

## KUC ORDER OF SERVICE NOVEMBER 19, 2023

### WELCOME

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We look to God

creator and sustainer of the universe.

We live with our eyes fixed on God

creator and sustainer of our lives

Great and glorious God, we praise and adore you as the one who creates life and speaks mercy. The people of old perceived your glory in the wonders of creation, but you chose to widen our vision forever when you entered our world and our history in person. Eyes were opened to see your glory in the most unimaginable way - in a vulnerable baby. Throughout his life, Jesus brought your love into sharper focus by emptying himself of power and filling himself with the needs of others. Our lives have been blessed forever through his sacrificial love and we humbly and gratefully offer our worship and praise for such evidence of your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

**LIGHT THE CANDLE** God is here.....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: Alive to God      TIS/147**

Alive to the presence and purpose of God,  
in Christ's name we're gathered the people of God.

Alive to God's presence and open to hear

God's word in our lives

and God's call to come near.

*Refrain*

*Come and sing! Praises bring! In Jesus we live!*

*Come and praise, laugh and sing! New hope God will give!*

*Alive to the presence and purpose of God,*

*God's word in our lives and God's call to come near.*

Alive to the presence of God in the world  
who meets us in strangers, the young and the old.  
Alive to the closeness of Jesus, set free  
to live out the good news  
through you and through me.

*Refrain*

*Come and sing! Praises bring! In Jesus we live!  
Come and praise, laugh and sing! New hope God will give!  
Alive to the presence and purpose of God,  
God's word in our lives and God's call to come near.*

Alive to God's purpose of justice and care,  
to build a new future, defeating despair.  
Alive to God's newness, new days will unfold;  
God's Spirit gives new ways in place of the old.

*Refrain*

*Come and sing! Praises bring! In Jesus we live!  
Come and praise, laugh and sing! New hope God will give!  
Alive to the presence and purpose of God,  
God's word in our lives and God's call to come near.*

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### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Look on us with mercy, we pray,  
reach out to us with care.  
Look to us with love, as ever  
you have for your beloved creation.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Holy One of mercy,  
we have been ungrateful,  
received your grace as a right,  
not recognising it as your gift.

**Holy One, Holy Three,  
forgive us again, we pray.**

Holy One of justice,  
we have been afraid,  
received your holiness with fear  
and let fear diminish our living, our life.

**Holy One, Holy Three,  
forgive us again, we pray.**

Holy One of love,  
we have been scornful,

received your love with disdain  
and failed to love you and each other.

**Holy One, Holy Three,  
forgive us again, we pray.**

Holy One: Mercy, Justice, Love,  
we return to you ready for grace,  
open to love, shedding our fear:

**Holy One, Holy Three,  
forgive us again, we pray.**

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Hear these words, friends,  
hear and take them in:  
Holy One sees us,  
knows us and frees us  
from the lifelessness that follows  
our turning from God, our source of life.

Return with trust in love,  
in mercy, in holy justice  
unlike what we can imagine.  
Trust: and be at peace. Amen.

### **PEACE**

**SING A Man of Ancient Time and Place      tune TiS 654**

A man of ancient time and place  
with foreign speech and foreign face,  
reveals the glory, power and grace  
of costly, unexpected love.

A rabbi, schooled in Moses' Law,  
a male, amending Herod's flaw,  
arouses wonder, rage and awe  
with costly, unexpected love.

By teasing word and healing deed,  
a leper touched, an outcast freed,  
he bears the fruit and plants the seed  
of costly, unexpected love.

The cost we barely can surmise  
when, lifted up before our eyes,  
the face of God we recognise  
in crucified, unfathomed love.

May faith and hope within us grow,  
the way of Christ to tell and show,  
and may the Spirit breathe and blow  
in costly, unexpected love.

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### **READING FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES:**

#### **Judges 4: 1-7**

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goim. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'"

### **READING FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES: Matthew 25: 14-30**

"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that

you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

## **REFLECTION:**

### **Attitude of Abundance**

Judges 4:1-7, Matthew 25:14-30

There's an old story about a young man who bought a horse from a farmer for \$100. The farmer agreed to deliver the horse the next day. However, when the next day arrived, the farmer broke his promise. "I'm afraid the horse has died," he explained. The young man said, "Well, then give me my money back." The farmer said, "Can't do that. I spent it already." The young man thought for a moment and said, "Ok, then, just bring me the dead horse." The farmer asked, "What are you going to do with a dead horse?" The young man said, "I'm going to raffle it off." The farmer said, "You can't raffle off a dead horse!" The young man said, "Sure I can. Watch me. I just will not tell anybody he's dead." A month later, the farmer met up with the young man and asked, "What happened with that dead horse?" The young man said, "I raffled him off. I sold 500 tickets at two dollars each and made a profit of \$998 . . ." The farmer said, "Didn't anyone complain?" The young man said, "Just the guy who won. So, I gave him his two dollars back."

