

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton



June 2024



PETER'S PEN

Many years ago when I was at Boarding School in Geelong I had a silly argument with one of our junior masters who was studying architecture. He argued that we all long for a place to call 'home' and being a teenager whose family had moved every five years or so, I had very little sense of a place I called home and told him so.

However, I take a very different view today. I think 'place' is very important for us. My grandmother came out to Australia in 1906 when she was nine years old, but all through her life she remained in touch with her cousins in Scotland and I remember her constantly speaking about bonny Scotland, the place she clearly regarded as home. Along with a lilting Scottish accent (which she kept throughout her ninety plus years) her connection with Scotland played an important role in her sense of identity.

As a little boy growing up outside Ballarat I was enrolled to learn Scottish Highland Dancing and remember regularly singing Scottish Folk songs. My parents gave me my middle name in memory of my Father's mother who was a 'Macbeth' and when I was young I admit that I found it a bit embarrassing. I often just wrote Peter M. and when I was asked what the M stood for I asked people to guess. None of them ever got the name and didn't believe me when I told them. However, when I went to study Divinity in Scotland all that changed. There was something about being in that place that affirmed my sense of identity, that helped me to own my heritage. What's significant is that I also had the same sense of connectedness, of homecoming, when I first went to Jerusalem – it all felt so familiar, so much a part of me, because I had read so much about it and grown up with the stories of the Bible.

The scriptures also speak about the importance of place. The story of God calling Abraham is woven through with the promise of a land to call home, and that is further emphasised by the account of the Exodus where Moses led his people from slavery to the Promised Land – a place to call home. One of the great dreams and hopes we find in the Prophets is that this place would

be a place of safety, welcome, and fruitfulness. Micah for example, following Isaiah, speaks about nations beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks to work co-operatively together in a reversal of Babel, so that everyone might live in peace, sit under the own vines and fig trees and enjoy the fruit of their labour. It's a picture of harmony, a powerful image we need to affirm in the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. Psalm 133 which says, "How good and how pleasant it is when people live in harmony", carries God's longing for peace in our world where everyone can feel secure and 'at home'.

However there is also another perspective offered at the same time, that the life of faith is a journey we make together with God. One of the ground-breaking insights of Jewish faith was that God was not bound by place but was rather the Creator of all and present wherever we travel. This was symbolised during the Exodus when the stone tablets of the commandments were carried in the ark of the Covenant as though God was travelling with them – guiding them by a cloud during the day and fire during the night. It's this metaphor that the early church picked up when it spoke about our ultimate home being in God, emphasising the importance of that primary relationship with have with God. In the foundational document of our church we read, 'The church is a pilgrim people, always on the way toward a promised goal; here the church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way.'

Yes place and nationality, along with language and culture, play an important part in forming our sense of identity, but prior to any of these things it is the faith, hope and love of God who claims us and calls us to live beyond ourselves that mark our lives as distinctive. We find ourselves by acting in love and service, in justice and compassion, in worship and witness.

Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte

*Image: Journey of the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia on Flickr
https://www.flickr.com/photos/prof_richard/10595121045*

Coming Up

Services:

Sunday 9/6	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev Peter Gador-Whyte.
Thurs 13/6	1:30pm	Mid-week service.
Sunday 16/6	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev Peter Gador-Whyte

Activities:

Wed 12/6	7:30pm	Seekers
Friday 21/6	12pm - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday 21/6	12pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Sat 22/6	9am - lunch	Collectibles
Wed 3/7	1:30pm	Coffee & Chat

Congregation News

Environment Group

Do you know?

The **Uniting Church in Australia Assembly** has a **National Climate Action Plan** – published in 2021.

UCA National Climate Action Plan

Vision: “We seek the flourishing of the whole of God’s Creation and all its creatures. We act to renew the Earth from the damage done and stand in solidarity with people most impacted by human-induced climate change. Government, churches, businesses and the wider community work together for a sustainable future.

Acting to make this vision a reality, we will work with all parts of the Uniting Church to **reduce emissions by 5% per annum and aim to become a net zero emissions church by 2040.**”

Action Plan: The Uniting Church is a member of the Pacific Conference of Churches with whom we will work closely in implementing this plan. Aligning our strategies with the Churches of the Pacific, we have identified three main areas of Focus to achieve our vision, Prophetic, Practical and Pastoral. These areas of focus are supported by achievable actions to be implemented over the next five years.

