

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

August 2023



A question that I have been asked quite often over the years goes something like this, "What can a story from a land far, far, away and from a time long, long ago possibly have to do with us today?"

I think it is a fair question. The themes I have recently explored in sermons based on passages from the book of Genesis might offer something of a response.

In two sermons I focused on two events from the life of Jacob (Genesis 28: 10-19a and Genesis 32:22-31) and in another touched on some of the themes from the wonderful story of Joseph with his special cloak.

In the case of the events related to Jacob, both took place at night. The first took place while he was on the run and seeking to escape from the wrath of his elder twin brother Esau from whom he had stolen his birthright and blessing by tricking their father, Isaac.

Jacob was alone, fearful, perhaps wracked with guilt, and uncertain of the future. He chose to sleep upon or behind a rock and dreamed of seeing a ladder or probably more accurately a ramp to heaven. And then suddenly found himself in the very presence of the living God who blessed him. He was an outcast and scoundrel and he was not seeking God, but God took the initiative in his life and blessed him. Jacob was lost and on the run, but God sought him out.

Is that not how we understand God today: that God seeks us out and can even use the scoundrels amongst us?

The second experience of Jacob took place as he journeyed home years later with his extended family, but still wondering whether Esau had it in for him. This experience involved Jacob struggling all night by the ford of the river Jabbok with a mysterious man. Jacob

emerges from this wrestling match both wounded and blessed.

The mysterious man put out Jacob's hip, but agreed to bless Jacob and in so doing gave Jacob a new name: "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

It turns out that Jacob had striven with God, but now while wounded bore a new name which would be associated not only with just him but a whole nation.

This experience of Jacob connects with us directly surely. We can relate to struggling all night with deep and difficult things ... perhaps inner demons ... and indeed sometimes wrestling all night with God over some matter which weighs heavy on our hearts and souls.

And then we have the wonderful story of Joseph which begins in Genesis 37 and continues to the end of the book. One of the points I highlighted from this long story is that God is hardly ever mentioned. But what becomes clear at the end of the story is that God (even though not often mentioned) has been active in all that happens. I think again we can make direct connections with our experience. So often we are not aware of God's activity in our lives until we look back.

Can I encourage you to spend some time reading these wonderful stories from Genesis yourself and be open to discover how directly they connect with your own life experiences?

Paul Stephens

Minister in Placement

Image: [Gustave Doré](#), Jacob Wrestling with the Angel (1855)

Coming Up

Services:

Friday 11/8	Messy Church	4 - 7pm
Sunday 13/8	Sunday service (Paul)	9:30am
Sunday 20/8	Sunday service (Bruce Waldron)	9:30am
Sunday 10/9	Special service related to Creation	9:30am

Activities:

Saturday 12/8	Geelong Repair Cafe - Highton	1 - 5pm
Wednesday 16/8	Church Council	7pm
Friday 18/8	Sewing group	12pm - 2pm
Friday 18/8	Collectibles	12pm - 4pm
Saturday 19/8	Collectibles	9am - lunch
Tuesday 22/8	Environment Action group	4:30 - 5:30pm
Wednesday 23/8	Coffee & Chat	1:30 - 3pm

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
Aug 20 Pentecost 12	Gn 45:1-15	Ps 133	Rm 11:1-2a, 29-32	Mt 15:(10-20), 21-28
Aug 27 Pentecost 13	Ex 1:8 - 2:10	Ps 124	Rm 12:1-8	Mt 16:13-20
Sept 3 Pentecost 14	Ex 3:1-15	Ps 105:1-6, 23-26	Rm 12:9-21	Mt 16:21-28
Sept 10 Pentecost 15	Gn 12:1-14	Ps 149	Rm 13:8-14	Mt 18:15-20

