

# *Monthly update*

## *The Uniting Church in Australia*

### **St Luke's Congregation, Highton**

July 2024

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### **Being Pilgrims**

While our recent long holiday had elements of an adventure and a time of relaxation, it also had a faith dimension. Here are some my faith related reflections on our travels in the United Kingdom, the Irish Republic, Croatia and Italy.

#### **People**

We enjoyed listening to and learning from the many people we met on our travels. And for whatever reason sometimes we found ourselves with the privilege of listening to people sharing at some depth. The ex-publican in Cornwall, for example, who told us with tears in his eyes about how he saved his son from certain drowning; and how they were both eventually saved through the selfless efforts of the Port Isaac lifeboat crew. Then there were the people in the village in Croatia where we stayed, who shared with us some of their grief following the tragic death of a young person. These and many other experiences reminded us that we are all made in the image of God, and we all need to be heard when things are tough.

#### **Faith was still part of the language**

In all the places we went, whether people were believers or not, we discovered that matters of faith was still part of daily life and remain part of daily conversations. This was highlighted for us in Croatia where the government is overturning laws from its communist past. Laws have been recently pasted to end shops being open 24/7 and requiring many shops to be closed on Sundays ... to give a day of rest for people. This seemed so different to our experience here in Australia where matters of faith do not easily arise in daily conversation ... and the church seems only ever to be discussed negatively in the media.

#### **Saints**

We found ourselves in each place we visited rubbing up against the valuing of different particular saints. In Cornwall it was St Piran who is the patron saint of tin miners. In Ireland it

was, of course, Saint Patrick. In the part of Croatia we visited, it was Saint Blaise who is venerated because he is credited with saving Dubrovnik from invasion by the Venetians around a thousand years ago. And finally, we spent a week riding around the area of Italy called Umbria with our ride beginning and ending in the medieval town of Assisi. There, of course, the focus was on Saint Francis but also Saint Clare. We were moved to see one of Francis' robes (see right) which reflected his commitment to a simple life. It was quite interesting to think how Francis had rejected wealth and a role in his father's fabric business as we wandered a few days later around the streets of Florence ... the home of such companies as Gucci and Ferragamo.



### **Prayer and connection with the Psalm**

We found it hard to go to a normal Sunday worship service on our travels, but we visited many, many churches ... sometimes only to briefly get a sense of these often-ancient places of worship and prayer. Sometimes these were large cathedrals, but other times small village churches. Sometimes these churches were filled with visitors and other times hardly anyone was present.

Wherever we went there were opportunities for people to offer prayers in some way or other. In Cornwall we visited a very simple, rather rough and ready church near a well named after St Piran, there was no one there but there were resources for Celtic prayer and prayerful silence ... which we used and took with us. In one quite large church in a small village in Umbria I slipped in for a few minutes ... there was one woman kneeling there, lost in silent prayer. You could be cynical and think that the visitors to some churches were only interested in the architecture, but we saw people taking the opportunity to light prayer candles ... and often there were ranks of candles burning in many of the churches into which we went. People clearly were calling out to God ... longing for God. We saw many people reflecting the words of the writer of **Psalm 130**.

<sup>1</sup> *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lord, hear my voice!*

*Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!*

Inspired by our experiences and the words of the writer of Psalm 130, I penned these words for the call to worship for June 30<sup>th</sup>:

*There is a longing deep within our beings;*

***A longing for genuine hope and abundant life for all.***

*There is a longing deep within our beings;*

***A longing to be accepted and loved for who we are.***

*There is a longing deep within our beings;*

***A longing for a world where peace and justice reign.***

*There is a longing deep within our beings;*

***A longing to which the living God responds.***

*So with the writer of the psalm we say:*

***Our hope is in God!***

***With God there is steadfast love and the power to redeem.***



Let us worship God ... the God who has come amongst us in the person of Jesus and who is present now through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Paul Stephens** (Minister in Placement)

## Coming Up

### Services:

Sunday 14/7	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev	Paul Stephens
Thurs 11/7	1:30pm	Mid-week service.	
Sunday 21/7	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev	Paul Stephens
Sunday 28/7	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev	Paul Stephens

