



Kaurihohore Historic Church

Email: kaurichurch@gmail.com Phone: 946 0813



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 19 January 2025 – Epiphany 2

The service this morning has been prepared by Rosalie Gwilliam,
one of our Lay Preachers

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Humility: we recognise we do not have all the answers but are prayerfully journeying together as we try to seek them.

Welcome

Call to Worship

There are many gifts, but one Spirit.

There are many services, but one Lord.

We offer our gifts in the service of the living Christ.

We offer our gifts to the service of others and to the delight of the living God.

Prayer

Spirit of God, your name is revered from mountaintop to the sea; your glory is praised in the east and the west, in the north and in the south; your Spirit unites us through your wondrous gifts.

Delight in us once more, Holy One, that the joy of your salvation may spill over into our lives and make us one with you and with one another.

Guide our hearts and minds into the fullness of your grace, that we may truly be your people. Amen.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Hymn HFTC 109: [Jesus Come! For We Invite You](#)

Tune: Praise My Soul

Prayer

Steadfast God, we delight in the river of your love and in the fountain of your grace. May your word of life speak to our hearts, that your message of love may abide in us, as your Spirit abides in your house. Strengthen us with your generous gifts and shine through our lives, that we may glorify you each and every day.
Amen

Psalm 36:5 - 10

Your love is faithful, Lord, and even the clouds in the sky can depend on you.

Your decisions are always fair.

They are firm like mountains, deep like the sea, and all peoples and animals are under your care.

Your love is a treasure, and everyone finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

You give your guests a feast in your house, and you serve a tasty drink that flows like a river.

The life-giving fountain belongs to you, and your light gives light to each of us.

Our Lord, keep showing love to everyone who knows you, and use your power to save all whose thoughts please you.

Contemporary English Version 1995

Hymn MHB 745: [All Praise to our Redeeming Lord](#)

Readings

God delights in God's people and in all creation. Redemption and reconciliation are not for Israel alone, but extend to the animals and the very land itself. The steadfast love of God we witness in the Psalms is seen in the bestowal of God's spiritual gifts. Since all gifts come from the same Spirit, we are to treasure one another's gifts. Jesus himself exhibits God's delight and the gift of hospitality as he gladdens the wedding of Cana by turning water into wine. God delights in Israel as a groom delights in his bride. Should we be surprised the Jesus' first miracle occurred at a wedding?

1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 11 (page 1783)

John 2: 1 - 11 (page 1649)

Reflection

How many times have you been told to make something of yourself? To do something significant in this world? All through school, and, for some of us, university and beyond, we are told that if we work hard and make good choices, we will achieve success. If we're struggling to work out how best to use our gifts, no worries: hundreds of books and podcasts and websites and careers counsellors are devoted to helping us achieve personal fulfilment and success.

In our society, people with particular gifts are given high status: just think of the ways we honour those who are articulate, highly literate, efficient, good at hiding their feelings, or, good at making money. Even Christians fall into these patterns. Every church honours some gifts more highly than others. Here, perhaps, we place a high value on the gifts of preaching, liturgy writing, and justice seeking, while some other churches might particularly honour the gifts of speaking in tongues, extemporaneous prayer, or street corner evangelism.

We all honour some gifts more highly than others; and we also honour the holders of some gifts more highly than other people. We give special status to people with particular gifts, and sometimes we even envy those people. We live in a society in which it is all too easy to take pride in personal gifts, and all too easy to envy the gifts of others – because the world we live in believes that gifts are gifts to an individual.

But this is a particularly Western way to live. Behind all our assumptions about personhood and giftedness, ownership and success, lies the idea of individualism; that is, that each of us is a separate, independent, distinct person. For the most part, we assume that our beliefs and actions are not affected by other people or the world around us. And we also assume that people around us are separate, independent, distinct individuals with whom we interact.

Because we are so embedded in this worldview, it can be hard to see it, or to see how it permeates everything that we believe and do. However, it is precisely this worldview, or this understanding of personhood, which leads us to assume that all gifts belong to individuals, whether gifts of the spirit, or other talents, or material wealth.

Vincent Donovan, a Catholic priest who was a missionary to the Masai people, observed that 'no one really tried to stand out in a community, perhaps didn't even want to. Talents that people possessed and displayed were accepted and recognised by the community and put to good use by the community. 'In the society he observed, gifts didn't lead to the achievement and success of an individual, nor to anyone getting ahead. Instead, gifts were for the community and used by the community for the good of the community. To people with this worldview, the words of the Apostle Paul would be self-evident: all gifts are given 'for the common good'. But to individualists, that is, to most of us, these words are very hard to hear, and very difficult to put into action.

Because for many of us, one of the biggest obstacles to faith is its corporate nature. We are called as individuals, we make individual testimonies and professions of faith – but, when we are baptised, we are baptised into the body of Christ, the church family.

At this point, we are joined with a group of people, a group which, given half a chance, we probably wouldn't choose. And being bound to that group, we are bound in love from that day on. We become a member of the body, called to serve others and serve the world.

This is why we are given gifts: of wisdom, or prayer, or music-making, or discernment, or witnessing, or hospitality, or whatever else. It's as members of the body that we are given the gifts that are needed for the body to serve in this time and this place. Our gifts are not given to us individually, for our own advancement, or for personal success. Our gifts are given to the community. As an individual, we are only the vessels for these gifts, nothing more.