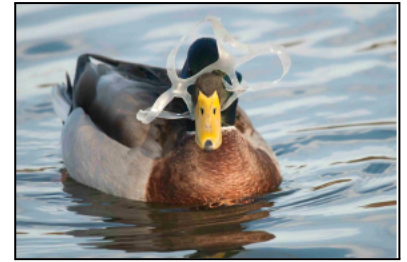
Congregation News

Environment Group

July 30 Environment Service Recap

A. Plastics

- Every year, Australia now “consumes” more than 3.5 Million Metric Tonnes (MT) of plastic
- We discard over 3M MT – we throw out an average of 130 kg of plastic per person (pp), per annum (pa).
- For the 40 - 50 people who typically attend a Sunday service at St Lukes, that equates to 5 - 6MT of plastic we are discarding to waste each year. And growing.
- What does the future look like if we can't change? The population in the USA, discards an average 250kg pp pa.
- 1M MT of the plastics Australians use and discard every year has been used just once – mostly as packaging.
- Currently just 36% of the plastic PET bottles sold in Australia each year are recycled – nearly 2 out of every 3 PET bottles is not recycled.
- In some low- and middle-income countries, studies have found up to a third of cattle and half the goat population have consumed significant amounts of plastic, because they mistook it for food.
- Worldwide, every year, it is estimated that 8M MT of plastics end up in the marine environment.
- For Australia, every year, about 130,000 MT of plastic eventually leaks into Australia's coastal and marine environment. Of the average 130kg we each discarded in 2019-20, eventually, 5kg of it will finish up in the Australian marine ecosystems, simply because we threw it out. 75% of the litter washing up on our shorelines is plastic. At the present rate of growth of our use of plastic, which is driving the increase of plastic pollution, by the middle of this century there will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish.



B. Blister Packs

- The 3 closest pharmacies to us to recycle your blister packs are:-
 - Pardey's Eastbrook Pharmacy, 75 – 77 Roslyn Rd, Belmont (opp. Post Office).
 - Kardinia Pharmacy, 2 – 18 Colac Rd, Belmont
 - Direct Chemist Outlet, Hills Plaza, 46 Province Boulevard, Highton
- There are 8 other pharmacies around Geelong collecting blister packs.



C. Vege bags are for sale at the Recycling Bay in the church foyer with all proceeds to Koala Clancy Foundation.

20 simple steps to reduce your plastic: If you didn't get one on the day - see notice above Recycling Bay

Recycling Guide for Greater Geelong <https://ucappw.org.au/recycling-greater-geelong/>

St Luke's Environmental Group



Mission Outreach

ST LUKE'S CHAPEL COLLECTIBLES

Hello readers and supporters of our Chapel Collectibles. I always look forward to keeping you updated on what is happening in the Chapel, so I hope you will enjoy what follows:

Christmas in July is well anticipated by those who like to view our latest collections. The Chapel was twinkling, sparkling and packed with gifts and treasures for young and old. Thank you to those who generously gave us unused or unwanted Christmas decorations, books and gifts.

Once again we doubled our floor space when using the Lane Memorial building. Dinner sets, High Tea fine china, crystal, glassware, an amazing range of 'Art' books, and to everyone's delight the beautiful collection of hand-glove puppets that could have been sold 10 times over! And now we look towards our August opening days.

Our next opening in **AUGUST: Friday 18 Aug, 12 noon - 4.30pm.; Sat 19 Aug, 9am - lunch time.**

The Chapel keeps on changing and following a gift of fabric from which Linda has created beautiful table runners, a bright new fresh look covers the tables.

As we sort donations for immediate use by refugees and needy people, or to be placed within our collections – we are mindful of caring for our environment. Therefore if we receive broken or damaged goods that cannot be repaired by Men's Shed or the Repair Café, then we use recycle bins for scrap metal, hard plastic and we also use the recycle bins in the Foyer of the church.

New deliveries from decluttering families means that August promises to be full of surprises. Already we have received a 'Toby Jug' collection, a retro smokers stand and a collection of 'red' glass that includes: bowls, sweet dishes, glasses, vases and jugs.

Our Volunteers need a special thankyou for their enormous amount of hours and goodwill work spent helping to prepare for every third Friday of the month. And we use another Ten Volunteers on sale weekends. Thank you Collectibles Team.

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

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

Linda Salamy and Rae Anderson (Collectibles Co-Ordinators)

Mobile: 0413 888 884

Pastoral Connections

TRAVELING THROUGH TIME AT ST. LUKE'S

August 2023 is the month when we will celebrate 40 years since the building of our current Worship centre. A centre in which we offer a spiritual space where people can gather to praise and worship God, and in faith, step back into the community offering support and help.

Christian worship in Highton dates back to 1853 when the first Wesleyan church services/prayer meetings were held in the homes of early settlers. In 1854, the foundation stone of the first brick church was laid and services commenced by early 1855. The present-day Chapel was built in 1868 from Ceres sandstone which was carted by dray, for free, to the site by local farmers. At around 1873 a stone Sunday school followed, partly funded by potato crops grown in the grounds, as well as the sale of trees and firewood. It is recorded that Wesleyan tea meetings in these buildings were a highlight for the local community.



Post WW1 the Lane Memorial Hall was built and it was only a few years later that a tornado swept through Highton on 22nd July 1926 demolishing the chapel bell tower. St. John's Highton also suffered damage and both churches conducted services in Lane Memorial until their damaged churches were rebuilt.

Time moved on and young families began to move into the Highton area. To accommodate a growing need the Highton Methodist Kinder was built in 1964, followed in the next year by the church hall with both buildings being used by the Kinder as numbers increased.

