

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
10 November 2024
25th 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 is the one who gathers us here.

We come to worship, O God.

Christ is the foundation of our gathering.

We come to worship, O Christ.

The Spirit will unsettle us to work for justice.

We come to worship, O Spirit of Love.

We come to worship. Let us bring our thanks and praise.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us
God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God,
we name you as the one
who is always on the side of the poor and the marginalised.
Open our eyes this day to see those we might miss.
In our worship, transform us to your likeness and ways. 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)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us bring our prayer of confession to God in the presence of each other.

God, your heart is for the poor,
the marginalized, the dispossessed, and lonely.
When we have power and fail to see others,
may your Spirit break open our eyes.

God, since the beginning,
you have desired communities of and in creation
where all might flourish,
the human, the animal, the plants, the soil.
When we have power and fail to prioritize the flourishing of all,
may your Spirit break open our hands.

God, your name is justice, peace, and compassion.
When we have power and fail to live your Ways,
may your Spirit break open our hearts.

Transform us into the likeness of Christ,
even when it breaks us open, even when it calls for radical change.
**May we align our lives
with your eyes, hands, and heart.**
In the name of the Christ who walked with justice. **Amen.**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God's name is justice.
God's name is peace.
God's name is compassion.
God's name is mercy.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
Our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

HYMN: Halle, halle TiS 720

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Hallelujah, hallelujah!

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Ruth 3:1–5; 4:13–17

1 Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. 2 Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.” 5 She said to her, “All that you say I will do.”

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin, and may his name be renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.” 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom and became his nurse. 17 The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Mark 12: 38-44

38 As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! 40 They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” 41 He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. 43 Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. 44 For all of them

have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

REFLECTION

We all remember the Great Commandment that Jesus spoke. Jesus said, "The first is, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, Love your neighbour as yourself." The ultimate expression of commitment and love towards God is seen in the stories of two widows: Ruth, who demonstrated profound sacrifice and trust, and the widow in the Temple, who gave all that she had to God. These stories teach us what it truly means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Both stories are stories about obedience and about trust, about placing one's commitment to God and to what God asks of us all over against our own needs, and allowing our commitment to God to win out.

An Anglican minister, a Baptist minister and a Uniting Church minister were arguing in a church on how much they should give to God and how much they should get as a priest. The Anglican minister said, 'I will always give God the exact tithe.' And, the Baptist minister said, looking at the huge cross hung on the front wall of the church, "Well, as my lifelong gratitude to Christ, I will give half of all my possession to God". Then, the Uniting Church minister, looking up to heaven, proclaimed. "Well, I will give everything to God. I will throw up all the money I earn to God in heaven, THEN I will only keep the money that will fall down back to me." Today's story from Mark's gospel is about money and it shouldn't be surprising because out of the 38 parables Jesus told, 19 dealt with handling possessions and money. So, nearly half of the Jesus parables were money-related. Baptism is important, but there are 16 times more verses in the New Testament on handling money than are devoted to baptism. The Lord's Supper/communion is important, but there are 32 times more Biblical statements about Christian financial management than about the Lord's Supper.

Today's story from Mark's gospel is about a widow who put all her money into the offering place in the temple. It is not an easy topic to talk about because money talk is often treated as a forbidden talk in our modern, material-oriented society. But I believe, it is not just about money. It is something else, which is far more to it. It was a mild Sabbath morning in the Palestinian City of Jerusalem. The sun has not yet risen to full strength, and yet people are already lined up all the way down the dusty road which leads to the Holy Temple. And in that slow moving line, there are rich and poor alike, carrying with them the offerings that are to be presented to the Temple for the Sabbath day. The line leads to a small square room lined with metal collection boxes. As you can imagine, the coins make a constant clanging noise as they are thrown into the metal container. Most of the people shuffling along, quickly make their donation, and move on. The wealthy people pass by and make loud

clanging noises by virtue of their many coins. Many seem quite impressed at the generosity of those who cast an abundance of big, heavy coins into the boxes. And it is not surprise that no one pays particular attention to one frail, little lady who enters the room. She then walks invisibly to a place where the offering box is placed. Still nobody notices her. She then tosses two small coins into the big metal box, even making louder clanging noise. But still no one notices her. After all, what difference would her two tiny tokens make? If this had been the end of story, then she and her action could have disappeared forever into the unknown history to be told. However, someone noticed her and her action. Christ sees her, like he actually sees everyone and every action made by them. Jesus is impressed. He is so impressed that he singles this woman out to the entire multitude. And since then her story is retold again and again and again. The point of this story is never about how much is much, or how enough is enough. It is about how much we trust. How much do we actually trust God and his Word as the ultimate provider of everything in our lives. There used to be a time when we were taught that skipping saying grace over meal was a kind of sin. That is what I learned when I was a kid. And I often miss those days.

