

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

May 123, 2024

Easter 7

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.***

CALL TO WORSHIP

God has given us life through Christ.
It is in the love and life of Christ we gather together.
This is what we have in common;
We are united by the love of God.
It is in this unity we worship God.
It is in this unity we praise God.
Come let us worship.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Wonderful God!

We thank you for our life together in Christ.

It is in him and through him that we have been made one.

We thank you that we are all very different people,

that though we come from different places

and have different hopes and fears,

different thoughts and expectations, yet we one in Christ.

Come Holy Spirit, come to us who are weak and willful,

and move among us with your cleansing, healing power this morning.

Work within us, we pray, that we may become more faithful, trustworthy,

and steadfastly devoted followers of Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, as we offer our worship in this hour,

it is with contrition, hope, and thanksgiving

that we open ourselves to your redeeming action in our midst.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMN: Praise, my soul, the king of heaven TiS 134

Praise, my soul, the king of heaven;

to his feet your tribute bring;

ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,

who like me his praise should sing?

Praise, him, praise him, hallelujah,

praise the everlasting king!

Praise him for his grace and favour

to his people in distress;

praise him still the same for ever,

slow to chide, and swift to bless:

praise him, praise him, hallelujah,

glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us;

well our feeble frame he knows;

in his hands he gently bears us,

rescues us from all our foes:
praise him, praise him, hallelujah,
widely as his mercy flows!

Frail as summer's flowers we flourish,
blows the wind and it is gone;
but while mortals rise and perish
God endures unchanging on.
Praise him, praise him, hallelujah,
praise the high eternal one!

Angels, help us to adore him,
you behold him face to face;
sun and moon bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space:
praise him, praise him, hallelujah,
praise with us the God of grace!

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God,
There are times when we judge others,
there are times when we are harsh.
We are sorry for this.
(Pause)

Merciful God,
there are times when we judge ourselves,
there are times when we are harsh with ourselves,
We are sorry for this.
(Pause)

Loving God, have mercy on us for all the times we have failed. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Beloved, God is love and God loves us with a mother's fierce tenderness.
If we abide in this love, God will hear and respond in loving forgiveness,
so that we may bear the fruit of love and compassion and justice.

Hear the good news that through Jesus who dwells in us,
we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

HYMN: Seek ye first TiS 745

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.

Allelu, alleluia.

(Refrain)

Alleluia, alleluia,

alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and you shall find,
knock and it shall be opened unto you.

Allelu, alleluia.

(Refrain)

We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Allelu, alleluia.

(Refrain)

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, 16 “Brothers and sisters, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus, 17 for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

21 “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” 23 So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.

John 17:6–19

6 “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

REFLECTION

Today is mothers’ day. Happy mothers’ day to all the mothers and grandmothers here this morning. Today is the day we celebrate and honour motherhood. Mothers' Day is the best time to say how much we love and care for our mothers. People are so loyal to their mothers, because a mother's love is so great. A mother gives and gives and gives asking nothing in return. And no matter what happens, they still love.

A harried mother had three very active boys. One summer evening she was playing cops and robbers in the back yard after dinner. One of the boys "shot" his mother and

yelled, "Bang! You're dead." She slumped to the ground. When she didn't get up right away, a neighbour ran over to see if she had been hurt in the fall. When the neighbour bent over, the overworked mother opened one eye and said, "Shhh. Don't give me away. It's the only chance I've had to rest all day."

Another story, a small boy is sent to bed by his mother...

[Five minutes later]

"Mom..." "What?"

"I'm thirsty. Can you bring me a glass of water?"

"No. You had your chance. Lights out."

[Five minutes later]

"Mom..." "WHAT?"

"I'm THIRSTY...Can I have a glass of water??"

"I told you NO! If you ask again I'll have to spank you!!"

[Five minutes later]

"Mommm..." "WHAT??!!!"

"When you come in to spank me, can you bring me a glass of water?"

It's never been easy being a mother. Again, happy Mother's Day to all the mothers here today. I hope you're having the best day ever.

Today's reflection is based on one of the lectionary readings, John's gospel reading. Our gospel reading is about Jesus' praying, praying for his disciples. I questioned to myself last week how I prepare a reflection for this Sunday and how I connect two different themes, Mother's Day and Jesus' prayer. Then I thought about my mother. I know that she always prayed for her children, her church, and for people around her. I still remember that when I was a kid, she got up every day early in the morning and prayed and prayed just beside of me while I was asleep. I sometimes woke up because of the noise of her praying. She was in an aged care before she passed away, but she still prayed for me, for my family, for my previous church, and for my ministry. No matter how difficult situations she was in or whether she was well or not, she always prayed. I think most of our mothers are like my mother.

