

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
11 January 2026
First Sunday after the Epiphany
Baptism of Jesus

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 meet today, we acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation, who have been custodians of these lands, waters and skies since time immemorial. We give thanks for their stewardship, and pay respect to their elders—past, present, and future.

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

Come, all who are searching for light.

We come to worship the God who reveals his love.

Come, all who are tired and thirsty for hope.

We come to meet Jesus, who stands with us.

At the Jordan River, Jesus was baptized, and God's voice was heard.

"This is my beloved Son."

Today, we gather to remember his baptism
and to renew our own journey of faith.

We open our hearts to God's grace.

Let us worship the living God, present with us now.

With joy and gratitude, we worship God together. Amen.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God,

We come before you with grateful hearts.

Thank you for calling us into your presence today.

As we remember the baptism of Jesus,

help us to remember who we are — your beloved children.

Open our hearts to your grace, open our lives to your love,
and lead us in your way.

May this time of worship draw us closer to you
and closer to one another. Amen.

HYMN: All creatures of our God and King TiS 100 (Verses 1, 2, 3 and 7)

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
alleluia, alleluia!

O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Swift-rushing winds that are so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
Fresh-rising morn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice:
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
alleluia, alleluia!

O fire, so masterful and bright,
providing us with warmth and light,
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

PD; Based on Laudato sia Dio mio Signore the 'Canticle of the Sun' of Francis of Assisi 1182–1226
by William Henry Draper 1855–1933 alt.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

*God of grace,
you have given us Jesus,
the light of the world,
but we choose darkness
and cling to things that hide the brightness of your love.
Immersed in ourselves, we have not risen to new life.
Baptize us with your Spirit,
that, forgiven and renewed,
we may preach your Word to the nations
and tell of your glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ,
our Lord and our light forever. Amen.*

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

The good news is that God has redeemed us in and through Jesus –
who came 'to give his life a ransom for many'. (Mark 10:45)
Friends, believe the gospel: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

PEACE

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

HYMN: Jesus loves me, this I know TiS 229

Jesus loves me, this I know,
and the Bible tells me so;
little ones to him belong,
in his love we shall be strong.

(Refrain)

*Yes, Jesus loves me,
yes, Jesus loves me,
yes, Jesus loves me,
the Bible tells me so.*

Jesus loves me, this I know,
As he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee,
saying, "Let them come to me."
(Refrain)

Jesus loves me, still today,
walking with me on my way,
wanting as a friend to give
light and love to all who live.
(Refrain)

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Isaiah 42:1–9

1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his teaching. 5 Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: 6 I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 8 I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise

to idols. 9 See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Matthew 3:13–17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

REFLECTION

Today is the First Sunday after Epiphany. And in the church calendar, this Sunday is also known as the Baptism of Jesus Sunday. So today, I would like to share with you the story of Jesus’ baptism — and what this story means for our lives. It is a simple story, but it is also a very beautiful and powerful story. Because in this story, we discover not only who Jesus is, but also who we are invited to become.

Baptism is a word we hear often in church, but sometimes we don’t really stop and ask, “What does baptism actually mean?” And “Why do we do it?” In the Bible, baptism is closely connected with repentance. John the Baptist did not speak softly. He cried out in the wilderness, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” He was calling people to turn back to God. To change their hearts. To change their direction. And the Bible tells us, “People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea, confessing their sins, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.” Baptism was a sign of a new beginning. Leaving the old life behind. Choosing a new direction. That makes sense, doesn’t it? People who knew they had failed. People who knew they needed forgiveness. They came and were baptized. But then we come to today’s story. And suddenly we are faced with a strange question. Why was Jesus baptized? Jesus had no sin. He did not need to repent. He did not need forgiveness. So why would Jesus step into the same water with the same people who were confessing their sins? That question invites us to look more closely. And as we do, we begin to see something beautiful. Jesus did not stand above us. He stood with us. Jesus did not watch people from a distance. He did not stay clean while others felt dirty. He did not stay safe while others felt ashamed. Instead, he stepped into the same water. He stood in the same river. He placed himself among the people who were broken, tired, and searching for God. This is who Jesus is. His baptism was not about his sin. It was about his love. It was about his humility. It was about his decision to walk our road with us. When Jesus was baptized, he was saying, “I am not afraid of your story. I am not ashamed of your weakness. I am willing to stand where you

stand.” And that is why baptism matters for us too. Baptism is not about being perfect. It is about being willing. Willing to turn. Willing to begin again. Willing to walk with Jesus.

Let me share a story from my own life. In Korea, every young man had to serve in the military for 3 years. It did not matter who you were before — good people, bad people, people with broken pasts, people full of regret. Everyone wore the same uniform. Among them were people who had been studying law. Some had lived as gang members. Some already had doctor degrees. Some had just finished high school. Different stories. Different backgrounds. Different futures. But in the army, we all stood in the same line, wore the same clothes, and carried the same weight. Life in the army was hard. No freedom. No comfort. Many young men felt lost and empty. And in that difficult place, many people began to look for God. Because life was so hard and so restricted, Sunday became a very special day. On Sundays, people went to church. Some went because they were truly searching for God. Some went because it was the only quiet place. Some went because they could rest. Some even went just to sleep during the service. After the service, there were snacks. And honestly, some people came for the snacks too. But in that simple space, something beautiful still happened. Some people met God. Some people were comforted. Some people felt hope for the first time in a long time. And slowly, quietly, God was working in their hearts. I will never forget that day. We gathered on the parade ground — hundreds, even thousands of young soldiers standing together. There was no time to baptize each person one by one. So the chaplain took a fire hose, sprayed water over the crowd, and said, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And those young men — strong on the outside, but broken and searching on the inside — they said together, “Amen.” Then the chaplain shouted, “From this day on, the sign of the cross is upon you!” And all the soldiers answered with one voice, “Hallelujah! Amen!” Some were crying. Some were smiling. Some were silent. But all of them knew: Something new was beginning. They did not suddenly become perfect. Their lives did not suddenly become easy. But they knew they were no longer alone.

