

Surf Coast Uniting Churches

Sunday 8 March 2026



introit Hymn 703 As pants the deer

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

Martin Nystrom 1956- based on Psalm 42:1-2



Welcome

Acknowledgment

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the Wadawurrung people, traditional custodians of this land under God. We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land.

Call to Worship

Pilgrim God

Striking water in the desert

Refresh us and quench our thirst

Revealing God

Sitting by the well

Refresh us and teaching us truth

Dancing God
 Moving over the waters
Refresh us and bring us life

Prayers

Ruth Harvey, Eggs and ashes, edit. Ruth Burgess & Chris Polhil, Wild Goose Publications 2004

www.lonabooks.com

God, our God
 you have called us to be a people
 on the move
 travelling light
 dying to live
 ready to lose ourselves
 for the sake of the world.

Lord, our God
 you have called us to be a people
 with purpose
 travelling without a map
 travelling to where we are led
 sustained by your Spirit
 committed to the gospel
 by the hope of the world.

You have called us, your people
 to be the church
 But we are a church with problems
 too strong for the weak
 too staid for the young
 too respectable for the poor
 too divided for mission
 too obsessed with our own lives to think of the lives of others
 too unsure of our message to speak to the world

Take us on our journey
 from where we are to what you want us to be
 so that we become a community
 where all are welcomed and no one is excluded
 all are valued and no one is made to feel inadequate
 all are forgiven and no one is ashamed to belong
 all are encouraged and no one is too hurt to come among us

Lead us on our journey
 from who we are to who you want us to be
 so that patience is built into us
 kindness is assumed in us
 gentleness is part of us
 compassion flows from us
 truth is second nature to us
 and the commitment of love is part of us. Amen

We spend a moment before you Lord
 bringing all that's on our heart
 hoping for forgiveness, grace and healing

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
 "Our sins are forgiven"
Thanks be to God.

Greeting of Peace
 May the peace of the Lord be with you
And also with you

Let's offer each other the greeting of peace

Hymn 585: I heard the voice of Jesus say

Reading John 4:5-42

4:5 So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

4:6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

4:7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

4:8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

4:9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

4:11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"

4:12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

4:13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,

4:14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

4:15The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

4:16Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."

4:17The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,'

4:18for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

4:19The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet.

4:20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

4:21Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

4:22You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

4:23But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.

4:24God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

4:25The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."

4:26Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

4:27Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"

4:28Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

4:29"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

4:30They left the city and were on their way to him.

4:31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."

4:32But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."

4:33So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"

4:34Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.

4:35Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.

4:36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

4:37For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

4:38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

4:39Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."

4:40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 4:41 And many more believed because of his word. 4:42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

YouTube Song Went down to the river to pray

<https://youtu.be/4plt7S9PEUk?si=kiuKv2naCLLg6NEp>

Sermon

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

Jesus was sitting by a well in the middle of the day in a desert. The day was at its hottest and he was tired and he didn't have anything to draw water from the well.

A Samaritan woman came. I wonder why she was at the well in the middle of day, when most people came early in the morning when it was cool. Was she avoiding people?

The woman came to the well. Perhaps Jesus only had enough strength to say: *Give me some water.*

There is a statue of the Samaritan woman looking directly into Jesus eyes. Perhaps she is searching, wanting to know more about why his presence is profoundly moving her heart.

I wonder what colour Jesus eyes were: vivid blue or hazel or green or deep pools of dark brown. imagine looking into the face of Jesus and seeing God.



The woman wonders why a Jew asks her for water. Jews never shared with Samaritans and hated them and anyway why was a man speaking with a woman. All taboos.

Jesus and the woman speak of how they worship God. The woman challenges Jesus: *Are you more important than my ancestor Jacob?*

Jesus teaches the woman the time has come to worship God in Spirit and truth. That is the kind of worship God seeks from us. For God is Spirit.

Jesus asks the woman to bring her husband and then shares how he knows all about her. She is surprised, thinks him to be a prophet.

Something important happens in this moment. Perhaps the woman had been treated harshly by her community.

