

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

May 14, 2023

Easter 6

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.

KUC VISION STATEMENTS

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

CALL TO WORSHIP

"If you love me" Jesus says.

We show that we do by loving.

"If you love me" Jesus says.

We show that we do by sharing.

"If you love me" Jesus says.

We show that we do by serving.

"If you love me" Jesus says.

We show that we do by worshipping.

So let us worship God.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us
God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Ever-loving and transforming God,
we come this morning with praise and thanksgiving.
We come as part of your family—
a family that binds us together across time and space,
across the barriers of race, class, and gender.
May this time of worship empower us to embody your good news.
May we always abide in you, and you in us.
May we be immersed in the water of your word and promises and love.
May we be so filled with your Spirit
that we can't help but proclaim to all your goodness as our God.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMN: All creatures of our God and King TIS 100 (Verses 1, 2, 3 and 7)

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Swift-rushing winds that are so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
Fresh-rising morn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice:
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
alleluia, alleluia!
O fire, so masterful and bright,
providing us with warmth and light,
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

PD; Based on Laudato sia Dio mio Signore
the 'Canticle of the Sun' of Francis of Assisi 1182–1226 by William Henry Draper 1855–1933 alt.
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***Forgiving One, unseen yet known,
it has been another long week where many have felt unloved and unnoticed.
We have done our best. We have loved even when we have felt lost.
We have been gracious when we have felt ignored.
Forgiving One, seeing and forgiving, knowing and loving,
we turn away from this hurt and frustration to find again
the grace we all need to love again.
Hear us.
Forgive us.
Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

No one has seen God. Yet Jesus has shown us God, and God
is love. God is the love that we find in community
and the commandment we hold together.
You are loved. We are loved. All is forgiven. All is love.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

HYMN: As the deer pants TIS 703

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire

and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength and shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.
You alone are my strength and shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

You're my friend and you are my brother
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.
You alone are my strength and shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

© Restoration Music Ltd by permission of Marnatha Music ;Words & Music: Martin Nystrom
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 66:8–20

Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept us among the living and has not let our feet slip. For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs; you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place. I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows, those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatted calves, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me. I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has heard the words of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

REFLECTION

I would like to begin my reflection this morning with a question. I need a three-letter word that means “Totally Awesome Person. What is it? “MOM”, it’s mom. Today is Mothers’ Day, the best time to say how much we love and care for our mothers. It is the day we descend on Mom to show her our love.

Sara, a little girl, is sitting and watching her mother wash the dishes at the kitchen sink. She notices that her mother has several white hairs sticking out of her dark hair. Sara looks at her mother and curiously asks, 'Why are some of your hairs white, Mum?' Her mother answers, 'Well Sara, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white.' Sara thinks about this revelation for a while and then inquires, 'Mummy, why are all of grandma's hairs white?'

People are so loyal to their mothers, because a mother's love is so great. A mother gives and gives and gives asking nothing in return. And no matter what happens, they still love. A mother's love is so unconditional and exceptional. Happy Mother’s Day and I hope you're having the best day ever.

Many of us have probably seen the movie: Home Alone. This is a Christmas comedy film. The main star of the film is Macaulay Culkin. In it, a large family goes on a Christmas vacation, accidentally leaving their eight year-old-son Kevin at home. When they get to their destination they realize what they have done, but they are not able to quickly book a return flight home. In the meantime, robbers try breaking into the family house but the young kid is able to stop their schemes. Kevin tricks the pair into thinking his entire family is home, forcing them to put their plans on hold. However, two robbers, Harry and Marv realize that Kevin is home alone, and on Christmas Eve, Kevin overhears them discussing plans to break into his house that night. Kevin equips the house with numerous booby traps. Harry and Marv break in, springing the traps and suffering various injuries. We know the rest of the story. Two robbers are caught by the police and Kevin reunites with his family.

