

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
28 July 2024
10th Sunday after Pentecost

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 Bidjegal 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 called us to this place of peace and quiet.

We come, eager for rest and hope.

The Lord is always with us, offering us refreshment for our souls

Let us partake of this wondrous gift.

It is the gift of the Lord's love for us. Come and rest.

Praise God for the absolute compassion of God's love. AMEN.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Without you, Lord Jesus,
we are an organization, a club, only an institution.
But you are the reason for our existence.
You are the heart of the church,
and your transforming love has shaped the church
and will continually be available to all who call upon you.
Enter into our presence to enliven our worship,
capture our hearts, and guide our actions.
Stir in our midst today with a new vision of what it means
to be an assembly of your followers in this community.
Help us to see our church with your eyes. Come to us now. Amen.

HYMN: Let us sing to the God of salvation TIS 52

Let us sing to the God of salvation,
let us sing to the Lord our rock!
Let us come to his house with thanksgiving,
let us come before the Lord and sing!

(Refrain)

*Praise our Maker, praise our Saviour,
praise the Lord our everlasting King.
Every throne must bow before him,
God is Lord of everything!*

In his hands are the earth's deep places
and the strength of the hills is his;
and the sea is the Lord's for he made it,
by his hands the dry land was formed.

(Refrain)

Let us worship the Lord our Maker,
let us kneel to the Lord our God;
for we all are the sheep of his pasture,
he will guide us by his powerful hand.

(Refrain)

Let today be the time when you hear him!
May our hearts not be hard or cold,
lest we stray from the Lord in rebellion,
as his people did in time of old.

(Refrain)

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

It is in our brokenness that we are fed.
A young boy brought five loaves and two small fish,
and, when broken, it became enough to feed a large crowd.

***God, sometimes, we feel we have nothing to bring
that will help build your reign.
The gifts you have given us seem so small and insignificant.
For the times we downplay our role in your kin-dom,
for the moments we feel we need to run the race alone,
for our failure to notice you at work in the world around us,
Forgive us, God. Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us.
If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
'Your sins 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.

*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.

*Alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, allelu, alleluia.*

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

*Alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, allelu, alleluia.*

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16 I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

John 6:1-21

6 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as

much as they wanted. 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." 15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

REFLECTION

We have had some tough times over the past few years because of COVID. Several years later, we are still living in a COVID world. Do you remember how we were when COVID started a few years ago? It was a stressful time all around the world as we deal with coronavirus and the uncertainty it brought. Our stay-at-home order in lockdown situation, Distance restrictions, activity restriction, online service etc... Children and youth felt most stressed during that time by having to change, postpone, or cancel important plans or events and being unable to participate in social activities and normal routines during leisure time and at school. Adults also felt stressed by not knowing when the pandemic would end, coping with the massive disruptions to social life, and having to reorganize work and family life. Many of us have experienced the challenges of isolation, fear for loved ones, and the uncertainty the COVID brings to all aspects of our lives. The pandemic continued to take a significant mental health toll on Australians, with increased stress, anxiety and depression in our communities.

Have you ever felt absolutely overwhelmed? Have you felt like walking away from your desk and just screaming about your work responsibilities, perhaps? Or your financial responsibilities? Or your family responsibilities? It has been estimated that 90 percent of all doctor's visits can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to stress, to the feeling of being overwhelmed. Here is what researchers have found. Stress not only keeps us awake at night, it also suppresses the body's immune system, which makes us vulnerable to all manner of illnesses. We get sick which may cause us a host of other problems related to missing work and the inability to fulfill other responsibilities and that just leads to more stress. It's a downward cycle that rarely has a happy ending. What do you do when you are feeling overwhelmed, when you are stressed? I want to suggest a simple formula taken from our lesson for the day

from the Gospel of John. It is a story told several times in the Gospels and therefore is well-known to you all.

Jesus is on a mountainside with his disciples. When he looks up, he sees a great crowd coming toward him. He says to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Here is a situation when any normal person would be stressed. It is almost time for dinner and suddenly they discover that they have 5,000 uninvited guests. Jesus asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" John says that Jesus asked how they were going to feed the multitude only to test Philip, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip has no idea how they will feed this crowd. He says to Jesus, "Eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Things look pretty awful, stressful. There is no way they can feed all these people. Then Andrew speaks up. "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Then Jesus says something interesting, "Have the people sit down." And that's what they did. They had the people sit down. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. That's the story. So, how do you deal with overwhelming situations, stressful situations? Let me suggest some simple steps.

First of all, sit down. I can just see Philip frantically running around, "What shall we do? What shall we do?" Jesus knew that panic never solved any problem. "Have the people sit down." A lecturer on stress management raised a glass of water and asked his audience, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Various answers were called out. Then he replied, "The weight really doesn't matter. What matters is how long you try to hold it. "If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem," he said. "If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes. "And that's the way it is with stress," he said. "If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on. You have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden. So, before you return home tonight," he continued, "put the burden of work down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can. Relax; pick them up later after you've rested. Life is short. Enjoy it!" That may be the great thing about worship. It's a time when we can sit still and reflect, and listen to the voice of God. Jesus knew it was important to settle the crowd down. And so he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down." No wonder Jesus said on another occasion, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Mt. 6:34). "Have the people sit down." That's where we begin. Sit down. Calm down. Focus on what's immediately

before you.

