

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
28 January 2024
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

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 Biddegal 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 VISION STATEMENTS

Let us say together who we are.

***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.***

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 111)*

Praise the Lord!

***I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.***

Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practise it have a good understanding.
God's praise endures for ever.*

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God,
you sent your Son to proclaim your kingdom
and to teach with authority.
Anoint us with the power of your Spirit,
that we, too, may bring good news to the afflicted,
bind up the broken-hearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive.

Help us to rejoice in your presence
and to offer the sacrifice of prayer and service, of praise and of caring,
that you desire to receive from all your children,
that you desire to bestow on all who will open their hands and hearts to you
and to your presence in our brothers and sisters.
Lord, we worship you and thank you for your saving love and your guiding light.
Amen.

HYMN: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer TiS 569

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain
whence the living waters flow:
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:

songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, our merciful Redeemer,
we who have sinned in word, thought and deed,
and in what we have left undone,
humbly ask you to meet us where we need to be forgiven
and set our feet again upon the path that leads to life.

Pause

***Loving God, may we, with a broken world,
know your touch of healing and restoration
as we thank you for sisters and brothers across the world
and every act of human kindness.
Set free to worship you with our whole hearts,
we sing and tell of the joy there is in you,
God of new beginnings,
who leads us through the dark valleys to green pastures,
who offers us a foretaste of the new creation.
May all glory and honour be yours,
faithful God of mercy, justice and love. Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Christ continues to lay down his life for us,
so that we might have life.
Christ continues to show us the way,
so that we might live into the truth and the life.
Christ continues to love us,
so that we might love God and love our neighbours as ourselves.

Know that you are forgiven, loved, and given new life.

Thanks be to God

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

HYMN: Draw the circle wide Online resource

(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.

(Refrain)

Let our hearts touch far horizons so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call.

(Refrain)

Let the dream we dreamed be larger than we ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door.

(Refrain)

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Deuteronomy 18:15–20

15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. 16 This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' 17 Then the Lord replied to me, 'They are right in what they have said. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. 19 Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. 20 But any prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

Mark 1:21-28

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching —with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

REFLECTION

This morning, I want you all to get back to your childhood memories. Did your mother ever say any of the following to you? "I could plant potatoes in those ears; I'm not your maid; If your friends jumped off a cliff does that mean you have to jump too?" Perhaps these phrases are familiar to you as well, "Just wait till you have kids of your own; Don't talk with food in your mouth; You weren't born in a barn, so stop acting like you were." And of course, I am sure you have heard this all time classic - "Because I'm your mother, that's why! Each of these statements is an expression that has been passed from generation to generation. So we might call them 'expressions of authority' - the authority of a parent over a child. Authority however is weaker in some people and stronger in others.

We have all heard parents who say things like "I really mean it this time" and know that it means nothing. Equally, we have heard others say simply and quietly - "Children, come" and seen an entire brood tumble into the room, waiting for what is to be said next. In this case, the strength of a person's authority comes from the strength of the being of the person. I remembered an old story about a Christian gathering in which a famous actor was invited to give a speech. He stood, cleared his throat, and recited the famous Psalm 23, with perfect dramatization, inflection (nuance, intonation), and so on. When he finished, the room was filled with applause. Then, an elderly priest stepped forward, and proceeded to recite the same words. When he finished, there was not a sound in the room. But nearly every eye was filled with tears. Someone asked the actor what the difference had been. "Well, you see," he said, "There's no doubt that I know the 23rd Psalm backwards and forwards. But that old priest here, well, he knows the Shepherd." Well, I think this story goes with us as a Christian community. No matter what we know, plan or do, no matter how good we are at some programs, we have to remember always that our authorities always comes from the Shepherd, our Lord.

