



Kaurihohore Historic Church

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Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 5 January 2025 – Christmas 2

The service this morning is led 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.

Sustainability: we care for and strive to restore the integrity of the Earth and all of creation.

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

Welcome

Call to Worship

Glory to God in the highest!
We look to the stars and see your glory.
Light shining on all people.
Glory to God in the lowest!
We look around and see your Grandeur.
Word making a home among us.
We worship you with praise.

Prayer

Wisdom of the Ages, to you we return in this New Year.
Lead us by quiet streams and on smooth paths.
Gather us and keep us safe.
Deliver us from the power of those who are stronger than we are.
Make our lives like lush gardens; turn our mourning into laughter and
our sadness into joy.
These lavish gifts, we deeply desire in our hearts.
And yet we know there will be moments of chaos, obstacles on the way,
and power used over and against us and our neighbours.
There will be tears, some of us will be inconsolable, and we will fear.
Remind us you are with us.
Help us surrender into the unknowns and let go our own need for power
and control or esteem and affection.
Help us become all we can be in the power of your love. Amen

Hymn: Morning has broken

1. Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world

2. Sweet the rains new fall, sunlit from Heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass

3. Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's recreation of the new day

4. Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world

Prayer

When one year passes its final hour, and a new beginning is spread out before us, we pause, not knowing what this year will be, its joys, its gifts, its griefs, its hardships, but pondering the gift of an empty page, where the next chapter has not yet been written.

In this New Year, may we let go of those regrets and failures and disappointments which can cloud our vision and stop us moving forward. In this season of Christmas and Epiphany, of manifestation, of revelation, of signs and wonders appearing where we least look for them, may we, like the wanderers and searchers in stories of old and new, see our lives in a new light, our friends and loved ones in a new light, those sitting next to us in church or working alongside us in a new light.

May we glimpse gifts we did not notice before. May we see small possibilities and lovingly tend them, watching them grow. May we, like persons of faith and hope in every age, see visions and dream dreams. Through our seeing and responding, through our willingness to explore new and unknown ways, may we uncover more and more of the Holy Light pulsing and present at the heart of all that is. And may that Light be seen in our courageous living and loving, in our sparkling words and surprising deeds, and in our constancy of spirit even amid all that passes, all that changes.

Sometimes the light is hard to see as the clouds darken, as our hearts constrict with pain and grief, as troubles come to those we love or this world we love. In a moment of silence, we recall what troubles us now, for ourselves, and for others, for our community, for our world. We are always in the embrace of that light which is at the heart even of the clouds and the grief. In our silence, let us place the troublings of our soul and world in the embrace of this unfailing, unlimited, unending light.

Silence

May we find the light we need for the living of this day, this week, and this year.

We pray in the prayer that has become a sign of community among all who celebrate the life and light of Jesus:

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Lord's Prayer

Scripture reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

In our reading from Jeremiah we hear that this is a promise of renewal from a place of hopelessness, captivity, despair ... Jeremiahs words are affirming that the present reality is not all there is. It's worth pointing out that when the exiles did finally return, there was a lot of work that needed to be done rebuilding, repairing, restoring: and the promise of bounty came at the cost of a lot of sweat! The Church down the ages has seen this as being fulfilled in Jesus: again, we need to remember that when Jesus preached about the proximity of God's Kingdom, there were still poor, there were still shortages of food, there were still people oppressed and needing healing and delivery. What changed was not the external circumstances, but peoples heart-attitudes: the kingdom of God burning within people's hearts provoked (and provokes) people to make changes ... the Kingdom of God still needs effort, work, energy ... this bounty is not cheap.

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Word of the day

Sometimes, at this time of the year, in this part of the world, it feels like everyone else has gone away, and only the 'remaining few' are still around. Of course, we know that by the end of the month, everyone will have gathered back in time to pick up every-day life.

The author of Jeremiah, however, is speaking to a people who have been spread far and wide by the Babylonian conquest. People have been removed from their land, family members are missing or perhaps killed, and social systems have been destroyed. And when everyone is drawn back to Judah, there are deep divisions between groups and vastly different understandings of what the future community should look like.

Jeremiah tells that when the rescue comes, there will be dancing and laughter and shouts of joy.

When and why do we want to dance and laugh and shout for joy in this place? What hinders us?

Hymn: Shout for joy

1 Shout for joy, loud and long,
God be praised with a song!
to the Lord we belong
children of the Father
God, the great life-giver!

*Shout for joy, joy, joy!
Shout for joy, joy, joy!
God is love, God is light,
God is everlasting !*

3 Yet our pride makes us fall!
so Christ came for us all
not the righteous to call
by his cross and passion,
bringing us salvation!

