

**Kogarah Uniting Church
Sunday 5th November 2023
All Saints – Learning Leaders**

Gather

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

Lighting the Christ Candle

God Is here!
God is always here!
God is with us!
God is always with us!

Saying who we are

**We are a congregation and community
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

**From the first days of all creation, your presence has been in every action.
*May we be open to all things through you and recognize you in all our
achievements.***

**In our steps together as a community and the steps we take where we feel alone,
*may we be open to all things through you and remember you in times of need.***

**Throughout life, we are encouraged to look forward and not dwell on past
actions: great or small.**

***May we be open to all things through you and reveal you, O God, in all we do.
Amen.***

Sing: *“Life into Life, the Threads are Woven” (Tune: Stanley Street’)*

28 TEL

Life into life, the threads are woven,
parent and child,
partner and friend;
tokens of love received and given:
joy at each birth,
grief at each end.
God of all time, all loves, all living,
hear as we bring our hearts' thanksgiving.

Life into life, our ways cross over,
culture and place,
neighbour and race;
in your good world help us discover
imprint of grace
in every face.
God of all time, all loves, all living,
hear as we bring our hearts' thanksgiving.

Life into life, when love is spoken,
everyday things
give our heart wings,
life-changing ills when things are broken,
turn us to you,
seeing what's true,
God of all time, all loves, all living,
hear as we bring our hearts' thanksgiving.

Life into life, your Holy Spirit
quickens the mind,
lifts humankind,
gives to our stream of days its current,
livenes the slow,
charges the flow,
God of all time, all loves, all living,
hear as we bring our hearts' thanksgiving.

Life into life, the world goes spinning,
catching your light,

**gaining new sight;
you give us hope, a fresh beginning,
life's very breath,
life out of death.
God of all time, all loves, all living,
hear as we bring our hearts' thanksgiving. (Shirley Erena Murray)**

Opening prayer

**God, we carry your teaching in our hearts and our minds.
We carry your teaching in our hands and feet in service.
We carry your teaching on our lips.
Carry us now into the joy of new learning.
Carry us with your love. Amen.**

Prayer of confession

Invite worshippers to take the cord in their hands during this prayer.

We carry with us Jesus' teaching. We also carry heavy burdens tied up and laid upon and within us. We've tied up burdens like being someone we are not, or wanting something we don't have, or doing things that hurt others or ourselves.

Tie a knot in your cord as a sign of one of those burdens you wish to place before God.

Silent prayer.

When we walk alone with our burdens, Jesus' good news reminds us to reach out and share the command to love and serve.

Exchange your knotted cord with a neighbour. Pray quietly now for your neighbour's burden. Ask God for new hope in the journey.

Silent prayer.

Words of affirmation

Return the cord to your neighbour as we hear these words of assurance:

Friends in Christ, you never journey alone.

God works joyfully to lift the burdens and renew us with love.

God forgives and calls each of us into greater compassion for ourselves and our neighbour.

Friends, live in the spirit of love.

Sing: (Tune: Brother James Air)

**1 Give thanks to God who hears our cries
and saves in troubled days
with wondrous works to humankind
that call for highest praise.
Let all who know God's saving love
sing grateful songs always.**

**2 If you have ever wandered where
no human help was near,
and in your trouble cried to God,
who rescued you from fear,
then thank the God of steadfast love
who dries your every tear.**

**3 If you have ever lived inside
the prison of your gloom
and cried to God, who broke your bonds
and raised you from your tomb,
then praise the One who sets you free,
who makes dry places bloom.**

**4 If you drew near the gates of death,
too sick to eat or dress,
and cried to God, who heard your voice
and healed all your distress,**

then sing with sounds of holy joy;
God's wondrous works profess.

5 If you have felt your courage fail
before a violent sea
and cried to God, who stilled the storm,
and made the wild wind flee, t
hen in the congregation praise
the One who heard your plea.

6 So praise the One whose love is great,
whose kindness is well-known.
Consider well the healing hand
and help you have been shown,
and tell the world what God has done.
Praise God and God alone.

Ruth Duck

Passing the Peace

The Peace of Christ be with you all

Engage

Opening the word

A Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Joshua 3:7–17

7 The Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. 8 You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" 9 Joshua then said to the Israelites, "Draw near and hear the words of the Lord your God." 10 Joshua said, "By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites: 11 the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan. 12 So now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. 13 When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap."

14 When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. 15 Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, 16 the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. 17 While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

Sing: "Spirit of God, Creation's Force" (Tune: 'Fulda', 88.88)

Spirit of God, creation's force,
and power of evolution's course,
gave breath of life to humankind
and then inspired inventive mind.

