

# KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

Easter 4

Good Shepherd 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 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. We acknowledge that our relationship with them has not always been life-giving nor peaceful, and commit ourselves to nurturing understanding and mutual respect.

## 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 need refreshment,  
***we come to worship.***

Come, all who walk through dark valleys,  
***we come to worship.***

Come, all who seek God's presence,  
***we come to worship.***

Christ is among us, Christ is risen!

***Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed; we come to worship.***

## LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

***God is always here***

God is with us

***God is always with us***

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Living God,  
we yearn to find your loving presence close to us.  
Help us through this Easter season to understand  
how Christ is close to us and among us,  
and find ways to share the abundance of life.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

**HYMN:** Spirit Song TiS 655 (4 Verses)

O, let the Son of God enfold you  
with his Spirit and his love;  
let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul;  
O, let him have the things that hold you  
and his Spirit, like a dove,  
will descend upon your life and make you whole.

*(Refrain)*

*Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill our lives;  
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill our lives.*

O come and sing this song with gladness  
as your hearts are filled with joy;  
lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name;  
O, give him all your tears and sadness,  
give Him all your years of pain,  
and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

*(Refrain)*

So as you worship God in earnest,  
lay your burdens at his feet,  
and allow God's love to work within your heart.  
O let the Holy Spirit fill you  
and direct your every day,  
and you know you'll never be alone again.

*(Refrain)*

So take God's love to those around you,  
show them Jesus every day  
in the way you serve and live your life for him.  
O bring the light into the darkness,  
show them there's no better way,  
than in living life in Jesus' name.  
(Refrain)

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## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

***Merciful God,  
We confess that we have wandered like lost sheep.  
We have followed our own desires instead of your voice.  
We have let fear and worry take the place of faith.  
Forgive us for not trusting you in the dark valleys.  
Forgive us for seeking our own way instead of your path.  
Restore our souls and lead us back to your quiet waters.  
Help us to listen to your voice and follow you with love.  
We thank you for your goodness and mercy that never fail.  
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.***

## **DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS**

The Lord is our Shepherd, and his mercy never ends.  
Even when we wander, he seeks us out and brings us home on his shoulders.  
He does not leave us in the valley of our sins,  
but restores our souls with his perfect love.  
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:** Jesus Came Bringing Us    Seasons 3 – 7

Jesus came bringing us hope.  
Jesus came bringing us hope.

Jesus came bringing us hope.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

Jesus came showing God's peace.  
Jesus came showing God's peace.  
Jesus came showing God's peace.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

Jesus came bringing us joy.  
Jesus came bringing us joy.  
Jesus came bringing us joy.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

Jesus came showing God's love.  
Jesus came showing God's love.  
Jesus came showing God's love.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

Jesus came showing justice.  
Jesus came showing justice.  
Jesus came showing justice.  
Hallelujah for evermore!

Traditional Cameroon folk song.

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## The Service of the Word

### **BIBLE READINGS**

#### **Psalm 23**

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

#### **John 10:1–10**

1 "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has

brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. 7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

## REFLECTION

Last winter, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit New Zealand with some friends. It was my second time there, and we spent a week exploring the South Island. Now, if you have ever been to the South Island, you know exactly what I’m talking about. The moment I arrived, I was just speechless. The mountains were so big, the fields were so wide, and the nature was just... breathtaking. It really makes you stop and say, "Wow, God, you are an amazing Artist." During our trip, we travelled to some truly incredible spots. We started in Queenstown, then made our way to the majestic Milford Sound. We saw the stunning blue waters of Lake Tekapo, the peaceful scenery of Wanaka, and the towering peaks of Mount Cook. We visited so many beautiful places along the way, and every turn we took felt like a new postcard. But as we were driving between these famous landmarks, something else caught my eye—something much more alive than the mountains. It was the sheep. Everywhere. To the left, sheep. To the right, sheep. Behind me, in front of me—everywhere! I knew New Zealand had a lot of sheep, but seeing it in person was just... overwhelming. They looked so peaceful, just grazing and resting in the sun. But, being the curious person I am, I wanted to experience a little bit of the local life. So, we went to a local market to buy some lamb to cook a nice barbecue. I was thinking, "Wow, there are millions of sheep here! This is going to be the freshest, most affordable lamb I’ve ever bought!" I walked up to the meat section with a big smile, ready to grab some... and then I saw the price. I almost dropped my basket! It was almost double the price of what we pay back home in Sydney. I stood there looking at the price tag, and I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I thought, "Wait a minute! There are sheep literally everywhere! Why is the meat so expensive?" In the end, we gave up on the lamb and just bought some beef for our barbecue. But that moment stuck with me. Driving back to our accommodation, I kept thinking about those sheep. They looked so free, just wandering around the fields. And yet, I knew they weren't just wandering aimlessly. Somewhere out there, there was a shepherd. Someone was watching over them. Someone was making sure they were healthy, safe, and moving to the right pastures.

