

## Next Sunday

**March 26, 2023, @ 10am**  
**Lent 5 – Our of the Depths**

Leader: Deok Hee  
Preacher Deok Hee  
Holy Communion Deok Hee

Ezekiel 37:1–14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6–11; John 11:1–45

### Church Council

Chair Dinah Roepers  
Secretary Richard Goodman  
Treasurer John Baglin

Councillors Dorothy Makasa (2023) Robert M°Alpine (2023)  
Sue Baglin (2025)

Elders John Baglin (2023) Richard Goodman (2024)  
Dinah Roepers (2023)

Safe Church Contact Person Richard Goodman



The Uniting Church in Australia

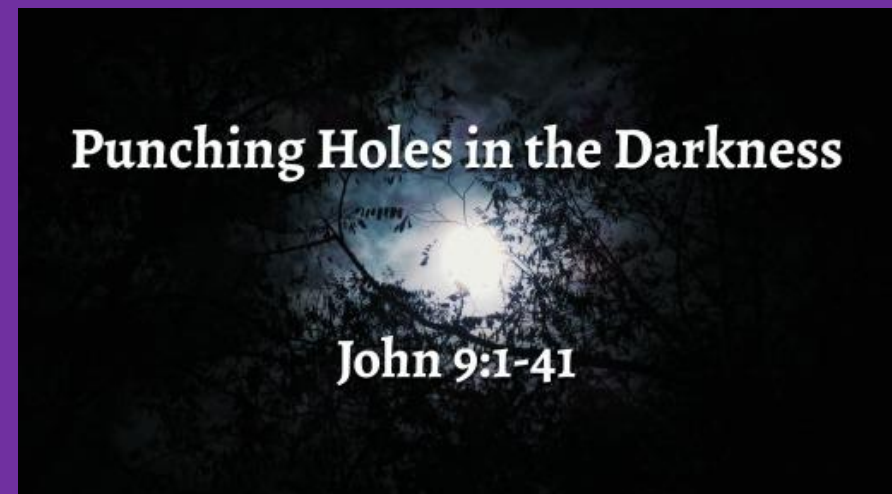
KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

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 19, 2023, @ 10am**  
**Lent 4 – After Vision Shifts**

Leader: Dinah  
Preacher Deok Hee

1 Samuel 16:1–13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8–14; John 9:1–41



For details and information about our church activities and The Kogarah Storehouse, check out the websites: [kogarah.uca.org.au](http://kogarah.uca.org.au) and [www.kogarahstorehouse.org.au](http://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. 21.03.2023 Church Council via Zoom @ 7:00pm
2. 16.04.2023 Special Church meeting after church – bring lunch
3. 18.04.2023 Worship Task Group @ 7:00pm via Zoom

#### **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 17.03 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.*

*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 Hedges 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 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.*

*Pray for Türkiye, Syria, Ukraine, Russia, New Zealand, Northern Queensland*

*Presbytery Prayer Roster*

*Today we hold in our prayers Richard Hanna, Secretary of the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Georges River Presbytery ‘*

#### **Can You Help?**

**On Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March**

**From 12 noon till 1pm**

**The Storehouse will be holding a community lunch, cooked by the Ukrainian Women's Group.**

**We need members of our Congregation to help serve the meal and mix with those attending. Bible Study will be moved forward to 10:30am to allow people to help with/attend the lunch.**

**Let Deo Hee, Richard or Robert know if you can help out.**

# After Vision Shifts

*God, help us to see the ways you turn the ordinary elements of life into something amazing.*

*Shift our perspective to place you at the centre so we may be transformed as we look at the world differently. Amen.*

Change comes when we shift our perspective to see how God shepherds our whole lives. With some mud and spit, a blind person is able to see. How do the ordinary elements of our lives point to the extraordinariness that is God? Ordinary elements of life are also found in Samuel, where a shepherd is called from the field; and in the words of a psalmist, who relies on the care of a shepherd. When our vision shifts, the possibilities of what we may see become endless.

