

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

July 2023



The sermons I am offering during worship currently have a focus on **prayer**.

On Sunday June 25, I reflected on John 17, which is a prayer offered by Jesus for his disciples and indeed for us. It is a reminder that Jesus continues to pray for us; and that to be “prayed for” is a precious gift.

On July 9th I will tackle the topic of “How God answers prayer,” on July 16th “Prayer and discernment,” and July 23rd “How the gift of prayer reflects God’s deep valuing of us.”

On July 2nd my focus was on the safe space that prayer gives for us to be honest with God; and indeed, the value of lamenting the deep and difficult dimensions of life before God.

The Psalm for July 2nd was Psalm 13. This Psalm is an honest lament before God by its writer about a difficult time in his or her life, or in the life of the people of Israel.

Psalm 13 begins with the writer crying out to God:

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

*² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?*

The words of the Psalm reminded me of a long road trip with children, with the children asking over and over: “Are we there yet?” “How much longer?”

The Psalm also reminded me, perhaps more profoundly, of the journey we have all been on with the Pandemic and the questions that we struggled with during lockdown, and that we continue to ask: “How long will this pandemic keep going?” “Will this enemy prevail over us?” “How many of us will sleep the sleep of death because of COVID?”

The last two questions echo words from the writer of Psalm 13:

... How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³ Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death ...

Another Psalm of lament is Psalm 22, the opening words are the words that Jesus declared from the cross: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* You cannot get a deeper and more agonising expression of lament before God than that.

The writer of Psalm 13 does not end with lament, the last verses of the Psalm are an affirmation:

*⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

*⁶ I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

The God who is testified to through the Scriptures and in the person of Jesus can deal with anything.

When we pray, God would have us share our concerns and longings ... and not hold back. We cannot hide anything from God anyway, but critically God does hear our cries and that in itself can be healing and hope producing. But as we share our deep concerns with God, let us also remember and affirm the nature of God, the God who hears our prayers, for this is the God who deals with us all and all creation with "... steadfast love."

Paul Stephens

Minister in Placement

Coming Up

Services:

Thursday 13/7	Midweek Service (Communion)	1.30pm
Sunday 16/7	Worship (Communion)	9:30am
Sunday 30/7	Worship with St Luke's Environment Group	9:30am
Friday 11/8	Messy Church	4 - 7pm

Activities:

Wednesday 12/7	Seekers	7:30pm
Friday 21/7	Sewing group	12 - 2:30pm
Friday 21/7	Collectibles Sale 'Christmas in July'	12 - 4pm
Saturday 22/7	Collectibles sale	9 - 12pm
Wednesday 26/7	Coffee & Chat@Rolling Pin Cafe, Mitre 10	1:30 - 3pm
Saturday 12/8	Geelong Repair Cafe - Highton	1 - 5pm

Church Council

Notes from meeting, held June 27 at St Lukes and by Zoom.

- New Council includes Sue Anderson, Lachie Farran, Shaghek Qassabyan, Mike Currie, Bob Clayton and new members Geoff Boehm and Steve Singline. Chair and Secretary roles under discussion.
- Updated Information Booklet currently in preparation
- Looking for Disability Action Plan champion
- Funds deriving from proposed sale of Barrabool Rd manse discussed
- Proposal for more focussed celebration of Refugee Week in 2024
- New Council meeting schedule agreed on
- Focus of next meeting will be on ACT2 challenge to Councils

Congregation News

Mission Outreach

St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

How quickly the 3rd weekend of every month ticks by. And now, I'm writing you a report on last month with a glimpse into our preparation for July.

In June, people were amazed when they saw a collection of over 500 DVD's for sale, plus stacks of CD's. In particular, Shoppers enjoyed hunting out sets of Westerns and English comedy dvd's for their winter-time viewing. Most of our mantle clocks were sold, even the old world type-writer found a new happy owner. Children's books and games were sold, helping grandparents get ready for school holidays.

Upon opening the 12 o'clock 'door' on the Friday, our Chapel Team greeted a queue of 20 people waiting to enter. Interest in our Chapel Collectibles encourages us to continue to refresh each opening with new and interesting collectibles.

Christmas in July is an event people love to come and appreciate. We have received many donations of unwanted chrissey decs and we are still open to receive more.

This month we will once again double our floor space when using the Lane Memorial building. Dinner sets, High Tea fine china, crystal glassware and much more will be on display.

