

KUC ORDER OF SERVICE 2/7/23

WELCOMING COMMUNITY

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome

We are called together by the Christ. We are called in obedience to his word.

We are called in the Spirit of love.

All are welcome, for the undeniable grace and love of God bids us come.

Let us worship the living God.

Holy one, ancient of days and yet eternally present, we come, responding to your welcome, remembering that we are your beloved children; recalling your goodness and grace; knowing that we will find fullness of life here. Unite us with one another in your love. Come and let us be renewed yet again. Amen.

LIGHT THE CANDLE

God is here God is always here

God is with us God is with us

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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. We acknowledge that this land on which we live and move was and always will be Aboriginal land.

MISSION STATEMENT:

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

SING: **All are Welcome Seasons 9-8**

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,

a place where saints and children tell

how hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,

rock of faith and vault of grace;

here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

 All are welcome, all are welcome,

 all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,

and words are strong and true,

where all God's children dare to seek

to dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness

and as symbol of God's grace;

here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

 All are welcome, all are welcome,

 all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found

in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

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PRAYER OF ADORATION, CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God, we hear your call to set out,
to go to the place in the distance that you have shown us,
but, God, we are afraid!
We fear it will cost us too much, cut too deep,
and claim that which is most sacred and precious to us.
We claim we are too busy.
But perhaps even more than this,
we know that we can't get to those places by ourselves.
We must go beyond ourselves and encounter you as our Provider in a way that feels so
risky and vulnerable.
And so, we name and acknowledge those places in us that are full of doubt and fear,
those parts of us that prefer to play it safe.
Forgive us, God, and make this a new place we name after your faithfulness and
provision, we pray.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God meets us in this place of honesty with great tenderness,

with a love that transforms our fears, bit by bit, over the haul.
God sees to it!
You are forgiven. God has seen to it.
Thanks be to God!

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING

Your love, O God, is our beautiful song, and we delight in singing it!
With our mouths, we will broadcast your faithfulness to all generations.
What a stunning love story.
You built the cosmos and set it up with everything necessary
O, how it hums with wisdom, goodness, and beauty!
Your love is a faithful love,
embracing us and grounding us in commitment and joy.
And so, we rejoice:
our God has been so good to us! Amen.

PEACE

SING: Amazing Grace TIS/129

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

As grace once taught my heart to fear
so grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

PD ; words, John Newton

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READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Genesis 22: 1-14

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

³So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here

with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.”⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”⁸ Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.⁹ When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

¹¹But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”¹³ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called that place “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

BASED ON Psalm 13

How long, O God, how long must suffering go on?

It sometimes seems that pain and suffering will last for ever.

At these times, Lord, we feel that you are absent -

O how we long for some sign of your presence.

For pain is the enemy which threatens to overwhelm our trust in you;

Without your presence, darkness and death fill our thoughts and crowd you out.

Hear our cries, O God, as you have in the past.

Dispel the dark horizons of our fear with the assurance of your presence .

Help us know that we are never ever abandoned by you

and that we can put our trust in your steadfast love.

So we praise you, O God, for delivering us

from darkness to light,

from death to life.

Remembering your great mercy,

we lift our voices to you in songs of endless praise.

READING FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 10: 40-42

⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

REFLECTION: "Welcoming Community"

Matthew 10:40-42, Genesis 22:1-14

Have you ever seen this?



Where have you seen something like this? Usually, we'd see a mat like this outside the door to our home, wouldn't we? A mat such as this usually has two purposes. Do you know what those two purposes are? Well, for one thing, it is a friendly reminder for people to wipe their shoes off so that they won't track dirt or mud into your home. And second, it is placed outside your door as a sign to let people know that they are welcome in your home. How important is it to be a welcoming church? How thankful are we for those who receive us? How do we receive each other, and newcomers? I want us to be more welcoming and a welcoming church.