In our Gospel lesson for this morning, Jesus says: "I will not leave you like orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me." Jesus wanted the disciples to know that when he ascended into heaven they would not be left home alone. In this passage, Jesus is in the Upper Room and about to leave his disciples. He is about to go. He tells them, "Let not your heart be troubled; I am going to leave you to prepare a place for you. I will come again to receive you unto myself." I have to go right now, though. The disciples had been walking with Jesus for three years. They had been hanging with him for three years, seen his miracles, heard his words—and all of a sudden, they hear "I have to go!" "You mean we committed our lives to you, walked with you, talked with you, prayed with you, and you have to go? We have a problem. You can't leave us after 3 years like this!" They don't understand why he has to leave. Jesus explains, "I have to leave to get you a place ready for eternity. But I will come again." That leads Jesus into one of the most powerful discussions in the Bible, because he begins talking about the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells his disciples that he will pray to the Father and the Father will send another Counsellor—to be with them forever. This Counsellor is the Holy Spirit. The word used to describe the Holy Spirit is translated as comforter, counsellor, advocate or friend.

When I was a child, I used to think that adults had all the answers. I used to think that adults somehow had it all together. Now that I am an adult. I know for a fact that this is not true. Some of us may think that we are completely independent or that we can make it on our own without any help, but this isn't so. We all need someone to watch over us, to shepherd and guide us. And God has sent such a presence to those of us who trust in Jesus--the Holy Spirit! When Jesus told the disciples that he was going away, they must have felt like they were being left alone, but Jesus assures them, Jesus assures us, that we will not be left alone. He says, "I will never leave you; I will never forsake you."

I found a song titled "God is Watching Us."

The lyrics of that song are as follows:

And this is true, this is so true!!!

No matter what obstacles life puts in our way.....

No matter what obstacles we put in our own way....

No matter how bad or good we feel.....

No matter who we are....

No matter where we are.....

Our Counsellor, our Advocate, our friend, our God is right there by our side!

He weeps with us.... He weeps for us....

And if we let him.... if we let Him.....

He guides us in our decisions..... He lightens our load....

He enlightens our minds.... He changes our natures.....

He creates new people..... He helps us to grow....
He enables us to love.... He makes life worth living.....

I remember waking up to the presence of the living God in my life.... and I'll tell you that before this occurred, I did not know what living was about! I had been so miserable, so angry, so hopeless, so competitive, so stressed out!!! But when I began to see, feel, sense, and understand that God was with me, that Christ loved me and had died for me, even me, I went to a friend and told him, "You know, life is actually worth living after-all!" You see, it is kind of like we don't know what we're missing until we find it! "I was blind but now I see!!!" Praise God I see!!! I didn't know how miserable my life was until I found the God of Love. But friends, when I came upon that treasure hidden in a field, I went and sold all I had in order to buy that field, in order to own that treasure. Because there is nothing, absolutely nothing that compares to knowing the Living and Loving God in a very personal way.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were before you were called. We were all sinners before God. But God called us and we accepted him as our Lord. And now you know him because he lives in you and lives with you. Yes, my friends, for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, God actually lives in them, lives in us. We are never ever alone. The next time you start feeling lonely, just remember that! God is our Father and mother and he has never, will never, and would never go on a vacation.... and leave us home alone!!!

Like I said, earlier, God the Holy Spirit is our Advocate, Counsellor, Comforter and friend. He is our Advocate in that he is here with us to speak on our behalf, to defend us from our enemies in the world, to defend us from our enemies within us. The Holy Spirit is also our Counsellor. He enables us to make the right decisions and choices. In 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul says, "It is only our own spirit within us that knows all about us; in the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God....But we have the mind of Christ." We have the mind of Christ living within us. Therefore, we are able to know right from wrong. If we allow him, the Holy Spirit will lead us down the straight and narrow path which leads to right decisions, right actions, and the most wondrous of experiences, abundant, joy filled life, productive life, loving relationships and good friends. No, we are never home alone. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, who is there when we are hurting, who is able to give us peace, that peace which passes all understanding, no matter how difficult the situation is we face. This Comforter informs us that God is our friend, that God hears our prayers, that God feels our pain, that God is there to help us through the bad times as well as the good times.

A woman, who was a widow, from my home church was diagnosed with terminal cancer many years ago. Before she was about to go through Chemo-therapy the doctor asked her if she was scared. "No," she replied. "Jesus is with me." Do we have that kind of Comfort? Do we have that kind of friend? We do if we have Jesus living in us! Jesus has

not left us as orphans! He has given us the Holy Spirit to be with us forever! He is our Advocate, Counsellor, Comforter, and Friend. Praise God! Praise God! Amen.

