

Pentecost 12 - Making Room
16th August 2026 @ 10am @ Kogarah UC

Welcome

Acknowledgement of Country

Australia

It is sometimes hard to remember the events of recent days, let alone the months and years that have passed.

How staggering it is to hold in our hearts and minds the profound history of these lands, with all the stories and connections, that the (*Name/s*) people have carried on Country here over many thousands of years.

We take a moment to appreciate and acknowledge this, honouring the Elders and the generations that have come before, that are here now, and those that will follow.

Lighting the Christ Candle

God is here!

God is always here!

God is with us!

God is always with us!

Introduction to Theme

There are times when we long to belong—to be welcomed and known without question. There are also times when we find ourselves standing at the edges, unsure if there is a place for us. And sometimes, without meaning to, we draw the lines that leave others outside.

Today we gather to listen for Christ's voice among us. As we worship, may we be drawn into the wide welcome of God and learn how to make room for others.

Call to Worship

We come as those who have lingered at the edges,
seeking only a crumb of your grace.

We come hungry and open,

trusting in a love without borders.

The table of God is wider than our vision,
and the mercy of Christ is deeper than our need.

Christ hears the cry of the outsider
and welcomes the faith that refuses to let go.

Let us worship the One who welcomes us all
to the feast of life.

Sing: Table of Plenty

Refrain

Come to the feast of heaven and earth!

Come to the table of plenty!

*My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.*

O come and sit at my table
where saints and sinners are friends.

I wait to welcome the lost and lonely
to share the cup of my love.

Come to the feast of heaven and earth!

Come to the table of plenty!

*My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.*

O come and eat without money;
come to drink without price.

My feast of gladness will feed your spirit
with faith and fullness of life.

Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!
My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.

My bread will ever sustain you
through days of sorrow and woe.
My wine will flow like a sea of gladness
to flood the depths of your soul.
Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!
My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.

Your fields will flower in fullness;
your homes will flourish in peace.
For I, the giver of home and harvest,
will send my rain on the soil.
Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!
My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.

Come to the feast of heaven and earth!
Come to the table of plenty!

***My God will provide for all that we need,
here at the table of plenty.***

Opening Prayer

Holy One,
You are the God of those at the quiet centre
and those at the furthest edge.
We call upon your Spirit today:
Break down the fences we have built.
Widen the circle of our welcome.
We come to you with open hands,
trusting that your grace is not a limited supply,
but a feast that never runs out.
Move among us now.
Turn our crumbs into bread,
and strangers into our siblings.
Amen.

Sing; Draw the circle wide (Strathdee)

***Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.***

**God the still point of the circle round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held together in God's gracious arms.
*Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.***

**Let our hearts touch far horizons so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call.
*Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.***

**Let the dream we dreamed be larger than we ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door.
*Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.***

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

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Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we admit that we like to draw circles.

We put ourselves inside and others outside.

We have been slow to listen and quick to judge.

We have kept your grace to ourselves.

Forgive us. Break our hearts open and widen our welcome.

Silence is held.

Words of Grace

God's mercy does not run out, and God's love has no borders.

You are welcomed and forgiven in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

We pass the Peace

Readings from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 45:1–15

5Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. **2**And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. **3**Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. **4**Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. **5**And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6**For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. **7**God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. **8**So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9**Hurry and go up to my father

and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’ ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Psalm 133

¹How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

²It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

³It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

Sing: *Healer of our every ill* Marty Haugen

Refrain

***Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.***

**You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts.
*Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.***

***In the pain and joy beholding
how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision, God of love.***

*Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.*

Give us strength to love each other,
every sister, every brother;
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide.
*Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.*

You who know each thought and feeling,
teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart.
*Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow,
and hope beyond our sorrow.*

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Readings from the Christian Scriptures

Romans 11:1–2a, 29–32

11I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew

²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

Matthew 15: 21–28

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Offering

We bring these gifts to expand the table.

Take what we have and make it enough for all. Amen.