### Activities:

Wed 10/7	7:30pm	Seekers
Friday 19/7	12pm - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday 20/7	12pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Sat 21/7	9am - lunch	Collectibles
Wed 7/8	1:30pm	Coffee & Chat

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## Congregation News

### Environment Group

### Do you know?

#### Environment Groups Combined Efforts

The Environment Groups from St Luke's, Wesley, Western Heights and Belmont have been combining their efforts for greater impact in various activities. We have already joined together for Clean Up Australia Day and will do so again later this year in October. The same has happened with "Seasons of Creation" and that will also happen again this year in September. We are also combining re climate change. You will have noticed above the Recycling Bay, the display showing what the Uniting Church states re climate change and the goals set by the Uniting Church re emissions by 2024. Please have a read if you haven't already. This joining of the 4 environment groups means we can achieve bigger goals in our work.



#### Plastic-Free July

We have mounted a display in the hall with information re plastic and the harm it is doing to us and the environment. Pointers on how we can change our habits; either eliminate, or recycle, or actively campaign and petition to reduce just one more type of plastic packaging from your lifestyle. Then do the same in August. Then September; then October, ..

#### Recycling Bay

There have been a few changes to the Environment Action Group Recycling Bay in the foyer. We now have a carton for collection of medicine blister-packs. For a short introductory period, City of Greater Geelong sponsored Highton Rotary to organise the collection of medicine blister-packs by a number of pharmacies around Geelong for recycling by Pharmacycycle. But to assist you further, there is now also a small collection carton on the Environment Action Group Recycling Bay in the foyer where those who may find it more difficult to travel to one of the above pharmacies may leave their used medicine-blister packs for recycling.

**PCs FOR KIDS** now recycle small items of e-Waste. Instead of going all the way out to the City of Greater Geelong Resource Recovery Centre in Douro St, much of the small electrical and electronic e-Waste put in the e-Waste bin on the Environment Action Group trolley in the foyer is now being taken to PCs for Kids in Newtown. PCs for Kids is a self-funded volunteer charity who, for many years, have repaired and rebuilt computers from donated equipment. Rebuilt computers and laptops are donated, free of charge, to children who do not have access to a suitable computer. The child must be nominated by a relevant support organisation. Maintaining

a stock of computers for children in need is still their primary priority - 89 computers were provided free of charge in 2023. But since 2020, a small computer repair service shop, sale of some refurbished and rebuilt computers from that repair shop, and more focused recycling of high value e-Waste, has meant they have been able to donate additional money to primary schools, enabling activities such as camps to benefit even more children - from 2020 until 2022, 16 schools in the Geelong and Bellarine region received 43 donations, totalling \$104,000. In their e-Waste operations, PCs for Kids accept and dismantle to sell to metals and electronics parts recyclers, many home electrical or electronic appliances up to the size of a typical kitchen microwave unit; all kitchen bench appliances, hair dryers, irons, small portable heaters, remote controls, electronic toys, headphones, vacuum cleaners, clock-radios, TVs and computer monitors, hi-fi and audio equipment, old telephones, workshop equipment, etc.

St Lukes Men's Shed also dismantle some failed electrical appliances and sell the steel, motors, copper, aluminium, and other high value metals. Small items which Men's Shed choose not to dismantle will now be taken to PCs for Kids, for them to recover value from recycling. So please, consider where to take your e-Waste for recycling.

**Claire Zeigler** (St Lukes Environment Group)

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## St Luke's Chapel Collectibles

**June Opening:** What good reason would shoppers need to venture out in such icy cold weather? The answer is verified as we continue to recognise that our Chapel Collectibles is fully charged as a 'credible retail outlet'. People enjoy coming for many reasons. To renew friendships and to chat, to be triggered with long lasting memories as they enjoy a wide range of memorabilia, to talk about their own collections and/or bring their photos, and lastly .... Knowing that all money raised, supports our Ministry to Refugees. We banked \$7,500 for June.

Thank you to the Wednesday team who refreshed the Chapel with new treasures in time for the sale. And to the Thursday 'girls' who displayed a huge quantity of fabrics, sewing aids, sewing machines, together with blankets, cushions and art for sale. The room looked fantastic, resulting in huge sales. Well done Linda, Julie, Shaghek and Carol. We had 6 apologies from our sales team, others stepped up to fill the gaps. Thanks to Anna, Lucy, Marilyn and Andrew.

