Surf Coast Uniting Churches

Sunday 15 Nov 2026
Following Christ, using our gifts to serve God and others

Hymn 768 Praise God

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise God, all creatures here below,
praise God above, you heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Thomas Ken
1637-1711 *alt.*

Welcome

May the worship bless you

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

Thanks be to you, Lord
That we have risen today
To the rising of life itself

Prayer

From Before the Amen (adapted) © 2007 M.C. & M.I. Tirabassi

Loving God, as the sunlight is transformed into energy by plants, your light shining upon us is transformed. Your word is sown in our hearts and blossoms into amazing acts of love and service. You Lord, open our hearts to your presence, and fill us with your Spirit so we reflect your love for all people. You make it possible for others to experience your love and warmth through us.

From Celtic Daily Prayer (red book) (adapted) © 2002 The Northumbria Community Trust

Lord, lead us on your path,
Be all our journeying.
Rule our hearts,
so that our hearts are only yours. Amen

Prayer of Confession

Please spend a moment in quiet contemplation bringing before God whatever is troubling your heart

Silence

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

659 The Lord is my shepherd (sung prayerfully while seated)

The Lord is my shepherd, and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.
Over the mountains, the waters and by-ways,
valleys and highways he's waiting for me.

I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.

And while on the journey to where we are going
he promised to be there to help us along,
and over the mountains we'll walk on together,
to know all the wonders he's given to me.

I want to go to meet him there,
to lay myself down in his love.
The Lord is my shepherd and I want to follow
wherever he leads me, wherever he goes.

Brian Kerry Boniwell 1949-
based on Psalm 23

Reading

Matthew 25:14-30

25:14"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them;

25:15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. At once
25:16the one who had received the five talents went off and traded with them and made five more talents.
25:17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.
25:18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

25:19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.
25:20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'

25:21His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

25:22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.'
25:23His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

25:24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter,
25:25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'
25:26But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter?
25:27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest.

25:28So take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents.
25:29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

25:30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Sermon

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



Its lovely looking at fern fonds, before they uncurl. It reminds me of what it's like when we are younger, when we're born with our gifts or receive them from the Spirit.

Perhaps when we're younger, our gifts are not yet fully developed and need nurturing through others teaching, mentoring and encouragement.

I remember when I was younger. Our church had a workshop where our gifts were discerned. I felt embarrassed sharing about my gifts. It was long before God called me to be a minster, long before I had the change to be taught how to use them, before mentors encouraged me to grow into them. It was early days. I did feel an enormous responsibility to use them, that God wanted me to use them and to not hide my light or bury my gifts. Over the years I've come to know they needed the right context to develop. Undertaking studies at theological college developed some of them, mentors asking me to just do it and providing opportunities helped grow them, others seeing them in me and simply inviting me to practice them, helped grow them.

Perhaps you may have had a similar or different journey, in how you've grown in your gifts



I did the 1000 steps the other day. I watched a kookaburra digging in the mud for worms for a young kookaburra sitting in a nearby tree. Kookaburras sing one song, they joyfully sing it and their voice is a delight to listen to at dawn and dusk. I hear them singing all the time, along the Surf Coast and along the Yarra River in Melbourne.

Further along the path I watched male and then a female lyrebird digging in the mud for worms. Do you know Lyrebirds can mimic twenty to twenty-five different bird species and make about thirty-five distinct sounds? Their voice is unique and beautiful, as they call out to one another and it echoes throughout the forest. Their vocalisations of other birds' song serve a purpose. Some songs are soft, others loud. There are warning songs and mating songs and they teach one another songs, so social songs. They can even mimic crying human babies. They can do this because of the syrinx or a special organ in its windpipe, which is like ours. They are social learners and practice their songs in the forests in the Dandenong's.



Perhaps how we develop and use our gifts depends on how God has made us and on our environment. Sometimes we have hidden gifts, and they emerge at the right time, in the right environment and when there are opportunities and encouragement to use them.

Sometimes we have one great gift.

A gift like helps or service to society, a social gift where groups of people work together to make something happen.

A gift like encouragement helps others to find the confidence, to try out their gift and grow it.

A gift like leadership is about coming along side all kinds of people, to help them minister together and use their gifts. Leadership involves being able to understand and lead others, so they can use their gift to bless one another. It requires people skills and a willingness to focus on others wellbeing.

A gift like pastoral care requires love, caring, empathy, patience and compassion for others and the ability to journey with others, focusing on their needs.

We all have different gifts.

The parable is about using our gifts, not burying them. Developing our gifts and allowing God to work through us, to bless others.
Sometimes someone has more gifts than others and perhaps there is a greater responsibility asked of them, such as leadership, chaplaincy, being a minister or doctor. A bit like the person with ten talents.

In the parable a person with one great gift didn't seem to appreciate it or be grateful to God for it. They were afraid of God buried their gift and were punished.

I wonder why Jesus taught this parable. Perhaps he wanted people to understood how important it is, to use our gifts.

We've just finished strategies sessions, that included discerning our gifts or strengths and reflecting on our skills. Perhaps it's been the tip of the iceberg for some of us and there are many other gifts to be discovered and grown into.

Those with the gift of encouragement can encourage others to use their gifts. Those with the gift of helps can work together with others to help people do something with their gifts as a group. Those who have a gift for administration or organisation can help those with creative gifts to use them. Those who can sing in the choir or who have the gift of hospitality bless us all and help us worship and gather as the people of God.

We all have our favourite gift. The one gift that comes naturally. That's God-given to us and makes us unique.

For those who feel called to use their gifts and want to take them further to grow or who want to know what to do with their gift or gifts, it's worth using the Uniting churches process of discernment and asking for a mentor. It will allow the church can help you discern your gifts and whether you have a call to ministry such as being on church

council, being a chaplain or a minister. I experienced having a mentor and my congregations' discernment and encouragement for many years, before I was called to ministry by God and did a period of discernment with the church. It can take time to discern our journey and call.

I wonder whether it takes a congregation to help us discern our gift or gifts, to bring them out into the open and use them and grow and develop and be a blessing to God and others.

That moment when we discern and discover our gift and grow, nurture and it and embrace our call, when we find deep fulfilment from singing our song is the moment we know and celebrate all God and others have done for us in growing into our gifts and being a blessing to God and others.

Don't bury your gift. Use it to bless God and others, and you will be blessed.

The Lord bless you

Offering UIW

We bring our gifts to you, Lord
In gratitude and hope
In dedicating them, we dedicate ourselves again
To be your people in the world
In the strength and enabling power
Of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayers of the people

Prayers for world peace, God's creation, for all living in poverty and suffering, our nation, our community, for those facing operations and medical treatment and for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

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

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?

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.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word 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.

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor the lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life 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.

Daniel L. Schutte 1947-

Sending out

Wee Worship book (Iona) © 1999 Wild Goose Resource Group www.ionabooks.com

From where you are
to where you need us
Jesus, now lead on

From the security of what we know
to the adventure of what you will reveal
Jesus, now lead on

To refashion the fabric of this world
until it resembles the shape of your kingdom
Jesus, now lead on

Because good things have been prepared
for those who love God
Jesus, now lead on

Blessing UIW

God, who is love, fill our hearts
Christ Jesus, who is the new life, inspire our hopes
The Holy Spirit, who is life giver
Spur us to deeds of compassion. Amen

Hymn 779 May the feet of God

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-