

Kogarah Uniting Church
5th Sunday after Epiphany
Sunday 5th February 2023 @ 10am
Greatness of Heart

Welcome

Acknowledgement of Country

- **We acknowledge that this land is God's land, and God's Spirit dwells here. We pay our respects to the elders, past, present and emerging of the Bidjegal and Gweagal people of the Eora nation who have cared for this land in time beyond our dreaming. This land on which we live and move, was and always will be Aboriginal Land.**

Lighting the Christ candle to acknowledge God's presence with us.

- **God is here!**
- ***God is always here!***
- **God is with us!**
- ***God is always with us!***

Call to worship

To a society that lives in the shadowed recesses of doubt and fear,

God calls us to be light.

To a world where every greed is fed until there is no taste to life,

God calls us to be salt.

To a time when loyalties are discarded as easily as the clothes

we wear,

God calls us to be faithful.

Disciples of Christ, come, let us worship.

Sing: TiS 181 Come, O God of all the Earth (Marty Haugen)

<https://youtu.be/k0118dxvaNw>

Come, O God of all the earth:

come to us O Righteous One;

come, and bring our love to birth:

in the glory of your Son.

Sing out, earth and skies!

Sing of the God who loves you;

raise your joyful cries;

dance to the life around you.

Come, O God of wind and flame:

fill the earth with righteousness;

teach us all to sing your name:

may our lives your love confess.

Sing out, earth and skies!

Sing of the God who loves you;

raise your joyful cries;

dance to the life around you.

Come, O God of flashing light:

twinkling star and burning sun;

God of day and God of night:

in your light we all are one.

Sing out, earth and skies!

Sing of the God who loves you;

raise your joyful cries;

dance to the life around you.

Come, O God of snow and rain:

shower down upon the earth;

come, O God of joy and pain:

God of sorrow, God of mirth.

Sing out, earth and skies!

Sing of the God who loves you;

raise your joyful cries;

dance to the life around you.

Come, O Justice, come, O Peace:

come and shape our hearts anew;

come and make oppression cease:

bring us all to life in you.

Sing out, earth and skies!

Sing of the God who loves you;

raise your joyful cries;

dance to the life around you.

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Opening prayer

Light of the world,

be our light this day.

Creator of life,

preserve our life this day.

Holy God,

pour out your righteousness on us this day.

Light of the world,

we gather to praise you on this day, with our hearts, song, and minds. Amen.

Prayer of confession

In silence, we contemplate the injustices that exist in this community. *(Provide a time of silence.)* God of grace,
forgive us.

In silence, we lament the ways our community has fallen short of shining a light on God's glory. *(Provide a time of silence.)* God of grace,
forgive us.

For times when we have let the busyness of life dominate and oppress,
forgive us.

For times when we have turned away from needs and troubles of and in community,
forgive us.

Guide us as we practice righteousness,
and conduct our affairs generously.

Amen.

Words of affirmation

God has heard our prayers and comes with the light of mercy.

We will share this good news. We will praise God's name.

Thanks be to God! Amen

Peace

Offering

Prayer of dedication

You can make a difference through your gifts.

We will bring the Word of God to life today.

You can make a difference through your gifts.

We will bring hope to the despondent.

You can make a difference through your gifts.

We will bring love to the unloved.

You can make a difference through your gifts.

We will bring friendship to the lonely.

We can make a difference through your gifts.

We will care for the despondent.

You can make a difference through your gifts.

We will bring freedom to the oppressed.

Loving God, receive and bless our offerings, and through the Spirit work joyfully with them.

Amen.

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 58:1–9a, (9b–12)

Isaiah 58:1-12

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that

practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Psalm 112: 1–9, (10)

1Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord,
who greatly delight in his commandments.

2Their descendants will be mighty in the land;

the generation of the upright will be blessed.

3Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.

4They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

5It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

6For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.

7They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.

8Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

9They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honour.

10The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth
and melt away;
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

Sing: •TiS 417 *Loving Spirit* (Shirley E Murray) (Tune: TiS 650)

<https://youtu.be/PDaxnF5cQuc>

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be —
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

Like a mother you enfold me,
hold my life within your own,
feed me with your very body,
form me of your flesh and bone.

Like a father you protect me,
teach me the discerning eye,
hoist me up upon your shoulder,
let me see the world from high.

Friend and lover, in your closeness
I am known and held and blessed:
in your promise is my comfort,
in your presence I may rest.

