

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
JUNE 30th 2024**

The Gathering of the People of God

WELCOME & GREETING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

There are significant stories in this place –

Rich stories that speak of connection to place, connection to culture, Creator, and spirituality.

We honour the stories and connections of *the Biddegah* people here in this place.

We honour elders and community.

We seek to be good guests,

Respectful and honouring of what has been, what is, and what shall be.

KUC MISSION STATEMENT

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

It's human to fear that there are parts of us that are no longer alive,
that will never flourish again, and that God has come for us far too late.

But there is a whisper, growing, getting louder, saying, 'Do not be afraid,
only believe.'

There is muffled laughter and confusion; there is a hand reaching out
and in the end there is the one thing that remains:

The call to stand in the new life that has come to us this day.

Get up! Let us praise the God of life!

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

SING: Gather Us In TIS 474

**Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
we are the old, who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.**

**Here we will take of wine and the water, here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt of the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.**

**Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven light years away,
but here in this space, the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in, and hold us forever;
gather us in, and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

© 1982 GIA Publications; words, Marty Haugen
Reproduced under Copyright Licences:
ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

OPENING PRAYER

Reach out and stop us in our tracks, O Creator!

Interrupt our busy minds and flighty hearts with your Big Love and Strong Justice.

Draw us into your restoring and remaking purposes and joy.

Come, Love, come.

SING: Nothing is lost on the breath of God ATAR 606

**Nothing is lost on the breath of God,
nothing is lost for ever;
God's breath is love, and that love will remain,
holding the world for ever.
No feather too light, no hair too fine,
no flower too brief in its glory;
no drop in the ocean, no dust in the air,
but is counted and told in God's story.**

**Nothing is lost to the eyes of God,
nothing is lost for ever;
God sees with love and that love will remain,
holding the world for ever.
No journey too far, no distance too great,**

**no valley of darkness too blinding;
no creature too humble, no child too small
for God to be seeking, and finding.**

**Nothing is lost to the heart of God,
nothing is lost for ever;
God's heart is love, and that love will remain,
holding the world for ever.
No impulse of love, no office of care,
no moment of life in its fulness;
no beginning too late, no ending too soon,
but is gathered and known in God's goodness.**

© Colin Gibson
Reproduced under Copyright Licences:
ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Merciful God in whose image we are created, we confess that we are cracked and broken mirrors, struggling to reflect that profound dignity and beauty inherent in all human beings.

So often we reduce people to single stories that define them poorly and fall short of building community that reflects your great compassion and love.

Forgive us, O God.

Words of Grace

The very thing we struggle to embody is held in perfection in God's own being:

The shining embrace of understanding, connection, and grace that reaches out to us, includes us and forgives us for all the ways we fall short.

You are loved. You are forgiven.

Thanks be to God, amen.

PEACE

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

The Service of the Word

BIBLE READING: PSALM 130

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

²Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

⁴But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

⁸It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

LISTEN: OUT OF THE DEPTHS SINEAD OCONNOR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m920jYP002c>

Out of the depths I cry to you, oh Lord
Don't let my cries for mercy be ignored
If you keep account of sins oh who would stand?
But you have forgiveness in your hands

And I've heard religion say you're to be feared
But I don't buy into everything I hear
And it seems to me you're hostage to those rules
That were made by religion and not by you

And I'm wondering will u ever get yourself free
Is it bad to think you might like help from me?
Is there anything my little heart can do
To help religion share us with you?

For oh you're like a ghost in your own home
Nobody hears you crying all alone
Oh you are the one true really voiceless one
They have their backs turned to you for worship of gold and stone

And to see you prisoner oh makes me weep
Nobody hears you screaming in the streets
And it's sad but true how the old saying goes

If God lived on earth people would break his windows

I long for you as watchmen long for the end of night

BIBLE READING: MARK 5:21-43

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²²Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.”

²⁴So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” ²⁹Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” ³²He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

³⁵While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion,

people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

REFLECTION – Richard
From Liturgies by Moira Laidlaw.

In the two stories of healing described in today’s gospel, a new reality is described at work in the world – ‘the loving dominion of God in which what was afflicted is relieved, what was bound is released, what was excluded is included.’ ¹ The expected futures of a 12 year old girl and a woman who had suffered for 12 years are both dramatically changed through the power of God working through Jesus.

The first part of the story concerns the girl - the gospel verses proclaim that she experienced the power of God restoring new life into what had been identified by those present as lifelessness. Earlier, when Jairus was given the news that his daughter was dead, Jesus said these words “Don’t be afraid, only believe.” In other words, hold on to your hope that God’s power will be revealed through Jesus’ actions.

