Next Sunday

March 12, 2023, @ 10am Lent 3 – With Thirst for New Life

Leader: Deok Hee
Preacher Deok Hee
Holy Communion Deok Hee

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

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

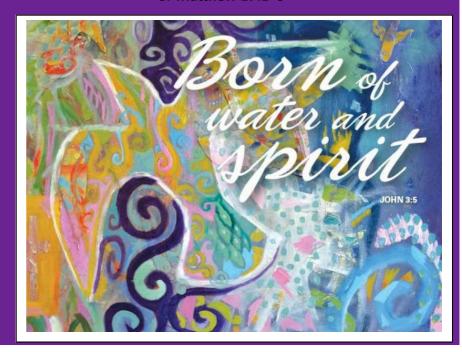
KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

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

March 5, 2023, @ 10am Lent 2 – Through the Night

Leader: Robert Preacher Robert

Genesis 12:1–4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1–5, 13–17; John 3:1–17 or Matthew 17:1–9



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 continuing 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 8.03.2023 Worship Task Group 7pm via Zoom
- 2. 21.03.2023 Church Council via Zoom @ 7:00pm

The Journey to Easter

Add these dates to your diary. Friends are welcome.

- the Lenten journey has begun.
- 2.04.2023 Palm/Passion Sunday 10am
- 6.04.2023 Maundy Thursday 7:30pm
- 7.04 2023 Good Friday 9am + Hot Cross Buns
- 9.04.2023 Easter Day 10am

From 24.02 2023 every Friday @ 12noon Lenten Bible Study (6 sessions)

Please pray for ...

The mission and ministry of our congregation and for our Minister, Deok Hee who is on holiday.

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:

We pray especially today for Brian and Rhonda and their wider family as they continue to grieve for their son Malcolm who recently died.

And for 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.

We continue pray this Sunday for the people of Türkiye and Syria who are suffering after the devastation caused by the earthquake in their region and for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand . May help soon arrive and the people who survived these disasters receive God's comfort. Presbytery Prayer Roster

Today we hold in our prayers Mr Greg McKay, Presbytery Treasurer.

As Abram and Sarai go into their future, and Nicodemus' faith questions take him into the deep of night, we are challenged to figure out what really matters.

Through the Night

Spirit, you lead us into the night.
Sometimes the darkness is scary;
sometimes it brings peace. In the
stillness of the night, help us come to
you. Let us experience you in ways we
have not before. As we wrestle with the
questions of our lives, help us know what
really matters. Amen.

Lord, it is night. Let us be still in the presence of God." These words from "Night Prayer" (A New Zealand Prayer Book/He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 184) echo the essence of our texts for today. In the stillness of the night, we ask questions about God's plans for us and our plans with God. In the night, the Lord keeps watch and does not slumber. In the deep of night, we bring our questions to God that we may not wish to ask during the day.

Genesis 12:1–4a The story of the people of Israel begins with a call and a promise, with Abram and Sarai blessed boldly by God. That story includes their family, then a whole people, and finally the world. Called by God, Abram and Sarai step into the wilderness. There may have been many long nights as they wondered if they had done the right thing and what their place in history might be. For a culture that, in many ways, defined success by descendants, they were not the ones to have been chosen. What is essential is their faith, not their fertility.

The words of **Psalm 121** offer comfort to those who are awake and asking questions of God in the middle of the night. Are the hills our eyes look to a wilderness? Where might we find God providing shelter and peace? In **John 3:1–17**, we meet Nicodemus. The introduction to this story of Nicodemus begins at John 2:23–25, with the crowd's reaction to Jesus' miracles and signs. Jesus distrusts them. Compared to the depths and meaningfulness of Jesus' teachings, their interest is shallow. Then Nicodemus comes to find out more about Jesus.

Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a pious Jew, a teacher, and probably a member of the Sanhedrin. An important man with disciples of his own, he would represent the authority of both the temple and the governing council.

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Nicodemus comes at night, which is a good time for scholars to debate, and possibly with his disciples as Jesus addresses him using the plural form of "you." However, Nicodemus was also still "in the dark" about life in the Spirit. The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is about what matters and what is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. While the night was an acceptable time for scholars to debate, the imagery also raises questions for modern-day readers. What questions do we think about most in the middle of the night? Jesus draws some concrete lines between saved and unsaved, heaven and earth, those born of the Spirit and those who have not. It is a very binary view and one we may struggle with today. How do we know what we know? How did we come to believe what we believe? In the modern day, we can ask how the Holy Spirit may be calling us to reconsider binaries. The Spirit can be seen to call us to question assumptions and move to different understandings.

In **Romans 4:1–5, 13–17**, Paul writes that it was Abraham's faith – his steady trust and dependence on God – that marks him as a righteous person. It is not anything he has done. Faith nurtured through many long nights of asking big questions. The true descendants of Abraham are those who rely on God's grace, not their own achievements.

God created both darkness and light, both day and night. God also created daybreak and twilight. As we consider these texts, we look at them from the standpoint of those who were in both a physical and spiritual wilderness. As Abram, Sarai, the psalmist, and Nicodemus moved through the deep of night, we might imagine them pondering, questioning what matters most about life and faith, and relying on the presence and guidance of God as they venture forth.

(Materials quoted from the Seasons of the Spirit Lenta 2023)

Reclaiming Wilderness

(A Poem read by Richard on Ash Wednesday)

It's time to reclaim the wilderness

I think

to revisit it and recognize
the life that is there.

Too often I have heard people
I have heard myself
say that the desert is a lifeless place,
that it is full of despair and
hopelessness,
a place of desolation and the ending
of things.
But when I sit there
when I pause from my everyday life
and just sit there
I find it teeming with life,

filled to overflowing with little mysteries I might otherwise overlook. I think the biblical people had it right when they used one word for wilderness and desert: both places that in our modern, busy, proper world, we have forgotten, ignored, tried to escape from, tried to insulate ourselves from. But it's time we revisited them for. like the dark of night, there is so much life to be found there, and hope, and newness. It is in the night in the desert in the wilderness – when I let go of me that I can truly grab hold of the one who made me. Donald Schmidt © 2016

(Below: Images from Ash Wednesday 2023)