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be —
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

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Readings from the Christian Scriptures

1 Corinthians 2:1–12, (13–16)

2When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Matthew 5:13–20

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket,

but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection

“You are the Light of the World, the Salt of the Earth!”

Matthew 5: 13-20

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed, blessed, blessed..." Last Sunday we began Jesus' so-called, "sermon on the mount." Jesus began his sermon with blessings upon those who are hungry, those who are poor and lowly. It is good to know what sort of God we have. God blesses the poor. God promises to be there for those who have no one to speak up for them. Today the sermon continues with Jesus saying, "You are the light of the world," and "You are the salt of the earth." Followers are to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Mt 5:16). Jesus continues telling us that the salt which does not taste is worthless; the light which is hidden is nothing but more darkness.

This morning, we would like to think about our identities. It is very important that each of us understand who we are. I have very often asked to myself, "Who are you Deok Hee?" for the last 20 years as a migrant living in Australia. "Who am I?" Sometimes it is one of the most difficult questions for me to answer. Sometimes I remember I struggled and wept because I couldn't find the answer to that question. We have some children in our church who are the second generation of migrant people. They were born in Australia but they look like Korean or Chinese etc. They feel like they belong to two cultures but they don't often feel belonging to any of the cultures. Who are you? I believe some of you also have had similar experiences.

Few days ago, I was trying to research something on Google. I was shocked by an article. There are so many people who commit to suicide every year. More than 450,000 people a year. 1,250 people every day. 55 people every hour. In Korea, 36 people commit suicide each day. I have worked as a youth worker many years ago in few Korean churches in Sydney. I remember I asked young people once, "How many of you thought or tried to commit suicide before?" Around 40% of them answered "yes". They said, when they felt lonely, useless, when they felt they were no more loved by their family and friends, when they lost the purpose of their life, and also because of the pressure from studies, difficult situations, betrayal from friends, hopeless in their life were when they thought about committing suicide.

It is true that many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and we feel we are useless and hopeless by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. You are so special, always special! You are so precious before God. He cares you. He loves you, all of his attention is on you, and he is with you always wherever you are. That is what God promised, and that is why Jesus came to the world 2000 years ago. This is our identities. This is how much we are precious to God, and how much we are so special. This is who you are, who I am. We are so special.

In our gospel reading in Matthew, Jesus tells us clearly who we are. Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." Everyone knows what the purpose and function of salt and light are. You need to understand how valuable salt was in the days of Jesus. In ancient times salt was seen as a necessity of life. Because of its seasoning and preservative qualities was one of the most highly prized minerals. In many societies it was so highly valued that it was used for money. The English word salary is derived from the Latin word Salarium which refers to the payments made to a Roman soldier with salt. The everyday purpose of salt is to preserve, flavour, and purify. What did Jesus mean by this statement? Jesus says to us this morning that we should preserve his teachings, flavour with love the lives of others, and purify that which has gone sour. It is the influence that you have over other people's lives to season, and preserve for eternal life. Christ is saying let your influence season people's life for the kingdom. Salt changes things; a little salt can flavour a big pot of beans. It only takes on salt to flavour a whole community a whole neighbourhood a whole workplace. That's who we are, the followers of Jesus. We are people who have a salt-like quality which adds to the lives of others. We function in a way that enhances or enriches the flavour of life.

Jesus goes on to say, "You are the light of the world."(v.14a) Jesus said in John 8:12, "I

am the light of the world." Now he tells his followers, "You are the light of the world." What does he mean? How are we the light of the world, when Jesus said that he was the light of the world? We don't make our own light, but we reflect the light of Christ, in the same way that the moon reflects the light of the sun. To call ourselves "Christians" or "followers of Christ" is to reflect Jesus' light.

Now what is the difference between salt and light? Salt relates to our character; light relates to our conduct. Salt deals with what we are; light deals with what we do. We know what light does; it dispels darkness, and it attracts. If you're in a dark place with just one light, all eyes will focus on that light. Light is what gives sailors a course to follow across the seas. A light house steers ships away from the rocks. A light bulb lights up a room. Light does not exist for its own glory but to brighten up the world. That is what Jesus is saying to us: We have a responsibility for the world. Jesus concludes by saying this: "Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (v.16) Now that raises a question. How do you know if you're being salt and light? How do you know if you're shaking the salt, and how do you know if you're shining the light? Well, here is the test; if "men see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." You ought to live your life in such a way and reflect the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way, that it not only brings glory to God, but it causes other people to want to glorify God.

