

## KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH 17/5/26

### GREETING

The Reign of God has come. It is experienced in the words and actions of Jesus. Today, we step into the story of Jesus' ascension—a moment filled with questions, uncertainty, and wonder. The disciples watch Jesus disappear from their sight, not knowing what comes next. As we gather today, we're invited into a similar posture of shared prayer and trust, remembering that God often meets us in the spaces between what has been and what is still to come.

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, let us gather together to worship.  
Come, let us worship the risen Christ.  
Come, let us join with the saints of all time and all places  
in worship of the living Christ.

Loving God,  
you have called us to belong to you  
and have made yourself known in Jesus Christ.

As Christ prayed for his disciples,  
so you hold us in your care today.

Draw near to us in this time of worship.  
open our hearts to know your presence,  
and strengthen us to live as your faithful people.  
Through the risen Christ, we pray.  
Amen.

### LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here.....God is with us

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

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, and commit to walking together in truth, justice and reconciliation.

### 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 community and sharing the journey of life and faith.

Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living  
now worship their maker with gladness and song;  
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:  
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!  
Our lives of his making he brings to their waking;  
in darkness he held us in his gracious care,  
now into the light we are called from our sleeping

Lord, frame our desiring to do your requiring,  
that unto your glory be all that we do;  
and where we have faltered, give strength and give healing:  
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

PD: text, Paul Gerhardt et al

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## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Merciful God,  
we bring all our sorrows to your feet today.  
We are sorry for the times we have hurt one another,  
and hurt ourselves.  
We are sorry for the times we have done the wrong thing,  
and for the times we have not done the right thing.  
Have mercy on us.

A time of silent reflection

Faithful and loving God,  
in Jesus Christ, you have made your glory known,  
drawing us into life with you  
and calling us to live as your people.  
Yet we confess that we do not always live as those who belong to you.  
We lose sight of your presence  
and fail to trust the life you offer.  
You call us to reflect Christ's love in the world,  
yet we turn inward,  
seeking our own ways rather than your will.  
Forgive us, gracious God.  
Restore us through your love,  
and shape us as faithful disciples,  
that our lives may bear witness to Christ's presence and grace.  
In the risen Christ, we pray.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Hear the good news:  
Jesus prays for his disciples

and holds them in God's love.  
We are not left to ourselves,  
but are known, held, and sustained in God's grace.  
In the risen Christ, we are forgiven,  
renewed in love,  
and entrusted with life in his name.  
Thanks be to God. Amen

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Let us join with the psalmist in praise:

**Sing to God, all peoples of the earth,  
sing praises to God.  
Open our ears to hear your voice,  
our hearts to receive your love,  
and our lives to follow where you lead.**

**We praise you for your goodness and love,  
now and always  
Amen.**

## **PEACE**

**SING            Praying in the Morning            AT/485**

Praying in the morning,  
praying in the evening,  
praying any time of the day.  
'Cos God's there any time at all,  
any time there's something to say.

Praising when you're happy,  
asking when there's needs,  
praying on and not letting go.  
'Cos God knows everything you need,  
all the things that help you to grow.

Praying when you're lonely,  
praying when you're sad,  
praying when your prayer's just a cry.  
'Cos God's there any time at all,  
even when you think God's passed by.

Praying in the quiet,  
praying when you're still,  
praying with your listening ears.  
'Cos God's got things to say to you,  
words of love to break through your fears

Praying in the morning,  
praying in the evening,  
praying any time of the day.  
'Cos God's there any time at all,  
any time there's something to say.

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## READINGS FROM THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

### Acts 1: 6-14

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of <sup>[a]</sup> James. <sup>14</sup>All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

### John 17: 1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all people, <sup>[a]</sup> to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup>"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

