



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

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## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 9 March 2025 – Lent 1

Today's service is led by Kimberley 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.***

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

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

**Community time** during the service is a good opportunity to ask for prayers for yourself or others.

**After the service you are invited to share in morning tea, either in the kitchen or on the deck.**

If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a visit from one of our **Pastoral Network Team**, please speak to the service leader.

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

## **Welcome**

Kia ora and welcome to our service this morning. Today is the first Sunday of Lent, the season in the church calendar leading up to Easter. Lent echoes the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert, being tempted by the devil, before beginning his ministry. This week you may have celebrated the beginning of lent by eating pancakes for dinner, or attending an Ash Wednesday service.

I was listening to a podcast earlier in the week where Kate Bowler described lent as the “bummer” season of the church as it’s the time when we acknowledge that it looks like we’re on the losing team. As post-resurrection followers of Jesus, we know that evil never has the last word, but as we look around the world right now to the USA, to Ukraine, to Gaza, it’s easy to feel discouraged and wonder where God is. May our service this morning remind you that Emmanuel, God with us, is still here among us today.

## **Candle Lighting Liturgy**

We have come together this morning for renewal—in worship and as a community of faith. We’ve greeted one another, laughed and hugged. But now the time of reflection and stillness is upon us. It is the first Sunday in Lent—the season for journeys of the heart. Close your eyes. Be still. Listen. We are entering a holy time. The Lenten candles have been lit, but over the next six weeks the light will slowly fade into darkness. For we are retelling the story of Jesus’ betrayal and suffering and death. We do this not to be morbid, but because in the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection, God is revealed—in the amazing

transformation of death into life, in endings transformed into beginnings, and in dead-ends that become a source for new possibilities.

This is the sacred centre of our faith—the truth made manifest in Jesus Christ—that God is in each and every one of us, quietly transforming us and the world. In his pain and suffering, Jesus speaks to every pain and loss you have endured and offers you the promise of transformation. It's an old story, but it still has the power to reveal, to heal, and to redeem. Jesus is at the heart of our faith, in the depth of our souls. He is waiting for us, inviting us to leave ordinary time and follow along with him on the journey that brought him to the Cross. Listen in silence, for Jesus is calling you.

*(Silent time.)*

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of injustice in the world.

*(A candle is extinguished.)*

*Let us pray:*

**Loving God, as we journey through this holy season of Lent, give us strength and courage to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to your steadfast presence and help us to put our trust in you. Amen.**

## **Call to Worship**

Jesus began his ministry to the world,  
led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

**As we begin our Lenten journey,  
let us be led by the Spirit,  
even into the uncomfortable places.**

In those forty days, and in that place,  
Jesus was faced with hunger, doubt  
and temptation.

**As we seek to follow Jesus,  
we would be led,  
even into the uncomfortable choices.**

Jesus left the wilderness,  
faithful and obedient to God,  
rejoicing in the One in whom he trusted.

**As we continue on our path to faithfulness,**

**we will be led by our Christ,  
rejoicing in the Lord our God.**

*Thom Shuman*

### **Opening Prayer**

Companioning God,  
as we enter the wilderness space of Lent,

**travel with us.**

As we listen for your voice among all those who clamour for our  
attention,

**travel with us.**

As we sit and wait and wonder where you are in our lives,

**travel with us.**

As we ponder our futures, our ministries, our opportunities,

**travel with us.**

Travel with us in the wilderness, O God,

**and guide us through the days and nights of this journey.**

**Amen**

### **Hymn: [Guide Me O My Great Redeemer](#) (HFTC 528)**

1. Guide me, O my great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but you are mighty,  
hold me with your powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore!

2. Open now the crystal fountain  
where the healing waters flow;  
let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer  
ever be my strength and shield.

3. When I tread the verge of Jordan  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's Destruction

land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever sing to you.

## **Pretzels and Lent**

As I said in my welcome, today is the first Sunday of Lent, the season of the church calendar leading up to Easter. Some Christians use this season to prepare for Easter through prayer, repenting of sins, donating to organisations which help people in poverty, simple living, and self-denial. Others commit to fasting or giving up certain luxuries in imitation of Jesus' during his 40 days in the desert. Different church traditions approach fasting differently but, for those who choose to fast, this can involve giving up one or all of the following: animal products (meat, dairy, eggs, etc), sugar, and alcohol.

