

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

9 March 2025

Lent 1

The Gathering of the People of God

WELCOME & GREETING

May 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

The Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness alone;

When we are lonely, Christ is with us.

Jesus faced temptation and resisted evil;

When we face trials in our life, Christ is with us.

God provided for Jesus and met his needs;

When we are ready to give up, Christ is with us.

Enter this time of worship, knowing that Christ is already among us.

May our spirits be renewed, our faith lifted up,

our hearts filled with the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Companionship God, as we enter the wilderness space of Lent,
travel with us.

As we listen for your voice among all those who clamour for our attention,
travel with us.

As we sit and wait and wonder where you are in our lives,
travel with us.

As we ponder our futures, our ministries, our opportunities,
travel with us.

Travel with us in the wilderness, O God,
and guide us through the days and nights of this journey. Amen.

HYMN: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty TiS 111

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation.
Come all who hear,
brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord who in all things is wondrously reigning
and, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining:
have you not seen
all that is needed has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend us:
ponder anew
what the Almighty can do
as with his love he befriends us.

Praise to the Lord, who when darkness of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph, our best hopes confounding,
sheds forth his light,
scatters the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for ever adore him.

PD; Words: Joachim Neander

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious and merciful God,
we confess to you our reluctance to enter the wilderness places
where we are confronted with our true selves.
The places where we are tempted to put worldly values before our desire for you,
and when our hunger for power and wealth is greater than our hunger
for seeking and doing your will:

Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.

When we are tempted to use the gifts you give us
to benefit ourselves at the expense of serving others:

Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.

When we are tempted to use sensational means to increase people's faith,
rather than being guided by the humility of Christ:

Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.

When we are tempted to use bribery to influence and control people:

Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.

When we are tempted to manipulate you, O God, to satisfy our own needs:

Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.

ALL:

Merciful God, save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

Forgive us our sins and fill us with the joy and peace of your salvation.

So strengthen us with your Spirit during this Lenten season

that we put our whole trust in you as confidently as Jesus did.

This we pray in his name. Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

And so I declare to you: 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: What a friend we have in Jesus TiS 590

What a friend we have in Jesus
all our sins and griefs to bear,
what a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer:
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrow share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.

PD; Joseph Medlicott Scriven

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, 2 will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, 10 no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. 11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. 12 On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. 14 Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name. 15 When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue them and honor them. 16 With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation.

Luke 4:1–13

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” 4 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’ ” 5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’ ” 9 Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ 11 and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’ ” 12 Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

REFLECTION

Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16, Luke 4:1–13

Today is the first Sunday in our Lenten journey. Lent starts from Ash Wednesday which was last Wednesday, and it is a 40-day period of reflection, prayer, and fasting, focusing on Jesus Christ and his life and sufferings leading up to the cross.

I have a friend named David. A long time ago I served as a children’s pastor at a Korean church in Parramatta and David was a Sunday school teacher. At over 190 cm tall, he was a great basketball player, and since he worked in IT, he was skilled in

media and technology—making him a fantastic ministry partner. Every Sunday morning, after Sunday school, we would gather with the teachers for devotion and prayer. One year, as we approached Ash Wednesday, I suggested that we each share something we would give up for Lent and commit to it throughout the season. There were about ten of us, and everyone took it seriously, carefully choosing something meaningful to let go of or take on. When it was David's turn, he looked thoughtful and then said with a serious expression, "For Lent, I will give up beer." The room burst into laughter, thinking he was joking. But he quickly clarified, "After work and a workout, there's nothing I love more than a cold beer—except for Jesus, of course! This won't be easy for me." We all encouraged him, and with that, our Lenten journey began.

A week passed, and on the first Sunday of Lent, we gathered again for devotion. We checked in on each other, and thankfully, most of us had kept our commitments. David, too, was proud to say he was doing well. We cheered for him, ended with prayer, and went our separate ways. As we stepped out into the church lounge, David suddenly said, "I can't wait to go home and enjoy a nice cold beer!" We all turned to him, shocked. "What?" Surprised by our reaction, he asked, "What's wrong? Why can't I?" Then, with confidence, he explained, "Lent is 40 days long, but Sundays don't count!" According to church tradition, Lent is a 40-day period leading up to Easter, excluding Sundays. Based on this, David reasoned that he was allowed to enjoy his beer on Sundays. We were stunned. Technically, he was right, and we could do nothing but watch as he walked away with a triumphant smile. Because of David's clever response, the other Sunday school teachers couldn't help but smile, and I could see a look of expectation spreading across their faces. This may be a simple, humorous memory, but it has stayed with me vividly over the years.

