

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

June 2023



Fresh Expressions of Church

I am writing this on the 6th June and it just so happens that a number of regular outreach ministries of our congregation are running this week. On Thursday (June 7th) the **Mid-week Service** will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. This service which is followed by afternoon tea has been growing in numbers, particularly since the end of the pandemic lockdowns. Those who attend find the time and format enables them to participate when a Sunday morning is just too much of a challenge in terms of getting up and being organised: the aches and pain of age can have an impact. There is now a bus load from Charles Brownlow Village attending each time.

On Friday afternoon, the **Sewing Group** will be humming along until about 2 pm. Along with the actual sewing, this group is all about building relationships within the group and a chance for some conversational English for those who are newcomers.

Also, on Friday afternoon there will be the next **Messy Church**, with a theme built around the good news that God journeys with us in life. St Luke's Messy Church has attracted people of all ages: including families and individuals who otherwise would not attend church as well as a large number of folk who are newcomers to our land. Messy Church is now a worldwide movement which began in the UK and is built on offering a Christ-centred time of hospitality, creativity and celebration for all ages.

On Saturday the **Repair Café** will be in full swing: offering a practical response to the enormous amount of waste we generate. It is a genuine collaboration between the broader community and the congregation undergirded by a common passion to care for our planet.

It also builds relationships within the team doing all the hard work, along with those who come along to get something fixed.

Some years ago, I did some research into what has been called “**Fresh Expressions of church.**” This again began in the UK. The basic definition of a fresh expression is that it is a form of church that seeks to be church for those who are not otherwise part of the church community.

It could be argued that both the Mid-week Service and Messy Church fit within this definition. While Sewing Group and Repair Café may not exactly fit the definition, they both reflect the church’s call in Christ to share the life of the kingdom of God.

Please pray for those involved in these ministries (and the other outreach ministries of the congregation); and let us give thanks to God for the difference that they are making in people’s lives.

Paul Stephens

Minister in Placement

Coming Up

Services:

Friday 9/6	Messy Church	5:30
Sunday 18/6	Refugee Sunday / Holy Communion	9:30am
Sunday 25/6	UCA anniversary / Combined service	9:30am

Activities:

Friday 9/6	Sewing group	12 - 2:30pm
Saturday 10/6	Geelong Repair Cafe - Highton	1 - 5pm
Friday 16/6	Collectibles Sale	12 - 4pm
Saturday 17/6	Collectibles sale@Chapel-Ground-Chapel	9 - 12pm
Wednesday 21/6	Church Council meeting	
Wednesday 28/6	Coffee & Chat@Rolling Pin Cafe, Mitre 10	1:30 - 3pm

Church Council

Notes from meeting, held May 17

- AGM/ Annual Report: Meeting agenda and annual report to be finalised.
- Admin position: Role review and PD of to be completed.
- Mens Shed MOU and grant: Follow up with Synod project manager
- Disability Action Plan: need someone to champion this.
- Act2 - Council responses: Informal meeting organised to complete our response
- Uniting in Prayer: Incorporate resources into congregation communications
- Money for Mission: Show videos to congregation
- Sale of manse: Follow up re specific distribution of funds
- Future UCA Geelong: Invitation to other churches to continue discussions

Members of the new Council are: Sue Anderson, Steve Singline, Goeff Boehm, Bob Clayton,. Shaghek Qassabyan, Lachlan Farran, Mike Currie.

Congregation News

THE OUTSTRETCHED ARMS OF PASTORAL CONNECTIONS



VISITING is a word, in the mind of some, that often begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. However at St. Luke's, like in many of our Church Council teams, that full stop is just the beginning of our caring within the congregation and community.

Certainly, our primary focus is to minister to, and keep in touch with, members of our congregation. This is done by linking families to a contact person from within our team. This combined with friendships and group support has received positive feedback.

Other pastoral and fellowship activities that Pastoral Connections co-ordinate are Mid-week services held in the sanctuary on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 1.30pm. This year it has been our pleasure to welcome residents of Ryman village who arrive in the village bus as we gather to praise God together.

