

## KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

29 March 2026

Palm/Passion Sunday

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 together in this time and place, we acknowledge the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation who have walked, lived, and told stories on this land for thousands of years. We honour their Elders, past and present, and their deep listening to Country. As Lent invites us to bring our whole selves before God—with our loss, longing, and fragile hope—may we commit to truthful listening and renewed relationship with First Peoples.

### 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, followers of Christ, wave your branches high!

***Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in God's name!***

Come, travellers on the road of sorrow and hope.

***We come, following the One who will not turn away.***

Come, hearts heavy with the cost of love.

***We come to walk with Jesus, from celebration to cross, trusting love to lead us through.***

### LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

***God is always here***

God is with us

***God is always with us***

**HYMN:** Hosanna, hosanna TiS 724

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!

Lord we lift up your name

with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Lord we lift up your name

with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Glory to the King of kings!

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## **OPENING PRAYER & PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God,

As we gather here today, we join the crowds of Jerusalem  
in shouting 'Hosanna!' to our King.

We thank you for the triumphant entry of your Son,  
Jesus Christ, and for the hope he brings to our world.

As we wave our palm branches and lift our voices in praise,  
open our hearts to follow him—not just in moments of victory,  
but also on the way to the Cross.

May this service be a true reflection of our love and devotion to you.

Yet, Lord, we confess that our hearts often fail to reflect your love.

While our lips sing 'Hosanna,' our lives often deny your reign.

Forgive us for the times we have turned away from your path  
and chosen our own comfort over your cross.

In your mercy, wash us clean and lead us faithfully through this Holy Week.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news: Christ's compassion never fails.

Even our betrayals are met with his mercy.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

***Thanks be to God.***

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

***And also with you.***

**HYMN:** Make way P&W 449

1. Make way, make way for Christ the King in splendour arrives.

Fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

For the King of kings (men) – *For the King of kings (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

And let his Kingdom in. (together)

2. He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free.

The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see.

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

For the King of kings (men) – *For the King of kings (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

And let his Kingdom in. (together)

3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh,  
with laughter, joy and royal crown He'll beautify.

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

For the King of kings (men) – *For the King of kings (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

Make way (men) – *make way (women)*

And let his Kingdom in. (together)

4. We call you now to worship Him as Lord of all  
To have no gods before him, their thrones must fall.  
Make way (men) – *make way (women)*  
Make way (men) – *make way (women)*  
For the King of kings (men) – *For the King of kings (women)*  
Make way (men) – *make way (women)*  
Make way (men) – *make way (women)*  
And let his Kingdom in. (together)

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The Service of the Word
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## BIBLE READINGS

### **Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29**

1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.” 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. 21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. 23 This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. 27 The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. 28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. 29 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

### **Matthew 21:1–11**

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” 4 This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: 5 “Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that

followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” 10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” 11 The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

## **MAKING PALM CROSS**

### **REFLECTION**

Loving God,  
Thank you for this Palm Sunday.  
As we begin this Holy Week, please quiet our hearts.  
Open our ears to hear your Word  
and our eyes to see your truth.  
May your Holy Spirit lead us today.  
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

For the past few weeks during Lent, I’ve been leading two very special Bible studies. On Fridays, I’ve been meeting with our faithful church members. We’ve been diving deep into the Word together. But on Tuesdays, I’ve been meeting with a new group —our Chinese friends who don't know much about God yet. They are just starting their journey of faith, asking, 'Who is this Jesus?' It has been such a joy to share the same stories with both groups. In our studies, we met some "superstars" of the Bible. We talked about the paralyzed man—the one whose four friends were so desperate to help him that they climbed a roof and made a hole in it just to drop him down to Jesus. We talked about Zacchaeus, the short man who climbed a tree like a child just to see Jesus passing by. And we talked about the Samaritan woman at the well, who went to get water in the heat of the day and found the "Living Water" instead. Usually, when we hear these stories, we talk about their faith. We say, "Wow, look at the friends’ hard work!" or "Look at Zacchaeus’ courage!" But as we studied together, we realized something important. We were looking at the supporting actors, but we almost missed the Real Star. Think of it like this: Imagine you go to a famous restaurant in Sydney—maybe a very trendy place in Surry Hills or the CBD. You wait in line for two hours. Finally, you get inside and you eat. When you go home, your friend asks, "How was the restaurant?" And you say, "Oh, the people waiting in line were so stylish! The guy in front of me had great shoes, and the lady behind me had a cool haircut! It was amazing to watch them for two hours!" Wait... what about the food? You went there for the food! In the Bible, the "food"—the Real Star—is always Jesus. Who was already standing under that roof, waiting for the paralyzed man to fall? Jesus. Who knew Zacchaeus was in that tree and called his name before he said a word? Jesus. Who walked a long, tired way to the well just to wait for that one woman? Jesus. Jesus is the one who plans the meeting. He is the one who welcomes us. He is the real hero.