As you came in to church this morning, you were given a small bag of pretzels. While there is some dispute over where pretzels were invented (Italy? France? Germany? Russia?), it is generally agreed they were created by a Monk around the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The pretzel was specifically designed for Lent as a fun treat without animal products to honour the Lenten restrictions.

The shape of a pretzel is significant in two ways:

1. The three holes represent the three persons of the trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
2. The twists are meant to look like arms folded over the chest in prayer. While this position is less common today, some churches still encourage this motion when receiving a blessing. The name “pretzel” actually comes from a Latin term meaning, ‘little arms’.

Feel free to snack on your pretzels during the service or take them home to enjoy during the week as you reflect on Lent and what it means to you.

## **Hymn: Psalm 91**

*(Seedbed.com; [Tune: Ode to Joy](#))*

1. Those who dwell within the shelter of the Most High who is God;  
They'll abide within the shadow of the true Almighty God.  
I will say of Him, the Lord, “He is my refuge, whom I trust;  
He's my God, my strength and fortress, in Him I will put my trust.”

2. The Most High—if He’s your dwelling—if the Lord’s your confidence,  
Then no harm will come upon you, nor disaster near your tents.  
For His angels will surround you, guard you in your ways alone.  
They will lift you in their hands so that your foot won’t strike a stone.
  
3. You will tread upon the lion, and the cobra without fear;  
You will trample the great lion, and the serpent who comes near.  
The Lord says, “Because he loves Me, I will rescue him from shame;  
I’ll protect him from all danger—he acknowledges My name.
  
4. “He will call to Me—I’ll answer; when he cries out, I will hear.  
I’ll deliver him with honor; in his trouble I’ll be near.  
With long life, I’ll satisfy him, till the time his days will cease;  
I will show him My salvation—he will dwell within My peace.”

## Scripture Reading

- Luke 4:1-13

## Reflection

Our reading today comes from the Gospel of Luke, but is also mentioned in Matthew and Mark. Matthew dedicates as similar amount of verses to the story although, as typical of many stories appearing more than once in the gospels, tells it slightly differently; while Mark is short on details, literally saying “And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.” (Mark 1:12-13).

Before we get too far into this today, I thought I’d just outline the context of our passage this morning. So, in Luke’s Gospel, we have the Baptism of Jesus, which you might remember me talking about last time I was up here, a genealogy of Jesus, and then our passage this morning about the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. When our passage begins “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness....” It’s referring to the Baptism of Jesus where Luke (3:21-22) tells us, “Now when all the

people were baptised, and when Jesus had been baptised and was praying, the heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the beloved, and with you I am well pleased.'

I feel like it's important to remind you of this, as I feel we often see temptation as something of a moral failing, like temptation is only something that happens to us if there's something wrong with us, or we lack self-control, or we don't have enough faith, or we aren't holy enough. To me this passage says that these ideas are absolutely not true – Jesus, God incarnate and full of the Holy Spirit, is tempted – how much holier can you get?!

We also see in verse 1 that it was the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness. This wasn't random or unexpected, the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness at this particular time, for this particular purpose. I'm not entirely comfortable with theology that says 'everything that happens, or doesn't happen, only happens because God wants it to', but in this particular situation I find it hard to believe that the appearance of the devil in this passage was a surprise to the triune God.

Which leads me to the temptations themselves: For the past week or so, I have thought a lot about temptation in light of our scripture reading today and, well, I have some musings that will hopefully give us more to ponder as we go about the coming week.

Oxford Dictionary says that temptation is the "Desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise." And that's certainly the way that we understand that word in our context: like being tempted to eat another piece of cake; or to stay up late reading, or binging your new favourite TV series; being tempted to stay home and go to bed, rather than going to a meeting or event that you just can't be bothered with right now; being tempted to buy things we want, but don't necessarily need – items that can be seen as a luxury or frivolous. We also recognise that there are also more serious temptations, such as the temptation to cheat on your partner.

