

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH**

**April 9, 2023**

**Easter**

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**

Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed!***

This day God calls us to be people of the resurrection!

Let us take our place in the procession of all

who have celebrated Christ's resurrection through the centuries.

***Amen! Alleluia!***

***Let us live out the power of Christ raised from the dead.***

Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed!***

Let us worship God!

***Amen!***

**BLESSING OF EASTER CANDLE ON EASTER SUNDAY**

Today we celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, his triumphant victory over sin and death. May this candle shine in our midst to remind us of the paschal mystery in which we share and which is made present in our midst daily.

Let us pray.  
God our Father, source of all light,  
bless this candle and make it holy.  
Through its presence among us  
may the light of Christ, risen in glory,  
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. Amen.

### **LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

God is here  
***God is always here***  
God is with us  
***God is always with us***

### **OPENING PRAYER**

O God, we come as Easter people  
to open our eyes to new sights and sounds.  
We come to find resurrection even when Good Friday hangs so heavily in our world.  
We come to be changed by songs of birds and angels  
and find new signs of life all around us.  
We come to find that we can be different when we open our eyes and ears to joy.  
We come to touch and smell the good news and find that  
you, O God, make all things new again.  
We come to praise you with all of our whole bodies. Alleluia!  
Christ is Risen!  
Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

**HYMN:**        Jesus Christ is risen today        TIS 362  
Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!  
our triumphant holy day, alleluia!  
who so lately on the cross, alleluia!  
suffered to redeem our loss, alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, alleluia!  
unto Christ our heavenly king, alleluia!  
who endured the cross and grave, alleluia!  
sinners to redeem and save. alleluia!

But the pain that he endured, alleluia!  
our salvation has procured; alleluia!  
now exalted he is king, alleluia!  
and the angels ever sing, alleluia!

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

*Almighty God,  
 in raising Jesus from the grave,  
 you shattered the power of sin and death.  
 We confess that we remain captive to doubt and fear,  
 bound by the ways that lead to death.  
 We overlook the poor and the hungry and pass by those who mourn;  
 we are deaf to the cries of the oppressed and indifferent to calls for peace;  
 we despise the weak and abuse the earth you made.  
 Forgive us, God of mercy.  
 Help us to trust your power to change our lives and make us new,  
 that we may know the joy of life abundant  
 given in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Amen.*

**DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

Christ has died. Christ is risen!  
 Because of this, we are forgiven,  
 we are set free to live and love in the way of Christ.  
***Alleluia! Amen.***

**Peace**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
***And also with you.***  
 (Let us exchange a sign of peace among people)

**Hymn:** Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord TIS 390

*(Refrain)*  
*Alleluia, alleluia,*  
*give thanks to the risen Lord,*  
*alleluia, alleluia,*  
*give praise to his name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;  
 he is the king of creation.  
*(Refrain)*

Spread the good news o'er all the earth:  
Jesus has died and has risen.  
*(Refrain)*

We have been crucified with Christ;  
now we shall live forever.  
*(Refrain)*

God has proclaimed his gracious gift:  
new life for all! Alleluia!  
*(Refrain)*

Come, let us praise our living God,  
joyfully sing to our Saviour.  
*(Refrain)*

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The Service of the Word
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## **BIBLE READINGS**

### **Acts 10: 34-43**

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

### **Matthew 28:1-10**

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the

guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

**KUC Choir** "He Arose"

## **REFLECTION**

A man left Sydney for a holiday in Perth. His wife was on a business trip and was planning to meet him the next day. When he reached his hotel he decided to send his wife a quick e-mail. Unable to find the scrap of paper on which he had written her e-mail address, he did his best to type it from memory. Unfortunately, he missed one letter and his note was directed instead to an elderly church minister's wife, whose husband had passed away only the day before. When the grieving widow checked her e-mail, she took one look at the monitor, let out a piercing scream, and fell to the floor dead. At the sound, her family rushed into the room and saw this note on the screen:

Dearest Wife,

Just got checked in. Everything prepared for your arrival tomorrow.

Your Loving Husband.

P.S: Sure is hot down here.

What could be more powerful than news from the other side of death? Easter is that and more. Not an email message, but a living message. Not from man, but from God. It's GOOD NEWS !

Hallelujah, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed hallelujah! Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. We gathered here today to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, our risen Lord. Our time of tears throughout Lent has come to a happy ending with tears of joy over the Resurrection. Easter is the longest of the Christian 'sacred' holidays. Although Christmas gives us two days off, one for Christmas and one for Boxing Day, Christmas day itself is the only 'sacred' holiday. For many people in Australia Easter means a four-day weekend. Easter is what Christianity is all about. Without Easter, Christmas would be nothing. Easter is so important that the early Christians would greet each other by saying "He is risen!" and the response would be "He is risen indeed!" The fact that 2000 years later we gather together to celebrate the risen Christ is PROOF that Christ is "risen indeed."

