

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH**

**February 16, 2025**

**Epiphany 6**

**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 MISSION STATEMENT**

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**

Come, gather here at the level place!  
Home for the hurting and hoping.  
A meeting place for all those aching for freedom  
and longing for God-alive community.  
Jesus, the Jubilee-in-person,  
meets us here at the level place saying,  
'Another world is on the way!'  
Come! Let us sing our songs of jubilee!

## **LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

God is here **God is always here**  
God is with us **God is always with us**

### **HYMN: Lord Of The Dance - TIS 242**

**I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem I had my birth:**

**Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.**

**I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn’t follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,  
they came with me and the dance went on:**

**Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.**

**I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
and they left me there on a cross to die:**

**Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.**

**I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;  
it’s hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I’d gone;  
but I am the dance and I still go on:**

**Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.**

**They cut me down and I leap up high,  
I am the life that will never, never die;  
I'll live in you if you'll live in me:  
"I am the Lord of the Dance," said he:  
*Dance then, wherever you may be;*  
*"I am the Lord of the dance," said he;*  
*"and I'll lead you all wherever you may be,*  
*and I'll lead you all in the dance," said he.***

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### **OPENING PRAYER**

Come Holy Spirit, Open our hearts, Widen our imagination.  
Let us become flourishing trees, rooted in love and wisdom,  
strong in the presence of divine care.

### **HYMN: Beauty for brokenness - TIS 690**

**Beauty for brokenness,  
hope for despair,  
Lord in the suffering,  
this is our prayer,  
bread for the children,  
justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.**

**Shelter for fragile lives,  
cures for their ills,  
work for the craftsmen,  
trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed,  
rights for the weak,  
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.**

**God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion, we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

**Refuge from cruel wars,  
havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary,  
freedoms to share,  
peace to the killing-fields,  
scorched earth to green;  
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.**

**Rest for the ravaged earth,  
oceans and streams,  
plundered and poisoned,  
our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
carelessness, greed;  
make us content with the things that we need.**

**God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion, we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

**Lighten our darkness,  
breathe on this flame,  
until your justice burns  
brightly again;  
until the nations  
learn of your ways,  
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.**

**God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion, we pray;  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain.  
Come change our love from a spark to a flame.**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION & DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

O God, we want the world to change,  
but if we're honest, we do not want to change.  
We want lives untouched,  
wherever possible,  
from the raw and brutal realities of life.  
That is until we are on the wrong end of things.  
And then we want someone to stand with us,  
to rail against all that is not right and just.  
We're sorry, God.  
We're sorry for the resistance, the inertia,  
the indifference we often feel.

### **Words of Grace**

There are always fresh chances in the reign of God,  
always new opportunities to move towards love, to open up.  
And it always starts with receiving love,  
with God's forgiving embrace of our lives.  
Friends, you are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

<b>The Service of the Word</b>
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### **BIBLE READINGS:**

#### **Jeremiah 17:5–10**

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD.<sup>6</sup>They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup>They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out

its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. <sup>9</sup>The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it? <sup>10</sup>I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

#### **Luke 6:17-26**

<sup>17</sup>He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup>They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup>And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup>“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. <sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. <sup>24</sup>“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup>“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. “Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup>“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

#### **REFLECTION**

**(By Rev Deok Hee Cho)**

Have you ever been asked from your children or grand children about God, any questions related to God? Some questions like “Who is God?” “Where is he?” My children when they were kids asked me many questions about God which are sometimes not easy to explain. Every night I prayed for my children before they went to bed. I prayed for them to have good sleep with always good dreams, not bad dreams, and prayed for them to love God and to be a happy maker in this world etc. One day my son Jayden asked me just after the prayer, “Where is God?”, hard question... “Did you see God?” “Did you meet God?” “Where is he?” “How does he look like?” “Dad, I want to see and meet God too.” How about you? Do you want to meet God too? Today I want to talk about where we meet God and where God meets us.

