



CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

23 August 2026

From Anne Threlfo

I have a painted copy of this icon, The Christ Pantocrator (Greek for “ruler of all”) of Saint Catherine’s Monastery. It is one of the oldest surviving Byzantine icons, dating to the 6th century AD. The icon is interpreted as depicting the two natures of Jesus. On the left is said to be the human nature of Jesus reaching out to us with a hand of blessing. On the right is the Divine nature, holding the Scriptures with the countenance of a Judge.

But that’s not how I see it! I see the Divine Christ on the left with his hand raised in blessing, and the human Jesus on the right holding the Scriptures that represent his earthly mission.

I’ve been thinking about how we can view Jesus and Christ differently when recently re-reading “The Universal Christ” by Richard Rohr.

Here are three short scripture readings:

“Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” John 5:58

*“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
John 14:6*

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
Revelation 22:13*

Who is speaking in each of these verses? Are these the words of a Galilean carpenter, albeit not your run of the mill Galilean? These are HUGE statements, speaking of the entire arc of existence; from the beginning to the end of all things, and even the way in which all creation has access to the Divine.

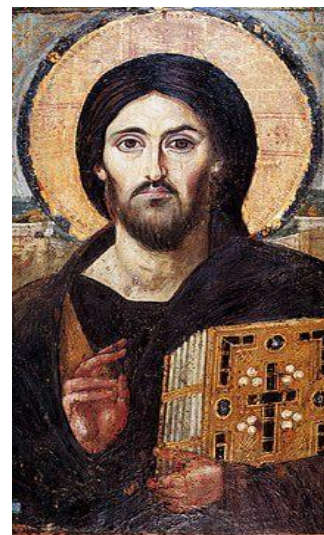
I hear in these words the voice of the Eternal Christ described in Colossians 1 as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created”. The Christ who is also the Word who “was with God, and was God” (John 1:1).

Why does this matter? If I understand that it is Jesus alone saying “I am the way, the truth and the life”, I can be stuck in an exclusive version of faith. Jesus becomes one person who possesses the “Truth” and access to God becomes dependent on following him.

If the voice I hear is that of Christ, then these words are part of a much broader vision for all of creation. Christ is not confined to one time, place or people, but is woven into the fabric of creation. Naturally we cannot come to God except through Christ – they are one and the same! Everything exists within the life of God and Christ is present in all of it. It is where we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28) As Richard Rohr says:

I fully believe that there has never been a single soul who was not possessed by the Christ, even in the ages when Jesus was not. Why would you want your religion, or your God to be any smaller than that?

Perhaps that is the invitation of the icon, to see Christ uncontained by the boundaries we erect, but the one who is present in all of creation. There is also an invitation to consider when reading the gospels, whose voice do I hear?



DIARY

Thursday 20 August

10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study in the Dudley Room at Milson St Hub

Saturday 22 August

2.00pm **Music @ The Bay 26** at The Willows Uniting Church, Warners Bay see more further in Contact

Sunday 23 August – Pentecost 13

9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader: Beryl Gaul and Preacher: Les Butchers
Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 24; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

Tuesday 25 August

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square
12.00pm **Garden Suburb Ladies Fellowship at Wests Cardiff**
5.00pm **You are Invited to the Final Meeting of the Hunter Presbytery at The Willows** – see more information further in Contact.

Thursday 27 August

10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study in the Dudley Room at Milson St Hub

Sunday 30 August – Pentecost 14

9.00am The Divine Worship – SRE Service
Leader: Cathy Beeton and Preacher: Sara Cooper
Exodus 3:1-15, Jeremiah 15:15-21; Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b, Psalm 26:1-8; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 1 September

10.00am **Pastoral Care Visit at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility**
10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Thursday 3 September

10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study in the Dudley Room at Milson St Hub

Sunday 6 September – Pentecost 15

9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom Stuart
Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 149; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

Monday 7 September

10.00am **Pastoral Care Visit at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility**

Tuesday 8 September

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Wednesday 9 September

10.00am Ladies Fellowship at the Milson St Hub

Thursday 10 September

10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study in the Dudley Room at Milson St Hub

THE PRAYER PAGE



Prayer is the Voice of Faith

Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Funeral for Mary Stuart today so praying for Tom and Kathy and family
- * Pray for Janice Wright and family
- * Jean Witherspoon and family
- * Robyn Greaves and family
- * Marion Box
- * Prayers for Grahame Beeton and family
- * Mert and Pam
- * Jacqueline Fenwick
- * Rene Kelly
- * Glen and Marion
- * Valmai
- * Kelly
- * Tony Sellen
- * Vicki
- * Pam and Ken
- * Lyn Benson
- * Jean
- * Isabella
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Max
- * Don Humphries