In **1 Samuel 16:1–13**, we turn to the story of Israel’s kings. God calls the prophet Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse of Bethlehem as a future king. Samuel acts in faith to do as God commands. Though Jesse’s seven sons come before Samuel, God has chosen David – the youngest son who is out tending the sheep. David’s family had not considered him as an option. However, their perspective shifts when Samuel declares, “This is the one.”

**Psalms 23** describes God as the shepherd who leads the people out in a new exodus, caring for their needs and offering protection. Ordinary fields and pastures are sources of food and places of refuge and shelter.

**John 9:1–41** God’s restorative love is expressed in Jesus’ life and ministry. Blindness and other ailments were often viewed as punishment for sin in ancient times. The disciples of Jesus and the leaders who oppose him assume this. Biblical scholar Richard Rohrbaugh speaks of an ancient custom of spitting in the presence of

the blind to protect oneself from the “evil eye.” Jesus transforms that act of disdain into one of healing.

Sabbath-keeping was the most visible mark of practising Judaism. Its weekly ritual of renewal reflected the God who “rested” (translating the Hebrew *shabath*) on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2). In this story, Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath creates the initial controversy (verse 16). At issue is what can or cannot be done on the Sabbath, and many oral traditions developed to provide guidance. “Kneading” was technically forbidden. Jesus’ making of mud (verse 6) could be viewed as such an activity. The larger question involves Sabbath and healing. Has Jesus broken or kept the law by performing this act?

The healing creates division within the community. Neighbours divide over whether this is the same man they had known (verse 9). Pharisees divide over whether Jesus is from God or not (verse 16). The man’s parents distance themselves from their son for fear of the religious leaders (verses 21–22). These divisions within the narrative hint at divisions between church and synagogue in the author’s time. The threat of expulsion from the synagogue can be heard as reflecting that later state of affairs.

The transformation of the healed one is not just from blindness to sight. Initially, the blind man is a passive recipient of Jesus’ actions, but he becomes more active as the story goes on. By reporting what has happened, he becomes a teacher of theology to the teachers of theology. Eventually, this healed one becomes a disciple of the one who healed.

**Ephesians 5:8–14** tells us to “live as children of the light.” In our baptism, we have passed into the light of Christ. We are called to follow Christ and to live an open and transparent life, trusting in God’s care.

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*With some mud and some spit, Jesus changed the life of a blind beggar. These ordinary elements were used to change not only the life of one person but also a community as the news of the miracle spread. Our shepherd offers us guidance, refuge, hope, and healing. When we see these as gifts from God rather than as gifts for us, our perspective can change. When we see those we want to cast out or ignore the way God sees them – as individuals who are valued and have worth – our entire world view can change as well.*

## Special Days Commentary

### **March 19 – St. Joseph**

Joseph is mentioned only a few times in scripture, and all his appearances come at the beginning of Jesus' life. The last time he appears is in Luke's account of the trip to Jerusalem when Jesus was 12 years old, leading to traditional speculation that he died before Jesus was an adult.

Matthew's gospel depicts Joseph as a good man who trusted God in the face of a scandalous and challenging situation. Joseph's acceptance of Jesus as his own child established Jesus in the descent of David, thus fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would be of the house and lineage of David.

