

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

February 2024



An Easter Reflection

Easter Sunday and the season of Lent are early this year. Ash Wednesday falls on February 16th.

Once the seasons of the Christian year meant something to most people in the community whether people were observant Christians or not. But these days except for Easter and Christmas many in the community have no concept of the Christian year.

Faith has become seen as a private affair ... not part of the public life of the general community ... something one does in a place of worship or in the privacy of one's home. Faith is not seen to have anything to do with everyday life. It is also something that is seen as being practised by a disappearing minority. A person living in Australia in the early 1960s ... the high point of church attendance in this land ... would not have thought this was possible. Christian faith as a private affair is completely at odds with the actual message of the Gospel.

The good news of Jesus is about God in the everyday as much as the high points of praise and worship. As the words of John 3:16 remind us: "God so loved the world..."

God who meets us in the whole of our living, not just Sunday morning. God is present in the moments of grace and love, hope and joy along with the times of difficulty and suffering that mark our daily routines.

The Celtic Christians help us with this with earthy prayers focused around God in the

everyday.

Here is a prayer attributed to the Irish Saint, St Bridget of Kildare:

*I arise today
through a mighty strength:
God's power to guide me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's eyes to watch over me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to give me speech,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to shelter me,
God's host to secure me.*

Source: [celtic – A Collection of Prayers](#)

During the season of Lent ... a time for spiritual renewal ... maybe a challenge for us is to focus on the blessing that comes from recognising God in all aspects of life ... in the everyday.

Paul Stephens

Minister in Placement

Image: Unspoken Elements <https://www.unspokenelements.com/blogs/hope/the-celtic-cross>

Coming Up

Services:

Sunday 11/2	9.30am	Sunday Service: Transfiguration (Paul)
Wed 14/2	7 pm	Ash Wednesday (Paul)
Sunday 18/2	9.30am	Sunday Service (Holy Communion)
Sunday 18/2	6:30pm	House Church @ home of David and Carol Manks
Sunday 25/2	9:30am	Sunday Service: Rev Bruce Waldron
Sunday 3/3	9:30am	Commissioning of Shaghek Qassabyan as Non-placement Pastor followed by a special morning tea.
Sunday 17/3	9:30am	Following worship: Annual General Meeting of the Congregation
Thursday 28/3		Special Maundy Thursday service

Paul will be (effectively) on long service leave from the 20th of April until Tuesday 25th June.
Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte will be offering Supply Ministry during this time.

Activities:

Friday 16/2	12pm - 2pm	Sewing group
Wed 14/2	7:30pm	Seekers (Lenten focus)
Friday 16/2	12pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Saturday 17/2	9am - lunch	Collectibles
Wednesday 6/3	1:30pm	Coffee & Chat

Council News

Meeting held Jan 15, 2024

- Church Admin role has been advertised around Geelong Churches;
- Meeting with Linley Liersch re consideration of future directions for Geelong Churches to be followed up;
- Shaghek's new role status to be confirmed;
- Cleaning contract to be canceled and new processes implemented;
- Application to Centrelink for Church volunteer registration being followed up
- Church Annual Meeting date decided (17/3)

Congregation News

St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

During January, the Collectibles Team has been busy stock-taking, refreshing and expanding with a new variety of collections.

Our first opening for this year is on: **Friday, Feb 16, 12 noon - 4.30pm.**
Sat, Feb 17, 9am -lunch time.

Since our last newsletter, you will be interested to know about our activities.

1. December sales were large. Christmas shoppers joyfully shopped knowing all proceeds benefit refugee families.
2. Our cutlery team has met and sorted the cutlery and kitchen aids.
3. Our sorting team meet each Wednesday.
4. Silverware cleaning is always working.
5. Kind Helen and John surprised the Wednesday team with a platter of Devonshire Tea.
6. The Chapel Room (Refugee supplies) continues to be restocked and tidied weekly.
7. The Chapel received a lovely crystal cabinet for display purposes.
8. Men's shed are making a specially tiered cabinet to display large pottery and books.

The **Lane Memorial Meeting Room** (adjacent to the Chapel): Shortage of space means that Collectibles will continue to us the Lane Memorial on sale days.

Potted Garden Sales: We have a number of mature Camellia trees, plus many flowering pots and succulents for sale. Can you help us water once a week during summer?

2024 promises to be another good year. Already we have group bookings for morning tea and Chapel tours with a sharing of our 'Ministry to Refugees' story.

We extend an open invitation to you and your family, and friends come and visit the Chapel Collectibles on our open days. Your visit helps us to continue to spread the word about our ministry to newcomers.

Linda Salamy and Rae Anderson (Collectibles Co-Ordinators)

Mobile: 0413 888 884



Family Traditions through Generations

During a recent church service, we were invited to discuss with one another, family traditions, handed down through the ages. Family traditions vary for everyone on Christmas Day and Boxing Day – where families meet, who generally caters, types of food, gift giving, visiting friends, and of course always trying to be inclusive while considering 'in-laws' and others who celebrate alone.