Most people are very respectful of prayer. If you ask someone if you can pray for them, it will be the rare individual that will not gladly accept your offer. Some years ago, one of my friends who is a missionary actually used this as a means of outreach into the business community around him. He would go into the business, and after introducing himself, he would explain that he was a Christian and felt that God would like him to pray for the people in his community and then simply asked if there were any specific things he could pray about for them. He developed a lot of good relationships through this and was able to share the gospel with many of them when he went back to see how his prayers were answered. That is still a good idea for

reaching people in our own community simply because people like to be prayed for. How much more would it mean to find out that Jesus Christ himself was praying for them.

In our passage for this morning, the disciples find themselves in exactly that position. Jesus is praying for them. The disciples are in the upper room, now. They have just finished the Passover meal and Jesus is thinking about his crucifixion which will occur within the next 24 hours. He knows he is about to leave his disciples alone in the world and he goes before God to pray for them. It's the last night of his earthly life. And what's on his mind, on his heart? What could Christ have prayed for in the final moments before his arrest? He might have prayed for his own strength, that the eleven would support him that they would not flee from him and his teachings. Instead, he prays for his disciples, especially for the unity of the disciples. It is that you and I, and all who follow him, "May be one." It is about unity. Jesus knew that, when he was no longer with them, the hostility which fell on him was going to fall on his disciples. And it did. Almost without exception they were imprisoned, tortured and killed in terrible ways. So Jesus prays for the disciples' protection from the world. But note this. When Jesus prays for their protection, he doesn't pray for their safety. When we pray for protection, we pray that nothing painful or harmful will happen to us. Jesus knew better than that. He knew that we live in a world of pain. Some pain is unavoidable. Christ's disciples would experience pain because of their devotion to him. There was no way to avoid that. Some people came to me and said, "You know Deokhee, life is too hard, it's not easy." That's right. Life can be just, too hard, and too boring, and sometimes too painful, too despair... and we can lose our Christian hope and joy and surrender to despair. Jesus understood these trials and temptations and pains and despairs, so he prayed, "Holy Father, protect them from the world so they may be one as we are one." May be one, unity. So rather than pray that they will avoid pain, Jesus prays for their unity.

Now, why would he pray that? There is strength in unity. When you have friends and family and fellow church members to whom you can turn in times of trouble you can bear almost any pain, any turmoil in your life. The church at its best provides that kind of support, that kind of one-ness. The church is a community living with unity. When I reflected on our gospel reading few days ago to prepare my reflection, I thought about a question that what it means to live in Christian community. One of the resources that I have says, "Community means unity in love." And it says that community comes from two words: com meaning "with", and "unity". Community means living with unity. Unity is very important in the teachings of Jesus and in the rest of Scripture. In our Gospel reading today, Jesus' prayer for the church was that we might be one in the unity of love. One of the ways for us to experience and to feel unity and to be connected with God and each other and to be one in the love of God is praying together. Jesus also prayed many times in the Bible. He went to mountains

and silent places to pray. One of the most encouraging experiences as a Christian is to be prayed for by someone else, and not only prayed for but prayed with. When someone prays for you in your presence, something special happens in your heart: you feel warmed and encouraged. There is a sense of intimacy, both between you and the other person and between you and God. It is like you are knocking on heaven's doors together. You know what the most beautiful and encouraging for us to know this morning is? Jesus also prays for us. He is praying for me and praying for you. If you have had the experience of someone praying with you, of having someone right next to you, sitting beside you, bringing your concerns and needs before God, I invite you now to imagine Jesus doing exactly that. This morning God calls us to pray too as Jesus prays for us. We have an obligation as a Christian to pray for each other, for our church, our community, and for our nation, and people in this world. It is because praying for each other makes us to experience unity and to be connected with God and each other. There is a story about the healing of a boy with evil spirit in Mark 9. The boy's father came to Jesus and said, "I brought you my son, who is possessed by an evil spirit, and I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they couldn't. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. Everything is possible for him who believes." and Jesus healed the boy. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Brothers and sisters in Christ! Don't forget this. Jesus knows everything about you and prays for you. I don't know what kinds of difficult situations you have now will have in the future, what makes you feel empty, how much your life is hard, what you are praying for these days. But Jesus knows everything about you and prays for you. And God calls us this morning to pray together. Praying together is a way to experience God's power and to build a good relationship with God and with others, and it is a way to ensure unity in our church, Kogarah uniting church. Amen.