That experience reminded me of the two Bible passages we are looking at today: Psalm 23 and John chapter 10. They are two of the most famous parts of the Bible, and they both talk about the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. We often think of sheep as these cute, fluffy animals, but if you actually know anything about sheep, they are a bit helpless. They have poor eyesight. They have no sense of direction—they can get lost just walking around the corner. And if a sheep falls over on its back, it cannot get up on its own. It needs someone to lift it up. They are totally dependent on their shepherd. And honestly, isn't that a lot like us? We often lose our way, we worry about the future, and sometimes we just feel stuck. But look at what David says in Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want." Think about that. The sheep isn't saying, "I have a big bank account, so I'm fine." It's not saying, "I'm very smart, so I'm fine." It says, "The Lord is my shepherd, therefore, I have everything I need." The secret to a life without "want" isn't what we have in our pockets—it's who is walking beside us. You know, this past Saturday, April 25th, was ANZAC Day here in Australia. All across Australia, we paused to remember the men and women who gave their lives for our freedom. It is a day of sacrifice. It's a day to remember that freedom isn't free—someone paid a price for it. When I look at the sacrifice of those young soldiers who stood in the gap for others, I am reminded of the words of Jesus in John chapter 10. He says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Just like those brave soldiers, Jesus gave his life for you. He knows your name, your struggles, and your joys.

But there is something very interesting about the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. In John 10, Jesus says that the sheep follow the shepherd because "they know his voice." He says they will never follow a stranger because they don't recognize a stranger's voice. The problem today is that there are so many voices claiming to be "the voice of God," but they sound nothing like our Good Shepherd. I recently saw a very striking report on the news regarding the rising tensions between the U.S. and Iran. It showed a gathering of top officials where President Trump asked his Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, to lead a prayer. Now, we usually think of prayer as a time for peace, but this was a very different kind of scene. They were praying earnestly. But the content of the prayer was shocking. He wasn't just praying for safety; he was using the name of Jesus Christ to justify a war. He prayed that "every bullet would find its mark" against the enemy. Imagine that—praying to God that every bullet would successfully kill another human being. When this way of thinking was brought up, the response from many religious leaders, including the spirit of Pope Leo XIV's historical teachings, was clear: "Jesus never fought a war." They reminded us that the prayers of those who seek war will not be heard in the same way, because Jesus is the Prince of Peace, not a God of destruction. Watching this, I felt a deep sadness. I had to ask myself: "Whose voice are they listening to?" Is that the voice of our Good Shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine to save the one lost sheep? Is that the voice of the One who said, "Love

your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"? Or is it the voice of human anger, politics, and the thirst for power? You see, sometimes people use the name of God to justify violence. But Jesus, our Good Shepherd, said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life." This is why "trained ears" are so important. Just because a prayer ends with "In Jesus' name" doesn't mean it came from Jesus' heart. We must be able to discern between the voice of the world that calls for "violence" and the voice of our Shepherd that calls for "life."

In our lives today, there are so many "voices" trying to lead us. The voice of greed, the voice of anxiety, or the voice of the world telling us we aren't good enough. These are like "thieves and strangers" trying to steal our peace. The question for us is: Are we listening to the right voice? We learn to recognize Jesus' voice by spending time with him—in prayer and in his Word. The more we know him, the easier it becomes to say, "That's not my Shepherd's voice," and keep walking the right way. So, don't try to be the sheep that thinks it knows the best path. Instead, be the sheep that listens. In this noisy world, the Good Shepherd's voice is the only one that leads to true peace.

This week, as you go about your work, as you talk with your family, and as you face your own "valleys," I want you to listen closely. Tune your ears to God's voice. Listen for the voice that speaks of love, mercy, and life. Remember this, you are truly the precious children of God. He knows each and every one of you by your own name, and he is calling you today. When you hear His voice calling your name, I hope and pray that you will listen and follow where he leads. He doesn't lead us into trouble; He leads us to green pastures where we can truly rest. My prayer for you this week is that you will walk hand-in-hand with Jesus, your Good Shepherd. I pray that you will have a truly happy and blessed week, feeling his presence in every step you take.

Amen.

**HYMN:** The Lord is my shepherd TiS 659

The Lord is my shepherd, and I want to follow  
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.  
Over the mountains, the waters and by-ways,  
valleys and highways he's waiting for me.

