

## KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

28 December 2025

Christmas 1

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 the Biddegal people of the Eora nation, the traditional owners of the land in which we gather. We offer respect to their elders, past and present. We pray for and work towards 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

The psalmist says: ***praise God!***  
From the heavens: ***praise God!***  
From the depths: ***praise God!***  
For God's presence: ***praise God!***  
For the Christ-child: ***praise God!***  
In our worship: ***praise God!***

### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

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

## OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God,  
we thank you for bringing us together  
on this first Sunday after Christmas  
and on the final Sunday of the year 2025.  
As we gather, quiet our hearts and open our minds.  
Help us to remember your faithfulness in the year that has passed  
and to trust your presence in the days ahead.  
Be with us as we worship today.  
Renew our hope, strengthen our faith, and draw us closer to you.  
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

**HYMN:** Joy to the world TIS 268

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
let earth receive its king;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;  
let us our songs employ;  
while fields and streams, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

PD; words: Isaac Watts

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## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God-with-us,  
when we consider the world, we see much beauty.

For the times when we do not wonder at creation,  
***forgive us.***

When we consider the world, we see much pain.

For the times when in our joy we do not notice another's pain,  
***forgive us.***

Through your Spirit, you are a companion to our suffering,  
teach us also to walk with others in their pain.

In the name of Christ, we pray. ***Amen.***

## **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

Hear these words from Isaiah 40,  
'Comfort, comfort, my people, says your God.'

May today and each day you know God's comfort, peace and consolation.

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 lift your name on high P&W 736

Lord, I lift your name on high;  
Lord, I love to sing your praises.  
I'm so glad you're in my life;  
I'm so glad you came to save us.

*You came from heaven to earth to show the way,  
from the earth to the cross, my debt to pay.  
From the cross to the grave,  
from the grave to the sky;  
Lord, I lift your name on high.*

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The Service of the Word

**BIBLE READINGS** Isaiah 63:7–9, Matthew 2:13–23

**Isaiah 63:7–9**

7 I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 8 For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully," and he became their savior 9 in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

### **Matthew 2:13–23**

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." 16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. 17 Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more." 19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

### **REFLECTION**

Before we do anything else, let me ask you a simple question. How was your Christmas? Some of you probably had a wonderful time. Family gatherings, good food, laughter, maybe even a bit too much food. Some of you travelled. Some of you rested. And some of you might be thinking, "Well... Christmas was nice, but also a bit tiring." That's usually how it goes, isn't it? Christmas is joyful, but it's also busy. Beautiful, but sometimes exhausting. And now, here we are—the first Sunday after Christmas. Life is slowly returning to normal. As you all know, today is the last Sunday of 2025—a moment when we look back on the year that has passed. Some of you may say it was a good year. Some may say it was hard. Some of you might feel a mixture of both. This year, some of us have experienced joy—family gatherings, celebrations, moments of laughter. Some of us have faced challenges—illness, stress, or personal losses. This year also reminded us that the world we live in is not always safe or secure. When we look

at the news throughout the year, we see it again and again. We have witnessed violent conflict continue in places like Ukraine, where fighting and destruction have persisted and affected countless lives. We have seen deep and ongoing struggles in the Middle East, including intense clashes between nations and armed groups. We have seen long-standing civil conflict in Sudan continue to disrupt families and communities. And in Southeast Asia, border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia forced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes this year. These are only a few examples—not even the whole list of places where people have faced fear, displacement, and loss. When we add to this the tragedy of local violence, including shootings like the one we saw at Bondi Beach, the reality becomes clear: 2025 was a year marked by a world still deeply affected by violence, insecurity, and human suffering.

And as we reflect on those realities, we come to our reading today from Matthew, which may feel surprisingly relevant. We often think of the Christmas story as warm and peaceful—angels singing, shepherds kneeling, a stable filled with quiet awe. But in Matthew 2, we see something very different. An angel appears to Joseph and says, “Get up. Take the child and his mother, and flee.” Jesus, still a baby, is already in danger. Herod, threatened by this newborn king, orders the deaths of all boys under the age of two. Take a moment to really think about those children—innocent lives cut short. Imagine their families, their parents, their relatives—what shock, grief, and fear they must have felt. Try to feel even a little of that weight, and let it remind us of the vulnerability that exists in our world, both then and now. This story is unsettling. It is frightening. It reflects a world where powerful people act out of fear, and innocent lives are put at risk. And it feels all too familiar to us, doesn’t it? We have seen headlines about war and displacement. We have seen families forced to leave their homes. We have seen violence claimed in the name of security. In many ways, this ancient story feels like today’s news. The names have changed, but the reality—fear, power, and the suffering of the innocent—remains.

