

Order of Service
 Christmas 2 Sunday 4th January 2026
 Liturgy by Rev Tina Lyndon Ng
 Read by Phyll Loeliger



Introit TIS 699 A New Commandment

Welcome

Welcome to this week's service. May the Worship bless you.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters, the Wadawurrung people. We pay respect to Elders past and present. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Call to Worship

Lord, You call us to love one another
 Let us love one another
 Lord, You call us to love one another
 When we love one another
 We love you

Prayers

Lord God, giver of every good gift we gather here to worship you hoping for a new word a gentle touch, a nudge in the right direction straight into your arms of love.

Gentle loving God as we contemplate all that happened last year guide us to concentrate on the golden moments that illuminated our lives, the challenging hikes through your awe-inspiring wilderness, the glimpses of exhilarating wildlife, quiet conversations, shared laughter and tears, the warm embraces, and our favorite takeaway.

As we ponder with awe about your great and wonderful creation and your love for us we know you will guide our hearts this coming year and trust you to care for us on

the great journey of our life and we know you always want what's best for us and have a plan and purpose for all of us. Amen

Confession

We come to Lord aware we need You with every fibre of our being. We want nothing to stand between us. We draw near to you, and as we are held, we slowly dare to look at the face of the One who holds us and know that gradually our own faces and our lives will begin to reflect your beauty.

Silence



Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven"

Thanks be to God

Hymn

TIS 640

Kneels at the Feet of Friends

Reflection on Psalm 8 with Images from NASA



O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established, what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?



Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honour.

Young at Heart

The café owner whose New Year Resolution was offering free coffees for a week -
Discussion about loving one another and New Years resolutions



T. Lyndon

I'll share with you a story about a café proprietors New Year Resolution. He had a café inside a hospital and one of the hospitals chaplains and I went to the café for a coffee. The proprietor told us the coffee was on the house when we ordered it and we asked him, '*Why.*' He replied, '*It's my New Years Resolution.*' We thanked him and enjoyed the coffee.

This may appear to be an unimportant resolution.

The proprietor was forgoing some profits for his café to be kind to his customers. However, it goes deeper. Many of the patients and their loved ones are facing a crisis. They are vulnerable. They are hurting. Perhaps everything in their life has been disrupted by this unexpected crisis in health which may be a heart attack, stroke, cancer, a mental health issue or illness.

Our health is precious to us, if there is a health crisis it can threaten our everyday existence and future. Perhaps enjoying a free coffee is grounding or offers some comfort, just for a moment.

And the staff, they have a lot of stresses in caring for vulnerable, hurting people. They may feel appreciated when they receive a free coffee. This simple New Years resolution makes a huge difference in the lives of others.

Hymn

TIS 629

When I needed a neighbour

New Years Sermon - "We are judged by our love"

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



This is an interesting gospel. It raises an important question. Are we judged by how much love we show to others?

Most of us remember someone loving us. Yet, most of us tend not to remember the times we've loved others.

In today's gospel Jesus questions two groups of people and he speaks about the people he spent most of his time with, the least of his brothers and sisters, people excluded from society and counted as unimportant. The people he stood in solidarity with. The people his heart went out to and who he loved.

Jesus addresses the two groups of people, and both respond with a question.

Those who loved others, say, 'When did we care?'

Those who didn't love others say, 'When didn't we care?'



Over the centuries most people have preferred to "distance" themselves from people who don't fit into society. Perhaps they are afraid of them.

In ancient times hospitality was key to survival in society, especially for travellers. Today, professionals and organisations are given the job of caring for the most vulnerable in our society. New terms keep appearing to label those who don't always fit into society. The anxious generation. Those who spit on emergency services personal or attack them. Aboriginal youth in prisons. Those with mental health issues who become violent. Although, specialists say nearly 50% of us will experience mental health issues during our lifetime. Those who have addictions to drugs or alcohol. Although, the latter is now considered a mental health issue. Commendation has been replaced with support and care instead.

In ancient times those who didn't fit in were often ostracised. In ancient times Jesus was there for them and healed them. He was there for the day labourers and the homeless and unwanted. He stood in solidarity with those with illnesses, deformities and conditions, often labelled as having demons in them.

Keeping in mind Matthew's gospel is for a Jewish community, mercy was way up there as the most important of all values in society and the Jewish faith. It was foundational. Perhaps the gospel questions those who have shown no mercy during their lifetime. The end times judgment was also part of their belief system. The gospel was challenging them to change their ways and show mercy and remember the final judgement day.

Jesus chose to span the distance between himself and the least. He stood in solidarity with them. He spent time with them, cared for them and ate with them. They were not expected to pay him back for his love, healing and compassion, his mercy and kindness. It was unconditional love. Jesus showed people to love in how he lived his

life and loved others. Matthew's gospel teaches us a practical way of loving God. When we love others, we love Jesus.



In other words, our heart leads us into God's love. It is our moral compass.

Like most people, I don't remember the times I've loved others, especially strangers or neighbours. I remember the times strangers have loved me.