That is what baptism is. Not a reward for good people. Not a ceremony for perfect people. But a beginning for people who are ready to turn, and ready to trust God. Baptism is not the end of our story. It is the beginning. Baptism does not mean, “I have arrived.” It means, “I am starting a new journey.” It does not say, “I am perfect.” It says, “I need grace.” When we are baptized, we are not saying we will never fail again. We are saying we want to walk in a new direction — with Jesus. We go into the water not to prove ourselves, but to trust ourselves to God. And just like Jesus came out of the water, we also come out with a new identity. Not because we are strong, but because we are loved. Not because we deserve it, but because God calls us his children.

Sisters and brothers in Christ! So today, we must ask ourselves: What about us? There are still many people like those young soldiers. People who are tired. People who feel lost. People who carry heavy stories. People who look strong on the outside, but are quietly searching for hope. And Jesus does not ask us to judge them. He does not ask us to fix them. He does not ask us to stand above them. He asks us to go to them. In Matthew 28, Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This is not just a command. It is an invitation. An invitation to walk into people's lives. To share hope. To share grace. To share a new beginning. People today are still standing in difficult places. And God is still looking for someone to stand with them. So church, let us be a community that does not keep the gospel for ourselves. Let us be a community that goes, that loves, that invites, that baptizes, and that walks together. Because baptism is not the end of the story. It is the beginning. And God is still writing beautiful new beginnings through us. 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?

(Refrain)
*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?
(Refrain)

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?
(Refrain)

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God,
We offer these gifts to you,
not to earn your love,
but in thanksgiving for your abundant grace.
Bless these offerings,
and use them to bring hope, comfort, and your light to all who are in need.
We give in faith, and we give in joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Gracious and loving God,
We bring before you the needs of our world,
trusting in your compassion and mercy.
Lord, we pray for all those impacted by conflict and violence,
for families torn apart by war,
where people suffer the loss of home, safety, and loved ones.
May your peace come, and your justice roll forward.

We remember those affected by hunger and displacement,
especially in regions where children and families lack enough food and shelter.
Comfort the weary, strengthen the weak,
and grant relief to all who cry out in need.

We lift up the communities facing devastating natural disasters — the floods that have swept through parts of Africa and South Asia,

displacing thousands and destroying homes;
the wildfires and increasing bushfire risks here in Victoria and across Australia,
as seasons of heat and drought challenge the land and its people;
and the extreme weather events that remind us of our fragile place in creation.

Lord, we pray for those who struggle with physical and emotional suffering,
for those experiencing anxiety, loneliness, or mental distress,
especially in times of crisis when hope feels distant.

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.

God of mercy,
pour out your Spirit upon us,
that we might be instruments of your peace,
offering hope where there is despair,
light where there is darkness,
and life where there is suffering.
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

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."

Come, let us take this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ
in remembrance that he died for us,
and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: You are holy TiS 753

You are holy, you are whole.
You are always ever more than we ever understand.
You are always at hand.
Blessed are you coming near;
blessed are you coming here
to your church in wine and bread,
raised from soil, raised from dead.

*You are holy, you are wholeness,
you are present, let the cosmos praise you, Lord!
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, hallelujah, our Lord!*

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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 give you thanks, O God,
for making your love evident
since the very beginning of time
when you spoke the word
which replaced the darkness of chaos
with life-giving light.

A light which has nurtured generations of people,
and plants and creatures, great and small.
A light which also revealed the fear and powerlessness
caused by corrupt and evil actions.
And so you spoke the Word which would once
and for all dispel the darkness of chaotic lives.

Through your love for the world
the Word became flesh and lived among us
full of grace and truth.
The angels caroled glory to you in the highest heavens
and peace to all people on earth, and we join with them
and with all people to praise your holy name:

***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.***

Holy God,
as the travelers with their treasures were overwhelmed
with joy on finding Jesus,
so we also are overwhelmed on finding out
the depth of his love for us.
For Jesus showed just how beloved we are to him,
by loving us and giving himself for us.

On that night when he gave himself up for us,
as he sat at the table and broke bread with his friends, he said:
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."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Send the power of your Holy Spirit
upon these gifts of bread and wine, O God,
that we may experience the presence of the Word-
made-flesh – Jesus Christ.

Breathe your Spirit in us
that we may be one body with him –
living out his ministry in the world
today and every day.
This we pray in Jesus' name. 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

Let us pray.
Gracious God,
We thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of Christ,
for nourishing our souls and strengthening our faith.
May this holy meal remind us of your love,
and may your Spirit empower us
to walk in the way of Jesus.

Help us to shine your light in the world,
to serve those in need,
and to share your grace with all we meet.
We go from this table renewed,
filled with hope, courage, and peace.
In Jesus' name, we pray. 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.

(Refrain)
*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.
(Refrain)

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.
(Refrain)

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BLESSING

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts, transform our lives,
and brighten the world.

And the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
rest upon you always. Amen.

SENDING SONG: May You Find Peace Seasons 7-26

May you find peace,
may you find hope,
may you find joy this day.
May you find love,
may you find rest
here in this place together.

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