I think all of us are familiar with the idea that God is best met in special times, times in which we go to special places, most often by ourselves, and dwell in silence. Most of us have felt specially blessed when we have been able to spend time away from the bustle and hustle of daily life and to actually go up on a mountain side and look around and see nothing for miles and miles but clouds passing by and hills and valleys receding into the distance. The scriptures tell us that this is what Jesus did. Others have the sense feeling when they go deep into the woods where they can hear nothing but birds singing in the trees and the sound of their own breathing, still others contemplate by a river with the eddies of water swirling by, carrying leaves and bits of wood to a destination hundreds of miles from where they sit. For some - like my wife - it is the beach - an ocean beach where the waves roll in one after another, pushing and pulling the gravel and sand and making whispering rattling sounds punctuated by the noise of the waves crashing and breaking on the shore. I like going out at late at night and staring up at the stars and the moon and the planets.

All of us have our places of refuge, our places where we go to meet God and to allow him to minister to us in the midst of the beauty, and the quiet, and the loneliness. We have a great sense of peace in these places, we can think - or even better - we can let go of thinking, and just sense the wonder and beauty of the moment, and then, sometime later, we return to our normal world, feeling more refreshed and stronger than we were than we left it. This kind of retreat is marvellous - it is one of the ways - one of the important ways, in which we meet God. The interesting thing about all these encounters with God is that we are often seeking them. We do something special, we expend effort, we set aside time, we go somewhere that is different or out of the ordinary, we seek out privacy - or the company of certain people, we - as the old hymn goes - take time to be holy. And that time makes us holy - whether we feel it or not - whether we are immediately aware of it or not, whether we have a fantastic emotional experience or simply come away feeling that we have done "the right thing" we have sought God and we have received from God. We have met God.

But - what about where God meets us? If we search for God – and I believe we all do at one time or another, if we search for God in special times and places --

Where does God search for us? Where does God meet us? A lot of us you know - do not think we have met God unless we FEEL that we have met him. We gauge the success of our search for God, our meeting God, by whether or not we feel certain things. We judge whether or not we have met the Lord, by whether or not we gain a sense of peace, by whether or not we have an emotional high – an emotional rush, by whether or not we have the Spirit send those marvellous chills and tingles up and down our backs. And by those conditions - most of the time - even in those times when we seek God out in the special places and in the special ways we know about - we fail to meet him.

Life is not, after all, full of special times, full of special moments. Life is full of other stuff, it is full of routines, of ordinary things: we work, we eat, we sleep, we play and relax, we suffer and feel pain, we sorrow and grieve, we are insulted and injured, we struggle and fight against trials and tribulations. In these ordinary times we are as well in ordinary places, at home, at work, in hospital, visiting with a friend, driving in our cars, standing in elevators, or sitting in an lobby or a meeting room. What about these ordinary times, and these ordinary places; these times when we are not taking time to be holy, and those places where we do not expect to meet God but are actually getting on - or trying to get on - with living our lives? Well - those are the times and the places where God meets us. We expect to meet God in a certain way - and we often end up missing His presence in our lives BECAUSE HE HAS COME TO MEET US - but he has done so, he has come to meet us, in a slightly different way - in a slightly different form or place - than that which we expect.

Blessed are the poor in Spirit - for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,

Blessed are those that mourn - for they shall be comforted,

Blessed are the humble - for they shall inherit the earth,

Blessed are the those who hunger and thirst for righteousness –  
for they shall be satisfied,

Blessed are the merciful - for they shall obtain mercy...

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Blessed are the peacemakers ...

Blessed are those who are persecuted falsely...



What these words mean is quite simply this -

Those who are living out their lives in faith;

Those who go about - seeking to do what is right;

those who are able to feel their pain and express it;

those who are trying to show mercy;

those who are willing to accept insult and injury for the sake of doing what is right; those who seek to make peace;

those who are walking humbly before God – they are met by God.

God encounters them. God inhabits them. God strengthens them. God rewards them. They did not have reach out to God in some special manner, though that is what all of us are called to God, so that they might meet God. God comes to them, and meets them - where they are.

Some years back I knew a woman who was dying of cancer. She had struggled with the disease for a number of years. She went through radiation and chemotherapy and all the ills associated with both the disease and its treatment. I asked her about how she felt about the whole ordeal and where it was surely leading her. She said that it was very difficult at times, she knew she was dying, but even so she felt an astonishing amount of peace and joy. When I asked her if she was scared of what was coming she replied "Why should I be afraid? I believe in God. I know where I came from and where I am going." She was blessed and she felt it - and others knew it - even when they could not accept what she was suffering.... Blessed are the pure in heart.

