

## 1 Peter 1: 17-23

(Lectionary Year A, Easter 3)

By Beth Barnett

Using bread, explore the theme of imperishable things of the Kingdom

You will need:

- Collection of breads, grainy bread, raisin bread, fluffy white bread, Turkish bread, flat bread, gluten free bread, each different kind of bread should be on a separate plate/or basket. The breads should be in various conditions of freshness, staleness, mouldiness. Each Bread should have a 'use-by' date tag. (you might need to fabricate these if they have been lost in the process of life)
- Art for 1 Peter 1:17-23 by Chris Booth
- Dozens of Bread tags (put out a call for people to collect these for you in advance)
- Copy of text of 1 Peter 1:17-23 made into large 'bingo' grid. The easiest way to make this is to print out each section of text on a separate A4 piece of paper. Glue the pages on to a large sturdy piece of white-goods carton, or onto a large pinboard.
- (optional sensory enhancement) Bring or even better, bake some bread in your gathering space. One creative worship facilitator I know set a bread making machine going in the gathering space 3 hours before the service was to begin, so that at the time people were arriving, and into the gathering time, the space was filled the aroma of freshly baked bread. This can be shared as the 'fresh prayer bread' [see instructions below]

Time required:

7 minutes

*Note: Remember that intergenerational community is strengthened by the contribution of as many of the community with their different gifts and abilities as possible. Invite various people to prepare the resources for the gathering – don't leave it to the person responsible for presenting or facilitating engagement to also provide the materials. Make sure that there is clear understanding though of the idea by those bringing or making materials. This ensures that there are no mishaps with the wrong thing turning up, but more than this, means that there are multiple participants in the gathering who already have an understanding of the process being facilitated and have some buy-in.*

## **Connect**

Bread – Yum! Everyone loves bread and I've got a collection of lots of breads here. Grainy bread, raisin bread, fluffy white bread, Turkish bread, flat bread, gluten free bread...

### Context

Invite some volunteers to carry the individual baskets of bread around amongst your gathering for others to view while you continue speaking.

If you look closely, all my bread here have little tags on them to tell us their used-by date.

I wonder if anyone would like to share my bread?

The following are just examples, adapt to suit your own resources:

Here's a bread roll, multigrain, and the used-by date is 4 days away. Baked fresh this morning. Any volunteers to eat this bread?

And this – raisin bread – Yum! I can definitely recommend this bread. I had some from this very loaf two weeks ago for breakfast, and it was delicious. Who'd like a piece? Maybe someone could volunteer to read the used-by date... hmm.. not so good.

And here is some Turkish bread – delicious with some hummus, used by date – yesterday – anyone? Anyone?

You seem a bit shy. Maybe some of you need gluten free bread. Any takers for this one?

*(Continue until all the breads have been examined.)*

## Content

How do we decide when bread is past the use by date?

-use by day, looks mouldy or stale

It's not just bread that needs a use-by date.

What makes some other things no longer ok to keep?

Take suggestions – accept and affirm all suggestions. For example: starts going mouldy, wears out, tarnishes or rusts, gets contaminated with something else.

Display image for 1 Peter 1:17-23

Our reading from First Peter speaks to a bunch of people who feel like they have been left way past their use by date.

You can see them in the image artist Chris Booth has created for this text.

What can you see?

Take suggestions – accept and affirm all suggestions

They were originally Jews, but they have been scattered far from their home country, and their country has been taken over by others. So there is no hope or point in returning. They think that God has forgotten them.

The things they have traditionally trusted in have also passed their use by date – trusting in the traditions of their ancestors and wealth – these things have failed. And they have had to adapt and find new ways of living and seeking God's presence.

The reading encourages them that God's loving faithful life with them never gets old or goes off or goes bad or gets mouldy, or decays or wears out or runs out or fades.

And the love that God calls us to have for one another also never gets old or goes off or goes bad or gets mouldy, or decays or wears out or runs out or fades.

There are some things that have no use by date, that never get old – and some things that do. We will use lots of things that will wear out or become perishable by a use by date.

But God calls us to put our trust in the things that have no use by date.

Our reading includes some things that have no use by date, that never get old, and also some things that do.

