St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, November 8th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

When Grace Opens the Door
Proper 27
Acts 10: 1-23

Welcome and Call to Remembrance

Good morning. Before we open the Word of God, we pause to remember. We remember those who served in times of war and conflict; those who left home, family, and familiar fields; those who carried burdens most of us will never fully understand; and those who did not return.

We also honor those who returned bearing visible and invisible wounds, those who continue to serve, and the families who have shared in their sacrifice. We remember not to glorify war, but to give thanks for courage, to grieve the terrible cost of conflict, and to pray for the peace that our world so deeply needs.

National Anthem

Please stand, as you are able, for the singing of 'O Canada.'

Scripture Reading

John 15:13

13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends

These words point us beyond sentiment to costly love. They call us to honor human sacrifice with humility, and they direct our hearts to Jesus Christ, who willingly laid down His life—not for the deserving, but for sinners—and rose again as our sure and living hope.

Reading of the Names of the Fallen

We now remember by name those from our congregation and community who gave their lives in service.
Their names shall be remembered with gratitude and honor.

World War 1

George Bothwell
Walter A Ferrier

Graham Howie
Donald McPhail
Eric T. Spalding
Harold Stone
Edwin D. Wilson

Killed in Action in The Great War of 1914-1918

World War 2

Fred Burchell
Kenneth Davis
Norman Davis
Charles Donovan
John McLeod Hogg
Lorne Patterson

Killed in Action in The Great War of 1939-1945

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

— Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae

Act of Remembrance

Let us stand, if you are able, and observe a moment of silence.

(The Last Post)

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them. Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.
We will remember them.

Prayer

Let us pray.
Almighty and merciful God, Lord of the nations and Prince of Peace, we thank You for those who served and sacrificed for the freedoms and peace we enjoy. Comfort those who mourn. Strengthen veterans, members of the Armed Forces, and their families. Heal wounds seen and unseen. Grant wisdom to those entrusted with authority, protect those placed in danger, and restrain the evil that leads nations into war.
Make us a people who seek peace, practice mercy, defend the vulnerable, and remember with gratitude. Above all, fix our hope upon Jesus Christ, who made peace through the blood of His cross and whose kingdom shall never end. Until the day when swords are beaten into ploughshares and war is no more, keep us faithful, prayerful, and ready to love our neighbors at cost to ourselves.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King. **Amen.**

Transition to Announcements and Worship

Please be seated. As we carry this remembrance with gratitude, we turn again to the God who sustains us and gives us hope in Jesus Christ. Before we continue with our call to worship, let us take a moment for the announcements and the life we share as a church family.

Announcements

Call to Worship

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we adore You as the Maker of heaven and earth, holy in all Your ways and faithful in every promise. You need nothing from us, yet in Your mercy You call us near. We come not because we are worthy, but because Jesus Christ, Your eternal Son, has opened the way through His obedient life, His atoning death, and His victorious resurrection. We praise You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: one God, now and forever. By Your Spirit, turn our attention from ourselves to Your glory. Gather our wandering thoughts, awaken our love, and help us worship in spirit and truth. Let our singing, our praying, and our listening be pleasing to You through Christ. Strengthen our faith, deepen our gratitude, and make Your Word fruitful among us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

God is holy, and none of us can stand before Him on the strength of our own goodness. Yet He invites us to come honestly, confessing our sin and trusting in Jesus Christ, our only Saviour. We do not confess to earn His mercy; we confess because His mercy gives us courage to stop hiding. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord and pray together.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful Father, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved You with our whole hearts, and we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have trusted our own goodness, defended our pride, and withheld the kindness we freely received from You. We have left undone what You command and done what You forbid. Forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ alone. We have no righteousness of our own to offer; our hope rests in His perfect obedience and His sacrifice for sinners. Wash us clean, renew us by Your Holy Spirit, and teach us to turn from sin. Give us humble hearts, truthful words, and willing hands, so that our lives may show the grace that has welcomed us into Your family. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news: Jesus Christ died for sinners and rose again. Everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Him receives forgiveness through His name. If your hope rests in Christ, your pardon rests not on the strength of your feelings or the quality of your confession, but on His finished work and faithful promise. In Him, you are forgiven and accepted by God. Give thanks, and walk in the freedom of His grace. Thanks be to God!