We have an active Prayer Link, used frequently for prayer requests which are forwarded out immediately to Link members. A monthly pray point link, is emailed out to those who pray faithfully for local and world events. If you feel you would like to be included either as a pray-er or have a concern prayed for, please contact one of our team members, who can pass your prayer to the co-ordinator.

Another of our roles is the co-ordination of monthly communion. A small team prepare and serve the elements. We also offer home-communion to anyone who is shut-in, unwell or facing a stressful situation. If you feel serving communion is a calling for you, please contact a team member.

A visitor "welcomers group" are active in the foyer of a Sunday morning ready to share with any visitors or newcomers, and to invite them to morning tea. A welcome card as a follow up assures those attending that they are welcome to join us again should they choose to in the future.



Our shawl ministry is very active, distributing shawls knitted by members of the congregation, to those facing hardship or going through a difficult time. These recipients can be members of our congregation or from the community. If you are a knitter or crocheter we would welcome your involvement.

Coffee and Chat is our monthly get together at the Rolling Pin café at Mitre 10 in South Geelong. This lively group meet on the 4th Wednesday at 1.30pm. Chat is a key ingredient of our time together.

An important ministry for Pastoral Connections is at Funeral services held at St. Luke's. We have a group of key people who assist the funeral director with practical help on the day, which enables Rev Paul to concentrate on supporting the family as they arrive. We do offer some kitchen service for congregational families.

Refugee ministry is an important part of our welcome to newcomers. Shaghek is very busy in this ministry and brings to our team important ways that we can support. One outreach in this area is a sewing group that meet every second Friday to learn to sew, or complete garments and items but also to catch up and chat together. If you would like to support or hear more about the work Shaghek does please contact her or a team member.

Team members include: *Barbara Murphy, Shaghek Qassabyan, Carole Findlay, Joy Hicks, Valerie Grills, Judy Clark, Rev. Paul Stephens, Pam Seller.*

MISSION OUTREACH

St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

Last month's Collectibles sales raised over \$9,000, largely due to the generosity of people who donate household goods as they declutter their possessions knowing full-well that money raised is directed towards the support of refugee and newcomer families.

In May we doubled our floor space again while using the Lane Memorial building. Around the walls we turned the room into an art gallery with original works, including a feature of wall mirrors. We also displayed a large range of crafts, sewing and with fabric sales - splendid timing for



indoor winter activities. Jewelry was featured, and we had a delightful collection of porcelain dolls. We know that more and more shoppers return to buy (under \$10) birthday and other gifts, knowing that all monies raised support refugee and asylum seeker families.

Do you know?: Every Wednesday morning, the Chapel is open to receive donations that go directly to needy families, or donations for our Chapel.

Do you know?: That the Chapel will feature 'Christmas in July' on 21/22 July. We would like to receive any unwanted Christmas decorations that you may have stacked away in your cupboards.

Do you know?: This month we are showcasing collections of.... Carlton Ware, Wedgwood, Crystal Vases, Tea-pots and Tea Cosies, Dinner Sets, and 'blue' is our colour theme for our beautiful plate collection.

Our next opening: **Friday 16th. June**, between 12 noon and 4.30pm.; **Sat 17th. June**, between 9am and lunch time. Private viewing can be arranged anytime..

Men's Shed earn a special vote of thanks this month for their untiring energy and response to when we ask for help with repairs and/or display support.

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.

Because of your support, we can now claim that we have established a worthy Collectibles retail outlet, open for sales once a month – helping to make a difference.

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

Mobile: 0413 888 884



The Plight of Many: the Turkiye/Syria earthquake crisis

In April, in response to a retiring offering, our congregation gave \$510 towards the Turkiye/Syria earthquake appeal. We also sent a letter to Mr Richard Marles asking for special consideration to be given to those impacted by this terrible natural disaster as refugees from Syria. Please find below the voices from our local Syrian community - some of whom are connected to St Luke's.

