

**KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH**  
**June 22 2025**  
**PENTECOST +2**

<b>The Gathering of the People of God</b>
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**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**

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 all you who have been carried by faith.

Come all of you who have been immersed in fresh hope

and a bold vision of who we are together:

One in Christ, a family of equals,

beloved and welcomed.

Let us worship the God who binds us together!

**LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

God is here

**God is always here**

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

**HYMN: As the deer pants for the water TIS 703**

As the deer pants for the water,  
so my soul longs after you.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.  
You alone are my strength and shield,  
to you alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver,  
only you can satisfy.  
You alone are the real joy-giver  
and the apple of my eye.  
You alone are my strength and shield,  
to you alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.

You're my friend and you are my brother  
even though you are a king.  
I love you more than any other,  
so much more than anything.  
You alone are my strength and shield,  
to you alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship you.

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**OPENING PRAYER**

Draw us in, Spirit of Life,  
  
Usher us into the joy of belonging –  
  
not in any small sense,  
  
but in the biggest way possible;  
  
alive in Christ,  
  
present to each other,  
  
ready and receptive to wonder.

**Draw us in, Spirit of Life,**

**HYMN: Like the woman of old / Wellsprings ATW 435**

Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.

Some days the well seems dry.  
We can't reach the water – it's too hard.  
Some days our legs won't take us,  
our hearts are aching, crying.

Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.

Some days our minds are reeling.  
There's too much happening –  
we need to stop.

Some days our souls are parched,  
we need the water – so thirsty.

Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.

Some days there's no escape  
life's routine and madness.  
Some days we don't want to go –  
we can't see the rhyme or reason.

Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.

Some days we're resurrected,  
we feel new life – inside us.  
Some days our faith moves mountains,  
we feel life's glory – earth and heaven.

Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of great compassion, we have heard and inherited all kinds of stories about who we are and who others might be.

We have allowed some of these stories to create distance between ourselves and others.

Forgive us, God, for forgetting how connected we truly are.

## DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The only way forward is by grace and by faith in Christ; that's what places us right in the heart of God's purpose.

We don't get there on our own terms.

God embraces us.

God forgives us.

God includes us.

Brothers and sisters, you are loved and 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 READING: 1 KINGS 19:1-4 and 8-15a**

**19**Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." <sup>3</sup>Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. <sup>4</sup>But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

<sup>8</sup>He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

<sup>9</sup>At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup>He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>11</sup>He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup>and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup>He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus;

**HYMN: Come and find the quiet centre TIS 493**

Come and find the quiet centre  
in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter,  
find the frame where we are freed:  
clear the chaos and the clutter,  
clear our eyes, that we can see  
all the things that really matter,  
be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us,  
cools the heat and slows the pace,  
God it is who speaks and names us,  
knows our being, touches base,  
making space within our thinking,  
lifting shades to show the sun,  
raising courage when we're shrinking,  
finding scope for faith begun.

**In the Spirit let us travel,  
open to each other's pain,  
let our loves and fears unravel,  
celebrate the space we gain:  
there's a place for deepest dreaming,  
there's a time for heart to care,  
in the Spirit's lively scheming  
there is always room to spare!**

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## **BIBLE READINGS: LUKE 8:26-39**

**<sup>26</sup>Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. <sup>27</sup>As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. <sup>28</sup>When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"— <sup>29</sup>for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) <sup>30</sup>Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. <sup>31</sup>They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss. <sup>32</sup>Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup>Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. <sup>34</sup>When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. <sup>35</sup>Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. <sup>36</sup>Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. <sup>37</sup>Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. <sup>38</sup>The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup>"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.**

## **GALATIANS 3:23-29**

<sup>23</sup>Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, <sup>26</sup>for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup>As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

**HYMN: God of freedom God of justice TIS 657**

God of freedom, God of justice,  
God whose love is strong as death,  
God who saw the dark of prison,  
God who knew the price of faith:  
touch our world of sad oppression  
with your Spirit's healing breath.

