

**Kogarah Uniting Church
July 23, 2023 at 1000 am**

WELCOME

LIGHT THE CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

MISSION STATEMENT:

We are a congregation who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles.

We are creating a safe place for the community,

and sharing the journey of life and faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

Call to worship

ONE: God invites us to gather.

ALL: We worship the Holy One who is present in all.

ONE: God invites us to come as we are
for the sake of who we may yet be.

ALL: We worship the Holy One who calls us to new ways of being and doing.

ONE: God invites us to journey in awe and in trust.

**ALL: We worship the Holy One in our midst
who blesses and commissions us for the good of all.**

SING – God of my breathing and God of my heart – tune TiS 547

God of my breathing and God of my heart,

Spirit embodied in all human parts,

would that this body, from head to the toes,

bring forth Your glory in all that I know.

God of my eating and God of my taste,
flavour my nourishment full with Your grace.

Bless what comes in through this mouth that it might
bless how I live with the kindness of Christ.

God of my hearing and God of my sight,
bless all I find from the moment I rise.
Upon this mind your table be found,
prayerfully offered these visions and sounds.

God of my footsteps and God of my path,
where these feet travel may they know no lack.
Shoes on the pavement or toes in the soil
carry your servant where Christ bids them go.

God of my memories, Lord of this mind,
God of the moment whose vision is time,
all I remember and all I forget
hold in Your keeping so this soul might rest.

God of my limits and God of all truth,
You who have knit me with joy in the womb,
would that this body from head to the toes
bring forth Your glory in all that I know.

© 2004 This Here Music/Worldmaking.net. Words, Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

Opening prayer

Searching God,
you who are always seeking us,
following behind us when we flee,
catch our hearts today
and draw us into your waiting presence
where we can learn how to wait as you wait:
eagerly, hopefully, joyfully,
for our holiness to grow. Amen.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

Merciful God, you plant each of us like seeds in the same field and together we are
nourished and nurtured by the sun. We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain.
We are blessed by the knowledge that you want us to grow towards whatever you call us
to be.

When we deprive others of that same opportunity,
forgive us.

When we want to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field,
forgive us.

When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are,
forgive us.

When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and
wheat,
forgive us.

When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there,
forgive us.

SING - O God you search me – Seasons 7-28

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
in ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

© 1992, Bernadette Farrell; published by OCP Publications
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

Words of affirmation and peace

God of compassion and mercy, we give thanks that you journey with us into the future.
Open us to the gifts of your presence and increase our willingness to follow as you lead.
Turn our hearts to find their way home in you. Amen.

Reading from the Hebrew scriptures

Context

Jacob has proven to be self-interested and cunning, not a person for whom we would hold much affection. Once again, he has cheated Esau, this time out of their father's blessing (Genesis 27), the affirmation of Esau's inheritance. With the help of Rebekah, Jacob flees from home in order to avoid Esau's ire. He is en route to Haran, where he has family (Abraham and Sarah lived there before they set out on their journey), in the hope that he might find a wife and settle there. After putting as much distance as possible between himself and his brother, he settles down for the night. He rests his head on a stone and falls into a dream-filled sleep.

Genesis 28 : 10 – 19a

¹⁰Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ¹⁴and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel.

SING – When God first promised Abram – tune TiS 551 vv 1-3, 5

Some occasions when God speaks from out of the darkness

When God first promised Abram
a nation of his own,
the darkness was the canvas
where stars of promise shone.

When Jacob fled his brother –
the trickster out of schemes –
in darkness of the desert
God gave the schemer dreams.

When Moses climbed the mountain
engulfed by storm and smoke,
within a cloud of darkness
the God of glory spoke.

So, thank you, God for darkness,
the holy meeting place
where you reveal your presence
and we encounter grace.

© 2020 GIA Publications; text, David Bjorlin

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

Reading from the Christian scriptures:

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ ²⁸He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

REFLECTION - Weeds, wheat and the blended ecology Rev Dr Matagi Vilitama

SING – The reign of God – tune TiS 459 (i)

Some images about seeds and weed from the parable of Jesus.

The reign of God, like farmer's field,
bears weeds along with wheat;
the good and bad are intertwined
till harvest is complete.

Like mustard tree, the reign of God
from tiny seed will spread,
till birds of ev'ry feather come
to nest, and there be fed.

Though hidden now, the reign of God
may yet unnoticed grow;
from deep within it rises up,
like yeast in swelling dough.

The reign of God is come in Christ;
the reign of God is near,
ablaze among us, kindling hearts,
the reign of God is near.

