THE UNITING CHURCH
in Australia

ORMOND

THE PATHFINDER

August 2026

MINISTER'S LETTER

In this Minister's Letter, I take the opportunity to share four theological principles that I have presented to the sessions of our 6-Week Learning Hub. Here is a summary of my paper published in 2022 through the UnitingCare Australia Network.

1. **Love God and Love Your Neighbour**

"Love God and love your neighbour" (Mark 12: 30-31) underpins the Uniting Church's social response to "God is love" and "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4: 8;19). Our shared mission as the Uniting Church, which includes community services ministry, is to embody God's love for all people and exemplify the Church's commitment to supporting individuals, families and communities through service provision.

The Uniting Church, in accordance with the *Basis of Union*, believes God guides the Church into union, and is calling people of the Church to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands. The Uniting Church and its community services ministry are not separate entities, but one in Christ. This unity is not dependent upon human aspiration, "but upon the will of God made effective through Jesus Christ". The Spirit of God permeates the boundary between the sacred, the secular, the Church and the world by creating life through the whole of creation.

The Church's community services ministry further broadens the horizon of God's mission by building relationships with multiple stakeholders, including within the Church, people, government and communities. Our compassion for people's lives seeks to incarnate God's love for the world (1 John 4: 8-10), so that the people may have life abundantly (John 10:10). God's love in Christ is bound neither by time nor space (Ephesians 3: 18-19), love never ends (1 Cor 13:8). Loving God is made visible in loving our neighbour – "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with the Lord" (Micah 6:8).

God's love is universal – everyone has the right to receive care. This equality extends to all people, with no discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, cultural origin, ability, sexuality, class, colour, or creed. The Church's commitment to equality will continue to draw many skilled people into service, to involve

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PEOPLE PAGE

Brad Denniston was recently received into communicant membership of the Anglican Church in Australia (see pg 5). We wish Brad well as he continues his faith journey and thank him for his contributions at Ormond, especially the Ormond Learning Hub and look forward to ongoing links in the future.

A number of people are travelling to (mainly) warmer places during August. We wish everyone "safe travel" and look forward to hearing your travel tales on your return.

There are some winter "lurgies" around and several people experiencing other health concerns. We remember them in our prayers. Please do contact your pastoral link person or someone in the congregation if you need support.

Pastoral Link Network

A reminder that our Pastoral Link Network works to ensure that everyone has a 'contact person" – someone they can call for a chat or to seek some assistance.

If you are unsure who your Pastoral Link person is or would like to be part of the network, please speak with Heather or Karen.

Church Giving

We appreciate the enormous contribution every member of our congregation makes at Ormond through giving of their time, their expertise, their love and care for one another, and through financial giving.

To continue to support our worship and mission, we ask you to prayerfully consider your financial giving. Direct payment from your bank account to the Ormond Uniting Church bank account is one easy way to manage regular giving.

If you would like to make a change to what or how you contribute and you need any assistance, then please let Cate know.

Thank you for all you do by being part of our very special community.

Lisa Saffin, Church Council Chair

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diverse members of the Church and many others from society to build the whole mission of God in the world.

2. God's Mission in the Margins

The large footprint of the Uniting Church's community services ministry enables us to reflect broadly on where God's mission is in Australia. Together with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), we learn that our experience with the Land and ancient cultures is a source of theology. The self-emptying God, vulnerable yet magnificently human, has broken unbreakable boundaries and become the suffering servant and risen friend. Living in a post-Christendom world, we affirm a paradigm shift in mission: from "Church's mission to the margins" to "God's mission in the margins".

"The Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). Incarnation is the marginalisation of God. God the Creator participates in the world and lives among the people, who are God's radical "other". In Jesus' ministry, we come face-to-face with the humble, non-violent, self-giving God, among humble people in difficult circumstances. Through service to the disadvantaged, the passion narrative of Jesus continues to unfold in communities, while our staff gather the suffering into hope. Many people of faith, such as lay leaders, chaplains, pastoral care and other workers, have collectively exercised servanthood ministry and witness to the Risen Lord, who pardons sin, restores life and awakens faith: so, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Triune God is inviting us to see God as a divine community whose inner life is fundamentally about love-abiding relationships among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This inner community of God is constantly moving outwards by the virtue of self-giving love (John 3: 16), forming diverse communities of life through the Spirit. God is in all our communities through the Spirit. God has always been present in this land, and what has changed is that we are discovering and naming God through community services ministry.

In serving all people, especially the marginalised, the Spirit of Life continues to move us from the centre to the margins of society. This same Spirit calls the Uniting Church to be part of society, including in the margins of social service.