Jesus says in our gospel reading in verse 42, "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple will not lose their reward". "Hospitality". Do you know what "hospitality" is? In my dictionary, it says hospitality is the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers. We practice hospitality when we receive guests in our home. When visitors come to our home, it is important that we be kind to them. We want them to be comfortable, to feel at home with us. We offer them something to drink, even something to eat. Jesus wants his followers to practice hospitality, especially to "little ones." That can mean children. "Little ones" can also mean those who are left out, those who are very needy, those who are hungry and without enough food, even those who have no home. Jesus says that when we even give a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, it is like we are giving that water to Jesus. Jesus in our Gospel reading speaks of sharing even a cup of cold water which speaks to the practicality of living the Christian life. Our life with God is a life that is designed to touch others in practical ways. We must be open to sharing God's Love in Practical Ways.

I would like to test you this morning. What would you do with the following challenge? You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. A very sick older woman who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect man or woman (beautiful and handsome) you have been dreaming about all your life.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride, and there is only one passenger in your car. This is one of those moral/ethical dilemmas that are often used as part of a job application. One like this was on an application I once had long time ago in Korea. Which one would you choose to offer a ride? You could pick up the older woman because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first. Or you could take the old friend

because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay them back. However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again. One of my friends answered on this question like this. I love what he shared. What did he say? He simply answered: "I would give the car keys to my old friend who once saved my life, and let him take the elderly lady to the hospital. And I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams." What a clever answer it is!!!

Jesus challenges his disciples and us in our Gospel reading and in many other places in the Scriptures to do the small thing to show God's Love. In John 13, the night before he dies, Jesus washes his disciples' feet and then challenges them to love others. Jesus then makes this observation in John, "Everyone will know that you are my disciples because of your love for one another." Do the small thing to show God's Love. Show God's love through the little things. The simplest of acts can have impacts far beyond our dreams. Take for example this story of a humble hotel clerk. In the city of Philadelphia USA there was a little third-class hotel. Into it one night there came two tired elderly people. They went up to the night clerk and the husband pleadingly said, "Mister, please don't tell us you don't have a room. My wife and I have been all over the city looking for a place to stay. We didn't know about the big conventions that are here. The hotels at which we usually stay are all full. We're dead tired and it's after midnight. Please, don't tell us you don't have a place where we can sleep." The clerk looked at them a long moment and then answered, "Well, I don't have a single room except my own. I work at night and sleep in the daytime. It's not as nice as the other rooms, but it's clean, and I'll be happy for you to be my guests for tonight." The wife said, "God bless you, young man." The next morning at the breakfast table, the couple sent the waiter to tell the night clerk they wanted to see him on very important business. The night clerk went in, recognized the two people, sat down at the table and said he hoped they had had a good night's sleep. They thanked him most sincerely. Then the husband surprised the worker with this statement, "You're a too good hotel man to stay in a hotel like this. How would you like for me to build a big, beautiful, luxurious hotel in the city of New York and make you general manager?" The clerk didn't know what to say. He thought there might be something wrong with their minds. He finally stammered, "It sounds wonderful." His guest then introduced himself. "I'm John Jacob Astor." So, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was built. Four years later, the hotel was the largest in the world and boasted extraordinary standards of service. The night clerk became the best-known hotel man in the world.

The point of this story is not that you will be rewarded for doing good deeds, but that simple deeds can produce larger results than we expect. Simple acts can show the love of God through our actions. One clerk chose to show a simple act of kindness to strangers by sharing his room with this tired couple. He touched them in ways he could not have expected. His simple act of kindness touched this couple and greatly impacted how they looked at this young man. Acts of kindness can be contagious. These extraordinary situations don't come along every day. But every day there is a situation that a simple act of kindness can help with. Sometimes, a simple act becomes contagious and more people share their own love with their fellow people. Jesus wants his followers to be welcoming people, Jesus wants all of us here this morning to be welcoming people, to be

kind to those who come to church, or who come to our home. Hospitality is a gift that followers of Jesus give to others because Jesus wants us to. I hope you feel welcome here at church, and I hope that you can also help to welcome others, because that is one of the ways that we show our love to Jesus.