## REFLECTION

### Acts 1:6-14, John 17:1-11

I want to talk about the world we are living in today. We live in a time of incredible technology. While this technology brings comfort and convenience to many parts of our lives, if we look closely, it is also changing our lives in ways that make us feel lonely and afraid. In factories, machines and robots have replaced human workers. People are losing their jobs to machines. Think about our daily lives—banking, shopping, and even ordering food. Everything is moving online. For many, especially our older generations, the world has become a confusing and lonely place. The face-to-face warmth we once knew is disappearing, replaced by screens and passwords. And it's not just about convenience. With the rise of AI, we now hear terrifying news about AI-powered weapons and robots participating in wars. Instead of a future of hope, many people feel a deep sense of fear. We ask ourselves, "Is this technology helping us, or is it taking away our humanity?" Despite being more "connected" through the internet, the truth is, people feel more lonely than ever. This sense of 'not belonging' or 'feeling out of place' is something many of us have felt. As a migrant myself, I know this feeling very well. I worked as a youth worker for many years, and I still remember a young man in my youth group who once told me with tears in his eyes: "Deok Hee, I need help. Sometimes I don't know who I am. Am I Australian? No. Am I Korean? No. Then who am I? It's so hard because I feel like I don't belong anywhere." Whether it is because of the fast-changing technology or the struggle of living in a new country, we are all asking the same questions: "What is the meaning of my life? Is there a place where I truly belong? Does anyone really care about me?"

Today, Jesus deals with these questions in his final prayer. Surprisingly, Jesus answers this question not in a lecture or a debate, but in a prayer. Imagine the scene. It is the last night of his earthly life. The Passover meal is finished. Within 24 hours, Jesus will be on the cross. If you knew you only had a few hours left to live, what would you pray for? Would you pray for your own safety? For your legacy? Jesus' prayer was dominated by one single, great thought: The unity of his disciples. He prayed, "That they may be one." Jesus knew very well that as long as this world exists, there will be constant troubles, worries, and pain for us to face. He knew that human life is never free from struggle. But notice this: Jesus didn't pray for our comfort or for the problems to disappear; he prayed for our unity. Why? Because Jesus knew a powerful truth: when we are truly one in his love, nothing in this world can break us. He knew that as long as we stay united, no problem, no fear, and no enemy can ever destroy the bond of his people.

Actually, last Thursday was the 40th anniversary of my father's passing. Because of this, my family gathered together to have a memorial service and remember him. It took me back to many years ago, when I was just 20 years old and my father passed away from stomach cancer. At that time, I wasn't there by his side, so I couldn't hear his final words in person. For a long time, I was so curious: What did he say in his very last moments? What was the most important thing on his heart before he left this world? Later, I asked my sister. She told me that just minutes before he took his last breath, with my mother and my siblings standing there, my father gathered his strength and said: "After I am gone, please take good care of your mother. She has loved you and prayed for you every single day. And please, stay together. Rely on each other. Love one another. Especially look after Deok Hee, the youngest. Please, be one as a family and live well." As I look back, I realize that my father's final wish wasn't about money or success. It was about Unity. He knew that if his family stayed together and loved each other, they could survive anything. This is

exactly the heart of Jesus in John 17. Jesus was like a father leaving his children behind. He knew he was leaving us in a difficult world, so he left us his final will, his most precious command: "Be one. Protect this unity at all costs. Love each other as I have loved you."

So, what does this unity mean for us here at Kogarah Uniting Church? Unity is not about 'uniformity.' It is not about everyone looking the same or following the same fixed rules. In fact, if we only focus on rules and outward appearances, people eventually feel excluded. Look at our church during the week. It is a beautiful, busy hive of diversity! On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, through the Kogarah Storehouse, a huge variety of people from our local community come to receive food parcels. Also, during the week, several groups—including Ukrainians, Mongolians, Indonesians, and Chinese—meet here to run their own programs and fellowships. We have a Nepali group meeting here every Sunday afternoon for their worship. And on Tuesdays and Sundays, our Table Tennis sessions bring in even more diverse people from the neighbourhood. And look at us right now, in this morning service. We are a beautiful mix of different genders, cultures, and values. We have different skin colours and languages and different life stories. To a stranger, it might look like we have nothing in common. But this is the beauty of Christ's unity. For the people of Jesus' time, unity meant being from the same background and ethnicity. But Jesus introduced a new kind of unity—one that is held together not by being the same, but by being loved by the same Saviour. In verse 11, he prays: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name... so that they may be one as we are one." In John 13, Jesus said, 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.' This is the foundation of our unity. It is a unity of the heart, where LOVE is our highest law. Christ's unity happens when we look beyond the rules and see the person. It happens when we take someone else's pain and suffering as our own, caring for one another just as Jesus cares for us.

