

Sunday 3rd May 2026 @ Kogarah @ 10am

Easter 5 - Living Stones

Welcome

Introduction to Theme

As we near the end of this Season of Easter, we step among the stones—stones that shelter, stones that stumble, and living stones shaped by Christ into something strong and life-giving.

As the early church discovered, the risen Christ continues to form us into a community where belonging and mercy take shape. As we worship, may we open ourselves to that shaping love, and to the ways our lives might become places of welcome and hope for others.

Acknowledgement of Country

Australia

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we gather on today, and recognise it as a place of deep knowledge, story, and spirit.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present of the Biddigal people of the Eaora Nation, recognising their enduring care and connection to land, waters, sky, and the life that flows through this Country.

We commit ourselves to nurturing understanding and mutual respect.

Lighting the Christ candle

God is here!

God is always here!

God is with us!

God is always with us!

Saying who we are

Our vision is to be a loving and caring community, sharing God's love with the world.

We are a congregation who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles. We are creating a safe place for the community and sharing the journey of life and faith.

Call to Worship

All who search for a place of calm, come;
we come to shelter in the rock, who is our God.

All who are ready to journey, come;
we come to walk the way Christ sets before us.

All who long to belong to a community, come;
we come to be shaped as living stones by the Spirit.

All who gather today, come and worship;
we come to worship the God of resurrection life.

Sing: *Christ is the world's light* F. P. Green (TiS 246)

Christ is the world's light, he and none other;

born in our darkness, he became our brother.

If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:

Glory to God on high!

Christ is the world's peace, he and none other;

no one can serve him and despise his brother.

Who else unites us, one in God the Father?

Glory to God most high!

Christ is the world's life, he and none other;

sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother –

he, who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:

Glory to God most high!

**Give God the glory, God and none other;
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;
give God the glory, God in man my brother:
*Glory to God most high!***

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Opening Prayer

God of mercy and loving kindness,
we come to you in gratitude for all you have done.
You call us from the shadows into the brightness of your truth.
Teach us what it means to be your people,
so we can make known what you have done.
We ask this in the name of the risen Christ, amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, you call us to be living stones,
but sometimes our hearts are hard.
You call us to be living stones,
but we don't always like the place where you have put us.
You call us to be living stones,
but sometimes we make others stumble.

A time of silence

Have mercy on us and treat us with kindness, we pray. Amen.

Words of Grace

God is good to us.

Know that you are still called and special to God.

Take your place where you are called among God's people
and tell of the wonderful things God has done in Jesus.

Amen.

**Sing: *God of my breathing and God of my heart*, Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
(Tune: TiS 547)**

**God of my breathing and God of my heart,
Spirit embodied in all human parts,
would that this body, from head to the toes,
bring forth Your glory in all that I know.**

**God of my eating and God of my taste,
flavour my nourishment full with Your grace.
Bless what comes in through this mouth that it might
bless how I live with the kindness of Christ.**

**God of my hearing and God of my sight,
bless all I find from the moment I rise.
Upon this mind your table be found,
prayerfully offered these visions and sounds.**

God of my footsteps and God of my path,

where these feet travel may they know no lack.

Shoes on the pavement or toes in the soil
carry your servant where Christ bids them go.

God of my memories, Lord of this mind,
God of the moment whose vision is time,
all I remember and all I forget
hold in Your keeping so this soul might rest.

God of my limits and God of all truth,
You who have knit me with joy in the womb,
would that this body from head to the toes
bring forth Your glory in all that I know.

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We share the *Peace of Christ*

ENGAGING THE WORD

A Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16

1 In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

**3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
*for your name's sake lead me and guide me,***

**4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
*for you are my refuge.***

**5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
*you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.***

**15 My times are in your hand;
*deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.***

**16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
*save me in your steadfast love.***

Sing: *Be my Keeper* (Bruxvoor-Colligan)

**My help and hope who never slumbers,
you who made the earth and heavens,
I lift my eyes up to the mountains -
you're my help and hope to come,
you're my help and hope to come.**

***Be my keeper as I'm moving
for I am close to someplace deeper.***

***As you've held this world forever,
be my keeper, be my keeper***

O Source of Life, my soul is longing,
catch me now for I am falling.

Oh, be my shade in sunshine burning,
be my comfort in the night,
be my comfort in the night.

*Be my keeper as I'm moving
for I am close to someplace deeper.
As you've held this world forever,
be my keeper, be my keeper.*

O Heart of Love, you have sustained me
from before my birth and always.
You've been with me for all my journeys,
help and hope, O Source of Life,
help and hope, O Source of Life.