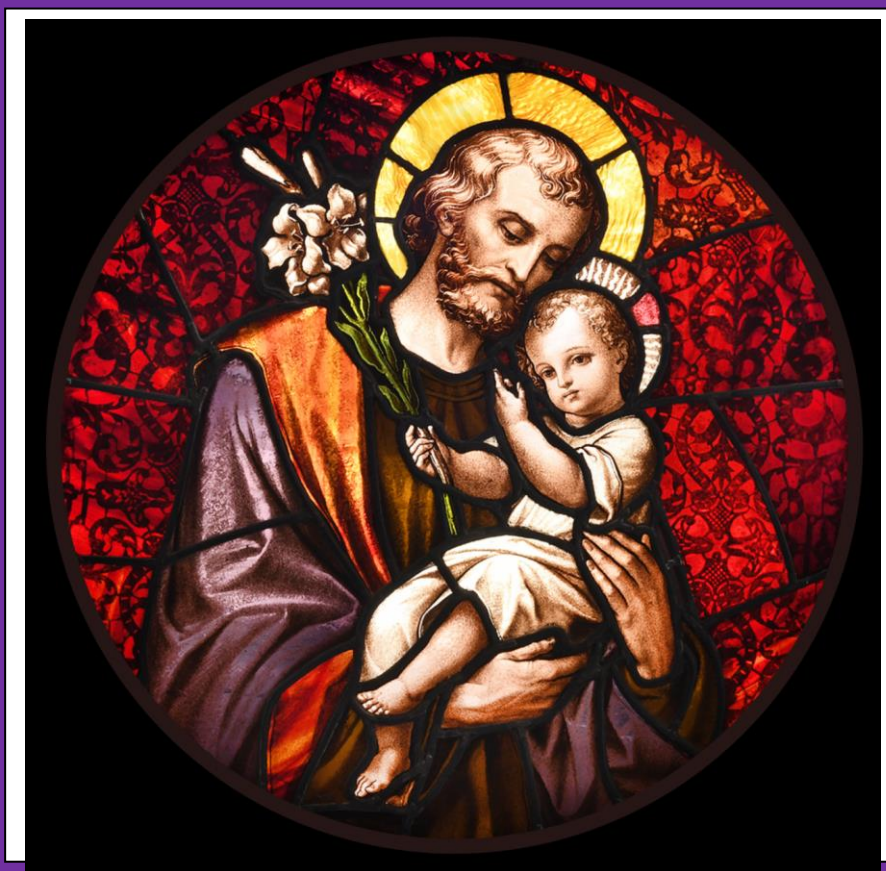
Joseph also models a radical kind of justice when he refuses to follow the biblical mandate to kill Mary for being pregnant with what he can only assume is another man's child (see the commandment in Deuteronomy 22:23–24). Instead, Joseph chooses not only to "allow" her to live but marries her, thus keeping her from being a disgraced member of society.

### **March 24 – Death of Oscar Romero**

This day commemorates the life and witness of El Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero on behalf of the Salvadoran people. On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero was shot and killed while saying Mass. In many churches, this day is a time to focus on the struggles of the faith communities in Central America, to work for social justice, and to pray for the people of that region.

### **March 25 – The Feast of the Annunciation**

Falling precisely nine months before the celebration of Christmas, since the late fourth century, the church has observed this date – officially the Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary – and recalled the angel Gabriel's announcement in Luke 1:26–38. In England, the day is known as Lady Day, and during the Middle Ages, it marked the beginning of the new year.





## Psalm 23 through New Eyes

God is the guardian of my journey.  
God sees me, one small person in this teeming city;  
God shields me, gives me space to breathe;  
Even though crowds press in on me,  
God surrounds me with loving care.  
Surely God will bring me safely home  
and I will rest in God's presence and give thanks.

God is my Advocate.  
God understands and feels my pain.  
God seeks my freedom and joy.  
Even though I remain shut out  
God comes to my rescue.  
Surely Love will be my liberation  
and I will rejoin the land of the living.

God is my gardener. God plants and tends.  
God places me in rich soil  
and carries water to my roots.  
Even though I wonder if there will be enough,  
God will provide.  
Surely bountiful care and grace will fill my life  
and I will rejoice at the harvest.