Today our gospel reading is about the parable of the talents. I was wondering what kind of gifted or talented people are around us in our world. I searched on google and You Tube last week. I just typed "the most talented people in the world". I found some and I would like to introduce one of them this morning.

(Video)

Jesus once told a story of a wealthy man who was preparing for a long journey. He called his three servants and divided his money between them, each according to their ability. To one servant he gave five talents, to a second two, and to a third one. Why is life like that? I don't know. We are all equal in the eyes of God. We are all guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution. In an election our votes are all equal. But when it comes to our abilities, we are as different as different can be. God simply did not make us all the same. There are some people who can handle five talents; there are some who can handle only one. There are some people who have great intellectual capabilities, and some who do not. There are some who have the ability to project and articulate their thoughts, and there are some who cannot. There are some who have physical ability and attractive looks, and there are some who do not. The important thing to remember is that each servant was given something. No one was left idle. You may not be a five-talent person, but you have some talent. We all do. And you know something. I think that there are a whole lot more one and two talent people in this world than there are five talent people. There are some people who seem to have it all. I won't deny that. But most of us are just one or two talent servants. Well, you know the story. The man who received five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five talents more. So also, the one with two talents gained two more. But the man who had received one talent, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money . . . in the ground! After some time, the master of the servants returned to settle accounts. The master was very delighted with the servants who had doubled their money, and he was angry with the servant who hid the money in the ground. Let me pause here. If you had never heard this parable before, how would you expect the master to feel? He had entrusted his wealth to his three servants. Two of them had not only protected that with which they had been entrusted, but they had doubled it. Now this third servant is asked to account for his stewardship. And he is forced to announce that he had buried his master's wealth in the ground and had not added an ounce to what he had been given. If you had been his boss, how would you feel? Disappointed? Frustrated? Perhaps even angry? His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant!

The significant question is: why did he choose to do nothing with the one talent that had been given to him? We are not really given the answer. We are left to speculate. And that is precisely what I would like to do this morning. Speculate about his inaction.

First, he perhaps did nothing with his one talent because he feared failure. How did he word it: "I was afraid" and I hid my talent. Fearful of doing the wrong thing, he chose to do nothing at all. This was perhaps a man who did well under supervision, but now he is left on his own and he is terrified. We view this man with contempt because he hid his talent in the ground. But our contempt is misguided. This was considered the traditional way of saving money in that day in time. He was being a good conservative businessman. He was not going to risk someone else's money by buying into some speculative venture. He wanted to play it safe and what is wrong with that. Simply this, you cannot love if you are not willing to risk. What is the risk of love? That people will not return our love. But as the people of God, we are called upon to be the people of daring. Friends, if Jesus had played it safe, we would not be sitting here this morning. Someone said, "The major themes of the Christian faith - caring, giving, witnessing, trusting, loving, hoping - cannot be understood or lived without risk." I want to be faithful to this text. So, I would say to you: Go, and take risks. Take risks and don't fear failure.

Perhaps a second reason why this one talent man did nothing with his talent is that he played the game "if only." If only I had been given the talent of these other two men, then I could have accomplished something. We like to play that game too. I would love to teach a Sunday school class, if only I had her ability. If only I had his voice I would sing in the choir. I would support the church if only I had a little more money. We would fully support the mission and ministry of the church if only we had a little more money in the budget. It is a dangerous game because it too easily gets us off the hook. Maybe when we complain that we wish that we had more, if only we were like someone other than ourselves, if only... God says to us: Use the gifts I have given you. Stop crying about what you do not have and start concentrating on what you do have.

To me, however, neither of these reasons really gets to the heart of the issue. I really think that the one talent man did nothing with his talent because he thought to himself: Well, my one little talent won't make any difference anyway. There are a lot of people who feel that way today.

A conductor was holding a rehearsal. As the mighty chorus rang out, accompanied by scores of instruments, the piccolo player--a little pint-sized flute--thinking perhaps that his contribution would not be missed amid so much music, stopped playing. Suddenly, the conductor stopped and cried out, "Where is the piccolo?" The sound of that one small instrument was necessary to the harmony, and the Conductor missed it when it dropped out. The point? To the Conductor there are no insignificant instruments in an orchestra. Sometimes the smallest and seemingly least important one can make the greatest contribution and even if it doesn't seem to make that big a difference to the audience at large, the conductor knows it right away! In the Church the players and the instruments are diverse--different sizes, different shapes, different notes, different roles to play. But like the piccolo player in the orchestra, we often decide that our contribution is not significant. Our contribution couldn't possibly make a difference. And so we quit playing. We quit helping, serving, supporting. We stop doing that which we've been given to do. We drop out. But the Conductor immediately notices. From our perspective, our contribution may be small, but from God, it is crucial. For all piccolos who won't play, or at least aren't playing for whatever reasons: pain, tiredness, insecurity, criticism, laziness, misbehavior, Jesus has something to say. Use the gifts that God has given you.

