

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

August 2nd 2026

Changed in the struggle

The Gathering of the People of God

WELCOME & GREETING

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:

We acknowledge that this land is God's land, and God's Spirit dwells here. We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging of the Bidjegal people of the Eora nation, who have cared for this land in time beyond our dreaming. This land on which we live and move was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

KUC MISSION STATEMENT

**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

We have come this morning— whether for the first time or the hundredth,
alone or alongside others, feeling whole or carrying questions.

We are welcome here, just as we are.

So come, let us turn toward the God who meets us in every place.

Let us worship the One who welcomes all.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

SING: TIS 537 Let us talents and tongues employ

**Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy;
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.**

**Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!**

**Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.**

**Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!**

**Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share;
God-Immanuel everywhere.**

**Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!**

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OPENING PRAYER

Holy One, whose power and majesty are awesome beyond our understanding, and whose love is close and present with us, we gather in your presence with grateful and open hearts.

We praise you.

You are the God who meets us in the hard places of life, in the long nights of wrestling and waiting, in the moments when we do not even know who it is we are struggling with. You are with us.

We praise you.

You are the God of abundance—taking what little we have and shaping it into more than enough.

You feed the hungry, you bring healing, and you do not leave us unchanged.

We praise you.

Open our hearts and minds as we worship. Meet us here, and gently shape us, so that we may not leave exactly as we arrived.

We praise you, Holy One. Amen.

SING: TIS 47 Our God our help in ages past

**Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:**

**under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure:
sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defence is sure.**

**Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God
to endless years the same.**

**A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone:
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.**

**Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all of us away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.**

**Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
remain our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy One, you know us completely— the struggles we bring into the light and the ones we keep hidden.

We confess the times we have walked away from striving with you—choosing comfort over transformation, the familiar over the new thing you are doing.

We confess the times we have declared that we have not enough to offer—forgetting that in your hands scarcity becomes abundance.

We come in silence, trusting that you hear even what we cannot put into words.

Silence is held.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

In Jacob's struggle, God was present. In the disciples' uncertainty, God was present.

God is present here.

Nothing we carry is beyond God's transforming love.

In Christ, we are forgiven, held and made new.

Thanks be to God.

PEACE:

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

The Service of the Word

BIBLE READING: Genesis 32:22-31

²²The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

²⁴Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁷So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then the man said,

“You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.” ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 14:13-21

¹³Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

REFLECTION – Deok Hee

Matthew 14:13–21

In my many years of ministry—both in the Korean church and within the Uniting Church here in Australia—I have listened to so many heart-to-heart conversations with church members. Over the years, I have heard people say things like this again and again: “Deok Hee, what I have is just too small.” “I really don’t have much talent or ability.” “What can someone like me possibly offer?” I’ve heard these honest confessions when people talk about their personal lives, and especially when it comes to serving in the church. When asked to volunteer or step into a ministry, so many faithful people hesitate and say: “I’m getting too old.” “I just don’t have the energy or strength anymore.” “Can this tiny thing I have really be useful?” “How could

my small effort actually make any real difference or help anyone?" Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever had those same thoughts? And sometimes, as a church community, we might feel the exact same way. We look at ourselves and think: "Our church isn't very big." "We don't have many people or resources." "What can a small congregation like ours really achieve?" Because we feel that we—or our churches—are too small, we often pull back. We wait until we have more time, more people, more money, or greater ability before we step out. But today's Scripture challenges that exact mindset. The most important question is not, "How much do I have?" or "How big are we?" The real question is, "How actively are we using the little we have with faith?" God is not waiting for us to become big or powerful. Miracles don't start when we have a lot; miracles begin when we actively take whatever small thing we have and put it into action with faith.

In today's Gospel reading, a huge crowd had gathered around Jesus. They had been listening to him teach all day, and as evening came, a problem arose: the people were getting very hungry. The disciples looked at the situation realistically. They said to Jesus: "Jesus, this is a remote place, and it's getting late. Send the crowds away so they can buy some food." Humanly speaking, their calculation was completely correct. It seemed impossible to feed everyone. And right at that moment, we see a small, simple offering—a young boy's lunch. Five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish. Think about that for a second. More than five thousand hungry people, and only five loaves and two fish. In human eyes, it was almost nothing. It was just a humble little lunch. But that small lunch was brought and placed into the hands of Jesus. And what did Jesus do? He took those five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, and blessed them. Then he broke the loaves and kept giving them to the disciples to distribute to the crowd. And something truly amazing happened. Every single person there ate until they were completely full and satisfied! And when they gathered up the leftover pieces, there were twelve full baskets remaining. What an incredible miracle!

Now, as we look at this amazing story, I'd like us to take a moment and focus on the disciples. What was going through their minds? What was their role in this miracle? Jesus could have easily made food appear out of nowhere and distributed it himself. But instead, he gave a surprising command to the disciples: "You give them something to eat." The disciples must have been so confused: "Jesus, how is that even possible? How can we feed this huge crowd with so little?" If the disciples had relied only on human logic and stopped right there, saying, "This makes no sense, we can't do it," the story would have ended before it even began. Of course, it was Jesus who performed the miracle. But Jesus chose to work through the active obedience of his disciples to share that blessing with everyone.