Now, let's look at today's story in Matthew 21. It's a parade! It's Palm Sunday! Jesus is entering Jerusalem. The streets are crowded. People are shouting, "Hosanna! Save us!" They are putting their coats on the road like a red carpet. Think about a Red Carpet today. We see them at the Oscars in Hollywood or the Grammy Awards. What do we see there? We see celebrities arriving in shiny, black limousines. They are wearing thousand-dollar suits and sparkling diamond dresses. Thousands of cameras are flashing, and everyone is shouting, 'Look over here! Who are you wearing?' Everything is about power, money, and looking expensive. On the first Palm Sunday, the people in Jerusalem were trying to make a Red Carpet for Jesus. The streets were crowded. People were shouting, 'Hosanna! Save us!' They were taking off their own coats and laying them on the dusty road like a royal carpet. But look at the 'Celebrity' on this Red Carpet. Jesus didn't arrive in a limousine. He didn't even have a powerful warhorse. But instead, he came on a donkey. Can you imagine? A donkey is small. It's a bit funny-looking. The crowd was a bit confused. Look at verse 11. When the people in the city ask, 'Who is this?', the crowd answers: 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.' They were cheering, but they didn't fully understand. They wanted a 'Superstar' who would fight the Roman army. They wanted a political hero to change their lives right now. They were looking for a 'Hero of War' on a Red Carpet, but the Real Star was a 'King of Peace' on a dusty donkey. Even today, we sometimes treat Jesus like a Hollywood star. We want him to show up in a limousine and fix all our problems like a magic wand. But Jesus says, 'I am not that kind of King.' As Philippians 2:6-7 tells us: Even though he was God, he did not demand his rights. Instead, he emptied himself. He took the humble position of a slave—a Servant King. He didn't come for the famous or the perfect. He didn't come for the righteous, but for the sinners. He came for the poor, the lonely, and the 'outsiders.' He is the Humble King of Peace who chooses to walk in the dust with those who are hurting." But the people did not recognize this kind of King. At first, they were so excited! They thought Jesus was the 'Powerful Warrior' they had been waiting for. They shouted with joy, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' They were sure he would fix everything their way. But just a few days later, they saw the real Jesus. They saw a King who didn't fight back. They saw a King who allowed himself to be arrested. They were disappointed. Their excitement turned into anger. And the same voices that shouted 'Hosanna' began to shout, 'Crucify him!' They didn't want a Servant King. They didn't want a King who died for sinners. They wanted a Star.

And what about us today? We are gathered here to remember Palm Sunday. We are here to meet Jesus as he walks toward the suffering of the Cross. Like the crowd in Jerusalem, we might want to join the parade and shout, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' But I want to ask you a question: Who are you expecting to see today? What kind of Jesus are you looking for? Are you expecting a Hollywood star who will make your life feel famous and successful? Are you looking

for a Superhero who will fly in and fix all your problems with a magic wand? What do you think? Let me tell you a story about this. It's a bit funny, but also very sad. One of my friends told me this story a few weeks ago. One Sunday morning, a man in very dirty, old clothes was sitting on the steps of a huge, beautiful church. He was crying so hard, looking very sad. Suddenly, another man sat down next to him. This man also looked very poor—His clothes were torn, and he looked like a homeless person too. This man asked, 'Hey, why are you crying so hard?' The man wiped his tears and said, 'I tried to go inside that church, but they kicked me out! They told me I didn't look right. They rejected me!' Then he looked at the stranger and asked, 'And what about you? Who are you, and why are you sitting out here in the dirt?' The stranger smiled sadly and said, 'Oh, don't worry. My name is Jesus... and they kicked me out of that church a long time ago, too!'

