

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH
September 13th 2026
Season of Creation Land Sunday
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

Come, people formed from dust and breath.

We come to remember the ground beneath our feet.

Come, children of earth and sky.

We come with gratitude for the land that sustains us.

Come with your grief for what has been wounded.

We come with hope for what may yet be restored.

Come and worship God whose love reaches to the ends of the earth.

We come to listen, that we might learn to tend what has been entrusted to us.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

God is here

God is always here

God is with us

God is always with us

SING: Jesus lover of my soul TIS 211

**Jesus, lover of my soul,
Jesus I will never let you go.
You've taken me from the miry clay,
you've set my feet upon the rock
and now I know...**

**I love you, I need you,
though my world may fall I'll never let you go.
My Saviour, my closest friend,
I will worship you until the very end.**

**Jesus, lover of my soul,
Jesus I will never let you go.
You've taken me from the miry clay,
you've set my feet upon the rock
and now I know...**

**I love you, I need you,
though my world may fall I'll never let you go.
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OPENING PRAYER

God of mountains and riverbeds, of volcanic soil and coastal dunes, you formed us from dust and placed us upon the earth not as conquerors but as caretakers.

Teach us to walk gently, to take only what we need, and leave room for those who come after us.

Where land has been exhausted, teach us restoration.

Where communities have been displaced, teach us justice.

Where despair threatens to overwhelm, teach us hope rooted in action.

Amen.

SING: Take ,Take off your Shoes TIS 651

**Take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground;
take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground.
Well, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof
from the waters beneath to the heavens above,
so take, take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on my holy ground,
you're standing on my holy ground.**

**On the eighth day of creation, well, the Lord looked around
at the power stations, freeways and the junk on the ground,
the factories with their waste-dumps and their chimneys so high,
you couldn't see the sun for all the smog in the sky.
Well, kids, you really filled the earth and then you subdued it,
but there's nothing in my book that says you've got to pollute it. So ...**

**Take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground;
take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground.
Well, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof
from the waters beneath to the heavens above,
so take, take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on my holy ground,
you're standing on my holy ground.**

**You've heated up my rivers with industrial mills,
you're killing off my oceans with your wastes and your spills,
you're fishing like there'll always be an endless supply,
and fighting one another for what's left to divide.
You didn't want advice when I first gave you dominion,
but maybe now it's time to get a second opinion.
So,**

**Take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground;
take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground.
Well, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof
from the waters beneath to the heavens above,
so take, take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on my holy ground,
you're standing on my holy ground.**

Your scientific minds — make sure you use them with care:
you're breaking down my ozone layer up in the air,
your fertilizer's turning mighty rivers bright green,
some folks are getting fatter while so many grow lean.
I told you to be fruitful and you sure multiplied,
but the rich took all the land and never learned to divide.
So,

Take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground;
take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on holy ground.
Well, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof
from the waters beneath to the heavens above,
so take, take, take off your shoes,
you're standing on my holy ground,
you're standing on my holy ground.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Creator God, we confess that we have often mistaken ownership for relationship and extraction for entitlement.

We have treated land as commodity rather than part of community.

We confess the ways we participate in systems that deplete soil, pollute waterways, and leave future generations carrying burdens.

Forgive us for what we have ignored, for what we have justified, and for what we have been afraid to change.

Teach us repentance that hope can be planted, watered, and grow.

Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

Hear the good news: God who heard Abel's blood crying from the ground hears the cries of creation.

God whose presence reaches to the ends of the sea has not abandoned the earth.

Grace still grows. Restoration still happens. New life still emerges from damaged ground.

In Christ, reconciliation remains possible.

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 3:14-19 4:8-16, PSALM 139:7-12, ROMANS 5:12-17.

ONE: Read Psalm 139:7.

⁷Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

TWO: Read Genesis 3:14–19.

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

THREE: Read Romans 5:12–14.

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—
¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

Two: Read Genesis 4:8–14.

⁸Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰And the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!
¹⁴Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.”

ONE: Read Psalm 139:8–10.

⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

⁹If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Two: Read Genesis 4:15–16.

¹⁵Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.

¹⁶Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

THREE: Read Romans 5:15–17.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

ONE: Read Psalm 139:11–12.

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"

¹²even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 18:21-35.

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw

what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

REFLECTION – SALT BUSH

MATTHEW 18:21-35.

G'day friends, and welcome to Saltbush: Uniting the Scattered Communities, Word Around the Bush. I'm Reverend Tim Jensen, and I'm standing here again in Bundjalung National Park, which is such a good place to come and film, but it's also a great place to come and visit. And as the name suggests, we are standing in Bundjalung country, and we pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging.

Now, for this particular reading in Matthew, I think it's really important that from the very beginning, we acknowledge that this is a difficult reading, because forgiveness can be difficult.

There are some actions that we may find really easy to forgive, like someone forgetting to take out the garbage for collection, and that can be really annoying, but it's easy to forgive. It happens. We do it occasionally. It's not a big deal.