This is a calling of God “to loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free” and “share food with the hungry and open homes to the homeless poor” (Isaiah 58: 6-7). In so doing, the marginalised may come to the centre of social attention as they are already at the centre of Christ’s attention. We are accountable to God’s mission at the margins.

3. A Fellowship of Reconciliation

The Uniting Church was formed in response to God’s mission in Australia; to be a fellowship of reconciliation. The mission of the Uniting Church and its community services ministry is one. This unity is a relational wholeness that accepts operational differences and follows God’s mission in Australia. It affirms that God’s reconciliation is radically open to the world.

The mission of God is larger than the mission to the Gentiles by the early church. In mission with the Gentiles, the horizon of God’s mission begins to open, bringing the common good of life into focus beyond the duality of the secular and the sacred. This outward unfolding of God’s Self is the Incarnation of God’s own life in the world, regardless of the Church’s capacity to conceptualise its fullness in theology and practice.

As we look deeply into all services and reflect truthfully on this, we see one thing in common: suffering. Again, suffering unites us. On the cross, Jesus’s suffering draws the world’s attention to the irreducible problem of human suffering. The Uniting Church proclaims this risen crucified one in the Basis of Union: *Christ calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church.*

“The Son of Man does not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Today many leaders, managers, and staff come from all faiths and walks of life to give a significant part of their own lives for the overall mission. In order to achieve the best outcomes for the people we serve, service providers work with partners and multiple stakeholders, including other organisations, congregations, communities and government. This collaborative work seeks outcomes where the restoration of a person’s life and the reconciliation of the world are akin. To achieve this common good, partnerships are nurtured to influence government policies that enhance the dignity of people.

4. Mission with God

The Greek word *diakonia* is often narrowly translated as "service" to others. But Paul uses the term diakonia when he affirms his relationship to the Triune God (Acts 20:24; 2 Corinthians 3:8), and to Christ who has authorised him to be his *diakonos* (1 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:25). The notion of "service", therefore, denotes God's mission through a messenger like Paul to embody the relationship between God and the purpose of God for the world. Therefore, the Church's affirmation that social service is not a secondary order of the Church but rather embodies the primary order of God's mission.

Social service is part of Christ's presence in Australia: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20). The identity of faith-based service also grows by including values-based professionals and action-based service-delivering staff. All of them are called into Christ's mission in the world; their collective status also transforms from being agents delivering the Church's services and, in some cases, providing government programs, to being contributors informing the uniting identity of the Church.

Being a partner of God's mission also means bearing witness to the inclusive unity of the Uniting Church. From the personal experience of salvation to the delivery of social services, the community of care has broadened the scope of the community of faith, turning the outsider of the Church into the insider of social transformation. God has been calling into existence a new way of being for the Church, that is a Church for the "other" in the margins of faith and at the peripheries of society. There the commandment of loving God is like salt dissolved into community actions of loving our neighbour, so the light of God shines in people's renewed hope for life. Social service is the yeast which permeates every part of the dough of society (Matthew 13:33). The Church is a part of, not apart from, society.

Mission with God will enlarge the scope of our faith tradition. "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6: 10). The Uniting Church's community services ministry is part of God's vision for how life should be lived. It actively discerns what God is doing in creation and history in the power of Spirit.

Save This Date: SATURDAY 19th September, 12.00 noon

"Why?" I hear you ask.

It's the date for our 2026 Great Outback BBQ

Where: At the church
Who: Everyone! Invite your family, friends, neighbours

Join us for a sausage or maybe a burger, salad and something sweet.

Make a donation to support the work of the Uniting Church's Frontier Services which provides practical, pastoral and spiritual care to people in remote areas, including Indigenous communities, isolated properties, and mining sites, through its Bush Chaplaincy program and Outback Links volunteer program. The organization offers a range of services, from emotional support and a listening ear to practical help with property maintenance and community recovery efforts.

More details in newsheets and September *Pathfinder.*

September *Pathfinder*

September *Pathfinder* will be prepared a week later than usual, so you will receive it by Friday 11th September. Contributors please note that we will need your contributions in our inbox by Monday 7th September, 6.00 p.m.

News from Brad….

On Sunday July 19th I was received into communicant membership of the Anglican Church of Australia. This came after several years of worshipping at St Paul's Cathedral in the city with increasing regularity. This transition from membership of the Uniting Church to the Anglican Church has taken place with much spiritual reflection and discernment. While I am happy and excited to have taken this path, there is also a sense of sadness at leaving behind a part of my life which has given me so much warmth, love and care. I want to say thank you for what each one of you has given me in the almost 40 years I have been a member of Ormond Uniting Church. I am particularly thankful for the opportunity to be the inaugural Facilitator of the Ormond Learning Hub. I will also be relinquishing this role, but I am confident that the Hub can now grow into a positive force for the Church beyond the Ormond congregation.

