life and the wine that gladdens our hearts,
may God go with you!

A hymn is sung.

The Benediction

God has touched us with his grace
and nourished us at his table.
As the people of God,
grow in his friendship.
Take the light of his love
out into the world
that peace may be your gift
and joy fill your hearts.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and dwell within your hearts
this day and for evermore – Amen

*The elements are removed from the Holy Table and the children and their mothers
leave the kirk carrying the lighted candles to meet the people at the kirk door.*