

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
FEBRUARY 19, 2023
Last Sunday before Lent
Transfiguration Sunday

The Gathering of the People of God

WELCOME & GREETING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

And also with you.

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.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us see a wonder a vision never seen.

Do we dare to journey?

Yes, for God is there.

Let us start a journey close to God's hill.

Let us tell the world what God will now fulfill.

Do we dare to journey?

Yes, for God is there.

Let us start a journey to worship in this place.

Let us seek our God and meet God face to face.

Do we dare to journey?

Yes, for God is here.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

We may not be able to climb a hill for you, O God,
but we gather to worship you in this place.
We may never see you transfigured in glory in our presence,
but we witness to your transforming power in our living.
We may not have the words to explain all that you are,
but we have hearts that want to worship all that you are.
Enable us to meet you in your glory around us,
that we may worship you in truth and love. Amen

HYMN: Joyful, joyful, we adore you TIS 152

Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you
opening to the sun above.

Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.

Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
singing bird and flowing fountain
call to praise you joyfully.

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean-depth of happy rest.

You our Father, Christ our brother,
all are yours who live in love;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to your joy above.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, for those times we have not followed your call:
when we have thought the cross too heavy,
and its way too rough for us,
when we have walked a more comfortable path,
and hidden the way of love by doing so, we pray...

Have mercy, gracious God.

For those times we have not followed your word,
when it has been too honest with us,
convicting our way of living,
when we have reinterpreted it to suit our way,
and hidden the truth of the gospel by doing so, we pray...

Have mercy, gracious God.

For those times we have not shared your table,
by keeping your goodness to ourselves,
tipping the scales of justice in our favour,
and leaving folks hungry in doing so, we pray...

Have mercy, gracious God.

For the times we have hidden your light,
by living in the shadows,
remaining hidden by the darkness,
embarrassed by your truth,
and hiding your glory in doing so, we pray...

Have mercy, gracious God. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

HYMN: Highways and Byways Seasons 6-18

*Go into the highways and byways,
far beyond the safe and secure.
Gather in the lost and the lonely,
listen to the cries of the poor.
Go up to the skyways and flyways,
paint a rainbow all across the sky.
Living out the love of Christ Jesus,
shining out God's glory in our lives.*

God, make us ready to listen,
ready to worship, ready to pray.
Make us a people of mission,
willing to hear your word and obey.
Help us to welcome the stranger,
reach out to others in need.
Make us a people of holy hospitality.

*Go into the highways and byways,
far beyond the safe and secure.
Gather in the lost and the lonely,
listen to the cries of the poor.
Go up to the skyways and flyways,
paint a rainbow all across the sky.
Living out the love of Christ Jesus,
shining out God's glory in our lives.*

God, make us ready to follow,
ready to go wherever you say.
Guide us through all our tomorrows,
meeting the needs of every day.
Help us encourage each other,
striving for unity,
building a rainbow of diff'rent personalities.

*Go into the highways and byways,
far beyond the safe and secure.
Gather in the lost and the lonely,
listen to the cries of the poor.
Go up to the skyways and flyways,
paint a rainbow all across the sky.
Living out the love of Christ Jesus,*

shining out God's glory in our lives.

God, make us ready to lead and
ready to shoulder some of the load.
Give us the courage we need and
faith to explore a different road.
Give us a spirit of service in our communities.
Teach us to labour in love,
and live responsibly.

*Go into the highways and byways,
far beyond the safe and secure.
Gather in the lost and the lonely,
listen to the cries of the poor.
Go up to the skyways and flyways,
paint a rainbow all across the sky.
Living out the love of Christ Jesus,
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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Exodus 24:12–18

The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there; I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up onto the mountain of God. To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come back to you. Look, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.” Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the Israelites. Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Matthew 17:1–9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for

us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

REFLECTION

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Today is the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany. And the season of Lent begins this Wednesday and we call this Wednesday “Ash Wednesday”. Today we celebrate Transfiguration Sunday. Have you ever heard of Transfiguration Sunday? What do you think of when I say: Transfiguration? It’s not a big holiday of the church like Easter. It’s not even as well known as some of the other things coming up like Palm Sunday or Ash Wednesday. I remember someone said: yeah, I’ve heard of that. Isn’t that when Jesus glowed or something? Yes. That’s right. This is the day that we celebrate Jesus glowed. Now, when we say it like that: there is a special Sunday dedicated to Jesus glowing, it sounds kind of weird. Why would we want to celebrate Jesus glowing? And more to the point, why was Jesus glowing?

