



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.**

28th December 2025 @ 10am

**Christmas 1
Between Celebration and Precarity**

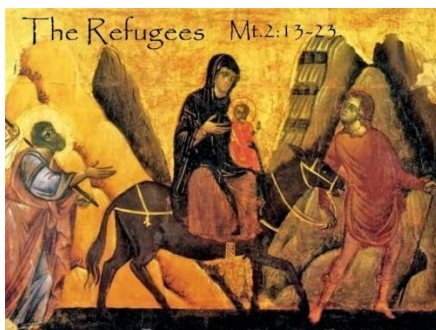
Leader Deok Hee

Reflection Deok Hee

Holy Communion Deok Hee

Isaiah 63:7–9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10–18.

Matthew 2:13–23



HAPPY NEW YEAR

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 from the Revised Common Lectionary

Isaiah 63:7–9

Located in the portion of Isaiah written after the return from exile in Babylon, this passage celebrates God's saving presence. At Christmas, Christians hear these words resonating in encounter with God's presence in the Christ-child.

Psalm 148

The whole of creation celebrates God in this psalm of praise. From elements of earth to human and other-than-human creatures, the psalmist calls all things to praise. In reading, we are called to join our praise of God with this vast community of creation.

Hebrews 2:10–18

This passage focuses on Jesus' humanity. In becoming human, Jesus is able to share the experience of other human beings and to offer compassion and help. At Christmas, this passage reminds us that Christians identify Jesus as God-in-flesh.

Matthew 2:13–23 is a challenging passage, especially in conversation with the other passages for the week. The story of Herod's ruthless killing of children highlights the fragility of human life and the presence of evil. Reading this passage, we remember those who live in fear: God is found among those who suffer.

Theme Focus

As we give thanks for God with us in the Christ-child, Matthew reminds us of Jesus' precarious beginnings, calling us to recognise such precarity in our own time and respond with care.

Word for the Day

Matthew 2:13–23 may be difficult to hear amidst the celebrations we often associate with Christmas in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. But the reading is honest about the horrors of the world. We hear the lengths that the powerful will go to when they feel threatened. We witness a family who must leave everything they know, hoping that God’s promise in a dream will be enough. We encounter the fear and trauma that remain even when the imminent danger has passed.

While we cannot assume that all who hear this passage are in a place of safety, the reading invites reflection on the perspectives from which we consider the world’s violence and anguish—whether it is Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Tuvaluan, communities affected by climate change, family violence in local neighbourhoods, or the experiences of First Peoples held in custody. These realities remind us that fear and trauma are ever-present, even when danger seems distant.

What, then, are we to do with Herod’s murder of children at Christmas? As we cherish the memory of God meeting us in a vulnerable child, it is important not to romanticise the experience of children in our world. Children are vulnerable. Children suffer. Many do not have an Egypt to escape to. God’s coming into our world and experiencing all this precarity is a sign to us of who this God is: the one who will never hold the world at arm’s length.

Ideas for Reflection

- What emotions or thoughts arise for you as you hear this story in Matthew? How do these feelings sit alongside celebrations of Christmas?
- What prayers or words and actions can you offer today or this week for vulnerable children?
- Joseph is faced with fear, uncertainty, and responsibility for a family under threat. If you were in his place, what, hopes, fears, or decisions might you hold? What story would you tell

Kogarah Storehouse Dates

The Storehouse will be closed from 22nd December 2025 till 21st January 2026 (first food distribution day)

In our final Advent 2025 devotional, (*from Common Grace*) Gershon Nimbalker shares how Christ's love breaks through and meets us in all of life's fracture

Love in the Cracks and Chaos

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

Revelation 21:1-5

As you read this, my wife and I will have just attempted the truly courageous act of parental optimism, the overnight red-eye with our three kids in tow. We are returning from my cousin's wedding, and booked the Christmas Eve red-eye because it was the cheapest option (i.e. nobody else is crazy enough to want it). The last time we braved a night flight, our then-seven-year-old vomited spectacularly, our five-year-old developed pressure headaches with accompanying cabin echoing screams, and our one-year-old spiked a fever mid-air.

Heaven, to me, would have been the simple joy of lying horizontally in my own bed - alone, silent, un-vomited on. And yet, even in that chaos, as much as part of me wanted escape, there was also no place I would rather have been. My daughter pressed against my chest in the dim cabin light finding what comfort I could offer. My son clutching my arm as I tried to soothe him and let them know it was going to be O.K. My wife and I catching each other's eye with that mix of exhaustion and affection only parents at 3 a.m. can understand.

Little cracks. Small breakthroughs of love right in the middle of the mess.

Revelation 21 is born in a chaos far less trivial than my airborne apocalypse. John doesn't receive this vision from a quiet retreat but from the margins of empire, watching a world unravel. Most scholars place the writing of Revelation at around 90-95CE, during the rule of the Roman emperor Domitian. The churches of Asia-Minor receiving John's words lived in a world of authoritarian rule and cult worship of Caesar, amidst a system and empire propped up by propaganda, military expansion, political violence and exploitation. Many were feeling crushed by the world around them, uncertain of their future. And into that darkness comes a glimpse of something breathtaking:

A new heaven and a new earth,

God dwelling with us,

Every tear wiped away,

All things made new.

The promise of a cosmic renewal — vast, sweeping, unimaginable

But one that begins with presence.

With nearness.

With God coming close.

A God that draws us in close, wipes away our tears, and assures us it's all going to be O.K.

Love breaking through.

Which is why this vision sits so beautifully on Christmas Day.

