

Surf Coast Uniting Churches

Sunday 13th of September 2026



*From St Mary's Lindisfarne
Possibly Columbus*

Introit -The peace of the earth

*The peace of the earth be with you,
the peace of the heavens too;
the peace of the rivers be with you,
the peace of the oceans too.
Deep peace falling over you;
God's peace growing in you. (Repeat)*

Welcome

Acknowledgement

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.

Prayer – Safina Stewart

Spirit of truth, guide our hearts and our steps
Teach us to walk together in friendship and respect
To honor the rich cultures and stories of this land's first peoples
May your church be a place of reconciliation, healing and justice
A courageous community empowered by your love



Ezekiel 47:9-12

Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the

salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live
 Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river.
 Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the
 water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will
 serve for food and their leaves for healing

May the Word, as living water,
 All: **make everything live.**

Call to worship

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.
 And God called them good.

Come Holy Spirit and cleanse the waters.

The prophet saw a river flowing from the Temple,
 and wherever the river flowed, everything lived.

Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.

Jesus cried out,
 “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me... Out
 of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.
 ”

Come, Holy Spirit and heal your people.



Prayer for Seasons of Creation (adapted)

Loving God, your Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning of time
 Today, we gather as part of your community of all creation,
 thirsty for your grace.

We give thanks for the gift of water, the veins of our common home, that sustains the cedar and the
 whale, the pasture and the city. We are grateful for the local waters that nourish our homelands and
 our fellow creatures. We give thanks that in your well-watered
 garden, every drop is a sacred testament to your love.

Yet, we confess at times we’ve treated this gift as a mere commodity. We have
 choked the seas with our waste and watched the warming tides rise in judgment.
 We lament the cracked earth of the drought-stricken and the salty tears of the
 climate refugee. Melt our frozen hearts, Lord.
 Let the waters of repentance flow.

When nature reminds us of our folly, help us pray and act with love to heal the earth.
 When climate change, starvation, and entire islands disappearing under the oceans and floods that
 come from melting glaciers that wash away entire villages and communities scar your beautiful
 creation help us find a way forward to heal your creation.

Lord, we are sorry Lord for the lack of love shown towards your creation
 We lament how humanity has caused this cry from nature
 Help us change our hearts Lord
 Help those who can care, gather and work together
 to speak out and stop this destruction of your creation

Lord of all Life, you promised that wherever the river flows, everything shall live.
 Stir in us a calling to care for the waters — to protect the watershed, defend the rights of water and
 honour the dignity of the thirsty.

Lord, may your Word be a spring within us, gushing forth for the healing of the nations.

Lord, you brought forth water from the rock to sustain us in the desert.
 May Christ our Lord who is Living Water refresh us for the work of restoration.
 May the Holy Spirit carry us on currents of grace until justice rolls down like waters and
 righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.

An Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God, who creates all things,
 who embraces all things, who celebrates all things,
 who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.
 We believe in God as the source of all life,
 who baptizes this planet with living water.
 We believe in Jesus Christ, seen in the suffering one,
 the poor one, the malnourished one,
 the climate refugee - who loves and cares for this world
 and suffers with it.
 And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life,
 who came to reconcile and renew this world
 and everything in it.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God,
 who moves with God
 and who moves among and with us today.
 We believe in everlasting life in God.
 And we believe in the hope that one day God will put an end to
 death and all destructive forces.

(Lutheran Theological College, South India, adapted)

Blessing of the water

*Members of the congregation are invited to come forward
 and fill the font with water from their jugs*

The Blessing

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.
And God called them good.

Come Holy Spirit and cleanse the waters.

The prophet saw a river flowing from the Temple,
and wherever the river flowed, everything lived.

Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.

Jesus cried out:

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me... Out
of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.”

Come, Holy Spirit and heal your people.



Fountain at Chester Cathedral

Thanksgiving prayer for the Waters

Almighty and ever living God, we thank you for your love in all creation,
and especially for your gift of water to sustain and cleanse all life.

