



KAURIHOHORE / KAMO
CO-OPERATING PARISH

kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz

kaurichurch@gmail.com

(09) 946 0813

59 Apotu Road, Kauri Hohore



Sunday 8 February 2026 – Epiphany 5

Our Service today is led by Jane Garrick and Cobus Viljoen,
two of our Lay Preachers.

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Justice: we hope for a better world for all and work together to be part of making that happen.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Community time during the service is a good opportunity to ask for prayers for yourself or others.

**After the service you are invited to share in morning tea
either in the kitchen or on the deck.**

If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a visit from one of our **Pastoral Partners Team**, please speak to the service leader.

*You are invited to stand if you are able,
for the hymns and the offering prayer.*

*You are invited to share in reading aloud the responses in **Bold Type**.*

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning and welcome. Our focus this morning as we continue through the season of Epiphany is on the Bible, the inerrant and eternal Word of God. The Bible has been described as a Light, a Mirror, a Sword, Bread, a Seed, a Fire, a Rock, a Map, Water, a Love Letter, a Compass, our Teacher, a Shelter, a Gift, a Song, a Lamp, a Treasure, a Path, a Key, a Guide, a Friend, a Door.... and much more! Someone once said, "The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation" and Jesus Himself said in Matthew chapter 4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." ... May you be encouraged in your journey of faith this morning.

Call to Worship: The Word of God

Come, people of God, and hear the voice of the Lord.

We come with open hearts to receive His truth.

God's Word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

It guides our steps and shapes our lives.

The Word of the Lord stands forever—unchanging, living, and active.

We will treasure it, proclaim it, and walk in its ways.

Let us worship the God who speaks life through His Word.

With joy and reverence, we lift our praise to Him!

Opening Prayer

God of truth and light,
You call us not only to worship, but to live what we proclaim. As we gather before you, open our hearts to your wisdom and our lives to your transforming grace. Draw us in Your love and teach us, that we may grow in faith and truly reflect Your light in the world. May our worship be pleasing in Your sight. **Amen.**

Hymn HFTC 24: O Worship the King

(Lyrics: Robert Grant, Tune: Hanover)

The Bible – God’s Love Letter

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

Hymn HFTC 217: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

(Lyrics: C Wesley, Tune: Blaenwern)

Prayer

**Lord, open our hearts and minds
By the power of the Holy Spirit
That, as the Scriptures are read
And Your Word proclaimed,
We may hear with joy what you have to say to us today.
Amen**

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 58:1- 9a

Matthew 5: 13-20

Reflection

Introduction

There is a problem with interpreting the Bible, and that is that whatever you look for, you find.

The reason for this is very simple: The Bible is Truth. Not facts, but truth. It is fact that we are all here in church, today the Feb 8th 2026. Come back tomorrow, and it will no longer be the 8th, and neither will we all be here. The fact expired.

Truth, on the other hand, runs more along the lines of cause and effect. If I place a metal spoon onto a hot stove, and pick it up, my hand will burn. Come back tomorrow, my hand will still burn.

Heat causes burn.

We can change the conditions, such that this truth is superseded by a more fundamental truth.

If the plate is off, my hand won't burn. The truth of nothing for nothing. In like manner, the Bible sets out cause and effect under certain conditions.

Sin, and you die fast.

Refrain from sin, and you die slow, due to Adam.

However we have accepted Jesus, and his teachings, the old truth of sin and death is superseded by another truth, the forgiveness of sins.

So our question changes. If we accept Christ, the question becomes: How does Jesus interpret the Bible?

Identifying the Parts.

When Christ rose from the dead, what was the first action he undertook? Remember the Road to Emmaus? Luke 24:1-25

“And beginning in Moses and the prophets, He explained things concerning himself.”

How did Christ read the Bible? He saw Himself in it, and told others about himself.

So then, what does Christ look like?

1 Peter 2:22: ...He did no sin...
2 Corin 5:21: ...He knew no sin...
1 John 3:5: ...In Him is no sin...

Did, doing, literal.
Knew, knowledge, figurative.
And In. Contained by. Spiritual.

Identifying the Literal and Figurative

Lets apply this idea to our liturgy reading. Isaiah 58.
Share your food with the hungry.
Give the wanderer shelter.
Clothe the naked.

It's literal meaning is straightforward. Take some of your food and give it to someone who does not have.
Now, how does one figuratively share food?
First, we need to understand what God means when He says "Food".

Remember God giving Man their diet in the garden?

Genesis 1:29

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

So food for people means plants or trees whose fruit has seed in it.
What does God mean when He says "Seed"?