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Reflection

Matthew 15:10–28

I'd like to begin my reflection today by talking about a movie that almost every single one of us in this room knows—the 1997 blockbuster, *Titanic*. Do you remember that movie? It was an absolute hit. Millions of people all around the world went to the cinemas to watch it. And do you remember that scene right near the end—the ending scene? It was so heart-wrenching, wasn't it? The ship has sunk, and the ocean is pitch black and freezing cold. Rose is lying on a floating door, and Jack is in the icy water, holding her hands. As he is fading away, Jack looks into her eyes and says, 'Promise me you won't give up, no matter how hopeless.' And Rose whispers through her tears, 'I promise. I'll never let go. That scene became unforgettable around the world because it captures something so deeply human. When you love someone with all your heart, you refuse to give up on them. True love doesn't calculate the cost. It doesn't run away when things get dark or hopeless. It holds on with everything it has got, and it says, "I will not let go." When we look around this room today, or when we think about our homes, our kids, our grandkids, our friends, and our neighbours living on our streets

here in Sydney—we all carry people in our hearts. And when the people we love are hurting, when a child loses their way, or when a family member is going through deep water, we feel that exact same desperate need. We want to fight for them. We refuse to give up. We refuse to let go.

Today, in Matthew chapter 15, we meet a woman in the Bible who lived out that very same unshakeable, unstoppable love. She was a Canaanite mother, an outsider living on the margins. Her young daughter was suffering terribly, tormented by a demon. If you've ever watched a child or a loved one suffer from a severe illness, a mental health crisis, or addiction, you know the absolute helplessness that rips through a parent's heart. You can't sleep, you can't eat, and you would trade places with them in a heartbeat if you could. This mother had run out of human options. She had nowhere else to turn. So, when she heard that Jesus was passing through her region, she ran to him. She didn't care about social boundaries, religious traditions, or what the crowd thought about her. She simply cried out from the depths of her soul, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly." Notice what she says—she doesn't just say, "Help my daughter." She says, "Have mercy on me." She felt her child's suffering in her own soul. Her daughter's pain was her pain. But look at how Jesus and the disciples react at first. It's actually quite tough to read. Jesus doesn't say a single word to her. Complete silence. Then the disciples turn to Jesus and basically say, "Jesus, send her away. She's making so much noise and won't stop annoying us." And when Jesus finally speaks, he says something that sounds remarkably cold and harsh: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." How would we respond to that? If someone called us a 'dog' or ignored us like that, we'd be furious! We'd say, "Did he just call me a dog?" We'd feel insulted, turn around, and walk away in anger. But this mother didn't walk away. Why? Because her love for her daughter was far bigger than her ego. She didn't care about her hurt feelings. She only cared about one thing—getting help for her sick child. She takes those harsh words of Jesus and turns them into a humble, unforgettable prayer. She basically says, "Yes, Lord, you are right. I am a dog. I don't deserve anything. But even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." When Jesus heard her response, his whole heart melted. He looked at her with pure joy and said, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And right at that very moment, her daughter was completely healed. Why did Jesus test her like this? Was he being mean or cruel? Not at all. Jesus wanted to show everyone what real, unstoppable

faith looks like. He wanted to show us a love that never gives up—even when God seems completely silent.

In our real lives, we often face that same silence. You pray for a loved one suffering from endless sickness. You pray for a child who is lost and struggling with their future. Some of us came to this land as immigrants, facing so much uncertainty, praying, 'Lord, I don't know what to do. I don't know which way to go. Please help me!' You pray through heavy financial burdens, and month after month, nothing seems to change. You feel like no one is listening to your prayers. But this story reminds us that silence is not a "no." Delay is not a refusal. Sometimes God asks us to keep holding on, deepening our love and our trust as we pray. I remember when I was serving in youth ministry years ago. I had a group of teenagers in my care, and to be honest, many of them were facing really tough situations—broken families, deep personal struggles, confusion, and feeling completely lost. Every single morning, at the crack of dawn, I got up and prayed for them. I brought each of their names before God, one by one, praying for their hearts, their safety, and their futures. And as I kept praying, something changed in me. Their pain became my pain. Their tears became my tears. Month after month, I held them in my heart. But there were days when it felt like nothing was changing, and I wondered if my prayers were making any difference at all. But then, when the time was right, God moved. I began to see quiet, miraculous transformations in those young lives—broken relationships being restored, kids finding hope and purpose again, and lives completely turned around by God's grace. Standing there and watching those miracles happen taught me something I will never forget: persistent prayer, driven by genuine love, is profoundly powerful.

