

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH OOS 15/1/23
CALLED TOGETHER**

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

God comes to us in sunlight and air.
God comes to us in stone and tree.
God comes to us in each other.
Let us worship in joy.
Let us worship in hope.

Surprising God, you made yourself known to Jesus like a dove.
You came to him at the beginning of his ministry and you never left.
We know that today, in this moment, you come to us in ways we might not expect.
We know that today, in this moment, you will never leave us and it is in this promise that we gather
in your name. Amen.

LIGHT THE CANDLE God is here.....God is with us

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We pay our respects to the elders past, present and future of the Gweagal people who have
cared for this land in time beyond our dreaming. We acknowledge that this land on which we
live and move was and always will be Aboriginal land.

SING: God has spoken TIS/158

God has spoken by the prophets,
spoken God's unchanging word,
each, from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
In the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, God's throne eternal,
God the first. and God the last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness in the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time began,
Light from Light, to earth descending,
God, revealed as Son of Man.

God is speaking by God's Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then,
through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith yet standing fast;
God still speaks, God's word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

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PRAYER OF ADORATION, CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God of all light and love,
You have given us words and insights
that cut through to the heart.
You have given us your hand of protection
and you invite us to be your servants –
to join in your work of gathering and uniting,
to become an epiphany people for the whole world:
a light for the nations.
Forgive us, God,
for those times when we have settled too readily
for a vision far smaller than you intend for us –
a little light for a few,
the restoration and reunion of friendly and familiar faces.
Forgive us for our narrow preoccupations,
for our failure to convert our blessings into blessings for others.
Help us become those bearers of light
for a cause greater than our own. **Amen.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God the Redeemer is faithful.
The light of God's wondrous grace shines upon you.
The Holy One has kept their word.
You are chosen, forgiven,
and wholly embraced by Divine Love.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING

How beautiful are your ways, O God!
You open the eyes of the blind.
You bring freedom to those held in bondage
and you invite us, who stumble and stagger,
to take our place in your dream of a world
where all may experience dignity, security, and wholeness.
What a joy it is to be your covenant people!
We give you thanks and praise
for you have taken us by the hand and kept us,
surrounding us with your love and filling us with your hope
that we might become a beacon and light for others. **Amen.**

PEACE

SING: Lord Let Me See TIS/681 verses 1,2,3,5

Lord let me see, see more and more,
see the beauty of a person, not the colour of the skin,
see the faces of the homeless with no-one to take them in,
see discouragement because she'll never win:
see the face of our Lord in the pain:
Lord let me see.

Lord let me hear, hear more and more,
hear the sounds of great rejoicing, hear a person barely sigh;
hear the ring of truth, and hollowness of those who live a lie;
hear the wail of starving people who will die;
hear the voice of our Lord in the cry:
Lord let me hear.

Lord let me care, care more and more,
care for those who feel the loneliness, for those who have no say,
care for friends who have no job and find it hard to face the day,
care for those with whom we sing and work and pray:
and in care Jesus Christ will be found:
Lord let me care.

Lord let me love, love more and more,
love the loveless and the fragile, help them be what they can be,
love the way that I would like them to be looking after me;
for to know you is to love them and be free,
and in love Jesus Christ will be found:
Lord let me love.

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READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 49: 1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God." And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength— he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

PSALM 40: 1-11

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Happy are those who make the Lord their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.

You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you. Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Then I said, "Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.

I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

SING: Sing a New Song TIS/166

Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

Creation sings a new song to the Lord,
the universal energies rejoice,
through all the magnitudes of space and time
creatures proclaim the grandeur of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

The mountains and the valleys and the plains,
the cattle and the wild beasts and the birds,
the shadows and the clouds, the rain and snow,
praise and reflect the bounty of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

The ocean deeps, the currents and the tides,
the diatoms, the fishes, and the whale,
the storm, the reef, the waterspout, the calm,
praise and reflect the wonder of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

The fruit trees in their seasons and the vine,
the eucalypt, the cedar, and the palm,
the lotus and the orchid and the rose,
praise and reflect the beauty of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

The human eye, the shaping hand, the mind
with number and with symbol and design,
in work and play and artistry and prayer,
praise and reflect the wisdom of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

The love of man and woman clear as dawn,
the will for truth and justice broad as day,
the wisdom of the heart profound as night,
praise and reflect the glory of Christ.
Sing a new song, sing a new song,
and wait upon the promise of the Lord.

