

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
12 January 2025
First Sunday after the Epiphany
Baptism of Christ

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

***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 great. Let us name God's greatness!

God's voice is like thunder.

God is great. Let us name God's greatness!

God's strength is like the waves of the sea.

God is great. Let us name God's greatness!

God's tenderness is like a gentle parent's.

God is great! Ascribe greatness to God.

Come, let us worship and praise.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

We bring our prayers to you, God who meets us where we are.
We remember stories told of long ago,
when you opened a path for the people to walk through the sea.
We remember stories of long ago, when you spoke at the baptism of Jesus.
We remember stories of our own encounters with you.
Meet us here, with your voice that is both thundering and quiet.
Give us ears to hear your call and eyes to see your creativity around us.
Amen

HYMN: Morning has broken TIS 156

Morning has broken, like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for the springing fresh from the world

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven
Like the first dewfall, on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung from completeness where his feet pass

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***Gracious God,
Sometimes, our expectations of you are too small.
We forget that you are the Creator,
we do not reflect on how you breathe life.
We neglect your passion and zeal for justice.
Turn our thinking around.
Widen our expectations,
help us to expect you to show up!***

***Surprise us by your presence!
And draw us into your work for justice and peace.
We pray in the name of Christ in whom we encounter you.
Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The good news is that God has redeemed us in and through Jesus - who came 'to give his life a ransom for many'. (Mark 10:45)

Friends, believe the gospel: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

HYMN: This little light of mine

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine!
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine!
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine!
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine!
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

Traditional

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BIBLE READINGS

Isaiah 43:1-7

1 But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. 5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; 6 I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth — 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Luke 3:15–17, 21–22

15 As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

21 Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

REFLECTION

In the season of Epiphany, we focus on special moments in Jesus' life where God showed his presence with great power. One of these moments is Jesus' baptism. Have you been baptized? Do you remember your baptism? Perhaps you don't remember because you were baptized when you were very young. Or maybe someone told you the story of your baptism, reminding you of the special moment when you became a child of God. Or maybe you've witnessed someone else's baptism in your community, and you saw the joy and significance in their faces. Today, as we think about baptism, let's reflect on what it really means for us, just as it meant something special for Jesus.

In our reading from Luke 3, we see Jesus coming to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. When Jesus is baptized, something powerful happens: the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove, and a voice from heaven says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." This is a beautiful moment where God affirms Jesus' identity. God declares that Jesus is his beloved Son, and in that moment, Jesus is publicly marked as the one who will bring God's love and salvation to the world. But why was Jesus baptized in the first place? After all, he was without sin, and baptism is often seen as a way to cleanse from sin. Jesus' baptism wasn't about forgiveness for sin. It was about identification. Jesus chose to be baptized to identify with us, with humanity. By entering the water, Jesus showed that he is with us in our struggles, our joys, and even our need for cleansing. He was beginning his ministry, not as someone distant from us, but as someone who walks alongside us, sharing in our human experience. Now, let's turn to Isaiah 43:1–7. In this passage, God speaks to his people, saying, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." This is God's promise to his people. He calls us his own, and he promises to be with us, to protect us, and to love us no matter what. Through baptism, we receive this same promise. God calls us by name, and he claims us as his own. Just like Jesus, when we are baptized, we are marked as children of God. God says to us, "You are mine." Our baptism reminds us of this deep truth. God loves us, and he calls us into a life of love, justice, and peace.

Think about a moment when you witnessed a baptism. Perhaps it was at a church service, or maybe it was a small ceremony with friends and family. What did you see happening? You saw a person entering the water and being brought out again. You saw a family or community gathering together to celebrate. There was likely joy, perhaps some tears, and certainly a sense of something special. Baptism is not just a ritual; it's a powerful symbol. It's a moment where a person publicly declares their faith and their commitment to live in God's love. When Jesus was baptized, it wasn't just a public event—it was a sign of something deeper. It was a sign of the beginning of a new chapter in his life and ministry. And when we are baptized, it's a sign of the beginning of a new chapter in our own lives, too. Through baptism, we are joined to Christ and to each other. We are connected as one family, united in our faith and in our calling to live according to God's Spirit. Baptism is a symbol of God's grace. Grace is the free gift of God's love and presence in our lives, even though we don't deserve it. When we are baptized, we receive this grace, just as Jesus did at his baptism. We are marked by God's love, and we are given the strength to live out our faith. Let me share a story to help illustrate this. Imagine a child who is adopted into a family. The moment the adoption is final, the child receives a new name, a new family, and a new life. They are no longer alone; they belong. Baptism is like that moment of adoption. When we are baptized, God claims us as his own. He says to us, "You are my child. I will always love you. I will always be with you." So, when we remember our baptism, we are reminded of

God's love and grace in our lives. We are reminded that we are children of God, and we are called to live out that identity in the world. Baptism is not just a one-time event—it's something that shapes our entire lives. It reminds us to seek truth, justice, compassion, and love in everything we do. Baptism also calls us to live by the Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, the Spirit comes to us in our baptism, empowering us to live according to God's will. The Spirit helps us to see the world through God's eyes, to embrace the world with God's heart, to love others as God loves us, and to act with kindness and courage.