1. Prophetic: Raising our voice for stronger action.

We will speak with a prophetic voice, advocating to government and the church to bring about practical and just climate action. This includes the development and dissemination of theological and educational resources that place care for creation in its spiritual and theological context.

2. Practical: Walking the Talk through Emissions Reduction and Adaptation Responses.

We will walk the talk on climate action through emissions reduction and adaptation responses associated with our own Assembly operations and call on all parts of the church to join us in this endeavour. This will allow us to begin to restore our broken relationship with creation and be a credible voice for climate justice nationally and internationally. To support this, we will follow a ‘four pillars of decarbonisation’ approach as described by ClimateWorks in *Pathways to Deep Decarbonisation in 2050*.

Four Pillars of Decarbonation (ClimateWorks et al 2014):

- Use energy more efficiently.
- Produce low carbon electricity.
- Switch to Electricity and cleaner fuels.
- Non-Energy emissions.

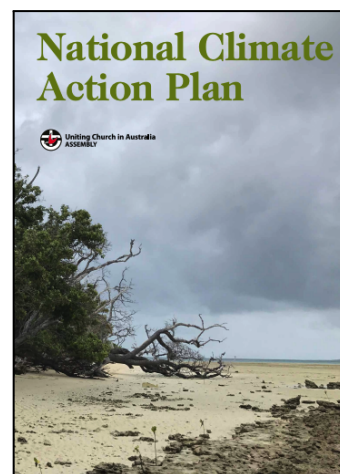
3. Pastoral: Walking alongside those most impacted.

We will prioritise pastoral care for those within the community who are most affected by the impacts of climate change.

The Assembly document can be found at:

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Assembly-National-Climate-Action-Plan.pdf>

Claire Zeigler St Lukes Environment Group.



St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

Our next opening is on the 3rd. Friday and Sat in June:

Friday 21st. June between 12 noon and 4.30pm; Sat 22nd. June between 9am and 12 noon.

In May, many amazing things happened in the life of Collectibles. Here they are:

- We welcomed to our Team: Sheila, Carolyn, Lucy, and Megan.
- Thank you to the ladies from Wesley Uniting Church, who have supported us with donations.
- We provided material aid to 2 unfurnished homes. Kitchenware, linen, lounge furnishings, electrical whitegoods, televisions, beds, and furniture.
- Locally, this year we have supported over 108 families with material aid.
- Men's Shed provided shelving for our much needed storage in the church garage.
- We now manage clothing donations by sending them to the Norlane Op Shop. (Norlane, deemed by Government to be a 'Disadvantage region').
- Thanks to the Men's Shed, the driveway for drive-through donations has been concreted (in time for Winter). Wednesday mornings are set aside for donation deliveries.
- Ongoing thanks for Shaghek Qassabyan's ministry amongst newcomer families. Shaghek is St Luke's Community Ministry Non-Placement Pastor.
- The Chapel Room is now under care, with Jeannine constantly restocking for needy families.
- In May, we raised \$6,780.00 to support the Refugee Ministry Fund.



Hands Up for action:

Some times the Chapel Room runs desperately short of some basic 'stuff'. Kindly tell your family or neighbours that we are short of hand towels, tea towels, face washers, and soup bowls.

Thank you to Katherine, who has taken home a box full of crumpled up doilies for laundry/ironing. People collect doilies, and these will be ready for the opening in June.

Are you a Collector? Our large assortment of collectible items provides much viewing pleasure. Bring in some photos of your collection to show our Team. If you don't collect, then come and feel stirred with loads of memorabilia that you will recognise from Grandma's era.

Our Collections include: Royal Albert porcelain, Australian pottery, Stuart Crystal, Limoges porcelain, original works of Art, dinner sets, kitchen trays, kitchen chopping boards. Recently included collections from Ireland, Scotland, Australia, and The Netherlands promote interest and family stories.



Donations – decluttering, downsizing..... The Chapel is open to receive donated items every Wednesday morning between 9.30 and 11.30am. We accept household items from kitchen cupboards, linen, bedding, blankets, doonas, cushions, lamps. The list is endless.

Linda Salamy and Rae Anderson – Collectibles Co-Ordinator. Mobile: 0413 888 884

May Reflections from Pastoral Connections

The Spirit of Pentecost

The Spirit of Pentecost shone brightly on May 19th when approx. 300 fellow Christians from 11 Uniting churches (and a representation from the Salvation Army,) met at The Dome, on the top floor of the Geelong Library, to participate in a combined Pentecost Presbytery service. St Luke's was represented by 26 members who joined in the celebration.