This story of the loaves and fish is not just an ancient story in the Bible. We see this same pattern throughout history. Back in 1889, early Australian missionaries arrived in Korea for the first time. Korea back then was going through deep hardship and severe poverty. Religiously, society was strictly ruled by traditional Confucianism, and many ordinary people relied on shamanism out of fear and uncertainty. The Good News of Jesus Christ was virtually unknown. When those first Australian missionaries arrived, it looked like a very small start—just one or two young missionaries, a few Bibles, and small, humble gatherings. Anyone looking at them might have asked: “What difference can such a small start make here?” One person shared the Good News with another. Small communities of faith were planted. Over time, those tiny seeds grew into an incredible, rich harvest of faith. Today, the Korean church has grown into a vibrant, global faith community—becoming one of the largest missionary-sending nations in the world, taking the Gospel to every corner of the earth! God didn't start by planting giant trees; he started by planting small, faithful seeds.

In fact, I'd like to share one more story happening in Korea today that shows this exact same miracle. There is a well-known Christian singer in Korea named Sean. Many years ago, he was deeply moved by the tragic reality of people suffering from ALS—Lou Gehrig's disease. In Korea, there was not a single specialized hospital to care for these patients and their desperate families. Building one seemed like an impossible dream that would cost millions of dollars. So what did he do? Did he wait until he had all the money? No. He simply laced up his running shoes and decided to run. He ran marathons, 10 kilometres at a time, donating his own small money for every kilometre he completed, and inviting others to join him. At first, people looked at him and scoffed: “What good is one man running? How can a few dollars build a whole hospital?” It looked like a tiny, insignificant drop in the ocean. But Sean kept running with active faith. And then, something beautiful happened. Inspired by his simple, persistent action, thousands of people started running with him. People began donating \$10, \$20 at a time. Celebrities, students, and everyday families joined the movement. And just recently, after 14 long years of running and praying, that small, humble step culminated in a miracle: the very first Lou Gehrig's hospital in Korea opened its doors, bringing healing and comfort to countless families! It all started with one person taking one small step of active faith. God's Kingdom always works this way. When someone says, “Even if it is small, I offer it to God,” that is where transformation begins.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. The story of the five loaves and two fish is not just about food. It is about a question. "What are you willing to place in God's hands?" "What will you give?" A small boy gave what he had. And the miracle started. The disciples obeyed. And the miracle continued. But if they had stopped, if they had said "No," the miracle would have stopped there. Today, God is asking us, "Will you trust me?" "Will you give what you have?" We often look at what we don't have. "I don't have much." "I am not enough." But God says, "Bring what you have to me." In God's hands, small things are not small anymore.

A small lunch fed thousands of hungry people.

A small mission step changed the history of a nation.

A small act of running built a hospital of hope for many.

God is not looking for people who have big things. God is looking for people who are willing to give their small things. So today, let us trust him. Let us give what we have. And let us see what God can do. Amen.

SING: TIS 544 God has a table

Since the world was young

there's a song that's been sung of a promise coming true:

hungry folk will eat and long-lost friends will meet

and the Lord will make all things new.

God has a table

where he calls his friends to a feast that never ends;

God has a table and one day we'll meet him there.

**Jesus saw a crowd who were hungry, and vowed
that they didn't have much food.**

**So he fed that bunch with a little boy's lunch
as a sign that God is good.**

God has a table

where he calls his friends to a feast that never ends;

God has a table and one day we'll meet him there.

**Jesus told a tale of how rich people fail
to accept God's summons to dine.**

**Then before their eyes those without earthly ties
share heaven's finest food and wine.**

God has a table

where he calls his friends to a feast that never ends;

God has a table and one day we'll meet him there.

**Till we hear that word from the mouth of the Lord
saying, "Join me at my table",**

**for the world we'll care
and its good things we will share as long as we are able.
God has a table
where he calls his friends to a feast that never ends;
God has a table and one day we'll meet him there.**

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

God of abundance, we bring what we have—our gifts, our time, our lives.

Like bread shared among many, take what seems not enough and make it more than enough.

Use these gifts as part of your transforming work in the world.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Holy One, we pray today for those who work for transformation in our world—those who refuse to let go until justice comes, strive for justice in difficult and complex situations, will not walk away until something changes.

We pray for those working in places of conflict and division—diplomats, peacemakers, community leaders, those who sit across the table from those they fear or distrust, and stay.

We pray for those working to feed a hungry world—aid workers, food bank volunteers, farmers, advocates—those who look at the scale of need and still offer what little they have.

We pray for those working in our communities—in schools, in hospitals, in families, on our streets, those who look with your eyes and see not a problem to be shunned, but a person to be loved.

May they know that they do not strive alone. May they find in you the strength to sustain them, and may what they offer—however small it seems—be transformed into more than enough.

Holy One, hear our prayer.

Amen.

THE LORDS 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

SING: TIS 691 Faith will not grow from words alone

**Faith will not grow from words alone,
from proofs provided, scripture known;
our faith must feel its way about,
and live with question-marks and doubt.**

**The pattern Jesus showed, we share:
life comes through death, hope through despair.
God is made known in brokenness,
and faith feeds on God's emptiness.**

**The church still tells how Jesus came
through death to glorious life again –
the strangest story! Yet, maybe,
our faith will thrive on mystery.**

**Faith takes the little that we know,
and calls for hope, and tells us: Go!**

**Love and take courage, come what may;
Christ will be with us on the way.**

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BLESSING:

Go into your week— its ordinary moments and its struggles, what is expected and what is uncertain, knowing: the God who met Jacob in the night meets you in your wrestling.

The Christ who took what seemed not enough sustains you when you feel you have little to give.

And the Spirit who moves in all things and through all things is with you in every moment of it.

Supported and sustained, go now to love and serve the Lord.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: TIS 538 Feed us now Bread of life

**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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