Earlier in Mark’s gospel, Jesus had been criticised by the elders of the synagogue, by the teachers of the law and by the Pharisees for having the audacity to tell a paralysed man that his sins were forgiven and to take up his bed and walk – which – no doubt to the consternation of these religious leaders, he did. Jesus had also been taken to task for picking some ears of corn on the Sabbath and for going so far as to actually heal a man with a withered arm **in** the synagogue – **on** the Sabbath! Yet – in this account, here we have one of the leaders of the synagogue casting himself at Jesus’ feet and begging him to come and lay hands on his sick daughter in order that she is made well. Jairus would have been an extremely important man – highly esteemed in society and used to acting with authority – yet here he is – out of his great need - placing himself in an extremely vulnerable position before Jesus. The suffering of his daughter had moved him to reach out to

Jesus in the hope that healing would take place. Jesus of course went with him, only to be interrupted by of all people - an unclean and therefore sinful woman - her disease – a flow of blood for twelve years which in Jewish eyes and law - made her sinful - yet Jesus turned aside from his mission of mercy to respond to this nameless woman's touch - a wonderful story with lots of layers of meaning.

For a start, the woman's approach to Jesus could not stand in starker contrast to that of Jairus. His approach was done in a most proper way – acknowledging Jesus' honour by lowering himself in order to make a request. The woman on the other hand, reaches out anonymously from behind in the crowd, seeking to touch Jesus covertly and somehow effect a cure. There was no impediment to Jairus' petition; the woman's causes a stir. Even their speech distinguishes them: Jairus addresses Jesus directly, while the woman talks only to herself. Mark is painting a portrait of two characters who represent the opposite ends of the social spectrum. Jairus is the 'head' of both his family and the synagogue; the woman is nameless and alone.

The woman's plight is described like this:

Physically, financially, socially, and religiously, her life is running out through a secret wound at the centre of her being. It is precisely from this wounded centre of her life, where she knows that all human resources have proved insufficient, that she reaches out to Jesus "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well". God's longing for the well being of creation finds in this woman a receptive heart because her wellness, which embraces and permeates her whole being, characterises life in God's kingdom. ²

And so, at the moment of contact between Jesus and this woman, the power dynamics of this story begin to be reversed. Her body is healed – the opposite of what a Jewish audience would expect, since it is Jesus who should have contracted her impurity through physical contact. Perhaps this is a clue to future social reversals to come – where the first will be last and the last first.

So, the touch of one anonymous woman in a crowd halted the Lord in his stride. That is the glorious truth of this incident. She touched him. And so can we.

She wasn't an important person at all and I'm sure she must have thought, as we might also think "Who am I that he should take any notice of me?"

Well, the record is there, not only in Mark's gospel, but in Matthew and Luke also, that Jesus was stopped just because a sick and nameless woman touched the hem of his garment.

In an article in a WEAVINGS Journal ³ entitled "To Touch the Fringe of God's Garment" ⁴ the author writes how her illness began with what she thought was the flu but it carried for weeks and months with doctors describing it as a "virus of unknown origin". It took long, discouraging and depressing years before she was finally diagnosed with lupus – a disease which disrupts the body's immune system and for which there is no cure. This woman, Jean M Blonquist is a well known American author whose work focuses on contemporary religious issues and spirituality. You can imagine how she wrestled with the problem of living with a chronic disease and she wrote that she struggled to maintain some sense of self worth and to salvage a sliver of self esteem when nearly everything she once had done now seemed impossible. Finding the disease permeating every aspect of her life – eating, sleeping, praying, loving and especially working – she found herself connecting her story with that of the woman who dared to touch the hem of Jesus' garment.

This is what she wrote:

My surrendering to the power of God involves a reaching, a yearning for what is beyond, just as that woman on that dusty road in Palestine stretched out her trembling hand to touch the fringe of Jesus' garment. She reached in spite of the crowd, in spite of the people and circumstances that blocked her access to the power of healing. She reached in spite of the religious and cultural taboos designed to restrain her. She reached in spite of her weariness from twelve long years of illness and being an outcast. This brave woman's faith is revealed not only in her final reaching for the hem of Jesus' garment but also in all her previous reachings, yearnings, wrestlings to seek wholeness. She reached in many different ways – and I reach too. ⁵

Jean Blomquist doesn't know if she will ever be healed but she still seeks healing with her whole being, body, mind and spirit and she concludes: I pray as I reach out each day, "I believe, help my unbelief."

I do not know if she experienced physical healing or not but I believe that her story gives us a glimpse into the life of someone who struggled not only with her illness but with her faith and in the end her story is one of hope and that is why I have linked it with the gospel. The story of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment especially must have helped to grow her faith rather than lose it and I believe this is where all three stories touch our stories. Each story has a foundation in hope which is, above all – the passion for what is possible.

