

Welcome

LIGHT THE CANDLE

God is here **God is always here**
God is with us **God is always with us**

OUR MISSION AND VALUES

Our mission at Kogarah Uniting Church is
to share God's love in the community,
to create a welcoming and inclusive place,
and to provide care and support for all.

We do this by

welcoming people of all cultures and lifestyles, creating a safe place for our
community and sharing the journey of life and faith.

Acknowledgement of Country

We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging of the Bidjegal 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. We honour their care of this Country, and acknowledge their unceded sovereignty.

Lent is a time of walking with Jesus towards Jerusalem, a walk motivated by love, a walk seeking justice. In Lent, we commit ourselves to following this way of love and justice. We commit to seeking a more just settlement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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. And we pray that we might take up Christ's courage to walk with love and to seek justice. And we pray that we might not falter in this task. Amen.

Extinguish one Lenten candle.

SING – God to enfold you – sing twice
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.

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Call To Worship

Adapted from Psalm 119

All-knowing God, we gather to celebrate your wisdom and words.

May we always keep your words and wisdom close to our hearts.

Holy God, we gather to praise you for your grace and your mercy.
May we make God's grace and mercy a part of our everyday life.

Unknown and Known God, we gather together to worship and thank you.
May we learn from our worship what are the important values in life.

Sisters, brothers, siblings,
friends gathered here,
come, let us worship.
We come to worship God.

SING – Sing to God with joy and gladness – TiS 92

Sing to God, with joy and gladness,
hymns and psalms of gratitude;
with the voice of praise discover
that to worship God is good.

God unites his scattered people,
gathers those who wandered far,
heals the hurt and broken spirits,
tending every wound and scar.
Sing to God, with joy and gladness,
hymns and psalms of gratitude;
with the voice of praise discover
that to worship God is good.

Such is God's great power and wisdom
none can calculate or tell;
keen is God to ground the wicked
and with humble folk to dwell.
Sing to God, with joy and gladness,
hymns and psalms of gratitude;
with the voice of praise discover
that to worship God is good.

God with clouds, the sky has curtained
thus ensuring rain shall fall;
earth, responding, grows to order
food for creatures great and small.
Sing to God, with joy and gladness,
hymns and psalms of gratitude;
with the voice of praise discover
that to worship God is good.

God's discernment never favours
strength or speed to lift or move;
God delights in those who fear him,
trusting in his steadfast love.
Sing to God, with joy and gladness,
hymns and psalms of gratitude;
with the voice of praise discover

that to worship God is good.

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Adoration/Invocation/Confession & Assurance of Forgiveness

The reading from Jeremiah, which we'll hear shortly, tells us that in God's new covenant, God will write the law on the heart of God's people: "I will be their God and they shall be my people". God will be present in the hearts of God's people.

Remembering this, let us pray.

Today, we recognise that God's good news

is that God is present among us,

not at arm's length,

not at some time in the future,

not in some distant perfect place,

but here, where our feet stand

and now, where we are at present.

Let us take a moment to recognise that God is in our midst.

SING – Spirit of Life – Seasons 7-35

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea,

move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.

Roots hold me close, wings set me free;

Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

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God-with-us,

forgive us when we fail to notice you.

Forgive us when we displace you to somewhere else.

Forgive us when we defer you to an unknown future.

You are here in this place.

We give thanks.

Help us to live honouring this time and place where you are.

Amen.

Words of Grace

Hear these words of grace: God is in our midst, breathing new life through the Spirit, teaching us how to live through Jesus the Christ.

We are called to live God's grace in this time and in this place.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

SING – This is a day of new beginnings – TiS 653, verses 1 and 3.

This is a day of new beginnings,

time to remember, and move on,

time to believe what love is bringing,

laying to rest the pain that's gone.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.

