



Kaurihohore Historic Church

Email: kaurichurch@gmail.com Phone: 946 0813



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 26 January 2025 – Epiphany 3

The service this morning is led by Mike Nielsen 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.

Curiosity: we are committed to a life of learning, questioning, and exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, and the Bible.

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

*You are invited to stand if you are able, for
the hymns and the offering prayer*

Welcome

Mōrena e te whānau. Good morning church family. My name is Mike, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to worship here at Kaurihohore this morning.

We're currently in the season of Epiphany, the season of the church calendar that sits between Christmas and Lent.

Before our call to worship I wanted to share something Diana Butler Bass writes about Epiphany – she says:

The origins of Epiphany as a church festival are somewhat vague, as is the very definition of the word. “Epiphany” can mean manifestation, revelation, appearance, insight, enlightenment, or a shining forth. Epiphany begins with the story of the Magi, three astrologers, who follow a brilliant star to the place of Jesus’ birth and honor the child with gifts. Upon seeing the baby, they were “overwhelmed with joy,” and fell on their knees.

The wise men awaited a sign in the sky — a star — to guide them on this journey. Revelations break in, light shines forth, and glory appears. Such things are from the realms of mystery, awe, and wonder. They surprise and disrupt the normal course of existence. Epiphanies are not of our making.

We may not create epiphanies, but we respond to them. Epiphanies grab a hold of us; we can’t shake them. Epiphanies ask something of us. The star is an invitation, a calling to do something — to act.

Call to Worship

Once again we gather,
From different homes and circumstances,
With different dreams and ideas, different values and tastes,
Different in age and race, different in gender and language,
Yet, we are one family – Children of God every one;
We join our hearts in worship,

**We join our voices in praise
And we join our lives as the Body of Christ. Amen**

Source: John van de Laar

Opening Prayer

Jesus brought the Good News to the people of his time.

We are called to bring the Good News to people of our time.

Jesus brought Good News to the poor.

We are called to encourage the sharing of this world's goods.

Jesus proclaimed freedom to those who were captive.

We are called to set free those who are bound by tradition or addiction.

Jesus gave sight to the blind

We are called to be the bringers of insight and fresh understanding.

Jesus set free the oppressed.

We are called to speak and act for people who face discrimination because of their age, race, or gender.

Loving God,

like Jesus, help us to be Good News bringers. Amen.

Source: David Sparks (Responsive Prayers Year C)

Hymn: As the Magi Scanned the Heavens (David Bjorlin; Tune: [Omni Die](#))

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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. |

Scripture Reading: Psalm 19

Prayer

During this season of Epiphany,
we are still the people walking.
We are still people in the dark,
and the darkness looms large around us,
beset as we are by fear,
 anxiety,
 brutality,
 violence,
 loss —
a dozen alienations that we cannot manage.

We are — we could be — people of your light.
So we pray for the light of your glorious presence
as we wait for your appearing;
we pray for the light of your wondrous grace
as we exhaust our coping capacity;
we pray for your gift of newness that
will override our weariness;
we pray that we may see and know and hear and trust
in your good rule.

That we may have energy, courage, and freedom to enact
your rule through the demands of this day.
We submit our day to you and to your rule, with deep joy and
high hope.

Adapted from: Walter Brueggemann, Prayers for a Privileged People

Lord's 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:14-21

Reflection

I started back at work again this week, and spent a couple of days in Wellington catching up with my team. As is always the case at this time of the year, the conversation turned to questions about what we got up to over the summer break. My answer: I read a lot of books!

And not just me – our entire family has been on a reading binge over summer, devouring all sorts of stories by some fantastic storytellers like Richard Osman, Dav Pilkey, Rick Riordan, and J K Rowling. There's something amazing about the way these stories are woven together to bring such joy, excitement, intrigue, and thoughtfulness into our lives.

Something fun that Kim's introduced us to is an app to track what books we've read called StoryGraph – not only does it help you remember what you've been reading, but it also shows you how many pages you've read and summarises what types of books you've been reading, by genre, pace, and even mood. It's great fun!

