

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
AUGUST 20th 2023
CRUMBS**

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.

KUC MISSION STATEMENT

Our VISION is to:

- to be a loving and caring community, sharing God's love with the world.

Our MISSION is to:

- share God's love in the community,
- create a welcoming and inclusive place
- and provide care and support for all.

Our VALUES:

**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.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

We have climbed trees and over mountains hoping to find
a place of belonging.

Love is possible.

We cross the boundaries that divide us by ages and stages,
ethnicities and genders,
hurts and disagreements.

Love is possible.

We open our hearts and ready our hands to reach out to
one another,
and discover One who is within and beyond us.

Love is possible.

Let us worship together in love.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

SING: Let Us Build a House / 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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OPENING PRAYER

We reach out to you, God, in our believing and in our doubting.
We reach out to you with our dreams, our songs, and our listening.
We know you have already reached out to us before we even thought about
reaching out to you, so we come to give you thanks today.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Holy Dream-giver, sometimes our vision becomes focused on ourselves.
God, return us to you in community (*silence*).

Sometimes we respond to new visions with fear and try to block them, even
injuring those who share them.
God, return us to you in community (*silence*).

Sometimes we keep dreams locked in our heads and focus on the grief for what is lost to us.

God, return us to you in community (*silence*).

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

God will do what God will do.

Yet God gives room for us to do what we will do.

In the mystery in the middle of both of those truths, God works for good.

God forgives, restores, and gives new life.

Thanks be to God!

PEACE

May the peace of God be with you. **And also with you.**

SING: Behold Behold - Iona - Season 6-10

Behold (behold), behold (behold),

I make all things new,

beginning with you and starting from today.

Behold (behold), behold (behold),

I make all things new,

my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS:

GENESIS 45 1-15

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his

house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

MATTHEW 15 21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

SING: Children Of The Spirit - Seasons 7-8

We gather as a family,
we come from many lands.
We come to tell our stories,
we come with outstretched hands.
 We are children of the Spirit
 joining in one song.
 We are shapers of the future,
 hope is in our hands!

Reach out to one another,
turn away from fear.
Build up the poor and lonely,
learn to live in love.
 We are children of the Spirit

joining in one song.
We are shapers of the future,
hope is in our hands!

With trust and understanding
we can heal our world.
Our victory will be known
when nations live as one.

We are children of the Spirit, joining in one song.
We are shapers of the future, hope is in our hands!
We are shapers of the future, hope is in our hands!

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REFLECTION – Richard (from Moira Laidlaw's Liturgies)

In finance and politics there is a concept called the “trickle down effect” which refers to the idea that if the top echelons of business and society are rewarded and stimulated with increased earnings and revenue that the lower levels of society will eventually receive some diluted benefit and end up better off. It is of course much more effective to give benefits directly to those worse off in society but it is often used as an excuse to condone economic benefits to those more well off. I was reminded of this during the Matthew reading this morning.

Jesus' encounter with the Syrophenician woman – these verses sometimes described as Jesus and the uppity woman. Uppity because she shows a lot of courage confronting Jesus in the way she did. Any woman addressing a Jewish man in those times had to be out of the ordinary – and it probably would be worse if it happened today – a woman living in what is now Lebanon asking a Jewish man – in hiding - for help – and he virtually tells her in today's language – to get lost.

And – that's where the problem lies - that we're not confronted in these verses with a gentle Jesus, meek and mild, encircled with a divine halo and reaching out welcoming loving hands to all who approach him. Rather, the story we heard is really quite shocking to our ears - shocking because it portrays Jesus mouthing prejudice. When the non-Jewish woman approached him begging for help for her daughter, Jesus said: 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel' - the Jewish people. And when the woman knelt before him and begged for help -- Jesus answered that it was not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs – (those who were not Jewish). In other words, his healing power was to be used exclusively for the people of Israel – not for those considered outsiders – Gentiles – such as this woman.