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READING FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

John 1: 29 - 42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

REFLECTION:

I would like to ask you to think about the moment when you became a Christian or when you realized for the very first time in your life that God loved you or when you realized first time that Jesus is truly the way and the truth and the life in this world and in your life. What was your first reaction after that experience?

I remember the moment when I experienced God and his amazing and unconditional love how much he loves me. It was a dark night. God came to me and showed me and told me how much he loves me even me. I couldn't stop tearing. There was the full of Joy and gratitude in me. I went out and everything in the sky on that night looked like singing and praising God, stars and moon and the trees.... Next day I remember what I did. I went to my friends and I shared this great joy, the experience of God's great love. I couldn't stop sharing this. It was my first reaction after the experience of God's love.

This is precisely what happened to Andrew in our gospel reading. He found the Messiah, he encountered Jesus – and he was so excited he couldn't sit still. Immediately, gratefully, excitedly, he ran to share the good news with his brother Simon. It reads like this in the first chapter of John's Gospel: "(Andrew) first found his brother, Simon and said to him: 'We have found the Messiah'" Then Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus. This was the greatness of Andrew. He was the man who was always introducing others to Jesus. Three different times in the Bible, Andrew comes to centre stage... and each time he is bringing someone to meet Jesus.

Here in John 1, he brings his brother Simon Peter. In John 6, Andrew brings to Jesus the boy with the five loaves and two fish. And in John 12, we find Andrew bringing to Jesus the enquiring Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus and visit with Him. Andrew's greatest joy was sharing the good news of Christ and bringing others into the presence of Christ. Having found Jesus, he could not sit still... he had to share Christ with others. He was so grateful, so thrilled, so excited about Christ that he just could not sit still. He could not keep Jesus to himself.

You know, as I think about this... and as I think about my own personal life and spiritual journey, I can tell you that I also have many strong cases of this like Andrew. It goes with being a Christian. Let me show you what I mean by speaking out of my own personal life with two thoughts. I'm sure

that you will think of others out of your own personal and spiritual life, but for now, let me share these two with you.

First of all, because we are Christians, we can be grateful.

Andrew, along with the people of his time, was longing for a Messiah to come, hoping for a Messiah, praying for a Messiah. When he found the Messiah in Jesus, he was incredibly grateful. You know there is no such thing as an ungrateful Christian. Christianity by definition is our grateful response to God for his love of the world and his gift to the world of Jesus Christ. Responsive gratitude. That's what Christianity is all about. I still remember when I was a high school kid in Korea that I was in the youth conference and the pastor asked all the kids to make a list of what they can be thankful to God for what God has given to them, some wonders of my life. I was having trouble with my list. Half an hour passed and I still didn't know what to write. I closed my eyes and prayed and prayed. "God, please help me.." After few minutes of silence, I started writing something in my list.

1. to be able to see
2. to be able to hear
3. to be able to touch
4. to be able to feel
5. to be able to taste
6. to be able to laugh
7. to be able to breathe
8. to be able to love."

Isn't it amazing how we overlook and take for granted the gifts that God has given us? We become so captivated by man-made things that we sometimes forget the amazing generosity of God. Read the Psalms. They resound on page after page with praise and gratitude to God. Psalm 100 is a classic example:

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands. Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord is God! It is he that made us and we are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations."

A missionary in Africa was preaching his first sermon in a mission church. When time came for the offering, the people danced their offerings forward. They danced and sang praise to God as they brought their offerings to the altar. It was a beautiful moment. What do you think? Should we get our ushers to do that? After the service, he asked one of the people, "Why do you dance and sing when you bring your offering forward on Sunday morning?" Back came the answer: "How could we not dance?"

We are so grateful to God for what He has done for us in sending Jesus Christ to save us... that we have to dance and sing our thanksgiving... and besides it says in the Bible, God loves a cheerful giver." Let me ask you something. Do you feel gratitude to God? When you are Christians, gratitude is the spirit of your lifestyle. When you are a Christian, you can be grateful!

Secondly, because we are Christians, we can be loving.

Again, Andrew is a great example of love. He was big-hearted, generous. He was a loving, caring person who was eager to share and anxious to help others. If only we could learn that lesson from Andrew, life would be better for all of us.

Let me introduce the story of Rev. Son Yang-Won who proclaimed the gospel to the soldier ready to shoot him as well as forgave the murderer of his two oldest sons. He is remembered as a martyr of love who embraced the burden of colonial oppression and war that impaired Korea's modern history.