Each participating church accepted the responsibility to organise part of the service. Some provided music, some prayer, another a puppet show, the reflections and the serving of communion, with each group presenting their message according to their respective gifts, reflecting that first encounter with the Holy Spirit when the disciples each shared Jesus teachings, in the gift of many languages.

St. Luke's volunteered to take up the offering, providing the music used during the offering and the prayer of dedication. Thanks to Noel and Nola, Lyn and Max, Jenny and Noel, and Mark for their support and help in conducting these tasks.

As the service concluded we were invited to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit just as recorded in the Acts 2: vs 1 – 2, and to go out from that space to share the good news of the gospel with those we meet.

Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, come and set our
 hearts on fire, with your compassion and power.
 Fill our hearts with Your wisdom, love and peace.
 Empower us to live out our faith today,
 and every day. Amen

Reflection by Pam Seller

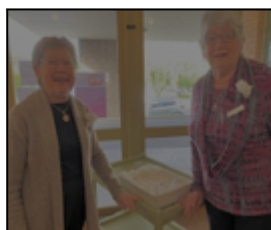
Coffee and Chat

During the colder months we are relocating to the cosy café BRIOCHE, 175 West Fyans St, Newtown. Time changed to 2pm. Next meeting Wednesday June 5th at 2pm. Then on July 3rd.

We hope to see our usual friendly crowd and maybe a few new faces. To assist Kylie arranging tables can you please RSVP to either: Barbara 0409 037 190 or Pam 0407 557 933

NOTE – change of venue and time and need to RSVP.

Mother's Day



In the May newsletter, I mentioned some of the traditions associated with Mother's Day, along with what our St. Luke's Pastoral Connections tradition has been. On Sunday May 12th Joy Hicks arrived with her box of 'flowers' all hand made by Joy and Jenny Patchett. Each person was offered the opportunity to wear a flower as a symbol of love, respect, and remembrance for their own mothers, and those who are still part of our lives and whose memories we hold precious in our hearts. Thank you, Joy and Jenny.

Pictured is Barbara Cox receiving her flower from Joy.

Sammy Stamp

On a pleasant Tuesday afternoon 4 of us met with Jen Verwoert for lunch at Brioche Café in Fyans Street, on the pretext of delivering the St. Luke's donation of Sammy Stamps, however there was much news to be shared, which in the end soon became the main focus. Over 1000 stamps had been donated and will be a welcome addition to those being processed and prepared for sale in Melbourne to raise money, in support of many Uniting Church outreach programs throughout Australia. Thank you to everyone who saves their used stamp to be used in this way. Jen was a children's leader at St. Luke's for many years before moving to Melbourne and attends Trinity Uniting Church Brighton, the contact point for Sammy Stamp.

INVITATION.

SUNDAY JUNE 16th COMMENCING 11.30am

following worship and morning tea.

You are invited by Pastoral Connections, to share in a

FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON.

Soup will be provided, please bring a plate of slice/cake to share.

In support of the homeless, you may like to bring an item of non-perishable food or make a donation, towards food or fuel vouchers.

If your personal invitation hasn't arrived as yet please contact Pam on 0407 557 933 to register your attendance.

Prayer Points

Below are prayer suggestions for you to reflect on during your quiet time.

Praise points

1. We give thanks for the good work being done locally to support refugees and the Qld flood victims.
2. Farmers offering truckloads of hay for stock, BlazeAid mending fences, Doctors offering their services in rural areas and so much more.
3. Give thanks for the life and witness of Ray Ballagh, who passed away on 17th May.
4. Praise God for the medical facilities and specialists that are available to us here in Geelong.
5. Thankyou Lord for those people in the congregation who offer their services in so many ways. Doing the little things that not many people know about. May they be blessed with good health and the will to continue to volunteer and be available.
6. Offer praise the Lord that the Biloela family will be returning 'home' to the arms of those who have fought so hard for them. May they once again know peace and security as their case is processed. We pray for other families in the same situation who continue to live with uncertainty.
7. We marvel at the wonders of nature. The rainbows, the showers and the sunshine, the beauty of the colours of autumn, and the special joy of sharing a coffee or hot soup with friends.

