

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
MARCH 3rd 2024**

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 MISSION STATEMENTS

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

From Psalm 19

The heavens declare God's glory.

The skies proclaim God's works.

God's instructions are trustworthy,

bringing joy to our hearts.

May our words bring praise

as we come to worship God.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

SING: Morning has broken TIS 156

**Morning has broken like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing,
praise for the morning,
praise for them, springing
fresh from the word.**

**Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
of the wet garden,
sprung from completeness
where his feet pass.**

**Mine is the sunlight; mine is the morning
born of the one light Eden saw play.
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day.**

OPENING PRAYER

There is a tradition in the Church that through Lent we journey with Jesus towards Jerusalem, following his footsteps towards the cross. We extinguish a candle each week to remind us that Jesus walks on towards his death. We pray that we might take up Christ's courage to walk with love and seek justice. And we pray that we might not falter in this task. Amen.

LENTEN CANDLE LITURGY

Extinguish one Lenten candle.

SING: God to Enfold You – John Bell Iona x2

<https://youtu.be/MLwVGNkMDwQ?si=BPLuWUUPZyW-VBIF>

<https://youtu.be/yOrmUAW5E8Q?si=-q9yjt0Pstuf5ANe>

God to enfold you,

Christ to uphold you,

Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight.

So may God grace you,

heal and embrace you,

lead you through darkness into the light.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Look at your hands.

Rub them together.

Blow your breath upon your hands.

Take time to notice your hands, and all your body.

A mystery and joy of our faith is this: we confess that in Christ Jesus we meet God-in-a-body. We give the name Emmanuel, God-with-us, Word-made-flesh.

Look at your hands. In Jesus, God has hands!

Look at your feet. In Jesus, God has feet!

Look around you. In Jesus, God has eyes!

Let this wash over you.

In Jesus, we meet God-in-a-body.

In Jesus, God affirms the words spoken at creation:

that the world is good,

that bodies are good,

and that God cares for created material things.

Gracious God, we are sorry for the times we devalued the creation and the bodies you love.

Help us to care for bodies and for all created things, honouring and valuing what you have made.

In the name of Christ, the word-made-flesh, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

As we wash our bodies clean so our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

PEACE

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

SING: Come let us praise our God / A voice is heard ATW 430

**Come, let us praise our God,
come let us sing for joy.
With a heart of thanks we give honour.
You are a mighty God,
you are the source of life.
Creator God, we give praise.**

**From the deepest seas – a voice is heard.
From the highest hills – a voice is heard.
From the rich dark earth – a voice is heard.
All creation sings! God is heard!**

**Come, let us praise our God,
come let us sing for joy.
With a heart of thanks we give honour.
You are a mighty God,
you are the source of life.
Creator God, we give praise.**

**Through the darkest night – a voice is heard.
Through the breaking dawn – a voice is heard.
Through the heart of life – a voice is heard.
All creation sings! God is heard!**

**Come, let us praise our God,
come let us sing for joy.
With a heart of thanks we give honour.
You are a mighty God,
you are the source of life.
Creator God, we give praise.**

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS:

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.

²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom,

²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

JOHN 2:13-22

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

CHOIR SINGS: Blessed Assurance: Jesus Is Mine

**Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood**

Chorus:

**This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.**

**Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.**

Chorus:

**Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.**

Chorus:

REFLECTION – Deok Hee

1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 2:13-22

*“For the [message](#) of the [cross](#) is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the [power](#) of God.”*

Have you ever seen the Energizer battery commercial on television before? You know that is the one where the little bunny appears beating a drum, and the announcer says "still going! On he goes, across the desert, over mountains, on lonely highways. Nothing seems to stop the little bunny. Now, I want you to understand that the point of the commercial is not the bunny, but the battery.

Any of you like listening to music? I love to listen to music. Whenever I go for a walk, I like to take along my mobile phone with songs in it so I can enjoy listening to music as I walk. Listening to music before I go to sleep at night helps me to relax. Some of you may have a portable radio, CD player etc. If you do, then you know that before it can make music, it must have batteries in it. The batteries give the player the power that it needs to be able to play. Without batteries, the player can do nothing. Without batteries, it has no power to do what it was created to do. Think of your mobile phone. After a day or two, what happens? The power bar dips into the red. The warning light flashes. And then it's done. No more calls. No more Facebook. No more text messages. Why? Because the battery is the power source. How about cars? Cars with weak batteries have problems starting. Once the motor starts the car usually runs, but it takes a good battery to get it started. Particularly in cold weather, a weak battery just won't do it. So it is very important to have good batteries because weak batteries cause problems all the time. But even a good battery is only half the solution. I had a trouble getting my car started last year. I tried to turn on the engine many times but I only got clicking sounds. So naturally I thought that my battery was dead. Without checking with anyone, I went to Super cheap Auto car part shop in Rockdale and purchased a new battery. When I returned, I put the battery in and I tried to start the car again, but I got those same clicking sounds. Finally, I called NRMA road service and the man had a look and analysed the problem. He said, "you have a good battery but your cables are bad." That day I learned a good lesson about my car; you must always make sure that you have a good connection to the battery. My brothers and sisters, we too, as born again Christians, must make sure that we have a good connection to our power source; and that source is Jesus.

A young boy once accompanied his mother to worship. During the sermon, the boy was listening very attentively to the lesson that day. The preacher's sermon on the crucifixion of Christ was so moving that the boy began to weep. Soon he began to cry aloud. His mother became so embarrassed that she whispered to him, "Don't take it so seriously." How many people today do not take the cross of Christ seriously? Some people think that cross was some boring historical account that has no meaning in life. Well, my friends, the cross has meaning; it has significance and we need to start taking the cross of Christ more seriously. We need to embrace the value of the cross. We need to understand that the word of the cross is the power of God.