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Peace

We Listen For God's Voice

A reading from the Hebrew scriptures: Jeremiah 31: 31–34– ppt

³¹The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

A reading from the Christian scriptures: John 12 : 20 – 33

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Reflection

From time to time, I get an invitation to visit a different church to be their guest preacher. Whenever I preach in a church I haven't been to before, I am always anxious to stand behind the pulpit to get a feel for it. I want to stand there and look out at the still empty pews and imagine how I will be making eye contact with the people. I want to hold the pulpit to see how it feels. Most of all, however, I want to see inside the pulpit, just to see what is back there. A lot of you have never looked behind the pulpit, but there are a couple of shelves in most pulpits, and you often find unusual things back there. I can

remember preaching in one church and inside the back of the pulpit was a telephone. Throughout the sermon my mind kept wondering, "What do I do if it rings? Stop preaching and answer it? Ignore it?" When I came to Australia in 1994, I studied at Sydney Missionary Bible College in Croydon. I remember that behind the pulpit in the chapel, there was a small sign, quoting the New Testament lesson for today. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." The reason someone put that sign behind the pulpit in the first place is to encourage the new preachers being trained at the seminary not to proclaim themselves, but to proclaim Jesus Christ. Every sermon ought to enable people to see Jesus more clearly.

I have a friend who did volunteer work as a chaplain at a nursing home in his early years of ministry. One day he was invited to conduct a Sunday morning service at the nursing home and she accepted gladly. He threw himself into the task with all of his energy. He thought very highly of the people who lived at the nursing home and he wanted to deliver, not just a sermon, but a great sermon. So he worked and worked on it and finally he had it. The only trouble with his sermon is that it was the kind of sermon that only a recent graduate of the seminary would understand. It had lots of references to Greek and Hebrew and also had complicated theological points. On the day when he delivered the sermon, the residents of the nursing home gathered in the activity room. Some were wheeled in. Others used walkers. A few had some needles in their arms. Nurses gathered around in the back to attend the service. Now, one of the gifts of old age is that you often take the freedom to say the truth, no matter what the truth is. My friend was preaching his sophisticated, theologically artistic sermon, when all of a sudden one of the patients started wheeling her wheelchair out of the activity room and back to her own room. With each push of the wheel chair, the lady said very loudly, "Blah, blah, blah, blah." Later on, my friend was telling me about the experience and admitted to me that while he had tried to preach the greatest sermon of all time, he had failed to help them "See Jesus", so that it had become nothing more than "Blah, blah, blah." He had tried to preach a graduate level course in theology, but the people just wanted to see Jesus in a basic level of truth.

There is something about the Gospel that is on one hand very complex. Whole libraries of books have been written in which scholars try to untie the mysteries of God. You want to get to know Jesus? You want to see Jesus? There are so many materials on the subject. Understanding the Trinity. Understanding the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Comprehending fully the meaning of bread broken at the Table and wine shared in the cup. Our faith is full of complexities. We can't understand them all. And we can't even begin to, until we first "See Jesus." There are times when we have theological questions that simply cannot be answered, not completely. From "How can Jesus be fully human and fully God?" to "Why do bad things happen to good people." Those are difficult theological questions. And until you first "See Jesus", any answer you give is simply going to be meaningless, "Blah, blah, blah."

In John chapter 12 there are many people in the city of Jerusalem that have gathered for the feast of the Passover. There were many people who desired to see Jesus because of the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead that was being talked about. This is the time that is referred to as the triumphant entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. This is where they laid palm branches in his path and cried Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord. Verses 20 and 21 of John chapter 12 say this: "Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. They went to Philip and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Wait a minute fellows, everybody just saw Jesus. Weren't you there to see him ride into Jerusalem? Didn't you worship with everyone else? Didn't you throw palm branches in his pathway? How are you asking to see Jesus

when you just saw him? You don't understand Philip, I know that we just saw him amongst the crowd, but we desire to see him for ourselves. We don't just want to have a general view from the sidelines somewhere but we want to really see him. We are not just looking for a group experience with the Lord but we are looking for a personal encounter with him. Let me pause here to tell you that it is possible to come to church every Sunday and never SEE Jesus. It is even possible to feel his presence and power and never get a look at him. It's possible for you to feel what everybody else is feeling while at church because of the crowd or the group that's here but never feel him anywhere else and never really see him. But when I come to church, I want to see him. In fact, I don't just want to see him at church I want to see him every day.

This morning, I would like to ask you a question, "When people open the door of Kogarah Uniting church, what will they find?" "When they open the door, what will they find and what will they see?" What I hope people see when they open the door of this church is Jesus. When people come to our church, I want them to be able to SEE Jesus. When they open the door of this church, I want them to be able to find Jesus here. In the Bible when people saw Jesus it always caused some kind of a reaction in them.