There is a reason why we are called the 'Uniting' Church. Our name is not 'United,' which describes something already finished. Instead, we are 'Uniting'—a word that shows we are constantly moving, growing, and working to become one. This is one of our greatest strengths. In the Uniting Church, we don't demand that everyone be the same. Instead, we acknowledge our differences, respect our diverse cultures, and then, through the love of Christ, we choose to journey together. We are 'Uniting' because we are committed to caring for this world and each other as one body. Even when it's difficult, we stay together because we are bound by a love that is stronger than our differences.

Dear members of Kogarah Uniting Church, let us love one another as Jesus has loved us—not just in words, but in action. We are not just 'running programs' here. We are introducing people to the heart of God. Whether people come for food parcels on Tuesday and Wednesday, or they come for their own group activities and meetings, or for whatever reason they step through our doors—my hope is that they don't just see a 'service' or a 'system.' Instead, I hope they see a living community of love. I hope they find a place where people from all different backgrounds are so deeply connected in Christ that we provide a true home—a place of safety and belonging for everyone. Just as a family stays together and relies on one another, I want our neighbours to feel that we truly care for them and that they belong here with us. We are Aussies, Koreans, Chinese, Fijians, Indonesians, Indians, Samoans, and many more. But we are ONE because Jesus Christ is right here among us. We were born to be one as the people of God's kingdom here in Kogarah. God calls each of us, in all our beautiful differences, to be woven into one body. So let us embrace our diversity and walk together as one in his love. Amen.

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,  
you have chosen me to be —  
you have drawn me to your wonder,  
you have set your sign on me.

Like a mother you enfold me,  
hold my life within your own,  
feed me with your very body,  
form me of your flesh and bone.

Like a father you protect me,  
teach me the discerning eye,  
hoist me up upon your shoulder,  
let me see the world from high.

Friend and lover, in your closeness  
I am known and held and blessed:  
in your promise is my comfort,  
in your presence I may rest.

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,  
you have chosen me to be —  
you have drawn me to your wonder,  
you have set your sign on me.

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## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us bring our thanksgiving offerings.

Loving God,  
please accept these heartfelt gifts,  
and grant us wisdom as we steward these offerings.  
In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Loving God,  
be with us in our questioning,  
be with us in our doubts,  
be with us in our fears.  
Be with us today.

Gracious God,  
help us to listen without judgement to others' questions,  
help us to listen without anger to others' doubts,  
help us to listen without shaming to others' fears.  
Help us to be attentive to one another today.

Merciful God,  
may we bring all things to you in prayer.  
May we encourage one another to pray.  
May we know that we can bring each thing that is on our hearts to you  
today and always.

Creator God,  
you have loved all things in this world.  
Help us to love your creation.  
Help us to love one another.  
Help us to love ourselves.

Creator God,  
You have called us into relationship with you and with one another.  
Help us to work together in your name,  
so that we might be a light to the world each and every day.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.

**SING            Hear in the Desert            Tune TIS/156**

Hear, in the desert,  
where we are living,  
God's word of comfort coming to us  
along the highway saints built before us,  
to every byway comes the Good News.

Pass on the message,  
Jesus is coming,  
freeing from bondage those trapped by sin,  
Bearing the power of cross and manger,  
Coming as ruler – Monarch of all.

Now is God's Kin-dom\*,  
made real among us,  
making us welcome while we still wait.  
Closer than breathing, we have God's Spirit,  
Advent hope giving promise of life.

We are not given,  
schedules to follow,  
but we will know when God's time is ripe.  
While we are waiting, live out the promise,  
in life creating havens of peace.

## **BLESSING**

May the glory of God shine on you,  
may the love of God be within you,  
may the peace of God soothe your heart as you go on your way. Amen

## **SENDING OUT SONG      They'll Know we are Christians**

We are one in the Spirit,  
we are one in the Lord,  
we are one in the Spirit,  
we are one in the Lord,  
and we pray that our unity will one day be restored.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other,  
we will walk hand in hand,  
we will walk with each other,  
we will walk hand in hand,  
and together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other,  
we will work side by side,  
we will work with each other,  
we will work side by side,  
and we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

All praise to the Father,  
from whom all things come,  
and all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,  
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

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