Children's Hymn #648: "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" (V 1,3,4)

I'm gonna live so
God can use me

anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna live so
God can use me anywhere,
Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna pray so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna pray so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn #330: "O God, Our Help In Ages Past" (V 1,2,3)

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our e ternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

Be fore the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,

from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 67:1–7

[1] May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
[2] that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
[3] Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

[4] Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
[5] Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

[6] The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
[7] God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Acts 10:1–23

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, [2] a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. [3] About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius."
[4] And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. [5] And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. [6] He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." [7] When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, [8] and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.
[9] The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. [10] And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance [11] and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its

four corners upon the earth. [12] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. [13] And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." [14] But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."
[15] And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." [16] This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.
[17] Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate [18] and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. [19] And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. [20] Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." [21] And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" [22] And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." [23] So he invited them in to be his guests.

Sermon

It is incredibly reassuring after a long trip to arrive and find a place prepared for you: the light is on, the table is set, and someone was expecting you before you knocked.

In Acts chapter 10, we see something like that in the work of God.

Cornelius is praying in Caesarea and Peter in Joppa. Neither one is aware of the other, yet God is preparing their meeting to show each of them and the church who can receive the Gospel.

Cornelius still needs to hear about Jesus; and Peter still needs to understand more fully what Jesus has accomplished.

That should encourage every one of us. As we go out and share the Gospel with our neighbors and care for our families, we often wonder whether anyone is listening or whether we have used the right words to share our faith.

When those questions trouble us, this passage reminds us that the mission belongs to God. We are simply called to obey, speak, and pray, but it is only God who can change a heart.

So as we follow these two men, keep this in mind: God prepares people to hear the Gospel, and he prepares his people to bring it.

Acts 10:1–8

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, [2] a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. [3] About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." [4] And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. [5] And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. [6] He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." [7] When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, [8] and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

We begin with Cornelius in Caesarea, a coastal city where the Romans governed Judea.

He is a centurion in the Italian Cohort—a Roman army officer who is used to be the one giving orders. Yet the Scripture gives more attention to his devotion to God than to his rank.

He honors Israel's God, prays regularly, and gives generously to those in need. His household also honors God. His devotion shapes his home, his habits, and his use of money.

That is why Cornelius is often described as a God-fearer: someone who was not Jewish but revered and worshiped Israel's God without becoming a full Jewish convert.

Take notice of how prayer and generosity belong together here. Cornelius looks toward God, and because of that he also notices his neighbor. A prayerful life ought to make us more attentive to all those around us.

And that attentiveness should always begin close to home. Cornelius's care for his household reminds us that we can be concerned about people far away while overlooking those who share our everyday lives.

We are to care for our households and our communities, not just overseas missions. Caring for our households may mean praying together, talking about Sunday's message, or apologizing when we have been wrong in some way. It is true that we cannot give anyone a new heart, but we can make our homes places where Christ is spoken of with honesty and witnessed in love.

We are told that Cornellis is praying at about three in the afternoon, the ninth hour, which is a customary time of prayer and that God speaks to him through a vision of an angel.

The angel tells him that God has heard his prayers and noticed his generosity. In other words, Cornelius's devotion has not gone unnoticed.

We need to understand that carefully, though. It does not mean Cornelius has earned salvation by giving money or doing good. For all his devotion to God, he still needs one critical thing to hear about Jesus.

God is at work in Cornelius. Christians struggle on how to describe Cornellius's faith in this moment, but his need is clear: he must hear the Gospel message.