Christ is the living water, cleansing, refreshing, and making all things
new. So now we offer our thanks for the waters that bring beauty to all
that we enjoy, the wild places, the bush, the mountains, coast and the
sea. We give thanks and praise for all good lands, for the trees and
pastures, for our plentiful crops, and for the living water that quenches
them.

(Adapted from Anglican Aotearoa NZ Prayer Book)

We praise you for giving us life through water, and for all waters
everywhere. We especially praise you for the waters who sustain us in
this part of our common home.

We give you thanks, Lord, for in the beginning you created us in your
image and placed us in a well-watered garden. In the desert, you
promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave your people
water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the
Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you washed us

from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with
the water of life.

You bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love Lord. You satisfy all who
thirst and You give us the life only you can give. Amen

(Adapted from All Creation Sings,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

We are invited to come forward and touch the water and remember our baptism

Blessing Prayer

May we be carried by the flow of the great river of life.
May we discover a hidden spring within, gushing forth.
May we be carried to the shores of the sacred and renewed.
Amen.

Hymn 668 TIS Touch the earth lightly

*Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.*

Shirley Erena Murray 1931-

Exodus 14:19-31

14:19The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. 14:20It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

14:21Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. 14:22The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

14:23The Egyptians pursued and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.

14:24At the morning watch the LORD, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into a panic.

14:25He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

14:26Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."

14:27So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea.

14:28The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

14:29But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

14:30Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 14:31Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

John 7:37-39

On the last day of the festival
 , the great day, while Jesus was standing
 there, he cried out,
 “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the
 one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said,
 ‘Out of the
 believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.
 ’ ” Now he said this
 about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive, for as yet there
 was no Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified.

May the Word, as living water,
make everything live.

Sermon -God is in control of creation

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

The message from Exodus is God is in charge of nature.

What’s described in the reading may have been a storm, where Israelites walked through shallow water or God acting, or both.



Crossing the Red Sea, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt University Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://act.library.vanderbilt.edu/artworks/55573> [retrieved September 8, 2026]. Original source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dura_Europos_fresco_Jews_cross_Red_Sea.jpg.

Dura-Europos church (also known as the Dura-Europos house church) is the earliest identified Christian house church. It is located in Dura-Europos in Syria. It is one of the earliest known Christian churches,[1] and was apparently a normal domestic house converted for worship some time between 233 and 256, when the town was abandoned after conquest by the Persians." [from Wikimedia]

This painting is in a house church in Syria that was used by the early church around 300 Common era. It portrays the story of the Israelites, and the parting of the red sea.

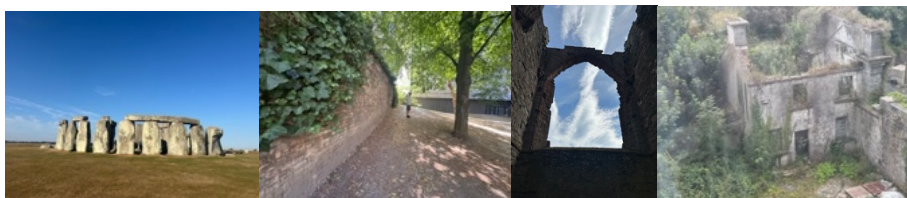


Kotarbiński, Wilhelm, 1848-1921. Crossing the Red Sea, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt University Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://act.library.vanderbilt.edu/artworks/57377> [retrieved September 8, 2026]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KotarbinskiV_PerehEveRYB.jpg.

This image shows the Israelites standing on dry ground, where the waters have swallowed up the Egyptian army. It's challenging. One army is favoured over another, one people over another people.

One people had oppressed and abused another group of people; the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites and used them as slaves. God saves the oppressed Israelites and destroys the Egyptians who oppressed them.