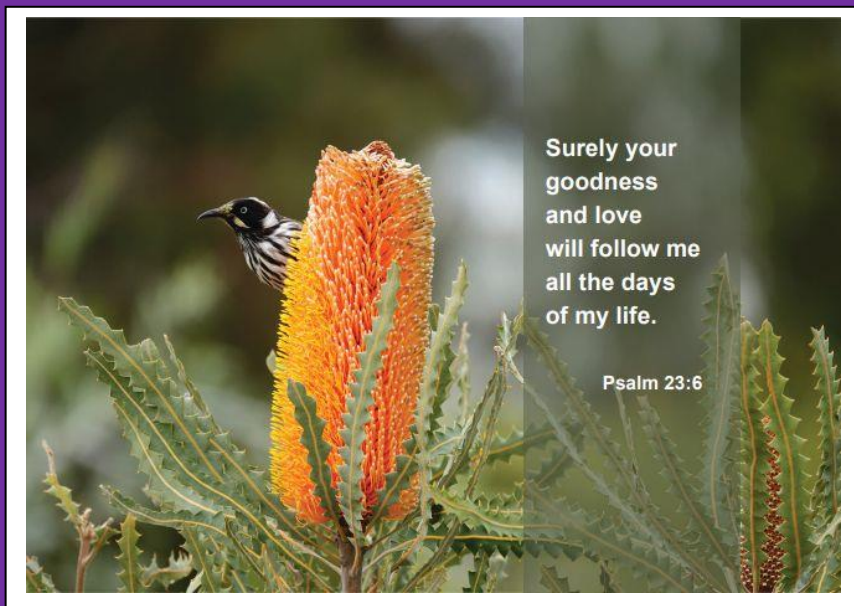
God is my calm centre in the storm.  
God covers me when all is ripped away.  
God alone knows the horror I've seen.  
Even though death assails me from every side  
God holds me close.  
Surely everything around me has changed  
and I will depend upon God every hour.

God is my open door.  
God brings me freedom to know.  
God satisfies my thirst to understand.  
Even though walls have stood locked and impassable,  
God has created a way through.  
Surely God will continue to break down barriers  
and I will cross each new threshold all my days.

God is my carer. God feeds, shelters, embraces me.  
God will guide me as I grow in life and faith.  
Even though life will have bumps and bruises,  
I will be OK because God holds me.  
God will nurture me and protect me  
even as I face bullies.  
God anoints me for good things and I am content.  
Surely goodness, kindness, mercy  
will be with me and flow from me,  
and I will be nurtured  
by the people of God in this place.

God is my mother.  
God looks after me and keeps me safe.  
God makes sure I have enough to eat  
and can go to school.  
Even though my country is at war  
God will surround and protect me.  
Surely my world will be whole  
and peaceful again soon  
and I will be able to do  
what I always dreamed I could do.

*Several years ago, at a Seasons of the Spirit development event, writers and editors were invited to choose a photograph from a magazine and imagine their chosen person speaking the words of Psalm 23 through their experience and situation. Above are some of the reflections offered.*



## Put a Brake on Poker Machine Harm

*Uniting* is working with the *Alliance for Gambling Reform* and *Wesley Mission* on a special pre-election forum on poker machine reform.

Mon 20 March 7pm – 8.15pm via Zoom

REGISTER HERE <https://tinyurl.com/unitinggamblingforum>

Gambling losses have been increasing. Last year over just 3 months (92 days), NSW gamblers lost more than \$2.1 billion. Daily profits for pubs and clubs from poker machines reached \$23.7 million a day in that period.

While the social and financial harm caused by poker machines is widespread, it is concentrated in more disadvantaged communities, where the most vulnerable are targeted by the industry. This is a key issue in the NSW Election!

At the forum we'll hear personal stories of the harms caused by poker machines and discuss:

- what policies are needed to reduce the harm
- how the major parties in the NSW election stack up in their response to these needed reforms
- what practical things you can do to support reform and reduce the harm of poker machines

Speakers include Rev Stu Cameron from Wesley Mission and Kate Seselja from the Alliance for Gambling Reform. Don't miss it!