

# Monthly update

## The Uniting Church in Australia

### St Luke's Congregation, Highton

September 2024



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#### The season of Creation

The first four weeks of September have been set aside by many churches across the world to reflect on God's wonderful gift of creation and our responsibility to care for God's gift of creation.

When I think about these themes I find myself going back to Genesis 1:26 which reads in the NRSV translation:

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."



Scholars understand the word translated here "dominion" to mean to be "good stewards of" or as *The Message Bible* translates this word, "be responsible for."

The resources that we will be using this Sunday (September 8<sup>th</sup>) suggest that people might like to go outside to worship. Now this involves some challenges for most congregations, but what about the next time you go for a walk you take time to stop and look at the beauty of the spring blossoms and give thanks to God?

Caring for creation in a way that makes a difference is all about everyone doing something.

St Luke's has an impressive track record of recycling all sorts of materials, so they do not go to landfill and, if possible, they get a second life.

I was delighted to learn recently that the box in the foyer for the recycling blister packs for pills is being made good use of ... some hundreds of blister packs were placed in the box last month.

The following is part of a prayer that I found in preparing for Sunday. It was written by Pope Francis:

All powerful God ...  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.  
We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace.  
Amen.

**Paul Stephens,**  
*Minister in placement*

## Church of the 21st Century

Last month I wrote about some of the challenges that face us as a community and as part of the greater UCA in Geelong and across the country. These challenges include the changes in our congregations – smaller, older and more infirm, and the resulting shortage of volunteers and ministry in leadership roles.

However these challenges also present opportunities to re-envisage a Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, one that will convey the Gospel message to new audiences in different ways. This could involve challenging existing ways of thinking and breaking out of comfort zones. Individually these could well be difficult but as a sharing and supportive community, all things are possible.

As a congregation, our support for the wider community through our pastoral activity and care for each other provides a beacon of hope in these troubled times.

We have already made steps in seeking new directions with our response to the Covid lockdowns with online and streaming services that have been welcomed by many in the community. New ways of worship shared in Geelong Steering Group discussions could involve working more closely with other UCA congregations where we each bring our spiritual gifts and strengths. They could mean congregational led services or a greater sharing of ministry across the region. A new paradigm of the Church could mean not being so attached to physical structures that are a legacy of a different time, such as is demonstrated in the Armstrong Creek Faith Community, or to the forms of worship that we have taken for granted. A key message of the Steering Group is that we are all in this together.

These issues will be addressed in our congregational discernment process that is a key element of our ministerial review. But I am confident that we will approach this reflective process guided by the Spirit and with the open hearts and minds that underlie who we are as the faith community of St Luke's. As Mark wrote:

“A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4:37-41)

### Michael Currie

*Chair, St Luke's Church Council*



*Image ref: Eugene Delacroix: Christ on the Lake of Gennezaret WGA06219*

<https://picryl.com/media/eugene-delacroix-christ-on-the-lake-of-gennezaret-wga06219-cdc4b4>

## Coming Up

### Services:

Sunday 8/9	9:30am	Service: Seasons of Creation (Rev Annetia Goldsmith)
Thurs 12/9	1:30pm	Mid-week service.
Friday 13/9	5pm	Messy Church
Sunday 15/9	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev <b>Paul Stephens</b>
Sunday 15/9	7pm	House Church: Home of Kevin & Joy McAvaney. Guest speaker Peter Gador-Whyte
Sunday 22/9	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev <b>Paul Stephens</b>

### Activities:

Wed 11/9	7:30pm	Seekers
Friday 13/9	12.00pm - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday 20/9	12.00pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Sat 21/9	9.00am - lunch	Collectibles
Wed 25/9	2.00pm	Coffee 'n' Chat

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## Congregation News

### Season of Creation 2024



## TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

*The firstfruits of hope*  
(Rom 8:19-25)

The **Season of Creation** is the annual Christian celebration to pray and respond together to the cry of Creation: the ecumenical family around the world unites to listen and care for our common home, the Oikos of God.

