# **Next Sunday**

# January 15 2023, @ 10am Epiphany 2 – Called Together

Leader: Dinah
Preacher Deok Hee

Isaiah 49:1–7; Psalm 40:1–11 ;1 Corinthians 1:1–9; John 1:29–42

#### **Church Council**

ChairDinah RoepersSecretaryRichard GoodmanTreasurerJohn Baglin

**Councillors** Dorothy Makasa (2023) Robert McAlpine (2023)

Sue Baglin (2025)

**Elders** John Baglin (2023) Richard Goodman (2024)

Dinah Roepers (2023)

<u>Safe Church Contact Person</u> Richard Goodman





## 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.

# WELCOME

January 8 2023, @ 10am
Epiphany 1 – Slow Epiphanies – Baptism of Jesus

Leader: Deok Hee
Preacher Deok Hee
Holy Communion Deok Hee

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17



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

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

# Face to face Services Kogarah Uniting Church At 10:00am

# **Some COVID Conditions have changed**

#### We are in the middle of a new wave

Masks are highly recommended given the vulnerability of some of our members. Please do not come in if you are feeling unwell.

Social distancing is also to be observed.

Watch this space for any changes.

### Planning Ahead

- 1. 11.01.2023 Church Council meeting 7pm via Zoom
- 2. 24.01.2023 Worship task Group meeting 7pm via Zoom

#### Please pray for ...

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

Worship leaders; helpers, leaders, followers as we prepare for the new year.

The Kogarah Storehouse and its many clients; Lala and staff of the Storehouse.

Dorothy and Godfrey and the work of LACLA.

Nick Hadges 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: Brian and Rhonda in Banks Lodge and Brian and Rhonda's son Malcolm; Prema, and others whom we name in our hearts; health care workers in this time of COVID-19, including Richard, Millin and Roseline Goodman and Dorothy Makasa and Elin. The people who are feeling anxious because of the continuing unseen and rising numbers of new COVID infections and deaths; those who feel lonely and afraid in this time of continuing infections,.

# **Slow Epiphanies**

God of every epiphany, help us to remember that we begin every journey drenched in your love.
Our identity, being, and calling begins (and ends and begins again) with you. Amen.

Every January, all who journey with the lectionary experience the baptism of Christ, when Jesus is publicly claimed as God's son and called beloved. Every year, we receive this invitation into a new way of seeing. We are slow to welcome this new perspective, but that doesn't stop God from this invitation to see differently.

<u>Isaiah 42</u> begins by proclaiming, "here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights." For Christians, these words are echoed at Jesus' baptism, "this is my son..." (Matthew 3:17), but the opposite may be true for Jewish readers. Instead of hearing Isaiah and thinking "Jesus," they would hear about Jesus and think of "Isaiah." God claims and calls Isaiah as a prophet. This prophet will be "as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon..." (vv. 6–7).

It's important to remember that the author of Isaiah didn't have Jesus in mind when writing this text, but the author of Matthew likely recalls the words of Isaiah.

Psalm 29 reveals God's power and majesty in dramatic natural events. God "sits enthroned over the flood," "breaks the cedars," "flashes forth flames of fire," "causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare." We don't tend to imagine floodwaters and whirling wind when we tell the story of Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan, but it does add a certain heavenly majesty to the moment. Moreover, we expect this kind of drastic change in moments of epiphany. Like Isaiah, it feels like a giant turning point; the former things have passed, new things are declared. We shall never be the same, thanks be to God.

Peter's speech in <u>Acts 10:34–43</u> takes the form of an early creedal statement, speaking to all nations and recounting key gospel events and themes. This succinct proclamation of the Christian story provides an important frame for the meaning of Jesus' baptism. These words might help us give words to our slow epiphanies.

In Matthew 3:13–17, we hear how Jesus begins his public life as a teacher, preacher, and healer by requesting baptism from John. What made the baptism of Jesus so important? John calls everyone – including Jesus – to "repent" (or metanoia in the Greek). Rather than meaning regret or confession, metanoia means "go beyond the mind" or "go into the larger mind." Scholar Cynthia Bourgeault writes

that this "high teaching' was Jesus' central message: the Kingdom of Heaven means reaching beyond black-and white dualities, into the larger heart and mind of God." Rather than "Change your bad ways!" we now hear, "Look! Look! God is inviting you to a new way of seeing! Come into the larger mind, see how God sees!" To "go beyond the mind" or "go into the larger mind" is no easy task, but the baptism of Jesus offers us some clues to how we might take steps to "repent."

One such clue was the paradoxical nature of it all. As he will do so many times more, all-powerful Jesus is submitting to those to whom he brings the gospel. Thus, his baptism is a rite of passage, not to cleanse, but to embody for himself and the world the seemingly upside-down way he will liberate humanity from the prison of sin and small thinking. Through the universal symbol of water, Jesus models his invitation for all to move from unconsciousness (for which water is an archetype) to consciousness — a deeper awareness of just how deeply loved we are by a good and gracious God.

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This week's texts offer insight into Jesus' identity and calling, and into our own. Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism and hears the truth of his identity: Beloved. Child of God. The same can be said of each one of us. While Baptism might mark a beginning in the Christian journey, we are called beloved children of God. Isaiah reminds us that this is not a passive identity but an active calling to God's work of justice in the world. How are you living out the truth of your identity and calling as God's beloved?

On this day, we focus on the message that God speaks to Jesus during the baptism: "You are my Beloved." This message is one that God speaks to each of us. This is reiterated in the reading from Isaiah. With a love that is so freely given, the hardest part may be to learn how to accept it!

January 8 – Baptism of Jesus

On this day, we celebrate the baptism of Jesus by John the baptizer in the Jordan River, and we recall God's words, "This is my beloved Son" and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Some churches observe a renewing of baptism during the service today.

#### BY BRIAN WREN

Lord, when You came to Jordan
And asked to be baptized,
What was Your vow and vision
Of love and sacrifice?
Was there a sudden splendor
Of prophets, priest, and kings,
A wind that stirred the waters,
A blur of mighty wings?

Was this God's crowing moment
Of all You had become,
The Spirit's power and blessing:
"Go now, You are My Son?"
Did scripture join with scripture
In words of sharp surprise:
"The Lord's Messiah shall conquer,
Rejected and despised?

(Image opposite)

\*\*Baptism of Christ\*\*

Jesus Church Troutbeck,

Cumbria Country UK

Manufacturer William Morris Designer Edward Burne Jones Faith rest content with questions
Of when and why and how,
But craves the gift of seeing
What God is doing now.
Lord, bring us to our Jordan
Of newly opened eyes,
Through love, immersed in living,
As You were once Baptized.

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