

Reading: John 6:41-51

I was really amused by a young boy who came to church with his family. They didn't usually come. At the time of collection he put in the plate a 50 cent coin given to him by his dad. Then at communion he was the only one in his family to go up. When asked why he went up, he said, "Well, I'd paid for it!"

Today is our annual commitment Sunday. The Sunday when we are asked to recommit ourselves to serving God in the world, in our families and at Church. We are also asked to recommit our financial giving to the church.

Jesus in the Gospel is offering himself as bread for the world. He is committing himself to be life-giving food. We can say his words are fulfilled in the Holy Communion, as we receive him, but they are also fulfilled as we become the body of Christ in the world. We are transformed by the bread of life to become life for the world.

So a question for our commitment Sunday would be something like this: how are we giving of ourselves to be the life of the world? Not just our 50 cents, but all of our lives.

Normally at this point in the commitment sermon the vicar outlines how much we desperately need your giving and how vital it is to maintain the church. All true, but this year I thought I'd ask a few people to tell us what ways they are being fed by the church. I have divided the answers into worship, pastoral care and the outreach of our church. These are some of the answers I got.

### Firstly **worship**

*St Peter's Upper Riccarton and Yaldhurst offers a number of different styles of worship that provides services for all, whether it be a quiet contemplative Eucharist, a traditional Choral Eucharist, an all-age contemporary service, a Mandarin Service or a mid-week more intimate Eucharist.*

*I prefer the quiet, calm Wednesday Service where, in a warm friendly atmosphere, I can concentrate on the readings, prayers and sermon in a more intimate setting. Don't get me wrong, I also enjoy the hymns, music/choir and busyness of other services too, but I am a traditionalist and my worship "style" is the 'old school' that I was brought up with alongside my family, since I was born.*

*In our magnificently restored church, which contains so much history, I find the ideal atmosphere to worship our Heavenly Father, no matter which service I attend. I have been a member of St Peter's for over 58 years (since I married Tony) and value not only the very reverent opportunity to come together with others (who have become my caring valued*

*friends) but to also learn from the down-to-earth, informative and often thought-provoking sermons from the clergy.*

*My four daughters were baptized here, were married here and my 14 grandchildren baptized in this hallowed place. A number of my relatives have been farewelled here too, so St Peter's is very much our family's church.*

*It is such a special place for me, so perfect for my love and worship of God.*  
Name withheld

Another person wrote:  
*From the moment I first stepped into St Peter's church I felt welcomed despite the unexpected circumstances of my mother's passing.*

*I felt as if I belonged here despite having never set foot inside the church before.*

*Nick and Peg compliment each other and together extended to me care, compassion and kindness which also seems to be reflected in the church community as a whole. The environment is encouraging of others to do the same, to engage with someone new to the church, as I experienced myself on many occasions. It's infectious and starts with the leadership, and it was obvious to me that there are many and varied ways that are appealing to all parishioners of all ages, who can and do participate. The encouragement of youth participation is particularly noticeable in some of the roles that they have.*

*I am not usually a regular church attender and when I returned for an extended period in September through November last year I was again drawn back to reconnect every Sunday. I'm sure that whenever I have the opportunity to return again I will receive the same friendly welcome and will once again appreciate the humour.*

*Also thanking the church for the recently received card with respect to the first anniversary of Mum's passing.*  
Name withheld

## **Outreach**

A digital prayer request came in:

*"I am in an abusive relationship and trying to leave but the last few months I have also been very sick ... in hospital 4x ... just out now, 2 days. Surgeries, infections etc. I have no family and no friends ... been isolated. I want a small home that is safe and peaceful where my pets and I can live. The odds are so against me ... not enough money ... I lack courage too. Please pray for me. I know God can make a way. I can't go through another Christmas like last year ... spent crying my eyes out. I am still so sick and my health is fragile. Please just pray for me. I need hope ... I am traumatized and fearful of living in a women's refuge"*

Anon

A response to a Podcast clip which talked about a personal past struggle of not feeling God's presence: *"My Church trauma is exactly that. Made me feel like God never picked up my call for help. Until I joined a small local Youth Camp and they unlocked my childhood trauma. It turns out I needed to forgive my past to be able to live in the present with God properly. I felt His warmth that night and was able to reconcile with my own father as well. What I learnt? With Him, there is always a way."* Anon

As an archdeacon we also offer support to those outside of our parish. Andrew McKerrow, Salvation army pastor and racing chaplain, writes:

*"I don't know what I'd do without my monthly spiritual direction. Nick has this wonderful gift of being able to help me to be still and find God in that quiet space. I always leave the better spiritually for spending time with him."*

### **Pastoral care**

*Choosing St. Peter's Church for our wedding was a decision rooted in both personal and spiritual significance. The church's historical charm and beautiful architecture provided a stunning backdrop for our ceremony, creating an atmosphere of timeless elegance. Being God's house, St. Peter's offered a sacred and meaningful space to exchange our vows, deepening the spiritual essence of our commitment. The church also holds a special place in our hearts, as it has been Kirsty's grandparents' church for many years and was where Kirsty's father's funeral was held. The ambiance of the church made our special day truly unforgettable. Furthermore, the people at St. Peter's were incredibly kind and supportive, ensuring everything played out as smoothly as possible. Their warmth and assistance added to the joy and perfection of our wedding day.*

Name withheld

What you value about church will be different but I hope these people's stories resonate with you and help you to realise what a blessed and special place your giving and your ministry goes to support.

Please take the time to fill out your form. It is not compulsory but it would really help vestry. Put it in the envelope and then in the collection plate. If you need more time you can take it home and bring it back next week. The information collected about your giving is totally confidential to the parish recorder Edwin Boyce. He will strike it out before anyone else sees it.

We are under significant financial challenge and, if you are able, please increase your giving. Rosemary and I have increased our giving. I hope that if you are able, you do too. If you can't increase your giving or can't give at all that is totally fine too. To ease the pain, know that one third of your giving is claimable back in tax.

I give thanks for all the ways we are fed by Christ from this place, including but not limited to, worship, outreach, and pastoral care. We get a lot for our 50 cents!

I invite you to take this opportunity to recommit to supporting our church and community this coming year.

Thank you.