For me, one true story emerged: Kathryn James' large family always meet on Boxing Day for their traditional BBQ. 'Well, that's not too different a tradition', I might hear you think. The 'punch line' comes when you know that this year over catering was their dilemma.

One of Kathryn's sons suggested that they hold an auction to auction off the leftover meat (still packaged). Through this inspiring idea, Kathryn's family raised \$120.00, after which the whole family agreed that monies raised go towards St Luke's Refugee Ministry Fund.

Thank you Kathryn for your amazing family and for your family tradition.

Rae Anderson (St Luke's Refugee Ministry)





Collectibles Sale

An eclectic range of china, crystal, glassware, lamps, mirrors, pictures, kitchenware, vintage & retro pieces, knick-knacks, furniture and more.

Come and browse you never know what you might find!

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry

2024

Feb 16th & 17th
March 15th & 16th
April 19th & 20th
May 17th & 18th
June 21st & 22nd
July 19th & 20th

August 16th & 17th
Sept 20th & 21st
Oct 18th & 19th
Nov 15th & 16th
Dec 6th & 7th

Friday 12—4pm Saturday 9am—12noon
Cnr Barrabool & Scenic Roads, Highton

No Need for a Lawn Mowing Roster!

Before and after worship on Sunday's, usually somebody makes positive comments on the way our church lawns are being kept. Of course, some people never stop to think about 'lawn mowing' and whipper-snipping lawn edges.

So, it's timely to tell the story about an amazing man who spends up to 4 hours weekly taking care of our church lawns.

Hagop Najarian and his family from Aleppo in Syria are living in our Roslyn Road Church Manse. Through a negotiated rental agreement, Hagop has taken responsibility for the upkeep of our church lawns. He is a qualified Fitter & Turner and is currently working for a large engineering company in North Geelong. His wife, Ani, is studying to become an Immigration Agent and works at Cultura (Diversitat). They have two children. Viken, starts school this year and Kevin who attends ChildCare. Hagop and his family attend Messy Church. Hagop's latest news is that his parents, brother and sister arrived in Australia from Lebanon just before Christmas. His whole family attended our Christmas Eve service.



So, take some time to enjoy our lawns, and give thanks for Hagop and his family, who have happily settled into Highton and who want to help make a difference here at St Luke's.

Rae Anderson (Member – St Luke's, Highton)

St Luke's Trading Table



*St Luke's Trading
Table*
Supports War
on
Plastic Bags

'Hats Off' to the following wise 'shoppers' who support the war on plastic bags by bringing their own re-useable shopping bags to our Trading Table: Lesley Gunning, Jean Williams, Jean Daw, Alison Lyons, Linda Salamy, Claire Zeigler, Glenis Stewart, and Jenny Pooley. (Can I add your name to this growing list?)

Shoppers will note that we now stock and use paper bags and small boxes for customers to carry home their purchases.

Today's Trading Table

Today we will focus on a Winter Games Table ... take you time to look at the wide selection of indoor games, they may bring back memories of playing games with family and friends, when sitting by the open fire, drinking hot chocolate and keeping 'tally' of the scores!



Thank you Joan and Doug

Every year the Jacksons kindly offer the fruit off their Plum Tree, helping to raise funds for St Luke's. Over the past few weeks, buckets of plums have been picked and many of our church folk are grateful when buying these delicious fresh plums. Thank you Joan and Doug, and thank you to the many 'buyers' who turned the plums into jam or simply enjoyed eating them fresh or stewed.

Pastoral Connections

2024 Update

February heralds the beginning of activities for the year and our Pastoral Connections team look forward to welcoming you to any of the groups or activities listed below. Our team includes Joy Hicks, Carole Findlay, Shaghek Qassabyan, Barbara Cox, Valerie Grills, Judy Clark, Paul Stephens, Barbara Murphy, and Pam Seller.

The primary focus of the Pastoral Connects team is to offer friendship and support to the members of the congregation, their families, and the community by way of prayer, visits, phone calls, follow up contact and offering opportunities for fellowship. Some of our main activities are listed below.

Prayer: The Prayer Link is an important part of the Pastoral Connections ministry. Prayers are regularly received from congregation members and are forwarded to a faithful group of 18-20 ladies and men who receive the prayer/prayers and faithfully pray for the concern or joy shared. All prayers are confidential and names are only shared with the permission of the person concerned. General prayer points also appear in the monthly church newsletter, to be used as a base for your personal reflection in the privacy of your home.

Co-ordinator: Pam – 0407 557 933

Coffee and Chat: On the 1st Wednesday of each month (except in January) a group of 10 – 15 ladies and gentlemen meet at the 'Rolling Pin' café in South Geelong which is located in Faggs hardware building. This is an opportunity to share news, catch up on news, meet new friends, enjoy a coffee and a delicious cake all in a relaxed, casual atmosphere. Everyone is welcome. The first gathering for 2024 is on Wednesday 7th February.