And really, considering Jewish history and where Jesus had just been, that would have been the expected answer. The people of Israel guarded their identity and their purity as God's chosen people with great care – with a myriad of rules and regulations setting out what was clean and what was unclean – all intended to maintain that racial purity. Outsiders were naturally considered to be unclean – as they did not meet the rules. In the verses preceding today's reading, Matthew describes Jesus as being involved in a long and complex argument with the scribes and Pharisees about this very subject – what was clean and unclean according to their ritual laws. As far as they were concerned – the laws governing purity were set down in Leviticus and had to be obeyed.

Today's reading describes Jesus and his disciples travelling roughly 50 kms from Galilee where he had had that heated discussion, to the gentile territory of Tyre on the Phoenician coast.

Back there, in Galilee Jesus had to deal also with the disciple's lack of understanding or perhaps their shock over his declaration that nothing that passed their lips was unclean – it was what was in their hearts that was more likely to be unclean. I think that some of them just didn't get the message - one can only speculate that some interesting discussions just might have taken place on that long journey to the Phoenician coast. It isn't surprising then, that when they got there, Jesus did not want anyone to know where he was.

He was probably exhausted and just wanted some peace and quiet and what happens - an outsider, a Gentile – even worse - a woman! - finds her way into the house where he was – and - driven by her need, falls on her knees at Jesus' feet, and begs him to heal her daughter of an unclean spirit. You know the story. Jesus, hearing the woman's request, reacts as a traditional Jewish man would, and spurns the pleas of the mother begging on behalf of her tormented little girl, simply because she is a Gentile, not one of the chosen. And then he tells the woman that it was preferable that the food was thrown to the dogs rather than taken out of the mouths of the children of Israel - and – perhaps with some astonishment - we hear them.

So – where is the good news in this? Precisely - as someone said that "This is the day that the gospel went to the dogs". Because this uppity

woman was not prepared to accept Jesus' words and answered 'Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

I was reminded of the wording in some versions of the Communion liturgy: "We are not worthy enough to pick up the crumbs under your table".

Did Jesus suddenly connect what she was saying with what had so recently been on his mind? About what was clean and what was unclean? Did he at this point stop hearing the woman with his ears and hear her with his heart – not physical hearing but a deep hearing of the spirit? Had he at first seen this woman as someone not good enough to receive God's mercy simply because he saw her as an outsider - not one of God's chosen people? I wonder if she had similar views about herself that she had to overcome – that – as an outsider - she would have considered herself as not good enough to approach or even speak to Jesus.

There is a powerful and moving story in the *Living the Questions* series of studies about a man who believed himself not good enough to be heard by Jesus. The story is told by an American retreat leader concerning what happened at a retreat for ministers that she was leading.

She had given those attending the retreat an assignment to do over the three days they were together. They had to look through scripture to find a name that belonged to them – to find where the Word uttered their name. (e.g. If their life seemed to be a continual struggle, perhaps the name found for them would be Jacob – suggested by Jacob's wrestling all night with God whilst on his way to meet his brother Esau, or if they were so busy at 'doing' things that they didn't have time to sit at Jesus' feet – perhaps the name they found would be Martha).

On the closing day of the retreat those attending sat around in a circle with an empty chair in the middle. One by one they took turns in the chair and spoke of the names they had found. The last person – came forward, sat down, and said nothing. The drawn out silence became uncomfortable and so the retreat leader asked him if he had a name that he would like to share with them. He replied that he had searched for the three days for a name but none had been strong enough to replace the name that he was given by his father when he was very young. There was a long pause and the leader asked him "What is that name?"

He said “**Not good enough** – that’s the name my father gave me.” And then he started to weep – she said that he wept like he was drowning.”

The leader recounted that she and the others sat there feeling unable to break the power of that name. Then, she said, the Spirit did its work – almost like a wind or an impulse, a number of them were moved to get up, go forward and lay hands on the still weeping young man. Several voices, speaking like one voice, said to him “You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased – your name is ‘beloved’, then they paused and let the blessing rest and returned to their seats.

When they were all leaving, the leader asked him if what happened had made any difference to him. He said that he didn’t really know, but he felt that something that had been broken, was mending. Then he said “Every time I put my hand in the water to help name a human being in front of God, I’ll remember who I am – beloved of God - that’s the secret of baptism.”