The Apostle Paul defines the whole gospel as "the word of the cross." Both the Christian message and the Christian life are cruciform, bearing the shape of the cross. Thus, we cannot avoid speaking about the cross, directly or indirectly, throughout the year. But during Lent, and especially on Good Friday, we try to keep silent and let the cross speak its word to us. Now, in our text, the Cross of Christ represents the power of God unto salvation. It also represents the power of God for every believer to live in the spirit. But like the battery, we must have clear contact to keep the power flowing. We must be in harmony with the will of God to benefit from the power that is available to us. Yes, some other people might think that we are foolish for doing so, but we Christians know that our power comes from the Cross-, the Power of God. That is why we, in this season of Lent, journey together to Calvary to the cross which is the power of God. In verse 18, Paul explains that those who are saved recognize the cross as a symbol of the power of God. But to those outside of the faith, the church seems to be involved in foolishness. What is this foolishness of which Paul speaks? Maybe it's the command to love your enemies or to pray for those who hate you. Maybe it is the command that if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Maybe it's your belief that you are blessed when people insult you and persecute you, and utter all manner of evil against you falsely.

Now, again notice in our text, it says, "For the [message](#) of the [cross](#) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the [power](#) of God." And verse 17 reminds us that the first step to releasing the power of God is by hearing the Word of God. It says: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Singing, praying, testimonies and other forms of worship are inspiring to me, but it is the Word of God that connects us to our power source. It is the Word of God that directs me to the foot of the Cross. When Paul preached about Christ and his crucifixion, the Jews considered it a stumbling block. The Greeks said that it was foolishness. They have heard the story, but they refuse to accept its truth. They view preaching as a waste of time, foolishness. But to those of us who are called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Those of us who are believers know that, at the foot of the cross, we find our ability, our strength, and our power. That power lights our path. That power keeps us going when we would give up. That power heals us. Save us, and redeems us. Our knowledge of the historical account of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is our power source; it is our spiritual battery that just keeps us going, going, and going. Sometimes our life is not easy, tired, exhausted, failed, and despaired. The one thing we should not forget is whenever we need power, we need to go to the one that is able to heal the sick and raise the dead. He is our Salvation, and his name is Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus is better than anyone and any power sources; and he has power to spare. People crucified him on the cross, they buried him in a tomb, and they tried to drain him of his power. But early one Sunday Morning, Jesus rose with all power in his hand, "Wonder working power" "Soul saving power" "Healing power" in his hand. Friends in Christ, are you connected to his power?

Have you ever seen this car bumper sticker before? Cross equals Love. When I came back home last week after shopping I saw a car with this sticker on its window, "Cross equals Love".

Every time I see the cross, it reminds me of the marvellous Love of God! John 3:16, "For God so loved the [world](#) that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have [eternal life](#)." Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own [love](#) for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The cross is everything about God's love, and it let us know how much God loves us. When someone comes and tries to tell you that God does not love you, what would you do then? I will suggest one for you. Take that person to the cross! The cross is everything about God's love, and it tells us how much God loves us.

Friends in Christ! As you bear your cross on life's journey, especially in this Lent season, hear the word of the cross. Take heart and be of courage. See Jesus! Believe in Jesus! He bore his cross for all for the forgiveness of sins and for life everlasting. The word of the cross is the power of God and the power of God is the word of the cross, on which God has brought you life abundant and life eternal. Amen.

SING: Inspired by love and anger TIS 674

**Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,
informed of God's own bias we ask him once again:**

"How long must some folk suffer?

How long can few folk mind?

How long dare vain self interest turn prayer and pity blind?"

**From those forever victims of heartless human greed,
their cruel plight composes a litany of need:**

"Where are the fruits of justice?

Where are the signs of peace?

When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?"

**From those forever shackled to what their wealth can buy,
the fear of lost advantage provokes the bitter cry,**

"Don't query our position!

Don't criticise our wealth!

Don't mention those exploited by politics and stealth!"

**To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,
we offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:**

"When will the wronged be righted?

When will the kingdom come?

When will the world be generous to all instead of some?"

**God asks, “Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?”**

**Amused in someone’s kitchen, asleep in someone’s boat,
Attuned to what the ancients exposed, proclaimed and wrote,
A Saviour without safety, a tradesman without tools
has come to tip the balance with fishermen and fools.**

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OFFERING

Accept our offerings, O God, and use them to make your Good News present in our midst. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS & THE LORD’S PRAYER

Let us pray for the world that God created and loves.

Creator God, we give thanks that you meet us in the world.

Help us to see you, even in places that shock or surprise.

We pray for the sick and the dying. Pause

We pray for those impacted by war, and for prisoners. Pause

We pray for the lonely and broken-hearted. Pause

We pray for endangered animals and plants. Pause

We pray for all who are marginalised or experience discrimination.
Pause

We pray that we would work for justice in your world, as we follow after Jesus.

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: Jesus Christ is waiting TIS 665

**Jesus Christ is waiting,
waiting in the streets;
no-one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger,
fit to wait on you.**

**Jesus Christ is raging,
raging in the streets;
where injustice spirals
and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes
let me rage with you.**

**Jesus Christ is healing,
healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer,
touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.
Let my care be active,
healing just like you.**

The Sending Forth of the People of God

BLESSING

May God bless you,
Christ walk before you,

and the Spirit of love hold you in faith,

this day and every day. Amen.

SENDING SONG: Jesus Christ is waiting TIS 665 (Cont)

**Jesus Christ is dancing,
dancing in the streets;
where each sign of hatred
he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.
Where good conquers evil
let me dance with you.**

**Jesus Christ is calling,
calling in the streets;
“Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet.”
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me;
I will follow you.**

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