

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

March 12, 2023

Lent 3

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 Biddegal 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

God is our Rock and our Salvation

God is our Maker and Redeemer

God is our Provider and Helper

God is our Shepherd and Savior

Let us worship God in prayer and praise

Let us worship God as the body of Christ. Amen.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God,
we find in you the deepest love that we can imagine.
From you comes the water that wells up to eternal life.

You watch over and protect your people.

As we come before you this day help us to let go of all our fears and our worries and to take upon ourselves the mind that you want us to have.

Grant that our prayer may rise to you even as Christ comes down into our hearts. Lead us God and by your grace we will follow and praise your name both now and forevermore. Amen.

HYMN: Praise to the living God TIS 102

Praise to the living God, all praise be to his name,
who was, and is, and is to be, and still the same:
the one eternal God before what now appears,
the First, the Last, beyond all thought his timeless years!

Formless, all lovely forms declare his loveliness;
holy, no holiness of earth can his express.
Behold the Lord of all: creation speaks his praise,
and everywhere, above, below, his will obeys.

God's Spirit freely flows, high surging where it will:
in prophet's word he spoke of old, is speaking still.
Established is God's law and changeless it shall stand,
deep written on the human heart, on sea, on land.

God has eternal life implanted in the soul;
his love shall be our strength and stay while ages roll.
Praise to the living God, all praise be to his name,
who was, and is, and is to be, and still the same!

From the Jewish Yigdal c. 13th cent.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***God of living waters, we confess that we have often turned from you
and wandered in our own wildernesses of fear and doubt.***

Our thirst mounts daily, seeking to be quenched by your redeeming love.

***Yet, when that love is offered to us, we again turn away, unable to truly believe
that you would actually heal and love us.***

We have behaved in very unloving ways.

We have chosen to ignore those in need or to deal only passively with them.

Our hearts are not placed in service to others, but rather in self-serving motives.

***Heal us, merciful God. Wash us again in the living water.
Help us be faithful servants. In Jesus name, we pray. AMEN***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God's voice carries over the waters of creation, reaching out to you and assuring you that you are loved into life's fullness over and over again. You will drink of the living waters and never be thirsty again.

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: Jesus, face of God Seasons 9-22

Jesus, face of God, Holy mystery.
Truth beyond what we've conceived,
bold reality.

Jesus, word of God, Heaven's poetry,
wisdom born beyond our minds,
divine humanity.

Jesus, heart of God, pierced on Calvary.
Love beyond imagining,
Heaven's majesty.

Jesus, song of God, Spirit's melody
sounding deep within our hearts
transforming harmony.
Holy mystery.

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Exodus 17:1–7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

John 4:5–42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I

know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.” Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.”

REFLECTION

“With Thirst for New Life”

Have you ever been thirsty? I don’t mean the average thirst where a drink of water sounds good after a long walk or after working in the garden on a hot summer day. I mean really -- really thirsty, your tongue sticks to the roof of your mouth and you have to peel your lips off of your teeth and all you can think about is water.

In 1995, there was the collapse of the Sampoong Superstore in Seoul, South Korea. The Sampoong shopping centre opened in December 1989 in a high-class area of Seoul, and an estimated 40,000 people shopped in the shopping centre every day. It was a nine-story building with four basement floors and five above grade. 501 people were killed and 937 were injured in the collapse. There were some survivors. The last survivor was 19-year-old girl Sung Hyon Park. She was found 17 days later. She was in the absolutely dark for 408 hours without food and water. When she was rescued, her tongue was dry and cracked and her throat parched. Have you ever been thirsty like that?

I’m sure you know how important water is. We couldn’t live long without it. In fact, life couldn’t exist at all without water. Every living thing is made up mostly of water, from

the tiniest animal or plant you can only see through a microscope, to the largest animals and plants like whales and trees. Over half of your body is made up of water! Let's pretend for a moment that we couldn't get any water. We turn on a tap, and nothing comes out. We go to a friend's house, but they don't have any water either. We go to a river, but the river is dry. We look in the sky, but there are no clouds, so it's not likely to rain. What problems would we suddenly have if we couldn't get any water? (We'd have nothing to drink, we'd have nothing to cook or clean with, we couldn't use the toilets, plants would dry up, etc.) In some places around the world, it's like this. People have to walk for miles and miles each day to find just a little bit of water for their families. That's why it's such an exciting thing when a new well is dug, and good, clean water is found. We all know how important water is!

