

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

December 2021



Sharing the Joy of Christmas

I guess you are often meeting with people, family members and/or friends, who are not part of a church community.

I wonder what they think Christmas is about.

I wonder whether they believe in God and what sort of God they believe in.

I wonder if you have ever been brave enough to ask them.

There are many people in Australia these days who are unaware of the Christmas story or dismiss it as irrelevant.

Yet, as we affirm, the heart of the Christmas message is one that connects God directly with the reality of daily life.

Unlike the words of the Bette Midler song, the message of Christmas isn't that God is "... watching us from a distance."

Christmas is all about celebrating the good news that God comes near and remains near.

The birth of Christ is all about God the creator becoming one with creation. It is about God showing up "in person" ... the person of Jesus ... bringing a message of hope for humanity.

The words of the Gospel writer John say it so well, "God so loved the world that he sent his Son..."

Office administrator: Robyn Hodge.

Office open hours: Tuesdays and Fridays, 9:30am–12:30pm

I wonder if you can find a way of sharing the joy of Christmas this Christmas with those beyond the church community.

Maybe part of this sharing could involve acquainting them with the actual story.

Grace and peace,

Paul Stephens

Personal Footnote:

Thank you for your Christmas greetings,
May your Christmas celebration for 2021 be touched with the hope, the peace, the joy and the love of Christ,

Paul and Jenny.

Image: *Love-is-born.jpeg* <https://bit.ly/3q650Fx>

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
Dec 19 Advent 4	Mic 5:2-5a	Ps 80:1-7	Heb 10:5-10	Lk 1:39-45,(46-55)
Dec 25 Christmas Day	Is 62:6-12	Ps 97	Tit 3:4-7	Lk 2:(1-7),8-20
Jan 2 Christmas 2	Jer 31:7-14	Ps 147:12-20	Eph 1:3-14	Jn 1:(1-9),10-18
Jan 9 Baptism of Jesus	Is 43:1-7	Ps 29	Acts 8:14-17	Lk 3:15-17,21-22

Diary

Wednesday 22/12 2 - 3.30pm Coffee & Chat @ Brioche
Saturday 25/12 9.30am Christmas Day service
Sunday 26/12 Online service option only. No further 11am services.
Sunday 2/1/22 9.30am New Year service.
Tuesday 4/1/22 9.30am Men's Shed
Wednesday 12/1/22 12noon Messy Church picnic: Balyang Sanctuary. All welcome.

Congregation News

Mission Outreach: Humans in Geelong

Despite the pandemic the Mission Outreach team have had their fingers in a few pies and the latest was the Humans in Geelong Expo held at the Geelong Racecourse on Sunday 5 December.

For those of us who were newcomers to this concept it was amazing. I certainly had not experienced the diversity of 'who we are', 'what we are', 'where our interests lie', in a multicultural mix of Indigenous cultures, Anglo Saxon origins, refugees from so many 'war torn' countries and immigrants who have settled here. Mind blowing the interests, talents and skills of Geelong people.



The Expo gave St Luke's a voice and a face in which to highlight our Refugee Ministry, Environment initiatives, Men's Shed activities and more.

Humans in Geelong is a truly inspiring, connecting and strengthening of 'community' in a climate of some uncertainty and where we often see the worst of humanity displayed in our media.

Thank you to our St Luke's helpers on the day - without your volunteering we couldn't have participated: Shaghek Qassabyan, Jean Daw, Iris Speare, Lloyd Walker (already having taken the service at St Luke's), Natasha Walker, Claire Ziegler.



Make sure you look out for it next year. Not only is it an amazing event, it is FREE!

Sue Anderson

St Luke's Blue Christmas

St. Luke's Blue Christmas service took place on Wednesday evening in the sanctuary with thirty people in attendance. Rev. Paul Stephens led the service acknowledging how difficult Christmas can be for some folk.

During the service candles and beautiful reflective music by Peter Roberts helped provide a space to prayerfully acknowledge the challenges experienced during 2021, and emphasizing that it is important to care for one another and ourselves.

A light supper was served following the service enabling the opportunity to share memories, feelings, and joys.

Pam Seller



St Luke's Cloutie Tree

Sharing prayers with the Highton Community



After the year the world has had, what a great way to demonstrate our faith by looking outward through a public display of prayer with the Cloutie Tree.

St. Luke's Cloutie Tree includes an invitation to all those passing to also tie a 'cloutie' to the tree and express their prayers, wishes and concerns. As the wind blows the cloth strips, the prayers, good wishes or concerns are carried into the world until their disintegration marks the fulfilment of the expression.

Our tree was kindly built and installed by Geoff Boehm and creates a colourful and lively sight on the corner of the church. If you would like to add to the tree you will find more 'clouties' hanging in a bag on the tree. Let us all share in this meaningful demonstration of our faith.

Note: Whilst the cloutie tree comes from the Celtic tradition the tying of a cloutie, ribbon or rag, is demonstrated by

many cultures around the world over the centuries including the native American Indians, in Nepal with prayer flags, in Thailand, India, Siberia, the Middle East and more. (If you would like to learn more: <http://www.theclimateribbon.org/stories/2015/11/4/the-climate-ribbon-as-a-tree-of-life>)

So the distinct difference is that this tradition is about decorating with love, prayers and good wishes rather than a need for personal healing.



Linda Salamy

E-mail your notices to news@stlukesuca.org.au by **27 October 21**. The monthly news is normally printed on the last Tuesday of the month and available for the congregation on the 1st Sunday.