While it's not great nutritionally to eat nothing but cake, and getting a good sleep is important, these are not the temptations of Jesus. And while the Bible absolutely has things to say about being wise with the way you use your money, and it's always a bad idea to cheat on your partner, these are not the temptations of Jesus either.

So, what does it mean when we read our story this morning and remember the words of Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” If we, as followers of Jesus, are called to follow in His footsteps, does this mean we should experience the same sorts of temptations that Jesus did?

My musings this week have led me to suspect that what we call temptations, and what the Gospel writers describe as Jesus’ temptations are not the same thing. You’ll remember that Jesus’ temptations were:

1. To turn a stone into a loaf of bread and satisfy his hunger (v 3)
2. To worship Satan in order to receive all glory and authority over every kingdom in the world (v 6-7)
3. To throw himself off the top of the temple with the assumption that God would save him from certain death (v 9-11) – You might have noticed that the devil’s words here are a direct quote from our Psalm this morning.

I don’t know about you, but these temptations aren’t that relatable to me!

But maybe these are more familiar:

1. You’ve never been tempted to turn a stone into a loaf of bread, but maybe relying on yourself, rather than God for the things that you need rings a bell
2. You’ve never been tempted to worship Satan in return for glory and global authority, but maybe there are times when you’ve turned a blind eye to the actions of others or justified your own less-than-ideal actions in order to bring about your own desires, even if these desires are ultimately good. Or, you’ve ignored or diminished the needs of others in order to get the results you want.
3. You’ve never thought about throwing yourself off the top of a building to see if angels catch you, but maybe there are times when you’ve made a stupid decision and then been mad at God for not bailing you out.

So, my question is this morning is, are these temptations that we recognise? Or have we allowed ourselves to be distracted by other temptations that, in the scheme of things, are rather insignificant?



Another way to put it could be, out of the temptations I talked about earlier and the temptations that Jesus faced, which are you more aware of in your day to day life?

There's a feminist theory that says that western culture teaches women to worry about their attractiveness and body size and shape in order to distract them from the ways in which the society around them still fails in achieving equality. The theory goes that if women are worrying about things that don't matter, they will be too tired or distracted to notice these inequalities, or if they do notice them, to put up much of a fight to change anything.

As I've been reflecting on this theory in light of the discrepancy in temptations, I can't help but wonder if we're seeing the same thing play out here. What if, we're so busy being distracted by temptations like what we eat, or don't eat, and how we spend our time and money, which, like I said, can be important, but are also not the same thing as Jesus faced, that we don't notice the real temptations over here: forgetting our need for God; hitching our wagons to the wrong horses, believing that the means justify the end; and making bad choices, then being mad at God for not rescuing us.

Maybe our challenge this lent is to step into the shoes of Jesus, and see through the distractions, knowing that God's spirit is with us every step of the way, as we resist temptation and become more and more like Jesus.

Our next song is a new one from David Bjorlin. He says it was written to honour Rev Aaron Johnson on his last Sunday as the pastor of Resurrection Covenant Church in Chicago, where Bjorlin had also been on staff for 13 years. Johnson's last Sunday was the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, so this song combines the themes of the feast with words of encouragement for him and the community as they moved into uncharted waters. We are also a church moving into uncharted waters as we get used to not having a minister in this next season. May we also be encouraged by this song.

## Hymn: Follow Jesus to the Jordan

*(Hope will not Fail; Tune: Hyfrodol)*

1. Follow Jesus to the Jordan;  
find a strange and sacred scene  
where an outcast, awe-struck prophet  
washes one already clean.  
See the liberating Spirit  
swoop and hover like a dove;  
hear a voice sound from the heavens,  
“Heed my cherished child of love.”

2. Follow Jesus in the river;  
brave with him the watery tomb;  
and in wonder watch the Savior  
turn the grave into a womb.  
Laugh in joy at death’s reversal,  
join the cries of joyous birth,  
as new life cascades like fountains  
over every inch of earth.

3. Follow Jesus through the desert  
even when the path seems cursed;  
trust the Spirit’s voice to guide you,  
tend your wounds, and quench your thirst.  
Then rejoice as gushing geysers  
flood your lands with streams of grace,  
as each scarred and sacred person  
grows in God’s immense embrace.

