



The Uniting Church in Australia

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

**We welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles,
We create a safe place for the community
We share the journey of life and faith.**

17th August 2025 @ 10am

Pentecost 10 - Proper 15

Caring for Community Faith that Bears Fruit

Isaiah 5:1–7; Psalm 80:1–2, 8–19; Hebrews 11:29—12:2; Luke 12:49–56

Leader: Dinah

(Deok Hee is on holiday)

Reflection: Dinah/Moira Laidlaw



For details and information about our church activities and The Kogarah Storehouse, check out the websites: kogarah.uca.org.au and <https://www.kogarahstorehouse.org.au/>

**For pastoral concerns, please contact Deok Hee on
0401 975 745.**

Scriptures

Isaiah 5:1–7

A well-loved vineyard is used as a metaphor to illustrate that the Israelites have failed to bear fruit and, therefore, will be allowed to be ruined. This metaphor is taken up in Matthew 20:1–16 to talk about Israel's treatment of Jesus.

Psalms 80:1–2, 8–19

The psalmist also uses the metaphor of the vineyard for Israel, which had grown large and prosperous but is now under threat. God is the only one responsible for the threat but is also the one who is able to save Israel.

Hebrews 11:29—12:2

The list of the faithful continues from last week and is widened to include groups of people whose actions demonstrated faith. There is also an acknowledgement that faithfulness is not always rewarded by the world and, indeed, is sometimes punished.

Luke 12:49–56

Jesus shocks the disciples by proclaiming that his coming will bring division. He also chastises them for having knowledge of the earth but failing to understand signs of divinity.

Theme Focus

Isaiah's metaphor of a vineyard that provides fruit when cared for and stories of faith recorded in the Letter to the Hebrews remind us that faith requires care, endurance, and action—even when the world resists it.

Word for the Day

This passage, often known as the 'Song of the Vineyard', begins like a love song. However, the song turns sour when the grapes fail. In the second half (vv. 4–6) the speaker actively destroys the vineyard for failing to produce good fruit. Verse 7 explains that the vineyard is Israel, which has failed to act justly or in righteousness. Therefore, God has destroyed the vineyard. Has the church in this country failed to act justly or in righteousness? Is this why the church might be seen to be dying? What is the good fruit that we should be producing, and how do we encourage it to grow?

Ideas for Reflection

- What does it mean for this passage to be a song? How do we read it differently than if we think of it as a poem? A prophecy? A parable?
- Notice how the grammar changes from third person (he/his) in verses 1–3 to first person (I/my) in the rest of this passage. Why do you think it changes? How does it affect the reader? Who is the he-him and the I-my? Are they the same person? Is this like 'asking for a friend'?
- The gardener doesn't blame the grapes for being sour. He gets angry at the gardener. This is a good analogy for people. There are people in our communities who are very sour; sometimes, they are angry, and sometimes they are abusive. This might be because they haven't been cared for. How do we keep people safe from abuse while still loving and looking out for the 'sour' person? How do we apply this metaphor to people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol? How do we apply this understanding to other traumatised peoples?
- In this passage from the Hebrew scriptures, God tears down the vineyard that has failed to bear fruit. A comparison passage might be Mark 11:12–25 where Jesus curses a fig tree or the parable of the absent landowner (Matt 21:33–41; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 20:9–16). How do these passages speak to each other? What new insights can we gather from considering them together?
- Is the land of Israel producing good fruit today? How might we understand this text in relation to the current situation between Israel and the Palestinians?



As President of the Uniting Church in Australia, I am compelled to speak with moral clarity, compassion, and a heart broken open by the suffering we are witnessing. We cannot remain silent while bodies are crushed by bombs, children starve, and our Palestinian siblings in Christ fear for their very existence. If we do not speak, even the stones will cry out.

With humility and repentance, we confess that our voice has not been clear or courageous in naming the immense and disproportionate suffering of Palestine. We lament our silences and hesitation. We know we cannot claim peace as our prayer if we have not named the injustices we see.

For more than seven decades, Palestinians have lived under the weight of occupation. On 7 October 2023, a horrific attack by Hamas militants in Israel claimed over 1,100 lives and saw 250 people taken hostage. Following this terrible violence, Israel unleashed a ferocious retaliation. For 19 long months the Palestinian people have endured merciless bombardment. Homes, hospitals, sacred places of worship, and centres of learning lie in ruins. Nearly two million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced. Medical workers, journalists, and humanitarian servants have been targeted and killed. Human rights abuses occur daily.

50,000 Palestinian lives – many of them women and children – have been stolen with unspeakable cruelty. For those who live, there is nowhere safe to go. We believe unequivocally that this desecration of human life is an outrage, a grievous wound in the heart of God.

The fragile hope of a ceasefire was shattered in March when Israeli military forces resumed their assault, sending a new wave of devastation across a traumatised and grieving people. Israel sealed off crossings into the Gaza Strip for over 10 weeks, cutting desperate people off from food, water, and medicine, and defying international law. Three weeks ago, the UN World Food Program announced all humanitarian and food supplies were exhausted. The situation is desperate. An avoidable and human-made famine is unfolding in full view of the world.

"To remain silent about the disproportionate suffering and long-standing oppression faced by Palestinians would be to deny the truth of what we see, and can never give us a just peace."

It is believed that 58 Israeli hostages continue to be held in Gaza, which is a great source of grief for the Jewish people and Jewish families. An unknown number of Palestinians, believed to be in the thousands, are imprisoned without charge in Israel under so-called administrative detention.

