

Ormond Uniting Church



The risen Lord, He Qi

The Reign of Christ

November 23, 2025

Minister: Rev Dr Ji Zhang 张骥

Chair of Council: Dr Mardie Townsend

Music: Dr Karen Roberts

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE 聚集敬拜
(Lorraine Denniston)

Call to worship

Acknowledgement of Country

1 Hymn: 693 Come as you are: that's how I want you

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION 忏悔祷告
(Ji Zhang)

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD 敬听圣言
(Lorraine Denniston)

1st Scripture Reading: Colossians 歌罗西书 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers--all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the

church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

2nd Scripture Reading: Luke 路加福音 23:33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

2 Hymn: 345 Were you there when they crucified my Lord
(verses 1, 4-6)

REFLECTION and THANKSGIVING

Journey 1: Our worship in the last 3 years of the Lectionary
(Ron Townsend)

Our worship in the last 3 years of the Lectionary

On our hike to Machu Pichu in Peru, we walked in a group with Sandra, who was Mardie's sister's neighbour and close friend from Hobart. On the walk she suffered badly from altitude sickness. The porters began to organise her ride on a donkey back to Cusco – the start. Meanwhile, we staggered on towards the 4,300 metre altitude 'Dead Women's Pass.' After a while, we heard a commotion behind us. And there was Sandra calling out to us, being piggy-backed up the mountain by a porter. She made it thanks to the heroic porters carrying her. So, what's the connection to OUC's observance of Lectionary-based worship?

1. These last 3 years have been very exciting and difficult for our WORSHIP life.
 - a. Variability: no full-time minister resulting in 3 supply ministries and multiple other contributors
 - b. Exciting because heaps of people 'stood up' to help in making our worship life sustainable

- c. Difficult because of a piece-meal ministry, but also complicated by the new build, moving out to the Church of Christ and a long-haul seeking a new minister.
2. Nevertheless, generally we followed the Lectionary in our worship.
 - i. Year A Matthew:
 1. Matthew has the strongest tradition and background in Judaism - and a heavy-duty theology of ethics related to Jewish Law and practices. Yet despite that, even in the most difficult of his passages, he ‘unmistakenly’ (portrays) ‘a God who desires to heal, gather and save, rather than to condemn.’ (BB SJ)
 2. Some examples: The wonderful birth of Jesus narrative, the sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the storm battered boat on the lake, and the terror of the deep, silenced by Jesus.
 - ii. Year B Mark:
 1. Mark’s is the first Gospel written. Almost all his testimony through his teaching and miracles is focused on Jesus’ death - his crucifixion. Through his death Jesus ‘takes on’ all that is demonic – in his world and in our world.
 2. A couple of examples
 - a. On the 1st day of year B, we celebrated two sacraments: the Baptism of Chloe KAKAVELIS and Holy Communion. Both bind us to the death of Christ. WE

DIE WITH CHRIST and all that is demonic is conquered. And we rise with Christ into new life.

iii. Year C Luke:

1. Luke's Gospel is the most cosmopolitan Gospel. So many stories of the outcast, the foreigner, the broken and the outsider in Luke's record. Luke asserts that the good news of Jesus is for ALL – not just Jewish converts.

2. Some examples:

a. The lost sheep, lost coin and lost son, the tax collector Zacchaeus and the Roman Centurion at the foot of the Cross.

b. Luke's Gospel speaks to our journey into exile and finally return from exile. The same God that spoke through the Prophet back then, now speaks a similar message to us through the lectionary readings of Jeremiah: God is always with us; God holds us; God will bring us home. God promises hope, even when all feels hopeless and lost.

b. JOHN'S Gospel – Years A, B and C. Strangely, John does not have a year for his Gospel – bits and pieces are used across all three years.

Stories like 'The Wedding Feast at Cana' and 'The Woman at the Well' are wonderful signs of God's presence in Jesus. Think of the wonderful climax to John's Gospel where Jesus declares as he dies 'It is

Finished', not signifying the end but the completion of the redemption of all creation - life over death.