It is possible that some of you may already know the answer to my question, but let me pose it: "Which country in the World has no religious freedom?" The answer is North Korea, where no religion is allowed. Since the Korean War, as you know, the Korean peninsula has been divided last 80 years. Officially, the war hasn't finished yet. In order to maintain their kingdom, the human rights and freedom of religion in North Korea is awful, with many people living in fear of the government and suffering under harsh and oppressive conditions. Definitely Christianity is illegal. I heard that churches and groups are secretly gathered in North Korea, but there is no concrete evidence to prove it. It just seemed to be a hopeful rumour. It may have been possible in the early stages after the division, but I cannot guarantee it because there have been three or four generations since then. Christians often worship their faith in secret, in underground churches, or in their own homes, risking severe punishment, including imprisonment or execution. Despite this risk, it is a small number, that continue to practice Christianity, as they believe..... it gives a sense of hope and comfort in an otherwise challenging and oppressive environment.

About 20 years ago, a person named Pastor Kim Jin-hong encouraged his congregation to pray for North Korea during Lent because, at the time, North Korea was suffering from a serious famine, causing many people to die. After Lent and Easter Sunday, Pastor Kim was so moved to tears because the church had fundraised an unimaginable amount of offerings. Straight after, he suggested to the government to provide aid for the people in North Korea, but the response was impossible due to the ongoing tension between North and South Korea. But Pastor Kim continued to pray and look for other ways to help. Through the advice of legal team and World vision and Mission organisations, he discovered a way to help North Korea through China and Russia. With God's help, he even received a special invitation to visit North Korea on the condition of being humanitarian.

He visited North Korea with a fearful and trembling heart as it was not a common occasion. While staying in North Korea under the surveillance of a few North Korean agents, he felt a strange sensation from a staff member who was serving him food. When agents' eyes were distracted, a North Korean woman quickly passed by Kim and said one word, "Hallelujah, Jesus rose again." And she quickly left. He was stunned. Could he have misheard? A few days later, the woman approached him again and whispered in a small voice, "Hallelujah, Jesus rose again." Imagine this. His heart grew hot, and he couldn't control his emotions, so he had to run to the bathroom". This incident brought a change in his life. He returned home with the conviction that there were Christians in North Korea. He couldn't stop praying for them and continues to engage in various missions for North Korea to this day.

I would say, it's possible that because our lives are too comfortable and our faith too rational and intellectual, we may not fully understand the meaning of Jesus' sufferings. That's why we may not be able to fully experience the immense joy of resurrection. However, the Christians in North Korea, who endure suffering and even death for their faith, may experience a deeper sense of joy during the Easter season. The fact that they are currently enduring great pain and persecution makes Jesus' suffering more real to them, and they may vividly feel... God's love in the midst of their struggles. Even though their realities are still around them, they strongly hold on to their faith with unwavering devotion, which makes their celebration of the resurrection even more meaningful.

As we reflect on the example of North Korean Christians, we can learn to appreciate Jesus' sacrifice and the miraculous power of His resurrection. Let's ask this question to ourselves. How much do we realize and appreciate Jesus' resurrection? How much do we understand Jesus' suffering and sacrifice? Do we truly understand what Jesus' death and resurrection mean for us, for our families, and for all of humanity? If we understand all of this, if we meet and experience the Lord who suffered and died on the cross and rose three days later for us, we cannot help but give thanks to God. We cannot help but share this joyful news of the Jesus' resurrection with our families and people around us.

A first year student in a Catholic seminary was told by the dean that he should plan to preach the sermon in chapel the following day. He had never preached a sermon before, he was nervous and afraid, and he stayed up all night, but in the morning, he didn't have a sermon. He stood in the pulpit, looked out at his classmates and said "Do you know what I am going to say?" All of them shook their heads "no" and he said "Neither do I. The service has ended. Go in peace." The dean was not happy. "I'll give you another chance tomorrow, and you had better have a sermon." Again he stayed up all night; and again he couldn't come up with a sermon. Next morning, he stood in the pulpit and asked "Do you know what I am going to say?" The students all nodded their heads "yes." "Then there is no reason to tell you" he said. "The service has ended. Go in peace." Now the dean was angry. "I'll give you one more chance; if you don't have a sermon tomorrow, you will be asked to leave the seminary." Again, no sermon came. He stood in the pulpit the next day and asked "Do you know what I am going to say?" Half of the students nodded "yes" and the other half shook their heads "no." The student preacher then announced "Those who know, tell those who don't know. The service has ended. Go in peace." The seminary dean walked over to the student, put his arm over the student's shoulders, and said "Those who know, tell those who don't know. Today, the gospel has been proclaimed."

Brothers and sisters in Christ!

Christ is risen, risen indeed! "Those who know, tell those who don't know." Let us share this great and joyful news with all those around us, those in pain, the poor, the

hopeless in war, the lonely, the lost loved ones etc.. May the Lord bless you and keep you, may he lift up his grace in his face upon you, and grant to your Grace and peace, and have a blessed Easter celebration of our eternal life, Amen.

**HYMN**            Yours be the glory            TIS 380

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory over death you've won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes, where your body lay.

