

[Love is His Word - YouTube](#)

*Pauline:*

Dear friends welcome to this act of worship which, though we cannot be together in person, we offer as a community united in the spirit of love and of faith in Jesus our Lord, whose name is Love. May I invite Lorraine to say our opening prayer.

*Lorraine*

Mary, our Mother, we your trans children call on you.  
Help us to see ourselves as wholly good  
and made in God's image and likeness.  
Protect us from harm so that we may  
be safe from hatred and fear.  
Inspire our church to see the goodness  
of our lives and our love, and for our allies  
to advocate along with us.  
Liberate us from a world that sees us as  
inherently disordered and into one where  
our lives and relationships are fully  
affirmed. And above all, convert us to your Son that  
we may love with a heart like His, and  
work to see God's Reign in our midst for  
all God's people  
Amen.

*Pauline*

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us  
In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,  
In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

*All*

Let us give praise and thanks!

Grace

Psalm 138 (139)

The Lord knows all things

*How wonderful is this knowledge of yours that you have shown me, Lord.*

Lord, you have examined me, you know me:

you know when I sit down and when I rise.

From far away you know my thoughts:

you know every step I take,

when I walk, when I lie down:

you have seen all that I do.

Before a word even reaches my lips,

you know, Lord, all that I will say.

You are close in front of me and close behind me:

you have laid your hand upon me.

Your knowledge is beyond my understanding:

it is too high, I cannot reach it.

Where shall I go, to escape your spirit?

Where shall I go, to flee your face?

If I rise to the heavens, you are there.

If I sink to the depths, you are there.

If I put on the wings of the dawn itself –

if I make my abode beyond the farthest sea –

it is still your hand that will lead me there,

it is still your right hand that will hold me.

If I say “May the shadows cover me:

let there be no light around me” –

the shadows will not hide me from you,

and the night will shine like the day:  
for shadows and light are the same to you.

*All*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Helen*

**A reading from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians:**

This, then, is why I bend the knee to the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or in earth, takes its name. According to the wealth of his glory may you be strengthened in power through the Spirit with regard to your inner being, so that through faith Christ may live in your hearts as you are planted and founded in love, so that with all the saints you may have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; and to know the love of Christ, which transcends all knowledge, so that you may be filled with the whole fullness of God.

The word of the Lord.

*Philippa*

**A reading from the Gospel of St John:**

No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who has sent me,  
and I will raise up that person on the last day.

It is written in the prophets,

*And they shall all be taught by God:*

everyone who has listened to the Father  
and learnt from him,  
comes to me.

Not that anybody has seen the Father,  
except him who is from God:  
he has seen the Father.

Amen, Amen I say to you,  
one who believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate manna in the desert  
and they died;

but this is the bread that comes down from heaven,  
so that a person may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.

Anyone who eats of this bread will live for ever;  
and the bread that I shall give  
is my flesh, for the life of the world.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Pauline*

## Reflection

What might it mean to be filled with the spirit of Wisdom? To feed on the living bread and have eternal life? To be filled indeed with the whole fullness of God? Something to be sure to be hoped for, glimpsed, experienced a little perhaps, not to be put into words.

Most of us here are trans people. Many of us have lived divided, compartmentalised, broken lives. It may have been a struggle not so much to be filled with the fulness of God but simply to know and be our whole selves, complete and undivided. Our journey of self-knowledge can be a long one, with many detours and false trails. Even at the end of it, some of us might feel that that very self is actually a divided self, that it includes both a masculine and feminine identity. Integrating these different parts of ourselves or undoing the emotional harm of long years of repression can be very challenging. Sometimes our churches can feel more like part of the problem than the solution.

Perhaps some of us continue to live defeated lives because we have never fully come to terms with who we are. The self we live in is fragile, fragmented, easily hurt, immature, ego-driven. It's not easy even for God to work with such a self. And if we prefer to keep on living in the security and comfort of that immature, incomplete self, despite all the pain and trauma that comes with it, if we don't accept the risk of change and find a way to transmute and transform our pain we shall most certainly transmit it to others.

