

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH

23 August 2026

Pentecost 13

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

The Lord calls us together this morning,
asking each of us, "Who do you say that I am?"

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!

He does not just want our knowledge;

He invites us into his love and presence.

Here we are, Lord. We come to know you and to walk with you.

Come, let us worship the living God together!

All: Amen!

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 inviting us into your presence today.

We lay down all our worries and distractions at your feet,
and we turn our eyes to you.

Lord Jesus, touch our hearts and speak to us today.

May this worship be a place where we encounter your living grace
and fall in love with you all over again.

Fill this room with your Holy Spirit and lead us in this time together.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMN: Let us sing to the God of salvation TiS 52

Let us sing to the God of salvation,

let us sing to the Lord our rock!

Let us come to his house with thanksgiving,

let us come before the Lord and sing!

(Refrain)

Praise our Maker, praise our Saviour,

praise the Lord our everlasting King.

Every throne must bow before him,

God is Lord of everything!

In his hands are the earth's deep places

and the strength of the hills is his;

and the sea is the Lord's for he made it,

by his hands the dry land was formed.

(Refrain)

Let us worship the Lord our Maker,

let us kneel to the Lord our God;

for we all are the sheep of his pasture,

he will guide us by his powerful hand.

(Refrain)

Let today be the time when you hear him!
May our hearts not be hard or cold,
lest we stray from the Lord in rebellion,
as his people did in time of old.
(Refrain)

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

***Merciful God,
We confess that we often seek knowledge about you,
rather than a real relationship with you.
Forgive us when we live by other people's words
instead of knowing you for ourselves.
Cleanse our hearts today, Lord.
Forgive our sins, draw us close to you,
and help us to walk with you in love every single day. Amen.***

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news! God does not hold our past against us.
When we come to him with honest hearts,
he forgives us and welcomes us back into his loving embrace.
In Jesus Christ, you are completely forgiven, restored, and loved.
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: If you're happy and you know it

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap clap)
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap clap)
If you're happy and you know it,
then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. (clap clap)

If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet
(stomp stomp)
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet
(stomp stomp)
If you're happy and you know it,
then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet.
(stomp stomp)

If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hooray!" (hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hooray!" (hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it,
then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hooray!" (hoo-ray!)

If you're happy and you know it, do all three
(clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, do all three
(clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it,
then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, do all three.
(clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)

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The Service of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

Exodus 2: 1–10

1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. 3 When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. 4 His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. 5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said

to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. 10 When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Matthew 16:13–20

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

REFLECTION

These days, I often think about our children. They were born right here in Australia as Australian citizens. They grew up here, went to school here, and speak fluent English just like everyone else. Yet, as they grow, they often struggle to find a clear answer to who they really are. Standing between two cultures, they wrestle inside: 'Am I Australian? Am I Korean? Who am I really?' Identity is not always easy to figure out. And just like our children ask, 'Who am I?', Jesus turns to us today and asks the most fundamental question of identity: 'Who do YOU say that I am?'

In our reading from Matthew chapter 16, Jesus asks his disciples a question: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" The disciples start listing all the popular answers of the day. "Well, some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Now, think about those names for a moment. Elijah? Jeremiah? John the Baptist? These were huge figures! They were spiritual heroes, famous prophets, deeply respected people in Jewish history. Calling Jesus "one of the prophets" was actually a massive compliment from the crowd. It showed they respected him. They saw him as a great teacher, a healer, a holy man. But then, Jesus changes the question. He turns directly to his closest friends, looks them in the eye, and asks: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Asking 'Who do people say I am?' is easy to answer. It's just repeating what other people say. You don't need a personal relationship for that! But when Jesus turns to them and says, "Who do YOU say I am?", everything changes. That question cannot be answered with second-hand knowledge. It demands a personal answer. It demands a relationship.

How did Peter answer this question? "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus was delighted to hear Peter's words.