Remember the third day?

Genesis 1:11

And God said, Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees yielding fruit whose seed is in itself, each according to its kind, upon the earth.

Seed is something that is like the thing from which the seed came.
Millions of seed varieties, from all of it we can give people to eat.

If you figuratively feed someone, you help them understand something.
So Isaiah can be interpreted as saying both:
"Give food to people who are hungry"
but also

“Give understanding to people who seek it”.

Identifying the Spiritual

So what is “In the give of food?”

The Bible highlights two archetypes of seed.

Genesis 3:15, when God curses the serpent:

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he will crush your head,
and you will crush his heel.

Two types of Seed we can give people as food to eat. Serpent seed, and Woman seed.

What is the seed of woman? Women do not have seed, men have seed. For woman to have seed she would give... a virgin birth. Care to guess who this Seed is?

So if you want to give people Woman seed, then we need to feed them something that is like Christ.

John 1:14... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...

We can give people all sorts of understandings. But if we feed them the Word of God, we feed them understanding that contains Christ.

Or, we can feed people the word of Serpent, understanding that contains the serpent. What is the word of the serpent?

Gen 3:4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

What is the seed, or word of Christ?

Gen 1:27: So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them

And again: John 20:17

...go and tell My brothers, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God

And again:

1 John 4:17: Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

What any understanding contains is very simply the exact choice made in the Garden. Do we draw our understanding from the tree of Life, or the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil?

To give serpent-based spiritual food is to teach:
Not yet are you like God, You must still do something to become like God

To give Christ-based spiritual food is to teach:
In the image of God you are made, As Christ is, so are you.

Conclusion

In plain words, what does this mean?

If you are teaching someone that makes them feel like they need to do something to become like God, you are feeding them serpent food.

If you are teaching someone that they are already like Christ, then you are feeding them Christ food.

Let's feed people Christ food. It is called the tree of Life for a very good reason

Hymn AA59: He Came Singing Love

(Lyrics and Tune: Colin Gibson)

1. He came singing Love
and he lived singing love;
he died, singing love
He arose in silence.
For the love to go on
we must make it our song;
you and I be the singers.

2. He came singing faith
and he lived singing faith;
he died, singing faith.
He arose in silence.
For the faith to go on
we must make it our song;
you and I be the singers.

3. He came singing hope
and he lived singing hope;
he died, singing hope.
He arose in silence.
For the hope to go on
we must make it our song;
you and I be the singers.

4. He came singing peace
and he lived singing peace;
he died, singing peace.
He arose in silence.
For the peace to go on
we must make it our song;
you and I be the singers.

Offering Prayer

Lord, every good thing we have comes from You.

Today, we return a portion of what You've entrusted to us.

May these gifts be used to bring hope, healing, and light to the world.

Bless the hands that give and the hearts that long to give.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Community Time

Prayers of the People

Congregation say "Lord hear our Prayer" after the words "In Your mercy"

God of light and life, You call us to follow You in faith and to shine Your love into the world. We bring before You our prayers for the Church, the world, and all in need.

For the Church:

Lord, guide Your Church to be a beacon of hope in every place.

Strengthen all who preach, teach, and serve, that Your Word may take root and bear fruit in our lives. May we be bold in love, generous in grace, and steadfast in truth.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For the World:

Creator of all, we pray for nations and leaders, that they may seek justice, peace, and the common good. Where there is conflict, bring reconciliation; where there is oppression, bring freedom; where there is despair, bring hope.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For the Suffering:

Compassionate God, draw near to all who are sick, grieving, lonely, or afraid. Surround them with Your healing presence and give them strength for each day. We remember especially those mentioned this morning ... and others known to us in silence....

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For Creation:

Lord of all creation, teach us to care for the earth as Your precious gift. Inspire us to live gently, protect the vulnerable, and work for a future where all may flourish.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

For Ourselves:

Loving God, teach us how to walk with You. Open our eyes to see You in the ordinary moments of life. Help us to answer Your call with willing hearts, trusting that You will equip us for every good work.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of glory, hear the prayers we offer this day and, in Your mercy, answer them, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn FFS 32: [God Who Sets Us On A Journey](#)

(Lyrics: Joy Dine, Tune Jillian Bray)

1. God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.
2. Exploration brings new insights,
changes, choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.
3. End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we lack –
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,

cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.

4. When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,
you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always at our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

The Blessing

May God's Word be in your heart.
May God's Word be on your lips.
May God's Word be in your touch.
May God's Word direct your feet.
On this day and all your days to come
May God's Word be the life you live.

Sung Amen

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