Every year, we enter Lent wanting to reflect deeply on Jesus' suffering and prepare our hearts for Easter. I encourage you to embrace this season as a time for spiritual renewal and healing—a chance to refocus on Jesus. But Lent is not about strict rules or obligations—it is not about rigidly following traditions or controlling our lives with guilt. That is not the true spirit of fasting and prayer that Scripture teaches. We are not bound by the number 40 or by religious effort—what we do or don't do should not become the focus. Instead, Lent is an invitation to meet Jesus in the midst of our burdens and worries, to find true peace and hope in him. So I encourage you—may this season be a journey of humility, of sharing in Christ's suffering, and of recognizing the pain of others as our own, as we patiently wait for the hope of the resurrection.

Today, the reading for the first week of Lent begins with the story of Jesus' temptation. Temptation! Someone said, "I can resist everything -- except temptation!" Once there was a small boy who wanted a pair of skates. His parents, hoping to teach him the value of money, informed him that he would have to save

the required amount from his allowance. His mother overheard him in his room one afternoon shaking his bank and counting his money. Then she heard the bell on the ice cream wagon ringing loudly in the street outside. Mom waited to see what would happen. The boy wanted the skates, but he also liked ice cream. There was no sound from the room until the vehicle had gone, and the bell could no longer be heard. Then a childish voice was heard in prayer. "Dear Jesus, please don't let the ice cream wagon come down my street anymore." Interesting. Temptation is all around us, isn't it? No doubt that is why every year, on this first Sunday in Lent, we are called to a rigorous self-examination, the whole churches in the world read again the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness.

Our story from Luke this morning is the classic New Testament account of temptation. As the lesson has it, Jesus is "led by the Spirit" into the wilderness where he encounters the devil. We need to look at how Jesus was tempted in today's reading, where Satan whispered to Jesus, "Jesus, you are incredibly powerful; use that power to meet your own needs. If you do not take care of yourself, you will not be able to take care of anyone else. On top of that, if word gets around that you turn stones into bread, think how many folks would follow you. Everyone can use a little extra bread." The second temptation was equally appealing. "Let people in the world know that YOU ARE THE MESSIAH, the Chosen One. What a spectacular stunt to leap from the Pinnacle of the Temple, drop the 450 feet straight down into the deep valley, and land unharmed. God's angels will protect you. People will SURELY listen to your message when they hear what you have done." The third temptation was enormous - unchallenged political power to right all the wrongs...all the kingdoms of the world. How incredibly simple, "Jesus: you can ORDER people to listen. You can ORDER justice and an end to all oppression. What a wonderful opportunity! All it will take is a tiny compromise, an ever-so-slight division in your loyalties. You do not have to stop worshiping the God of heaven, just spread that worship around a bit. Jesus, this is the offer you cannot refuse." The three temptations of Christ. No doubt there were more.

I am curious about how Jesus managed to resist. Scripture. After each temptation, Jesus quoted scripture. Does scripture have more power than evil? Yes, I believe so. But the main point of Jesus' temptations in this story is that Jesus points to God. Jesus knew that his purpose on earth was to show people God and help them experience him. Jesus was clear about his life's purpose: to make God known and accessible to everyone. And it asks us an important question: Who or what does our life, our work, our career, or our daily life point to? Is it happiness, achievements, success, getting promoted, or finding a better place? If it is, then we might still be lost in the wilderness. Yes, there WILL be always wilderness journeys - times when we experience physical or emotional hunger, times when we are tired of being ignored and wish someone would notice us, times when we are frustrated at not being able to make a difference in our own life or anyone else's - the same

temptations that Jesus felt. However, wilderness is never our place. We must go through it to be called into God's ministry for us. Jesus had to go through temptations so that he was able to go through his life-long ministry, serving God and serving his people.

Dear friends, I believe that the same thing applies to us. Some of you might feel that you can't make a difference in your life anymore. Then, it might be the way you deal with the temptations in your life. Your chance of meeting God in a different way, your opportunity to make a difference in your life, your ministry to serve God and people in a more exciting way, might be just around the corner. It might be that you just stay too long in the face of temptations and lose the blessing that awaits beyond the temptation. Whatever the temptation might be, you can't defeat it on your own. You need God and his Word, and his power and his presence to defeat it. Verse 13: "When the devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while." A different version expresses it more interestingly, "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time." In other words, this struggle with temptation is ongoing...for Jesus, and most certainly for you and me. There is no such thing like temptation-free life in the world. Another will come very shortly. And, whenever it comes in our way, we are to look to God and to be reminded of Jesus' temptation story and to know that beyond this there always awaits us a new way to experience and serve God, and a new opportunity to make a difference in our lives and someone else's as well. Amen.