I have seen many people in my life who confessed Jesus just like Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Most of them experienced the love of God, and their lives were totally changed by God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I can never forget a boy named Tory. He was a 16-year-old high school student, one of my youth group members when I was working as a youth worker for a Korean congregation here in Sydney. Tory was a regular attendant at Sunday worship, but he was also the person who very often embarrassed his youth group leaders with lots of challenging questions about the Bible. Shortly after 9/11 happened in the US, Tory said, "There is no God. If there is a God, how come so many innocent people are killed by terror and wars in this world? Where is God?" He rejected all the Bible lessons. He didn't believe the Bible at all. However, he was still there in the service and in the Bible study group every Sunday, asking lots of questions against the Bible. One year, our youth group—around 40 of us altogether—went to Tasmania on a mission trip for two weeks. Tory followed us just for fun. Our daily program was simple: in the morning we had worship and prepared for street ministry like dramas and worship dance. In the afternoon we went out to shopping malls to share the Gospel, and in the evening we had prayer time and shared our experiences of the day. One evening, something amazing happened. As usual, we were praying for Australia, for Tasmania, for our ministry, and for each other. I led the praise and the prayer time. We started very quietly, singing together and offering silent prayers. But as we were praying in silence, suddenly, a few teenagers began to cry out to God with deep passion. In an instant, the Holy Spirit swept through the room like a rushing wind—just like the Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Every single student and Youth Leader fell to their knees, crying, repenting, and praying out loud together. Standing at the front, I was completely overwhelmed and stunned by what was happening right before my eyes. The presence of God was so powerful that I couldn't even stop the prayer time—it went on for more than three full hours. And the most unbelievable thing was that Tory—the boy who was always against God—was right there in the middle of the prayer group. He was praying, shedding tears, and confessing his sins. He was totally changed by the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. When we came back to Sydney, I asked Tory to share his testimony in front of the adult congregation on Sunday. To this day, I still cannot forget the very first sentence of his testimony. He opened his mouth and said with a trembling voice: "God is the living God, and he is my Saviour and Lord." And then he broke down in tears. I think Peter had a very similar experience to Tory. Throughout the Gospel, Peter walked side by side with Jesus, listening to his teaching, seeing his miracles, and watching how he lived and loved. Through this personal journey with Jesus, Peter was completely transformed—and that is why he could confess from the bottom of his heart: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

I believe that who a person is to us is always defined by our relationship with them. Think about it for a moment. Identity and titles don't mean much without a living connection. Let me give you an honest example. I am a church minister, as you know. But if my relationship with someone breaks down completely, if there is no trust, no respect, and no love left, then even though my official title is "minister," that person will not truly acknowledge me as their minister anymore. The title loses its meaning because the relationship is broken. Or think about a family. A man might biologically be a father to a child. But if that man was cruel, violent, or abusive to the child growing up, that child will find it almost impossible to truly call him "Father" from the heart. Legally, yes, he is a father. But relationally, he is not. When a relationship is broken, titles lose all their power. Who someone is to you is always born out of relationship. And that is why Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do YOU say I am?" Asking "Who do people say I am?" is easy to answer. You just repeat public opinions or rumours. You can say, "Oh, people think you're a great teacher, a famous prophet, a noble historical figure." That requires zero personal investment. But when Jesus turns to you personally and asks, "Who am I to you?", he is not testing your theological knowledge. He is asking about your relationship with him. Knowing about Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus. Knowing about him is just information. But knowing him personally—like Tory did, like Peter did—is a life-changing relationship.

So today, I don't want us to just leave this service with good thoughts in our heads. I want us to have an actual encounter with the living Jesus right here, right now. I would like to invite everyone to close your eyes for a moment. Just close your eyes, take a deep breath, and quiet your heart. Imagine for a moment that Jesus is standing right here in front of you. He knows your name. He knows your struggles, your joys, your fears, and your heart. He looks gently into your eyes, and he asks you the very same question he asked Peter: "Who do YOU say that I am?"

(Silence)

When Jesus asks you today, "Who am I to you?"... what is your heart saying to him right now? Don't worry about finding fancy or "churchy" words. Just speak to him honestly in the quietness of your heart.

(Silence)

Loving God, thank you for inviting us into a real, personal relationship with you. Lord Jesus, as you stand before us today and ask, "Who do you say I am?", we want to answer from the bottom of our hearts: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are my Saviour, my Lord, and my Friend." Where our hearts have grown cold or distant, draw us close again today. Walk with us throughout this week, and help us to love you more every single day. Amen.

HYMN: The power of your love TiS 685

Lord, I come to you: let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace that I found in you.
And, Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away by the power of your love.

(Refrain)

*Hold me close, let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side:
and as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you:
your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love.*

Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind as your will unfolds in my life,
in living every day in the power of your love.

(Refrain)

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OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

Loving God,
Thank you for giving us your Son, Jesus Christ,
and for inviting us into a living relationship with you.
We bring these gifts as our grateful response to your love.
Multiply them to bless our church, our community, and those in need.
May all that we give show the world who you are to us.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Let us bring our prayers for the world, for our community, and for ourselves before
our loving God.

Lord Jesus, you ask us today, "Who do you say that I am?"
Help us to answer not with empty words,
but with lives that show your love to those around us.
As we come to know you personally,

send us out to be your hands and feet in a hurting world.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for our world—a world so deeply loved by you,
yet broken by conflict and suffering.

