



The Uniting Church in Australia

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

*We welcome people of all cultures and
lifestyles,
We create a safe place for the community
We share the journey of life and faith.*

**April 28, 2024, @ 10am
Easter 5 – Fruitful Lives**

Leader: Rev Steve Aynsley

**Acts 8:26–40; Psalm 22:25–31; 1 John 4:7–21; John 15:1–8
(Deok Hee is on annual leave today.)**



For details and information about our church activities and The Kogarah Storehouse, check out the websites: kogarah.uca.org.au and <https://www.kogarahstorehouse.org.au/>

**For pastoral concerns,
please contact Rev Deok Hee Cho on 0401 975 745**

Scriptures

Acts 8:26–40

Philip meets an Ethiopian official who, after a discussion about a passage in Isaiah, asks to be baptised.

Psalms 22:25–31

The psalmist foretells a day when everyone will have enough and will freely worship God.

1 John 4:7–21

John reminds his readers that God is love and that because God loved us first, we must follow the command to ‘Love God and love each other.’

John 15:1–8

Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine to encourage his disciples to stay joined to him and to God.

Theme Focus

In a story about Philip and the Ethiopian Official in the book of Acts and a declaration about Jesus as the vine in the gospel of John, we reflect on ways we include and ways we exclude.

Word for the Day

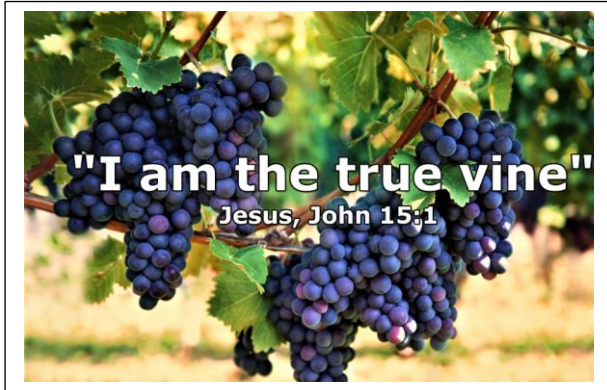
The official asks ‘Why can’t I be baptised?’

This is an interesting way of phrasing. He might have asked, 'Can I be baptised?' or 'Who can be baptised?' Instead, he says, 'Why can't I?'

I wonder if there are people who have come to us who are also asking, 'Why can't I?' and the answers might be: because I am queer, because I am a single mum, because I am divorced, because I don't know enough, because nobody in my family is Christian, because I am not sure I believe, because the church has not been a safe place for me, or any other number of reasons for why this person should not be included. I wonder what it would look like if we were so loving that instead of people asking 'Why can't I?' they might confidently ask, 'can I be baptised here?' Can I be part of this luscious, growing vine?

Ideas for Reflection

- Baptism is a sign of inclusion. The church says baptism is only required once, so what other signs of inclusion might be practicable?
- Philip asks the official: do you know what you are reading? The book of Isaiah and other prophetic books can still seem strange to us today. Who can we trust to help us decipher their meaning, both in its ancient context and as a practical application today?
- In many translations, the person engaged in conversation with Philip is described as a eunuch, although the word is not used in in the Common English Version. At the time of writing, a eunuch was excluded from full participation in the temple, although they had a place within the temple walls. They were assigned male at birth but then physically maimed so that they did not develop characteristics associated with men. In this period, eunuchs might be what we call today gender diverse. How does that change our willingness to include? (See Matthew 19:12 for another reference to eunuchs). The Common English Version gives the title of the person – an Ethiopian Official. What changes when we refer to personhood rather than defining people by their condition or orientation? What do we learn about Philip's conversation partner through this translation.
- How do the readings from the gospel of John and the book of Acts fit together?



I Am the Vine

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

How might it feel to be part of the vine?

Not just to see the vineyard from afar

Or even pluck the clusters, press the wine,

But to be grafted in, to feel the stir

Of inward sap that rises from our root,

Himself deep planted in the ground of Love,

To feel a leaf unfold a tender shoot,

As tendrils curled unfurl, as branches give

A little to the swelling of the grape,

In gradual perfection, round and full,

To bear within oneself the joy and hope

Of God's good vintage, till it's ripe and whole.

What might it mean to bide and to abide

In such rich love as makes the poor heart glad?

