

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

April 2023



In this era in which war, conflict and tension seem to mark every message that comes to us through the media and social media, let us praise God that the one we affirm as the hope of the world is very much the "prince of peace."

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, according to Gospels, the crowd echoed the words of Psalm 118:

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

There was lots of energy and life.

There was joy!!!

This entry of Jesus to Jerusalem was a celebration.

But I wonder what the people who threw cloaks in his path and waved the branches expected would happen after Jesus entered the city? Were they expecting some kind of uprising?

Matthew, who has Jewish Christians in mind as he writes his Gospel, tells us that this event happened to fulfil the prophecy of the OT prophet Zachariah (9.9):

*⁵ "Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

In other words, Matthew emphasises that this is a humble act. The act of a servant

king entering the city to bring hope through obedience to the way of God, not the grand procession of a conquering tyrant who has come to celebrate his military victories. As we know, Jesus did not end up sitting on a throne after entering Jerusalem but was lifted up on a barbaric cross.

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus walked a path of personal struggle, betrayal, desertion, trial, and crucifixion while always remaining faithful to the one he called Father.

Part of the light that shines from the empty tomb is not only that death does not get the last word for Jesus and us, but that the way of living we see in Jesus is declared by God as the way of God.

How are we to live this life we have been given?
We are to look to Jesus and his path of peace!

So, when we consider how to live with each other, we therefore use words like: faithfulness, forgiveness, reconciliation, grace and love. In this era in which war, conflict and tension seem to mark every message that comes to us through the media and social media, we praise God that the one we affirm as the hope of the world is very much the "prince of peace."

A provocation

On Palm Sunday I concluded my sermon with three provocations that are worth prayerfully considering:

1. How do you and I praise God? How do we make praise of God part of daily living?
2. How do we welcome Jesus daily into our lives? How are we conscious of Jesus in our daily living?
3. And fundamentally who is Jesus for us? Who, for us, is this Jewish bloke who lived 2,000 years ago, who preached, healed, entered Jerusalem, was crucified and who his followers encountered as alive on the third day? Who is Jesus for us?

Maybe as you listen and read the texts relating to the first Easter you might think about how you answer these questions.

Grace and peace,

Paul Stephens, Minister in Placement

Image: Picture by James Tissot. In public domain. Source Wiki Commons Images.

Coming Up

Services:

Thursday 6/4	Maundy Thursday service/ Messy Church	5pm
Friday 7/4	Good Friday	9:30am
Sunday 9/4	Easter Sunday	9:30am
Thursday 13/4	Mid-week worship	1:30pm

Activities:

Friday 14/4	Collectibles Sale	12 - 4pm
Saturday 15/4	Collectibles sale@Chapel-Ground-Chapel	9 - 12pm
Saturday 15/4	Geelong Repair Cafe - Highton	1 - 5pm
Wednesday 19/4	Church council meeting	
Wednesday 26/4	Coffee & Chat@Rolling Pin Cafe, Mitre 10, Sth Geelong	1:30 - 3pm
Friday 28/4	Sewing group	12 - 2:30pm

St Luke's Church Council

Meeting held March 15 at 7pm by Zoom.

In attendance: Paul, Sue, Mike, Robyn.

- Council noted the lack of progress in developing a combined Geelong UCA action plan.
- Council reps to meet with Mens Shed personnel to discuss their goals and issues.
- Letter presented expressing our concerns about effective communication with Uniting and withdrawal of UCA presence in Norlane.
- Secretary to organize Annual Report to congregation for AGM.
- Secretary to provide update on Council activities in next newsletter.
- Secretary to address further Church admin staffing issues.
- Council to share with congregation letter to government encouraging further support for Turkiye & Syria.
- Resourcing Ministry: need to follow up maintenance issues

Mike Currie, Council Secretary

Congregation News

Mission Outreach

ST LUKE'S CHAPEL COLLECTIBLES

Many new opportunities appear to be happening as our Chapel Collectibles becomes deeply embedded in a younger generation as people treasure more and more household items produced in our grand-parents generation. That's what the Collectibles is all about..... enjoying well made and beautiful objects of desire.

During March, we welcomed a group of 25 from The Combined Belmont Probus Club – who came and enjoyed our morning tea and heard St Luke's story about supporting Refugee and Asylum Seeker families since 2005, followed by a Chapel viewing.



Part of our fund raising effort is directed towards the sale of potted plants. Donations of Orchids and spring flowering plants are being prepared for the new season. We thank Paul Anderson who has been repotting plants ready for sale. Paul has potted up 50 Aspidistras plants – plants that can handle a fair degree of neglect with low maintenance – good for indoor and outdoor – 2 pots sell for a bargain \$10.

Our next opening in **APRIL**: Friday 21 April (between 12 noon and 4.30pm); Sat 22 April (between 9am and lunch time). If these dates don't suit you, please tee up a time with Linda or myself to arrange your own private viewing at your convenience.

This month we are very excited to display a fabulous collection of 'Wall Plates'. Too many to display in the Chapel, so they can be seen in the Men's Shed Meeting Room. This is a '**must see**' collection for your viewing pleasure.

Plan to visit the Chapel Collectibles this month. We have tables loaded with gift ideas – whether for birthdays, weddings, for grand-children or simply a gift to share when visiting friends for a cuppa.

How can you help increase our saleable items? Firstly bring your friends to enjoy all that we do. Then, If you have any unwanted items in your house and you wish to declutter, why don't you think about passing them on to our Chapel Collectibles

I continue to thank everyone for helping us make a difference towards enabling St Luke's to be a church that is attempting to live out God's mission in the community.

Linda Salamy & Rae Anderson, Collectibles Co-Ordinators

Pastoral Connections

JOB OPPORTUNITY

QUALIFICATIONS : This unique opportunity requires a desire to help and a friendly smile.