HYMN: Seek ye first TiS 745

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.
Allelu, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and you shall find,
knock and it shall be opened unto you.
Allelu, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.
Allelu, alleluia.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Loving and gracious God,
we bring before you our gifts,
our wealth, our goods and our lives.
May they be used to help those in the wilderness spaces of life,
those who are hungry in body and spirit,
those who are thirsty for justice and love,
and for the lonely and grieving hearts. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

God of Compassion,
walk with us in the desert of our world
and see those experiencing hunger.
We bring before you those people
who struggle with everyday survival,
whose children die from lack of clean water
and nutritious food.

(Silence)

We raise up those who hunger after meaning in life:
the ambitious, the passionate and the needy in spirit.

(Silence)

We pray for those who hunger after material wealth
and build their riches in this world, often to the detriment of others.

(Silence)

Let us walk with those who hunger.
Hear our cry from the wilderness.

Lord, hear our prayer.

God of Compassion,
walk with us in the desert of our world and see the powerless and powerful.
We think of those who have been given positions of power,
those who lead our country and state.

We pray for wisdom and integrity.

(Silence)

We raise before you those who are powerless,
those who face persecution and violation.

We pray for justice and peace.

(Silence)

We bring to you those who seek power, no matter what the cost.

(Silence)

Let us walk with those who seek or exercise power.

Hear our cry from the wilderness.

Lord, hear our prayer.

God of Compassion,

walk with us in the desert of our world and see your church.

Give us a renewed sense of your vision and mission.

Help us to be patient and honest in discovering your will.

(Silence)

We pray for our church leaders;

for those who make decisions and dream dreams.

May they be centred on you.

(Silence)

We pray for the sick in this congregation

and those who are in our prayer lists.

We remember Richard and family, Henry, Dennis and Robyn Lyons,
Brian and Rhonda, Prema and Priya, Bobbie and the extended family,
Denis and Dolly, Naghuia, Peter and Sue; Dinah; Ern Edwards; Jim Bird
and others whom we name in our hearts.

(Silence)

We pray for ourselves.

May we come to know you more intimately
and become an outpouring of your love.

Let us walk with all who long to know you.

Hear our cry from the wilderness.

Lord, hear our prayer.

God of Compassion,

you walk with all people through the wilderness.

May we be your hands, feet, eyes and ears

throughout the desert we travel.

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

This is the table of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In great humility and love

Jesus lived among us,

he became one of us.

He came, not to call the righteous,
but sinners to repentance.

He came, not to condemn us,
but to save us from our sins.

He understands our doubts, our lack of faith,
our longing for more love, more holiness of life;
and even now he accepts us as we are
and calls us to be his disciples.

Come then to this holy feast.

Come to our crucified Saviour and risen Lord.

The Master is here and is calling to you.

Come and receive the signs of his presence,
the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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.

Blessing and praise belong to you, gracious and eternal God.

Through your living Word you created all things,

the majesty of the heavens and the glory of the earth.

In your wisdom and goodness you have made all people
in your image and likeness.

Therefore with saints and angels and with all creation

we lift up our voices to proclaim the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

***Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

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.

Loving God,
we offer you this bread and this cup,
remembering his death and celebrating his resurrection.
You have made him the light of the nations
and the bearer of justice to the ends of the earth.

Send the Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts.
Make us one with Christ in his self-giving,
that through us he may bind up the broken hearted,
comfort the mourners, open the eyes of the blind,
and proclaim liberty to the captives;
until justice rolls down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream.
In this hope, and as your people, we praise you.

***Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy. 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

***We give thanks, almighty God,
that you have refreshed us at your table
by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ.
Strengthen our faith,
increase our love for one another,
and send us forth into the world
united in courage and peace,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: Kneels at the feet of his friends TiS 640

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet:
master who acts as a slave to them.

(Refrain)

*Yesu, Yesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.*

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are near us and far away.

(Refrain)

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbours to us and you.

(Refrain)

Loving puts us on our knees,
Silently washing their feet:

this is the way we should live with you.

(Refrain)

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BLESSING

And now, as we leave this place,
where we have been fed and sustained,
may we enter the wilderness places of this world
taking with us the living water and the bread of life.
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: Behold, behold Season 6-10 (Sing Twice)

Behold (behold), behold (behold),
I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold (behold), behold (behold),
I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

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