As we reflect on the gift of baptism, let us remember that through this sacred act, we are deeply connected to God and to one another. Baptism is not just a past event; it is a continual reminder of God's love and presence in our lives. We are his children, and he is always with us. This truth should guide how we live each day, empowering us to show love, kindness, and justice in the world. As we step into this new year, 2025, we do not know what will happen in the world, in our communities, in our church, or in our families. But there is one thing we can be sure of: God loves us unconditionally, and he is pleased with us. Let this truth be our foundation for the year ahead. No matter what challenges or joys we face, may we trust in his love and strength, just as Jesus did. Let us give thanks for the grace and love we experience through baptism. Let us remember that we belong to God. With his Spirit in our hearts, we are empowered to live lives that reflect his love, mercy, and truth. As we journey through this year, may we continue to live out our baptism, sharing his love with others in all that we do. In this new year, let us not forget the call to live out our baptismal identity. As we face the unknowns of life, may we always remember that God's love is with us, guiding us, and empowering us to be a light in the world. May this year be one where we live with deep trust in God's love, and may we share that love with others, reflecting the grace and mercy that he has shown us. So, let us go forward with faith, knowing that God is with us, and may our lives be a continual witness to his love. Amen.

HYMN: Here I am, Lord TiS 658

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

(Refrain)

*Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night;
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?
(Refrain)

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame;
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?
(Refrain)

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

O God, you overwhelm us with the blessings of creation
and the blessings of your love.
Love revealed in Jesus and experienced by us
through the power of your Spirit.
We respond with these gifts and pray that through them –
and our Spirit-filled witness – others may come to recognise
and experience your presence in the world.
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Most Holy God, we gather before you in prayer,
celebrating your presence and your light in our lives and in our world.
The old year has ended and a new one lies before us;
a new year full of promise, hope and potential.

As we enter into this New Year
we pray that your Holy Light will shine upon all nations,
all people and all of creation leading us in love, peace and joy.
We pray that your guidance and wisdom will lead us in this New Year;
that your voice will encourage us to live in your ways
and that your Spirit will enliven us as we grow,
learn and work together.

In the midst of our celebrations we hold before you
those who suffer alone this day –
those who ache with pain or hunger –
those who tremble in fear or anxiety –
those who feel empty and unfulfilled –
those who feel unloved and unwanted and those who are homeless.
May your presence and your peace surround all who are in need.

Lord, we pray for the elderly,
who are so often and so easily neglected by a fast-changing world;
for all who feel isolated and vulnerable
in a society designed for the young, the fit and the active.

We pray for communities that have lost sight of your love and compassion.
Enable us, we pray, to be channels of Christ's love
as we share in the hurt of our neighbours.

Lord, we pray for the sick and people in suffering
who are known in this congregation.
We remember Dennis and Robyn Lyons, Brian and Rhonda,
Bobbie and the extended family in their time of loss,
Prema and Priya, Denis and Dolly, Naghuia,
John and Sue and especially John's mother;
Peter and Sue; Dinah; Ern Edwards; Godfrey; Jim Bird; Sylvia,
and for others whom we name in our hearts.

Please be with them and give them your intensive care and healing,
strength and hope.

We praise you, O God, for pouring out your light upon us.
May your living word call to us and may we, in faith, answer.
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

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: Come as you are TiS 693

Come as you are: that's how I want you.
Come as you are; feel quite at home,
close to my heart, loved and forgiven.
Come as you are: why stand alone?

No need to fear, love sets no limits;
no need to fear, love never ends;
don't run away shamed and disheartened,
rest in my love, trust me again.

I came to call sinners, not just the righteous;
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
why do you think I'd love you the less?

Come as you are; that's how I love you;
come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you;
all will be well, just come as you are.

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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.

Loving God, you made this world marvellous for us to enjoy.
You gave Jesus to be our Saviour and friend and to bring us to you.
You sent your Spirit to make us one family in Christ.
For these gifts of your love we thank you,
and we join with angels and saints in this joyful hymn of praise:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

For your kindness to us and your goodness to all, we give you thanks.
We thank you that you showed your love
by sending your Son, who gave his life for us,
and rose again from death, and lives to pray for us for ever.

We thank you that he has taken away all that separates us from you
and has made us friends with you and with one another.

We thank you that he has brought us together at this table,
to strengthen us by his love.

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.”
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Send your Holy Spirit on us and these your gifts of bread and wine,
that we may know Christ’s presence, real and true,
and be his faithful followers, showing your love for the world.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours,
almighty Father, for ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

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.

The Communion

Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
in your eternal kingdom.

***We offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice
through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: God Gives Us a Future TIS 687

God gives us a future, daring us to go
into dreams and dangers on a path unknown.
We will face tomorrow in the Spirit's power,
we will let God change us, for new life starts now.

We must leave behind us sins of yesterday,
for God's new beginning is a better way.
Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back:
God gives hope, and insight, and the strength we lack.

Holy Spirit, teach us how to read the signs,
how to meet the challenge of our troubled times.
Love us into action, stir us into prayer,
till we choose God's life, and find our future there.

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BLESSING

Jesus was baptised in the Jordan,
the voice of God spoke to him, saying:
This is my beloved child, listen.
As we go from this place, may we listen to God's voice:
Thundering: Beloved
Whispering: Beloved
In fire: calling out justice
In wind: blowing peace.

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: 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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