

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

May 2022



“Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” Rev. 21:5

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” Rev 21:1

I wonder how people in the Ukraine might hear this from Revelation at the moment? The promise of a new heaven and a new earth? “See, I am making all things new”?

The daily news images from Mariupol and other places in Ukraine seem like hell on earth rather than a place of renewal. I wonder what they and we make of this, particularly when we feel powerless against the ruthless powers of the world – be it dictators, COVID, climate change, elections?

Can we believe, dare we believe that God will wipe away every tear and that death will be no more? I find it hard to hear these words and see bombed out Ukrainian buildings or people wailing in despair. I wonder, ‘what can I do, what difference could I possibly make?’

Orthodox Easter was celebrated just a few weeks ago, and images of hope in Ukraine stick in my mind. Amongst the rubble of death and destruction, I bring to mind colourful robes of Ukrainian Orthodox priests as they embody a protest against destruction and death. With them come lines of people impacted by war needing hope, seeking blessing as they recall and remember together that Christ is risen.

Is there somehow a new heaven and a new earth to be found even in such dark places?

As we live on this side of Christ’s resurrection, surely the answer must be yes, even if sometimes it is hard to see. John’s vision in Revelation at first seems to be a passing of what we know and understand as God’s good creation, but when we look closer it promises a renewal of the one we already know. Does that mean that the city streets of Mariupol will be cleared of shrapnel and rubble, the dead will be buried with dignity

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

and people will rebuild and replant against all the previous destruction?

Perhaps, hopefully one day even. But for John it begins with a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them...'

Renewal comes because God is among us. Maybe that's why we see hope in Easter rituals in a war zone. I know that when things have been dark in my life, that's when I've most strongly sensed the presence of God offering light and hope. That has come in mysterious ways, but it has also been present in people who have offered comfort and hope, those who have prayed, especially when there was little else they could do. Isn't it true that a phone call or card, or food left at the door tells us that Christ is risen, that Christ is present among us?

I don't have the power to change the war in Ukraine, and I can't fix COVID or climate change and my one vote won't single-handedly change how our politicians lead. But I can respond to the words of Jesus as we hear them in John's gospel today. A new commandment he offers – to love one another. What is new is that Jesus calls us to love as he has loved us. How we live and love is what lets others know that we truly follow him.

A prayer for Ukraine, or a targeted donation; a meal for someone isolating with COVID; finding ways to conserve our energy use; encouraging our politicians to lead with courage and vision – these might all be examples of loving as Christ has loved us. We may be able to wipe away tears or ensure death is no more, but we can journey with the one who brings renewal to all.

Let us love as he loves us. Let's do that for the whole of creation, and for ourselves. For Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, allelujah!!!

Rev. Arnie Wierenga

Worship@Home: 5th Sunday of Easter

<https://victas.uca.org.au/download/656/worship-resources/13533/weekly-worship-15-may-2022-easter-5>

Image: © Art Chartier <https://scpeanutgallery.com/2014/11/26/morning-prayer-26-nov-revelation-211-8-all-things-new/>

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
May 22 Easter 6	Acts 16:9-15	Ps 67	Rev 21:10,22 - 22:5	Jn 14:23-29
May 29 Easter 7	Acts 16:16-34	Ps 97	Rev 22:12-14	Jn 17:20-26
June 5 Pentecost	Acts 2:1-21	Ps 104:24-34, 35b	Rom 8:14:17	Jn 14:8-17,(25-27)
June 12 Trinity Sunday	Prv 8:1-4,22-31	Ps 8	Rom 5:1-5	Jn 16:12-15

Diary

Tues 17/5	8.30 - 9.30	Prayers by the River (near Barwon Valley Fun Park)
Wed 18/5	8 - 8.15am	Weekly Prayer time on Zoom
Fri 20/5	12.00 - 2.30	Sewing Group
Fri 20/5	1-4pm; Sat 21/5	9-12pm Collectables sale
Sun 5/6	10.00	Combined Pentecost Service, Wesley Geelong UCA

Congregation News

Environment Group/Repair Cafe

We had a very busy day on Saturday 30th April at the Circular Living Show at Geelong Showgrounds. We fielded lots of queries re: - what is a Repair Café? What sort of things do you fix? When are you open? Also people keen to learn how to fix things. Fortunately there were three of us, myself (Claire), Jean and Sarah to handle the interest and demonstrate some repair work.

There were lots of other interesting things going on as well , e.g. plastic lids being made into bowls, cups, clipboards and other interesting things, aluminium from tablet packs repurposed, old clothes made into new clothes, old furniture renovated, sold and the monies donated to charities.