Sulaf

I woke up that morning to text messages on the What's App family group, at the same time, from my mother who lives in Syria and my two sisters who are refugees in Iraq.

They wrote, "Have you felt it?! This is crazy!! I don't know how I got out!!! It's too cold and I can't see your brother." My brother was stuck in the house for a second but it felt like hours, he said. They are displaced now but what matters is that they are alive. I'm Sulaf and I am from Lattakia, Syria.

Imagine the scene, you're sleeping peacefully with your family in your warm home when you are suddenly shaken by a horrifically powerful earthquake that measures 7.7 on the Richter scale. You find yourself either under mounds of rubble or if you're lucky, alive in the freezing cold with no shelter whatsoever.

Now, imagine all of this taking place in a country that's suffering from war for more than 12 years. No medicine; No fuel; No electricity; No means of heating and no proper relief vehicles nor machinery. Sadly, this scene is happening right now for real in a country called Syria. The Syrians are now grappling with the lack of life resources.

What is exactly freedom and humanity when millions of Syrians are left utterly alone to fend for themselves in an unthinkable situation with the death toll exceeding three thousand and it's still rising and millions are displaced.

This is not the time to remain silent, this is not the time for politics and definitely; this is not the time for retribution! This is a time for solidarity and compassion and humanity Please raise your voices with a resounding Save the Syrians!

Yousef

What could possibly be worse than an earthquake? An earthquake in a country that has been decimated by ten years of war. The earthquake in Syria is a crisis within a crisis. Before the dark day 06/02/2023, Syria was already experiencing poverty, a hunger crisis, economic collapse, a Cholera outbreak.

Because of the war, roads, homes and hospitals had already been destroyed, making it even harder to rescue people from the rubble and provide lifesaving support. A volunteer from the civil defence rescue group said: "We are used to rescuing people from the rubble. But this time is different. This time, there is nothing left. Nothing at all!"

90% of Syrians live below the poverty line, over 75% cannot meet their basic needs. The war has damaged Syria's water supply system and displaced millions from their homes and now more are displaced because of the earthquake.

We, the Syrian community here in Geelong and in Australia are feeling helpless, we are watching our families dying in front of our eyes. We have people here in this room, right next to you, who have lost families and friends, whose families have been displaced for the 2nd and 3rd time.

Lina Khazzan - her family in Damascus

Due to the civil war, my brother's family has been displaced from a suburb in Damascus called Harasta. They lost their house in Harasta. The family has suffered a lot. My brother got sick and died. Two of my nephews were taken by the Syrian Army to serve compulsory military service and their eldest brother fled to Sudan to avoid this, he is working now there to support the family. My sister-in-law works as carer for an old lady to support the family.

After years of displacement, on 02/01/2023, they decided to go back to Harasta despite the destruction there, as they could no longer afford the rent in Damascus. The day before the earthquake on 05/02/2023, the family was doing some maintenance in the kitchen. At night everyone left except my nephew Ghabi who stayed there to finalise the house maintenance as soon as possible, but he died that day before finishing the house and before moving back to Harasta. He was aiming to move back to this house and he died there under the rubble after waiting for 19 hours - no one could reach him because of the shortage of machinery and civil defence.

Now what is the destiny of this family? They have displaced for the 3rd time in ten years. I live here with my husband and my two children. We are well established family in Australia and we are able to support and host who remains from our family. Please let us do what we meant to do as a family.

Joseph

“We left so many family members there, and some of them are alone and disparately need to reunite with their families in Australia”. Joseph from Aleppo will tell us about his brother, who is the last member of the family still in Syria alone.

The visa that suits most of our family’s situations is the Last Remaining Relative. Many of us have one sibling that remains stuck in Syria. The wait time for that visa is estimated to be 70 years! Once again, we request that applications for this visa being made on behalf of the family member of a refugee be exempt from the capped and cued system.

Bashar

Bashar’s parents only wish is to see his kid who was born in Australia and they’ve never met him yet. Most of us have family that remain in Syria. These were vulnerable members of our family that could not escape due to age and illness. For example, our aged parents, sick aunties and uncles.