**Spirit of history's linked events
has shown repeated evidence
of hidden influence, working through
all our world leaders try to do.**

**Spirit of prophet's utterance
proclaimed in needy circumstance
a word of God, through human voice
with challenge to courageous choice.**

**Spirit of power and truth and grace,
renews today the human race,
bestowing gifts, producing fruits,
promoting godly attributes.**

**Spirit, possess and fill us whole,
fill every heart and mind and soul,
infuse our being with your power
that we may serve this present hour.**

(Richard Firth. Adapt. (c) 1997 Stainer & Bell Ltd

A reading from the Christian Scriptures

Matthew 23:1–12

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of

others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Offering

Prayer of dedication

Holy Teacher, give us the wisdom to use these gifts to practise what we hear and teach. Give us the compassion to lift burdens that oppress and replace them with an invitation to loving service in your name.

Reflection

“Humble Servant Leadership”

Matthew 23:1-12

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqhgAeISKNE>

What did you see in this video? What did you learn from this video, especially from the old man? In this video, I remember what the old man said to the young man, “I don’t need this money anymore”, “Then help somebody else out who needs it more than you.” “I really don’t need it anymore. Do someone else a favour. There is always someone in need.” This is exactly what Jesus tells us about through our gospel reading this morning. “Serve others, help others, be a humble person, be a servant etc.” “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted..” Jesus was speaking about an important principle of leadership, because it applied to all leaders of all times, and especially to those who would follow Jesus. He is telling us that we are all leaders and our leaders must be self-giving, rather than self-seeking.

Servant leadership is a very important thing in our Christian life. It enriches the lives of individuals, builds better society and ultimately creates a more just and caring world. A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. Servant leadership isn't about positions and titles. Instead, it is an attitude that says people and relationships are more important, valuable and essential to mission success. We often talk about “Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.” Jesus Christ set a perfect example, throughout his life, of obeying this principle. He exemplified an attitude of service toward all within his reach. God's desire is for us to lose our sense of self-centeredness and replace it with an attitude of outgoing concern for all — an attitude of wanting to see them grow, advance and prosper. John C. Maxwell, famous leadership mentor said this, "True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not to enrich the leader." No matter what capacity you serve in, your success isn't defined by how much you personally achieve but on how much those you influence achieve.

I went to Google and typed “What are the characteristics of servant leadership?”. One of the results says; first, Valuing People. Servant leaders value people for who they are. Servant leaders are committed first and foremost to people—particularly, their followers. Second, Humility. Servant leaders do not promote themselves; they put other people first. They are actually humble, not humble as an act. Third, Listening. Servant leaders listen receptively and nonjudgmentally. They are willing to listen because they truly want to learn from other people—and to understand the people they serve, they must listen deeply. Servant leaders seek first to understand, and then to be understood. Fourth, Trust. Servant leaders give trust to others. They willingly take this risk for the people they serve. Lastly, Caring. Servant leaders have people and purpose in their heart. They display a kindness and concern for others. Servant leaders truly care for the people they serve. And at the end of this article, some great examples of servant-leaders throughout history are listed. They are Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr etc. And I believe you have in mind some other great servant leaders in Australia and around us. These leaders absolutely put the needs of others before their own and, because of it, they are considered some of the greatest, most beloved leaders to have ever lived. The greatest leader, however, that I admire most is Jesus Christ our Lord. He set a perfect example as a servant leader, throughout his life; his goal was not status or popularity. In fact, as strange as it sounds today, he actively

discouraged publicity. Jesus submitted his own life to sacrificial service under the will of God, and he sacrificed his life freely out of service for others. He came to serve although he was God's son and was thus more powerful than any other leader in the world. The Bible says in Philippians 2, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" On the night before he died he taught his disciples a tremendous lesson of humility as he began to wash their dirty feet as a servant. He healed the sick, drove out demons, was recognized as Master Teacher and Lord, and had power over the wind and the sea and even over death.

Jesus' leadership style evidently worked well. Within a generation, his followers turned the world upside down. Jesus Christ is the most powerful leader of all time; no matter what you believe about him, it is most amazing to see that even after 2,000 years after he lived, the message he tasked his disciples to preach to the world is still the most impacting message in our world. Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this earth. You know, Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, and Jesus for only 3. Yet the influence of Christ's 3-year ministry infinitely transcends the impact left by the combined 130 years of teaching from these people who were among the greatest philosophers of all ancient times. Jesus always led by example in everything that he told his disciples to do. Whatever he expected them to do; he always showed them how to do it first. No one can define with words about the Lord Jesus' exceptional leadership style, there are countless leadership lessons we can learn from him.

Friends in Christ, we are all leaders. Every Christian has a position of leadership over someone. Some have greater positions with greater responsibilities over more people, but every Christian must lead at some point. All parents must lead their children. Every Christian is to be involved in making disciples of Jesus and so must be leaders. That leadership must be exercised in accordance with God's commands and Jesus' example which was one of humble servant leadership. God is not looking for those who have lots of things, but those who are humble before God and others. God sustains the humble and gives them grace. How about us? Do our lives reflect this characteristic of Christ, the humble servant leadership? Are we truly a humble servant? Are we the helping people to flourish as servant leaders who function not only within the church, but out in the wide world? My prayer is that Kogarah Uniting Church is now and will continue to be a community that nurtures and supports servant leaders: leaders who empower others, who are not bosses but coaches, who are not bullies but models.