Malcolm Guite

From his book *Parable and Paradox* available from Amazon on May 30

Planning Ahead

21 and 28 April Deok Hee on annual leave

- **2nd June Storehouse Sunday @ 10am**
- **11th June Worship Task Group @ 7:00pm via Zoom**

Preparing for our AGM and Election of Church Councillors and Elders

- o Dates for receiving nominations for Church Council: **May 19 and 26**
- o Dates for advertising nominees for Church Council: **June 2 and 9**
- o Date of AGM: **June 16**
- o Date of Commissioning of new Church Council: **June 23**

Please pray for ...The mission and ministry of our congregation and for our Minister, Deok Hee.

Worship leaders; helpers, leaders, followers The Kogarah Storehouse and its many clients; Lala and staff of the Storehouse.

Dorothy and Godfrey and the work of LACLA.

Nick Hedges and the scripture teaching at JCBTHS and MGHS

The team, parents and children in the Early Learning Centre. Those who are sick, sad or lonely: We pray especially today for, Brian and Rhonda , Prema and Priya, Jim and Bobbie, Craig, Denis and Dolly, Jim Bird,

Naghuia, John and Sue and especially John's mother and father; Peter and Sue; Dinah; Robyn; Pat Nankivel and her family health care workers at this time, including Richard, Millin and Roseline Goodman and Dorothy Makasa and Elin.

For others whom we name in our hearts. Pray for the people of Türkiye, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine, especially the people of Gaza



Draw the Circle Wide – A circle of grieving for the Bondi Junction victims.

To all Uniting Church
Congregations, faith communities and Parish Missions,

From the Moderator UCA NSW ACT *(An edited version from the Synod website)*

In light of the recent stabbing of a Priest in the Assyrian Church yesterday, we share concern for the wellbeing of all worshipping communities in all religions and denominations. Although completely unrelated, this attack, and the tragedy at Bondi, reminds us how fragile and precious life is.

The Synod of NSW and ACT joins our congregations, parish missions and faith communities in praying for all who have been traumatised, and/or grieving the shocking death of their loved ones.

The incident at the Assyrian Church was one individual, reacting to a specific church and situation. While it has been declared an act of terrorism, the national terrorism rating has seen no change, nor is any change foreseen.

All congregations and entities should have an Emergency Plan that is familiar to all key personnel.

Local Police have contacted some of our congregations, asking them to help bring people together in peace and unity. If you haven't already, you may consider making contact with your local police, to offer encouragement and seek ways to bring the love of Christ to your wider community.

In the meantime, we remember our calling to be a people defined by love and grace, rather than fear. We cherish all people from all walks of life and we work with God to bring peace to earth. God bless you all,

Rev. Faaimata Havea Hiliau

Next Sunday

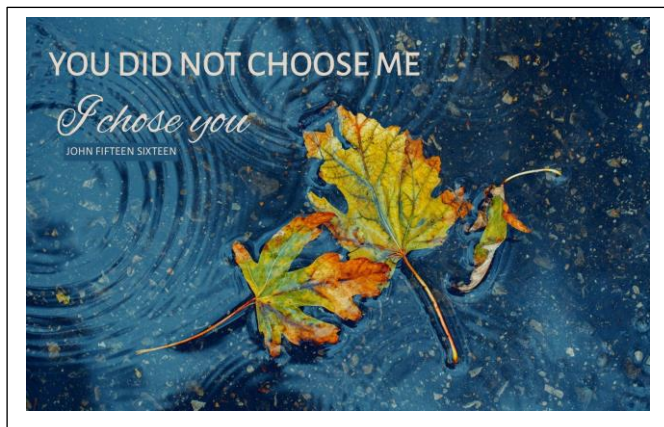
May 5th 2024 at 10am

Easter 6 - A New Song – A New Way

Leader: Robert

Preacher – Deok Hee

Acts 10:44–48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1–6; John 15:9–17



Church Council

Chair

Richard Goodman

Secretary

Sue Baglin

Treasurer

John Baglin

Councillors

Robert M^cAlpine (2024)

Sue Baglin (2025)

Elders

John Baglin (2025) Richard

Goodman (2024)

Dinah Roepers (2024)

Safe Church Contact Person

Richard Goodman