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: This month we are showcasing collections of Coca-Cola glasses, Tupperware, Corning Ware, Rolling Pins, Tea Pots, frig magnets, and If you require a spare lid for your saucepan or casserole dish, just ask to see our collection of over 100 lids of all sizes (bring your container for size), and 'blue' is our colour theme for our beautiful plate collection.

Our next opening in **JULY:** Friday 21st. July, between 12 noon and 4.30pm; Sat 22nd July, between 9am and lunch time.

Private viewing can be arranged anytime.

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.

Be prepared for a warm welcome when you come and visit our Chapel Collectibles. No need to spend money, just come and enjoy memories triggered from days of old.

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

Mobile: 0413 888 884



Collectibles Sale

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry



July 21st & 22nd

Is it time for a refresh of your Christmas supplies? Donations of preloved Christmas decorations, ornaments, trees, napery, tableware etc will be gratefully recieved!

Speak with Rae or Linda

Pushing for a greener future

For many years we have been using a trolley from Woolworths in Highton to support donations of food brought to church from generous folk. Food that is distributed amongst needy people through Uniting Barwon. This trolley is made from 74 recycled milk bottles. This 'greener' replacement trolley comes with overwhelming support from Woolworths – Barrabool Hills – who are aware of St Luke's commitment to Climate Change and the Environment.



Where Are They Now?

Perhaps there was someone in the St Luke's congregation that you once knew and are still in touch with - how about writing a little article about 'what they've been up to' and 'where they are now'.

I'll go first - read the story below first, then go to the next page and see whether you've guessed my mystery person???

Clue 1 - Born at Mortimer House, Bristol, England 30/06/1953 @ 3.25 am

Clue 2 - Arrived in Melbourne on their FIRST birthday

Clue 3 - As a youngster lived in the UK, Australia, Papua - various mission stations there

Clue 4 - Baptised in the Congregational Church, UK

Clue 5 - attended Hughesdale PS where spent time in Prep in a rubbish bin due to talking, Hannam Abbot's PS, UK, Grade 5 MLC Hawthorn

Clue 6 - £10 Pom

Clue 7 - married, 3 sons, 3 grandsons, 1 grand daughter

Clue 8 - other than 'human loves' - figs, frangipani, travelling (soon off to Vietnam), scrabble, canasta, jigsaws, owls plus

Clue 9 - retired

Clue 10 - lives in Yarrawonga when they are NOT somewhere else in Australia or abroad

Very recently turned the BIG (how good is your maths?)

Sue Anderson

Pastoral Connections

My Role as a Community Ministry Worker

Many years ago, St Luke's Uniting Church chose to support refugees by offering hospitality, friendships, house goods and furniture, sewing groups for women and even cooking meals for families facing hard times.

My role as a Community Ministry Worker started in 2020. This was during the coronavirus pandemic. I thought it would be hard for me to do my job with the many challenges that rose during the lockdowns, however it was very important for me to keep the families connected. So, we at St Luke's started to implement an online service every Sunday to keep families connected during those challenging times. Also, we did online weekly prayers on Wednesdays and of course online Messy Church.



After the lockdown, various initiatives such as the bread run allowed me to return the same compassion and hospitality that was once shown to me. As a former refugee, I understand the challenges that many newcomers face as they settle into their new lives in Australia, allowing me to further provide support to newcomers. Some initiatives that I am proud of are those that provide a connection between newcomer families and St Luke's Church, such as the Sewing group, which I believe is an excellent opportunity for refugee women to mix with tutors within our church to improve their English and be encouraged to volunteer, easing their settlement into Australia. I couldn't do my role without the support I received from the congregation members as individuals and groups such as the Collectibles group and the Men's Shed. I also very much value and appreciate the support I have received from our minister Paul encouraging me to overcome the obstacles that I face in my role.

Kind regards

Shaghek

Where are they now?

2003-2012

- Began working at St Luke's UCA, Highton, as a Pastoral Care worker, alongside Rev Marian Zaunbrecher.
- When Marian called to Synod NSW I was called to be the MoW at St Luke's. What a privilege & adventure!
- Exploring being a "Purpose Driven Church" Letting go of predictable worship.

"Remember butterflies emerging out of cocoons, Rachel in a clown suit, plaited hair that took Terezei hours to prepare, visually stimulating images on the screen, prayers read in arabic, a full size boat at the front of the church, countless symbols that enriched our worship experience, church groups conducting worship, informal café church, meaningful and innovative Holy Week contemplative experiences etc. Who could forget Jesus' birthday party and that Christmas jacket! Remember the "Madonna" mic..." Mark Seller



AZI, FARHAD and AMIN

CONGRATULATIONS on FINALLY being granted permanency in Australia!