For today we remember that the renewal of all things doesn't begin at the end of time, but in the middle of it - in a small, crowded home in Bethlehem, in the fragile cry of a newborn, in Jesus taking on flesh and entering our chaos, not to escape it, but to transform it from within.

And in a world marked by violence, poverty, exploitation, injustice and brokenness we need that promise as much as we ever have. We wrestle with economic systems that harm people and our planet, a society that too often has stepped away from reconciliation rather than toward it, political systems that punish rather than protect those most in need, including our children and asylum seekers, and of course, the brokenness within our own homes and within ourselves.

We need the Jesus who shows up in the cracks.

We need the Christ who draws near.

We need the love that is breaking through.

In the tenderness we show to our children at 3am.

In courageous acts of compassion.

In communities seeking justice.

In the sound of laughter, and moments of hope restored and change that has come.

In the surprising moments, both small and world changing, where God's renewal bursts through the fractures of the world as it is. Moments that so often occur when we choose to follow the one that is love incarnate.

After our all-night Christmas Eve flight, I'm sure the chaos of the world will be feeling all too present today. But whatever state we're in, bleary-eyed, overtired, and possibly still carrying the faint scent of cabin calamity, I know I'll be holding onto this truth:

Love has come.

Love is near.

And one day Love will make all things new.



GERSHON NIMBALKER

Gershon Nimbalker is the National Director of Common Grace and founder of Sojourners Social Change Consultants. With over 15 years of experience in advocacy, policy, and research, he has led numerous grassroots movements campaigning on social justice issues. Gershon lives on Awabakal Country in Newcastle, NSW, with his young family.

Shared From [Jamberoo Abbey](#)

Christmastide and Feast of St John

The Coming of Light

Even this late it happens:

the coming of love, the coming of light.

You wake and the candles are lit as if by themselves,

stars gather, dreams pour into your pillows,

sending up warm bouquets of air.

Even this late the bones of the body shine

and tomorrow's dust flares into breath.

- Mark Strand

Continued blessings of "the coming of love, the coming of light..." to everyone!

Image ~ Cosmic Birth/Sacred Moment in Time by Mary Southard csj



2025 Main Christmas Message from Rev Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church in Australia

As Christmas comes around, many of us are carrying mixed emotions – moments of joy and moments that feel heavy.

This year has stretched us with fires, floods, rising costs, conflicts overseas, and grief that has touched many homes.

And into all of this, the Christmas story speaks again: “Do not be afraid. For today, a Saviour is born”.

Christmas is the story of God choosing to come close, born as a child into the world we know too well.

As John’s Gospel says, “The Word became flesh and lived among us” and “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”.

That is why Christmas still matters.

And I’ve seen that light across Australia and across this region, in the red dust of Oodnadatta, when an Aboriginal community opened a church 40 years in the making – faith and promise fulfilled.

In the celebration that wove together Australia and Tonga – strengthening our diplomatic ties and our Pacific family bonds.

In Johannesburg, where churches from across the world stood together for climate justice.

And in people of all ages and backgrounds who even through struggle and loss, keep showing up for one another.

Different places, different stories – but the same light, Christ’s light.

That light doesn’t ignore the darkness, it transforms it, and it calls us to compassion, generosity and justice.

So, this Christmas, bring that light into your homes, your neighbourhoods, and the conversations that matter.

And sometimes the smallest light, a kind word, a shared meal, a moment of courage can change everything.

May the Christ child, the God with us, steady your heart, soften our world, and lead us into a new year of peace, courage and hope.

Every blessing for Christmas and for 2026.

President

Rev Charissa Suli

Rev Charissa Suli is the 17th President of the Uniting Church in Australia. As President, she is the spiritual leader and encourager of the Church and the Church's national spokesperson. Rev Suli stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration. Elected in 2021, her installation as President in July 2024 was a historic milestone as she became the youngest person, the first person of non-Anglo-Celtic background, and the first of Pacifica heritage to hold this national leadership position.



Planning Ahead

- **January 4th 2026 We celebrate Epiphany**
- **January 8th 2026 Kogarah Church Council @ 4pm in person at Kogarah UC to discuss Life and Witness report suggestions**

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 and Godfrey, - For members of the Jewish community who continue to mourn. 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. The people of South-East Asia, especially Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia plus Sri Lanka in this time of devastating floods. Those recovering from the catastrophic apartment fires in Hong Kong.

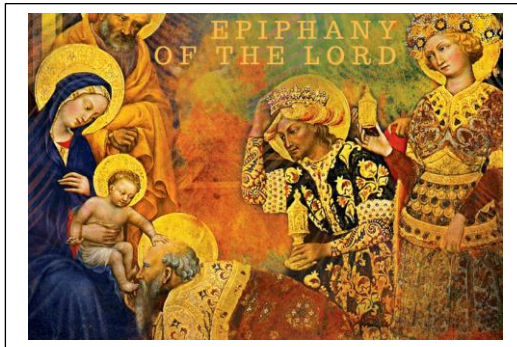
Next Sunday

4th January 2026 @ 10am

**Epiphany Sunday
Between Celebration and Precarity**

**Leader Robert
Reflection Deok Hee**

Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 72, Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6, and Matthew 2:1-12



Church Council 2025-2026

***Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Councillors***

**Richard Goodman
Sue Baglin
John Baglin (2027)
Robert M'Alpine (2026)
Sue Baglin (2026)
Joshua Chang (2026)**

Elders

**John Baglin (2026)
Bobbie Miller (2028)
Richard Goodman (2027)
Dorothy Makasa (2026)**

Culture of Safety Contact Person

Richard Goodman