The new concrete paving between buildings is a welcome sight. Thanks to Men's Shed. This allows 'drive throughs' Wednesday mornings when generous people deliver donations.

**July Opening:** **Friday 19th July, 12 noon - 4pm; Saturday 20th July from 9am till lunchtime.** You are invited. Bring friends. Tell us where you are from. Help share our story.

**Do you know:** That the Refugee Chapel Room stocks: blankets, doonas, bed linen, towels, tea towels, hand towels, mugs, cutlery, glasses, baking trays, saucepans, dinner sets, crockery, tablecloths, and vases. A number of refugee families are welcomed each week, for supplies.

**Do you know:** Every Wednesday, the Wednesday Team are available to receive donations. Simply drive between the Chapel and Men's Shed to off load. We would proudly walk you through the Chapel when you arrive, so we can share the story. We can help: It does become a worry if you are downsizing. Not wanting to 'land fill' .... And not knowing what to do with your treasures is a real concern. Please note that we will accept all household items (white goods, furniture, garden tools, pot plants etc.) The only things we cannot take are electric blankets and bed pillows.

**This month we stock:** Collections of Royal Doulton, Wedgwood, silverware, Royal Albert porcelain, CarltonWare, telephones, cameras, jewellery, collections from Scotland, Greece, Ireland, Australia, England and Holland, figurines, salt/pepper shakers, Golden Books, art works, and doilies. Just to name a few!



This month we will welcome the Belmont South Probus Club for morning tea and a Collectibles tour.

The Collectibles team continues to give thanks to those who donate items. Their generosity means that we can fulfill our Community Outreach by supporting our Ministry to Refugees and people in need.



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

## June Reflections from Pastoral Connections

### Fellowship Luncheon

On Sunday 16h June, 2024, over 50 people gathered in the Church Hall and enjoyed a time of fellowship while enjoying a bowl of soup.

The Pastoral Connection team, (along with support from some other church members), provided soup for over 50 people. Following soup, tables laden with delicious cakes and slices, all provided by those in attendance, were available.



Included on the invitations and information issued prior to the luncheon, anyone planning on attending was invited to consider bringing along an item of non-perishable food or to make a donation towards fuel, food or clothing vouchers.

Throughout the luncheon people moved around, enabling friendships to be renewed, news to be shared and providing the opportunity to meet newly arrived families.

As part of the afternoon, those present were invited to learn about the **Real Deal, Housing for the Homeless Project**, and to join in the fun of making an origami house.



Claire and Shaghek encouraged everyone to participate and were more than willing to share details of the project.

*Some interesting statistics :*

- 1) 12 big bags of food were donated to Grovedale/Norlane Uniting for distribution to refugees and those needing support.
- 2) \$400 was donated for vouchers.
- 3) 60 origami houses were constructed.

**Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed in some way.**

**Pam Seller** (Pastoral Connections)

## 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 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. Then on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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.



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## Prayer Points

The following Prayer dot points are offered as foundation for your own prayers.

### Praise and Thanksgiving

- 1) Lord, open our eyes to see your glory on these cold winter days. Those things that are all around us, that we so often take for granted. The early jonquils and narcissus that are flowering, the moon and stars on these cold clear nights, stunning sunrises and the rainbows that come with the showers. All free gifts from God.
- 2) Almighty God empower us to stand firm in our faith and to celebrate the gifts that you have blessed us with. May we use these gifts wisely to bring glory to your name.
- 3) Praise God for the life and witness of all those who have gone before us. Those who have shared their knowledge and wisdom and those who have been our mentors. As we follow in footsteps may we do justice to their trust in us. .
- 4) Thank you Lord, for the new friendships made at the fellowship luncheon and for those people who worked hard by providing food, manpower to set up , clear up and the many who spent time making origami houses in support of the Real Deal Housing Project. Praise God for all of those who donated food for distribution to the refugees and those struggling through Norlane and Grovedale Uniting. Praise for donations received to provide vouchers for fuel, food and clothing items
- 5) Thankyou Lord, that we are able to meet together to share with our families and friends. We acknowledge that we are privileged to be able to help others through volunteering, donating and supporting where possible.

