



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.*

29th December 2024 @ 10am

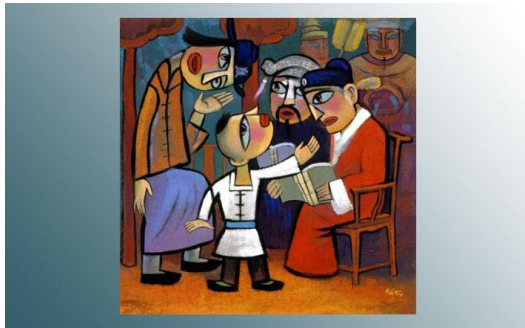
Christmas 1
Among Family and Friends

Leader Richard

Reflection Richard

Samuel 2:18–20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12–17; Luke 2:41–52

(Today is Deok Hee's Rostered Sunday Off)



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

Samuel 2:18–20, 26

The young Samuel is introduced as a helper for Eli and is placed in contrast with Eli's errant sons.

Psalms 148 declares that all the heavens and the earth praise God.

Colossians 3:12–17

The writer encourages the readers to be kind and gentle with each other and, most of all, to bind together in love.

Luke 2:41–52

Jesus stays behind in the temple when his mother and father leave Jerusalem after the Passover Festival.

Theme Focus

As we glimpse the young Samuel and Jesus who feel at home in the temple environment and have familial relationships there, we ask, 'Do all members of our faith community feel at home in worship or in the church?'

Word for the Day

The time between Christmas and New Year can feel like a liminal space where 'real life' is suspended. In these times when ordinary routines are disrupted or suspended, it can be refreshing to spend some time being grateful.

The writer of Psalm 148 encourages everyone to praise God and gives us a good template for how we might formulate our own praise.

Ideas for Reflection

- Sometimes, when we are exhausted from all the busyness of Christmas, it can be hard to wind down. Psalm 148 can be an invitation to slow down and let gratefulness for all we have wash over us. What might that gratefulness look like in our context?
- The psalmist includes creation in the list of beings that should praise God. How might an Indigenous understanding of the connection between Country and all living beings help us appreciate this psalm? How might this psalm help us appreciate an Indigenous approach to spirituality?
- Some may have had a lonely, stressful, or otherwise tricky Christmas season. For them, focussing on praise might be particularly difficult, or it might be the balm that is needed. How can we be sensitive to the different situations that members of our community are experiencing?
- There is a chance that the child Jesus heard this psalm on one of his visits to the temple. How might he have heard it? Would his experience be different to ours? Who else might hear this psalm differently, and how do we hear their perspective so that we can learn from it?

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

Christmas On The Edge

Christmas sets the centre on the edge;
The edge of town, the outhouse of the inn,
The fringe of empire, far from privilege
And power, on the edge and outer spin
Of turning worlds, a margin of small stars
That edge a galaxy itself light years
From some unguessed at cosmic origin.
Christmas sets the centre at the edge.
And from this day our world is re-aligned

A tiny seed unfolding in the womb
Becomes the source from which we all unfold
And flower into being. We are healed,
The end begins, the tomb becomes a womb,
For now in him all things are re-aligned.

Malcolm Guite

Malcolm's poem was accompanied by the Botticelli picture below. Here is his explanation. He wrote this in on December 23 2011.

Thanks. Yes, I know and love that saying about God having his centre everywhere, I think it is attributed to Nicholas of Cusa. I also love the painting which is Botticelli's Mystical Nativity. The details of the stable make it clear that it is, in human terms, an edgy outcast place but the centred circles of the dancing angels make it clear that it is aligned to the heart of Heaven!



(This picture is from the official website www.sydneynewyarseve.com)

We take this opportunity to wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year in 2025.



It's the year of our Lord, 2024. The nations stream to a weapons expo and military alliances, while missiles promising safety instead create terror. For-profit prisons disproportionately target Aboriginal families, and despite protest from Elders and scientists, we open new mines. Empire survives when we believe there is no alternative.

The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 2:1-5) proclaimed a wild and unthinkable future, where justice rolls down like water and we no longer stockpile weapons but actively wage peace and plant olive trees. " ...the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established ...all the nations shall stream to it.... They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning- hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Empire will not go quietly into the night; it must be dismantled and metabolised, sword by sword, tank by tank. Most of us do not hold weapons in our hands but we are beholden to them, nonetheless. There is no room for riot gear and tear gas in the world that God is creating. For Isaiah, seeing justice flow was not for

the 'good guys' to have the weapons, it was for the weapons to be transformed into gardening tools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aunties and Uncles have known this as they've faced the end of the world - resistance in the face of Empire, caring for children and culture and Country as they protect and cultivate that world that has no end. The question of this Advent season is for the rest of us - what world am I protecting? What future am I creating? How are we actively unlearning the ways of war, colonisation, and empire? Who is showing us the way? Jesus offers us courage and power to walk Creator's good road of compassion and peace, and there are many ahead of us on the journey.

Catholic peace activist Thomas Merton wrote that "Prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer has become impossible and our heart has turned to stone." Regular prayer with Costandi Bastoli, and other [Palestinian Christians](#), has been a refuge for me in terrifying times. As an American, being welcomed in prayer by Palestinians while my nation arms and supports Israel, is deeply humbling. They do not pray for the death of their oppressors, but for God's kindness to bring repentance and liberation to their beloved Palestine. We cry together for mercy, justice and ceasefire as we imagine that world which has no end.

The political landscape we see now is not so different from the prophet Isaiah, but the stakes are higher, the missiles more far-reaching. May Empire lose its grip on our imagination as we stand in greater solidarity with those who experience us as their enemies. They know the land, and there's so much gardening to do.

'Glory be, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and forever will be. World without end. Amen'.

Written by Becca De Souza who lives on Dharawal Country, works as a trauma-informed doula/birth educator and is on staff with Central Church Port Kembla. She was raised on Turtle Island and is a Shawnee descendant.

This is one of the Common Grace Advent meditations.

Planning Ahead

- 20th January 2025 Storehouse returns; orders for food parcels taken
- 22nd January 2025 first food parcels distributed
- 5th February 2025 Worship TG @ 7pm via Zoom
- 6th February 2025 Kogarah Church Council @ 7pm via Zoom
- 7th February 2025 Elders

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; 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. Vanuatu.

Next Sunday

5th January 2025 @ 10am

Christmas 2

**We Celebrate Epiphany
Gathered by Light, Guided by Hope**

Leader Robert

Reflection Deok Hee

**Jeremiah 31:7–14 or Sirach 24:1–12 ; Psalm 147:12–20 or Wisdom of
Solomon 10:15–21; Ephesians 1:3–14; John 1:(1–9), 10–18
Matthew 2:1-12**



Church Council 2024-2025

Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Councillors

Richard Goodman
Sue Baglin
John Baglin
Robert M^cAlpine (2026)
Sue Baglin (2025)
Dinah Roepers (2025)
John Baglin (2025)
Bobbie Miller (2025)
Richard Goodman (2027)

Elders

Safe Church Contact Person Richard Goodman