3. MINISTRIES: Over the last 3 years we have had many different people leading our worship, which has its upside (variety is the spice of life) and its down side (uncoordinated) BUT having the RCL as that which held it all together was extremely important and helped to keep us focused on the heart and soul of the faith.
4. CONCLUSION: So how does this connect to the story of Sandra in Peru?

WHO CARRIED US THROUGH THE TOUGH TIMES TO THE END?

WHO CARRIED US THROUGH SUNDAY BY SUNDAY?

5. Let us pray

King of All Creation, who loves your creatures and all of creation so much you would die for them, we know you as the one who leads us into your promised Kingdom, but also the one who carries, supports, enables, loves us into the one thing that matters – to sing your praises always. Carry us forward, now and always.

AMEN

Journey 2: The last 2 years of our building process
(Mardie Townsend)

The building project – journey over the past 2 years

This has been a 17 year long journey, but I will focus on the last 2 years of that journey. Our road has been one characterised by pot-holes, bumps and detour signs.

In September 2023, the Ormond PCG representatives met with Rina Neustroski, Manager Development Projects for Synod Property Services and Blake Kempthorne, our new (and umpteenth) Project Manager to discuss the way forward in the project which had been drifting, with likely building costs blowing out beyond our available budget.

Two options were considered:

1. To continue with the current design and consultancy team but reduce the scope to fit within the available funding (\$3,098,144.00 ex GST).
2. For the project to be put under the control of a contractor to resolve the scope of work and undertake the building works within the available budget.

Church Council approved the second option, and Simbuilt Pty Ltd was appointed as the contractor for the project.

And so, we began the journey with Simbuilt as our contractor and Blake as our Project Manager. Neville, David, Frank and I met regularly throughout the project with Simbuilt, Blake and a Presbytery representative.

At the PCG meeting on 1st November 2023, Simbuilt expressed confidence that building work would begin in January 2024 and be finished by 1st December 2024, subject to Council planning approvals.

However, by late January 2024, the revised Planning Permit application had not yet been submitted and by late March 2024, we were still waiting on the Planning Permit. By May 2024, the Planning Permit had been issued, but the Building Permit was still some weeks away. At this point Simbuilt advised that we would not be back in our building for Christmas, but they anticipated we would be back for Easter 2025.

By mid-August 2024, we struck yet another ‘pot-hole’: the builders for the neighbouring property did not have a building permit. Given that we both intended to build to the boundary, this was a problem (ultimately one which would cost us more than 3 months). Although works progressed on the levelling of the floor of the church, the work on the new building could not proceed the neighbours had constructed a retaining wall. While our concrete slab was laid and the steel framework installed before Christmas 2024, further work on the new part of our premises was delayed. This meant, of course, that we were unable to move back into the church in time for Easter as planned. At various stages of the project, we would go to a meeting and find that we had to decide on an element of the project immediately to avoid further delays.

Unfortunately, some decisions were made by the builders without consultation. For example, they installed a very energy hungry hot water service, which we have since had replaced by a more energy efficient one.

Ultimately, the project reached practical completion in early June 2025.

What a challenging journey it has been, but I think we all agree that the destination has been worth the effort.

Journey 3: Our worshipping experience at Church of Christ
(Dianne Richter)

The journey from our building to worship in a different space.

We sorted and packed our belongings, ready for the journey to Ormond Church of Christ just one km up the road. Like moving house for a short time, we identified the items that would be important to our continuing worship and wellbeing in a new space – communion glasses, plates and cloth, the Christ Candle, collection plates, hymn books and bibles, children’s activities and, of course, our morning tea supplies and packed them into our cars.

We were warmly welcomed by the Pastor, his wife and others who so generously and thoughtfully shared their space with us. Cupboards were ready for us to store our belongings, offers of assistance were forthcoming, we were quickly made to feel at home.

Of course it was different. The building was smaller and configured with a focus on baptism at the front. We missed the pipe organ but both Peter and Karen adapted their playing, making best use of the electronic keyboard and the opportunities it offered to enhance our music. Our singing sounded louder in the smaller space!