I don't know when I spend hours on a sermon every way that it is going to make any difference at all in the life of anybody. But I do know that it is better to try than not to try. I don't know that if a teacher makes an effort to reach out to a troubled student that it is going to make any difference in the long run, but I do know that it is better to try than not to try.

May I remind you that when the Good Samaritan stopped to help a beaten victim on the Jericho Road that day he did not resolve all of the social, political, and economic



ills of first century Israel. But he did what he could. He used what he had. And that is the issue for us. Are you doing what you can, where you are, with what you have?

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**SING: The Summons**

**All together 413**

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

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**OFFERING:**

Take what we offer, O God,  
and may it grow life in abundance for all –  
our offerings of money, of time,  
of ourselves and our presence.  
May it be enough,  
and may all have enough. Amen.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

## **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

Faithful God, today we pray for our world and for truth.  
So much of the time we live amongst untruths, half-truths and embellishments.  
The products and services we buy are sold to us in unreal ways.  
The leaders we listen to, too often tell us what they think we want to hear  
and not the truths we need to hear.  
Sometimes it is hard to make sense of it all.  
We pray for all who are confused and all who are weary. We pray for all  
whose courage fails them in the face of hardship. We pray for all who are  
entrusted with telling the truth. May they do so sensitively and plainly. We  
pray for a world of honesty where we all have the courage to tell the truth  
and to hear the truth, to know the reality of the words of Jesus that the truth  
will set us free.

We pray for people and places where there is not enough:  
where children starve  
and parents watch, helpless;  
where animals wander in search of habitat, lost;  
where doctors and nurses make do but cannot heal, cannot save;  
where politicians do deals and compromise more than they gain,  
where our elders languish in lonely isolation,  
where communities re-live trauma through and long after-violent disruption

We pray for people like us, our sisters and our brothers, who must live with the  
constant threat of war and famine, for those for whom each day might be  
their last and for those who see no end in sight to their suffering and fear.

Merciful God, today we pray for all in our community for whom life is a tired  
and used up thing.  
We pray for people who are weary of the life they are leading, for those we  
name in our hearts who are suffering in some way.  
We pray for those who are called to sit with and hear the stories of all who  
feel broken by life. We think specially at this time of The Storehouse and the  
work done among an often despairing people.

Holy One, we lift our eyes to you,  
we look up, not away,  
we look to each other and to you  
in response to the needs of the world,  
and we hope, we trust, we pray  
for love to meet these needs,  
for love to be enough for life to begin again. Amen.

**SING: The Power of Your Love TIS/685**

Lord, you come to me:  
and as my heart is changed, released,  
this miracle of grace  
gently sets me free.  
Lord, I've come to know  
the weaknesses I see in me  
will be stripped away  
by the power of your love.

You hold me close,  
you let your love surround me;  
for you've come near  
to draw me to your side:  
and in your life I'm rising like the eagle,  
and I will soar with you:  
as your Spirit leads me on  
in the power of your love.

You've unveiled my eyes,  
you let me see you face to face,  
in the knowledge of your love  
as you live in me.  
You've renewed my mind  
as your will unfolds in my life,  
in living every day  
in the power of your love.

You hold me close,  
you let your love surround me;  
for you've come near  
to draw me to your side:  
and in your life I'm rising like the eagle,  
and I will soar with you:  
as your Spirit leads me on  
in the power of your love.

Lord, you've come to all  
with hope that shines to light the way,  
as mercy soothes our souls,  
healing every heart.  
Love that sees the tears  
overcomes our darkest fears,  
this grace that lifts us up  
in the power of your love.

You hold me close,  
you let your love surround me;  
for you've come near  
to draw me to your side:  
and in your life I'm rising like the eagle,  
and I will soar with you:  
as your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love.

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### **BLESSING:**

Lift up. Look up. Stand up  
and go into the world that God loves,  
and love that world into life.

Do not be afraid,  
but trust your Holy One,  
with you, before you,  
in you, through you,  
loving all into life. Amen.

### **SENDING SONG: Jesus' Hands were Kind Hands**

**TIS/236**

Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all,  
healing pain and sickness, blessing children small,  
washed tired feet, and saving those who fall:  
Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all.

Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let them work for you,  
make them strong and gentle, kind in all I do;  
let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too,  
till my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.

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