

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

26 October 2025

Pentecost 20

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:

As we gather, we acknowledge that we meet on the lands of the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation, the traditional owners who have tended and cared for this land since time immemorial. We pay our respects to elders past and present and commit to walking together seeking truth, justice, treaty and reconciliation.

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

Follow the way of God;

Live into the ways of justice and mercy.

Follow the way of Christ;

Love and forgive your neighbours as you are loved and forgiven.

Follow the way of the Spirit;

Use your gifts to bless others in the world and be blessed.

Come, worship our God,

Who leads us into the paths of righteousness.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we come into your presence with singing
we come, each one and all, with unique strengths and weaknesses;
together, your children.

Thank you for the creation, in your love,
of a space where we are accepted as we are,
where we can breathe, be honest, learn, and grow.

Thank you for meeting with us here.

Thank you for brothers and sisters in the faith.

You teach and empower us to live together,
to serve the gospel and change the world
in life that does not die, and love that does not end.

Loving God, thank you. Amen.

HYMN: Joyful, joyful, we adore you TiS152

Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you
opening to the sun above.

*Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.*

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.

*Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
singing bird and flowing fountain
call to praise you joyfully.*

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean-depth of happy rest.

You our Father, Christ our brother,

*all are yours who live in love;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to your joy above.*

PD; text, Henry Van Dyke

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***Forgiving God,
every minute of every day
the world asks us to compare ourselves with other people.
We confess that we give in to this temptation,
sometimes feeling worse but most often feeling better than others.
We ask you to forgive us.
May we dwell in your presence where each person and all people
reflect your love to one another and are satisfied. Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS *(Based on Psalm 65)*

God's promise to every generation is to know that God is there for us,
and we shall never be put to shame.

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: 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.

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS Psalm 65, Luke 18:9-14

Psalm 65

1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed, 2 O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come. 3 When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions. 4 Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple. 5 By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. 6 By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might. 7 You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples. 8 Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy. 9 You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. 10 You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. 11 You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. 12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow; the hills gird themselves with joy; 13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks; the valleys deck themselves with grain; they shout and sing together for joy.

Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves,

rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

REFLECTION

Today, we read the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18. Most often, this story is taught by comparing the Pharisee’s prayer with the tax collector’s prayer, asking which prayer God answers. But today, we will look at this story from a slightly different perspective. We will focus on one simple but powerful truth: “before God, we are all equal”. We say in our constitution that everyone is equal. But in real life, we know that’s not true. We are different in height, in intelligence, in abilities, in the opportunities we are given, in life expectancy, and even in moral character. We are not equal in who we are, or in who we can become. But there are some places in this world — not many, but a few — where people are truly equal. Or at least, there should be. In those places, small differences don’t matter. One example is the courthouse. In court, our social status, our wealth, our reputation — none of that should matter. That is part of what justice really means. Other places include the voting booth, or standing at the door of a public school. It is important to know where equality is expected, and where it is not. Mixing these up can have serious consequences.

Let me share a story. A few years ago, some ministers from the Uniting Church in Australia were invited to visit Korea as part of a cultural experience. One day, they were taken to a traditional large Korean public bathhouse. At first, they were completely shocked — they had to undress and sit fully naked in a huge hot pool with many strangers around them. You can imagine their feelings: heart pounding, palms sweaty, completely nervous, unsure where to sit, worried about what people might think, and thinking, “How am I going to do this?” Don’t worry — men went to the men’s side, and women to the women’s side. At first, every movement felt awkward. Every glance felt too personal. But slowly, as they sat there, surrounded by strangers, a surprising thing happened. The tension began to melt. The nervousness faded. They started to relax, to laugh quietly at themselves, and eventually, they felt completely free. In that moment, they realized something simple but profound: in this space, everyone was equal. No titles, no status, not even names mattered.

This is exactly what happens in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee had forgotten one of the few places where all are truly equal. It is easy to see differences in life — who has more money, who has a better job, who is more respected. Even in our faith, it is easy to think: “I am doing well. I am better than

some people. God must be pleased with me.” This is very human. It feels natural. But God’s kingdom is different. God does not measure us by what we have done or how we compare with others. In God’s eyes, we all begin on the same level. No one is higher. No one is lower. No one is better. No one is worse. Even the Pharisee, who seemed so faithful and proud, needed the same mercy that the tax collector prayed for. God’s grace does not depend on our scorecards. It depends on God’s love. And that is a beautiful thing to remember. The Pharisee had much to be proud of. He fasted, gave 10% of his income and 10% of his time and life to God, and prayed. He was honest, diligent, and faithful. The tax collector, on the other hand, was despised. Seen as a traitor. He worked for the Romans, took money from his own people, and was considered unclean. The Pharisee would never marry into his family. Yet it was the tax collectors — the ones who were hated and despised — who left the temple justified, forgiven, and at peace with God. Of course, living morally and faithfully is better than living sinfully. Going to church, following God’s ways — these are good things. In these ways, we are not equal. There are differences. But there is one place where all are completely equal. A place where there must be equality. That place is at the foot of the cross. The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector is not only about two men praying in the temple. It is about us — about how we see ourselves and how we see others before God. When we come before God, all our titles, all our achievements, all our failures fall away. In that holy presence, there is no “better” or “worse,” no “higher” or “lower.” There is only grace. There is only mercy. At the foot of the cross, we all stand on the same ground. The ground is level there. The Pharisee and the tax collector, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner — all are invited to kneel in the same place. And that is good news. Because if we are all equal in our need for mercy, we are also all equal in God’s love. Standing at the foot of the cross means standing before God. Here, there is no distinction, no privilege, no superiority. Only one prayer remains: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” We are all equal before God. And this truth is reflected in our church community. Our church statement is, “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 together.” Because before God, we are all equal — no matter our background, our story, or how different our lives may be. Here, everyone is valued, everyone is welcomed, and everyone can belong.