All in all, I have been truly blessed. Although I speak of sadness at what I am leaving behind, I still look forward to visiting Ormond Uniting Church on occasion and keeping in touch with the wonderful people – you! - who worship there. If you would like to keep in touch you can email me at bacdenniston@gmail.com or contact me on 0411 864 774.

Blessings to you all.

Brad Denniston

(l-r) Revd Alison Taylor, Confirming Bishop, , me, mum, Revd Andreas Loewe, Dean of Melbourne.

Have you noticed ……. the new **Dwarf Flowering Gum** that was recently planted in the south lawn behind the North Rd bus shelter?

There is a long, complicated story behind how it came to be there. The short version is that for decades the Ormond U.C.A.F. (Uniting Church Adult Fellowship) was an active group in our congregation.

In 2019, this group made a donation to congregation for a tree to be planted in their name. As the renovations were still pending, they were advised that it would be best to put these plans on hold. Soon after the Ormond U.C.A.F. morphed into the Friendship Circle as the members felt their fundraising days were behind them.

Fast forward to the present and it was finally the right time to purchase the tree.

Many thanks to Marg Davis for her research into what tree to purchase, including countless nursery visits and to Kevin Davis for planting said tree.

Jan Davenport

A book about OUC

Church Council is delighted that the Tuesday home group has decided to update the OUC history record. A booklet was written in about 2000, and now needs revision and updating.

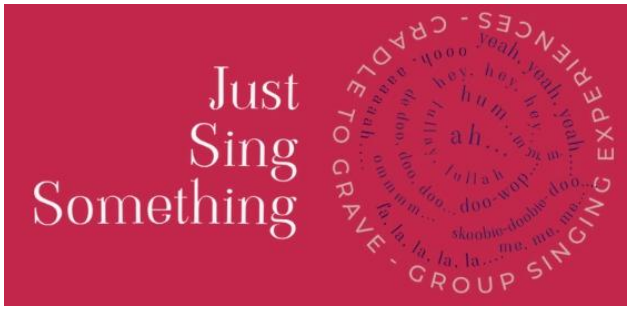
As well, the group is keen to capture the essence of the various characters in the congregation - what makes them tick, what rings their bells and gives them hope, and what unknown but interesting/funny facts we would like to reveal to our church friends (I know that everyone will want to read about Heather's adventures with spiders) A book will be published for congregation members and their families only.

This is an opt in project-if you'd like a page in the book, someone from the home group will interview you. You will have complete editorial decision on your written page.

Please speak to David N, Heather, Dennis or Helen to put your name on the interview list.

Enjoy group singing? Have a sing with "Just Sing Something"

Did you know that it's beneficial for your health? And fun!



This is a group singing opportunity for people who *know* they can sing, and for people who *think* they can't.

During September and October, *Just Sing Something* have hired space at the church to run three pop-up choir sessions. They are an opportunity to get stuck into one great song (per session) and sing it until we're proud. You can elect to sing the tune or add some harmonies. All singing will be taught to you at the event and music is provided. No experience or skill is necessary.

Lucy Graham, who runs the groups, is an experienced musician who worked for a number of years with the Uniting Church VICTAS Synod co-ordinating contemporary music groups. She has a passion for offering opportunities for people throughout the community to participate in singing and experience the joy it brings. Cost is $27.00 per session. Each session runs from 7.00 – 9.00 p.m. You are welcome to invite friends and family.

The program for September/October:

Thursday, 3rd September Song: "Footloose"
Thursday 17th September Song: "Easy on Me"
Thursday, 1st October Song:"Wimoweh"

To find out more information and to book a session (or three), the link is https://www.justsingsomething.com/ Bookings are essential. For the session on Thursday 3rd September, bookings close at 5pm on Thursday 27th August, or when capacity is reached.

If you would like to speak with a "local" link, *Karen Roberts* will be attending the sessions and is happy to speak with you about them.

Welcome the Spring by spending an evening singing with us!

Save the Date: Trivia Night – Saturday 10th October

As well as putting the date on your calendar and inviting family and friends, there something else you can do now to get ready – take up this

Photo Opportunity

How cute were you as a baby or toddler? We are collecting photos of members of our congregation as babies and now, for an exciting challenge to be unveiled at our Trivia Night (Saturday 10th October).

If you would be willing to have your photos included, then please send me 2 photos of yourself, one as a baby or toddler, and one more recent photo. If you do not have a recent photo, don't worry, I will have my camera ready to ensure you don't miss out.