We are all soooooo pleased!

We know it has been a long, long journey and one that you were constantly advised would NOT end as it has.

We also know that although we have surrounded you with prayer and support we were not able to give you the HOPE you so desired.

However those prayers, our and your faith in God and a little help from the current Federal Government has brought the best possible result.

Only those who have travelled a similar path can know some of what you've been through.

We also realise that the adjustment to your new situation will take time to sink in.

The possibilities of what can come next
.....we continue to pray for you all.

Sue Anderson



Finding Freedom Sunday 18 June.

We were fortunate to have joining us in this important service a young man who spent many years in detention as an asylum seeker. Varathan is now free, soon to receive permanency in Australia. He is married to Sara and they are the parents of two gorgeous little girls.



Rex Rouse, one of our newer members, and his late wife Lesly, made as their mission the freeing of Varathan and support of many other asylum seekers at the detention centre. This mission was also championed by the members of Rex's 'home' church, Living Faith in Greensborough. We were pleased to see a number of their members at our service.



Sue Anderson

Praise and Thanksgiving

- We give thanks for precious time with family and friends.
- Give thanks for the life and witness of Judy Abbott shared at her thanksgiving service.
- Praise God for the support networks that exist in the community and at a local level. Especially doctors and medical staff who are at the front line of all emergencies, and praise for the volunteers who step in when times get tough.
- Thankyou Lord, for the good news received by Azi, Farhad, and Amin, after 10 years of waiting, received their permanent visas on Wednesday 28th June.
- Praise and thanks for the 41 people who attended the June Mid-week service at which we celebrate a big 'O' birthday. We give thanks for the successful surgery for Max, Val, and we pray for Lyn as she goes in for surgery.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE THOUGHTS THAT WERE WRITTEN DOWN DURING
SUNDAY WORSHIP ON 16TH JUNE,
TOPIC - "for things we are thankful for about the church."

LOVE FREELY GIVEN	CARING PEOPLE	FRIENDSHIP
THANKS FOR EXTENDING THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP WHEN I NEEDED IT.		
LIGHT IN A SECULAR WORLD.	HOPE	CHURCH IS MY REFUGE
A PLACE TO WALK WITH CHRIST AND THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE.		
OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE FAITH	LOVE	CONCERN FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
THE FREEDOM WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO WORSHIP GOD IN PEACE		
FRIENDSHIP	IDENTITY AND DIRECTION	COMFORT
MORAL SUPPORT IN RAISING A FAMILY	TEAMWORK.	
<u>CONSIDER YOUR OWN ANSWER TO THE ABOVE QUESTION.</u>		

General Prayers

- Our prayers continue for Ukrainian families living in Australia as they share their concerns for loved ones. Pray for peace in all places of conflict, that there will be calm leadership and that sensible decisions will be made.
- We also pray for refugees throughout the world, especially those who are caught up in the Australian visa system. We think of those in transition, those on temporary visas, and those who are working through paperwork to re-apply for tourist, working or permanent visas. Grant them an advocate who can guide and support them throughout their journey.
- Our prayers are always with people that are being directly 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 open to recognise the needs, challenges, and changes needed and to take appropriate action to help in a crisis.
- Pray for the ministry at Armstrong Creek, and for those who work hard to support the fresh expressions outreach in this growing area. We also remember in our prayers those who are volunteering at the Uniting Norlane, emergency relief agency. May their hard work be rewarded through the gratitude of those they help.

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
July 9 Pentecost 6	Gn 24:34-38, 42-49,58-67	Ps 45:10-17	Rm 7:15-25a	Mt 11:16-19, 25-30
July 16 Pentecost 7	Gn 25:10-19a	Ps 119:105-112	Rm 8:1-11	Mt 13:1-9,18-23
July 23 Pentecost 8	Gn 28:10-19a	Ps 139:1-12, 23-24	Rm 8:12-25	Mt 13:24-30, 36-43
July 30 Pentecost 9	Gn 29:15-28	Ps 105:1-11,45b	Rm 8:26-39	Mt 13:31-33, 44-52
August 6 Pentecost 10	Gn 32:22-31	Ps 17:1-7,15	Rm 9:1-5	Mt 14:13-21