She had five husbands. Perhaps her community had rejected her, treated her with contempt, judged and criticised her. Perhaps their words were like stones, and she had been wounded by them. Perhaps she wasn't safe in her village and was unwelcome. Why else would she be drawing water from a well in the middle of the day when she knows no one will be there.

Perhaps her husbands had died or beaten her or abandoned her. We don't know.



What we do know is Jesus didn't judge her, criticise her or have contempt for her. He treated her with gentleness, respect, and love. He looked into her soul and knew she was thirsty to be loved, accepted, safe, welcomed and he healed her of the ache in her heart and soul.

Isn't this what we all long for in our hearts. To be treated with gentleness and love, not criticised and judged. where we can feel at home in a safe place where we feel accepted and embraced with love and kindness.

Perhaps the woman had experienced so much pain for so long, looking into the face of God healed her and made her whole.

Moment by moment, the Samaritan woman draws closer to Jesus until she opens her heart and sees him.

Jesus offers living water that will satisfy her thirst forever. She responds by asking: *Give me this water so I shall never be thirsty again or have to keep on coming to this well to draw water.*

The turning point for the woman, is when she says to Jesus: *I know the Messiah is coming and he will proclaim everything to us.*

And Jesus says to the woman: *I am he.*

Most ancient people knew the stories of Moses who wanted to know God's name and God had told him: *I am who I am.*

When Jesus says "*I am*" he is speaking of the mystery of who he is in God and with God

I wonder whether the woman understood

Did she pour water into a cup and give it to Jesus and watch him drink deeply, and sigh with relief?



Because of Jesus the woman has worshipped God with Spirit and truth. Because of Jesus she has been given living water. Perhaps living water gushed up inside her and drew her into eternal life.

The disciples return and are surprised Jesus is speaking to her. The woman leaves her water jar behind and returns to her village.

I wonder why the Samaritan woman left her water jar behind. Perhaps she let go of her old life and way of being and was transformed and healed. Perhaps she left her old life behind and all the pain she carried.

When she arrives at her village she gives her testimony.

She must have been so changed by her encounter with Jesus that the people who knew her were convinced she had met God. Her testimony moved their hearts and they believed in Jesus. She led her village to Christ, and they sought him out and stayed with him and their faith grew and they believed in Jesus and came to know him as the saviour of the world.

This was a woman who had suffered deeply, yet her faith was stronger than ever. Imagine her joy after meeting Jesus and experiencing the change in how the people in her village treated her. She wasn't avoiding them anymore. She was leading them to Christ. She was courageous and forgiving and clearly loved God with all her being.



She left her water Jar behind

This water jar belonged to a woman from a small village in India, who had migrated to Australia. She had an arranged marriage and had divorced her husband because of domestic violence, and her family, village and community had rejected her and had treated her harshly.

She came to my church asking questions, feeling pain, shame and alone. Over time she came to know she was in a safe place.

No one was judging her or criticising her. She felt she belonged and was accepted. She was treated with love and gentleness. The congregation modelled Jesus unconditional love and helped her to heal over time. They brought her to Christ, and her faith grew and she came to believe in Jesus and know him as her saviour.

Do you need to leave your water jug behind?
 Do you thirst for living water?
 I wonder what it would be like to look into the face of God

I invite you to close your eyes for a moment and pray.

Allow yourself to be drawn closer to God

Know you are loved by God

The Lord be with you

Reflective YouTube song Fill my cup Lord

<https://youtu.be/CCsTqfq51PU?si=kHA2Rg-Szgwq64qL>

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

Prayers for peace for the world and for each one of us

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

Hymn 655 O Let the Son of God enfold you

O, let the Son of God enfold you
with his Spirit and his love;
let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul;
O, let him have the things that hold you
and his Spirit, like a dove,
will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Notices and Sharing

Blessing

God be with us on our journey
Jesus, guide us in your love
Lord, gift us through each other.
Renew us as your pilgrim people,
through your Holy Spirit.

Hymn 778 Shalom to you now

Shalom to you now,
shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies bless you,
my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom,
Christ be your shalom.

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger 1942