You could pass these on to me and I will scan them and ensure you get originals back, or email digital photos to lisasaffin25@gmail.com.

Please submit your photos by 30th September.

Lisa Saffin

Celebrating Community with a HO, HO, HO!

Christmas in July has gone for another year, but I think it is fair to say a great time was had by all!

On Saturday evening 18th July, 49 folk gathered (11 other apologies) at the wonderful home of Frank, Karen and Daniel in Hughesdale, and enjoyed a delicious first course of Roast Turkey, Baked Potatoes and multiple salads. In between mouthfuls, conversation was the order of the night. Before desserts were served, we were privileged to hear from 'Stevie Wonder' (who perhaps most of you know as Steve Mulder.) Steve led us through some Christmas Carols, followed by some other Christmassy songs (eg, 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas') and a few of his favourites. Much foot-tapping and singing along were evident! Thanks Steve!

Then a delicious array of sweets from Tiramisu, Pavlova through to fruit and ice-cream were served and washed down with various beverages, including tea and coffee.

Then chaos broke out with the arrival of the big fella with the white beard and a huge sack of presents, which were duly distributed by 'Santa Elves,' Elle and Annaliese – such 'precious?' gifts!

Then Ji sent us off with a prayer and a blessing.

In 2025. 43 attended, and if my memory serves me correctly, the year before that, 30 and at our first Christmas in July about 25! Next year lets 'smash' the 50 mark, at our new venue for Christmas in July??!

Finally, many, many thanks to those who made the event possible: Karen, Frank and Daniel (for home, hospitality and help), Di and Robyn and Gary; Mardie and Ron; Karen and Frank, bearers of sweets – too many to name (catering), Steve (entertainment) and 'Santa' and his helpers, others who served and assisted, and of course all who attended!

And don't forget the REAL 'BIRTH' of Christmas coming up in 6 months!

Until next July, HO, HO, HO! And away we go!

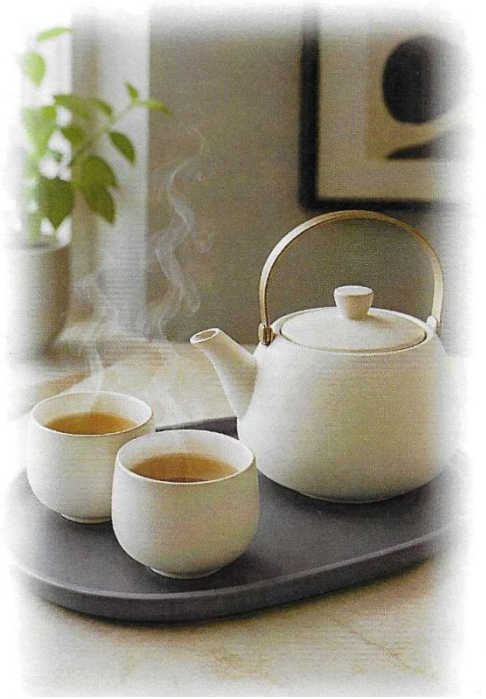
Ron

Support Group for Grief and Loss

Elsternwick Caulfield South Uniting Church
(567 Glen Huntly Road, Elsternwick)

Wednesdays (2.30 – 4.00 p.m.) commencing Wednesday 19th August

Grief and loss are a part of life, affecting people of all ages, backgrounds and life experiences. It may result from the death of a loved one, illness, relationship breakdown and separation, loss of employment, identity or community connection.



This group will be a safe and supportive environment where we listen respectfully, sharing stories and ways that people have found helpful in living with grief. It will help us honour connections with those who have died and their continuing contributions in our lives.

The group will be facilitated by Dr. Marnie Sather and Dr. Greg Smith who both have qualifications and extensive experience in community-based work and narrative therapy.

There is no cost for the group. A gold coin donation or contribution to afternoon tea would be appreciated.

If you would like to know more, please contact Greg on 0432 596 293.

Be still
and know that
I am God

FROM PRESBYTERY

Heads up! Discernment Evenings 2026 - 12 and 19 October

The eLM will be hosting two Discernment Evenings in October, and we encourage members of our Presbytery to note the dates and look out for further details soon. These online sessions are designed to support people who are exploring ministry pathways or simply wanting to learn more about the shape of ministry within the Uniting Church.

The first evening, **Monday 12 October (7–9:30pm AEST)**, will focus on **Stories of Ministry**. Six people from across the Synod will share their experiences of ministry, with opportunities for listening, reflection, and conversation in both breakout rooms and plenary time.