4. Follow Jesus on the journey  
anywhere the river flows,  
though you wonder why it wanders,  
still uncertain where it goes.  
And when hope and courage shrivel  
may each puddle, lake, and sea  
echo God’s “You are beloved,”  
drown your fears, and set you free.

## Offering Dedication

We trust God, and we offer God our gifts of money, time, and talent, so that this faith community can be about God's work.

**Where the hungry are fed, we are about God's work.**

**Where the sick are visited, we are about God's work.**

**Where the powerful are brought low, we are about God's work.**

**Where the forces of selfishness are challenged, we are about God's work.**

**Where God's name is praised, prayer is offered, and the Word is heard, we are about God's work.**

**Where the way of Jesus is followed faithfully, we are about God's work.**

And you will receive God's blessing.

**Amen.**

## Prayer for the Community

Jesus was tempted in every way.

The evil one said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

Save us from the easy way, O God. Save our world.

Save us from world leaders who ignore the threat of global warming; from those who say, "We will take action, next year."

Save us from those who avoid sharing resources and personal skills with developing nations, from those who say, "We need first to improve our own standard of living."

Save us from the easy way, O God. Save us from denying any child basic rights to food, schooling, and a warm place to live.

**The easy way was not the way Jesus lived. Save our world, O God, from thinking solutions can be just words, and not actions.**

Jesus was tempted in every way.

The evil one showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and said to him, "I will give you all this power and all this wealth if you worship me."

Save us, O God from those who lack integrity and worship the gods of selfishness.

Save us from those who work just for the money, without thought for others, or the Earth.

Save us from those who exploit the situations of the very old and the very young for selfish advantage.

Save us from bureaucrats who do not take the time to listen, explain, and assist.

Save us from those who will not hear the cries of the sick or the heartbroken. We remember in silence now the sick and bereaved.

**The selfish way was not the way Jesus lived. Save the suffering, O God, from the self-focused.**

Jesus was tempted in every way.

The evil one set Jesus on the highest point of the Temple and said, "Throw yourself down, for the angels will take good care of you."

Save us, O God, from praying for help from you when we make no effort on our own part.

Save us from a faith community that prays for new members but is not clear about how to welcome them.

Save us from a faith community that prays for justice and peace but is not willing to get involved in work to help the hungry and persecuted.

Save us from the faith community that says that young persons are the future of the church, yet does not ask them how the church might meet their needs.

Save us from a faith community that prays "for those in other lands," but does not support them through mission gifts.

**The selfish way was not the way Jesus lived. Save the church from forgetting that prayer without deeds means little.**

Jesus was tempted in every way.

Jesus ate nothing at all during those days and he was famished when it was all over. We are hungry to face our own temptations and to deal with them directly. We need your help, O God.

Save us from giving up on others and on ourselves.

Save us from taking the path of least resistance and avoiding the issues.

Save us from dreaming big but letting fear dash our dreams.

Save us from a reluctance to use untried talents and embark on fresh ventures.

Save us from keeping our life of faith to ourselves.

**The selfish life was not the way Jesus lived. Give us the courage to face our temptations and go forward unafraid as Jesus did.**

**Amen.**

*From: Pastoral Prayers to Share: Year C, by David Sparks*

**Hymn: When our Lives are Filled by Fear**

*(Protests of Praise; Tune: Hollingside)*

1. When our lives are ruled by fear  
and our churches choked by greed,  
when success becomes our goal  
and security our creed:

*Refrain:*

Let us brave the wilderness,  
dare to walk where few have trod,  
leaving safety's easy path,  
risking doubt, and finding God.

2. When our faith erodes to facts,  
and our stories turn to rules,  
when the cruel are seen as wise,  
and the merciful called fools.

*Refrain*

3. When our families exclude  
And our doctrines still divide,  
when our tables feed the full  
and the hungry starve outside.

*Refrain*

4. When the road ahead is steep  
and our courage is so small,  
when we stumble at the start  
and are certain we will fall.

*Refrain*

## **Benediction**

As you go from here,

remember the promise of God:

“I will rescue those who love me.

I will protect those who trust in my name.

When they call on me, I will answer;

I will be with them in trouble.

I will rescue them and honour them.”

So go from here with joy,

confident that the love and mercy of God  
goes with you.

Amen.

**Sung Amen x3**