Since we arrived in Australia our community has settled well, and worked. We are financially stable and can afford to pay for visa applications but the types that would suit our situation are either capped and cued which means there is a 30-70 year wait list, or the alternative options are far too expensive for us at this stage in our journey.

For example: Parent Visa

Visa	Parent (Subclass 870)	Contributory Parent (Subclass 143)
Validity	Permanent	permanent
Waiting time	at least 30 years	Up to 3 years
Minimum Age Requirement	No	No
Cost	\$6,415	\$47,755

More stories of our Syrian refugees next month. Thanks to Sue Anderson for this item.

An Anzac Story Worth Reading

The ode on Anzac Day is a lament. Lest we forget. And I do not forget. I remember.

(Stan Grant, myself and millions of others)

On Anzac Day, I honour the story of my uncle, a Wiradjuri warrior killed in a war he was never meant to fight. Somewhere in the fields of France the soul of a Wiradjuri man wanders, restless. He died far from home; killed in a war that he was never meant to fight.

In World War I, Aboriginal men were barred from enlistment. But recruiters sometimes looked away — ethnicity was not noted. Ivan Grant signed up, as did an estimated 1,000 other Aboriginal people.

Many, like my great uncle Ivan, never returned. They are the black diggers. Warriors who heeded the call to fight for a country that never recognised their full citizenship. Indigenous resistance fighters waged economic war and turned the weapons of their oppressors against them, according to a new book based on "hundreds and hundreds" of historical accounts.

Ivan Grant was the grandson of Gurrawin, the daughter of Wongamar, Wiradjuri people who saw the coming of white people — who saw war and invasion on their own land. In the 1820s martial law was declared in the Bathurst war — called an exterminating war — of so-called settlers against my Wiradjuri ancestors. It was a war reported on the pages of Sydney newspapers as the Napoleonic Wars of the time were reported, as we report the wars of our time.

Yet so few Australians know of our wars. Only now are we beginning to learn of what we call the Frontier Wars. Only now are we learning of the massacre sites that crisscross our country.

The stories of our Bumaldhaany

We still don't know about our heroes. Australians may be familiar with Geronimo or Sitting Bull but do they know of Windradyne? He was the Wiradjuri leader who orchestrated our resistance. He perfected a guerrilla warfare that held the British at bay for three years until his people were almost erased. He led the survivors on a trek across the Blue Mountains to sit down with Governor Brisbane to end the fighting. It was reported that he wore a hat with the word "peace" written on the brim.



You won't find Windradyne's name in the Australian War Memorial. But we remember him. I was raised on the stories of our Bumaldhaany, our fighters. This is why my great uncle Ivan fought and died in a foreign war. It is what he was raised to do.

In World War II, Ivan's brother Cecil — my grandfather — signed up. He was shipped off to the Middle East, one of the famed Rats of Tobruk. My grandmother was not happy. She asked him: What had this country ever done for us? Why would he fight?

Because this is his country, he said.

In the army he found an equality he had never found out of uniform. But he returned to the same segregated, racist country he had left. He was good enough to fight but not good enough to share a drink in the pub with his digger mates. He refused to honour Anzac Day. For him, it was a day of hypocrisy.

But in the last years of his life in the late 1960s, he did march. Afterwards, wearing his medals, he



tried to enter the pub and a policeman blocked him at the door. My father has proudly told me what happened next. A group of old soldiers formed a ring around my grandfather and shepherded him in. If he couldn't drink, they wouldn't drink.

War is always fought twice

I remember my grandfather and his brother. I remember Windradyne and the fallen of the Bathurst Wars. I honour my cousin, Ivan, named after our great uncle lost in France. Ivan junior served in Iraq.

First Nations people have sacrificed for this land in wars here and overseas. I know my grandfather was not fighting for Australia, he was fighting for an idea of Australia. An Australia still to come ... perhaps.

.. The Vietnamese writer Viet Thanh Nguyen says war is always fought twice: first on the battlefield and then in memory.