This morning, I am not talking about our physical thirst and real water H₂O. I am talking about our spiritual thirst and the streams of living water. "Where is God" is one of the questions we often ask when we feel dry and thirsty in our lives. This is a question that I asked many times in my life. Sometimes I didn't know where to go, what to do, how to fix my life. I still remember what I prayed to God every day at that time, "Show me the way". I was totally thirsty and dry, physically and spiritually. What all I needed was just water, living waters that can satisfy my thirst for life.

I would like to introduce you to a woman, who is a lot like me, like us. All of us before we come face to face with our God is like this woman. In listening to her story, we discover our own story. As we see her receive something from God, we ourselves learn to receive from God. I want to introduce you to the woman at the well. She didn't know she was in need of Christ, she didn't know she was dying of thirst. She didn't realize that her life was parched, wilted and dry. She didn't realize what she was hungering for. All she knew was an unending sense of dissatisfaction, an unsettledness, an uneasiness. She had five husbands, each one different than the others. But none of them worked out. One maybe left her for another woman. Still another she left because of the constant bickering. But though the excuses were all different, what was the same was her loneliness. Her awful loneliness.

In Jesus' time in the early morning, the women and children would come to get water. At the well, they would get more than just water. They would get a chance to visit with friends and relatives and catch up on any news. There would be laughing and singing—and a feeling of togetherness. Then they would go home with their water for drinking and cooking and cleaning that day. And this would happen every day of the year. However, this Samaritan woman comes to the well alone, in the heat of the day, when it was so hot, she knew no one else would be there. It probably means that she is not included in the company of the women in her village, possibly because of her troubled history with men, and because she now lives with one who is not her husband. As Jesus and the woman talk, she finds acceptance with Jesus. Even though Jesus appears to know much about her, he does not condemn or reject her because of the

circumstances of her life. She finds the Spring of Living Water there at the well, who touched her in the depths, the part of her heart no one else saw. There, she experienced the living waters. She was renewed, refreshed. She was supplied with strength and encouragement.

Any of you like gardening? I'm not much of a gardener, but one thing I do know is that every plant needs water to grow. And I know this as well - the plants that are in the driest soil: - the ones that are struggling the hardest and beginning to wither - the ones whose leaves are being to curl and which look worse than the rest need more water than those who are in moist ground and whose leaves are rich and full of moisture. And I know too that dry plants respond better to water than they do to added heat - that they thrust down their roots to where they can find it or turn their leaves over so that they better receive it - and receiving it - they change - they begin to look better - they begin to grow - and at length - they produce the fruit that they have been designed to produce. We are the plants in God's garden - placed here for a reason and a purpose - and some of us are awfully dry - and some of us are not. But each one of us, whether we be dry or moist at this very moment, needs the living water that Jesus says he has come to give: - that water which wells up to eternal life, - that water which overflows and brings life to other plants near to it. Streams of living water ... That's what Jesus offered the Samaritan woman at the well, and that's what he offers us as well —streams of living water — life-giving, life-renewing, life-refreshing water that can satisfy those who drink so that we will never thirst again. We are offered water that satisfies our longings in life, water that nourishes our innermost selves. Living waters! That's what we need and that's what Jesus offers us this morning — living waters that can satisfy our thirst for life — living waters that supply us with an endless source of strength and encouragement no matter what we face in life.

Now I want you to get in touch with yourself. Please close your eyes. Imagine yourself as a plant in God's garden. You know that you have been placed here for a reason and a purpose. As that plant you are in touch with the ground in the garden near you. You can feel whether it is dry or moist. When you picture yourself as that plant, is the soil moist or dry? How dry is the soil around you? Right now, ask yourself: Am I dry? Do I need watering? I will be still for a moment so you can answer for yourself: "Am I dry? Do I need water?"

Jesus says to us, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink." For I will give you streams of living waters. That is what Jesus offered the Samaritan woman and that's what he offers us as well: streams of living water that flow from his sufferings and death. Jesus offers streams of living water that bring us blessings and peace.

Are you thirsty? Are you thirsty for God? Are you thirsty for a victorious life? Then friends, just come to Jesus and drink, and He will fill you until you overflow and

become a river of living water that will bless others as well. His invitation has one requirement. **Come whoever is thirsty!!!** Amen.

HYMN: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer TIS 569

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain
whence the living waters flow:
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

PD; Words: William Williams

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Accept the offering we bring, O God,
in response to the love which you have poured into our hearts.
May our lives bear witness to that love in all we say and do.
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

God of every land and nation,

you have created all people and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,
and grant that all people will know the power of your love at work in the world.