Highton Methodist and Highton Presbyterian churches began formal co-operation in 1972, adopting the name St. Luke's in 1974. With the advent of the Uniting church in 1977, the two congregations worked together and shared facilities, and as numbers continued to grow it was decided to consolidate onto the larger Barrabool Road property and to construct a new worship space.

The 'first sod' was turned in January 1983 and the dedication of the new church and furnishings took place on 7th August, 1983. The final cost of the worship centre, vestry, church office, toilet, carpark and modifications to the fellowship room, foyer and kitchen amounted to \$272,000. Amazing when you think what it would cost to build a similar complex today.

In the late 1980's, 90's and through to the early 2000's, St. Luke's was a very busy place, with 650 names on the Church roll and 160 children enrolled in Sunday School. There were two services plus a youth service in the evening. Outreach occurred through: prayer breakfasts, prison visitation, Christian Education in schools, Singles group, mini Expos, fundraising musicals presented by the SS children, Parish Fairs and even cooking classes for men.

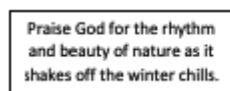
Major concerns at the time were: unemployment figures of 11%, needy families in the area leading to the setting up of an Emergency Food pantry, refugee families who were arriving into the area from Laos/Cambodia, Northern Thailand, (Karenis), South Sudan and other troubled areas.

Today we have much the same concerns, and like then, St. Luke's has rallied to support families in crisis, welcomed newcomer families from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries, supporting them with emergency household goods and ongoing pastoral support through the work of Shaghek our Community Ministry Worker – Refugee Support.

Today like the saints before us, we the congregation of St. Luke's faithfully serve our God and community, placing into His hands our future and in faith and hope we continue to serve Him wherever He calls us.

Pam Seller

Acknowledgement: Some information was taken from Steadfast through Change.



PRAYER POINTS.



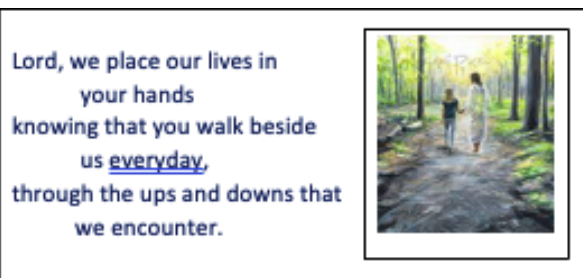
Praise and Thanksgiving

- Praise and thanks for the positive outreach of so many people at St. Luke's. Those 'working' on environment projects, the Collectables, the sewing classes, pastoral outreach, repair café, midweek service, Men's Shed, Uniting and refugee ministry outreach..
- 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 out to Des Younghusband who has worked at Uniting and continues in a support role in North Geelong and for the many others who volunteer in various areas.

- Praise and thanks for Shaghek and all people who support new arrivals to our country, our state and our city. May they be blessed in the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference.
- We thank you Lord for the life and witness of those who have gone before us. Those we know and those we don't.
- Give thanks for celebrations of new life, special birthdays and occasions, and the unsung, quiet achievements of many.

General Prayers

- Pray for Rev. Paul and the worship team as they prepare weekly services and plan ahead for special events. We ask God's blessing on all ministers in placement and those relieving or in a supportive role for congregations.
- Pray for all those members of our congregation who are unwell, recovering from operations, or waiting for test results. We think especially of Noel, Lyn, Bob, Peter, Lily, Graham, Ian, Viola and others close to you. May they know and feel God's peace and strength for their journey ahead. We pray especially for the family of Katie Cockayne. Katie passed away on Monday 31st.
- Continue to pray for all who are frightened, coping with mental anxiety, homeless, family violence, or struggling with household budgets. May there be avenues of support to help them through these difficult times.
- Loving God, protect those in war torn countries who have no option of escape or shelter. Pray for the children displaced by civil unrest, loss of family contact and support.
- Prayer for peace in the world and our city where the nightly news is filled with shootings, robberies, and bashings. Pray that there will be ways to connect with, and support young people involved in these activities. We pray for the law enforcement officers tasked with confronting these situations.



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

INVITATION

Sunday 10 September

Pastoral Connections invite you to a **B.Y.O brunch to share** on Sunday 10th September, 11.30am following worship and morning tea.

Family names beginning with -

A to M please bring savoury

N to Z please bring sweet.

All ages welcome.

Over the next few weeks, you will receive an invitation to join us.

If by chance your invitation doesn't arrive on time, please come along and celebrate as we join together as a faith community.

ALSO

We will reflect on the building and opening of the St. Luke's worship centre 40 years ago on August 7th. If you have pictures or memorabilia of the building, opening or celebrations surrounding that time please bring them along on the morning to be displayed.