This year we will unite around the theme "To hope and act with Creation" with the symbol "The firstfruits of hope", inspired by Romans 8:19-25.

- Creation is groaning in the pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22)
- Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19)
- Firstfruits of hope (Romans 8:23-25)

We rejoice in this opportunity to safeguard our common home and all beings who share it. This year, the theme for the season is "To hope and act with Creation". Amid the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, many are beginning to despair and suffer from eco-anxiety. As people of faith we are called to lift the hope inspired by our faith, the hope of the resurrection. This is not a hope without action but one embodied in concrete actions of prayer and preaching, service and solidarity.

This year in the Season of Creation at St Luke's, we take the opportunity to highlight our role in the Uniting Church in Australia's Climate Action Plan for the future of protecting Creation. The display in the hall over the Season of Creation will change over the weeks and focus on:

- What the Science tells us: There is hope and the expectation for a better future. To hope in a biblical context does not mean to stand still and quiet, but rather groaning, crying, and actively striving for new life amidst the struggles of a changing world.

- What the UCA doing and what its policy is on Climate Change: *The UCA National Assembly Climate Action Plan*. The background from "Our Vision for a Just Australia."

## **The 17th UCA Assembly's 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.

## **VICTAS Synod**

Synod Emissions Reduction Fund (SERF) is reducing gas emissions in all congregations, as highlighted in the recent [Crosslight magazine](#).

## **Geelong Climate Action Group**

The Geelong Climate Action Group has met and planned to jointly contribute to some of the activities listed below, including the interchange of Ministers on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September. Members of Wesley, Belmont and Western Heights have T-shirts to wear. These are also for sale at \$27.

## **What the Interfaith community is doing**

### ***The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change- ARRCC***

The ARRCC and the multi faith week of Climate Action faith commitment September 14-24, 2024. As part of a national response over the Season of Creation, Churches are asked to place a banner on the outside of the Church to demonstrate their commitment to climate action. Our banner is on display outside the Church. Sue Strong, from Wesley has contacted the media to highlight this.

People of all faiths are invited to the unfurling of a large sign calling for stronger climate action [at St Paul's Cathedral](#) on **Tuesday September 17** at 10am. A number of religious leaders will be there and the media will be invited.

**Common Grace:** a movement of individuals, churches and communities pursuing Jesus and justice together for the flourishing of all people and all creation. A challenge for individual action for the month to..

- Sustain Your Plate/Eat less meat
- Shift My Gears /use cars less
- Shelve My Purchases/ refrain from buying new things

## **What St Luke's has done and continues to do to contribute to protecting Creation**

- Electrified most of the buildings: solar panels, reverse cycle air conditioning in some areas
- The Environment Group runs the Repair Cafe which repairs items, thus saving them from landfill
- Collectables – redirecting items from landfill
- Sewing Group showing migrant women to make/repair their own clothes with donated materials, reducing purchase of items and saving material from landfill.
- The Environment Group, on behalf of St Luke's, has achieved two "5 Leaf Eco Awards", the Basic Certificate and Eco Spirituality.
- The Men's shed collect furniture that's not needed, repair same, to furnish migrant/refugee homes where needed.
- The Environment Group administers the "Recycling Bay", to save items from landfill and also to have items recycled.

**What else can we do as a body of Christ, at St Luke's, now and in the future?**

In the last week we will consider what actions we can take, as a congregation of the Uniting Church, to contribute to the Assembly's commitments to protect Creation with its Climate Policy.

The Climate Action Group encourages you to read the displays and participate in the 2024 Season of Creation as we continue to make our contribution to protecting Creation.

**Claire Zeigler and Megan Knott** (for Environment team)



## *St. Luke's Collectibles*

*Raising funds for Refugee Ministry*



**August Open Days:** We are full of praise for our willing Collectibles Teams, for their many gifts and skills used to make our August opening in the Chapel and in our Pop-Up a very special place to be. Truly, a queue of customers waiting outside the chapel for the 12 noon Friday to tick by was a great sight to behold.