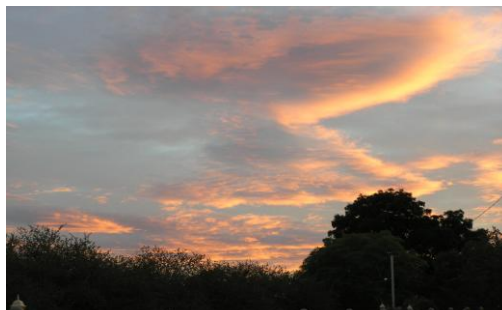
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Congregational Prayer Points

- NREMA application
- Major upgrades to the Project Reconnect website
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Church profile and preparations for Tom's retirement
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- pray for Catherine Pepper who has recently been appointed Associate General Secretary, Strategy and Governance for the Assembly of the UCA. Pray that she may receive wisdom and grace as she fulfills her role which is involved with preparing the church for the future in the areas of strategy and governance.
- Pray for Medowie/Tilligery
- Margaret Jurd College and Darren Twist the Principal
- Orphanage in Kenya and Wilfreda
- Neos ministry
- Those affected by climate change in Australia eg floods, droughts and fires
- Prayer for those in conflict zones in the world



August is National
Grief Awareness
Month

Women on 4th Monday

Grief



Join us for an afternoon of reflection and conversation as we explore grief and loss.



Explore what Jesus taught about grief.



Examine what grief is and what society and church practices are helpful/unhelpful.



Discuss how we can help someone who is grieving.

Monday August 24th

1:30 – 3:00 pm.

North Lake Macquarie
Uniting Church
342 Hillsborough Road,
Warners Bay.



SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF THE WEEK

Unplugging: calls us to leave the virtual world of technology (computers, email, mobile phones, iPads etc) in order to become present to God and others.

Practice: Which relationships in your life need face time? • Plan face-to-face time with several people this week. Do not let this time be interrupted by anything electronic.

"If you can't take time to do nothing, you're a slave to doing. Doing nothing is a radical, revolutionary act. It frees you from the universal slavery of our age: slavery to the clock.

The clock measures doing but not being." —Peter Kreeft

These resources come from Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us (Transforming Resources). InterVarsity Press



August: Witnessing

23 August – Pentecost 13

Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124; Rom 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20

Exodus opens with an anxious empire that responds to perceived threat with policy violence. The resistance of midwives, a mother, a sister, and Pharaoh's daughter disrupt the machinery of death. Psalm 124 voices a communal testimony of survival – what Pharaoh intends as an engulfing flood becomes, by God's sustaining presence and by the courage of these women, an escape from empire's intent.

Paul urges the Romans to resist conforming to the age of empire through "living sacrifice" language that directs worship away from spectacle toward shared life for the common good. Gifts are for building up, not status!

In Matthew, Peter's confession of the Messiah is affirmed, and Jesus speaks of a community that will endure, but urges his disciples to keep this revelation quiet. In empire language, "Messiah/King" is easily heard as a rival regime.

30 August – Frontier Services Sunday

Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6,23-26,45b; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28

Moses encounters God in a burning bush in the everyday landscape of an exile. His ordinary work tending the flock becomes the holy ground of liberation as he cares for God's people and advocates for their release. Psalm 105 keeps his memory alive, reminding us that God's faithfulness is a refrain to be rehearsed and retold.

Following on from Peter's confession, Jesus rejects empire-power as he turns decisively towards the cross and its costly allegiance. Romans 12 gives the cross shape in communal ethics of hospitality, shared joy and grief, perseverance, and non-retaliatory resistance.

Frontier Service Sunday widens community to consider ministry at the edges where presence, endurance, and justice are practised far from the centre. These readings remind us that through communal care, God meets people on the periphery where services are scarce and needs are real.

These Lectionary Reflections were prepared by Rev. Yvonne Ghavalas



The Church Office will be closed on Wednesday 2nd and 9th of September.

If you have something coming up in September that you would like advertised/mentioned in Contact during this time, please get it in to the Office for next Wednesday 26 August and I will put it in Contact for the 30 August.

Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

Rev Tom Stuart

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Administration:

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Children & Families Resource Worker:

Mrs Cathy Beeton

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Cath4858@gmail.com

Mrs Cathy Beeton is also our Safe Church
Contact Person

Communications Coordinator:

Piteeri Michail

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Piteeri.m@outlook.com

Bank Account Details for the Charlestown Garden Suburb Multi-Centre Congregation:

Bank Account held with: Uniting Financial Services

Account Name: Charlestown Congregation General Account

BSB: 634 634 Account No.: 100030837

For Offering please put Ref: Offering

Keep up to date with happenings and info:

Webpage: <http://www.chagsuca.org.au>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CharlestownUnitingChurch>

Project Reconnect: <http://www.projectreconnect.com.au>

Worship Services: <https://tinyurl.com/CHaGS-YouTube-Link>