I wonder if we can spot the difference and mark them in the reading?

To help us identify the perishable things that can't be trusted, and the imperishable things that will never get old in this reading, we've made a large grid, with each of the things in a separate square (*attached*)

I have given 12 bread tags to 12 people – 6 of the tags are marked 'perishable' which means it has a use by date sometime and 6 are marked 'imperishable' which means it have no use-by date – it never gets old or goes off or goes bad or gets mouldy, or decays or wears out or runs out or fades.

As we read through the passage, we will stop and decided whether the things that are in bold should be tagged perishable or imperishable.

*Read the text carefully, thoughtfully, expressively and slowly. Pause and engage your gathering with the text in bold, inviting responses to whether the phrase should be tagged 'perishable or imperishable. Give time to your volunteers to blu-tak the bread tags on the squares as you go.*



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*When you have done this, read again with the Art image, inviting anyone in your gathering who thinks they can see some part of the reading in the image to point it out and explain it.*

*Finally. put the text away, and challenge your gathering to tell the person next to them the story of the text, by referring to the art image.*

## **Consequence**

The love of God, which we know especially in the life of Jesus, is imperishable, it never gets old or goes off or goes bad or gets mouldy, or decays or wears out or runs out or fades. But more than this - it is like bread that is served up fresh every day.

After the resurrection, Jesus appears on the road to two of his friends – they talk about some of these old ways of the ancestors, and the things that have happened to their people. They also feel like God has forgotten them. But Jesus stops and eats with them, and as he breaks open the fresh bread, they recognize Jesus in a fresh way.

That's what the living presence of Jesus is like. See things fresh. Knowing God hasn't forgotten us, with his imperishable, never gets old or goes off or goes bad or gets mouldy, or decays or wears out or runs out or fades kind of love new everyday. In the Lord's prayer, which we will pray together now, Jesus taught his followers to pray 'give us fresh bread today'.

Like the people in first Peter, in Pontus and Galatia and Asia and Cappodocia and Bithynia, we share God's 'no-use-by-date' love.



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**1 Peter 1: 17-23**

<p>1:17 If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their <b>deeds</b>,</p>	<p>live in reverent fear during the <b>time of your exile</b></p>	<p>1:18 You know that you were ransomed from the <b>futile ways inherited from your ancestors</b>,</p>	<p>not with perishable things like <b>silver or gold</b></p>
<p>1:19 but with the precious <b>blood of Christ</b>, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish</p>	<p>1:20 He was destined before the foundation of <b>the world</b>,</p>	<p>but was revealed at the end of <b>the ages</b> for your sake.</p>	<p>Through him you have come to trust in <b>God</b>, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,</p>
<p>so that your <b>faith and hope</b> are set on God</p>	<p>1:22 Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have <b>genuine mutual love</b>,</p>	<p>love one another deeply from the heart. 1:29 You have been <b>born anew</b>, not of perishable but of imperishable seed,</p>	<p>through the living and enduring <b>word of God</b>.</p>



Prayer extension:

Use the freshest bread (if you have baked bread in the space for the aroma, use that bread.

In smaller groups of up to 8 people, form a circle.

Each circle will need a chunk of bread.

The bread is passed around the circle so each person in turn holds the bread in their hands, and tears off a small piece.

The whole group says "Give us today our fresh daily bread" as the bread is passed to a person, who breaks off a chunk and can offer a prayer finishing the line 'Give fresh bread to...' or 'Give fresh bread of...'

If your community aren't confident in extemporaneous prayer like this, use the prayer below, either selecting a few lines as samples to get people started, or as a whole.

**Our great provider God,  
thankyou for giving us life,  
for getting us started with your word,  
for sustaining us with your spirit,  
for keeping us going with your grace,  
for calling us forward to new things and newness.  
We pray for ourselves, and others across your world  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of hope to those who are struggling to survive  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of health to those who are  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of peace to those in conflict  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of wisdom to those responsible in leadership  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of compassion to those with plenty  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of courage to those who fear  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread of holy anger to those who have grown complacent  
Give us today our fresh daily bread:  
Give fresh bread to us, as we hear your call to share love to all among us.  
Amen.**

Song suggestion: One thing remains

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6 KXsMCJgBQ>



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