

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

12 July 2026

Pentecost 7

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 on this land, we pay our respects to the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation, who have lived, worked and played on this country for thousands of years. We bring to mind their elders, past and present, and their place in passing on story and song, language and lore. May we commit ourselves to ongoing peace, joy, love, and hope as we grow in relationship as First and Second Peoples of this land.

KUC VISION STATEMENTS

Let us say together 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

We gather this morning to seek the Lord.

We gather to feel His presence.

We gather with thankful hearts to give Him praise.

We gather to sing of His great love.

We gather to hear His Word and receive His grace.

We gather as one family in Jesus Christ.

All: So now, let us worship our God together!

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for bringing us together
into your holy presence this morning.

Thank you for your deep love that never fails.

As we begin this worship, we open our hearts completely to you.

Fill this place with your Holy Spirit.

Lord, speak to us through your Word.

Comfort those who are tired, and give your peace to those who are anxious.

Let our prayers and praises be a beautiful gift to you today.

We offer this time into your hands.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

HYMN: Shout to the Lord TiS 738

My Jesus, my saviour

Lord, there is none like you;

all of my days, I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands;
forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise
I have in you! (X2)*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy One,

We confess that there are times

when we block out the light of your word.

We blunder on in our own strength, on our own path.

Drawn to the way of the world rather than your way,

we forget others and the consequences of our actions.

Forgive, we pray, and help us

that the light of your word may guide our thoughts, words, and actions.

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Paul reminds us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

In Christ, we are set free and given life by the Spirit.

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: As the deer pants TiS 703

As the deer pants for the water,

so my soul longs after you.

You alone are my heart's desire

and I long to worship you.

You alone are my strength and shield,

to you alone may my spirit yield.

You alone are my heart's desire

and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver,

only you can satisfy.

You alone are the real joy-giver

and the apple of my eye.

You alone are my strength and shield,

to you alone may my spirit yield.

You alone are my heart's desire

and I long to worship you.

You're my friend and you are my brother
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.
You alone are my strength and shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Genesis 25:19–34

19 These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren, and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. 22 The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other; the elder shall serve the younger." 24 When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. 25 The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle, so they named him Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. 27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. 28 Isaac loved Esau because he was fond of game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. 30 Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole

crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 If you have ears, hear!"

18 "Hear, then, the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. 23 But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

REFLECTION

Before we begin, let me ask you a question: How are you? You know, when I first started learning English, one of the first things I had to practice was how to answer this question. In Korea, every single student learns English from the exact same textbook. And in that textbook, whenever someone asks, "How are you?", you **MUST** answer with one automatic formula. Do you know what it is? Yes! "I'm fine, thank you, and you?" It's like a reflex. No matter what is happening in your life, you are always "fine." There is a famous, slightly dark joke about this in Korea. During the Vietnam War, a Korean soldier was fighting fiercely on the frontline. He captured a hill, but he was terribly wounded, covered in blood, and barely holding on. A US soldier ran up to him, saw how critically injured he was, and cried out with deep worry: "Oh my goodness, buddy! How are you?!" The Korean soldier, breathing his last breath, looked up, remembered his English textbook, and whispered: "I'm... fine... thank you... and you?" It's funny, isn't it? But you know what? Sometimes, I think we do the exact same thing in our real lives. On the outside, when we walk into church, or when we see our coworkers on Monday morning, and they ask, "How are you?", we smile and say, "Yeah, good! Fine, thanks!" Anxious? Yes. Exhausted? Yes. But we still say, "I'm fine." If we are honest, many of us are like that wounded soldier. Deep down, we are bleeding. We are tired. If you ask the average person in Sydney today how they are really doing, the real answer isn't "fine." It is: "I am busy, I am stressed, and I am overwhelmed." We are rushing constantly. We worry about the cost of living, the bills, the future, and our families. Our minds are crowded, and our

calendars are packed. And because we are so stressed, our hearts can easily become like the ground we walk on—hard, tired, dry, and unable to take anything else in. And this brings us exactly to the story Jesus tells us today in the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus talks about a farmer throwing seeds, and the seeds fall on four different types of soil: the hard path, the rocky ground, the thorny bushes, and finally, the good soil. Usually, when we hear this story, we understand it in one specific way. We look at the four soils and say, "We must clear out the rocks and thorns, listen to God's word, and become the good soil so that we can bear a harvest of 30, 60, and 100 times what was sown." That is the standard, traditional way we all understand this parable. And it is a good and correct lesson. But as I kept meditating on this text throughout this week, a deeper question kept burning in my heart. I asked myself: "Is that all? Does this ancient story have a deeper, more radical meaning for us living in Australia today? What does 30, 60, and 100-fold harvest actually mean for our daily lives?" And as I prayed, the Holy Spirit shifted my focus from the soil to the fruit itself. And he asked me a very simple, yet life-changing question: "Deok Hee, who is that fruit actually for?"

