

Surf Coast Uniting Churches

Sunday 21 June 2026



RCL

Introit 717 Give Thanks

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ his Son.

And now let the weak say, 'I am strong',
let the poor say, 'I am rich'
because of what
the Lord has done for us.'

Welcome

Today we focus on supporting and praying for those who are suffering and doing it tough in our congregation and the community around us

Acknowledgment

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

In the Lord, is our comfort
**He holds us close to his heart,
like a sparrow.**
In the Lord, is our home
The place where we find peace and hope

Prayer

From Before the Amen. Edit. Tirabassi, M.C., Tirabassi, M.I., © 2007 Pilgrim Press Ohio (Adapted)

Lord, our God, you speak in the swaying, swirling leaves
that sing and dance in winter winds.
You whisper into the cold air as we wait on your Word.

Lord, the silence only speaks of you,
 sending love and the Holy Spirit upon us
 like sparrows that fly free, calling out, singing, rejoicing.
 You Lord, you care for them and you care for us.

O lord, you weave your Word of wholeness, into our broken world
 You help us become peacemakers
 who act for you, for the poor and broken-hearted
 for all who are in need and suffering.
 When we hear the breeze of brokenness, within and beyond our borders,
 and the sound of silent suffering of the refugee, of rejection and resentment.
 You help us become vessels of reconciliation and comfort.

Lord, may we flee to you with our fragile, fragmented fearful world
 We are made in your image! Is this your image?
 We cry out to you, "No"
 May we shed sunlight in the midst of winter pain
 may we recognise our responsibility to the marginalised
 to those who sit in darkness and grief and who are hurting.

In the darkness of despair, depression, and
 the high cost of living, racism, sexism, agism.
 You Lord, Open to us the cries of injustice.

Lord, Your Holy Spirit, moves upon the waters of economic inequalities and
 educational unfairness and healthcare, beyond many peoples reach
 and the devastation and suffering of war and you help us reach out with compassion and
 practical help.

You help the those who are privileged have compassion
 and use their power to empower
 those struggling with the cost-of-living day after day
 to pay the bills, the rent, to pay for transportation, food and clothing.
 Lord, you are the same yesterday, today and tomorrow

Lord, you do not let us not be content to stay the same
 you change us and help us fulfill your work
 We give you our thanks and praise
 from grateful hearts.
 Thy kingdom come now Lord.

Hymn 123 Be still my soul

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;
 bear patiently the cross of grief and pain;
 leave to your God to order and provide;

in every change he faithful will remain.

Readings

Genesis 21:8-21



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21:8The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

21:9But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.

21:10So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac."

21:11The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son.

21:12But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.

21:13As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring."

21:14So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

21:15When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes.

21:16Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.

21:17And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

21:18Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him."

21:19Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

21:20God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.

21:21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Matthew 10:24-39

10:24 "A disciple is not above the teacher nor a slave above the master;
10:25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

10:26 "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known.

10:27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

10:30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted.

10:31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

10:32 "Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven,

10:33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

10:34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.

10:35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,

10:36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

10:37 "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me,

10:38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

10:39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Hymn 602 O Love that Wilt not let me go

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee:
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow

may richer, fuller be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee:
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain,
that morn shall tearless be.

George Matheson 1842-1906

Responsorial reading of Psalm 86:1-10

86:1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

86:2 Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God;

86:3 be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long.

86:4 Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

86:5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

86:6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication.

86:7 In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

86:8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

86:9 All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

86:10 For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

Sermon

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

Today's gospel has a wonderful metaphor, a sparrow. We are told we are of more value than many sparrows. See these tiny sparrows in a nest, so fragile, and dependant on care. In ancient times the poor ate sparrows, it's the only meat they could find. Yet God cares for them.



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The metaphor is about God caring for us. So, what do sparrows have to do with today's readings?



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We just said the psalm which reminds us how dependent we are on God's care and how we find strength in God. We can be reassured God hears our voice, like he heard Hagar and her son's voices, cry out to him in the wilderness.

Like the psalmist, there are some amongst us who are suffering deeply, due to health issues, medical treatment, grief, childhood wounds and more.

It's said, when one of us suffers all of us suffer. That is because, we are like a family. When we pray for someone in our church family, I've from some of our members that they know it and feel it and don't feel so alone. They feel God has heard their cries, because of our prayers.

