



The Uniting Church in Australia

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

*We welcome people of all cultures and
lifestyles,
We create a safe place for the community
We share the journey of life and faith.*

1st December 2024 @ 10am

**Advent 1 - Hope
A Sign of the Times**

Leader Robert

Reflection Deok Hee

**Jeremiah 33:14–16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13;
Luke 21:25–36**



For details and information about our church activities and The Kogarah Storehouse, check out the websites: kogarah.uca.org.au and <https://www.kogarahstorehouse.org.au/>

**For pastoral concerns, please contact Deok Hee on
0401 975 745.**

Scriptures

Jeremiah 33:14–16

These two short verses contain a reminder of the promise that the time is coming when God will ‘raise up a righteous branch’ from David’s line.

Psalms 25:1–10

This psalm is divided into three main sections. The first is an assurance of trust in God. The second is an invitation for God to remember the psalmist and teach them to be holy. The third section reminds the reader/hearer of God’s goodness.

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

The writer reports that the apostle Timothy has returned with news about the faithfulness of the Thessalonian community. They note that the community continues to pray and thank God for them.

Luke 21:25–36

The example of the fig tree, which sprouts leaves when summer is near, is used as an analogy for the signs that God’s kingdom is near. The writer urges the reader to be prepared and to watch for the signs of the time.

Theme Focus

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, a time of waiting and watching. This week, we reflect on passages from Jeremiah and Luke, who were both watching for events to come.

Word for the Day

Regularly, there are pronouncements that God is coming back on a specific date, and therefore all people should be prepared. So far, none of these predictions have come true.

The theme of time is present in three of today's readings (absent only from the psalm). This is unsurprising because the writers of the biblical texts were often living in difficult circumstances. When we face difficulties, it is very tempting to look towards a time of peace, restoration, and comfort.

The Season of Advent encourages us to look forward – to Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth, to the secular New Year, and to Jesus coming again.

When we are busy looking forward, we often look for signs that the thing we hope for is coming. The signs may appear differently, depending on what we are looking forward to, and these signs are often ambiguous.

Ideas for Reflection

- Luke 21:25–36 suggests that there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. How might we understand this? What does this idea make you feel?
- Was there a time you received a clear sign that something was changing or something new was happening? Did other people see the sign as well? How did you know it was a sign?
- Was there ever a time that someone told you it was a sign, and you didn't believe them? Were they right or wrong? What other evidence may have been at play here?
- How do you feel when a sign does not result in the expected outcome? Do you shift your expectations, or do you reject the sign?
- How might the Bible act as a sign for us today? Are the same signs in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as well as the new? How do we know which signs to follow?

Poetry as a contemplative practice

Instructions

1. Try to let your mind drop into your heart as you quietly read or listen to the poem. You might like to start by centring on your breath.
2. Read or listen to the poem through more than one time.
3. Notice what arises in you each time.

This activity is a way of entering into the scriptural themes in a contemplative way – not unlike how one might engage in a *lectio divina* process.

Interrupted By Hope

ADVENT AS POETIC IMAGINATION

(from Malcolm Guite “A Womb for a Wounded World” video)

How might we reimagine our lives, however difficult that might be? Poet and scholar, Malcolm Guite, helps us draw a line around our lives so that we can make sense of the most tragic of events. God is waiting to be born in us, even if our lives appear to be a dark and dirty manger.

Questions for Reflection

1. Guite starts by talking about why he wrote “O Emmanuel.” He wrote the sonnet in remembrance of a friend who died of a brain tumour. Toward the end of his life, his friend said, “I think my life itself is a poem. I know I am being written by God. But my big problem is I always thought I was an epic, but now it turns out that I am a sonnet. I am short; I see the end right here.”

How might we look at our lives as compared to a literary genre? Are our lives epics, or sonnets, or tragedies, or comedies, or short stories? Many, if not most of us, presume that our lives will be long, that there will always be another day—but what if our end comes sooner than later?

How does that change what we invest in each day?

2. Guite says that towards the end of his friend’s life he had “to know how to concentrate the forces, like I have the bounding line now.” The image of the “bounding line” is one where two surfaces converge onto

each other. Guite saw that his poetic technique and his friend's were converging on this line. On a grander scale, the "bounding line" takes place when our life meets the "life" of God.

How has God brought us together with others to form a "bounding line"? How do we often have negative connotations about being bound? How might it be an actual benefit to be bounded together, with others and with God?

Here is a poem that Guite recites - "O Emmanuel." Emmanuel means "God with us" in Hebrew and, in the book of Isaiah, it is the sign of God's presence in the midst of the conquering Assyrian Empire.

O Emmanuel

O come, O come, and be our God-with-us
O long-sought With-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.
Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name
Come Root, and Key, and King, and holy Flame,
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,
Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness

**Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.**

What might it mean to have “God with us”?

Guite ends the poem saying, “make these rags of time our swaddling bands”? What might he mean by saying “rags of time”?

How can God transform our lives into something that can receive the Christ child into this world?

This poem is from Malcolm Guite’s book, *Sounding the Seasons: 70 Sonnets for the Christian Year* (Canterbury Press, UK, 2013).



THE STOREHOUSE
COMMUNITY CONNECTION FESTIVAL

**CHRISTMAS
MARKET**

Friday, 6th & Saturday, 7th December
10AM to 3PM

The Kogarah Storehouse
Corner of Kensington and Gray Streets

All Welcome

Bargains Galore!! Performances
Light Refreshments

Supported by Georges River Council's Community Grants Program

Planning Ahead

- 17th November Table Tennis/Church Lunch after church – 11-1pm
- 30th November Health Talk *Head to shoulder* 10am – 12noon
- Starting Friday 29th November for 4 weeks – Advent Bible Study
- 5th December 2024 Kogarah Church Council via Zoom @ 7pm

Christmas Services 2024

December 19 Thursday @ 7:30pm Blue Christmas

December 24 Tuesday @ 7.30pm Christmas Eve (A service of Readings and Carols)

December 25 Wednesday @ 10.00am Christmas Day (with Holy Communion)

Please pray for ...

The mission and ministry of our congregation and for our Minister, Deok Hee.

Worship leaders; helpers, leaders, followers The Kogarah Storehouse and its many clients; Lala and staff of the Storehouse.

Dorothy and Godfrey and the work of LACLA. Nick Hedges and the scripture teaching at JCBTHS and MGHS

The team, parents and children in the Early Learning Centre. Those who are sick, sad or lonely:

We pray especially today for Dennis and Robyn Lyons, Brian and Rhonda, Prema and Priya, Bobbie and the extended family in their time of loss, Denis and Dolly, Naghuia, John and Sue and especially John's mother and father; Peter and Sue; Dinah; Ern Edwards; Godfrey; Jim Bird; Sue de B; Sylvia. For others whom we name in our hearts.

Pray for the people of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine, especially the people of Gaza and Lebanon. The USA. Sudan. Spain

Next Sunday

8th December 2024 @ 10am

Advent 2 - Peace
I am Sending My Messenger

Leader Deok Hee

Reflection Deok Hee

Holy Communion Deok hee

**Baruch 5:1–9 or Malachi 3:1–4; Luke 1:68–79; Philippians 1:3–11;
Luke 3:1–6**



Church Council 2024-2025

Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Councillors

Richard Goodman
Sue Baglin
John Baglin
Robert McAlpine (2026)
Sue Baglin (2025)
Dinah Roepers (2025)
John Baglin (2025)
Bobbie Miller (2025)
Richard Goodman (2027)

Elders

Safe Church Contact Person **Richard Goodman**