Something that remains true to this day. Church attendance, kindness, and living a good life cannot save any of us. Our hope must rest in Christ alone, who died for sinners and rose again.

The angel tells Cornelius to send for Peter. Think about that for a moment, God could have given the message through the angel, but instead sends a human messenger.

See how God uses people speaking his Word to bring others to faith. And because we know this, we know that when we share His Word that He is at work and we can share the Gospel with confidence.

For his part, Cornelius responds promptly. He calls two servants and a devout soldier, explains what has happened, and sends them off to Joppa.

He does not yet know everything that lies ahead, but he knows what he has been told to do. And while his messengers travel, God begins preparing the man they will meet.

> **Acts 10:9–16**
> **9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.**

The next day, as the messengers approach Joppa, Peter goes to the flat rooftop to pray. It is noon, and the roof offers quiet place away from the activity below.

The house where Peter is staying belongs to Simon the tanner. Simon works with animal hides, something which could raise questions among Jewish believers about ceremonial cleanliness under Jewish law.

As Peter prays, he becomes hungry, and while food is being prepared downstairs, God gives him a vision.

Peter sees something like a large sheet descending, holding animals, reptiles, and birds. He is told to kill and eat.

But Peter strongly refuses. He has never eaten food which is considered common or unclean under Jewish law, and he is not ready to do so now.

We can understand his concern. Leviticus chapter 11 taught Israel which animals they could eat, and Peter had learned to take God's commands seriously.

What he does not yet understand is how Christ's new covenant changes the place of these food laws.

Peter's concern is not mainly about hygiene; it is about obedience to God. He wants to know whether God permits him to eat this food.

And God answers that concern directly: Peter must not call unclean what God has made clean.

God is not telling Peter to ignore the Scripture. He is showing him what has changed through Christ's finished work. Jesus had already taught this exact thing in Mark 7:18–19.

> **Mark 7:18-19**
> **18 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)**

This is important for us to understand. God still calls his people to be holy. But he is also teaching Peter that the food laws must no longer stand between him and Gentiles. Those laws must not keep him from welcoming Gentiles who receive Christ into fellowship.

God repeats the vision three times, confirming his message and pressing it home to Peter.

As we watch Peter learning, there is a lesson for us too. Loving the Bible means being willing to let it correct our own understanding.

Like Peter, we can think something is faithful simply because it is familiar, or what we want in our lives. We may have followed a church practice for years, but we still need to ask whether it agrees with God's Word. Perhaps we have not yet felt convicted about something we have always accepted. That alone does not mean we are right. We need to keep listening to Scripture and asking the Lord to help us see where our understanding needs to change.

Peter has heard what God has said, but he is still trying to understand how it applies to his life. In a moment, the men arriving at the gate will help him understand.

> **Acts 10:17–20**
> **17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate 18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."**

In verse 17, as Peter is still pondering the vision, Cornelius's messengers reach Simon's gate and ask for him.

There is comfort in that for us, because faithful people do not always understand everything God wants us to understand immediately. Peter takes the vision seriously, yet he still needs help understanding it.

Notice the timing: Cornelius sent his messengers long before Peter saw the sheet. They were already travelling and Peter knew nothing of their coming.

That is what we mean when we speak of God's providence: God wisely governing events to accomplish His divine purpose.

We can see how God was at work in bringing these men together. But in our own difficulties, his purposes are not always so clear. Some questions may remain unanswered. Even then, we can trust him—not because we understand everything he is doing, but because we know who he is.

Peter still has questions too, but God makes his next step unmistakable. The Holy Spirit tells him that men are looking for him and tells him to accompany them.

He is to go without hesitation, allowing neither his uncertainty nor the fact that these men are Gentiles to keep him from obeying. After all, the Spirit says that he has sent them.

This does not promise every Christian will receive a vision or hear an inner voice. In the book of Acts God is guiding the apostles at a crucial moment in the Gospel's spread.