HOURS : 4 hours a year with the possibility of a second shift of the same duration.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- To assist funeral directors at funerals conducted at St. Luke's. Skills needed include providing assistance such as location of keys to downstairs toilets, preparing the prayer cradle for family to light candles, location of light switches, location of tables for memorabilia.
- To assist families with information regarding kitchen facilities, such as do we have ovens, dishwasher, plates, cups etc. Welcoming and directing caterers when they arrive.
- Following the service, turn off all lights, lock toilets, ensure all candles are extinguished and exterior doors are locked.

If you feel you qualify for this special Pastoral Care outreach to grieving families please apply by contacting Pam on 0407 557 933. Offer closes end April.

SHARING WITH GRIEVING FAMILIES

2022 was a significant year for St. Luke' as we had several of our former and active church members pass away. These included Jean Williams, Stan East, Michael Cox, Patti Tinney, Maurie Redfern, Marlyn Gilbert, Winsome Cations, Brian Fielder, Mary Dawson, Betty Bottger, Ray Ballagh, Bob Tantau, June Longmore and earlier this year Val Garratt.

Most of these funerals were not held at St. Luke's but we were involved pastorally in all of them, as the Pastoral Connections team followed up families to pass on our condolences and to support them. Paul still ministers to some of the families.

In several cases, loved ones had moved to Melbourne to be closer to family. However, in four cases we had the privilege of hosting and serving afternoon tea/lunch, at services of thanksgiving to celebrate the lives, work and contributions made within our St. Luke's community.

As well, during the year St. Luke's was approached to facilitate services for nonchurch families. At some of these Paul was asked to conduct the service.

It is a privilege to serve all families who seek a church funeral service, and to provide a link, and support, for families who may be struggling with their grief.

Pam Seller

MIGRANT SEWING GROUP

It was Shaghek's birthday so of course we had a lovely afternoon tea for her. With all our sewing friends we went all out to celebrate Shaghek's 21st 😊.



National Update



At the heart of the Uniting Church is a commitment to walk together with First Nations people in seeking justice. We seek to work and pray together as First and Second Peoples for more just, inclusive and equal relationships in the church and in this nation. Inspired by this commitment, we support a constitutionally enshrined **First Nations Voice to Parliament** as an historic opportunity to recognise and honour First Nations people and to walk together as a nation toward a better future.

Today the Assembly [published a new page on our website](#) dedicated to supporting Uniting Church members to stay informed about the Voice and resourcing you to join and lead respectful conversations around the upcoming Referendum. Bookmark this page as we will keep updating with information and resources as they are developed!

Informed by our covenant commitment, the [Assembly Standing Committee \(ASC\) resolved at its recent meeting](#) to declare the support of the Uniting Church in Australia for the proposed change in the Australian Constitution to recognise a First Nations Voice.

Importantly, the ASC acknowledged the challenge in the Referendum to think more deeply about and reflect upon our own practices in our relationships with First Peoples as a priority of the Covenant with UAICC.

UCA NATIONAL UPDATE 23-28 March <https://uniting.church/voice/>

Prayer Requests

******Reminder all prayer requests remain confidential******

Praise and Thanksgiving

- Praise you God for each new day, for the rhythms of nature and the many blessings and precious gifts that you freely give, Thank you Lord.
- We are thankful and mindful of the many family, friends and acquaintances that have touched and shaped our lives, and for the lessons we have learnt from them.
- We are blessed to have happy occasions to plan for and celebrate. Such as birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, new additions to the family, even pets that can bring joy and calm to our hearts.
- Thanks be to God for all who are recovered or recovering from COVID, surgery or treatment.



General Prayers

- Our prayers are always with all of those we know of and support who are unwell, having treatment, recovering from operations or making hard decisions. We think of and pray for Kevin, Claire's sister, Azi, Farhad and family, Val Nicholls, Ian Allan, Lyn and Max, David, Katie, Dorothy, Merv, Bob and Jenny, Ric, Jenny and Peter, Jean, Ian and Jenny, to name just a few within our faith community who are struggling. May they know God's peace and strength on the journey ahead.
- We also remember and think of those who are hurting and grieving because of domestic violence, health problems or separation from loved ones.
- Pray for the St. Luke's groups and our sister churches, who continue to do the work of God in our community.
- Pray for peace in the world. For those citizens living in war-torn countries, especially Ukraine and the anxiety of separated families. Pray for the children and older people who have no easy way of escape. We pray that they will find relief through the love and kindness of others.
- Please pray for the mental health of farmers and small business owners in North Queensland and in the Northern Territory as they struggle to clean up after the floods that have caused such destruction, loss of stock and heart ache. We praise God for the practical help that is already being offered.
- We pray for non-English speaking families, who struggle to understand the laws and restrictions that confront them on arrival in Australia. We thank you Lord for the work of Shaghek as she translates and intercedes for so many.



We enter the church via the
 servant's entrance, and when
 church ends our service begins.
 We serve our Lord by serving
 others.

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
April 9 Easter Day	Acts 10:34-43	Ps 118:1-2, 14-24	Col 3:1-4	Jn 20:1-18
April 16 Easter 2	Acts 2:14a,22-32	Ps 16	1 Pt 1:3-9	Jn 20:19-31
April 23 Easter 3	Acts 2:36-41	Ps 116:1-4,12-19	1 Pt 1:17-23	Lk 24:13-35
April 30 Easter 4	Acts 2:42-47	Ps 23	1 Pt 2:19-25	Jn 10:1-10
May 7 Easter 5	Acts 17:55-60	Ps 31:1-5,15-16	1 Pt 2:2-10	Jn 14:1-14