**During August We welcomed** a Group from Barwon Trefoil Guides for morning tea and a Collectibles tour of the Chapel. We shared the story of our Ministry to Refugees.

**September Opening:** **Friday 20/9 12noon - 4pm; Saturday 21/9 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 welcomes needy people every week when selecting material aid for their homes.

**We can help you:** 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. We accept all donations of household items (incl white goods, furniture, garden tools, pot plants etc.) The only things we cannot take are electric blankets and bed pillows.



**Do you know:** Every Wednesday, between 9.30 am and lunch time, the Wednesday Team are available to receive donations

**This month:** Plan to bring a friend and visit The Collectible's Chapel. You can stroll at your leisure, enjoy many happy memories that will come into your mind as you see treasures from bye gone days.

**This month we will welcome** the Geelong Day View Group for morning tea and a Collectibles tour.



The following is an 'extract' from a family in the process of downsizing:  
.....'We will be coming on Wednesday to donate other items. We visited the church sale on Friday and were greeted with lovely smiles and warm

welcomes. How beautifully everything had been displayed! Such a lovely place! You could feel the love and time that has gone into this heartwarming organisation.....!.

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

**Rae Anderson & Linda Salamy** (St Luke's Highton, Collectibles Joint Co-ordinators)

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## August Reflections from Pastoral Connections

### **PASTORAL UPDATES.**

**Have you changed your address, home phone number, mobile number or email address lately?**

**Please update your details on a pew card located in the holder on the back of each pew.**

**or advise Pam Seller following worship.**

### **PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAYER LINK.**

At St. Luke's prayer is considered an important and valued part of our worshiping community. The Pastoral Connections ministry team offers several opportunities for you to share in this ministry.

*1. You can become a member of the Prayer Link.*

Submitted prayers, are forwarded to those willing to commit time to pray for the joys and concerns of the congregation members, their family and friends, and the community. These prayers are shared only after permission has been given by the person requesting the prayer and are always kept confidential. If you would like to be part of this valued ministry, contact Pam Seller on 0407 557 933.

*2. You can fill in a prayer request form.*

These are found in the container on the back of each pew and can be placed in the offering bowl or handed to Pam following worship. Urgent requests can be conveyed to Rev Paul or Pam at any time.

*3. Prayer candles*

These are available at the front of the worship space. They can be lit at any time during the service and placed in the prayer cradle. These candles represent prayers offered privately for people or situations we care about.

*4. Prayer corner*

The Prayer corner is located in the north-west corner of the church in the chapel area. This is an area set aside as a place for quiet reflection and personal prayer.

Rev. Paul or pastoral connections team members are available to offer support.

**WE ARE CALLED TO UPHOLD ONE OTHER IN PRAYER. PRAYING BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND TOGETHER.**



**RU OK? Day** occurs on the second Thursday of September each year. This year, 2024, it falls on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

RU OK? is a national suicide prevention charity that encourages people to stay connected and to have conversations that may help others through difficult times. On this day Australians are invited to ask the simple question, "RU OK?" and then listen to the answer which can lead to a meaningful conversation with

that particular person, who may be struggling or need support. We are invited to ask the "RU Ok?" question, not just on the second Thursday of September each year but every day when we perceive a need. One simple way to create an opportunity to ask this important question is to offer a smile or a greeting. In this way you can create a safe space for someone to share.

## Prayer Points

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

### Praise and Thanksgiving.

- 1) During this Season of Creation, we pray that as we find ways to celebrate your creation and that our hearts will be moved to rejoice in the beauty around us as we renew our aim to protect and live up to this year's Seasons of Creation theme which is "to hope and act with creation"
- 2) Heavenly Father we come before you with praise and thanksgiving for the precious gift of life, filled with many blessings and gifts freely given by you as we seek to live a life that reflects your glory.
- 3) We praise you God, for the St. Luke's small group leaders and volunteers who willingly give their time, energy and talent to encourage and support those attend from St. Luke's and the community.
- 4) Lord, make us ready to answer your call with a willing heart. Give us Your heart of love and compassion and help us to radiate the love given through your Spirit to all those you place before us.