Rid the earth of torture's terror,  
God whose hands were nailed to wood;  
hear the cries of pain and protest,  
God who shed the tears and blood;  
move in us the power of pity,  
restless for the common good.

Make in us a captive conscience  
quick to hear, to act, to plead;  
make us truly sisters, brothers  
of whatever race or creed:  
teach us to be fully human,  
open to each other's need.

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**REFLECTION – Richard**  
**(from Moira Laidlaw, Liturgies)**

There was a marvellous little story in the *READER'S DIGEST* some time ago about a little boy who was staying with his grandparents one weekend. A violent electrical storm suddenly broke while the boy was in the garden. His grandmother thought that he would be terrified as he

ran into the house following a great flash of lightning... instead, he was tremendously excited, "Nan," he shouted, "God just took my photograph!"

Elijah also expected to experience God in the storm but not quite in the same way as that.

Elijah had experienced God's power in what to him must have seemed mighty and supernatural ways...in the chapter before today's reading, Elijah had just had a mighty victory on Mount Carmel where he demonstrated graphically to a great number of Israelites that his God was more powerful than Baal, the god of the Canaanites. His actions, however, incur queen Jezebel's wrath and his fear over this catapults him into a spiritual 'low' "I have had enough, Lord" he said "Take my life..."

I remember reading a book on 'spiritual burnout' and it would seem that Elijah had a classic dose of such a condition. It is something which is not confined to his time...spiritual burnout can and does occur when one is in a state of despair and it's all too easy to slip into such a state when one is confronted with the news each night on TV or when one is faced with some kind of crisis situation in life - perhaps to do with health, or the death of someone close - or perhaps arising out of feelings of guilt over something which happened in the past. The author of the book wrote that "People on the way to burnout find the past piling up on them. They have come to the point of believing that it is too late to change - believing that too much has gone wrong for anything to go right." Perhaps this is how Elijah felt - he had no courage left to go on any more. Elijah does not have within himself resources for life. But these resources are given unexpectedly, inexplicably - just given. He receives life restoring food, the most elemental sign of care.

We were fortunate in being able to contribute in a small way to providing such care for a family who possibly had reached a similar level of burnout as Elijah. A social worker/ counsellor came to our town once a week, and also went to surrounding towns, and found in one some distance away the most appalling case of poverty she had ever seen. It appeared that the family had been exploited financially and were in a really desperate situation health-wise - the children did not attend school and were exceedingly listless and malnourished - she knew we kept a stock of food at the church for emergencies such as this, so the upshot was that a couple of large boxes of groceries and toiletries went with her when she returned to further help the family. So, maybe we were all ministering angels for that family. In a commentary on the verse about Elijah and the angel - we read "It is such a simple thing as "cake and water" which is the effective sign of God's presence. Without the angel, the story would leave us with a hopeless future.

Elijah has enough strength to continue his journey and he would have had time to reflect on all these manifestations of God's power in his life as he went, to the extent that perhaps he had come to the expectation that God's power would be revealed through splendiferous and mighty signs and wonders...I wonder if Elijah believed that he could decide how and in what way God's power could be put to use...perhaps these verses contain God's answer to that question. God had told Elijah to go and stand before him on top of the mountain and Elijah no doubt expectantly watched and waited to see how God would speak to him through the shattering roar of the hurricane -force winds. And heard - nothing.



Through the terrifying tumult of the earthquake - again, he heard - nothing.

In the crackling ferocity of the fire - again, he heard - nothing.

But, after the fire - there came a gentle whisper - and in that whisper, Elijah identified the presence of God.

Walter Brueggeman's writes in his commentary on this passage <sup>1</sup>  
"This is not the voice of Elijah's conscience, but one of awe, not romantic whisperings, but overriding majesty. For all his graciousness, God stays free of any grasping Elijah may want to do of him. In this dramatic moment Elijah becomes freshly aware that it is Yaweh and none other, and certainly not himself - Elijah - who is God." <sup>2</sup>

This is a passage which spells out very clearly that God is beyond our manipulation, beyond our grasping. It is one which says that God is not always identifiable in the ways we expect.