*Be my keeper as I'm moving
for I am close to someplace deeper.
As you've held this world forever,
be my keeper, be my keeper.*

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Readings from the Christian Scriptures

Acts 7:54–60

54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. **55** But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **56** “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” **57** But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. **58** Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60** Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

1 Peter 2:2-10

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and **5** like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” **7** To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” **8** and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. **9** But

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1-14

14 1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these,

because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Offering:

Generous God, we bring our offering of money with our thanks for all the good things we have received in life.

Use these gifts where they are needed the most to build strong people and communities. Amen.

Choir Sings: *Blessed Assurance*

Reflection

John 14:1-14

I want to start with a very honest question today. Is there anyone here who had a “worry-free life”? No stress, no problems, just perfect peace? Probably not, right? The truth is, we all worry. It’s part of being human. I want to ask you—and you don’t have to share anything too private—but generally speaking, what are the most common things that make you worry these days? What is the ‘big topic’ of worry in your life or your friends’ lives right now?”

Yes, those are the things we all feel, aren't they? We worry about our health. We worry about our children. We worry about our jobs or if we will have enough money for the future. I did some research online to see what people in Australia are generally worrying about across different ages. It turns out, whether you

are 10 years old or 80 years old, we all have our own 'specialty' in worrying!

For teenagers in their 10s, it's all about Social Survival. They worry about friendships and belonging.

For those in their 20s, the worry is Independence. They are stressed about the cost of living and the rent in Sydney, wondering if they can ever move out and start their own lives.

Then we have the parents in their 30s and 40s. They worry about mortgage, but even more, they worry about their children. "Are my kids safe? Are they getting a good education?"

In the 50s and 60s, the focus moves to Security. They worry about the stability of the future and life after work, wondering if their Superannuation will be enough or if they will be healthy enough to enjoy retirement.

And for our elders in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, the worry is quiet but very deep. It's not just loneliness; it's the fear of Losing Independence. "How long can I drive? How long can I live in my own home?"

No matter our age, we are all in the same boat. The weight of worry feels the same to everyone; it makes all of our hearts heavy.

Then, what would Jesus say to us today, as we live with all these worries? In the Bible, in John chapter 13, we see the disciples worrying just like us. They were in a very dark place. It was the night before Jesus was to die. One friend, Judas, had already left to betray him. Peter, their leader, was told he would fail and deny Jesus three times. Jesus told them he was leaving, and they couldn't follow. Everything the disciples knew was falling apart. They were terrified. They were confused. And they were deeply,

deeply worried. And in that moment of total darkness, Jesus speaks. He says in chapter 14, verse 1: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." These are the same words Jesus speaks to us this morning here in Kogarah. But you know, even after hearing this, the disciples were still confused. In today's passage, we especially see the two disciples: Thomas and Philip. Thomas was a practical man. He said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Isn't that exactly what we say? "Lord, I don't know what will happen next month. I don't see the map! How can I walk when the road is so dark?" Jesus didn't give Thomas a map. He simply said: "I am the way and the truth and the life." Then, Philip speaks. He said, "Lord, just show us the Father and that will be enough." Philip wanted a sign! "Show me a miracle, then I will stop worrying!" But Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus was saying, "Look at my life. Look at my love. That is how much God loves you."

Friends, I have a confession to make. Even though I am a Christian, and even though I am a church minister, when I look back at my own life, there are many times when I am just like Thomas. I pray, "Lord, I really don't know where we are going. I don't see the map!" And there are also times when I am just like Philip, crying out for a clear sign. I pray, "Lord, show me the way! Just show me! Show me something so I can finally stop worrying!" But friends, even in our moments of worry, God is working. Last Tuesday, I had a wonderful Bible study with some of our Chinese friends. We had a meaningful time sharing stories about the people who have profoundly influenced our lives, brought about positive changes, and to whom we are deeply grateful. Many of them spoke about their families—fathers who

sacrificed everything for them, and mothers who were always on their side with unconditional love. They shared stories of kind people who helped them during their darkest and hardest times. They all agreed: “Because of these people, my life was changed.” It was such a joy to hear how their lives were transformed by love and sacrifice. In that study, we looked at the story of Paul in the book of Acts chapter 9. We know the story well. Paul was on his way to Damascus, full of anger, wanting to arrest Christians. But on that road, he met Jesus. He met ‘The Way.’ And what happened? His life was completely turned upside down. When Paul discovered that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, his life of worry, anger, and pain was transformed into a life of joy, excitement, and hope. Paul was changed. The disciples were changed. Every Christian in the early church was changed by this same grace. I shared these stories with our Chinese friends during our Bible study. A little while later, one of them asked me a question. She said, ‘Deok Hee, why is your face always so smiley? You look like a person who has no worries at all!’ I said, do you think I have no worries? Of course I do! I have the same worries, the same anxieties, and the same struggles just like you. But when I look at Jesus, I feel good. I feel joy.’