A Sunday School teacher was talking to his class one time, and he said, "Boys & girls, here's a watch. What is it for?" They said, "To tell the time." He said, "Well, suppose the watch doesn't keep time. What is it good for?" They said, "Good for nothing." He then took out a pencil and said, "What is this pencil for?" They said, "It's to write with." He said, "Suppose the pencil won't make a mark. What is it good for?" They said, "Good for nothing." The teacher then looked at the class and said, "Boys & girls, whatever else you do, if you do not glorify God by the way you live, and bring others to glorify God, then what are you good for?" They all said, "Good for nothing."

We are all Christians, which means we have to think, act, and live like Christians in this world. Jesus says we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, which also means we have to think, act, and live like the functions of the salt and the light in this world. We should give good taste, really good taste to our family, our neighbors, people around us, our community, and our world. So that people may see our good works and glorify God in heaven. Don't ever forget that you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. We are the devices in a world of varying temperatures. We are the infectious disease that God wants all people to catch. We are the transmission lines, the transformers, that God has chosen. We are the singers of the songs of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, this morning and this following week, I want you to take some time to think about who you are, whether you are doing the functions of the salt and the light in this church, in this wider community, in this world. If you are not sure about your identity, who you are, then remember this, we are the salt and the light of the world who have a responsibility for this difficult world. Amen.

Sing; • TiS 474 *Here in this place new light is streaming / Gather us in* (Marty Haugen).

<https://youtu.be/ar0BXa82F9M>

**Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
we are the old, who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,**

give us the courage to enter the song.

**Here we will take of wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt of the earth.**

**Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.**

**Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven light years away,
but here in this space, the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, now is the day.**

**Gather us in, and hold us forever;
gather us in, and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

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Announcements

Prayers of the people

**May we be the spice
in a world content with banality;
the zest that stings minds focused only on themselves;**

the tartness that awakens mouths that speak only platitudes.

Let us be

the torch that shows the shadowed the way out of their troubles;

the nightlight which comforts the fearful;

the lighthouse which warns of dangers we all face,

**even as we offer up prayers for all who need to feel the salti-ness
of God's tears,**

and the light of the grace we can offer:

(silent prayers).

then

may all who are searching find that community,

not necessarily on a hill,

but in all the ordinary places and people around them,

as we have done in you.

We pray, saying the Prayer Jesus taught ...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven

hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

your will be done

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

and forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory

are yours, now and forever,

Amen.

Sing: You Are Salt for the Earth, O People

Marty Haugen

<https://youtu.be/G88rhg1W4xw>

You are salt for the earth, O people:

salt for the kingdom of God!

Share the flavour of life, O people:

life in the kingdom of God!

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,

bring forth the kingdom of peace;

bring forth the kingdom of justice,

bring forth the city of God.

You are a light on the hill, O people:

light for the city of God!

Shine so holy and bright, O people:

Shine in the kingdom of God!

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,

bring forth the kingdom of peace;

bring forth the kingdom of justice,

bring forth the city of God.

You are a seed of the Word, O people:

bring forth the kingdom of God!

Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice,

grow in the kingdom of God!

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,

bring forth the kingdom of peace;

bring forth the kingdom of justice,

bring forth the city of God.

We are a blest and a pilgrim people:

bound for the kingdom of God!

Love our journey and love our homeland:

love is the kingdom of God!

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,

bring forth the kingdom of peace;

bring forth the kingdom of justice,

bring forth the city of God.

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Send/Bless

(Season after the Epiphany circle blessing)

Go now, beloved,

to follow the love of God
to be surprised by God's wonder
to lift your voice for love and compassion.
Dare to believe that you are people
on a mission of healing and grace.
Feel God's encouragement
to be a blessing as you offer blessings
with your heart and hands and
know that you never, ever go alone.

Amen.

Exit Song: *Praise the God who changes places* TiS 178 (Brian Wren)

Praise the God who changes places,
leaves the lofty seat,
welcomes us with warm embraces,
stoops to wash our feet.

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

Praise the rabbi, speaking, doing
all that God intends,
dying, rising, faith renewing,
calling us his friends.

**Friends be strong!
Hold your heads high!
Freedom is our song! Alleluia!**

**Praise the Breath of Love, whose freedom
spreads our waking wings,
lifting every blight and burden
till the spirit sings:**

**Friends be strong!
Hold your heads high!
Freedom is our song! Alleluia!**

**Praise, until we join the singing
far beyond our sight,
with the Ending-and-Beginning,
dancing in the light.**

**Friends be strong!
Hold your heads high!
Freedom is our song! Alleluia!**

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