A couple of quotes to conclude: E.Glenn Hinson wrote –

To awaken others to the hope that is in them may be the greatest thing we can do for them. We humans need hope. We can survive without many of life's physical, intellectual, and emotional realities, but we cannot survive without hope. What a gift it is, then, to have someone arouse in us this reality dwelling deep within us without which we cannot survive. ⁶

And Teresa of Avila the 16th century Spanish mystic gives us the answer as to who can awaken this hope in others:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out on the world, yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good and yours are the hands with which He is to bless and (*my addition*) touch us now. ⁷

1. John S. Mogabgab Editor, *WEAVINGS Vol. VI*, Number 4 *YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WHOLE* (Nashville TN: The Upper Room, 1991), page 2
2. Mogabgab, *WEAVINGS Vol. VI*, Pages 2,3.
3. *WEAVINGS Vol. VI*.
4. Jean M Blomquist, *To Touch the Fringe of God's Garment*, page 28
5. Jean M Blomquist, pages 35, 36.
6. E.Glenn Hinson's article *Elpisizing* in *WEAVINGS Vol. XXVII* Number 2 *ALL WHO HAVE THIS HOPE* (Nashville TN: The Upper Room, 2011), page 17
7. Quoted by Heidi Grogan in her article *Kiln-Fired Hope* in *WEAVINGS Vol. XXVII*, page 27

LISTEN: TOUCH THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT SAM COOKE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaSmjdWEK9E>

Oh, there was a woman in the Bible days,
she had been sick, sick so very long
but she heard about Jesus was passing by,
so she joined the gathering throng
and while she was pushing her way through,
someone ask her: 'What are you trying to do?'

She said:
'if I could just touch the hem of His garment
I know I'll be made whole'

She cried:
'Oh Lord, Oh Lord and Oh Lord, Oh Lord'
Said :
'if I could just touch the hem of His garment
I know I'll be made whole'

Oh, She spent her money here and there
until she had no, had no more to spare,
the doctors, they'd done all they could
but their medicine would do no good.
When she touched Him The Saviour didn't see
but still He turned around and cried
'Somebody touched me'

She said:
'It was I who just wanna touch the hem of Your garment,
I know I'll be made whole right now'

She stood there crying:
'Oh Lord, Oh Lord and Oh Lord, Oh Lord'

Said:
'If I could just touch the hem of His garment,
I know I'll made whole right now'

OFFERING

Receive and bless our gifts and offerings, O God.

Let them play a part in your wonderful purposes. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS & THE LORD'S PRAYER

O wondrous God who brings healing and life, Come into our lives.

Come especially into those desperate situations where we have no answers and so few places to turn.

Falling at our feet, we pray for those experiencing significant health struggles.

A silence is kept.

We pray also for those with deep trauma stories, for all who know the shame of being labeled with stories that define human lives poorly, and for all those who know the pain of exclusion.

A silence is kept.

We pray for relationships that have reached the point of death – for intimate relationships that have become strained and broken, for communities that have become divided and decimated, for nations at war and others rushing headlong towards conflict.

Bring health, healing and restoration, Lord Jesus,

so that we may be made well and live.

Touch those parts of our life that we had written off as dead.

Bring hope and rejoicing to our shared lives, loving God.

This we pray, 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.

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.

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.

© Wild Goose Publications Words: John L. Bell
Reproduced under Copyright Licences:
ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

The Sending Forth of the People of God

BLESSING

We know what it's like when the God of resurrection comes into our lives: People are made whole. Life comes from death. Fear turns to wonder. Wailing gives way to rejoicing.

So, keep welcoming life, even when it all looks like it's all over and done with.

And may the grace of God hold you and keep you close,

May the loving eyes of God look upon you with a sparkling brilliance,

And may you draw new life and well-being from God's smile.

Go in peace, **amen.**

SING: A touching place TIS 677

Christ's is the world in which we move;
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love;
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
and Christ is the one who meets us here.
To the lost Christ shows his face,
to the unloved he gives his embrace,
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.

Feel for the people we most avoid,
strange or bereaved or never employed.
Feel for the women and feel for the men
who fear that their living is all in vain.
To the lost Christ shows his face,
to the unloved he gives his embrace,
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.

Feel for the parents who've lost their child,
feel for the women whom men have defiled,
feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
and feel for the weary who find no rest.
To the lost Christ shows his face,
to the unloved he gives his embrace,
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.

Feel for the lives by life confused,
riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.
To the lost Christ shows his face,
to the unloved he gives his embrace,
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.