So what can we learn about sharing a cup of cold water? Let the love that God has for you and me reflect in your actions. We can show God's love for us through our actions. You are important and God showed just how important you are with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. We can serve by accepting that Jesus served us first. Jesus was a servant and we can reflect that in our own actions. Just as our God first loved us and demonstrated service through his Son Jesus, we too can show that love in simple acts of kindness. Accept freely the act of grace that God has bestowed upon you and freely share it with people around you. Amen.

SING: The Great Love of God TIS/164

The great love of God
is revealed in the Son,
who came to this earth
to redeem every one.

That love, like a stream
flowing clear to the sea,
makes clean every heart
that from sin would be free.

It binds the whole world,
every barrier it breaks,
the hills it lays low,
and the mountains it shakes.

It's yours, it is ours,
O how lavishly giv'n!
the pearl of great price,
and the treasure of heav'n.

PD ; text, Daniel Thanmyrajah Niles; Christian Conference of Asia, Charoen Vijaya
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OFFERING PRAYER:

Let us bring our offering which we make to God. Let it be an expression of our concern for others and our love for our saviour.

Receive these gifts O God, brought in response to your call on our lives and the needs of the world. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

God of the Big Picture,
draw us into your inclusive and expansive dream for the world.
Guide us beyond our narrow interests, our parochialism.
Help us to create some separation from our self-promotion and self-preservation instincts.
Deepen within us a sense of affinity with the people near to us in this place, here and now. We also include our close friends and families.
Fill our hearts with a longing that everyone would experience goodness, joy, and flourishing.
Expand this range of blessings now to those in our surrounding neighbourhoods.
May our neighbours know peace and wholeness.
Widen our scope to those throughout our country.
May we sense your desire for flourishing in all cities and towns and to long for that also.
Help it to become our desire.
Go even further, God:
open our hearts and minds to include people all over the globe.
help us to touch your delight and love for all people,
and may we include all living beings.
May we hold all human beings and all the wonders of this planet within your vision of a renewed and reconciled creation.

We pray for all who respond to your mission by offering help and kindness, even as simple as a cup of water. Merciful God, in the face of the massive needs of our climate and people who suffer, we pray for the conversion of hearts, minds and actions to bring restoration and goodness.

Loving God, we lift before you all who seek healing and help this day. In silence we bring those known to us.....

We pray especially at this time for the Caringbah congregation and its minister Hyun Keun Lee and ask your blessing upon his congregation. We pray for those who offer a prophetic word, your living word. Grant them strength and the desire to stay the course, whatever the obstacles.

Loving one, may your way be our way, may your truth be our truth, may your love be our love. In the name of Christ. Amen.

SING: There's a Spirit in the Air TIS/83

There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere:
"Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world."

Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
tell the world what God has done:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today.

When believers break the bread,

when a hungry child is fed,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world.

Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today.

When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise,
guide our thoughts and change our ways:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today.

There's a Spirit in the air,
calling people everywhere:
"Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world."

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BLESSING:

God calls each of us and embraces us with love.
We learn how precious and sacred we are to God.
And then God helps us to see our neighbour, too.
We are invited to hold this Divine Love for others in our hearts.
So go, carrying as much of the Creator's love as you can.
Let Jesus teach you the way of trust.
And may you overflow with Holy-spirit-confidence in God's faithful provision.
Go with faith and go in peace. Amen.

SENDING SONG:

We are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
we are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that our unity will one day be restored.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other,
we will walk hand in hand,
we will walk with each other,
we will walk hand in hand,
and together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other,
we will work side by side,
we will work with each other,
we will work side by side,
and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

All praise to the Father,
from whom all things come,
and all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

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