In our modern world, when we hear the word "success" or "fruitfulness," we automatically think about ourselves. We think, "If I work hard, I will get a promotion, a bigger house, more money, and a comfortable life." Even in the church, sometimes we think like this. We think a "fruitful Christian" is someone who has a perfect, blessed life with no problems, or someone who seems to have it all together. We think the fruit is a blessing just for us to enjoy. But today, I want to share a different perspective. An apple tree never eats its own apples. Have you ever seen an orange tree eating its own oranges? No, never. An apple tree produces beautiful, sweet, juicy apples, but it doesn't keep a single one for itself. The fruit is grown entirely for others. It is for the hungry bird, the little child walking past, the neighbour, the community. This is the big shift Jesus wants us to make today. The fruitfulness of your life—the 30, 60, and 100-fold harvest that God wants to bring out of your heart—is never for your own consumption. It is for the consumption of your neighbours. God does not make your life fruitful so you can build bigger barns to store your blessings. He makes you fruitful so you can become a source of life, hope, and healing to a hungry and broken world. And this is exactly why Jesus says, when the seed falls on good soil, it produces a harvest. And what is that harvest? It is the beautiful character of Jesus growing inside you. The Bible calls this the "Fruit of the Spirit." It is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Now, think about this. When God gives you the fruit of patience, who benefits from it? You? No, the people around you—especially the annoying people around you! When you have the fruit of kindness, who eats that fruit? The lonely neighbour who lives next door to you. When you have the fruit of peace, it calms the anxious coworker sitting next to you. Every single spiritual fruit God grows in your heart is a meal for someone else.

Let me share a story with you. A few years ago, there was an elderly woman named Joy who lived in a quiet suburb. Her husband had passed away, her children lived far away, and she felt quite lonely. But she was a faithful Christian. She loved gardening, and her heart was a "good soil" full of God's love. Joy couldn't do big missionary work, and she didn't have a lot of money. But she noticed that every afternoon, teenagers from the local high school would walk past her house. Many of them looked tired, stressed, and some looked quite angry at the world. So, Joy decided to use her "fruit." She set up a small table near her front gate. Every single afternoon, she baked fresh chocolate chip cookies, put them on the table with a big jug of cold water, and a sign that said: "Free cookies. You are loved. Have a great afternoon!" At first, the teenagers were suspicious. But slowly, they started stopping by. Joy would sit on her front steps, wave at them, and smile. Soon, some kids started talking to her. They told her about their exams, their family troubles, their anxieties. Joy just listened with deep patience and love. She didn't preach; she just gave them cookies and a safe space. One boy, named Sam, was going through a very dark time. His parents were divorcing, he was failing school, and he felt completely invisible. He later shared that during those dark months, the only reason he didn't give up on life was Joy's cookies and her smile. He said, "To the world, I was invisible. But to Joy, I mattered. Her kindness saved me." Think about it. Joy didn't build a mega-church. She didn't write a bestselling book. But the seed of God's word in her heart produced a 100-fold harvest. Sam ate that fruit and survived. Many other kids ate that fruit and felt loved. Joy's life had a beautiful, life-saving influence, simply because she shared her fruit.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is why we are called to be Christians. We are called to be a community of good soil, not for our own sake, but for the sake of the neighbourhood around us. Look at the cross. Jesus Christ was the ultimate seed. He was the perfect seed that fell into the ground and died. And because he died and rose again, he produced a harvest of grace, forgiveness, and eternal life. And who did he do it for? For us. Jesus gave all his fruit away so that we could live. So, my challenge for you this week is simple: Don't keep the fruit to yourself. When you go to work, when you talk to your family, when you see your neighbours, ask yourself: "Who can I feed with my fruit today? Who needs a piece of my patience? Who needs a taste of my kindness? Who needs the shade of my love?" Let us open our hearts to God today, so that our lives can become a beautiful harvest that feeds and changes this community. Amen.

HYMN: Make me a channel of your peace TiS 607

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;

and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

(Refrain)

*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, let me bring your light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy.

(Refrain)

Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

We thank you for what you have given to us.

From that generosity, we offer back what we have—our money, time, and our gifts.

Receive these, we pray, and guide us in how they may be used
in the unfolding of your work, in this place and beyond.