The story in our Old Testament reading Exodus 24:12–18 is the first time in the Bible where we see someone glowing. Perhaps you remember that Moses, after he led the people out of bondage, he brought them to the foot of Mt. Sinai where he had first encountered God (the burning bush). And Moses climbed back up the mountain and met with God again. And God gave him a beautiful gift: the 10 Commandments. And then Moses came back down the mountain. But by the time he got back down, something was different. His face was shining! Honestly, when I first heard this story as a kid, I thought: that’s so weird. He was glowing? But now that I’m older, I don’t think it’s so odd anymore. I too have experienced people glowing, well sort of. In fact, we as a culture notice that sometimes people glow. Women, when they are growing life inside of them, when they are pregnant and so excited to be expecting a new life into this world, we can often see their excitement. We say: wow, you are glowing! Or parents and grandparents: when little ones whom we love are in a special show. Let’s say there is a five year old who gets dressed in her little tutu and walks out on stage to raise her arms with all the other little boys and girls learning to dance. We watch her with so much pride that others can see it on our faces. We saying: wow, you are beaming with pride. Or a third one, when we meet someone, someone really special. Someone who we think might just change our lives forever. And we get that feeling

inside of us where we think we might just burst into song. And we go to work the next day after that first date and people say to us, “Wow. You look happy. What happened to you: you are positively glowing.” Right? So we have seen this before. We know that it is possible for people to glow. People glow when they experience life in an abundant way. People glow when they are filled with joy from being in the presence of another whom they are thankful for. People glow when they know they are loved and are in love.

So, how about Moses. Did Moses experience life in an abundant way? Yes, he encountered the one whom created all life and who is continuously recreating us! Did Moses experience the joy of seeing another whom he loved? Yes, he was in the very presence of God! Did Moses know he was loved and did he love in return? There is no greater love than the love of God. When we experience God’s love, we are completely at peace. We experience God, we cannot help but love God in return for God is truly great, truly awesome, truly full. There is nothing like God. But we know that feeling that comes to us from being in God’s presence. So Moses glowed.

Let’s now move to the story of the Transfiguration in Matthew’s gospel. Jesus takes the disciples on a hike. Not all of the disciples, actually, but a few: Peter, James, and John. All follow Jesus up the mountain. So they start on this journey. And who are they going to meet? God, just like Moses. So they climb up, and let me tell you, it’s a workout. This is not an easy climb. It’s hard. I actually love hiking. I love being in the woods. I’m telling you, climbing the mountain is a labour of love. If Jesus hadn’t pulled them along, I don’t think they would have gone. So, the disciples get to the top, and they are really tired. They were weighed down with sleep. But Jesus has important business to do. He talks with Moses and Elijah about his “departure”, which he is about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Jesus is preparing for Lent. But anyway, while they are up there, some amazing things happen. Jesus changes somehow. He is transfigured. In Matthew 17:2 it says Jesus metamorphosis—like a butterfly. Something happens to Jesus. Jesus isn’t just glowing like Moses. He is completely transformed—he is transfigured—hence, Transfiguration Sunday. This is what we are celebrating today. They go up to meet God, and they do indeed meet God, but who is God—Jesus. Jesus allows them to see his full glory.