God meets us in ways we do not expect, at least those of us who think in the way of the world, rather in the way of God. He meets us in our weakness, in our grief, in our hunger for salvation, in our attempt to do what is right, in our pain and suffering when we are persecuted. He meets us in the cross that we share with Jesus.

Paul writes: about this in his letter to the Corinthians - he reminds us that God has chosen the way of foolishness - because in wisdom the world does not acknowledge God that he has chosen the way of weakness, because in strength the world does not accept God. The proof that God meets us ultimately is found in us - that proof is not found in our great visions and great moments of religious high, though these are wonderful things; It is found in our growth in understanding, in our increase in love, in our acceptance and faith in the midst of continual tribulation, in our doing of justice, in our love of kindness, in our humble walking. I give you peace, said Jesus - I do not give to you as the world gives.

We can go to meet God in many special ways and places and that is good -- but know and celebrate this -- God comes to meet us - in all ways and in all places. And all he asks us of us as he comes is that we trust and believe in his name. Amen.

#### **HYMN: Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace - TIS 607**

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.**

**O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.**

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;  
where there is darkness, let me bring your light;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy.**

**O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.**

**Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving of ourselves that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

God of grace, let your blessings ripple out.  
Let our giving be part of these movements.  
In your name, we pray, **amen.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

Gather around Jesus,  
he is with us here,  
standing on level ground,  
and all who are struggling  
and unwell may come to him,  
for healing, for connection,  
for community, for a word that uplifts.

We pray at this time for all those  
on our hearts whose spirits are troubled –  
troubled by illness,  
troubled by conflict,  
troubled by uncertainty  
troubled by hunger or some other need.  
We lift up in prayer those we know  
who long for your care, loving Jesus.  
May your healing power go forth, dear Jesus.

We pray for those around the world whose lives  
are endangered or displaced by war.  
Keep people safe, somehow.

Bring peace, God.  
Bring hope God.  
Turn weapons of war into instruments for connection,  
for healing and hope,  
for feeding those who are hungry.  
Teach all of us the things that make for peace.  
Let your jubilee dream come,  
let your will be done,  
in all of these desperate places,  
as it is in heaven.  
May your healing power go forth, dear Jesus.

**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.*

<b>The Sending Forth of the People of God</b>
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### **HYMN: The Galilee Song - Seasons 7-38**

**Deep within my heart, I feel  
voices whispering to me.  
Words that I can't understand;  
meanings I must clearly hear.  
Calling me to follow close,  
lest I leave myself behind,  
calling me to go into  
evening shadows one more time.**

***So I leave my boats behind,  
leave them on familiar shores.  
Set my heart upon the deep,  
follow you again, my Lord.***

***In my memories, I know  
how you send familiar rains  
falling gently on my days;  
dancing patterns on my pain.  
And I need to learn once more,  
in the fortress of my mind  
to believe in falling rain  
as I travel deserts dry.***

***So I leave my boats behind,  
leave them on familiar shores.  
Set my heart upon the deep,  
follow you again, my Lord.***

***As I gaze into the night,  
down the future of my years,  
I'm not sure I want to go  
past horizons that I know.  
And I need to learn once more,  
like a stirring deep within,  
restless 'til I live again  
beyond the fears that close me in.***

***So I leave my boats behind,  
leave them on familiar shores.  
Set my heart upon the deep,  
follow you again, my Lord.***

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## **BLESSING**

The singing here, in this place, will come to an end.

We will pack up the instruments.

We will clean up.

We will shut the doors behind us  
and ready ourselves to go from this place.

But this is not the end of our worship.

The jubilee parade simply streams forth,  
into our neighbourhoods, into our homes,  
into our workplaces, and into our relationships.

God goes before.

God is with you.

The joy and courage of God live within you.

So go forth.

Go in peace to serve and love with freedom.

## **SENDING SONG: May God's Blessing surround you each day**

**May God's blessing surround you each day,  
as you trust Him and walk in His way.**

**May His presence within  
guard and keep you from sin,  
go in peace, go in joy, go in love.**

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