Amen

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Let us remember the brokenness and evil in our world today. Let us pray for an end
to all hatred, crime, and division, and for our own hard hearts.

(Silence)

Lord, hear my praying, listen to me;

you know there's evil in what I see.

I know I'm part of all that is wrong:

still, won't you hear my sorrowing song?

Let us remember those who are suffering in our society today. Let us pray for hungry
children, struggling families, and all who have no safe place to call home.

(Silence)

Children are crying, hungry for food,
sick from diseases — God, are you good?
People are homeless, lost and alone:
God, are you hiding? Where have you gone?

Let us remember the injustice and violence in our world today. Let us pray for places torn apart by war, and for all who suffer from greed, poverty, and unfairness.

(Silence)

Why do the rich ones steal from the poor?
Why do they build their weapons of war?
How can you stand the torture and pain,
hope disappearing, freedom in chains?

Let us remember that Jesus stands with the sick, the lonely, and the hurting in our world, especially in our church. Let us pray that we will follow him this week to feed, bless, and change our community.

(Silence)

Jesus, remind us that you are found
with those who cry, with those who are bound;
where there is suffering, you will be there -
help us to follow: Lord, hear my prayer.

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us
***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

Friends, this is not the table of the church.

This is the table of the Lord.
Jesus invites everyone who is hungry for his love.
He welcomes the sick, the lonely, and the hurting.
He welcomes all who want to follow him
to feed, bless, and change the world.
It does not matter who you are or where you have been.
Jesus says, "Come as you are."

COMMUNION HYMN: Feed us now TiS 538

Feed us now, Bread of life,
in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew:
we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life,
come and live within;
let your peace be ours today,
Lord Jesus, we pray.

Piece of bread, cup of wine:
Lord, this food is good:
love and mercy come to us,
your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, cup of wine:
who can understand
how his mercy works in these?
Yet, Lord, we believe.

God is here, O so near,
nearer than our thoughts.
Stay with us where'er we go;
Lord, help us to grow.
God is here, O so near,
in this heaven's meal.
May we always feed on you –
on the bread that is true.

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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 bless you for your continual love and care for every creature.

We praise you for forming us in your image and calling us to be your people.

We thank you that you did not abandon us in our rebellion against your love,
but sent prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation.

Above all we thank you for sending Jesus, your Son,
to deliver us from the way of sin and death

by the obedience of his life,

by his suffering upon the cross,

and by his resurrection from the dead.

We praise you that he now reigns with you in glory and ever lives to pray for us.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit, who leads us into truth,

defends us in adversity, and out of every people unites us into one holy church.

Therefore, with the whole company of saints in heaven and on earth
we worship and glorify you, God most holy, and we sing with joy.

***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 give thanks to God

that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, before he suffered,

gave us this memorial of his sacrifice until he comes again.

The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, 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."

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move in power over us
and over these earthly gifts of bread and wine,
that our sharing of them may be for us
the communion of the body and blood of Christ,
and that we may become one in him.

May his coming in glory find us ever watchful in prayer,
strong in truth and love, and faithful in the breaking of the bread.
Then, at last, all peoples will be free, all divisions healed,
and with your whole creation we will sing your praise,
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

***Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours,
almighty Father, forever. 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

Lord Jesus, thank you for feeding us at your table
and welcoming us just as we are.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit as we go out into the world.
Help us to follow you this week to feed, bless, and change our community.
Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: Jesus Christ is waiting TiS 665

Jesus Christ is waiting,
waiting in the streets;
no-one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger,
fit to wait on you.

Jesus Christ is raging,
raging in the streets;
where injustice spirals
and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes
let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,
healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer,
touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.
Let my care be active,
healing just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,
dancing in the streets;
where each sign of hatred
he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.
Where good conquers evil
let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,
calling in the streets;
"Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet."
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me;

I will follow you.

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BLESSING

Go forth into the world in peace.
Be of good courage, and hold fast to that which is good.
Remember that Jesus loves you just as you are,
and follow him this week to feed, bless, and change your community.

May the Lord bless you and keep you;
may the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
may the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.

SENDING SONG: Shalom, my friends, shalom All Together 195

Shalom, my friends, shalom, my friends,
shalom, shalom.
Shalom, my friends, shalom, my friends,
shalom, shalom.

Shalom, haverim, shalom, haverim,
shalom, shalom.
Shalom, haverim, shalom, haverim,
shalom, shalom.

Share peace, my friends, share peace, my friends,
God's peace, God's peace.
Share peace, my friends, share peace, my friends,
God's peace, God's peace.

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