



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.*

12th January 2025 @ 10am

Epiphany 1/Baptism of Christ

Filled with Expectation

Leader Deok Hee

Reflection Deok Hee

Holy Communion Deok Hee

Isaiah 43:1–7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14–17; Luke 3:15–17, 21–22



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 for Epiphany 1

Isaiah 43:1–7 draws on the image of passing through the waters, a remembrance of the story of exodus from Egypt. It is a passage likely written to exiles living in Babylon, and offering words of comfort of God's continuing care.

Psalms 29 celebrates the power of God's voice. It draws on the imagery of creation to demonstrate this power. It links to the waters of baptism through verses that describe God's voice as thundering and powerful over mighty waters.

Acts 8:14–17 describes Peter and John coming to the newly baptised Christians in Samaria, laying their hands upon them, and these members receiving the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3:15–17, 21–22

The first portion of this reading focuses on John the baptiser, whose words are strange and awesome. John speaks of baptism with spirit and with fire. The second portion focuses on the baptism of Jesus, upon whom the Spirit of God falls in the form of a bird.

Theme Focus

The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ...~ Luke 3:15

As we notice the expectations people held about John the baptiser and about Jesus' baptism, we are encouraged to explore our own expectations we hold of God, ourselves, and each other

Word for the Day

Luke 3:15 catches our attention: 'The people were filled with expectation, and everyone wondered whether John might be the Christ.' We might imagine the people, drawn to this straight-talking preacher who drew on earlier stories, calling those who would listen to align their lives to God's ways. The verses preceding our reading have John talking to tax collectors and soldiers, instructing them to act justly and without any corruption. To others he said, share what you have in excess of your need. The people were intrigued and recognised the character of God's teachings in his words. As is always the way, in contrast to the regular folk, the powerful were confronted by John, as seen in Herod's response to him (which is omitted in the lectionary). The people are looking for what might come next. How would John's call play out in their community?

Interestingly, John, in this account, is not the one who baptises Jesus. John's straight talking has seen him imprisoned by Herod. John points to someone else, someone who will continue with the same characteristics of call that he has shown: but with fire and wind, gathering up the good grain and blowing away what remains. It is an image both compelling and, if we are honest, terrifying. How do we expect to experience this holy wind and fire, the threshing and winnowing and collection that John points towards? As we read of Jesus' baptism, of his prayerful posture, and as the voice and bird from heaven come upon him, the gospel writer asks us: filled with expectation, wondering in your hearts, will you continue to journey with this story?

Ideas for Reflection

- What expectations might the people have held of John? and of Jesus?
- What do you make of the character of John the baptiser?
- How do you understand the difference between John's baptism with water and the one who will baptise with wind/spirit and fire?

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

Christ's Baptism

This is epiphany, or 'showing forth' par excellence, for here we glimpse the whole Trinity: The Father blesses the Son, and the Spirit descends as a dove. This is not only a revelation about God, but also about us, for our own baptism draws us into the Son, so that the Spirit falls on us, and the Father says of us too 'this is my beloved child'.

Here's a poem reflecting on that by Malcolm Guite:

The Baptism of Christ

**Beginning here we glimpse the Three-in-one;
The river runs, the clouds are torn apart,
The Father speaks, the Spirit and the Son
Reveal to us the single loving heart
That beats behind the being of all things
And calls and keeps and kindles us to light.
The dove descends, the spirit soars and sings
'You are beloved, you are my delight!'
In that swift light and life, as water spills
And streams around the Man like quickening rain,
The voice that made the universe reveals
The God in Man who makes it new again.
He calls us too, to step into that river,
To die and rise and live and love forever.**

Fabulous poem by Jenneth Graser inviting us to listen to the new year singing...it's a right time to begin! (From Jamberoo Abbey)

From out of one end
comes many beginnings.
The pang of past seasons
makes way for a gift.
All we have shaken out
of our now empty hands
is in itself wisdom.
The birds laugh
into the sky
with no possessions.
The sea tumbles sound waves
through the door
and does not gather
anything together.
From a farewell
under the shadows
of falling leaves
the mist of longing
dissipates.
From the mouth
of a new year
comes the whisper

of songs we will sing,
of places we're headed,
of love that moves us
into word and voice.
It is never too late,
the new year sings.
You are never too old,
she sings.
It is the right time for you
to believe.
It is the right time...
to begin.
~Jenneth Graser

The Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT has strongly condemned the recent antisemitic incidents in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

Moderator, Rev. Faaimata Havea Hiliau said, "We share with our sisters and brothers in the Jewish community their pain and grief over the recent vandal attacks in Woollahra, the home of many Jewish institutions and synagogues.

"In the face of these incidents, we must all stand together to recommit to respecting and caring for one another, to protecting one another, and to preventing such violence.

"Any form of violence we reject and denounce. It's vital that as a community we stand together to embrace human rights and values. I call on all of us to continue to pray for peace and compassion for those who have been impacted."

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 Deok Hee, 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

19th January 2025 @ 10am

Epiphany 2/Day of Mourning

Toward the Common Good

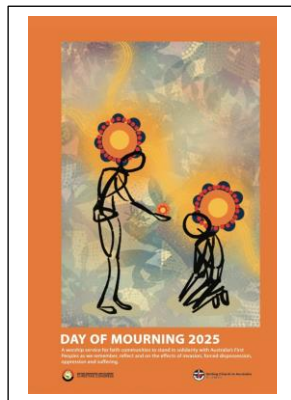
Leader Dinah

Reflection Deok Hee

Lectionary Reading for Epiphany 2

Isaiah 62:1–5; Psalm 36:5–10; 1 Corinthians 12:1–11; John 2:1–11

Readings for Day of Mourning



Isaiah 61:1-3

John 1: 1-9

Isaiah 9 : 1-7

Matthew 5:1-14

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