For some people it filled them with great joy.

For others it caused them to fall on their face and repent.

For others it made them rejoice in the Lord and praise him.

At times it brought healing to those who were sick with disease in their bodies.

When some really saw him they laid down everything to follow after him.

A blind man saw him one day without sight and cried out to him,

"Jesus, the son of David have mercy on me."

When Peter saw him he said, "You are the Christ the son of the living God."

Whenever people really saw Jesus it caused some kind of a reaction.

These same great things can happen in our lives, in our church, and in our community too when people see Jesus here. When people see Jesus here:

Those who are weary and sad are uplifted and restored.

Those who have no hope in this life begin to have a hope in the life to come.

Those who have no one to lean upon during the struggles of this life find someone to cast ALL their cares upon because all at once they realize Jesus loves me and cares for me like no other. Things begin to happen!

Here in this Lenten season, the hour is coming for Jesus to be crucified. Then he compares himself to a grain of wheat. If the grain of wheat doesn't die and lie buried in the earth, it can't yield anything and remains alone. So, too, with Jesus: if he is preserved, safe and secure, he will remain alone. But if he is crucified, dead and buried, then he can rise to bear much fruit, drawing all people to himself. The Son of God must die if he is to bring to the world the gift of eternal life. Then Jesus applies the same message to the rest of us. He says that we, too, must die in order to live. All of us want to see great things happening in this Kogarah Uniting church, not dying church but living and growing church, don't we? If you want to receive the ultimate joy, if you want to see full of people in this place enjoying their new life in Christ, if you want all of us and the people who knock our doors to see Jesus and feel his presence in our worship and in their everyday life, if you want all of us and all our church members and all your family members to experience God's salvation and eternal life, and hope and peace, we must be a grain of wheat that must be dropped into the ground and dies. The question for all of us is, "Are we willing to die, are we willing to sacrifice ourselves to bear and produce much fruits in our lives and here in our Kogarah Uniting church?" Jesus says, "I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat

remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains." Amen.

We Respond

Offering

We long to see the reign of God present on earth as it is in heaven. We long to see the grains of wheat growing and transforming the world. We offer these gifts, O God, as we work for love and justice. Amen.

Announcements – ppt

Prayer For Us and for Others

SING - In the bulb there is a flower – tune TiS 477

In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the coldness of the winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

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God-with-us,
we pray that we would be like seeds,
that you would grow us into a beautiful garden.

God-among-us,
we pray that we would be like gardeners,
cultivating goodness and beauty in our communities.

And so we bring our prayers to you:

We pray for those who suffer from illness, from loneliness, from trauma, from injustice. We pray for healing and the possibility to flourish.

We pray for places of violence in the world. We pray for circumstances that will enable peace.

We pray for Indigenous peoples in this place and in other parts of the world. We pray they would have access to their land. We pray for a more just settlement.

We pray for those who mourn that they would know comfort.

We lift to you those people, places, and situations that weigh on our hearts and minds.
Opportunity to pray.

Gardening God,
we pray that flowers would be found
along the road we walk
of love seeking justice.
We pray in the name of the Christ whom we follow.
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 from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

We Go

SING – One more step – All together 200
One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you.
And it's from the old I travel to the new.
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn.
All the new things that I see,
you'll be looking at along with me:
And it's from the old I travel to the new.

Keep me travelling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should.
Where I see no way to go,
you'll be telling me the way, I know:
And it's from the old I travel to the new.
Keep me travelling along with you.

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough.
Leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new.
Keep me travelling along with you.

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me.
Ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new.
Keep me travelling along with you.

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Blessing

In this day, in this place,
know the blessing of God-with-us.
May the Creator hold us,
may Christ Jesus walk before us,
may the Spirit live within us,
as we walk with love and work for justice.
Amen.

SING - As we go now – Seasons 6-6

As we go now from this moment,
as we leave behind our time together.
May we walk with one another,
may we help each other on the way.

As we go now from this moment,
as we go into the future together.
May we treasure one another,
may we realise how precious we are.
May we realise how precious we are.
May we realise how precious we are.

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