## General Prayers

- 1) We pray for governments around the world. That they will show compassion for those people who have been forced from their homes by war in countries such as, Ukraine, Gaza, South Sudan, Iran, Myanmar.
- 2) Our thoughts and prayers are also with the people of the Philippines, Tonga, Fiji, Bangladesh and many other countries and islands where homes are being reclaimed by the sea.
- 3) Lord, in all we do, we seek your wisdom and grace, may we be compassionate and sensitive to the needs of others. Guide us in ways to support those in our own community of faith and the wider community that are grieving, waiting for surgery, having treatment or supporting loved ones who are recovering from illness.
- 4) We hold in our hearts all young people in our society, who feel they have no future and resort to defacing public places and are involved in the crime scene. We pray for those who have spent time in gaol and are now seeking support to transition back into society and the work force and struggle to get their lives back on track. May there be someone or someplace to where they can turn for help.



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## Wider Church News

### National Update (1 - 7 July 2024)



This month National Update profiles the [inspiring and faith-filled journey of Rev Charissa Suli](#) who next week will become the 17th President of the Uniting Church in Australia. Rev Suli will be the youngest and the first person of colour, of Pacifica heritage and Tongan descent, to lead the church nationally.

Read about Rev Suli's powerful Emmaus moment that led her to ministry, the challenges she faced as a teenage mother and her deep sense of the new thing God is doing in the life of the Uniting Church.

“The key point for me is that as Christians and people of faith we underestimate how broad, wide and deep the love of Christ is and that Christ’s love is so powerful that it can hold our diversity, if we would just take a chance and allow Christ’s love to transform us from within,” says Rev Suli.

In this feature piece, the incoming President reflects on the challenges the Church must face, including its own structural and cultural racism, and her joyful hope that we might be transformed and reconciled by the radical love of Christ.

Don't miss the story by [SBS News](#) on the President-elect and her barrier-breaking leadership.

**17th Assembly:** *"Christ's love is the thread that will bind us"*

Ahead of her installation next week, President-elect Rev Charissa Suli has recorded a new message from the heart about her theme for the 17th Assembly and the triennium. Inspired by Charissa's rich Tongan heritage, *Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries* is an invitation to weave the thread of God's love through the tapestry of our life. Watch now on our [website](#) and on [Facebook](#).



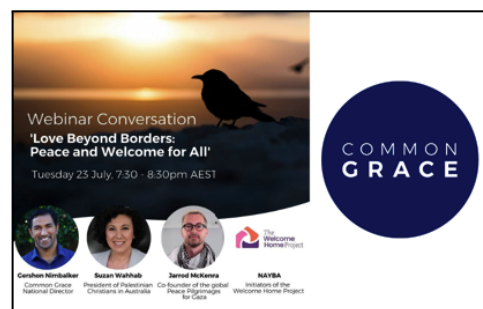
**[Nine ways to Connect with the 17th Assembly of UCA](#)**

Members of the 17th Assembly will gather in Parramatta in just one week, and there are lots of opportunities for the wider Uniting Church to follow the work of the meeting as it happens. Whether it's opening worship, the meeting livestream, social media highlights or decisions and celebrations, here's your guide to connecting with the Assembly.



**Common Grace Webinar**

Common Grace is holding a webinar on Tuesday 23 July at 7:30pm AEST entitled ['Love Beyond Borders: Peace and Welcome for All'](#). Hear from Suzan Wahhab, President of Palestinian Christians in Australia, and Common Grace's Gershon Nimbalker.



**Readings for the Month**

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
July 14 <b>Pentecost 8</b>	2 Sam 6:1-5,12b-19	Ps 24	Eph 1:3-14	Mk 6:14-29
July 21 <b>Pentecost 9</b>	2 Sam 7:1-14a	Ps 89:20-37	Eph 2:11-22	Mk 6:30-34,53-56
July 28 <b>Pentecost 10</b>	2 Sam 11:1-15	Ps 14	Eph 3:14-21	Jn 6:1-21
Aug 4 <b>Pentecost 11</b>	2 Sam 11:26-12:13a	Ps 51:1-12	Eph 4:1-16	Jn 6:24-35