

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

10 August 2025

Pentecost 9

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 Biddegah 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

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

The God of grace, the God of love, the God of justice
calls us in. Come and hear these words.

Hear these words and obey.

Love one another as I have loved you.

Help the oppressed.

Defend the orphan and the neglected.

Plead for those who are alone and vulnerable.

In this way, my love will be known to all the ends of the earth.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Living God, we thank you for calling us this day.

We praise you that you challenge us to show our faith
in ministries of peace and justice,
offering compassion to all in need.

We come this morning reminded of all that you have done for us in Christ,
marvelling at the love with which you surround us,
rejoicing in all that you have given to us.

Open our hearts and minds today
to hear your words of encouragement and challenge. Amen.

HYMN: God has spoken by his prophets TiS 158

God has spoken by the prophets,
spoken God's unchanging word,
each, from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
In the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, God's throne eternal,
God the first. and God the last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness in the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time began,
Light from Light, to earth descending,
God, revealed as Son of Man.

God is speaking by God's Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then,

through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith yet standing fast;
God still speaks, God's word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

*Gracious God,
too often, we have placed more emphasis on things
looking good than being just and loving.
Too often, we have demanded our own way
and maintained power for ourselves.
Too often, we have hurt others with our words, deeds and actions.
God, have mercy on us. Amen.*

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of things we cannot see. We cannot see God's love and forgiveness, but our faith tells us that they are real.
God washes us clean and makes us new!

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
Our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

HYMN: Lord, I come to you TiS 685

Lord, I come to you: let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace that I found in you.
And, Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away by the power of your love.

*Hold me close, let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side:
and as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle,*

*and I will soar with you:
your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love.*

Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind as your will unfolds in my life,
in living every day in the power of your love.

*Hold me close, let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side:
and as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you:
your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love.*

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Isaiah 1:1, 10–20

1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats. 12 When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more! 13 Bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. 14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove your evil deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil; 17 learn to do good; seek justice; rescue the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow. 18 Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord: If your sins are like scarlet, will they become like snow? If they are red like crimson, will they become like wool? 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land, 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith, with Sarah's involvement, he received power of procreation, even though he was too old, because he considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." 13 All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better homeland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Luke 12:32-40

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 35 "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36 be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes during the middle of the night or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. 39 "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

REFLECTION

This morning, I'd like to begin our reflection by asking you a few questions about the Bible. Let's start with this: Do you know which chapter in the Bible speaks most clearly about love? It's 1 Corinthians 13. It begins with those beautiful and familiar words: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast..." And it ends

with this well-known verse: “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” That’s why we often call it the “Love Chapter.” But there’s also a chapter in the Bible that focuses on faith. Do you know which one? It’s Hebrews 11—one of our readings this morning. In that single chapter, the word “faith” appears 25 times. It tells the stories of many people from the Old Testament who lived by faith. There’s Noah, who built an ark long before the rain ever came. There’s Enoch, who walked so closely with God that he didn’t even die—he simply walked into heaven. And then there’s Abraham. He left his home, taking his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and everything he owned, simply because God told him to go.

This morning, our Hebrews reading is about Abraham and his faith. We know about him well. He was a man of faith. He always listened to God and obeyed him. And God was so pleased with Abraham because of his faith. God was with him and went along with him always in his whole life. Today, I want to remind you that the same God who was always with Abraham, a man of faith, is also with us today. He is here with us now in our worship—and he is with us in every moment of our lives. And as we reflect on this truth—that God is truly with us—I want to invite us to think about what that means for the world we live in today. How does God's presence with us speak to the justice issues we face in our time? What does it look like to walk with the God of justice in a world that so often seems broken and unjust? Today, I hope we can explore that together.

If you knew you were about to die, what would you say? I enjoy watching movies. Has anyone seen Terminator 1? It’s an old movie, but a classic. The main actor is Arnold Schwarzenegger—known for his strong, tough image. Do you remember his famous line? It’s just three words, but unforgettable: ‘I’ll be back.’ Another favourite of mine is Braveheart. It’s also an older film, but deeply powerful. The lead roles are played by Mel Gibson. Mel Gibson plays William Wallace, a Scottish hero from around the year 1300. In the end, Wallace is betrayed and captured. His enemies want him to beg for mercy—to die quickly and quietly. But instead, with his final breath, he cries out one word: ‘FREEDOM!’ In this way, final words carry a special meaning and leave a deep impression on the hearts of those who hear them. Final words matter—especially the final words of the dying. They often reveal the kind of life a person has lived. Someone once said, “You die as you lived.” So let me ask you: What would you say if you had one last opportunity to speak? What would you tell those you love—about what truly matters to you? Now think about Jesus. What were his final words before he ascended into heaven? In one powerful sentence, Jesus summed up everything he had taught his disciples. It wasn’t just a summary—it was a mission, a calling. It was their final instruction on how to live as contagious, world-changing disciples. He said: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end*

of the age.” This was the final command Jesus gave after his resurrection and just before his ascension into heaven. And I want to draw your attention to his last words in that passage: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” That’s not just a nice thought. That’s a promise—a promise to his disciples, and to us, a promise we must hold on to, especially in the hardest moments of our lives: God is with us. Think about Jesus’ life. He was with all kinds of people in all kinds of places—no matter who they were. He was with the woman caught in adultery, with tax collectors, with a Samaritan woman, with sinners, with the poor, the weak, and even the outcast. That’s why he came. To be with people. To be with us. No matter who we are. No matter where we are. No matter what we’ve done—right or wrong. What we must never forget is this: God has been with us, is with us now, and will be with us every moment of our lives. Remember this truth: There has never been a moment when God left you. And there never will be a moment when he does. God was with you yesterday, he is with you today, and he will be with you tomorrow—forever.