Violence is escalating in the West Bank, as settler attacks, military raids, mass displacements and arrests tear apart communities and lives. Injustices deepen in East Jerusalem, where threats to sacred spaces and freedom of worship strike at the heart of a city meant to be a home for many peoples, many faiths.

Our Christian siblings in Palestine plead: *"Why are you indifferent to our suffering? Do not remain silent."* Bound to them in Christ, we answer their call to unwavering solidarity. We stand with them in defending the dignity and presence of Palestinians in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We oppose any action or plan to annexe the Palestinian territories, and the now openly-stated intention to re-occupy Gaza and permanently displace the Palestinian population. As followers of Jesus, we cannot turn away while Palestinians face erasure from their homeland, their stories, their identity.

To leaders across the global community: you are standing at a moral crossroads. How much more suffering before you are compelled to act? You must take brave, principled action to end the violence which is an affront to humanity, uphold international law and insist upon the dignity and security of every person in the Holy Land.

As the Uniting Church, our longing remains the same as always: peace, true peace, in and between Palestine and Israel. In this, we grieve every life lost – Israeli and Palestinians – and reject all violence against

civilians. We reject all hatred – antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all that divides or dehumanises.

Yet we affirm there can be no peace without justice, and no future built on the rubble of military power or the forced erasure of a people. To remain silent about the disproportionate suffering and long-standing oppression faced by Palestinians would be to deny the truth of what we see, and can never give us a just peace. Lasting peace can only be found through the dismantling of occupation, self-determination, and the full restoration of dignity and security to every person in the Holy Land.

To leaders in the newly elected Australian Government, we repeat our calls to:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire and the uninhibited flow of humanitarian aid;
- Condemn the brutalities and atrocities which are being committed;
- End any remaining weapons exports to Israel and provide greater transparency over Australia's weapon exports;
- Urge the immediate release of all Israeli hostages, and all Palestinians held without charge or trial;
- Impose targeted sanctions on Israeli settlers responsible for serious human rights abuses against Palestinians;
- Support the International Court of Justice in its measures to prevent genocide;
- Do all it can to facilitate a meaningful and lasting peace.

To the beloved Uniting Church community: I know we hold diverse views on many issues. These words do not claim to represent each one, but arise from our long-held desire for justice, human dignity and human rights. We believe this is a moment not for cautious neutrality but moral

courage. We follow the crucified and risen Christ, who stands with the oppressed, weeps with the broken and rises with wounds still visible.

So let us lament. Let us pray. Let us lift our voices in advocacy. Let us educate ourselves and one another. Let us write to our leaders and join our voices with all who cry for justice. I encourage you to use the below litany of lament for Gaza in your worship, as we name what must be named and cry out for peace.

Let us be the Church God calls us to be – courageous and faithful in love and solidarity, so that all may know the peace, shalom, salaam of God.

Rev Charissa Suli President, Uniting Church in Australia (Delivered in May 2025)

Planning Ahead

- **August 17 – August 31 – Deok Hee on holiday**
- **August 31 (after church) Congregational meeting to consider the 2025-2026 budget and receive the report on our Life and Mission.**
- **September 7 till September 28 – Season of Creation**

Please pray for ...

The mission and ministry of our congregation and for our Minister, Deok Hee, and Wynne Cheng as they make links to the Chinese community.

Worship leaders; helpers, leaders, followers The Kogarah Storehouse and its many clients; Lala and staff and volunteers at the Storehouse. Dorothy and Godfrey and the work of LACLA. The team, parents and children in the Early Learning Centre.

Those who are sick, sad or lonely: We pray especially today for Dennis and Robyn Lyons, Rhonda Chamberlain and family; Prema and Priya, Denis and Dolly, Ngahua, Peter and Sue; Dinah; Ern Edwards; Jim Bird, Cindy, Dorothy, Sue B. For others whom we name in our hearts. Pray for the people of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine, especially the people of Gaza and Lebanon. The USA and the countries of Europe. Sudan, Thailand, Cambodia

Next Sunday

24th August 2025 @ 10am

Pentecost 11 - Proper 16

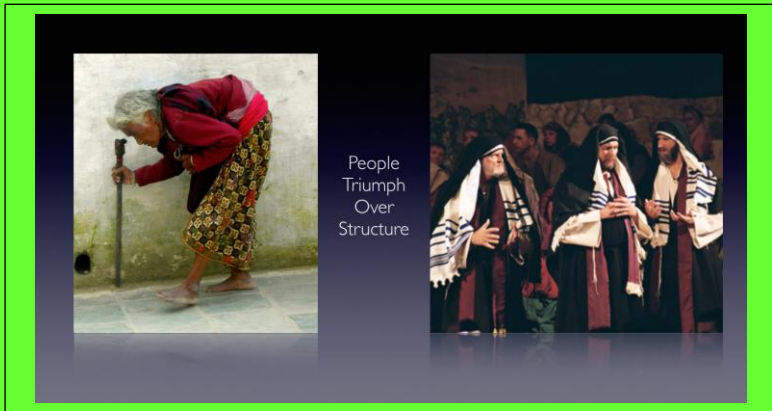
Call and Response

**Jeremiah 1:4–10; Psalm 71:1–6; Hebrews 12:18–29;
Luke 13:10–17**

Leader Sue

(Deok Hee is on holiday)

Reflection Sue



Church Council 2024-2025

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Richard Goodman

Sue Baglin

John Baglin (2027)

Robert M^cAlpine (2026)

Sue Baglin (2025)

Joshua Chang (2026)

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John Baglin (2026)

Bobbie Miller (2028)

Richard Goodman (2027)

Dorothy Makasa (2026)

Safe Church Contact Person

Richard Goodman