We pray for the people of Ukraine,
for all those suffering or afraid,
that you will be close to them and protect them.
We pray for world leaders,
for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide their choices.
We pray for the world that in this moment of crisis,
we may reach out in solidarity to our brothers and sisters in need.
May we walk in your ways so that peace and justice become a reality
for the people of Ukraine and for all the world.

God of mercy,
We pray for the people of Türkiye and Syria following the recent earthquakes.
We mourn the death and destruction,
and pray for those who have died and those who grieve.
We hold in our hearts those who are injured,
and those who have lost loved ones, livelihoods, and homes.
Sustain and guide all responding to this disaster.
Grant those affected courage and resilience,
as they rebuild their lives and communities.
Inspire us to unite in solidarity, acting swiftly and generously,
so that help may reach all who need it.

We pray for our church.
We thank you that though in many ways we are very different,
in Christ you have made us one body.
We thank you for our fellowship and ask that your Holy Spirit
may continually lead us into deeper ways of sharing with each other.
May you guide us in all we do as we seek to offer the good news of Jesus.

We pray for those who are sick or in hospital
and for those who will never recover; for those who care for them.
For those who are depressed, anxious or afraid,
and for those with great problems,
and no one with whom they can share them.
Especially we remember Prema and her family, Brian & Rhonda,
and those who are not well and lonely.
May the grace of Christ give them strength,
give them your healing and comfort.

We pray for those who are struggling because of their hard lives.
Lord, listen to their heart-felt prayers
and help us to be supportive to them and their needs in our prayerful concerns.

Each week we pray for the Georges River Presbytery.
This week especially we remember
Ruth Fyfe, the Chair of PRC in our Presbytery.

Loving God,
We thank you for Ruth and her leadership as the chair of PRC.
Pour upon her your Holy Spirit.
Fill her with patience and peace.
Pour into her heart the joy of the Lord.
Set her heart alight with your love
and keep her rejoicing in the Lord and in the power of his strength.
We conclude our prayers with the prayer Jesus taught us

***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 Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

INVITATION

Come, all you who thirst,
all you who hunger for the bread of life,
all you whose souls cry out for healing;
Come, come to the feast of life.

The Table of Jesus is our place of gathering;
here we are welcomed, wanted, loved,
here there is a place set for us;
Let us come to the feast of life.

COMMUNION HYMN: Feed us now TIS 538

Feed us now, Bread of life, in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew: we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life, come and live within;
let your peace be ours today, Lord Jesus, we pray.

Piece of bread, cup of wine: Lord, this food is good:
love and mercy come to us, your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, cup of wine: who can understand
how his mercy works in these? Yet, Lord, we believe.

God is here, O so near, nearer than our thoughts.
Stay with us where'er we go; Lord, help us to grow.
God is here, O so near, in this heaven's meal.
May we always feed on you – on the bread that is true.

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PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also be with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
our Lord and God, for you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming you brought forth life out of darkness,
and in the love of Christ your Son you set man and woman at the heart of your
creation.

For this we praise you with the faithful of every time and place
joining with the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.***

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

We thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations.

Through Moses you taught us to love your law,
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.
In the fullness of your mercy you became one with us in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself up for us on the cross.
You make us alive together with him,
that we may rejoice in his presence and share his peace.

***By water and the Spirit
you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table:
for by grace we are saved, through faith.***

We remember, on the night of his betrayal, that Jesus took bread, giving thanks, and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat.
This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after supper, he also took the cup and said:
Drink from this all of you.
This is my blood shed for you and for the whole world
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

***Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.***

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Make us one with him,
one with each other,
and one in ministry in the world,
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, in your holy church,
all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty, now and for ever. ***Amen.***

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, Lamb of God,

Have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,

Have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,

Grant us peace.

THE COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Loving God,
we thank you that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
in your eternal kingdom.

***We offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice
through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: God gives us a future TIS 687

God gives us a future, daring us to go
into dreams and dangers on a path unknown.
We will face tomorrow in the Spirit's power,
we will let God change us, for new life starts now.

We must leave behind us sins of yesterday,
for God's new beginning is a better way.
Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back:
God gives hope, and insight, and the strength we lack.

Holy Spirit, teach us how to read the signs,
how to meet the challenge of our troubled times.
Love us into action, stir us into prayer,
till we choose God's life, and find our future there.

BLESSING

Be joyful always; pray continually;
give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.
Whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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 God's blessing – (Benediction)

May God's blessing surround you each day,
as you trust Him and walk in His way.
May His presence within
guard and keep you from sin,
go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

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