I had the privilege of serving as a youth worker at Dong San Korean Uniting Church in Parramatta for eight years, starting in 1998. During that time, the church was deeply involved in serving the homeless community in Parramatta, providing meals and support. On occasion, I helped serve lunch to those in need. One of my responsibilities was ensuring that everyone received their meal in an orderly manner —though, with around 50 hungry and desperate people rushing to get their food, it often felt like chaos. In the midst of this hectic scene, there was a man named Bill who stood out. Bill was homeless, hungry, and destitute, but he never failed to pause and say grace before his meal. I'll never forget watching him in that moment. In the midst of all the noise and disorder, Bill took a moment to thank God for his meal. That brief prayer, said with sincerity, was one of the most spiritual moments I experienced during my time there. He was homeless and hungry but in that moment of his saying grace over his food, he was the richest of all around him. He was having God at that moment. He was proclaiming that God is his provider, no matter what circumstance he was in. The poor widow in Mark's gospel today was the richest of all other people in the temple in that particular Sabbath day. She trusted God and she risked everything she had to prove that she would trust. Here goes a modern parable: "Once upon a time, a pig and a chicken were walking down a village street. They came upon a church sign which was advertising a market and breakfast which was going to be held in a few days. At the bottom of the sign the menu was given, it read 'Ham and eggs will be served from 6:30 to 8:00 am.' The chicken turned to the pig and said, "See!!' Even we can help the work of the church!!!" "Yes," said the pig, "but yours is only a contribution, mine is a whole SACRIFICE." Sacrificial giving is linked to trust. You sacrifice, not because of the sake of sacrifice, but because you trust. That's what the poor widow in Mark's gospel tells us today.

A similar story is found in the Book of Ruth in Old Testament. As you know in this story, we hear the story of two widows, Naomi and Ruth. Naomi was an older woman, and after her husband died, she also lost both of her sons. She decided to return to her home in Bethlehem, but her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, didn't want to leave her. Naomi told them, "Go back to your own families, because I can't give you anything more." Orpah decided to go back to her family, but Ruth said, "I will stay with you, Naomi. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." Ruth trusted Naomi and trusted in the God of Israel. She decided to risk everything to stay with her mother-in-law and support her. Ruth didn't have much, but she worked hard, gathering leftover grain in the fields to provide for Naomi and herself. Even though Ruth was a foreigner in Bethlehem, she was faithful and obedient to God, trusting that he would provide for them. One day, Naomi told Ruth to go to the fields of a man named Boaz, a relative of Naomi's husband. Naomi gave Ruth specific instructions on how to approach Boaz. Ruth followed Naomi's advice, and Boaz was kind to her. Boaz noticed Ruth's dedication and how she had stayed faithful to Naomi, even when she had lost so much. He was moved by her trust and decided to protect her and provide for her. In time, Boaz and Ruth married, and Ruth became part of God's plan. They had a son named Obed, and he became the grandfather of King David, an important figure in the story of Israel. Through Ruth's trust and faithfulness, God not only provided for her and Naomi, but he also brought great blessings to the whole community. Ruth's story is one of great sacrifice and trust. Like the widow in the temple in today's gospel, Ruth gave everything she had – her time, her energy, her trust – to care for Naomi and to follow God's plan. She risked everything, and God provided for her in amazing ways. You know, when things are going tough, I think it is time you need to prove you really believe and trust. It is time for you to test your faith. This widow trusted in the word of God to provide and that word came true for her. She trusted, she risked for God and God provided for her. A man who was not exceptionally wealthy had a reputation of giving to many causes. One day he was asked rather frankly how he could give so much and still have some left over so that he and his family would live comfortably. "You see," he said, "as I shovel the money out, God shovels it in. And God has a bigger shovel than I do!". My friends in Christ, faith in God, trust in God is our serious business that we must deal with in our work, our homes, our dining rooms and our church. Amen.