The word for "authority" that is used twice in the Gospel text today is the Greek word "exousia", which literally means "out of being". An author is someone who speaks out

of his/her own being. As with the priest in the story, Jesus spoke out of His heavenly Father's being - out of where he came from. Today's story from Mark involves Jesus commanding the demon with his heavenly authority. Demon, or evil, or Satan, exists, no matter how you define it. In ancient societies people avoided darkness and protected their homes against demons. They put special markings on their doorposts, at special times they put jack-o-lanterns on their porches and kept themselves safe from evil things. Today people avoid dark places and protect their homes against crime and random violence. They put signs in their windows saying that they are protected by alarms. They put motion lights up. The results today are the same as the results so long ago: People are bound by a type of fear, even terror, that robs them of a good quality of life. In ancient societies they would believe that people were possessed by demons that took over their lives and made of them a living hell. Today people are possessed by lusts and all sorts of addictions that have the exactly same result. The point is, something else controls them and makes their lives unmanageable - unbearable - unpleasant in the extreme. There is Violent Crime making people tremble for fear behind bolted doors. There is Drug Addiction dragging its victims around in chains. There is Domestic Violence and child abuse that paralyse the basic capacity of being a human, both abusers and the victims. And here are Racism, Materialism, Me-ism, and all the other demonic forces that invade our lives and relationships before we realize them.

In today's gospel story found in Mark, Jesus went into the synagogue in Capernaum and began to teach. Then Jesus turned to a man with an evil spirit and healed him completely. This is basically what Jesus did in his life and ministry. As it is seen in many biblical stories, Jesus' presence always made an extreme difference in all sorts of people's reality. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of heaven and then made that kingdom visible and empirical through his practical ministry to those who were in sufferings and pains. Jesus is still doing the same in this world and in our lives. There are things in our life that we can't do anything about. You know that you can't do anything about certain parts of your personality as well. You can't even change your habitual way of doing things almost forever. However, we've got a good news. There is a higher power who is fully able to help us and this is always the key to complete recovery to all sorts of problems and darkness that damage and destroy our relationships and our quality of life. And we have to be always reminded that that higher power can make a difference in our lives and our all relationships. So..., Jesus Christ... is our authority. Jesus Christ is our ultimate, supreme authority in all we have and in all we do, and in all we are. He is our Lord; he is our God; he is our Teacher.

In verse 25 of today's gospel story, Jesus ordered the evil spirit by saying this: "Be quiet, and come out of the man." And, the man stands there quietly... At peace. Jesus not only talks about God and the love of God -- he actually brings it about in someone's tortured life. Evil always flees in the presence of a higher authority. Our world needs to know and we too, that Only Jesus has the authority to give meaning

to life and to heal the broken". A few years ago, I have watched a video called 'I am Sam'. It was a really touching story about a single father whose intelligence level is about as same as 7 year-old. He happened to meet a homeless woman who gave a birth to a baby girl and then disappeared, leaving the baby all to Sam's care. Sam tries very hard to bring his child up despite all kinds of limitations that cause many embarrassing happenings. Anyway, the long story to be shortened, Sam's daughter grew to be a very smart child. In a scene where Sam hears his 10 year-old daughter reading her story book, she reluctantly stops her reading and refuses to go on. What happened is, she doesn't want to speak out the word 'different' that has appeared on the page she was reading, because she knows that her father is different. Sam keeps telling his daughter to speak the word without even knowing what's going on in his daughter's mind, 'Baby, you've got to read the word.' cries out Same. "Why? I don't want to read it." his daughter confronts. Then, Sam almost screams, "You read it, because I am your Father. Because I am your Father.' Sam, whose mental capacity is as low as that of 7 year-old child, who is so different to other fathers, still claims his parental authority over his 10 year-old daughter, whose mentality is apparently higher than his. How? Why? Because he was her father.

There is God who created the whole universe and everything and everything living thing in it. And the God rules them and maintains them and judges them. And that God is our Father and Mother. Therefore, God is our authority. God is our power; God is our laws; God is our reason; God is our authority, all because God is our Father and Mother.

Australians are those who live their lives under the rule of the Australian government. Koreans are those who live their lives under the rule of the Korean government. Christians are those who live their lives under God's reign. We live in the kingdom of God though we belong to certain society or community, or a nation in this world. We are in God's control. God is our every authority over every aspect of our lives, because God is Our Father and Mother and we are His children. Amen.

HYMN 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.

OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you call us to follow you
and to proclaim the gospel through word and deed.
May these gifts and the service of our lives be tangible
and worthy signs of our response. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Gracious God,
as the disciples brought others to Jesus
that he might lay his hands upon their lives and bless them,
we offer our thoughts and prayers for people we bring to you now.
And, like the disciples, we bring ourselves as well.
We come to you who is able to do so much more than we can imagine,
we come to you because already, risen and ascended Jesus,
before the throne of God, you pray for us and for all whom we would bring to you.