Speaking of stories, our readings from Nehemiah and Luke this morning have a common theme running through them of scripture being read, of stories being told.

In Nehemiah, all of the people of Israel, men and women, gather together in Jerusalem and Ezra reads the scroll of Instruction, the Torah, to them. Not just a short reading either, he read from early morning until the middle of the day! The Israelites, full of passion and love for God, have just finished rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and, upon hearing the storyteller Ezra read from the Torah, have such an emotional reaction.

In Luke, we see Jesus stand up in the synagogue and read from the Hebrew scriptures, this time Isaiah, telling the story of the good news of God's liberation and justice for the poor and oppressed.

Storytelling in all shapes and forms was and is an integral part of Jewish culture, with people known as maggid appointed to skilfully narrate the Torah and tell other religious stories. I recently listened to a great episode of the Queer Theology podcast where they interviewed a modern maggid in the US called Marques Hollie.

This storytelling culture flowed into early Christianity. Tom Wright, in his book *The New Testament and the People of God*, says that early Christians were storytellers... and that stories were visibly and obviously an essential part of what they were and did.

Storytelling was a key component of how the good news of Jesus was shared... how Christianity quickly spread in the first few centuries following Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Stories were told about liberation, about justice, about healing. Stories that inspired others to join the Way, and to become storytellers themselves.

I wonder if we've somewhat lost the art of storytelling as Christianity has ebbed and flowed over the centuries, particularly as Christianity became a tool of empire, whether Roman or more modern. But I think it's a crucial art for us to relearn as we reimagine Christianity in the 21st century.

At the beginning of the service I shared some words from Diana Butler Bass about Epiphany, she said: Epiphanies ask something of us. The star is an invitation, a calling to do something — to act.

Author Madeleine L'Engle has a quote from one of her books that often pops up during the season of Epiphany:

*This is my charge to you.
You are to be a light bearer.
You are to choose the light.*

One way for us to act, like Diana Butler Bass says, is to tell and show the story of Jesus, the good news, in a modern context. If we are bringers of light, one way we can do this is by telling stories. Stories of love, stories of justice, stories of hope.

So how do we go about relearning the art of storytelling?

We receive the Scripture Union Adventure magazine in our letterbox every few months, and this month's copy has an article by Andrew Ramsbottom, their children and families consultant, about sharing our stories. I wanted to read some excerpts from that with you today. He writes:

The early church would not have grown if it weren't for what people shared with others about what God was doing in people's lives. And the same applies today. We need to be telling the stories of what God is doing in ... our lives and in our churches and communities.

It all starts with one conversation, the power of 'testimony, spoken and lived out. One conversation with Jesus changed the Samaritan woman's life. One conversation with our neighbour could do the same.

On our SUPAkidz camp training weekends we ask all the leaders to share their testimony with the rest of the team... During the weekend, the leaders are given time to find a quiet place and write down their testimony. The suggestion is one page of A4 writing which equates to a 3-minute testimony. We do not ask them to share how they came to faith but rather what God means to them right now.

If they are not comfortable sharing it without notes, then they read it. Every time we do this, the team and individuals in the team have been inspired by hearing others' story. We have encouraged them to share their story with another individual or group in church or community.

Andrew then goes on to talk about the different ways you could share those stories. I've included the examples he mentions in today's service sheet; they include sharing one-on-one, writing a story, sharing it in church, or even on social media [*see final page*].

Andrew's talking about how we share what God is doing in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Something else I love to see is stories that creatively share the good news of love, justice, hope in new and different ways that connect with our culture now. One author that I think does this amazingly is Dav Pilkey – his Dogman books are some of the most popular books for kids at the moment – Kim's shared a snippet of one with you in the past. Hamish has read every single Dogman book at least a few times this holiday. We love these books not just for their fun and humour, but for the themes of redemption, love, justice, and hope that run through each and every story. At the end of each book Dav Pilkey has some author notes where he talks about different bits of the book, and inevitably he

links to various passages in the Bible, particularly focusing on the gospels.