And friends, that calling to pray doesn't just apply to our own children or our church—it extends to our entire community and our world. Think about the world we live in right here in Australia today. We see people doing it tough everywhere. We see families crushed under the rising cost of living. We see young people battling deep mental health issues and falling into drug addiction. On these freezing winter nights, we see homeless neighbours sleeping rough on cold concrete streets. We see refugees desperately seeking safety, and people around us completely broken by loneliness and injustice. It is so easy to look at the news, feel overwhelmed, and think, "What can I possibly do?" Practical care and social justice are essential, but true transformation always starts on our knees. We are called as the church to stand in the gap for those who have no voice, for the marginalized, and for those suffering injustice in our society. What would happen if our church

became a powerhouse of never-ending, persistent prayer for Sydney and beyond? What if we prayed for our local schools, our hospitals, our politicians, and the vulnerable with the same unstoppable desperation as that Canaanite mother? Miracles happen when we refuse to give up on people. So today, who is God placing on your heart? Is it your son or daughter? A friend carrying a heavy burden? Or perhaps a neighbour who is feeling completely forgotten and isolated?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't give up on them. Do not let silence or time make you lose heart. Bring them to Jesus today, bring them tomorrow, and keep knocking on heaven's door. Come with humility, come with trust, and pray with a love that refuses to let go. God hears every cry, he sees every tear, and he honours a faith that never gives up. So let us be like this woman in the Bible. Let us pray with patience, and never stop praying—for our families, for our church, and for this world. Amen.

Announcements

Prayers for Others

Gracious God, we bring the needs of our world
and our neighbours to your table,
trusting that there is more than enough for everyone.
Help us to stop being gatekeepers
and start being bridge-builders.
May our holiness be contagious,
drawing people in rather than pushing them away.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We remember all places where borders
and ancient enmities keep people apart.
We pray for leaders to have the persistence of the Canaanite woman
and the inclusive heart of Christ,
seeking peace and healing for every child.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who feel they only deserve the 'crumbs' of society—
the lonely, the refugee, the misunderstood, and the ignored.

Remind them that they are honoured guests at your table.
Break down the systems that tell them they don't belong.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Merciful God, gather us all into your love.
Feed us, hold us, heal us, and bind us together.
Amen.

Sing: God How Can We Forgive (Ruth Duck) Tune Leoni TiS 473

*God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn?
How can we rise and start anew, our trust reborn?
When human loving fails and every hope is gone,
Your love gives strength beyond our own to face the dawn.*

*When we have missed the mark, and tears of anguish flow,
How can you still release our guilt, the debt we owe?
The ocean depth of grace surpasses all our needs.
A priest who shares our human pain, Christ intercedes.*

*Who dares to throw the stone to damn another's sin,
When you, while knowing all our past, forgive again?
No more we play the judge, for by your grace we live.
As you, O God, forgive our sin, may we forgive.*

Blessing/Benediction

Go now,
into a world that is hungry for mercy.
Remember that the table of God is longer than any fence,
and the love of Christ is wider than any border.
May you have the boldness to ask for what is needed,
the humility to receive what is given,
and the courage to pull up a chair for someone else.
And may the blessing of God—
the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer—
go with you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Exit song: GWA218 / MV169 When hands reach out beyond divides (Keri K. Wehlander

Tune: TiS 585 (Kingfold)

**MV # 169 When Hands Reach Out Beyond
Divides**

**1. When hands reach out beyond divides
and hope is truly found,
each chain of hate will fall away
and bells of peace shall sound,
and bells of peace, of peace shall sound,
and bells of peace shall sound,
each chain of hate will fall away
and bells of peace shall sound.**

**2. When fear no longer guides our steps
and days of war are done,
God's dream for all shall live anew;
our hearts will heal as one,
our hearts will heal, will heal as one,
our hearts will heal as one,
God's dream for all shall live anew;
our hearts will heal as one.**

**3. When race and creed blind us no more,
a neighbour's face we'll see,
and we shall dance the whole world round,
for love will set us free,
for love, yes love will set us free,
for love will set us free,
and we shall dance the whole world round,
for love will set us free.**

Words: Keri K. Wehlander, 2005

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