

Pershore Abbey Iona Service - 5pm on Sunday 28th January 2024

Agape

Welcome and Introduction: The Agape is a fellowship meal, a very ancient tradition of the Church. In this service, the sharing of oatcakes and water is led by lay people and is open to all, including all Christian traditions. It is sacramental in the sense of being a sharing of God's love and gifts, and a celebration of our time together as a worshipping community.

Gathering Song: 🎵 **God welcomes all, strangers and friends.
God's love is strong and it never ends. (x3)**

Opening Responses:

Leader: Living God, our loving parent: you cherish your creation.
With earth, air, water, fire: in our element as your children,
All: **we praise you.**

Leader: With our lips, with our lives, in all our diversity, each one made in your image,
All: **we praise you.**

Leader: Because, in Jesus, you came to share our human lives, our sorrow and joy,
All: **we praise you.**

Leader: Because your Spirit is at work today: encouraging, enabling, surprising us,
All: **we praise you.**

Leader: Poor as we are, you give us hope: salt of the earth,
All: **you give us meaning and purpose and we praise you. Amen**

Song: 🎵 (*'Welcome to the feast' sung to the tune of Hyfrydol*) (*A candle is lit.*)

- 1. Light the candles, bring your presents, let us celebrate good days,
with rejoicing and thanksgiving, for great actions give God praise.
Now's the time for jubilation, lift your voice in joyful song;
thanks for justice, Christ-like anger, friendships made through righting wrong.**
- 2. In the shining of the candles, dust shows up as in the sun,
thus revealing all our failings, power misused and work not done.
In our praying: God forgive us, Let's remember those reviled:
folk exploited, women wordless, children who have never smiled.**
- 3. Light the candle in the darkness, flames will penetrate the night;
pass the brightness to your neighbours, till the world is full of light.
Act with justice, use your anger, be on God's side, choose the least;
God, in weakness, will receive us, calling us to share their feast.**

Bible Reading: (*Acts 2 v42-47*)

Reader: In the early church, agape meals were a natural part of life as a community of believers, part of worship, a way of sharing resources and a tangible sign of the Kingdom. The wholehearted sharing of the early believers is a challenge to us. It is counter to how our society has evolved. Listen now to the Word of God.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Reader: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us,

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Prayer of confession:

Reader: Salt is good, but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?

Leader: Giving God, you blessed us with saltiness,

All: **but we became bland.**

Leader: You trusted us with your Word,

All: **but we did not keep it.**

Leader: You lit a flame in our midst,

All: **but we hid it under formality, smothered it with our fears.**

Leader: God, in your mercy:

All: **forgive us.** *(silence)*

Leader: Forgiving God, we believe that you have called us

All: **to be salt and light;**

Leader: that you offer us time and space and strength

All: **to begin again.** *(silence)*

Leader: Giving and forgiving God,

All: **we thank you. Amen**

Reader: Have salt in yourself, and be at peace with one another.

A sign of peace: *(We share the peace of Christ with each other.)*

Thanksgiving Prayer:

Leader: As we share these oatcakes, as we taste this honey, as we pour out this water, we thank you, God, for our daily bread, for the food which delights and nourishes us, and for the companionship that sustains us.

We thank you, too, for clean, cool water to quench our thirst, and for the Living Water with which you surprise and enrich, and transform our lives.

All: **Amen**

Leader: Taste and see that God is good.

Time to share refreshments: *(Please use this time to help serve the oatcakes and water, and to talk to someone you haven't spoken to for a while or not at all.)*

Time for sharing thoughts:

Song:♪ (Common Ground 103) (A candle will be passed around during this song.)

1. Put peace into each other's hands, and like a treasure hold it,
protect it like a candle-flame, with tenderness enfold it.
2. Put peace into each other's hands, with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways, in touch with God's creation.
3. Put peace into each other's hands, like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye: our life is meant for caring.
4. As at communion, shape your hands, into a waiting cradle;
The gift of Christ receive, revere, united round the table.
5. Put Christ into each other's hands, he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance, and share it like a treasure.

Prayers:

Leader: Together we gather, glad of this place of welcome in turbulent times, aware that many this night do not have a safe place to meet. Jesus, comfort and inspire us with your presence and challenge us to be a people of sharing and hospitality. (PAUSE) Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all.

Leader: Jesus, you sat at table with the betrayed and rejected of Palestine. We pray today for those who do not feel welcomed in their families or communities. (PAUSE) Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all.

Leader: Jesus, you identified with the naked and with those who had no place to lay their heads. We pray for homeless people, people who have lost jobs, possessions, familiar routines; for those whose confidence is sinking and ability to cope with adversity is exhausted. (PAUSE)

Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all.

Leader: Jesus, you belonged to a refugee family. We pray for the millions of people displaced by hunger, fear and war, and those told to flee. (PAUSE) Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all.

Leader: Jesus, you welcomed and cared for your companions and those you met. We think of people we know who feel lonely, lost or distressed. May we be welcoming to those God has given us a special care for. (PAUSE) Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all.

Leader: Jesus, we accept your welcome, and the hospitality offered us here. May we in our turn, open the door of our hearts and welcome others, offering hospitality to all. (PAUSE)

Christ, gather us in,

All: and bless us all. Amen

Song:♪ (Common Ground 38)

1. Here in this place new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away,
see in this space our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in – the lost and forsaken, gather us in – the blind and the lame;

call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2. We are the young – our lives are a mystery, we are the old who yearn for your face, we have been sung throughout all of history, called to be light to the whole human race. Gather us in – the rich and the haughty, gather us in – the proud and the strong; give us a heart so meek and so lowly, give us the courage to enter the song.
3. Not in the dark of buildings confining, not in some heaven, light years away, but here in this place the new light is shining, now is the Kingdom, now is the day. Gather us in and hold us for ever, gather us in and make us your own; gather us in – all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Closing responses:

Leader: God of life, of all life and of each life, we lay our lives before you.
Nothing is hidden from you. We give our lives to you.

All: You are before us, God, you are behind. You are around us, God, you are within.

Leader: God of life, generous Spirit,

All: renew us with your life, tonight, tomorrow and always.

Blessing:

Leader: God bless each of us as we travel on.

All: In our times of need may we find a table spread in the wilderness and companions on the road. Amen.

The Grace:

All: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore. Amen

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Iona Abbey Worship Book © The Iona Community

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NEXT IONA SERVICE IS AT 5pm on SUNDAY 25th February 2024

These are the topics that are left from our list of potential Iona Service themes which we compiled during the September service. If you are particularly interested in one of these, and have ideas about it, or would like to help with a service in any way, please email Helen on:- iona@pershoreabbey.org.uk

- Time of quiet reflection/ music/ craft
- Interfaith
- Sexuality and gender issues 'Living in Faith and Love'
- Barriers, vulnerability (Race?)
- Art Prayer, Mental health, Community needs. (The Soul's journey through life)
- A Walk (weather permitting) Social, Celebration service
- Faith, AI, digitisation, personal agency