

**Surf Coast Uniting Churches**  
25 January 2026



**Introit - Don't be afraid – John Bell**

Don't be afraid, my love is stronger  
my love is stronger than your fear  
Don't be afraid, my love is stronger  
And I have promised to always be near

**Welcome**

Adapted from Isaiah 9:1-4, Psalm 27:1, 7-9

There are words of comfort and inspiration for us in Isaiah 9 and Psalm 27. Words that remind us that Christ is the Light of the World



**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...  
...those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.  
The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?**

There are some things in the world that may make us afraid and sometimes are afraid for our loved ones. Lately, the media and news have unsettled many people, and some of our members have had some pastoral challenges for themselves or their loved ones or for members of our congregation.

We do not need to fear. We have the Lord and our faith and when we have God's love and peace in us, there is no room for fear. Whenever you are afraid, all you need to say is "Lord." The Lord is always with you. The Lord will always love you and embrace you and accept you.

Today, we are also mindful that tomorrow is Australia Day. It is not a happy day for everyone, so today we are including an Acknowledgement and Lament and confession from the UCA Day of Mourning materials

Our church is an inclusive church and we welcome all peoples

**Acknowledgment of First Peoples  
UCA Day of Mourning materials**

Today, as we gather to worship, we acknowledge the Wadawurrung peoples, as the first-born peoples of these lands, and we acknowledge that through their continuing care of God's creation, God and his Holy Spirit has been a source of spiritual sustenance and strength for First Peoples of this Country.

We pay our respects to the knowledge holders and sharers of story, for through their custom and ceremony God's reconciling love and purpose is revealed. We acknowledge First Peoples Elders present today and in doing so, acknowledge their suffering and we commit ourselves to an ongoing Covenantal journey.

**Call to Worship**

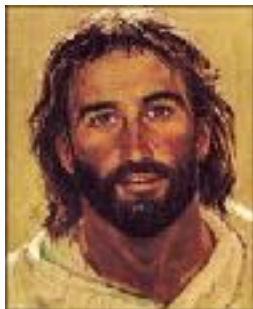
Adapted from Isaiah 9:1-4, Psalm 27:1, 7-9

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness-on them light has shined.

**For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders  
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken**

The LORD is our light and my salvation; whom shall we fear?  
The LORD is the stronghold of our life; of whom shall I be afraid?  
Hear, O LORD, when we cry aloud; be gracious to us and answer us!

**Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, LORD, do we seek.**



**Poem**

Be Silent  
Be still  
Alone  
Empty  
Before your God  
Say nothing  
Ask Nothing

Be Silent  
 Be Still  
 Let your God  
 Look upon you  
 That is all  
 God knows  
 Understands  
 Loves you with  
 An enormous love  
 God only wants to  
 Look upon you  
 With love  
 Quiet  
 Still  
 Be  
 let your God  
 Love you

*Edwina Gately*

**Prayers for Community (adapted)**

Celtic Daily Prayer © 2015 The Northumbria Community Trust

We welcome you, Lord  
 you who seek our company  
 and choose to make yourself known to us

We are grateful for your many blessings  
 including bringing us together  
 at this time and in this place

We ask that you use this time  
 to challenge us and encourage us  
 to change us  
 that we may continue to grow in our gifts and call  
 and be transformed so we can reflect your love in all we do.

in our conversations, our sharing and our caring  
 in our eating and our resting  
 in our learning and our laughing  
 may we notice you  
 find you  
 follow you  
 and offer your love to others. Amen

### **Lament and Confession (Adapted)**

Merciful God, we, the Second Peoples of this land, acknowledge with sorrow the injustice and abuse that has so often marked the treatment of the First Peoples of this land. We acknowledge with sorrow the way in which their land was taken from them and their language, culture and spirituality despised and suppressed.

We acknowledge with sorrow the way in which the Christian church was so often not only complicit in this process but actively involved in it.