HYMN: Shout to the Lord TIS 738

My Jesus, my saviour
Lord, there is none like you;
all of my days, I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands;
forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise
I have in you!*

© 1993 D. Zschech / Hillsong Music Australia

Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Loving God, whose children we are, receive these gifts we offer.
May they help bring others closer to you,
and experience and appreciate your presence in their lives. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Dear God, you are the light that shines in the darkness.
You are the God of hope in the midst of despair.
Extended in time and space, past, present and future
all belong to you, so we are never alone –
your unseen presence has been with us always,
and your mighty hand has been there to rescue us
from the pit and to place our feet on firmer ground.
Lord, we lift up our world in prayer.

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations,
in the ways of justice and peace;
that we may honour one another and serve the common good.
Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation,
that we may use its resources rightly
in the service of others and to your honour and glory.
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,
and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.
Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind,
Or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles,
And bring them the joy of your salvation.
We especially pray for those who are sick
and in suffering in this congregation.
(We remember Brian and Rhonda, Prema and her family, Denis and Dolly and their
children, and all others who are not well.)
Spirit of God, may your healing hand rest upon them,
give them your intensive care and healing,
may they know your hope and comfort, your power and assurance.
We pray for our Kogarah Uniting Church, all the leaders,
and members and families that we may be open and welcoming
to all who come within our doors.
Guide us in our relationships with each other,
within the church, within our families, with our neighbours,
and draw us together in your fellowship of love and joy and holiness.
In Jesus' name we pray. 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

INVITATION

Jesus said, "Come to me,

all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.”
“I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
the Lord has prepared his table for true believers.
If you are sorry for your sins and sincerely follow Jesus Christ
as your Saviour and Lord,
you are invited to come with gladness to this table of the Lord.

COMMUNION HYMN: Be known to us in breaking bread TIS/514

Be known to us in breaking bread,
but do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
your table in our heart.

There share with us in love divine;
your body and your blood,
that living bread, that heavenly wine,
be our immortal food.

© PD; text, James Montgomery
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

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.

Father and Mother, all-powerful and everliving God,
it is indeed right,
it is our joy and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
You created all things and made us in your image.
When we had fallen into sin,

you gave your only Son to be our Saviour.

He shared our human nature, and died on the cross.
You raised him from the dead,
and exalted him to your right hand in glory,
where he lives for ever to pray for us.
Through him you sent your holy and life-giving Spirit
and made us your people, a royal priesthood,
to stand before you to proclaim your glory
and to celebrate your mighty acts.

And so we praise you
with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels and 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 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.”

Therefore, God, as he has commanded us,
we do this in remembrance of him;
and we ask you to accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Send upon us the Holy Spirit,
that we who receive your gifts may share in the body and blood of Christ.
Make us one body with him.
Accept us as we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice,
and bring us with the whole creation to your heavenly kingdom.

We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him, with him, in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be given to you, almighty God,
from all who dwell in earth and in heaven throughout all ages.
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

***God of glory,
you nourish us with the bread of life
and the cup of salvation.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit,
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
--

HYMN: Stand up, stand up for Jesus TIS 592

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
as soldiers of the cross;
lift high his royal banner,
it must not suffer loss;
from victory on to victory
his army he shall lead
till every foe is vanquished
and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
the trumpet call obey;
forth to the mighty conflict
in this his glorious day!
All Christians true now serve him
against unnumbered foes;
let courage rise with danger,
and strength to strength oppose.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
stand in his strength alone:
the arm of flesh will fail you,
you dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armour,
each piece put on with prayer;
where duty calls, or danger,
be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
the strife will not be long:
this day the noise of battle,
the next the triumph song.
To those who are victorious
a crown of life shall be;
they with the King of Glory
shall reign eternally.

Words: George Duffield (1818-88)

Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

BLESSING

Go in peace,
love and care for one another in Christ's name,
and may the blessing of God the Creator,
the peace of God the Christ,
and the power of God the Holy Spirit,
abide with you as you travel where he leads you,
both now and forevermore. **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.

© 1982 Cliff Barrows

Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150