Prayer points

1. Of late our prayers are again focused on a mass shooting in Texas. So many innocent lives snatched away. There are no words that can ease the pain of parents and loved ones at this loss.
2. We pray for our newly elected government, that they will show compassion, and that honest and inclusive dialogue will occur around climate change and international relations. We also pray that our politician's will keep the best interests of all people and our country uppermost in their discussions and negotiations.
3. We pray for truth and justice for those people who no longer feel they have a 'voice' in their own country. We ask that anyone seeking refuge in our country will be supported and feel safe.
4. We hold in our hearts and prayers those we know, and those we don't know, who are unwell, or requiring ongoing treatment. We think of all people heading off on holidays after the lifting of restrictions, may they travel safely.
5. Our heartfelt prayers are for the people of Ukraine who are deeply impacted by the ongoing fighting. We think of their families now scattered across so many countries. Lord, we pray for an end to this battle and we think of those who have been lost. May dialogue begin in pursuit of peace.

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

OUR PRAYER FOCUS FOR THIS MONTH.
PENTECOST.

Lord, we thank you for the transforming work of your Holy Spirit in our lives, and through our lives, toward others. We thank you that you have given us the boldness to proclaim the Gospel through our lives. Remind us how to use your power to do the work you have given us.

Amen.



Council Notes

Council met on Wednesday, June 5 with Steve S, Shaghek Q, Geoff B and myself in attendance. Issues discussed included:

- Barrabool Rd manse sale form approved and signed;
- Church rolls updated;
- Cancellation of current cleaning contract, one of Shaghek's people is taking over;
- Security lighting has been rectified;
- Key security - key holders will be contacted to update security;
- Church insurance renewed (despite significant increase in premiums);
- Appointment of Church auditors and updating of bank account signatories;
- Process for selection and appointment of new minister after Paul's retirement discussed.
- With several current members having retired due to illness, Council resolved to approach congregation about the need to maintain Council numbers to ensure viability.

Wider Church News

National Update (5 - 11 June 2024)

Pray that the 250 UCA members drawn from all regions who will be attending the [17th Assembly of the UCA](#) between 11 - 16 July in Parramatta will be guided in discerning the future directions of UCA.

[Welcoming new calls for a Human Rights Act:](#)

The Uniting Church Assembly was proud to be among more than 100 organisations welcoming the call for a national Human Rights Act following the recommendations of a [new report](#) tabled in Parliament. The Assembly has advocated for a holistic approach to human rights for almost two decades.

Action stations on the **Act2 Report**: *Act2: The Gift of the Spirit*, the Act2 report to the 17th Assembly, has now been released to Assembly members and the wider Uniting Church as a [PDF](#) and a [website](#). Read about the significance of the work, the shape of the report and an overview of what's proposed in this article originally published in [Crosslight](#).



The Preamble: 15 years on: An exciting Conference to mark the 15th anniversary of the Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution will be held from 8-9 July. Adopted at the 12th Assembly in 2009, the Preamble includes the significant affirmation that "The First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land..." The conference will explore what the Preamble means for the faith of the Uniting Church today. You can join this online. [Download the flyer](#) and [register here](#).



A gathering of Spirit and Unity: Geelong Library in Victoria was the spectacular venue for a combined service on Pentecost Sunday, uniting diverse UCA congregations under one roof and mirroring an ancient gathering that once took place in an upper room long ago. Read more from Rev Will Nicholas, minister at St David's Uniting Church in Newtown Victoria. Will has a comprehensive reflection on the event on the St David's website (see link above).



Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
June 9 Pentecost 3	1 Sam 8:4-11	Ps 138	2 Cor 4:13-5:1	Mk 3:20-35
June 16 Pentecost 4	1 Sam 15:34-16:13	Ps 20	2 Cor 5:6-10, 14-17	Mk 4:26-34
June 22 UCA Anniversary	2 Chr 30:1-9	Ps 127	Eph 2:19-22	Jn 17:1-11
June 23 Pentecost 5	1 Sam 17:32-49	Ps 9:9-20	2 Cor 6:1-13	Mk 4:35-41
June 30 Pentecost 6	2 Sam 1:1, 17-27	Ps 130	2 Cor 8:7-15	Mk 5:21-43
July 7 Pentecost 7	2 Sam 5:1-5, 9-10	Ps 48	2 Cor 12:2-10	Mk 6:1-13