*(Refrain)*

*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

See, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;  
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,  
for the Lord is living, death has lost its sting.

*(Refrain)*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life;  
life is naught without you: aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors through your deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to your home above.

*(Refrain)*

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

Loving God, we thank you for this Easter Day –  
with its promise of new life, and new opportunities.  
Use us, and our gifts, to love and to serve you,  
and to witness to Christ whom you have raised.  
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

Let us join our hearts and voices to offer our prayers to God.  
God of the risen Christ,



we rejoice in your resurrection power, which is fully ours in Jesus Christ,  
and we bring our prayers to you.

We pray for those who suffer in places  
there is armed conflict, war and terrorism and disaster.

Living Lord, may your peace be with them  
and help them to know your love in the message of Easter,  
and let them rejoice in the gift of life in Christ.

God of salvation, we pray for our country:  
for those in leadership;  
who frame our laws and shape our common life;  
who keep the peace and administer justice;  
for those who teach and those who heal  
for all who serve our nation.

Living Lord, may your wisdom be with them  
and help them to know your love in the message of Easter,  
and to rejoice in the gift of life in Christ.

God of love,  
we pray for our neighbours:  
for whom this Easter is one of misery and loneliness;  
those who are separated from loved ones,  
immigrants who are lonely in a strange environment,  
alcoholics and other addicts  
for whom no day is ever a holiday, homeless young people,  
and the inmates of prisons;

Living Lord, may your hope be with them  
and help them to know your love in the message of Easter,  
and to rejoice in the gift of life in Christ.

God of mercy,  
we pray for our congregation  
and for those who have worshipped here over the years,  
and for those who visit here today.  
Also for those who could not join us today.  
Let us praise your blessings and love in our daily lives.  
Lord, make us your witnesses.

Fill our lives with your love and your truth  
that others will know we have been with Christ.

Help us to have vision and dream as a Christian congregation.

Living Lord, may your joy be with us,  
all who are in this congregation.  
and help us to know your love in the message of Easter,  
and to rejoice in the gift of life in Christ.

God of power,  
We pray for the sick and the suffering  
who are known in this congregation.  
We remember, Prema and her family, Brian & Rhonda,  
all of our elderly people for their health, and all others who are not well.

Living Lord, may your healing be with them,  
and help them to know your love in the message of Easter,  
and to rejoice in the gift of life in Christ.  
We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **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 Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
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### **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.

**HYMN:**            Let us talents and tongues employ            TIS 537

Let us talents and tongues employ,  
reaching out with a shout of joy;  
bread is broken, the wine is poured,  
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

*(Refrain)*

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,  
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,  
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Christ is able to make us one,  
at the table he sets the tone,  
teaching people to live to bless,  
love in word and in deed express.

*(Refrain)*

Jesus calls us in, sends us out  
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,  
gives us love to tell, bread to share;  
God-Immanuel everywhere.

*(Refrain)*

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## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

***And also 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.***

Loving and Compassionate God, Father,  
all powerful and ever-living,  
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We praise you with great joy on this Easter day,  
when Christ rose in fulfilment of the promises you made

through the law and the prophets.  
He is the true Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

By dying he destroyed our death, by rising he restored our life.  
And so with all creation, and with all the company of the redeemed,  
we magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you, saying;

***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.***

Lord, you are holy indeed.  
You are gracious to all who turn to you  
And keep your promises to all who trust in you.  
With grateful hearts we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

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

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.”

***When we eat this bread and drink this cup  
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,  
until you come in glory.***

Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain,  
to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and might,  
honour and glory and praise.

***Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.  
You are the Saviour of the world.***

Loving God, send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts,  
that the bread we break may be for us communion in the body of Christ,  
and the cup of blessing which we bless may be for us communion  
in the blood of Christ; that being built up in love  
we may be strengthened in the unity of the faith  
and come to the fullness of the stature of Christ our Lord. 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**

Living God,  
the disciples knew the Risen Christ in the breaking of bread:  
open our hearts, that we may be raised to new life  
in the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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**HYMN** It is well with my soul

When peace, like a river, attends all my way,  
when sorrows like sea-billows roll,  
whatever my path, you have taught me to say,  
'It is well, it is well with my soul.'

*(Refrain)*

*'It is well with my soul,  
it is well, it is well with my soul.'*

Though Satan may buffet, though trials may come,  
let this calm assurance control:  
that Christ knows my need and my helplessness here  
and has shed his own blood for my soul.

*(Refrain)*

The joy, O the joy of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more;  
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

*(Refrain)*

For me it is Christ, it is Christ now to live!  
Though death's waters over me roll,  
no fear shall be mine, for in death as in life  
you will whisper your peace to my soul.

*(Refrain)*

But, Lord, for your coming in glory we wait;  
the sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend:  
bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul!

*(Refrain)*

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## **BLESSING**

God of our salvation,  
you have restored us to life,  
you have brought us back again into your love  
by the triumphant death and resurrection of Christ:  
continue to heal us as we go to live and work  
in the power of your Spirit, to your praise and glory.

May 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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