Receive our prayers O Lord:
some are for people we love,
others are for people we find hard to love,
some are for people who are happy,
others are for people in pain,
some are for people we know,
others for people known by you.
In quiet moments we pray.

Jesus, Saviour,
we pray today for a world so often in turmoil,
caught up in fear or war, injustice,
the neglect of the vulnerable, and of creation.

Teach us how best to use the freedom we have been given
to serve you and to make common cause with all who seek the wellbeing of others.
We pray for people in positions of influence,
remembering the Internet and other forms of mass communication.
May we have the wisdom to nurture what is good
and guard against what is harmful.
We pray for all who advance knowledge and extend the frontiers of science,

thanking you for the many benefits we enjoy as a result.
God only wise, may knowledge be used for good alone.
May we return often to the well-spring of wisdom,
that we may share what you have given us
to drink with a thirsty world.

Lord, we pray for the sick and people in suffering
who are known in this congregation.
We remember Brian and Rhonda, Prema and Priya,
Jim and Bobbie, Denis and Dolly, Jim Bird, Naghuia, Joy Dixon
and others whom we name in our hearts.
Please give them your intensive care and healing,
strength and hope.
Please lift the hope and joy of their family
because of your healing.

All of this we pray in the name of your beloved child
who came to us all those years ago
and lives among us today. Amen.

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 for ever. Amen.***

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

INVITATION

We are here because Jesus has called us –
strangers and friends, locals and visitors,
believers and doubters, the certain and the curious.

Jesus invites us to his table and he meets us here

and through him we, who are different, are joined to each other.

So come, not because you understand,
but because you are understood.
Come, not because of how you feel,
but because God has food for you.
Come, not because you deserve a place,
but because Jesus invites you, just as you are.

COMMUNION HYMN: Feed us now TiS 538

Feed us now, Bread of life, in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew: we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life, come and live within;
let your peace be ours today, Lord Jesus, we pray.

Piece of bread, cup of wine: Lord, this food is good:
love and mercy come to us, your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, cup of wine: who can understand
how his mercy works in these? Yet, Lord, we believe.

God is here, O so near, nearer than our thoughts.
Stay with us where'er we go; Lord, help us to grow.
God is here, O so near, in this heaven's meal.
May we always feed on you – on the bread that is true.

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also be with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

With joy we praise you, gracious God,
for you have created heaven and earth,
made us in your image, and kept covenant with us—
even when we fell into sin.

We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord,
whose coming opened to us the way of salvation

and whose triumphant return we eagerly await.
And so, with all the company of heaven and earth
we praise your holy name saying:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

You are holy, O God of majesty,
and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.
You sent him into this world
to satisfy the longings of your people for a Savior,
to bring freedom to the captives of sin,
and to establish justice for the oppressed.
He came among us as one of us,
taking the lot of the poor, sharing human suffering.

We rejoice that in his death and rising again,
you set before us the sure promise of new life,
the certain hope of a heavenly home
where we will sit at table with Christ, our host.

We remember, on the night of his betrayal, that Jesus took bread,
giving thanks, and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after supper, he also took the cup and said:
Drink from this all of you.
This is my blood shed for you and for the whole world
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.”
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Strengthen us, O God, in the power of your Spirit
to bring good news to the poor and lift blind eyes to sight,
to loose the chains that bind and claim your blessing for all people.
Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory
and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm.
Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, Lamb of God,

Have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,

Have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,

Grant us peace.

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Loving God, we thank you that through word and sacrament
you have given us your Son who is the true bread of heaven
and food of eternal life.

So strengthen us in your service
that our daily living may show our thanks;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: 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.

(Refrain)

*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.

(Refrain)

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.

(Refrain)

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BLESSING

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ

shine in our hearts, transform our lives,
and brighten the world.

And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
rest upon you always. Amen.

SENDING SONG: May You Find Peace Seasons 7-26

May you find peace,
may you find hope,
may you find joy this day.
May you find love,
may you find rest
here in this place together. (X2)

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