Elijah's expectations were of a God exercising visible power and how unexpected it must have been to experience God in the silence as throughout the Old Testament we have images of God having the power of a warrior, a conqueror, the kind of power that people exercised themselves, power that enabled people to "lord" it over others.

Jesus gives us an entirely different image of God.. as he told the disciples in Mark chapter 10..." whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

As Malcolm Smith concludes in his book about burnout "The road back from burnout requires a re-discovery of who God is and what God's grace means. It involves experiencing God's love as the desire to fill our lives with divine life, and the resulting power to live as vehicles of God's grace. It means remembering that we are loved because God is love. We can do God's work because we no longer live but Christ lives within us. Therefore we are not consumed by the pain, failure and strain of life because it is God's resources upon which we depend." Elijah certainly discovered that...as we do too as we take the words from one of the following hymns to heart:...

"Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace,  
the beauty of thy peace." (*TIS* 598 v.4)

#### **HYMN: They'll know we are Christians by our love AOV1-130**

**We are one in the Spirit,  
we are one in the Lord,  
we are one in the Spirit,  
we are one in the Lord,  
and we pray that our unity will one day be restored.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.**

**We will walk with each other,  
we will walk hand in hand,  
we will walk with each other,  
we will walk hand in hand,  
and together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.**

**We will work with each other,  
we will work side by side,  
we will work with each other,  
we will work side by side,  
and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.**

**All praise to the Father,  
from whom all things come,  
and all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,  
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.**

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us participate in God's generosity  
and grace with our offering.

Loving God, receive these gifts.

Use them for blessing. **Amen.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

O God of all creation, we pray for more of heaven, more of your dream,  
and more of your will being done here on earth.

We think of the places in the world that are divided along religious lines.

Give us a great trust in the work of the Holy Spirit amongst us all.

Heal hurts and help us to be open to one another.

**Hold everything and everyone together in your love,  
renewing and reconciling all things, little by little.**

We think of the places in the world that are divided along political and  
economic lines.

We pray for the conversations that are fraught and almost impossible to  
have within families, workplaces, and friendship groups because of how  
hard it is to find agreement.

We pray for places in the world where governments are unstable and unsafe and think of those who are most vulnerable in these places.

**Hold everything and everyone together in your love,  
renewing and reconciling all things, little by little.**

We think of the divisions that exist between genders.

Strengthen and support those who have been made to feel less-than, overlooked or discarded.

Help us to see the inherent dignity in all people—

beloved children of God— more than our bodies,

more than stories we tell about what it is to be a male or a female.

**Hold everything and everyone together in your love,  
renewing and reconciling all things, little by little.**

Loving God, open us up to the deep connections that run through all things, including us.

Help us to see others as siblings that perhaps we haven't had the chance to get to know, all held together by your love.

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.**

<b>The Sending Forth of the People of God</b>
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**HYMN: Beauty for brokenness hope for despair 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.

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## **BLESSING:**

Family of God, you have been clothed in garments of love,  
a love and a life that runs through all things and connects all people;  
a love that cuts across all of our differences and holds us together in Christ.

So put on compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.

Put on humility, gentleness and patience.

And may God's peace be with you and shine through you. **Amen.**

## **SENDING SONG: I Heard The Voice Of Jesus Say - TIS 585**

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down  
your head upon my breast."  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
so weary and worn and sad;  
I found in him a resting-place,  
and he has made me glad.

**I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“Behold, I freely give  
the living water; thirsty one,  
stoop down and drink and live.”  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
of that life-giving stream;  
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.**

**I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
“I am this world’s light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
and all your day be bright.”  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
in him my star, my sun;  
and in that light of life I’ll walk  
till travelling days are done.**

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