HYMN: Bind us together All Together 174

(Refrain)

*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 we sing...

(Refrain)

Made for the glory of God,
Purchased by His precious Son.
Born with the right to be clean,
For Jesus the victory has won...

(Refrain)

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

(Refrain)

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
your example leads us to sacrificial loving, giving, and serving.
Following your leadership, we make this offering
as sign and symbol of our commitment to being faithful disciples
in caring for the poor, comforting the sorrowing,
and advocating justice for the oppressed.
Bless our giving and our gifts.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Loving God,
Thank you for our mothers you have given us.
Their love is so precious that it can never be measured.
We can see the example of your unconditional love
they share with their children.
Mothers are the first and best teachers and spiritual guides for their children.
They give us joy, comfort and rest through their motherhood
that can help us to learn about your grace.

Lord, bless and protect all mothers everywhere.
Strengthen mothers who are tired, stressed or depressed.

Help mothers who struggle to balance the tasks of work and family.
Support mothers who are unable to feed their children due to poverty.
Guide mothers who have children in physical, mental or emotional disabilities.
Comfort mothers who have lost a child.

Loving God, we pray for our community.

We thank you for our neighbours and for the people around us
with whom we share our daily lives in our community.

Lord, we pray for those who are sick or laden down
or grieving with any kind of difficulties.

Especially we remember Brian and Rhonda , Prema and Priya, Jim and Bobbie,
Craig, Denis and Dolly, Jim Bird, Naghuia, John and Sue and especially John's mother
and father; Peter and Sue; Dinah; Robyn; Pat Nankivell and her family, and others
whom we name in our hearts.

Please grant them your healing power, intensive care, peace of heart, and faithful
hope.

Show us what we can do to help, and teach us to be good neighbours.

We pray for our church.

Let love lead us to be more forgiving,
and add to love the discipline to be a reconciling force in the world.

Let love lead us to be more daring;
give us the boldness to speak out on behalf of the voiceless.

Let us not be afraid to venture into dark places,
or into situations in which we are not in control.

Fill us with the confidence that you will not desert us,
the assurance that what we do is in accord with your will.

Let love lead us to be more trusting;
give us the faith to make Christ supreme in our lives.

Help us translate our words of confession into acts of compassion,
our desire to be faithful into deeds of obedience.

Let us grow to be the gospel church our mothers and fathers dreamed of,
that day long ago.

May we be the church you dream for us! 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

Let us draw near to the holy table.
This is the table our Lord has prepared for those who love him.
Jesus said, "Come to me,
all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
"I am the bread of life;
Those who come to me shall not hunger,
and those who believe in me shall never thirst."

COMMUNION HYMN: Let us talents and tongues employ TiS 537

Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy;
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

(Refrain)
*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*
*Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.

(Refrain)

Jesus calls us in, sends us out

bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share;
God-Immanuel everywhere.

(Refrain)

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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.

Loving God, you made this world marvelous for us to enjoy.
You gave Jesus to be our Savior and friend and to bring us to you.
You sent your Spirit to make us one family in Christ.
For these gifts of your love we thank you,
and we join with angels and saints in this joyful hymn of praise:

***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.

For your kindness to us and your goodness to all, we give you thanks.
We thank you that you showed your love by sending your Son, who gave his life for us,
and rose again from death, and lives to pray for us forever.
We thank you that he has taken away all that separates us from you
and has made us friends with you and with one another.
We thank you that he has brought us together
at this table, to strengthen us by his love.

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.”

And so, we eat and drink in memory of Jesus and His great love.

And in this simple meal, we acknowledge the living Jesus.

We celebrate the life and rest he gives us, even today.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Send down your Holy Spirit

that these gifts of bread and wine may be for us the body and blood of Christ.

Unite us with him for ever and bring us with the whole creation

to your eternal kingdom.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

all glory and honor are yours,

almighty Father, 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.

The Communion

Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we give you thanks and praise,

that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through 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

We thank you, O Lord, for the gift of motherhood.
May those blessed with children be granted
the gifts of courage, perseverance and good health.
May they face each new day with faith and hope in your abiding love.
May all families find in the strength of your love the priceless gift of peace
and so bear witness to your glory.

And the blessing of God almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with 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.

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