*(Refrain)*

*I want to go to meet him there, to lay myself down in his love.  
The Lord is my shepherd and I want to follow  
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.*

And while on the journey to where we are going  
he promised to be there to help us along,  
and over the mountains we'll walk on together,  
to know all the wonders he's given to me.

*(Refrain)*

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## **OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER**

Gracious God, our Good Shepherd,  
Everything we have comes from your hand.  
We joyfully return a portion of these gifts to you today.  
Please bless these offerings  
and use them to spread your love and peace.  
May they help those in need  
and bring light to the dark valleys of this world.  
We give our hearts and our lives to you.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS**

Gracious God,  
Today, we bring the needs of our world and our community before you.

First, we pray for our world.  
We pray for those living in the shadows of war and violence.  
Our hearts break for those who have lost their homes and their loved ones.  
Please bring your peace to places of conflict.  
Comfort those who are grieving and protect those who are in danger.

We pray for our society.  
We remember those who are struggling today—  
the homeless, those who do not have enough to eat,  
and those who are worried about their future.  
For those who feel hopeless or have lost their dreams, please be their light.  
Give them the strength to keep going and provide for their needs.

We pray for our church.  
Bless our leaders with wisdom and passion.  
Help our church to be a place of healing and hope.

Give us the strength and the heart to serve our local community with love.  
May we truly be your hands and feet in this world.

We now pray for our own church family.  
In silence, let us remember those among us  
who are sick, lonely, or going through a difficult time.

*(A short moment of silence)*

Lord, hear our prayers.  
Touch those we have named in our hearts with your healing hand.  
Let them feel your presence and know that they are never alone.  
Guide us all through the coming week.  
Keep our ears open to your voice and our hearts open to your love.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, 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
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## **INVITATION**

Jesus said, "Come to me,  
all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;  
for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls."

"I am the bread of life.  
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,  
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
the Lord has prepared his table for true believers.  
If you are sorry for your sins  
and sincerely follow Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord,  
you are invited to come with gladness to this table of the Lord.

**COMMUNION HYMN:** Be known to us in breaking bread TIS/514

Be known to us in breaking bread,  
but do not then depart;  
Saviour, abide with us, and spread  
your table in our heart.

There share with us in love divine;  
your body and your blood,  
that living bread, that heavenly wine,  
be our immortal food.

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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.***

Father and Mother,  
all-powerful and ever living God, it is indeed right,  
it is our joy and our salvation always and everywhere  
to give you thanks and praise through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.  
You created all things and made us in your image.  
When we had fallen into sin, you gave your only Son to be our Saviour.  
He shared our human nature, and died on the cross.  
You raised him from the dead,  
and exalted him to your right hand in glory,  
where he lives for ever to pray for us.

Through him you sent your holy and life-giving Spirit  
and made us your people, a royal priesthood,  
to stand before you to proclaim your glory

and to celebrate your mighty acts.

And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place,  
joining with choirs of angels and 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 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.”

Therefore, God, as he has commanded us,  
we do this in remembrance of him;  
and we ask you to accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Send upon us the Holy Spirit,  
that we who receive your gifts may share in the body and blood of Christ.  
Make us one body with him.  
Accept us as we offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice,  
and bring us with the whole creation to your heavenly kingdom.

We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Through him, with him, in him,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be given to you, almighty God,  
from all who dwell in earth and in heaven  
throughout all ages. ***Amen.***

## **BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.  
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

## **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 feeding us at your table.***

***You have restored our souls and filled us with your love.***

***As we leave this place,***

***help us to follow your voice.***

***Strengthen us to serve others and share your peace with the world.***

***Keep us close to you, our Good Shepherd. Amen.***

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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**HYMN:** The Servant King TiS 256

From heaven you came helpless babe,  
entered our world your glory veiled;  
not to be served but to serve,  
and give your life that we might live.

*(Refrain)*

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
he calls us now to follow him,  
to bring our lives as a daily offering  
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
my heavy load he chose to bear;  
his heart with sorrow was torn,  
“Yet not my will, but yours,” he said.

*(Refrain)*

Come see his hands and his feet,  
the scars that speak of sacrifice,  
hands that flung stars into space  
to cruel nails surrendered.

*(Refrain)*

So let us learn how to serve  
and in our lives enthrone him;  
each other's needs to prefer,  
for it is Christ we're serving.

*(Refrain)*

## **BLESSING**

Follow in the way of Jesus through the week ahead.  
Keep learning together.  
Be like family to each other.  
Eat meals and pray together.  
Do all you can to live and share the abundant life of the Christ.

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:** Behold, Behold    Season 6-10

Behold (behold), behold (behold),  
I make all things new,  
beginning with you and starting from today.  
Behold (behold), behold (behold),  
I make all things new,  
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

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