We acknowledge with sorrow that in our own time the injustice and abuse has continued.

We have been indifferent when we should have been outraged,

We have been apathetic when we should have been active,

We have been silent when we should have spoken out.

Gracious God, forgive us for our failures, past and present.

By your Spirit transform our minds and hearts so that we may boldly speak your truth and courageously do your will.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Declaration of Reconciliation (adapted)**

Water for First Peoples is always a sign of God's peace and fulfilment in everything that is good. The promise of food, of harmony with ourselves, and the creation around us.

At the very beginning Creator God blessed the waters, God's great gift to us and renewed in this water here today.

God who hovered over the waters, invites us to 'come to the water' to drop our heavy burdens of lament and confession. So then, let us bring the heavy stones that we are carrying and drop them into the water of healing and life.

**You're welcome to come forward and place your rock in the bowl of water**

### **Prayer**

God who hovered over the waters, invites us to 'come to the water' to drop our heavy burdens of lament and confession. So then, let us bring the heavy stones that we are carrying and drop them into the water of healing and life

*Moment of silence*

### **Declaration of Forgiveness (Adapted)**

Hear then the words of Christ's forgiveness to us all:

Our sins are forgiven, and we are made new again.

We now live as reconciled people.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

### **Song for listening – YouTube Morning Intercessions Marty Haugen**

#### **Reading – Matthew 4:12-23**

4:12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 4:13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 4:14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

4:15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—

4:16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

4:18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea for they were fishers. 4:19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fisher of people." 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

4:21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 4:22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

4:23 Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

#### **Hymn TIS 589 Jesus calls us over the tumult**

Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult  
of our life's wild restless sea,  
day by day his voice is sounding,  
saying, 'Christian, follow me':

as, of old, Saint Andrew heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.

#### **Sermon**

*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen*

After John was arrested Jesus left his home and withdrew to Capernaum, a large fishing port on the shores of Lake Galilee. The people in this city lived under Roman rule and were oppressed and many were suffering. When Jesus came it was like a great light came and it was the dawning of a new beginning for many. He changed people's lives, healed and taught them a new way of living and being.



RCL

He called his first four disciples.

Jesus called Simon Peter, who he had met in the desert and who he gave the new name of Peter. He called Andrew who brought Simon Peter to him. They were ready to follow him immediately, leaving all behind them.



RCL – Tissot

Leaving behind their boats, security and profession to follow Jesus.

James and his brother Zebedee also immediately left behind family, boats, fishing and security to follow Jesus. imagine how their father felt. Perhaps he wished he was called too.

The four disciples left a peaceful existence of fishing in the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus throughout Galilee, to cities and towns and ports around the Sea of Galilee. They witnessed Jesus' teaching about a loving God who makes people whole and set people free and watched him heal people. They followed Jesus into the midst of crowds of people who were oppressed, afraid, and suffering.

Jesus would have known about the disciples' gifts before he called them and believed in them. He would have encouraged and empowered them to grow in their gifts. Perhaps the disciples felt confronted when they went from fishing on a peaceful lake to ministry in the midst of crowds of suffering people and learning how to teach and preach the gospel.



Jesus calls each one of us to follow him.

He embraces each one of us and looks into our soul. He sees our goodness, completeness, potential, desires, longings, and our light and love.

Each one of us has one great gift we love most of all. It's a joy for us to embrace it and live it out in ministry.

Each one of us is like a nightingale. We long to sing our song, before we die.

Perhaps we all long to reach our full potential.  
 Long to be valued and feel deep satisfaction.  
 Long to follow Jesus wherever he leads us.

There comes the time for all of us when we all find our true gift, and it's like finding a precious pearl that we embrace with joy.

One gift is enough. Paul teaches us we can't all be feet. The body is made up of many parts. The body of Christ the church is made up of people, each with one precious gift and when we come together, we are many gifts but one body. All of us are important and everyone has a gift and contribution to make that blesses the whole body.