### General Prayers.

- 1) Our thoughts and prayers are with Zech, Judi and Ian Lawrence's grand son who leaves early September to walk the Kokoda track with Geelong Youth Engagement, (GYE) Their theme is 'Today's youth are tomorrows leaders.'
- 2) We pray for Rev. Paul and his ministry. May each of us support him in his pastoral work within our St. Luke's community, as well as calls to visit hospitals and facilitate outside funerals within the wider church community.
- 3) We offer prayers for the Lutheran community who will be meeting in October to discuss matters pertaining to women in leadership in the future. May their discussions be open and considerate as they discern the way forward.
- 4) Lord, our thoughts are with all young people studying for VCE exams which commence at the end of October. Our prayers are also with Uni students who are completing assignments and assessments required as part of their studies.
- 5) Gracious God, give comfort and peace of mind to anyone suffering mental illness, feeling isolated or lonely. We continue to uphold those we know who are not well. Kevin, Shirley, Graham, Joyce, Ian, Joan, Christine, Olga. May they know your peace and comfort during their time of need.

### **As followers of Jesus, September offers two very important responsibilities**

- 1) September 12<sup>th</sup> is R U OK day, when we are encouraged to ask and listen to, someone who may be needing a friend "Are You Ok".
- 2) The second is our celebration of the Seasons of Creation, a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through the celebration of and commitment to protecting God's creation.

### **MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY**

You are invited to join us during our worship service, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 9.30am, when we will formally introduce and receive several new members into our St. Luke's fellowship.

Morning tea will follow allowing an opportunity to share together.



# Wider Church News

## Support those in need at Christmas

Uniting Barwon needs volunteers with availability from early October through to mid December to help our Emergency Relief Coordinators in the Greater Region of Geelong, participate in our Christmas Appeal Program.

Roles available include:

**Packing and Sorting** - This role involves setting up boxes and bags ready to be packed, packing, labeling and donation sorting! This role also involves unloading deliveries, stacking boxes, unpacking, sorting and recording of donations ready for distribution.

**Administration Support** - This role involves contacting schools & groups via phone who may contribute to the Christmas Programs. Volunteers in this role will have effective communication skills, an ability to develop rapport, and basic administration skills. We also require administration support, including research, data, correspondence, and project support.

**Donation Collection Driver** - This role involves collecting donated food and toys from around the Barwon (Geelong) region (and surrounding area) and delivering to our sites.

Need further information, or would like to apply, please get in touch with Kerry Uebergang, ER Coordinator Grovedale – [kerry.uebergang@vt.uniting.org](mailto:kerry.uebergang@vt.uniting.org) or call the Grovedale office on 4310 1100.

Volunteer applications for the Christmas Support Program close Friday 15th November 2024. Please note that volunteering with Uniting is subject to pre-commencement safety screening checks, including Police & WWCC checks.

Thank you for your continued support of the Uniting Barwon Emergency Relief Program.

*From Uniting News, Sept 2024*

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## Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalms</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
September <b>Pentecost 16</b>	Prv 22:1-2,8-9,22-23	Ps 125	Jas 2:1-10,14-17	Mk 7:24-37
September 15 <b>Pentecost 17</b>	Prv 1:20-33	Ps 19	Jas 3:1-12	Mk 8:27-38
Sept 22 <b>Pentecost 18</b>	Prv 31:10-31	Ps 1	Jas 3:13-4:3,7-8a	Mk 9:30-37
August 29 <b>Pentecost 19</b>	Est 7:1-6,	Ps 124	Jas 5:13-20	Mk 9:38-50
Oct 6 <b>Pentecost 20</b>	Jb 1:1; 2:1-10	Ps 26	Heb 1:1-4; 2:5-12	Mk 10:2-16