© 2003 GIA Publications; text, Delores Dufner

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

OFFERING PRAYER:

With all that we have and all we are, we reach out to you, our God of generosity.
We ask that you receive these ordinary gifts;
may they be used to offer extraordinary blessings in our community and world.
May these gifts remind us that through you, all is possible! Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GRP Prayer roster - Rev Paul Bartlett and the congregation at Engadine UC

Compassionate God,
made known to us most clearly in Jesus,
Together with our joys and our thanks
we bring before you,
the sorrows of the bereaved ...
the helplessness of the weak ...
the despondency of the weary ...
the failing powers of the aged ...

For all who struggle with grief or fear,
anger or pain,
hear our prayers...

For all who face a crossroads,

a time of choosing,
hear our prayers...

For all who find it hard to come into the presence of God,
or who have found the church non-receptive and ungracious,
hear our prayers...

For all on journeys home,
for all setting out on new ways,
for all who feel trapped and unable to move,
hear our prayers...

By your Holy Spirit draw near to each:
those we have named on our lips and in our silence ...
and those we have forgotten ...
meet them at their point of need,
comfort strengthen and encourage them,
now and at all times.
Amen

COMMUNION HYMN: SING – This is a day of new beginnings – TiS 653

This is a day of new beginnings,
time to remember, and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing,
laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus,
God's mighty Spirit, now as then,
can make for us a world of difference
as faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.

Christ is alive, and goes before us
to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
our God is making all things new.

In faith we'll gather round the table
to taste and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
our God is making all things new.

© 1983, 1987 Hope Publishing Company; Words: Brian Arthur Wren
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE #A-604712; CCLI #45150

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The feast has been prepared - for us!
This is not my table,
it is not the church's –
this is the feast offered to us by our God the generous Provider.
So, come to this Feast.
Come, if your faith is blossoming and full –
and come if it is but a tiny seed planted in your heart.
Come, if you always show up for this meal –
and come if this is your very first taste.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Host of the feast be with you.

And also with you.

People of God, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the One who refreshes them into grace.

People of God, give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,
for you have formed in us the first fruits of your Spirit,
a harvest that will prevail when evil is uprooted.
It was your labour that brought forth creation,
and your love that formed the families of the earth.
You revealed yourself to Jacob,
promising that for all who are led by your Spirit,
every place would be filled with your presence.
In Jesus Christ you have thrown open the gate of heaven
and adopted us as your beloved children.
Though all creation yet groans in pain,
Christ suffers with us,
enduring death on the cross,
so that we might be glorified with him.
His Spirit groans within us as we await the end of the age
when your children will be revealed and,
with our bodies redeemed,
we will shine like the sun in your Kingdom.
Therefore, Sower of godly seeds,
all the living find voice to praise you,
as we celebrate with the people of every time and place,
singing to your glory:

Holy, holy, holy are you,

God who feeds us with the feast of grace and hope.

Your wonder works of creation praise your name.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes,

calling to us on the basis of love.

Hosanna in the highest!

Holy are you, Lord God.
On the night in which Jesus gave himself up to death,
He took bread, gave you thanks,
Broke it and said:
This is my body which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

When the meal was ended, he lifted the cup,
and again given you thanks,
gave it his friends and said:
This cup is the new covenant
sealed by my blood.
Do this, whenever you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.

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,
who taught us how to pray saying...

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 forever. Amen.***

The Breaking of the bread and Pouring of the Wine

Christ is the bread of life,

food for healing and wholeness.
Christ is the cup of hope,
wellspring of resurrection life.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

**May we who share these gifts
be found and grow in Christ
and Christ in us.**

The Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

Distribution

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life.

Amen.

Prayer after Communion

**Most gracious God,
you have made us one with all your people
in heaven and on earth.**

**You have fed us with the Bread of life
and renewed us for your service.**

**Now we give ourselves to you,
and ask that our daily living
may be part of the life of your kingdom.**

**May our love be your love,
reaching out into the life of the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen.

Sending song – Sent forth by God's blessing – TiS 531 v.1
Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from his table take leave.
The supper is ended: may now be extended
the fruits of his service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, our hungry souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for all humankind.
His grace shall incite us, his love shall unite us
to work for his kingdom, his purpose to find.

BLESSING

As you go from this place,
may God's love hold you,
may God's light guide you,
and may God's liberation free you.
Go out into the world with blessing in your life,
and the blessing for the lives of others.
May every rock and stone be a place of wonder and hope. Amen.

Sending song – Sent forth by God's blessing – TiS 531 v.2
With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living
the task of our everyday life we will face,
our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
embracing as neighbours all those of each race.
One feast that has fed us, one light that has led us,
unite us as one in his life that we share.
Then may all the living, with praise and thanksgiving,
give honour to Christ and his name that we bear.

© 1964, World Library Publications, O Westendorf
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150