So where is God in all of this? Here is the heart of the gospel: God does not stay distant. God comes near. God enters the very danger and uncertainty we know all too well. In Jesus, God chooses not to watch from afar, but to enter our world—not in power and dominance, but as a vulnerable child. Joseph and Mary don’t solve every problem. They don’t make everything safe. But they do what they can. They protect life. They respond with care. And that is significant. Let me share a simple story from my own experience. A few months ago, while I was getting ready to attend a table tennis gathering after Sunday service, a homeless couple approached me. At first glance, it was clear that life had been very hard for them. I asked them, “How can I help you?” They didn’t ask for money. They just wanted someone to listen, and to pray for them. So I guided them to a quiet place, and we spent some time together. They shared their struggles, their fears, and their tears. I had nothing material to offer, but I could listen, we could mourn together, and we could even share moments of hope. And we prayed together. They thanked me, saying, “Thank you for praying for us, and

thank you for listening to our story,” before they left. It was not heroic. It was not dramatic. But it mattered. And that is exactly what God shows us in Jesus. God enters the fragile, the fearful, the uncertain—and says, “I am with you.” Not from a distance, but up close. And just as I was able to be present with that couple, God calls each of us to be present in the world—especially where fear, uncertainty, and suffering exist. Have you ever heard of the “Free Hugs” movement? It started years ago with people holding signs in busy streets, offering a simple embrace to strangers. It’s amazing to see how a five-second hug can transform someone’s face from tension to peace. Psychologists tell us that a sincere hug lowers stress hormones and creates a sense of safety. It tells the heart, “You are not alone.” As I prepared for today, I imagined God giving each of you a “Holy Hug” for the year 2025. Think of the moments this year when you felt like giving up, or when life felt like a stormy sea. In those moments, even when you couldn’t see him, God’s invisible arms were wrapped around you. God’s presence was there—quiet, steadfast, and close.

So what does that mean for us, as we look back on 2025? We cannot stop every war. We cannot prevent every tragedy. We cannot make every child safe. But we can respond with care. We can notice vulnerability. We can pray. We can speak up for the powerless. We can comfort. We can walk alongside those who are hurting. Small acts of care matter—because they reflect the very way God chose to come into this world. And here is the hope: Jesus’ story does not end with danger and flight. Jesus grows. Jesus lives. And God’s work continues. What seems fragile does not stop God’s purpose. God is with us through uncertainty, through fear, through the complexities of life. As we leave this year behind and enter a new one, may we remember this truth: In a world filled with uncertainty, fear, and brokenness, God comes close—and calls us to walk with others in love. This is what it means to follow Jesus. This is what hope looks like. Even in a world filled with hardship, difficulty, and events we cannot understand, this is why we are called to live with hope—trusting that God is with us and guiding us every step of the way. Amen.

#### **HYMN: Star-Child   Seasons 1-31**

Star-Child, earth-Child, go-between of God,  
love Child, Christ Child, heaven’s lightning rod,  
This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone,  
everyone alive!

Street child, beat child, no place left to go,  
hurt child, used child, no one wants to know,  
This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone,  
everyone alive!

Grown child, old child, memory full of years,  
sad child, lost child, story told in tears,  
This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone,  
everyone alive!

Spared child, spoiled child, having, wanting more,  
wise child, faith child, knowing joy in store,  
This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone,  
everyone alive!

Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,  
down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine,  
This year, this year, let the day arrive  
when Christmas comes for everyone,  
everyone alive!

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

God-with-us,  
may these gifts and our lives reflect your gift of life  
and work for justice in the world.  
For the sake of the Christ-child  
and for all who continue to live in vulnerability. Amen.

## **PPT PRENSENTATION 2025**

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

## **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

Merciful God,  
There are many who today long for consolation.  
There are many who carry wounds in their hearts.  
There are many who continue to grieve.  
***May they know you are with them,  
and may we all be vessels of consolation.***

Gracious God,

There are many today who seek salvation.

There are many who long to know truth.

There are many who desire wisdom.

***May those who seek find the mystery of God,  
and may we all be willing to walk beside them.***

Loving God,

There are many today who are waiting.

There are many who long for revelation.

There are many who hope for an answer to their prayers.

***May all who are with us today,  
and those who we remember in our hearts  
and carry in our minds,  
know the peace that passes understanding  
and find rest in your loving goodness.***

Let us take a moment of silence to remember and pray  
for those in our church who are lonely or struggling with illness.

*(Silence)*

Give our brothers and sisters your healing and comfort.

Pour out the warmth of your love upon them

and grant them peace today.

***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**

This is the Lord's table.

Our Saviour invites those who trust him  
to share the feast which he has prepared.  
Jesus said, "I am the bread of life.  
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."  
Come. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

**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.***

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**

### **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

Gracious God,  
thank you for this Holy Communion  
and for your presence with us.  
Strengthen us to live in your love,  
to serve others with compassion,  
and to walk in hope and faith every day.

May your Spirit guide us  
as we go from this place,  
bringing hope, peace, and joy to the world around us.  
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

### The Sending Forth of the People of God

#### HYMN: Lord of the Dance TiS 242

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem I had my birth:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.*

I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn’t follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,  
they came with me and the dance went on:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.*

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,

and they left me there on a cross to die:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.*

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;  
it’s hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I’d gone;  
but I am the dance and I still go on:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.*

They cut me down and I leap up high,  
I am the life that will never, never die;  
I’ll live in you if you’ll live in me:  
“I am the Lord of the Dance,” said he:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
“I am the Lord of the dance,” said he;  
“and I’ll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I’ll lead you all in the dance,” said he.*

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## BLESSING

At Christmas, we remember,  
**God is with us!**  
In our joys we remember,  
**God is with us!**  
In the world’s suffering, we remember,  
**God is with us!**  
So let us share in each other’s joys and sufferings.  
Go now and seek peace and justice in 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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