He converted to Christianity at the age of seven, and, beginning in 1926, ministered in Gyeongnam Province, Busan, Gwangju, Yeosu, and other regions. In 1939, he began his ministry at Aeyangwon, a center for leprosy patients. Because he refused the Shinto Worship forced by Japan, he was put into prison and tortured. After Korea was liberated from the Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Rev. Son returned to the leper house and began to care for patients. He loved lepers so much even to draw the pus from a patient's boil with his own mouth.

In 1948, moreover, Rev. Son's two sons were murdered by a violent communist. When the conflict between atheistic communism and Christian faith resulted in the murder of his sons, he may have immediately felt resentful in front of their dead bodies. For him it was a horrible event comparable to the collapse of the sky or the sinking of the ground, but transformed his anger into such a great love of his enemy in Jesus Christ that he decided to adopt the murderer of his sons. In this way he overcame and dismissed the ideological conflict. In September 1950 he was shot to death while proclaiming the gospel to the soldier who was attempting to shoot him. His age was 48. In memory of his great life Korean Christians speak highly of him as "a little Jesus in Korea."

Now, where did Rev Son Yang-Won learn to love like that, to reach out to people in need like that, to make a difference in people's lives like that? You know, don't you? From Jesus. The same place the disciple Andrew learned it, from Jesus. He was the man who was always introducing others to Jesus and sharing what he learned from Jesus with others. Having found Jesus, he could not sit still... he had to share Christ with others. He was so grateful, so thrilled, so excited about Christ that he just could not sit still. He could not keep Jesus to himself.

Where are you now? What have you learned from Jesus? Are you sharing with others what you have learned and experienced? Are you sharing with others God's amazing love that his only son Jesus came and died on the cross for us? Are you so grateful, so thrilled, so excited about Christ that you cannot sit still? You see, when you are a Christian, you get a strong experience like this. You can be grateful, you can be so excited about Christ, you can be loving. Amen.

OFFERING:

In baptism, God gives us the gift of washing and cleaning, a renewal and a beginning again. Let us live in that newness in all that we do and have.

OFFERING PRAYER:

Self-giving God, today we give out of what has been given to us.

All that we have and all that we are comes from you.

As you bless us in every moment, we pray a blessing on these gifts here freely given, that all who receive this money will be blessed. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

Loving God, we want to open up even more to your love.
Take us by the hand and show us all those places we might serve.
Shoot us like an arrow where you would have us go!
Be our strength, God,
We give thanks, God, for the people in our communities
serving each day without pomp and fanfare –
for those who shape and care for our children,
for those who bring order and promote safety,
in our neighbourhoods and cities,
for those who tend and grow
and help see to it that there is food that ends up on our plates,
for those given to recovery and restoration in so many forms.
Every day, people everywhere give and serve and labour and care –
we take a moment to pause,
to appreciate the gift and the radiance of this work.

We allow God to bring to our mind
some of the people who have shared their light with us this week.

We bring before you the work of The Storehouse and all the organisations, volunteers and staff
who make this work possible.

We remember the work done through the Christmas Bowl
We give thanks for those that God has brought to our minds,
we hold them in our hearts and pray for their sustenance,
wellbeing and encouragement.

Be their strength, God, be their glow.

**We give thanks for the small miracles that allow us
to be functioning and cooperating cities and communities –
for the gift of others,
and for the privilege of playing our part in it all.**

SING: Spirit of Love, you move within creation TIS/603

Spirit of love, you move within creation,
drawing the threads to colour and design:
life into life, you knit our true salvation,
come, work with us,
and weave us into one.

Though we have frayed the fabric of your making,
tearing away from all that you intend,
yet, to be whole, humanity is aching,
come, work with us,
and weave us into one.

Great loom of God, where history is woven,
you are the frame that holds us to the truth,
Christ is the theme, the pattern you have given,
come, work with us,
and weave us into one.

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BLESSING:

Beloved of God,
The God who calls us by name also puts us to work!
God has formed you to be a community of insight and humility.
May the love of God be your strength.
May Christ be your treasure.
And may the Spirit shine with radiant glory within and all around you.
Go in peace to love and serve as an epiphany people!

SENDING SONG: A Christmas Blessing TIS/779

May the feet of God walk with you,
and God's hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you,
and God's ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and God's breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and God's love bring you home.

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