There were also electric cars to test drive and electric bikes to try out (yours truly had a ride and didn't fall off – it was great!!)

Claire - *Environment Action Group/Repair Cafe*



Mission Outreach

St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

For those folk who did not attend our April Collectibles sale, then you missed an amazing opportunity to see how St Luke's works within our community and beyond. Sales over \$3,500 was just a small part of talking, listening and sharing stories with people who want to share their stories – stories mainly influenced by the eclectic collection of vintage or retro goods on sale in the Chapel.

The third weekend of each month is when we open the Chapel for people who simply want to come and look at and enjoy or buy our precious treasures. Treasures donated by generous families who declutter, down size or just move on as their life's needs changes.

Next week's opening: **Friday 20th May** between 1pm and 4.30pm/ **Saturday 21 May** 9am to lunch time.

Saturday we will welcome back the Cottage by the Sea ladies selling jams, sauces, pickles. There will also be sales of paintings, books and furniture.

Forward notice to July when once again the Chapel Collectibles will be featuring Christmas in July. Last year's event was overwhelming and we look forward to another amazing display of all sorts of Christmas items. If you are planning to change your Christmas decorations this year and don't know what to do with your old decorations – drop them off to us and we will try to sell them and raise money for our needy newcomer families. That is what our Collectible sales are all about Raising much needed money to support people in needan important way to live out St Luke's Mission within our community.

Once again we continue to thank our small team of volunteers, and of course Men's Shed who consistently respond to our many requests for help to upgrade our displays. Also our customers are thankful that we have a Credit Card facility available.

Why don't you plan to pop into the Chapel and say 'hello' and take a look at our Collectibles this weekend. A warm welcome, and a surprise awaits you.

Linda Salamy and Rae Anderson (*Collectibles Co-Ordinators*).



Pastoral Connections

UKRAINIAN APPEAL

On Tuesday 26th April, Pam Seller and Barbara Murphy delivered the very generous donations from our St Luke's Congregation, to an appreciative Wally Stawiski and Vera Lubczenko .

In addition to over \$910 plus gift cards, some prayer shawls , worked and prayed over with love, were also gratefully accepted by the Ukrainian Centre, West Geelong.

Wally and Vera said they were very appreciative of St Luke's donations and thanked us for our love and generosity. They have been very heartened with the response from those in the Geelong region to the terrible news from their previous homeland in Ukraine, and will use the donations to help newly arrived Ukrainians who come to Geelong.



Presenting over \$910 plus gift cards to Wally Stawiski and Vera Lubczenko from the Ukrainian Centre West Geelong.

PRAYER REQUESTS (from Wednesday Prayer Time)

Praise and Thanksgiving.

- We give thanks for these beautiful Autumn days and joy of seeing the leaves change colour.
- Give thanks for successful surgery, the skill of our medical teams and those who care for us in times of need.
- Praise God for the support networks that exist in the community and at a local level. Especially those offering support for anyone receiving COVID positive results and isolation can be difficult.
- Thank you Lord, that we live in a country where we can openly give thanks for those men and women who gave, and are still giving, their lives to enable us relative security and free speech.
- Praise and thanks that the Connections appeal to support the local Ukrainian community was successful with approx. \$910.00 being delivered for their ongoing work.
- Give praise and thanks for Men's Shed and the Collectables Sales where opportunities are created, to interact with and involve our local community. May God continue to bless new initiatives that open ways to spread the good news.

General Prayers.

- Our prayers continue for the Ukrainian people as their loved one's struggle to survive. We pray for those trapped, injured, or separated from families. Strengthen humanitarian workers to continue their daunting work and open avenues where aid, support and care can be given. May peace and justice prevail.
- We also pray for peace in countries such as Yemen, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Libya and so many more. May leaders work with compassion to bring justice and truth. Empower peace makers

such as the UN and other international bodies to find ways to open dialogue and agendas to bring peace.

- Our prayers are always with countries that are being dramatically affected by climate change. Places where people are forced from their homes, crops fail and health is compromised. May the eyes of those in power be opened to recognise the needs, challenges and changes needed and to take appropriate action.
- Pray that our politicians will keep the best interests of our people and country uppermost as they campaign in the lead up to the election.
- We ask God's blessing on those suffering ill health, COVID positive results, awaiting surgery, having ongoing treatment and those struggling with everyday life. Show us ways Lord to be your feet, hands, and advocates for the voiceless, for those less fortunate and needing help.

Pam Seller