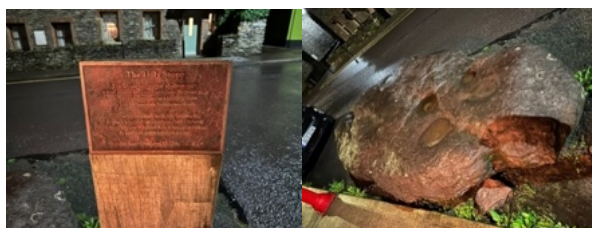
It could be any people, being oppressed. I wonder if history teaches us oppressors never win, in the end.



Photos T. Lyndon

Time passes and empires come and go. There are many ruins of buildings and walls left in the world. These are images of Stonehenge, the old Roman wall around Londinium (now known as London), a monastery on Lindisfarne and a house in Galway, Ireland, where nature is growing through a ruin.

Perhaps since the beginning of humanity and our history, it's become clear we're not in control of creation. We are in control of how we treat and love creation.



Photos T. Lyndon

Some of us love rocks. This is a holy rock on a road in Dingle, Ireland. It's at a strange angle. You can see the road, post and a car. It's as big as a car and the road has been built around it. It's associated with early Christians and has been sitting there, for a long time. People treasure this rock. They consider it sacred.

When we look back over our own lives, we may remember stories about people who care about creation

I remember going into a toy shop over 40 years ago to buy toys for my children and the owner of the shop was lamenting about how we are destroying our own nest. I remember his despair.

I try to do what I can, but it seems small and insignificant. Some say every effort contributes to a better world and makes a difference, no matter how small.

Most of us try to reduce the amount of plastic we use and recycle. I was walking on the beach on Friday and found a plastic bottle, half full of dishwashing detergent. It had warnings about it being toxic and not good for our skin and eyes. I hate to think what it did to the fish and other sea creatures. I carried it to a bin and disposed of it.

We can make a difference caring for plants. A few years ago, I bought two Wollami pines and keep them in pots.



Photos T. Lyndon

They're rare Australian natives dating back over 200 million years and only grow in a forest in the Blue Mountains in Australia. There are only 100 growing in the wild and they are considered living fossils. They are critically endangered. A wildfire could destroy the entire forest in a moment. People are not allowed in the forest. They could bring disease which would wipe them out. Climate change threatens their existence. There are many like me who keep them in pots. If a wildfire wiped out the forest, I'd offer my two trees for replanting in the Blue Mountains and hopefully others would do the same. I'm not saying do the same as me.

We can all find some small way to make a difference. I'm sure everyone is already doing this but if you aren't I encourage you to do something.

I was talking with one of our members about their garden on Friday. They're planting petunias in their garden because they love them. We're all gardeners in our own way, whether we plant seeds or seedlings, trees or hedges, have indoor plants, fruit trees, flowers or creepers, belong to a community garden or enjoy a bunch of flowers on our dining tables or church.

Imagine, God as the gardener of all creation and we're his assistants

Seasons of creation raise awareness people's hearts. The church which has 2.4 billion Christians, that's 28% of the world's population. That's a lot of voices. You can't tell me that doesn't count. Its time the church used its voice. The Pope has spoken out.

Is it time for Christians to make a stand?

Most of us are concerned about what's happening to our beautiful world. We've heard what has happened to the Amazon, forests logged and destroyed for money. Now there is drought and the river is drying up. Like most people we fear huge AI centres will use up our precious water. Our young people are anxious. Water is precious and we can't survive without it.

Perhaps we are being oppressed by a small group of people who want power and money. Perhaps like the story of Moses, will God hear our prayers and act and help us.



Photo - Lynne Jackson (used with permission)

I believe there is hope and nature is resilient. Australia is amazing. Its heartland is desert and thousands of buggies, and zebra finches gather at waterholes. There is upside down rivers with rocks on top and water underneath. I'm confident God will find a way to bring restoration and healing to the land.