Some of us may be gifted at singing but we have different voices. Some are altos or base or soprano or tenor, some are pianists, some a good conductor, and some are music teachers. Together everyone makes a choir, who brings the gospel through music to the hearts of those who don't have these gifts, but feel joy and appreciation when they listen.

Perhaps when we try to embrace ministry, we don't have gifts for, we neglect our one great God given gift and prevent others from using their gift. We go against the grain of who we are and may end up feeling burdened, stressed or overwhelmed.

I've been at churches where someone leaves and there is no one to do their ministry. Someone immediately steps into their role without any prayer and discernment about their

gifts and training to do this ministry. They do it simply because there is no one else to do it. Then sooner or later, they may feel stressed and burdened because the ministry doesn't match their gift or give them joy.

I knew someone who was doing this and it was affecting their health. They were elderly and their heart was in the right place, but the burden was stressing them and affecting their sleep and heart. Perhaps, when we see someone in this situation, thanking them for trying so hard to care for the church is good but offering them permission to let go can bring a sense them a sense of relief. That is what it was like for this person. They felt as if a burden was lifted.

We are all called to follow Jesus and use our gift but it's not about being burdened. We do our best to contribute, according to our capacity and whether we find the particular ministry we embrace, lifegiving and joyful. If we do find it lifegiving and joyful, and natural for us, this indicates it's a match for our true gift.

A true call to use our gift for ministry leads to joy, not stress, and feeling overwhelmed or guilty.

We may feel limited by time, money and energy as we age, but we are part of a community. We support and encourage one another and build up one another, so we all minister together.

Each of us has one great gift from God. If we are limited by time, energy and money, it makes sense to fully embrace the gift that gives us the most joy and energises us. It makes sense to let go of the ministry that doesn't match our gifts, and drains away most of our energy and time, because we trying to do something that goes against the grain.

If everyone embraced their one true gift and ministry, imagine what life would be life for our church community.

Perhaps we need to be on the outlook for discerning gifts in other people and encourage them to have a go at ministry and explore if their gift matches a ministry. The Uniting Church offers a period of discernment with mentors to help people discern their gifts and ministry. We need more lay preachers and teachers passionate about ministry to young people and to train people to lead small groups, for study and discussion. Encourage people. Affirm them more.

Just one gift that matches one ministry is enough to bless the body of Christ, his church.

Those who feel shy of lack confidence need our encouragement to step forward to embrace their gift.

The solution is to listen to the still small voice of the Spirit in your heart and respond. If you have a gift, use it, don't bury it. It is never too late to sing your song and find fulfilment.

Follow Jesus and embrace your gift. Sing your song.

The Lord be with you.

### **Song for Listening – YouTube All are welcome – Marty Haugen**

#### **Offering**

Lord, giver of every good thing, we bring to you our lives, gifts and resources for the building up of your kingdom and church.

We give thanks for blessings and transformation that come through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

#### **Prayers of the People**

##### **The 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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

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

#### **TIS Hymn 658 I the Lord of Sea and Sky**

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry  
All who dwell in dark and sin, my hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

**Refrain:**                      *Here I am Lord; is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night;  
I will go, Lord, if you'll lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

#### **Notices**

#### **Blessing**



The Pillars of Creation (A Nebula from NASA)

May the God of all wonder who set the stars in the sky, bless us with relentless unsettledness that drives us to seek truth.

May the God of all justice who gave motion to the rivers, bless us with righteous anger that drives us to seek freedom for all.

May the God of all love who placed laughter in the kookaburra, bless us with the friendship that looks like the love where one lays down their life for another.

May the God of all comfort who determined the height of the mountains, bless us with tears from shared pain and mourning that shows us hope.

Now with wonder, righteous anger, sacrifice, and lament

We go in truth, justice, love, and hope and with God's help, to change the heart of Australia.

**TIS 778 Shalom be with you**