Actually, I love the butterfly metaphor because caterpillars are always butterflies in a sense. When caterpillars hatch, they have everything in themselves already to be butterflies, but we cannot see it until they go through metamorphosis, this word the Bible uses for Jesus. Until they change, we cannot see what is already inside them. The same is true with Jesus, in a sense. Jesus is always fully human and fully God, but in the transfiguration, in this moment up on the mountain top, Jesus pulls off the veil, so to speak. He allows the disciples to see a little bit more of himself. Jesus lets us see the radiance of God within himself. Jesus isn’t just glowing like Moses, beaming from being in the presence of God, Jesus is actually shining the very light of God. It’s like this love,

this light, this power is shining forth from him as he discusses going to cross for our salvation. Jesus loves us so much, he plans to go to the cross. Jesus intends to go to Jerusalem to give up his life for our sake, and before he does, he makes sure that his disciples have seen his glory. He makes sure they know. If the miracles haven't convinced them; if the way he forgives people—something only God can do hasn't convinced them; if his love for all people hasn't convinced them, now the disciples cannot deny, Jesus is God. Jesus radiates like God in the burning bush. They have actually seen the glory of God in Jesus. That's what we celebrate on Transfiguration Sunday. Jesus is God. Jesus has revealed the glory of God within him.

I would like to encourage you to do three things today:

First, climb the mountain. Doing this will look different for every person. Perhaps you actually do want to climb a physical mountain. Maybe you want to spend time in God's good creation and create space to hear God's voice. For most of us, though, I think this might be a symbolic mountain. Perhaps you will give something up for Lent. Perhaps it will be to take time in prayer or Scripture reading. Perhaps you will commit yourself to service. Whatever mountain you chose to climb is beautiful. Let us all encourage one another to climb something though, to press forward so that we might see God more clearly, just as the disciples did.

Second, be in God's loving presence. Moses's face glowed because he had encountered the One True God. He met God and experienced the deepest love one could ever know. God loves you. God created you and has a plan and a purpose for you. Let us spend time this Lent simply being in God's presence, knowing we are loved. Wake up every morning knowing that God's mercy is new every morning and you are loved.

And lastly, I encourage you to let your light shine. Let us show others how God has transformed our lives. Let us tell them about the deep love of God. Let us use this season of Lent to let Christ's light shine through us. Amen.

HYMN: How good, Lord, to be here TIS 234

How good, Lord, to be here!
your glory fills the night;
your face and garments, like the sun,
shine with unborrowed light.

How good, Lord, to be here,
your beauty to behold,
where Moses and Elijah stand,
your messengers of old.

Fulfiller of the past,
promise of things to be:
we hail your body glorified,
and our redemption see.

Before we taste of death,
we see your Kingdom come;
we still would hold the vision bright,
and make this hill our home.

How good, Lord, to be here!
yet we may not remain;
but since you bid us leave the mount,
come with us to the plain.

PD; words: Joseph Robinson

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Call us out of our complacency, generous God.
Open our ears to your voice,
our eyes to your brilliance,
and our hands and hearts to share the blessings
that you have made possible for us.
We dedicate these gifts and our lives to your service.
Send us out to follow the Christ,
the one with whom you are well pleased,
and in whose name we make our prayer. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Let us pray to the Lord,
who is our refuge and stronghold.
For the health and well-being of our nation,
that all who are fearful and anxious
may be at peace and free from worry:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound,
that we may be alert to their needs,

and care for them in their vulnerability:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

(Silence)

In Silence, let us remember

- the mission and ministry of our Kogarah congregation.
- Worship leaders; helpers, all the members and their families. Brian & Rhonda, Prema and her family, and those who are sick and lonely.
- The Kogarah Storehouse: Russell and Lala and all the staffs and volunteers, and the Early Learning Centre.
- The people of Turkey and Syria.
- Rev Simon Lee, our presbytery chairperson who is in our presbytery prayer roster.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn: O Lord hear my prayer TIS 741

O Lord hear my prayer,
O Lord hear my prayer:
when I call, answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer,
O Lord hear my prayer:
Come and listen to me.

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.
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 for ever. Amen.*

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: Shine, Jesus, Shine TIS 675

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us,
set us free by the truth you now bring us –
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord,
and let there be light.*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness –
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;*

*send forth your word, Lord,
and let there be light.*

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here may our lives tell your story –
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord,
and let there be light.*

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BLESSING

In every journey,
may we encounter the Christ.
On every mountaintop,
may we encounter glory.
In every story,
may we hear a word of grace.
And in every moment,
may we encounter the transforming power of God.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: May you find peace Seasons 7-26

May you find peace,
may you find hope,
may you find joy this day.
May you find love,
may you find rest
here in this place together.

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