Here's the second thing: acknowledge that God has a plan. John says that Jesus asked Philip how they were going to feed all these people to test him, because Jesus already had in mind what he was going to do. God has a plan. Do you believe that God is aware of your need? Do you believe that God has the ability to meet your needs? Then relax. God will provide. There's power in trusting God. The same God who multiplied the fish and the loaves that day long ago can give you the resources you need to meet your obligations. Sometimes we have to go through some painful situations before we discern God's hand in our life. But God is always there. God is always available. God's will is for our best good. An anonymous poet reflected on the name that God used when speaking to Moses. Remember that scene? Moses asked God to tell him his name and God replied, "I AM WHO I AM. Thus, you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex 3:13-14)

This unknown poet writes:

My name is I AM. If you live in the past, It will be very hard, for I am not there. My name is not I WAS. And if you live in the future, It will be very hard, For my name is not I WILL BE. But if you live in the present, It is not hard, For my name is I AM. The great I AM is with us. Relax. God has a plan.

Here's the third step: make a beginning. Andrew came forward to say there was a boy present with five small barley loaves and two small fish. It wasn't much, but it was a beginning. That would give them something with which to start. Where are your fish and loaves? Even Christ had to start somewhere. What are the resources that you have today to make your situation better? Take a list. Get started with what you have right now. An old story tells of a young bear cub that was puzzled as to how to walk. He asked his mom, old she-bear, "Shall I move my right paw first or my left, or my two front paws together, or the hind ones, or all four at once, or how?" In reply the old she-bear growled, "Leave off thinking and walk." Sometimes that is what God says to us. Quit analyzing the problem to death and get moving. Sit down. Acknowledge that God has a plan. Make a beginning. We are gathered here today to make a new beginning. We gathered to begin a new journey with the Chinese Community in Kogarah. There are worries and questions about the uncertain future. And we are even more worried because this is a road we have never been on before. But we are trying to take a step forward in faith. we are here to make a beginning.

Friends in Christ! What do you do when you are overwhelmed, when you are stressed? Learn from this beautiful story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. Sit down. Acknowledge that God has a plan. Make a beginning. You are not alone. The same God who multiplied the fish and the loaves is with you. Remind yourself that you are in the presence of the great I AM. Amen.

HYMN: Comfort, comfort, all my people TIS 647

(Refrain)

*Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my Word.*

*Speak it tender to my people:
all your sins are taken away.*

Though your tears be rivers running,
though your tears be an ocean full,
though you cry with the hurt of living:
comfort, comfort.

Every valley shall be lifted,
every mountain shall be low,
every rough place will be smoother:
comfort, comfort.

(Refrain)

Though your eyes see only darkness,
though your eyes can see no light,
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:
comfort, comfort.

Every night will have its morning,
every pain will have an end,
every burden will be lightened:
comfort, comfort.

(Refrain)

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WYNNE CHENG COMMISSIONING SERVICE

OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, we give thanks to you for the gift of life each day.
You are the bread of life, sustaining and filling with goodness.
We bring these, our gifts, and our lives to you.
May they be used to feed others, both physically and spiritually,
that the abundance of your love may be known in our world. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

We bring before you our prayers for our world and community. Although the pain and suffering of the world can overwhelm us, we trust in your presence transforming the world.

We pray for our creation, for the loss of precious species, the rising seas, the pollution of skies, waters, and land.

***May the little we have to offer
become an abundance of life and love
when we trust the work of your Spirit, O God.***

We pray for our people,
for those who are hungry in body and spirit,
the marginalised and oppressed,
those who suffer at the hands of cruel and unjust powers.

***May the little we have to offer
become an abundance of life and love
when we trust the work of your Spirit, O God.***

We pray for our communities and families,
for the sick and dying,
those estranged or living with tension,
the hopeless, the despairing and the grieving.

***May the little we have to offer
become an abundance of life and love
when we trust the work of your Spirit, O God.***

(Silence)

Hear our prayers, Loving God,
those we have brought to mind
and those yet to surface.
We pray in faith, 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

Come, all you who thirst,
all you who hunger for the bread of life,
all you whose souls cry out for healing;
Come, come to the feast of life.

The Table of Jesus is our place of gathering;
here we are welcomed, wanted, loved,
here there is a place set for us;
Let us come to the feast of life.

COMMUNION HYMN: Be known to us in breaking bread TIS 514

Be known to us in breaking bread,
but do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
your table in our heart.

There share with us in love divine;
your body and your blood,
that living bread, that heavenly wine,
be our immortal food.

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Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: *Why do we give thanks and praise before this table?*

Minister:

We give thanks for God's work of creation, liberation, and salvation.
It is indeed right, our duty and delight,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks to you, O holy Lord, eternal God.
You created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them;

you made us in your own image;
and in countless ways you show us your mercy.

Therefore, with choirs of angels
and the whole company of heaven,
we worship and adore your glorious name,
joining our voices in their unending praise:

**All: *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.***

Minister:

All glory and blessing are yours, O holy God,
for in your mercy, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ.
He took our human nature
and suffered death on the cross for our redemption.
There he made a perfect sacrifice for the sins for the whole world.

We praise you that before he suffered and died,
our Savior gave us this holy sacrament
and commanded us to continue it until he comes again.

All: *Why do we eat bread at this table?*

Minister:

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread.
After giving thanks, he broke it
and gave it to his disciples, saying,

“Take, eat.
This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

All: *Why do we drink from the cup at this table?*

Minister:

The same night Jesus took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

All: *What do we remember at this table?*

Minister:

We remember God's gracious love for us,
Christ's death and resurrection for us,
and the Spirit's tender care for us.
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All: *Dying, you destroyed our death;
rising, you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory.***

Minister:

Merciful God, pour out your Holy Spirit
on these gifts of bread and wine,
that in eating and drinking we may be made one
with Christ and one another.
Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, now and forever.
Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

LAM 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

God of glory,
you nourish us with the bread of life
and the cup of salvation.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit,
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God

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)

BLESSING

May the love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself;
May the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service;
May the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your souls.
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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