Hagar was a slave and had no choice or power in what happened to her. She bore Abraham's eldest son. When Sarah had a son, Abraham's youngest, and saw him playing with Hagar's son, she resented it and made Abraham banish Hagar and the boy. The boy wasn't named in a culture where name, heritage and ancestry are everything, Name defined ones one's essence and the eldest inherited. And Sarah did not want the boy to inherit God's blessing.

Abraham was afraid for his eldest son, and we hear how God reassures him that God will make a nation of him. So, Abraham sends Hagar and the boy into the wilderness with bread and water and sure enough it runs out and death is near. Hagar and her son cried out to God and an angel came and told Hagar God will make a nation out of her son and opened her eyes to a well and they survived. And the boy was named, Ishmael, which means God hears. God heard his cries.

in a similar way, the psalmist cries out to God. Perhaps that's the connection with the reading from Genesis. The psalmist is crying out to God. He is poor and needy and one of God's little ones who depends upon God's love and faithful care. He wants God to gladden his soul and praises God when he is in trouble. He trusts God to hear him.

In the reading from Genesis Hagar didn't hate Abraham or Sarah for the bad things that happened to her. She didn't complain about the injustices and pain she suffered. She could have said: Why me? Instead, she called out to God, like the Psalmist and God heard her cries. This isn't an easy thing to do, when suffering.

In the gospel it's not easy being a Christian, to call out the gospel message to those who defame and persecute the little ones, Jesus disciples. Yet, we hear how God hears their cries and reassures them every hair on their head is counted and they are of more value than many sparrows. God is faithful to them and will never fail them, no matter what happens. It is a reassuring message for all who suffer.

It is reassuring for all of us who need prayer to know God hears our prayers and we belong to a loving community who treats us with love, gentleness and respect. It gives us the courage and hope to go on.

So, what does it mean to take up our cross, and follow Jesus? Perhaps our cross is all the past wounds and pain we carry. All of us have experienced times of joy and sorrow. Some of us carry burdens, that can feel like a cross.



This is a lifeline. Sometimes just when we need it most, someone comes to comfort us, or stand by us, or pray for us, or are there when we need someone to be there for us and care about us. They are our lifeline.

Have you ever prayed and felt drawn to going to see someone or calling them on the phone or offering to pray for someone? That's like being a lifeline and can be enough to save someone who has lost hope.

This is a prayer for healing by Edwina Gately. I invite you to look her up and find out about her story.

My God – equally present
 in darkness, as in light.
 Stand by me!
 Allow me, yes, to suffer and be hurt
 But not to be broken or destroyed
 Allow me to be bruised
 But not my spirit to be overcome
 I know of suffering, but I do not fear it
 I only fear my strength to carry it
 I ask not to escape from the threats and the pain
 I ask that I might carry them
 with grace

with hope
with love

There is courage in what she says, and hope.
Edwina's ministry is challenging and she has blessed many people through her ministry for
Jesus.

The gospel speaks of losing our life for Jesus' sake and finding it. Perhaps losing our life is
about giving up our time, energy and resources to love and pray for others. This is losing our
life for Jesus' sake and the promise is we find our life.

God stands with us in light and darkness and the cost of discipleship can be high
but the rewards are greater. Life.

Let us keep on praying for one another and caring for one another

Then we will know God is with us, and will hear our cries and answer our prayers for
courage, hope and the strength to go on.

The Lord be with you

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

Pray for all those you know are suffering and in pain

Taizé 741 – O Lord hear my Prayer

Sung Response for those suffering and doing it tough is our congregation

O Lord hear my prayer; O Lord hear my prayer:
when I call answer me.

O Lord hear my prayer; O Lord hear my prayer.
Come and listen to me.

From the Taizé Community (1991)

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 607 Make me a channel of your peace

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, let me bring your light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy.

*O master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

(‘Sebastian Temple’) 1928 -

Blessing

In our brokenness God is ever near
In our time of need,
God's love surrounds us
We must simply be open to receive it
Sisters and brothers
God knows our brokenness
and God is here
to bring healing and wholeness
Receive the good news of God
by the Holy Spirit,
we are nurtured to wholeness.

Song 779 May the feet

May the feet of God walk with you,
and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you,
and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and his breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and his love bring you home.

Aubrey Podlich 1946-