Our Christian identity as baptised people is a gift of grace and says that we too are beloved of God. We forget and sometimes we rerun old tapes that says we’re not good enough, and I speak out of experience – it is a tape which I have rerun in the past because I grew up believing I was ‘not good enough’ to meet the expectations of my parents or schoolteachers.

My older sister was academically and athletically brilliant– I didn’t qualify on either count – she was only one year ahead of me at school – so I certainly disappointed those who expected me to follow in her footsteps.

Unlike her I was a dreamer – If there was a shaft of sunlight in the room when I was supposed to be doing homework, I would be fascinated by the dancing dust particles and wonder where they came from and where they were going. We didn’t live in one of those hygienically clean houses that people live in now – there was always plenty of dust to watch – still is. And, in winter, I would have my nose pressed to the window for hours just watching the snow fall – waiting for a snowflake to land on the glass so I could marvel at its design. Yes, I definitely grew up believing that I was not good enough, but happily, in time I certainly came to know that I didn’t have to be ‘good enough’ to be accepted and loved by God – I was loved and accepted just as I was – warts and all – as we all are.

The day, then, that the gospel went to the dogs was the day it came to us. Where the traditions of the Pharisees and the scribes, Jesus' disciples and even Jesus himself – momentarily - would have seen in that Syrophoenician woman as unclean - an outcast - a not good enough person, her persistence moves Jesus to see her as a person with a need he could meet and so he expands the circle of God's mercy to include those once considered outsiders. What was excluded is now included – as we are included - as people beloved of him – beloved of God. We do not have to be 'good enough' to be accepted and loved – we are accepted and loved just as we are – as the earlier story said - no matter what - so let's take some time to celebrate that fact – that your name and my name - is 'beloved'. Let's turn to those near us and state "you are beloved"

SING: For everyone born, a place at the table - Seasons 4-14

<https://youtu.be/MJJ9eii3DEY>

**For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for woman and man, a system that's fair,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live,**

**and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

**For gay and for straight, a place at the table,
a covenant shared, a welcoming space,
a rainbow of race and gender and colour,
for gay and for straight, the chalice of grace,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!**

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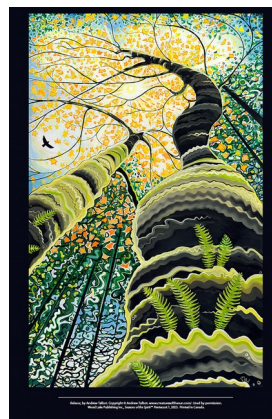
OFFERING

God, who loves all of earth, every created thing is beloved to you.
We give thanks for your embrace and reach out to this wild world with the
gifts we dedicate to your love.
May these gifts transform so many stories. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS & THE LORD'S PRAYER **Show Release**

We have wandered through the
branches of our ancestors' stories,
wondering where we are grounded
and what these old, old stories might
say to us now. We glimpse the dap-
pled light of connection in the family
squabbles, the broken promises, and
the love that continues to bring God's
people together. Here, today, our



prayers climb this family tree asking for what we need: forgiveness, grace, generosity, hope, love, along with all the wandering of your heart. Find a branch to rest in God's love in this artwork and find release from what hinders growth.

If it helps to centre yourself in words, use a mantra in your silent prayer such as "Release this from me, O God" or "Grow with me, O God."

Amen.

**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.**

SING: Beauty for brokenness - TIS 690
Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord in the suffering,
this is our prayer,
bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.

Refuge from cruel wars,

havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share,
peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green;
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams,
plundered and poisoned,
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with the things that we need.

God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame,
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.

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The Sending Forth of the People of God
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BLESSING

People of God – look around.
These are your brothers and sisters.
Nothing divides us other than our limitations.

Released from the burdens of fear, anger, resentment, and pain,
let us go into the world made new, celebrating our new freedom to reach out
with your love.
Let us go to love and serve. Amen.

SENDING SONG: Kyrie Eleison - TIS 736

Kyrie eleison,
Kyrie eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison,
Christe eleison,
Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison,
Kyrie eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

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