2 By God's word all was made,
heaven and earth, light and shade,
nature's wonders displayed,
man to rule creation
from its first foundation.

Chorus:

4 Now has Christ truly risen
and his Spirit is given
to all those under heaven
who will walk beside him,
though they once denied him!
Chorus

Scripture reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

One older New Testament commentator – John Stott – subtitles his commentary the letter to the Ephesians ‘God’s New Society’. Re-reading this passage through that lens gives new perspectives ... is this what god wants from my community? From me? If this is ideal, what is the reality and why? It can be an interesting exercise to filter Parish council decisions through that matrix: is this decision or prioritising evolving our community towards a new society, or are we safeguarding a heritage, keeping safe?

The opening passage is about intentional equipping: about God’s somehow choosing to use us for his purposes, about a plan that is being unfolded in us and with us. A huge part of this is the Holy Spirit The Greek word for Spirit, pneuma, can also be translated breath/ wind/ lifeforce ... re-reading this passage to say that God’s holy breath inspires! Or God’s holy wind empowers gives added nuances to an already beautiful passage.

Scripture reading: John 1:10-18

If Ephesians is a guitar strummed around a campfire, John’s opening passages are a pipe organ: huge swelling chords reminding us of things like size, capacity, volume, decibels, majesty, the indescribable.

The theology behind this passage fills countless tomes ... and many of John’s hearers would doubtless be familiar with what he is implying. For many others, however, it would perhaps be heard as a glorious enthronement of Jesus in the purposes of God: and sometimes it needs to be heard as sheer glory, not as a puzzle to be completed.

Hymn: Lord your almighty word

1. Lord, your almighty Word
Chaos and darkness heard
And took their flight,
Hear us, we humbly pray
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!

2. Saviour you came to give
Those who in darkness live
Healing and sight
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind,
Now to all humankind,
Let there be light!

3 Spirit of truth and love,
Life giving, holy dove,
Speed forth your flight!
Move on the water’s face
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth’s darkest place
Let there be light!

4 Holy and blessed three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love. Might;
Boundless as ocean’s tide.
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide,
Let there be light!

Wrap up

Gathered by light. Guided by hope.

This morning we heard from Jeremiah of the promise of renewal from a place of despair for those in exile. There is a lot of work to be done rebuilding, and restoring the community. This takes a lot of sweat and tears.

In Ephesians the letter is described as ‘God’s new Society’. Looking through this lens gives us a new perspective and we ask ‘is this what God wants from my community?’

Then in John we bring light and music as we share the glory of God among us all.

These are all poignant themes for us as we start 2025 in a new way for our parish: as we seek to discern God’s will for us here in Kauri, in this church and in this community.

Let us sing and dance for joy as we seek to spread this love of God.

Let us pray

We stand poised, waiting, balanced between the years.

What is behind is behind. We commit all now into your care: regrets, disappointments, brokenness, discouragement, damaged relationships, hard words, things done by us and to us. We leave them all behind.

What is ahead concerns us now, what had happened behind can affect how we walk into this new year.

We choose in this moment to carry only that which will help us into the new year.

We choose, in this moment to carry those lessons, those skills, those understandings, that will lead us toward light, towards wholeness, towards integration and love.

We choose, as we stand poised, to walk in faith into the future before us in grateful knowledge of the surrounding enveloping strength of your grace. Amen

Hymn: O little town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem

How still we see thee lie

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth

The everlasting light

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim thy holy birth
And praises sing to God the King and peace to men on earth

O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend on us we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great tidings tell;
O come to us, abide in us, Our lord Emmanuel

Offering prayer

Generous God, thank you for the gift of Jesus.
Thank you for the gifts of Christmas.
Thank you for inviting us to bring gifts to your world.
Bless the gifts we bring, that they may become vessels of Christ's light
and love in the world. Amen

[Hymn: The journey of life](#)

The journey of life may be easy, may be hard,
There'll be danger on the way;
With Christ at my side I'll do battle as I ride,
'Gainst the foe that would lead me astray;

Chorus

*Will you ride, ride, ride with the King of Kings,
Will you follow my leader true;
Will you shout Hosanna to the lowly Son of God,
Who died for me and you?*

My burden is light and a song is in my heart
As I travel on life's way;
For Christ is my Lord and he's given me his word
That by my side he'll stay;

Chorus

Benediction

Arise; shine!

The world needs our light.

Go forth with grace and love, for every person needs our grace and love.

Go forth with the gift of Christ's presence.

And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all . Amen