And today, I want to add one more important truth to everything we've reflected on so far. Just as God is always with us, God also calls us to be with our neighbours—to walk with them, care for them, and love them. Jesus went from town to town, meeting all kinds of people. He healed the sick. He encouraged those who had lost all hope. He became a friend to the lonely. He gave living water to the weary and tired. He taught, served, and lifted up the broken. And wherever he went, joy and hope followed. This is how God wants us to live. This is how God wants us to serve the world. We are called to heal the sick, to bring hope to the hopeless, to be a friend to the lonely, to offer living water to the weary, to teach, to serve, and to bring joy and hope wherever we go. But this calling is not just about kindness. It’s also about justice. Let us remember what God spoke through the prophet Isaiah—words that challenge us even today. “Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:13-17) God makes it clear: True worship is not just about singing and praying. True worship includes justice. God wants us to defend the oppressed, stand for the weak, and act with mercy and compassion.

In this week’s our church newsletter, there is a photo and a short article about the Moderator and members of the NSW Synod who attended the March for Humanity last Sunday—even in the rain. It was a public witness of standing with those who suffer and calling for a more just and compassionate world. There’s also a mention of Homelessness Week 2025 in the newsletter, a time to remember and respond to the needs of those in our own communities who live without shelter, without safety, and without support. And in the newsletter, there is also a prayer request. We’re reminded to pray for the people of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine—especially those suffering in Gaza and Lebanon. We’re asked to pray

for the USA and the countries of Europe, and for Sudan, Thailand, and Cambodia. And we might ask ourselves: Why? Why should we pray for people we've never met? Why should we care about the struggles of strangers whose faces we'll never see? Here's why: Because God cares. Because God sees them. Because God is there—with them—just as God is here—with us. And because God invites us to care, to see, and to be there with them, in love and in prayer.

So today, as we remember that God is with us, let's also remember: God is calling us to be with others. With the homeless. With the hurting. With the displaced and the oppressed. With the people of war-torn countries and forgotten corners of the earth.

Let us go, and bring joy, hope, and justice wherever we are. This is our calling. This is our worship. 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?

*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?

*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 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?

*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.*

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Jesus has taught us that where our treasure is,
that's where our heart will be.
So we offer you our treasure, O God,
and we offer you our hearts.
Make them beat with the pulse of your love
and guide us to walk in your ways. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Loving God,
We know that this world is unfair.
Some people have everything,
while others struggle with nothing or not enough.
Help us to see the struggle and to work for equity in our communities.

Gracious God,
We know that people are judged
for their skin colour, their hair, their tattoos, their weight.
Help us to be gracious and value each person as an individual created in your image.

Merciful God,
We know that there is no justice in this world.
Help us to hear the cries of the vulnerable and oppressed.
Help us to join in thought, word and action
to support the cause of all those in need of justice, peace and harmony.

Healing God, we pray for the sick and people in suffering
who are known in this congregation.
We remember Dennis and Robyn Lyons, Rhonda Chamberlain and family;
Prema and Priya, Denis and Dolly, Ngahuia, Peter and Sue; Dinah;
Ern Edwards; Jim Bird, Cindy, Dorothy, Sue Beglin
and for others whom we name in our hearts.

May your healing hand rest upon them,
may your life-giving powers flow
into their bodies and souls, cleansing, purifying,
restoring them to wholeness and strength
for service in your kingdom.
In Jesus name, 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: Be known to us in breaking bread TiS 514

Be known to us in breaking bread,
but do not then depart;
Saviour, abide with us, and spread
your table in our heart.

There share with us in love divine;
your body and your blood,
that living bread, that heavenly wine,
be our immortal food.

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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.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
our Lord and God, for you alone are worthy.
In time beyond our dreaming you brought forth life out of darkness,
and in the love of Christ your Son
you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.
For this we praise you with the faithful of every time
and place joining with the whole creation
in the eternal hymn:

***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 thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations.
Through Moses you taught us to love your law,
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.
In the fullness of your mercy you became one with us in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself up for us on the cross.
You make us alive together with him,
that we may rejoice in his presence and share his peace.

***By water and the Spirit
you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table:
for by grace we are saved, through faith.***

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.”

With this bread and this cup
we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.
***Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.***

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Make us one with him, one with each other,
and one in ministry in the world,
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.
Through your Son, Jesus Christ, in your holy church,
all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty,
now and for ever. ***Amen.***

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

LAM 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

Gracious God,
We thank you for feeding us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.
Through this holy meal, you have reminded us again
that Christ is with us, and we are not alone.
Now send us out, strengthened by your grace,
to love our neighbours, to seek justice,
and to walk humbly with you each day.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: Jesus Christ is waiting TiS 665

Jesus Christ is waiting,
waiting in the streets;
no-one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger,
fit to wait on you.

Jesus Christ is raging,
raging in the streets;
where injustice spirals
and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes
let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,
healing in the streets;

curing those who suffer,
touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.
Let my care be active,
healing just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,
dancing in the streets;
where each sign of hatred
he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.
Where good conquers evil
let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,
calling in the streets;
“Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet.”
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me;
I will follow you.

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BLESSING

As we leave today,
may you be blessed with a heart for listening
to the cries of the stranger,
to the weeping of your neighbour,
to the aching of the world.
May you take the cries, weeping and aching
that you hear and move them into action,
to support the movement of justice,
for each and every person around the world.

And 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 God's blessing (Benediction)

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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