Brothers and sisters in Christ! This is the grace I want all of us to experience today. Even when our difficult realities and worries remain unresolved, meeting Jesus—who is our Way—and experiencing his grace allows us to find true joy and peace regardless of our circumstances. When we stop looking for a map and start looking at Jesus, our hearts change. Our worries, anxieties, and deep concerns are transformed into peace, hope, and rest. Our lives become lives of deep trust in God.

My prayer is that our friends in the Chinese Bible study will truly experience this grace. I pray that everyone in the Kogarah church family, along with all your loved ones, will feel this same grace in your hearts. I also pray that you and I can share this amazing grace with our neighbours and the people around us, with everyone who is struggling with worry and anxiety today. Let us always remember the words of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He says to us today: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.' Amen!

Announcements

Prayers for Others

God, whom we see in Jesus, we come with our prayers for others.

We think of those whose lives have been shaken, as if by an earthquake;
who find the horizon shifting and the ground unsteady;
whose foundations are cracking, leaving them vulnerable and uncertain.
As the dust settles, in their time of need,
be their rock and lead them to safety.

We pray for those without the stability of a place to call home;
those who experience violence or bullying in their family, school, club or
workplace;
those who mourn the loss of a dependable person in their lives.

May they find support from others in their time of need,

(We pray especially today for the people of Alice Springs and the mother and
brother of Kumanjayi Little Baby; and the alleged perpetrator of this crime,
Jefferson Lewis,.)

be their rock and lead them to safety.

We think of those who are worried about fulfilling their responsibilities because they are unwell or do not have the resources to cope; those facing an unwelcome diagnosis or making difficult life choices; those who feel fragile and brittle.

May they find your comforting presence in their time of need,

be their rock and lead them to safety.

We pray for our leaders, cornerstones of our communities; for colleagues, family, friends, who we rely on for support; for those carrying the weight of expectation to help make the world a better place.

May they be strong and reliable in their time of need,

be their rock and lead them to safety. Amen.

Eternal Spirit

Source of all that is and ever shall be, Loving Parent in whom we discern heaven,

May knowledge of your holiness inspire all peoples.

And may your commonwealth of peace and freedom

flourish on earth, until all of humankind

heed your call to justice and compassion.

May we find the bread that we need for today.

And for the hurts we cause one another

may we be forgiven as we forgive them theirs.

In times of trial and temptation, help us to be strong;

When life seems overwhelming, help us to endure;

And thus from the yoke of sin deliver us.

May you reign in the power of human love, Now and forever. Amen

(Tom Hall)

Sing: *Hidden Christ Alive for Ever* (Brian Wren) (Tune" TiS 233)

**Hidden Christ, alive for ever,
Saviour, Servant, Friend and Lord,
year by year, unseen, you offer
life undying, love outpoured.
Day by day, you walk among us,
known and honoured, yet concealed,
freeing, chiding, leading, guiding,
till your glory is revealed.**

**Endless orbits by our planet
spinning round its speeding star
cannot trace creation's secret:
why we live, and whose we are.
Jesus, you alone uncover
nature's rhythm, reason, rhyme,
so your birthday is our center:
hinge of history and time.**

**Still your life and way of living,
God-revealing, Spirit-blown,
teaching, healing, sins forgiving,**

measure and inspire our own;
loving earth's despised, rejected,
till with them you hang in pain,
broken, buried, resurrected,
life laid down, our life to gain.

Who can tell, through earthly eons,
all your loving power has done,
changing hearts and shaping nations,
seeking all, rejecting none?
Speeches fail, but songs soar higher,
tracing how, in every place,
twice ten hundred years have numbered
countless works of boundless grace!

Christ our hope, alive among us,
take our love, our work, our prayer.
We will trust and tell your purpose,
braving evil and despair;
in your name befriending, mending,
making peace and setting free,
showing, giving and acclaiming
signs of joy and jubilee.

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Blessing/Benediction

Go from this place as God's people,
to be built like living stones into a strong and beautiful community.
The love of God the Creator is your foundation,
the grace of Christ is your cornerstone,
and the fellowship of the Spirit cements you together.

We go in peace. Amen, may it be so.

Exit Sing: Peace be with you Words and music: David Busch © 2015

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**As you journey from this day,
to the challenge of tomorrow's way:
God to guide you,
Christ beside you,
peace be with you.**

**In the season to come,
know the promise of the Living One:
God to guide you,
Christ beside you,
Peace be with you.**

**And whenever your burdens are heavy,
when the road seems too hard for you to carry on;**

**then remember God's call,
and the promise that God shares it all:
love surrounding, grace abounding,
Spirit's treasure, without measure:**

**God to guide you,
Christ beside you,
peace be with you.**