Although we did not have a minister in placement, we were supported and inspired by the group of regular ministers and

worship leaders, especially Tony and Ron. Our learning also continued with two face-to-face Learning Hub courses in the church, facilitated by Brad.

We needed to change our worship time to 4.00 p.m. – a challenge for some but easier for others. Overall though, attendances at worship were consistent and similar to usual and most people were able to stay for afternoon tea and a chat in the hall afterwards. No one seemed in a rush to get home and cook dinner!

By the middle of this year, we were able to again pack our belongings and move back to our home, albeit a changed one.

Reflecting on this journey, we have much to be thankful for:

- Our strong, faithful community that was committed to making this journey
- The many people who showed leadership and problem solving skills to make our move as smooth as possible and ensure people were cared for
- The generous hospitality of the people at Ormond Church of Christ
- The opportunity to observe and learn from a congregation with a multicultural focus
- The ongoing guidance of God as we ventured on this step of our redevelopment journey

Journey 4: Our returning to the Ormond site
(Heather Baxter)

Moving back to Ormond

With anticipation and excitement we entered the new and renovated spaces at Ormond Uniting: the new carpark, gardens getting started, the little free pantry newly painted, the new entrance, the old but changed worship space, the fresh kitchen and meeting space.

With joy we sat in the worship space looking again at the stained-glass windows, listening to the organ and piano, comfortably seated with heating and cooling installed.

With trepidation we viewed all the technology that had changed and needed our collective input.

With sadness we reflected on the saints who had died but had planned for this new community space. We remember that this building is built on land that was bought over 100 years ago, but was never given up by the peoples of the Kulin nation.

We know there is yet many more tasks to complete: the installation of cabinetry, the completion of garden plantings, the attachment of plaques. The list goes on. But we also know that when completed we will have a facility where worship can take place, which the Glen Eira community can use, and we can continue to spread the good news that Jesus says yes to everyone.

With Zechariah as recorded in Luke's gospel we say:
"Through the heartfelt mercies of God,
God's Sunrise will break upon us,

Shining on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death,
Then showing us the way, one foot at a time, down the path of peace."

Presentation: President's Conference Tonga 2025 (part 2)
(Ji Zhang)

3 Hymn: 717 Give thanks with a grateful heart (sing twice)

Offering

Announcements and concerns of the church
(Lorraine Denniston)

Prayer of the People - Christ the King
(Dianne Richter)

(adapted from prayers by Bruce Prewer)

Some critics tell us that prayer is a fool's escape from reality.
Not so. It is a contract into a deep responsibility for others folk
in this world.

Let us pray.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

We bring our prayers to you for the hungry and the thirsty; and
for aid agencies, both Christian and secular, who seek to relieve
current suffering and implement preventive programmes to
create a better future.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

We bring our prayers to you for those who are strangers and outsiders; people new to our area, new students in schools, new employees at our workplaces, newcomers to our church and its activities. May they experience the nurturing power of respect and acceptance.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

We bring our prayers to you for the homeless and ill clad people of the world including refugees and asylum seekers, street kids who join gangs to find acceptance, dispirited indigenous communities, children living in dysfunctional families and their parents and young people anxious about what the changes in access to social media will mean for their lives. May we find the most ennobling ways to assist them to a better life.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

We bring our prayers to you for all who are sick and suffering, and for the care being given at home, in our hospitals, in the makeshift medical facilities in situations of warfare or in extremely poor countries. Help us to share surgical skills and medications across all countries and communities.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

We bring to you our prayers for those in prison. We think of the murderers and the embezzlers, the rapists and the drug dealers, the thieves and the con-men; But also those mistakenly convicted and those thousands who are prisoners of conscience. We pray too for the prison officers, social workers, chaplains, and for the work of Amnesty International.

Holy Friend, help us to get real with our faith and hope and love.

Holy Friend, without you we can do nothing. With you we can achieve much more than we can ever see or measure. So give us the love to thoughtfully and compassionately play our part in relieving the sufferings of the world. Through Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Amen!

Lords 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.

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE 差遣信徒
(Ji Zhang)

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

3 Hymn: 228 Crown him with many crowns

Benediction

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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NEWS & NOTICES