HYMN: Trust and obey AHB 531

When we walk with the Lord
in the light of his word
what a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.

(Refrain)

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.*

Not a shadow can rise,
not a cloud in the skies,
but his smile quickly drives it away;
not a doubt nor a fear,
not a sigh nor a tear,
can abide while we trust and obey.

(Refrain)

But we never can prove
the delights of his love
until all on the altar we lay,
for the favour he shows
and the joy he bestows
are for those who will trust and obey.

(Refrain)

Then in fellowship sweet
we will sit at his feet,
or we'll walk by his side in the way;
what he says we will do,
where he sends we will go –
never fear, only trust and obey.

(Refrain)

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Giving God,
you ask us to give,
not just our material gifts but our very selves to you.
Help us to be willing givers
knowing that you always provide
what we need if we but trust you. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

We pray for all who are hungry,
who do not have enough to live with dignity.
May they find generosity and inclusion
in their local Christian communities.
God in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who live in loneliness or isolation.
May they know friendship and community.
God in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are abused in any way,
whose homes or neighbourhoods or places of work
or study are places of fear, not of safety.
May they be strengthened and freed from abusers and fear.
May they find your good plans for them and hope in you.
God in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those with disabilities and those who feel alone.
We pray too for all who are shunned,
from whom people turn away.
Please help them to be included
and to know that they are loved by you
and that you have good plans for hope for them.
God in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We also pray for all who have been displaced,
who live in exile and in fear of losing everything they have ever known.
May they know your peace and strength in their lives.
God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In Silence, let us pray for those who are not well.
for Dennis and Robyn Lyons, Brian and Rhonda,
Prema and Priya, Jim and Bobbie, Denis and Dolly, Naghuia, John and Sue and
especially John's mother and father; Peter and Sue; Dinah; Ern Edwards; Godfrey;
Jim Bird; Sylvia and for others whom we name in our hearts.
(Silence)

In Jesus' name, 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.*

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,
"I am the bread of life;
Those who come to me shall not hunger,
and those who believe in me shall never thirst."

Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
if those who hear my voice open the door,
I will come in to them and eat with them,
and they with me.

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.

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high, voices full and joyful...

these you deserve loving God.

For when we were nothing, you made us something.

When we had no name and no faith and no future,

you called us your children, and gave us the example of saints.

When we lost our way or turned away, you did not abandon us.

When we came back to you, your arms opened wide in welcome.

So now in gratitude, we join our voices

to those of the Church on earth and in heaven:

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.

You are holy, O God,

and blessed is Jesus Christ your Son whom you sent to save us.

He came with healing in his touch, and was wounded and rejected.

He came with mercy in his voice and was mocked and despised.

He came with peace in his heart, and met with violence and death.

But by your power O God,

he broke free from the prison of death.
The one who was dead now lives.
The one who humbled himself is raised to rule over all creation.
The one who was alone and abandoned, is with us always as he promised.

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.”

Lord, as we come to share the richness of your table
we cannot forget the rawness of the earth.
(Silence)

We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry.
Lord, put our prosperity at the service of the poor.
(Silence)

We cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty.
Lord, put our fullness at the service of the empty.
(Silence)

We cannot hear your words of peace
and forget the world at war and conflict.
***Show us quickly how to turn weapons into welcome signs
and the lust for power into a desire for peace.***
(Silence)

We cannot celebrate the feast of your family
and forget our divisions.
Lord, heal your Church in every brokenness.
(Silence)

So as we do in this place
what you did in an upstairs room,
send down your Holy Spirit on us

and on these gifts of bread and wine
that they may become for us your body –
healing, forgiving and making us whole –
and that we may become for you,
your body, loving and caring in the world
until your kingdom comes. Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

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.

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Eternal God,
you have graciously accepted us
as living members of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the sacrament of his body and blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart,
through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: 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.

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BLESSING

Lord, as we leave this worship place
Let your Holy Spirit fill us with the love of Jesus Christ,
And strengthen us to live

as the good stewards of all that you have given us.

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

SENDING SONG: Behold, behold Season 6-10

Behold (behold), behold (behold),
I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold (behold), behold (behold),
I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

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