It's great to see stories in the mainstream being able to bring these themes through – what a wonderful way to share the good news with such a large number of people.

I want to finish today by coming back to Psalm 19. The beginning of that psalm puts creation in the storytelling seat, declaring the good news of God. It then moves on to the Torah, before finishing with a verse that I think is apt for us as we embark, or continue, on our storytelling journey:

Let the words of my mouth
and the meditations of my heart
be pleasing to you,
Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Hymn: Celebration Song (Michael Foster; Tune: [Battle Hymn](#))

1. There's a song of Celebration
that is ringing round the earth,
As humanity unites to sing of
dignity and worth,
Out of poverty and anger God is
bringing hope to birth:
Let all creation sing!

Chorus:
Sing of hope and liberation; sing
of justice and salvation,
Sing with holy indignation: Let all
creation sing!
2. It's a song of solidarity, of protest
and of pain,
On behalf of all who suffer for
another person's gain,
It's a call to faith and freedom
that will never be in vain:
Let all creation sing!
3. It's a song that's sung in unison,
but heard in harmony,
Many voices, many accents and
a trillion ways to be;
And it liberates the wealthy
as it sets the needy free:
Let all creation sing!
4. It's a song of humble penitence
for all we haven't done,
It's a song of glad thanksgiving
that the journey has begun;
It's the promise of a future when
the world will be as one:
Let all creation sing!

Offering Prayer

We are your people, loving God.

Through us your Good News is made known.

We tell the Good News to our friends and family members.

We proclaim fresh vision and freedom to our neighbours.

We have words of hope for those who are suffering or poor.

Your gifts make change for the better possible. God blesses your gifts; God blesses you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

As children around our community and country prepare for a new year of school,

let us recommit ourselves to their nurture...

Let us also remember the children we once were and who still live within us.

Let us love them now, in this quiet moment.

Let us remember the children of our own families and the children of our friends.

Let us love them now, in this quiet moment.

Let us remember the children who are homeless
children who are separated from their families
children who are hungry or in pain
children whose lives are threatened by
drugs, crime, lack of health care.

Let us love them now, in this quiet moment.

Let us remember all children and commit ourselves to their growth and safety,
their health and education,
their uniqueness and their unfolding beauty.

Let us love them now, in this quiet moment.

And forever more.

Adapted from: C Sternberg / UUA Worship Web

Hymn: At the Table All Are Equal (David Bjorlin; Tune: [Hymn to Joy](#))

1. At the table, all are equal
all approach the feast as guest.
None sit in the seat of honour:
at the table, none are best.
2. At the table, none go hungry,
none must steal or beg for
bread;
all receive from God's
abundance:
at the table, all are fed.
3. At the table, all are cherished,
all are sought at any cost,
none abandoned or forsaken,
at the table, none are lost.
4. At the table, none are finished,
none sit selfishly content;
all are called to love in service:
from the table, all are sent.

Welcome to the Table

At this table we give thanks for
justice, love, peace and freedom.

At this table we give thanks for friends and strangers.

At this table we welcome old and young.

All are invited.

Come, as we prepare the meal.

Thanksgiving

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Holy One.

Let us give thanks

It is right to give thanks and praise.

God of the summer's day and the holiday season,

Praise and wonder be.

God of the lingering sunset and early dawn,

Praise and wonder be.

God of the hot winds and the refreshing shower,

God of the shady tree and the cool water bag,

God of the ripening harvest and sparkling sea,

Show to us beauty, vision, and joy.

All creation blesses the Source of Energy and Life.

For all things bright and beautiful.

For all things dark and mysterious and lovely.
For all things green and growing and strong.
For all things weak and struggling to push life up through rocky earth.

For all human faces, hearts, minds, and hands which surround us.
And for all non human minds and hearts, paws and claws, fins and wings... **Praise and wonder be.**

So we join our praise with all your people across the generations, saying

**Holy, holy, holy, Celebrating God,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.

Hosanna throughout the Earth.