We pray for nations torn apart by war and violence,
for those facing natural disasters,
and for families who have lost loved ones, homes, and security.

Comfort those who grieve, protect the innocent,
and bring wisdom to global leaders
that they may pursue true peace and justice.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in our own nation and community
who are suffering in silence—the poor, the lonely, the sick,
and those struggling under heavy financial and emotional burdens.

We pray for Australia, for our political and economic leaders.

Give them compassionate hearts and wise minds
to lead with integrity, serving the good of all people, especially the most vulnerable.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for our church family.

Though we are a small congregation,
you have been faithful to us in the past and present,
and we trust you with our future.

Guide us step by step as we seek your will.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who are suffering—
touch those who are sick with your healing hands, comfort the lonely,
and strengthen all who carry heavy burdens.

May we remain a warm, loving home where no one walks alone,
continuously sharing Christ's love with the vulnerable in our community.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Loving God, gather all these prayers—
those spoken aloud and those held in our hearts.

United in your Spirit, we now pray together the words 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

This is not our table; it is the table of Jesus Christ.
He invites all who love him, all who seek him,
and all who desire to walk with him in faith.
You do not need to be perfect or have all the answers—
you only need to come.
So come, taste and see that the Lord is good.
All are welcome at the Lord's table.

COMMUNION HYMN: Come as you are TiS 693

“Come as you are: that’s how I want you.
Come as you are; feel quite at home,
close to my heart, loved and forgiven.
Come as you are: why stand alone?

“No need to fear, love sets no limits;
no need to fear, love never ends;
don’t run away shamed and disheartened,
rest in my love, trust me again.

“I came to call sinners, not just the righteous;
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
why do you think I’d love you the less?

“Come as you are; that’s how I love you;
come as you are, trust me again.

Nothing can change the love that I bear you;
all will be well, just come as you are."

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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.

All: Why do we give thanks and praise before this table?

Minister:

We give thanks for God's work of creation, liberation, and salvation.

It is indeed right, our duty and delight,

that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks to you, O holy Lord, eternal God.

You created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them;

you made us in your own image;

and in countless ways you show us your mercy.

Therefore, with choirs of angels and the whole company of heaven,

we worship and adore your glorious name,

joining our voices in their unending praise:

***All: 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.

Minister:

All glory and blessing are yours, O holy God,

for in your mercy, you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ.

He took our human nature

and suffered death on the cross for our redemption.

There he made a perfect sacrifice for the sins for the whole world.

We praise you that before he suffered and died,

our Savior gave us this holy sacrament

and commanded us to continue it until he comes again.

All: *Why do we eat bread at this table?*

Minister:

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread.
After giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,
“Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

All: *Why do we drink from the cup at this table?*

Minister:

The same night Jesus took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

All: *What do we remember at this table?*

Minister:

We remember God’s gracious love for us,
Christ’s death and resurrection for us,
and the Spirit’s tender care for us.
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All: *Dying, you destroyed our death;
rising, you restored our life.
Lord Jesus, come in glory.***

Minister:

Merciful God, pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine,
that in eating and drinking we may be made one with Christ and one another.
Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, now and 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

Loving God,

We thank you for feeding us at your table
with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

Through this holy meal, you have reminded us
who Jesus is and how deeply we are loved.

Send us out now in the power of your Spirit—
refreshed, forgiven, and united—

to share your love, peace, and grace with a waiting world.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Sending Forth of the People of God
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HYMN: Over my head

*Over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere.*

Leader: Oh, when the world is silent,

People: I hear music in the air;

Leader: Oh, when the world is silent,

People: I hear music in the air;

Leader: Oh, when the world is silent,

People: I hear music in the air;

All: there must be a God somewhere.

*Over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere.*

Leader: And when I'm feeling lonely,

People: I hear music in the air;

Leader: And when I'm feeling lonely,

People: I hear music in the air;
Leader: And when I'm feeling lonely,
People: I hear music in the air;
All: there must be a God somewhere.

*Over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere.*

Leader: Now when I think on Jesus,
People: I hear music in the air;
Leader: Now when I think on Jesus,
People: I hear music in the air;
Leader: Now when I think on Jesus,
People: I hear music in the air;
All: there must be a God somewhere.

*Over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
over my head, I hear music in the air;
there must be a God somewhere.*

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BLESSING

Go out into the world with confidence and peace.
Remember who Jesus is to you,
and walk with him in love each day.
Be his hands and feet in a hurting world,
and share his grace wherever you go.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

SENDING SONG: May God's blessing

May God's blessing surround you each day,
as you trust Him and walk in His way.
May His presence within
guard and keep you from sin,
go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

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