The struggle for forgiveness

The Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, who lived through the wars of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, was once asked could he embrace a Cetnik — a Serbian nationalist fighter. No, he said, adding: But I must.

How do we forgive? Forgiveness is not offered. It is earned. Volf says it is remembering rightly. Not with vengeance but with love. The struggle for forgiveness is the struggle for the truth of humanity.

Anzac Day asks us to pause to consider war, wars that are never over. Anzac Day is a day of lament. We have lost the capacity for lament. In our age we reach too soon for healing, for reconciliation. Lament allows us to dwell in the sadness. To live in the loss. Lament is the prayer to a silent God. Lament is the question without answer. Lament is the today without the promise of tomorrow. But it is not bleak. It is the hope unseen. In lament there is grace.

The ode on Anzac Day is a lament. Lest we forget. And I do not forget. I remember.

I lament the sacrifice of those in my family, from the Bathurst Wars to France to Tobruk to Iraq. I lament the country we are is still less than the country they fought for.

I lament an uncle — a Wiradjuri warrior — lost somewhere in France. May he rest in peace and may our country one day find the peace that he and so many like him fought for.

Stan Grant was formerly presenter of Q+A and the ABC's international affairs analyst.

Thanks Sue for this contribution.

Some parts of this item have been edited for space reasons. Editor

Pastoral Connections

PRAYERLINK

JUNE 2023

Praise and Thanksgiving

- We give thanks for the generosity of people who are donating food to organisations for distribution to those finding these times tough. Our thanks, goes to our St. Luke's members who support these areas of concern.
- Praise and thanks for all people who support those suffering mental health, a disability or health problems. May an open door be always available in times of need.
- Our thanks and praise, Lord, that we live in a privileged country with access to fresh food and water, and have good facilities such as libraries, medical facilities and pharmacies.
- Give thanks for the celebration of special birthdays and of new family additions.
- We give thanks and praise that Mary's surgery has been successful and that she is recovering.

General Prayers

- Continue to pray for all of those we know of who are unwell, receiving treatment, awaiting surgery, are recovering from operations, or have suffered the loss of a loved one. May they know God's peace and strength for the journey ahead. We especially think of the family of Rev. Bob Patterson a former minister at St. Luke's who passed away in May.
 - Pray for the leaders of local government, community and church who make hard decisions that have huge impacts on the lives of so many. We pray that everyone will have the opportunity to be heard and respected as they present their voice to those in power.
 - Pray for peace in the world. For those citizens who are living in war-torn countries where there are few medical facilities, fresh food, or adequate housing. Pray for all children displaced or injured by civil unrest, dysfunctional households and loss of family support.
 - Gracious Lord, our thoughts and prayers are with those depressed, lonely, or homeless. May they find shelter during these cold nights. We offer prayers for those charities who can minister to the needs of these people. Pray that there will be financial and practical support from the community and government.
 - This month our prayers focus on the needs of our own congregation, that there will be people available to stand for Church Council and the other positions within our fellowship that need support. We are thankful for the many committed people who are already involved.
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Singing for the Creek

The "Singing for the Creek" fundraiser concert at Grovedale UC on Sunday afternoon was a great success. The church was packed, there was a wonderful variety of music and an absolutely scrumptious afternoon tea. A big thankyou to all those "Bakers" who gave me slices to take to the event. Cheers, Claire



Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
June 11 Pentecost 2	Gn 12:1-9	Ps 33:1-12	Rm 4:13-25	Mt 9:9-13, 18-26
June 18 Pentecost 3	Gn 18:1-15, (21:1-7)	Ps 116:1-2,12-19	Rm 5:1-8	Mt 9:35-10:8
June 22 UCA Anniversary	Ez 37:15-28	Ps 122	Heb 13:1-8	Jn 17:20-26
June 25 Pentecost 4	Gn 21:8-21	Ps 86:1-10,16-17	Rm 6:1-11	Mt 10:24-39
July 2 Pentecost 5	Gn 22:1-14	Ps 13	Rm 6:12-23	Mt 10:40-42