Today, the Holy Spirit teaches us through Scripture. We must therefore bring our thoughts and impressions back to God's Word, rather than assume that every feeling or idea is a command from him.

But we must not let unanswered questions keep us from doing what God has already made clear. We can love our neighbors, welcome others, pray for the spread of the Gospel, and speak of Christ, even when we do not understand everything.

Sometimes the problem is not that we need clearer guidance, but that obedience feels difficult. We ask what to do even when we already know the answer.

Perhaps the conversation will be awkward, or the invitation will interrupt our routine. Perhaps welcoming someone will require patience while they learn unfamiliar things.

God does not tell Peter everything that will happen in Caesarea. He simply tells him what to do next: go down and meet the men.

Often, it is the same for us. We do not need to know everything that lies ahead before we obey what God has already made clear.

> **Acts 10:21–23**
> **21 And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 So he invited them in to be his guests.**

Peter obeys. He goes downstairs and introduces himself to the men. They explain that God has told Cornelius to send for him so that he can hear Peter's message.

As Peter listens, he begins to understand what the vision means. God is teaching him about more than food. Will he welcome Gentiles, spend time with them, and bring them the gospel?

Not all Jewish people followed the same practices concerning Gentiles. But Acts 11:2–3 tells us that some Jewish believers objected when Peter entered a Gentile home and ate

with those who lived there. Sharing a home and a meal with Gentiles was a real barrier for some in the early church.

Yet even before Peter goes to preach in Cornelius's house, he invites these men in as his guests. What God has taught him is beginning to change how he lives, not just how he thinks. He opens the door and welcomes them.

Welcoming someone into our home does not mean they are saved. But it gives them an opportunity to hear the Gospel. Salvation comes through faith in Christ, not through our hospitality.

And we do not need a large budget or a special church program to welcome people. Hospitality can begin with something simple.

Imagine walking into a gathering where everyone already knows each other. People are polite, but they are busy talking with their friends. You might spend the whole evening there and still feel left out.

Then someone makes room for you, introduces you to the others, and asks a question because they really want to hear your answer. It is the same room, but now you feel welcome.

We can do that here in our own congregation. When someone is standing or sitting alone, invite them into the conversation. Kindly explain anything that may be unfamiliar with, and take time to listen rather than assume you already know their story.

We do not have to compromise biblical truth to treat people with Christian kindness. God's grace teaches us to be generous toward others. After all, we did not earn our place in his family. We belong because he has shown us mercy.

Peter is beginning to understand that grace more fully. Gentiles do not have to become Jews before they can receive salvation in Christ. Removing the barrier of the food laws points to something greater: Jews and Gentiles alike receive the same Savior through faith.

Peter later explains in Acts 15:9 that God cleansed their hearts through faith. And in Acts 15:11, he makes clear that Jewish and Gentile believers are saved in the same way—by the grace of Jesus.

Christ, then, is at the heart of this welcome. This is about more than being friendly. God is bringing people together as one family through one Savior.

Ephesians 2:13–18 teaches the same truth. Through the blood of Christ, those who were far away are brought near to God. Through him, they come together to the same Father.

The next morning, Peter puts that welcome into practice. He sets out with the messengers from Joppa. He goes to listen and to speak. Grace has opened the door, and Peter walks through it.

Our passage today ends before Peter preaches to Cornelius. But everything we have seen is preparing the way for the Good News of Jesus Christ.

What is that Good News? As Acts 10:43 makes clear, forgiveness comes through faith in Jesus. The angel, the vision, the journey, and the welcome all lead to this message. We welcome people so that we can speak to them about Christ. We must never leave him out.

Some of us today still need to hear the Gospel in the same way as Cornelius. Our circumstances may be different, but our need is the same. Maybe you have respected Christianity for years without trusting the Savior who died and rose again. Come to Christ with your sin, and trust in his mercy.