This is a story from one of my books. The one about © 2025 trekking to Everest Basecamp. I'd been trekking in the rain all day, the road was muddy and I was drenched and cold. I was walking from a village high in the mountains to Lukla Airport and had hours to go and I had Khumbu cough. I was miserable.

I saw a bent over woman ahead of me, her skirt, and legs just visible under two large sacks of rice that were somehow balanced on her back. It was pouring and she was sheltering under a large black umbrella. I hovered a bit to the side of the path, and she took a step, a bit to the other side of the path, and then another step forwards.

As I walked beside her, I said, 'Namaste.' She looked up and managed to put both hands together, while still holding the umbrella, and say, 'Namaste.' She smiled and then signalled with her hands for me to come closer. She put her hand on my shoulder gently moving me beside her and under the umbrella and patted my cheek, and tears came to my eyes.

I must have looked forsaken and cold, a bit like a drowned cat. She patted my cheek again, said something in Nepali, put her umbrella under her arm and rubbed my hands with hers. Her hands were nice and warm. I felt loved.

We walked on together until I began to worry about whether I was slowing her down and about her carrying such a load but didn't want to refuse her care for me. She didn't seem to be in a hurry. I sensed it was more important to her to be kind to me and help me. I relaxed and walked on with her, sheltering under her umbrella.

When the rain stopped. I put my hands together, 'Namaste.' She smiled, putting her hands together over mine, 'Namaste.'

When she smiled, I felt the warmth of her love. I hope she felt mine. She was my mother that day. My real mother died about fourteen months previously.

We walked on beside each other for a little while, occasionally smiling at each other. Then she waved and went on ahead of me and when she looked back, I smiled and waved. All my feelings of misery had departed.

Have you ever experienced this kind of love from a stranger? Its unforgettable. I hope some time in my life I've been able to offer this kind of love to a stranger.



Mother Teresa and Bishop Tutu spent their lives loving those who were discarded or traumatized because they were not wanted or welcome.

Mother Theresa was a teacher at a private school in India and one day she went out and found a baby discarded on a rubbish tip. It changed her and she founded an order of nuns who loved and cared for those who were discarded and unwanted.

Bishop Tutu brought together people who hated and killed each other and encouraged them to tell their stories and forgive one another.

I'm sure you know people who you admire.

Bishop Tutu spoke of the need for ubuntu, where we become a better person through our relationships with others. We need ubuntu so we can overcome the distance between those who are accepted into our society and those who are excluded.

Today's gospel is not only about caring for others. It is about Jesus being within the least of people in society. When we love them, we love Jesus. Today's gospel is challenging. Being judged by how we treat the least amongst us.

The good news one of the key values in Australian society and our church is caring for community, and inclusivity.

We are surrounded by people doing their very best to care for our community, who look out for those who are doing it tough or need a hand or a facing a crisis or are suffering or are in trouble. Most of us do our best to care for others and make a positive contribution to our community.

Let us continue to love and bless the people Jesus loved.

This is how we love Jesus.

The Lord be with you

Hymn TIS 414 There's a Spirit in the air

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

Tricia Genat

Hello. My name is Tricia Genat and I'm a member here of the Surf Coast Uniting Churches, Torquay, Bellbrae and Aireys Inlet. If ever you are passing by, you are always welcome to pop in. 9.30am at Torquay and Aireys and 11 am at Bellbrae if you've slept in!

It will be my privilege to bring you some notices and our prayers for the people – the people next to us, far from us and in our hearts.

Our prayers this week are guided by our reading from Matthew 25 which John read earlier - are we sheep or are we goats? Personally, I think the goats get a bit of a bad rap – they make good milk and cheese and great curries. Either way, the message is clear – wherever people are, there must we be too.

I will begin our prayer and then leave a short break for your thoughts and individual prayers and then we will conclude with the Lords' Prayer shared together.

Lord, how can it be that a year has passed and there are still many things on our 'to do' lists which are unfinished or not yet started. Life on this beautiful surf coast got in the way sometimes, of life as we should be living it. Today as the sun shines, and holiday makers fill up the car parks and coffee spots, we ask your patience and particularly your focus. It's much easier to choose between choc chip and peppermint ice-cream cones than to choose between an extra shift at the Opshop, or finding time to water the plants at the church garden, or make an extra ham and cheese quiche for our neighbour home from hospital. But we also recognise the need for balance and we ask for that too – keep us refreshed and ready- to share your word and care for our aching knees.

Most of us today are never hungry or without a bed or friends and family to lend a hand but we know that just at the edges of our sight are those in war zones, and refugees in hot dusty camps, and children who ache to learn to read but cannot for so many reasons. These people are your people too, we do not hold that privilege alone. In Australia, our neighbours suffer heat waves and floods, fields scorched and then drowned and livelihoods affected.

This can be overwhelming for us too as we struggle to figure out what to do in response. Do we open our wallets, and tap and forget, do we put aside groceries and