Then there are those actions that cause so much violence to our being that forgiveness feels almost impossible, if not absolutely impossible. And then receiving forgiveness can be difficult. We may hold that shame of wrongdoing, of the harm that we may have caused someone else, and have felt totally unworthy of forgiveness no matter how many times we have been forgiven.

And the other thing about forgiveness is that it can be manipulated by others. Have you ever felt deeply hurt by the actions of another person and found it difficult to forgive, particularly because they keep on doing the same thing, believing they'll be forgiven again? And to add insult to injury, you may have been told by them or by others, and sometimes they even quote this passage, that you have to keep on forgiving. It just compounds the abuse, where you may now become considered to be the villain in the story for withholding forgiveness.

So Peter's question reverberates down through the ages. How often is enough? And we may consider Jesus's answer as bizarre and unattainable. Yet here, the number that Jesus offers highlights that forgiveness is a sacred act, a divine movement, an eternal expression of the nature of God. Something that we can also participate in. As we experience the sacredness of God's mercy, we are freed to show mercy to others.

In the parable, the slave owes the king an impossible debt, a debt that would be crushing for the slave, and the consequences of not repaying the debt means that his family will be imprisoned. However, after begging for mercy, after searching the king for forgiveness, the king wipes the debt clean. The slave is free, and is free from the crushing burden of the consequences of the debt.

So what should his response to this life-changing event be? And as we look at this parable and his response, how would you respond? How do you respond as well? How would it change you? Now, the expectation is that you have received mercy, and in receiving mercy, you will show mercy. And quoting the prayer that Jesus taught, the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." So this is a really important theme in the Bible, forgiveness and mercy, forgiveness of the debt, forgiveness of the sin, forgiveness of the transgression in our own lives, allowing us the freedom then to forgive others.

Well, it's interesting in this parable, the king's mercy apparently did nothing for the slave. And he goes off and he demands that a fellow slave repay an amount which is insignificant compared to what the king had forgiven him. He chooses not to be compassionate towards another. He has absolutely no appreciation of the agony that this debt or this action of his causes the other. He lacks all empathy, and he upsets those around him, who go and tell the king, and the king is outraged. And in his outrage, he says in verse 33 to this ungrateful slave, "Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?" And this becomes the verse that actually defines it all.

As we encounter God's mercy, and as we receive God's mercy and forgiveness, how then do we show that to others? How do we extend that to all other people? And so moving away from the literal then, how many times should we forgive, or that we must forgive, the core message here, I believe, is that as we encounter mercy, how do we show mercy? As we encounter God's grace, how are we gracious to others? As we know we are loved by God, how do we show that love to others?

Now, what that mercy and grace and love looks like depends on the context, on the situation. And in the case of mercy or forgiveness, what were the depths of the betrayal that we have encountered? Was it something as accidental as not taking the bins out, or was it so much deeper than that? So mercy, compassion, and grace and love are the outpouring expressions of how we encounter God and how then we are to express that to others, to offer that to others.

So whatever way we choose to respond, the interesting thing about this also is the parable is so clear that we do not imprison others with the debt that they owe us. We allow them the freedom to move on with their lives, with or without us.

So this is a difficult reading. Forgiveness is difficult. Yet it is hoped that we know that it is also where we encounter the compassionate divine mercy of God, freeing us to be a people of grace, love, and mercy, to be a people of the living God. God bless you as you journey this way.

Amen.

SING: Amazing grace how sweet the sound TIS 129

**Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.**

**As grace once taught my heart to fear
so grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!**

**Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**

**The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**

OFFERING & OFFERING PRAYER

As we bring our gifts today, we remember that every harvest begins in soil and every future begins with hope.

Receive these offerings and use them for healing, justice, and renewal, for people, places, and generations yet to come.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

God of soil and stone, we pray for lands scarred by mining, war, erosion, and drought.

Hear our prayer

and help us live the hope we have in you.

We pray for those who are displaced as climate refugees, for those who are experiencing the effects of climate crisis, and for those who have lost homes and livelihood through flood, fire and other disasters in recent months.

Hear our prayer

and help us live the hope we have in you.

We pray for indigenous communities whose relationships with land have too often been ignored or broken.

Hear our prayer

and help us live the hope we have in you.

We pray for all who feel overwhelmed by ecological grief.

Give us courage to act, wisdom to listen, and patience for the long work of restoration.

Hear our prayer

and help us live the hope we have in you.

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.

COMMUNION:

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.

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?

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.

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?*

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?*

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?*

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.

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

The Bread of Life, Christ's body broken for you.

The Cup of Hope, Christ's blood shed for you.

The gifts of God for You the People of God.

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

SING: O God, you search me and you know me SEASONS 7-28

**O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.**

**You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
in ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.**

**Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.**

**Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.**

**For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.**

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BLESSING:

**Go now as people of dust and breath.
May God who formed humanity from the earth give you humility.
May Christ, who entered the ground and rose again, give you hope.
May Spirit, who renews the face of the earth, give you courage for the work
ahead.
Go in peace to tend, restore, and leave the ground better than you found it.
Amen.**

SING: Touch the earth lightly TIS 668

**Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.**

**We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster,
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!**

**Let there be greening,
birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.**

**God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ re-connect us,
using us gently and making us one.**