Others of us may need to keep learning, just as Peter did. We believe the Gospel, but we still need its truth to shape our habits and teach us how to welcome others.

Some of us might simply need encouragement to keep going. You have prayed, invited people, and spoken about Christ, but you have seen little response.

Remember that the messengers were already on their way before Peter knew they were coming. Not every invitation will bring the response we hope for. But God may be working in ways we cannot yet see. Keep serving, and keep trusting him.

So, let us keep praying with confidence, humbly obeying God, and warmly welcoming others. Let us give them an opportunity to hear about Christ, who welcomed us by his grace—not because we had anything to offer him.

This is part of what it means to be the Salt of the earth and the Light of the world. We welcome others with kindness, speak faithfully of Christ, and let His grace shape what we say and do. We do not seek praise for ourselves. We want others to see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.

Let us pray,

Holy and gracious God, You made us for Yourself, and our hearts find their true rest in You alone. Draw us away from pride and self-reliance, and settle our hope in Jesus Christ. Thank You that faith is Your gift and that You bring us to hear Your truth through the ministry of Your Word. Give us hearts ready to listen and lives ready to obey. Where our habits resist Your Word, patiently correct us. Where fear keeps us silent, give us courage to speak of Christ. Where someone stands outside our circle, teach us to make

room with kindness and humility. We cannot change a heart, but You can. Keep us faithful in prayer, generous in welcome, and clear about the Saviour who died and rose again. May those who seek You find their rest in You, and may all who find You give You praise. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Inspired by Augustine's Confessions

Invitation to Offering

God has graciously given us a church family in which to worship, grow in His Word, and care for one another. With that gift comes a shared calling to support the church's life and ministry through our prayers, our service, and our giving. Our offerings help sustain the preaching of the gospel, the care of our congregation, and our witness in the community and beyond. We give not to earn God's favour, but in gratitude for the grace He has freely given us in Jesus Christ. If this is your church home, I encourage you to give regularly and prayerfully, according to your means, with a willing and cheerful heart. You may place your offering in the offering box at the back of the church as you leave today. Let us now thank the Lord for His faithful provision through song and prayer.

Offering Prayer

Offering Hymn #830: "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow"

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Closing Hymn#794: "Abide With Me"

Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?

Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

Pastoral Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that through Jesus Christ we may come before You as Your beloved children. You know every person gathered here: every need we have spoken and every burden we carry quietly. Be near to those who are grieving. Sustain those who are ill, awaiting treatment, or living with pain, and give wisdom and compassion to those who care for them. Uphold the lonely, encourage the weary, and provide for households facing financial strain. Help us notice one another and offer practical care, not merely kind words.

Strengthen our church in faithfulness to Your Word and love for one another. Guard our children and young people, sustain parents and caregivers, and help every generation grow in the knowledge of Christ. Give wisdom to those who lead and willing hearts to those who serve. Bless the churches and gospel workers who faithfully proclaim Jesus, both near and far. Bring those who do not yet know Him to repentance and faith, and make us patient, prayerful witnesses to His grace.

We remember before You those who have served in war and those whose lives are still affected by conflict. Comfort bereaved families, support veterans and those now serving, and bring help to people displaced or endangered by violence. Give wisdom to those entrusted with public responsibility. Restrain wrongdoing, protect the vulnerable, and guide communities in the ways of justice and peace. Keep our ultimate hope in Christ, whose kingdom cannot be shaken.

As we share fellowship and food, we thank You for Your daily provision and for those who have prepared and served it. Bless this food to nourish our bodies, and bless our conversations to encourage our hearts. Help us make room for one another so that no one is overlooked. Remember those who lack food or companionship, and make us ready to share what You have given. Send us into the coming week with steady faith, generous hearts, and a clear witness to Jesus Christ. We ask all these things in His precious name. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the God of peace, who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, equip you with everything good to do His will. May He work in you what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Go in His peace, stand in His grace, and serve in His strength. **Amen.**