God’s kingdom calls us to act for justice — to care for the poor, to protect the weak, and to stand against violence and oppression. We see it in wars, in inequality, in bullying, and in the conflicts between those who have more and those who have less.

I have seen this in my own experience at Kogarah Storehouse, where our church has been serving the local community for over 35 years. Every Wednesday, I join in food packing with volunteers and staff, and I see people from all walks of life coming to collect food. Some look strong, some look weak, some appear well-dressed, others

come struggling. But I see them all equally. I welcome them all in the same way, I bless them all, and I remember that before God, every person is equal. Wherever there is injustice, we are called to remember that God values every life equally, and so should we.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, when we leave this place today, let us not look down on others, nor lift ourselves above anyone else. Let us walk humbly, seeking justice, showing mercy, and loving others as God loves us. Let us remember that every person we meet — no matter their background, culture, appearance, or story — is standing before God's mercy, just like us. May we live each day with that humble joy and courage, knowing that before God, we are all — deeply, beautifully, and equally — loved. Amen.

HYMN: All are welcome Seasons 9-8

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
All are welcome, all are welcome,

all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God,
We bring these gifts with thankful hearts.
Use them to share your love, care for those in need,
and bring hope to our community.
Bless what we offer and multiply it for your work.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Loving God,
sometimes we forget your presence.
Sometimes we think everything depends upon us,
and we know our own limitations.
Thank you for being present and for loving us.
Thank you for being present everywhere and loving all people.

Help us to see with new eyes, love with new hearts,
and serve you with joy and light.

We pray for a hurting world,
that people of every race, culture, and background
may know that they are valued and loved equally by you.
In places of conflict, inequality, and suffering,
help us to work for justice, to protect the weak,
and to care for all your children without favour or prejudice.
May your presence surround everyone,
so that all may experience your love, mercy, and peace as their home.

God of mercy and comfort,
we lift up to you those who are sick or in pain,
those in hospital or at home, and those waiting for healing or strength.
We remember them now in a moment of silent prayer...
(Silent prayer)

Surround them with your peace,
touch them with your healing love,
and give them hope in your presence.

We pray for our Kogarah Uniting Church,
all the leaders, members, and families,
that we may be open and welcoming to all who come within our doors.
Guide us in our relationships with each other,
within the church, within our families, and with our neighbours,
and draw us together in your fellowship of love, joy, and holiness.

Lord, we pray for all in this congregation, all who are here and away,
that they may be blessed and strengthened by your spirit.
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.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

INVITATION

Let us draw near to the holy table.
This is the table our Lord has prepared
for those who love him.

Jesus said,
"I am the bread of life;
Those who come to me shall not hunger,
and those who believe in me shall never thirst."

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.

We bless you for your continual love and care for every creature.

We praise you for forming us in your image
and calling us to be your people.

We thank you that you did not abandon us in our rebellion against your love,
but sent prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation.

Above all we thank you for sending Jesus, your Son,
to deliver us from the way of sin and death
by the obedience of his life,
by his suffering upon the cross,
and by his resurrection from the dead.

We praise you that he now reigns with you in glory and ever lives to pray for us.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit,
who leads us into truth, defends us in adversity,
and out of every people unites us into one holy church.

Therefore, with the whole company of saints
in heaven and on earth
we worship and glorify you, God most holy,
and we sing with joy.

***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 give thanks to God
that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, before he suffered,
gave us this memorial of his sacrifice until he comes again.

The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed,
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.

Eternal God,
let your Holy Spirit move in power over us
and over these earthly gifts of bread and wine,
that our sharing of them may be for us
the communion of the body and blood of Christ,
and that we may become one in him.
May his coming in glory find us
ever watchful in prayer, strong in truth and love,
and faithful in the breaking of the bread.
Then, at last, all peoples will be free, all divisions healed,
and with your whole creation we will sing your praise,
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

***Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours,
almighty Father, forever. 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

Loving God,
as we have received these gifts of bread and wine,

you have fed us with the spiritual food of the body
and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love,
and that we are members of his body.

***Renew us by your Holy Spirit,
unite us in the body of your Son,
and bring us with all your people
into the joy of your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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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.*

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BLESSING

Go and fight the good fight,
trusting that you can finish the race because God is with you.

May the grace of God,
deeper than our imagination;
the strength of Christ,
stronger than our need;
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
richer than our togetherness,
guide and sustain you today
and in all our tomorrows. 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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