Those of us who might have formed our identity on the basis of our gifts, or talents, or resources, can find this thought distressing: Christ doesn't care about status. We are not being asked to make something of ourselves, or to stand on our own two feet. We are not expected to be successful, or to use our gifts for personal fulfilment. Any pride we take in our gifts is not acceptable, because it assumes that we have earned our gifts, when in truth they are given from God. But to those of us who have felt unbearable pressure to succeed, or who have felt like a failure, or who cannot see a way forward: to those of us who tried to make something of ourselves and saw it all turn to ashes: to those of us who stand on our own two feet and are aching with loneliness: we can lay our burdens down. God doesn't love us for our achievements; God doesn't judge us for our failures; we don't need to prove ourselves, or go it alone.

So come, bringing the gifts that you are and the gifts that were given to you at your baptism. Bring them into community, and let God use them for God's purposes. Because, when God takes everyone's gifts – when God stitches all these people and all these gifts together – we form the body of Christ. Our individual achievements will never provide us with the full, rich identities that we long for, but this doesn't matter one little bit: for when we join together in worship, work and play, then Christ himself is made manifest in the world.

It is precisely when we give up trying to forge our own identity – it is precisely when we submit our gifts and ourselves to the body of Christ, that our true identity will be revealed, the identity we took on when we were baptised. As the body continues to take shape and grow, we will continue to unearth new gifts, surprising gifts, in ourselves and each other. We will forge identities far richer, far more familiar and far more satisfying than anything we could have imagined for ourselves.

We are the body of Christ – His Spirit is with us – and with it comes all the giftedness and all the belonging and all the identity we could ever hope for.

So now, let us exercise the gift of music as we join together and affirm the faith of the body.

Hymn FFS 67: We Are Many We Are One

Lyrics: Colin Gibson

Tune: Hamilton

1. We are many, we are one,
and the work of Christ is done
when we learn to live in true community,
as the stars that fill the night,
as a flock of birds in flight,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine;
as the branches of a tree,
as the waves upon the sea,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine.

2. All division is made whole
when we honour every soul,
find the life of God in every you and me,
as the fingers of a hand,
as the grains that form the sand,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine;
as the threads upon the loom,
as a field of flowers in bloom,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine.

3. We will join creation's song,
make a world where all belong,
build as one in peace and loving harmony,
as the voices of a choir,
as the flames within a fire,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine;
as the snowflakes in the snow,
as the colours of a bow,
as the cluster of the grapes upon the vine.

Offering

Divine Spirit, as you changed water into wine at the wedding at Cana, change our simple gifts into great joy for those in need. Bless and embolden our hearts, that we may share our gifts with others, that they may discover in themselves the gifts of your Spirit. Amen

The Common Good

Community Time

Prayer

Today we are going to pray for those living in need and poverty, and we're going to do it by using brief word pictures of individual people, remembering that's it's people, not statistics, who are hungry and in need.

Chandri is 31 years old. He lives in a corrugated iron shack on the edge of the city. He picks up work when he can. He lost his wife and child through cholera, but he wants to start again. He loves life, music, children, even the odd game of cricket when there's space and a ball. He has no money, and only a few possessions, but he wants to love someone, build a new family, make plans for a better future.

So, let's pray now in silence for people like Chandri all over the world, people in need of love and hope

Silence

Olga is 18. She is optimistic and cheerful, but then you need that in Russia these days. She is a student, reading English, and good at it. Mother is divorced, money hard to come by. A loaf of bread costs 300 times more today than it did a few years ago. How do you keep up with that? It's hard to know what will happen politically; it's all very fragile. But this is Olga's country, Holy Russia, and she wants to see it through. At least the churches are open again, and the icons are sparkling in the candle-light, and priests are adjusting to all the new demands. Olga drops into church most days, and then she feels stronger.

So, let's pray now in silence, for people like Olga, people in need of stability and determination.

Silence

Jim used to have a job. A flat and a family too. But the factory closed; his job with it. He lost his confidence and couldn't find work. So then the days were long, lunchtime TV, and afternoon TV, lunchtime drink and afternoon drink. Rows at home, more rows, and him leaving. Whangarei without a job or money isn't much fun.

Nor is the bridge in Tarewa Road, and a cardboard mattress. Does Jim have a future, or just a long past?

So, let's pray in silence for people like Jim, people in need of a break and a new start.

Silence

Lord Jesus, you came with love from your heavenly Father, and still today you come with love for every human being, the ones we know and love ourselves, and also the ones we pass in the bus queue, see on the news or know only as statistics. Lord, revive our capacity to love, so that we serve you gladly wherever you make yourself known to us. So we shall truly be agents of your kingdom of hope and love, here on earth. Amen

Hymn: As the Magi

Tune: Blaenwern

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| 1. As the Magi scanned the heavens
Looking for a cosmic sign,
Give us faith to search creation,
For a glimpse of truth divine. | 3. As the Magi sought out wisdom,
In a strange and foreign land,
Lead us out beyond our comfort,
In our quest to understand. |
| 2. As the Magi made their journey
Though their end remained unclear,
Guide us down the unknown highways,
Choosing wonder over fear. | 4. As the Magi found their saviour,
In a helpless baby's face,
Give us eyes to see your glory
In the most unlikely place |

Benediction

May you know the steadfast love of God, this day and this week.
May you share that same love with all that you encounter:
In the name of God who is lover, beloved and love itself.
We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Sung Amen

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