The Bible from start to finish is full of stories of liberation, freedom from bondage and from false kinds of security. Adam and Eve were driven out of the safety and security of their garden. The Israelites in the desert complained that at least when they were slaves back in Egypt they had food to eat and a roof over their heads. Jesus constantly reminded his hearers of the cost of discipleship, of what they had to lose, of the need for profound interior change. The need in fact to be "born again" – a phrase with huge resonance for many trans people.

Our self-knowledge can indeed sometimes be very hard won. Some of us might have preferred to stick for a very long time with the safe and familiar, living inauthentic lives for the sake of status and security. But God, as the psalm Grace read to us tells us, has always known us as we truly are and has been with us every step of the way. Once we have

taken that momentous step of self-acceptance – or rather committed ourselves to that process - we might see that what we have lost is far outweighed by our gains. Though birth is often a painful and difficult experience.

For some time after I transitioned I thought I had made a mistake. Some of the challenges seemed impossibly hard. I worried a lot. I couldn't sleep. In some ways it was a leap into the dark, an act of faith that things would get better. And they did. I heard one Sibyl say that after her transition God became her lover. In this way we can see that the trans experience, the emergence of the true self from the false self, entirely mirrors and replicates the pattern of death and re-birth that must characterise every life modelled on Christ. We can perhaps begin to grasp a little of the breadth and the length, the height and the depth of the love of God.

For we are not divided within ourselves as far as God is concerned. What Jesus is by nature, we are by grace, a fusion of the divine and the human. Surely the sanctification we are all called to involves the full acceptance of our own nature both as trans or non-binary people and as beings inhabited by and united to the indwelling presence of God. That God who feeds us with the living bread that has come down from heaven. The God who will raise us up on the last day. The God through whom our lives are no longer defeated but whole, blessed and fruitful, lives available to God, lives that God can work with, lives one day to be filled with the whole fullness of God.

## Responsory

*Pauline:*

Guard us, Lord, as the apple of your eye.

*All*

*Guard us, Lord, as the apple of your eye.*

*Pauline*

Hide us in the shadow of your wings.

*All*

*Guard us, Lord, as the apple of your eye.*

*Pauline*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

*All*

*Guard us, Lord, as the apple of your eye.*

*Nicky*

**Canticle**

**Magnificat**

**My soul rejoices in the Lord**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God, my salvation.

For he has shown me such favour –  
me, his lowly handmaiden.

Now all generations will call me blessed,  
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

His name is holy,  
his mercy lasts for generation after generation  
for those who revere him.

He has put forth his strength:  
he has scattered the proud and conceited,  
torn princes from their thrones;  
but lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things;  
the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,  
he has remembered his mercy as he promised to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.

**Amen.**

## Prayers and intercessions

*Pauline*

Let us ask the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, to send the Spirit of his Son into our hearts as we pray:

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

O Lord, the creator and redeemer of all mankind, we humbly pray for all people of every race, country, religion, gender and sexuality in every kind of need:

Make your ways known to them, and reveal your salvation to all nations.

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

May the whole Church be guided and governed by your Holy Spirit;

let all who call themselves Christians be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit.

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are afflicted or distressed;

comfort and relieve them according to their need, and grant them the love and consolation of your Spirit.

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

Father, give a place of life and rest to those who have died in your peace:

may we share with them in the glory of Jesus Christ, who died to save us all.

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

Let us pray for our dear sister Elaine, that in her time of trial she may truly know the presence of God and be comforted with a spirit of trust and hope:

*All*

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Pauline*

Please, now ask God, aloud or in silence, for whatever is in your hearts.

[Pause]

*Pauline*

Let us now pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

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, the power and the glory

Forever and ever Amen

---

*Pauline*

Remember your people, Lord, and show them mercy:

as you satisfy the hungry with food from heaven,

enrich our poverty with your abundance.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

(one) God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

*Pauline*

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

**Amen.**

[As The Deer - YouTube](#)