I stayed at a village called Bourton upon water where a stream of water runs through it and it made me think about how much we need water. We have built our cities around rivers in this land and need to live close to water.

I hope today's worship from Seasons of creation has encouraged you to take heart to speak out, act and love God's creation.

I encourage you to pray. Choose one action to make a difference to love God's creation and bless others

The Israelites felt awe when rescued from oppression by walking through the parted seas. That was their response to God's power over creation. Awe.

Whether it's a storm, looking up at the stars at night or at an orchid or a sunset, the beauty of nature evokes awe. Let us love creation and do our best to bless it.

The Lord be with you

Hymn 137 TIS For the Beauty of the earth

*For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
Christ, our God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

Offering Prayer

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water — the waters on the Earth, and under the Earth, the waters above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet's waters, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us. Accept the first fruits we offer here. Bless and multiply these gifts to our nurture and the care of your creation; for the sake of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

Prayers of the people from Seasons of Creation

God of living waters, today we pray for a wounded world where waters are exploited, polluted, and withheld.

We pray for places where plastics, toxins, and oil spills blacken creeks and wetlands, for communities whose fishing waters are contaminated and whose children drink from polluted streams.

You may name and pray for local creeks, wetlands or contaminated places

Heal what has been poisoned. Bring justice where profit has silenced truth.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

We pray for all rivers dammed without the consent of the vulnerable; for farmers whose soil dries seasonal flood; for indigenous peoples whose sacred waters are engineered for distant cities and data centres; for the suffering of communities whose livelihoods are stolen by corporate greed, and whose health is sacrificed for global consumption.

You may name and pray for local rivers, farmlands and affected Peoples

Free what has been unjustly controlled. Let rivers flow again with dignity and life.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

We pray for oceans burdened by plastic and chemical waste; for coral reefs bleached by warming seas; for great whales navigating through labyrinths of nylon and ghost nets; for the microscopic life, the plankton and the krill, now mingling with the invisible dust of synthetic waste; for the rivers that carry our runoff — the fertilizers, the dyes, and the heavy metals.

You may name or pray for nearest oceans and those around the Globe

Turn our guilt into grace and our apathy into action. Make us a people who live justly and bring healing to every shore and stream.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

We pray for communities where rising seas claim communities and ancestral lands, where saltwater invades freshwater wells, where graves are washed away with memory and belonging; for those who have contributed least to climate change yet suffer first and most.

You may name or pray for communities

Hold them in dignity and strengthen global resolve for justice.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

We pray for informal settlements and rural villages where taps run dry or water is unsafe to drink; for children walking miles to collect water or women burdened by scarcity; for those whose sickness is caused by contaminated supply.

We pray for those whose lives are closely intertwined with water - coastal peoples, fisherfolk, marine biologists, water engineers - who can teach us wise ways to live with water. We pray for people to be moved to action and use their inherent or entrusted power to create change. Stir governments, corporations, and communities to protect and share water justly.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

(Methodist Church of Southern Africa)

Convert our hearts, O God.

Where we have treated water as a commodity, teach us to receive it as a sacred gift.

Where we have consumed without thought, teach us simplicity.

Where we have used water without reverence, teach us to protect it as a gift entrusted to every generation and honour water as a source of life for all.

Where we have been silent and tolerant of injustice make us courageous protectors of rivers, defenders of seas, and companions to those who suffer water injustice until justice and mercy flows like the river of life.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

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 658 TIS 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?

*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.*

Blessing

Go in peace, as people of God made Christ's own through the waters of baptism. In the power of the
 Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Hymn 755 You shall go out with Joy

You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace,
 and the mountains and hills shall break forth in singing.
 There'll be shouts of joy, and the trees of the field
 shall clap, shall clap their hands,
 and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
 and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
 and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
 and you'll go out with joy.

Steffi Geiser Rubin 1950-based on Isaiah 55:12