In our praise and thanksgiving we also remember the ways of Jesus who walked the dusty roads of Galilee, who taught from seashore and mountainside, who told stories of the sower and the seed, the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air.

May we, too, know your presentness in the beauty of creation.

We also remember, Creating God, that your care for this earth and your people can be denied; for your goodness was abused and the Human One betrayed.

Jesus, the Holy One, again shared a meal with his friends. Through grain and grape, bread and wine, he celebrated community asking them to remember him.

May we feel your touch, hear your call, experience your grace, and know your strength in our lives

As we celebrate your life in our midst.

Breaking of the Bread / Pouring of the Wine

Jesus took bread,
offered thanks, broke it, and
gave it to those gathered with him:
'Bread broken - for you. Take this, all of you'

He poured a cup of wine
offered thanks for it, and

gave it too to those gathered with him:
'Wine poured out for you. Take this - all of you.'

Bread, that was once scattered as grain in a paddock
and gathered together
and baked into a loaf;

Wine, that was once grapes grown on a hillside
and gathered together
and pressed into juice.

Come, for all is now ready.

Communion is served

Prayer After Communion

Gracious God, we give thanks that at this table we have been reminded once again of your love for us.

Refreshed by the power of the Spirit, we go now to live out your love in our homes, communities, workplaces, and the world.

Amen.

Hymn: Dare to Live the Dream God Gives You (David Bjorlin; Tune: [Hyfrydol](#))

1. Dare to live the dream God gives
you,
Seek out paths as yet unknown,
For the Spirit leads you onward,
And you never walk alone.

Refrain:

*Go in courage, walking humbly,
Bearing love none can destroy.
Doing justice, loving mercy,
Go with God, and go in joy.*

2. When the dread of doubt assails
you,
And the road remains unclear,
Yet our faithful God will guide you
Through the doubt and dread of
fear.

3. Journey on with true companions,
Joining hands and sharing bread,
For we share a common journey
And in friendship we are fed.

4. Dare to live the dream God gives
us,
Brave the path, and face the fear,
For the Spirit will unite us;
Christ himself is always near

Blessing

Go as far as your courage takes you,
for you cannot go beyond the reach of God.

Give as extravagantly as you may,
for you cannot spend all the riches of God.

Care as lavishly as you are able,
for you cannot exhaust the love of God.

Keep journeying as a friend,
for God will always be with you.

Source: Rex A E Hunt

Closing karakia:

Kia tau ki a tātou katoa

Te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki, a Ihu
Karaiti

Me te aroha o te Atua

Me te whiwhingatahitanga

Ki te wairua tapu

Ake, ake, ake

Amine

Translation

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ,*

and the love of God,

*and the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit be with you all*

Forever and ever

Amen

Sharing our Stories – excerpts from SUNZ Adventure article by Andrew Ramsbottom

Take time to think about what you might want to share with others.

If you are relaying information that was communicated to you by another person, you will need to verify the facts and ensure that they consent to its sharing.

ONE-ON-ONE

Start small. Invite your best friend – not your spouse or partner – out for a coffee with the explicit intention of sharing a story of what God is doing in the ministry that you are part of.

IN A GROUP

If you are nervous to share in a group, prepare notes to take with you. Tell a story to your home group, your family, coffee group or community group-like Men's Shed or choir.

WRITE A STORY

Publish it in your church's newsletter or Facebook group or website. Or create an e-book of these stories to share what God is doing in your church or community.

VISUAL MEDIA

Make a visual recording of you telling the story. You can use your phone to do this. Set your phone up on a tripod or get someone else to hold the phone for you, so that you can use the back camera.

Stand facing a bright window to get natural light.

SHARE IN CHURCH!

Tell the story to your church community and then spend time giving thanks for what God has done. A visual media presentation is a really good way of doing this as it takes out the stage fright factor and the planning team knows exactly how long the story will be.

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

This is a great place to share stories, however, be mindful of privacy, correct referencing and community guidelines.

Breath prayer to try this week

Inhale The heavens declare the glory of God

Exhale The skies proclaim the work of his hands.