The second evening, **Monday 19 October (7–9:30pm AEST)**, will explore **Pathways and Processes**. This session will cover Pilgrim Theological College units for next year, the Period of Discernment and how to begin one, ministry pathways, and the kinds of support available from Congregations, Faith Communities, Presbyteries, and the Synod. Timeframes and frequently asked questions will also be addressed.

Both events are FREE, and a Humanitix registration link along with promotional material will be shared shortly. For now, we invite you to save the dates and keep an eye out for more information.

Pull on your boots, have a hoot and help rebuild rural Australia — one dance step at a time!

Featuring Bushwahzee Bush Band - https://bushwahzee.com/

Don't know the steps, no sweat! Steps to each dance will be shown beforehand and then called as we dance.

Funds raised for Blaze Aid - https://blazeaid.com.au/

A volunteer based charity that works with families around Australia after bushfires, floods and cyclones - clearing debris and rebuilding fences, shoulder to shoulder.

A member of our Murrumbeena Community Garden will share about their time volunteering with Blaze Aid earlier this year.

$20 Adults

$40 Family

$15 Concession

Extra donations welcome

Entry fee includes a cuppa and cake.

Raffle prizes and a best dressed boots & hat prize on offer!

Places are limited so book now for this great cause!

At The Meeting Place Main Hall (at the back). Car parking available.

Lectionary Readings

August 2	Pentecost 10	Genesis 32:22-31, Psalm 17:1-7, 15, Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:13-21
August 9	Pentecost 11	Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28, Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b, Romans 10:5-15, Matthew 14:22-33
August 16	Pentecost 12	Genesis 45:1-15, Psalm 133, Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32, Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28
August 23	Pentecost 13	Exodus 1:8-2:10, Psalm 124, Romans 12:1-8, Matthew 16:13-20
August 30	Pentecost 14	Exodus 3:1-15, Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b, Romans 12:9-21, Matthew 16:21-28
September 6	Pentecost 15	Exodus 14:19-31, Psalm 114 or *Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21,* Romans 14:1-12, Matthew 18:21-35

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

We are a small group who gather monthly at the church for a chat & afternoon tea.

YOU are welcome to join us.

WHEN? Monday August 17th

TIME? 1.30 p.m.

Take care

Jan Davenport. (ph: 9578 1713)

Rosters

	Reading	Prayers	Communion	Welcoming	AV
August 2	Maria G	David N	Heather B Warwick B	Frank O Jan D	Nev P
August 9	David N	Heather B		Nev P Graeme D	Lisa S
August 16	Suzie F	Warwick B		Brenda G Lynne P	Graeme D
August 23	Heather B	David N		Graeme D	Lisa S
August 30	Warwick B	Warwick B		Frank O Hans T	Nev P
September 6	Maria G	David N	Lorraine D Heather B	Frank O Graeme D	Lisa S

	Music	Tea & Coffee	Resource Delivery	Coffee Spot	Mowing
August 2	Peter H	Suzie F Brenda G	Frank O	1/8 Team 1	
August 9	Peter H	Jan D Lynne P	Brenda G	8/8 Team 2	
August 16	Karen R	Maria G Sue M	Dennis T	15/8 Team 3	Frank O
August 23	Peter H	Suzie F Jan D	Hans T	22/8 Team 4	
August 30	Peter H	Maria G Lynne P	Frank O	29/8 Team 1	Lisa S Rod S
September 6	Karen R	Maria G Jan D	Frank O	5/9 Team 1	

Images: Cover – Rev Dr Ji Zhang
https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56683
https://www.magnific.com/free-vector/adventure-lettering-concept_7259595.htm#fromView=keyword&page=4&position=3&uuid=b8880bb8-4884-4fe6-9a8a-f69593a2f2b1&query=Go+well
Trivia Vector 123276 Vector Art at Vecteezy
Others by OUC members or website related to the article

Diary Dates

Saturday 1st August	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 2nd August	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Wednesday 5th August	6.30 p.m.	Learning Hub – Service as Mission
Saturday 8th August	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 9th August	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Thursday 20th August	7.30 p.m.	Church Council
Saturday 15th August	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 16th August	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Monday 17th August	1.30 p.m.	Friendship Circle
Wednesday 19th August		Wednesday Home Group
Saturday 22nd August	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 23rd August	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Saturday 29th August	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Saturday 5th September	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 6th September	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Monday 7th September	6.00 p.m.	Material for *Pathfinder* due
Saturday 12th September	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
Sunday 13th September	10.00 a.m.	Worship - Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Saturday 19th September	9.30 a.m.	Unity Tea and Coffee Spot
	12.00 noon	Outback BBQ

But Jesus immediately said to them:
'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'