Co-ordinator: Barbara – 0409 037 190

Newcomer Support: This is an outreach to new families moving into the Geelong area from overseas. The co-ordinator of this outreach works closely with Mission Outreach who welcome new families and support them with household goods. The Pastoral focus is on supporting these families with practical things like translation in a hospital situation, with legal documentation and helping to find a property to rent until a permanent home is found. The co-ordinator of this group also facilitates a sewing group where ladies can meet to make items for their homes or children and to catch up with one another to share news over afternoon tea. Group meets every second Friday during school term at 12.30.

Co-ordinator: Shaghek – 0404 328 233

Midweek worship: This service is held on the second Thursday of each month (except in January) at 1.30pm in the church sanctuary and is followed by a time of fellowship over afternoon tea, communion is served every two months. The service is available for anyone who may not be able to attend Sunday worship or finds this a more convenient time to join in worship. Special birthdays are celebrated. Other special events include Pancakes, Devonshire tea and a Christmas High Tea. The first service in 2024 is on Thurs 8th Feb.

Co-ordinator: Pam – 0407 557 933

Home Communion: This short prayerful service is conducted in private homes, nursing homes or hospitals, and is led by Rev. Paul with the help of a support person. Paul prepares an Order of Service which enables the participation of those present and can be used for reflection following the service. To enquire about a home communion contact Rev Paul on 0417 152 009 or Pam on 0407 557 933.

The Pastoral connections team welcomes new members. Please contact Pam for info.

Prayer Points

Praise and Thanksgiving

1. Praise God for the many blessings that we received during 2023. Even though it was a difficult year for some, God continues to walk beside each of us. Grant us your strength and peace in 2024 Lord.
2. Blessings for all the students who return to their studies this month and to those who will begin new adventures at work or university. Give each of them courage to step out and to chase their dreams.
3. We are forever thankful, Lord, that you are part of our lives. Use us to bring your kingdom to the here and now and make clear our path as we follow in your footsteps.
4. We celebrate the blessing that we live in a peaceful country where we are free to worship and share our beliefs, feelings, and concerns openly.
5. We give praise and thanks for our 'front line' workers in hospitals and nursing homes who continue to give compassion and love. May they know and feel that they are appreciated and supported by our prayers.

General Prayers

1. We pray for those families who are still being impacted by COVID, and for those who are caring for family and people in our community who are unwell. Grant them time and strength to be there when needed.
2. We pray for healing in our world as natural disasters impact various regions such as fire, flood, and storms. Help us to be conscious of climate changes and make us aware of ways in which we can help repair our earth by recycling, using our cars less, planting native plants and creating safe homes for birds and animals.
3. Our prayer is for peace and safety in those countries impacted by war. May there be strong leaders to unify countries and to support supply lines for aid to be delivered to those suffering illness and hardship.
4. We think at this time of those who are unwell and of those in hospital or undergoing tests. Continued prayer for all who are seeking treatment and are in need extra care. We also pray for the carers we know of who are supporting friends, partners or family members who are most in need.
5. Our special prayer is that, as we return to regular activities and our many small groups recommence after the break. That those wanting to join can feel included and safe in our outreach to one another and into the community.

All prayer requests are confidential, names are mentioned only when specifically requested.

May You walk down the road with me today.
May You shower my path with Your many blessings.
May You keep me from danger.
May Your light keep me from the darkness
surrounding me.
May You give me grace and peace and strength for the
day.
May You give me someone to bless as You have
blessed me.
May You be there, waiting for me. at the end of the
day, with a good word to calm my spirit as I rest in
Your ever-loving arms Lord. AMEN

Presbytery and Synod News

From Grovedale, news that they are holding an **Ash Wednesday service** on February 14 at 7:30pm.

**Uniting Church in Australia**
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Belmont Congregation
Presbytery of Port Phillip West
PO Box 480 BELMONT Vic 3216
Phone: 5243 4756
Email: glengceel@yahoo.com.au

SYNOD has a growing suite of resources for ministers, lay leaders and congregations to encourage people to worship and pray together as a gathered community or at home during Lent and Easter. The link is <https://victas.uca.org.au/weekly-worship/>.

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
February 18 Lent 1	Gn 9:8-17	Ps 25:1-10	1 Pt 3:18-22	Mk 1:9-15
February 25 Lent 2	Gn 17:1-7,15-16	Ps 22:23-31	Rom 4:13-25	Mk 8:31-38
March 3 Lent 3	Ex 20:1-17	Ps 19	1 Cor 1:18-25	Jn 2:13-22
March 10 Lent 4	Nm 21:4-9	Ps 107:1-3,17-22	Eph 2:1-10	Jn 3:14-21