This morning, I want all of us to listen what the Lord is saying to us. "Practice what you have learned from the words of God." "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." So we may have the mark of Christ which is humility and servant leadership, and this place may be filled by the full of people, full of servants of faith and humility before God and others. Amen.

Respond

Sing *Draw the circle wide* Gordon Light

<https://youtu.be/liM0flTqD6s?si=ghxGK3-h7GAdrVRB>

Refrain

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.

Let this be our song: no one stands alone.

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

God the still point of the circle round whom all creation turns;

nothing lost, but held together in God's gracious arms.

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.

Let this be our song: no one stands alone.

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let our hearts touch far horizons so encompass great and small;

let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call.

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.

Let this be our song: no one stands alone.

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let the dream we dreamed be larger than we ever dreamed before;

let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door.

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.

Let this be our song: no one stands alone.

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

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Prayers for All Saints

Ringling of the bells

Dwell with us, O God, in the mystery of your great story.

We have loved, and we have lost. Mourn with us as we name in our hearts those who died in our recent past.

Dwell with us, O God, in the mystery of your great story.

We have loved, and our hearts have grown. Rejoice with us in the wonder of new life.

[We hold in our hearts those who have recently been born]

Ring the bells a number of times.

Stories begin, and stories end.

The joy of birth mingles with the sadness of death, and your story continues to be told.

O God, dwell with us in this tender place.

Ring the bell

**Between this land and the next,
dance with us through every transition.**

**Amid tears of sadness and pain,
hold us in your love and invite us to share in your story.**

Dwell in the fullness of our lives, O God. Amen

Ring the bell!

Prayer of remembrance

We pray in remembrance.

We pray in hope.

We remember those who have died; leaders in this congregation, members of our family, cornerstones in this community, practitioners of justice and compassion in this world, the mighty saints of God:

O God, we remember this love.

Ring bells.

We remember their stories; shared with us at kitchen tables and by firesides, tucked into family Bibles and revealed to us in actions that spoke louder than words, some left only partially told and waiting for us to pass it on.

O God, we remember this love.

Ring bells.

We remember too the saints alive: leaders of children and youth, caregivers of vulnerable ones, keepers of peace; tellers of truth, seekers of good, servants out of the limelight; the ones who practise mercy in times and places that try mercy and patience; the ones who love, whether love is richly received or scorned in bitterness or ridicule.

O Spirit, we remember this love.

Ring bells.

We remember saints still to come: the ones who will rely on our witness, the ones who our stories will lead, the ones who will receive from our hands and stewardship, for good or ill; this island of life called Earth, and all its web of human relationships.

Coming Christ, we pray that our love continues into their story.

Ring bells.

- **We pray together a version of the Lord's Prayer**

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be,

Father and Mother of us all,

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your communion of peace and freedom sustain our hope

and come on Earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

Amen.

(from the New Zealand Prayer Book)

Sing: *For all the saints who from their labours rest*

https://youtu.be/6_budOKFd88?si=Keu8w-LIWQweUhu8

For all the saints who from their labours rest,
who to the world their Lord by faith confessed,
your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.

Halleluia! Halleluia!

You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;
you were their captain in the well fought fight;
in deepest darkness still their one true light.

Halleluia! Halleluia!

So may your servants, faithful, true, and bold,
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
and win, with them, the victor's crown of gold.

Halleluia! Halleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!

**We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,
all yours, all joined in unity divine.**

Halleluia! Halleluia!

**And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.**

Halleluia! Halleluia!

**The golden evening brightens in the west;
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest,
the peaceful calm of paradise the blest.**

Halleluia! Halleluia!

**But see, there breaks a yet more glorious day;
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;
the King of glory passes on his way.**

Halleluia! Halleluia!

**From earth's wide bounds, and ocean's farthest shore,
through heaven's gate the holy people pour;
the Three-on-One for ever they adore.**

Halleluia! Halleluia!

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Bless

[Have people untie the knot in their cords and tie each end to a neighbour's cord. Invite the congregation to lift the lengthened cord above their heads.]

In the Spirit of the Christ, we are sent out as partners in service with others in our community and the world.

We are sent out to untie burdens and put on our response to Jesus' teaching.

We are sent out to lift off the yoke of oppression and sadness and put on the yoke of love.

Thanks be to God!

Exit Song: *Bind us together, Lord*

<https://youtu.be/IHJzD46-qU?si=vGtLVmyr1RwFhD-K>

Bind us together, Lord,
bind us together with cords that cannot be broken,
bind us together, Lord,
bind us together,
bind us together with love.

There is only one God;
there is only one King;
there is only one body;
that is why I sing...

Bind us together, Lord,
bind us together with cords that cannot be broken,
bind us together, Lord,
bind us together,
bind us together with love.

**You are the family of God;
you are the promise divine;
you are God's chosen design;
you are the glorious new wine:**

**Bind us together, Lord,
bind us together with cords that cannot be broken,
bind us together, Lord,
bind us together,
bind us together with love.**

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