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the story of the man on the church steps tells us the truth about Palm Sunday. If the real Jesus—the Servant King on a donkey—walked into our world today, would we recognize him? Or would we leave him sitting outside on the steps because he doesn't look like a 'Star'? This is why we must look at our community differently this week. When we serve at the Kogarah Storehouse, we aren't just giving out food. We are meeting the Jesus who sits on the steps. When we welcome our Chinese friends who are just starting to learn about God, we are welcoming the Jesus who was an 'outsider.' When we see the homeless or the struggling youth in our streets, we must remember: Jesus is already there. He came for the people in the dust. This is why he chose the donkey. He wanted to be at the same eye level as those who are hurting. To follow Jesus this Holy Week means we must go where he is—to the humble, the lonely, and the broken. Let us walk humbly with him and carry his peace into our streets and into our homes. And as we walk, let our hearts hold onto the light. Because we know... Easter Sunday is coming! The victory of Love is coming! Let's prepare our hearts to celebrate that life-changing joy together next Sunday. Have a blessed Holy Week, walking hand-in-hand with our Humble King. Amen.

**HYMN:** Ride on, ride on – Iona- tune TiS 348

Ride on, ride on, the time is right:  
the roadside crowd screams with delight;  
palm branches mark the pilgrim way  
where beggars squat and children play.

Ride on, ride on, your critics wait,  
intrigue and rumour circulate;  
new lies abound in word and jest,  
and truth becomes a suspect guest.

Ride on, ride on, while well aware  
that those who shout and wave and stare  
are mortals who, with common breath,  
can crave for life and lust for death.

Ride on, ride on, though blind with tears,  
though dumb to speak and deaf to jeers.  
your path is clear, though few can tell  
their garments pave the road to Hell.

Ride on, ride on, the room is let,  
the wine matured, the saw is whet;  
and dice your death-throes shall attend  
though faith, not fate, dictates your end.

Ride on, ride on, God's love demands.  
justice and peace lie in your hands.  
evil and angel voices rhyme:  
this is the man and this the time.

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

We lay our branches down  
in the form of bread, coins, and time.  
Take these gifts, O God, and make of them shelter  
for the weary, food for the hungry,  
and companionship for the lonely. Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

God of palms and passion, we bring you our prayers for others.  
We pray for the nations torn apart by war and conflict.  
We remember the innocent lives caught in the crossfire,  
the families who have lost their homes,  
and those who grieve the loss of loved ones.  
Lord, in your mercy, shatter the weapons of war  
and bring forth your gift of lasting peace.

We pray for those who suffer in silence—the hungry, the poor, and the sick.  
For those who do not know where their next meal will come from  
and for those struggling with physical and mental illness.  
May they feel your providing hand  
and your healing touch through our hands and hearts.

Let us now hold a moment of silence to remember those in our own community  
who need God’s guidance and comfort—  
the lonely, the grieving, and those facing difficult situations.  
(Silence)

Gracious God,  
We also pray for our church.  
For those among us who are searching for direction,  
those who feel isolated,  
and those enduring seasons of hardship.  
Strengthen our bonds of love so that we may truly be a refuge for one another.  
Guide our leaders and every member to walk in your wisdom and light.  
Lord, as we enter this Holy Week,  
help us to be instruments of your peace  
and witnesses of your hope in a broken world.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, our King and Savior, 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 Sending Forth of the People of God
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**HYMN:** To God be the glory TiS 147

To God be the glory, great things he has done!  
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,  
who yielded his life an atonement for sin

and opened the life-gate that all may go in.  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
and give him the glory! great things he has done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
to every believer, the promise of God!  
and every offender who truly believes,  
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
and give him the glory! great things he has done!

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
but purer, and higher, and greater will be  
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
and give him the glory! great things he has done!

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## **BLESSING**

As we complete our worship here,  
may we carry the grace of this day into Holy Week.  
May we walk with courage,  
holding grief and hope together,  
and follow Christ in steadfast love.  
Go now into Holy Week with hearts open and steps steady.

And may 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 be upon you now

May God's blessing be upon you now,  
may you know of God's great love for you.

May God's blessing be upon you now,  
right where you are.

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