

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

October 2024



“Learning from St. Francis about following Jesus” ⁽¹⁾

Francis sought to follow Jesus in a radical and passionate way. He sought to take seriously Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and what it means for the church to be salt and light in the world.

My own interest in St Francis and his colleague St Clare has been heightened by the time we spent in Assisi in Italy in June this year.

This is a summary of the themes from the teaching of Francis that I shared in a recent sermon. **Things were crook in the Church.** Francis lived between 1182 and 1226. This was an era in which the church in the West was corrupted by its relationship with earthly powers; when bishops ruled kingdoms and Popes ordered crusades and bloodshed.



Francis had a vision of Christ telling him to rebuild the church. Jesus spoke to him while he was praying in the ruins of the church of San Damiano and said, “Francis, rebuild my church, which, as you see, is falling down.” ⁽²⁾

The Uniting Church’s *Basis of Union* declares that the church is called to be always open to continuing reform under Christ. (para 1.)

Encounter with God

Francis’ own faith was grounded in silence and prayer. He emphasised the importance of personal encounter with God. For him faith was not something you just talked about, but you engaged in. It involved prayer, love and action. ⁽³⁾

The Church as an evangelical Community

The greatest witness to the way of Christ for Francis was a church that in its actual life reflected the teaching and way of Jesus. Recent thinkers reflecting on the place of the church in western countries like Lesslie Newbigin have underlined this ... suggesting that the most potent way of confronting the atheism of the western world are congregations of faith living the Gospel. ^[4]

Dignity of all human beings ... peace making

In following Jesus, Francis did as Jesus did. He touched and sought to heal lepers. He cared for the broken and the outcast. There are many stories about this. He was totally opposed to violence, and he was committed to peacemaking. It is said that he and a colleague travelled to Egypt, and in seeking a peaceful end to a crusade went to see a Muslim Sultan and had an amicable engagement with him. ^[5]

Simplicity

One writer notes that: “Francis prescribed simplicity as an antidote to our often unquenchable yearning for more and ever more.” ^[6] Another writer summaries the “essence and foundation” of both his life and the life of Clare as “poverty.” ^[7] Francis and Clare saw the enormous wealth of the church of their day as a deep spiritual sickness. I suspect many of us yearn to be able to live simpler lives, how might we actually do this?

Respect for God's creation and his valuing of the beauty of God's world

Francis is well known for his engagement with creation. He wrote *The Canticle of the Sun* in which he gives thanks to God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother wind, water, fire and earth ... all of which give praise to God. There are many stories about him having a great love for animals and the world.^[8] There is the story that he preached to the birds and Bob Tantau's painting of this event hangs on the wall at St Luke's. Pope John Paul II made him patron saint of ecology in 1979.^[9]

Summary

Francis in seeking to radically and passionately follow Jesus had a powerful word to his time about the role of the church and the joy of the Gospel. How does his teaching challenge each of us, and us as a church community, today?

Prayer of confession

O Lord, you are our shepherd,

And yet we don't always acknowledge this.

You invite us to rest in quiet green pastures and be refreshed with your living water for the journey, but too often we ignore your invitation, and instead just keep doing things in our own strength.

Instead of following you, we tend to wander off along other paths.

We too often forget that in the darkest valleys in life you are right there with us ... offering your comfort and support.

We are not so great at setting a table for all and we struggle to break bread with those who are our enemies.

We see scarcity even when you offer us abundance.

We pray for forgiveness, for your goodness and mercy,

o that we might dwell in You, in your grace, forever.

Amen.

I wrote this based on Psalm 23 and inspired by a prayer (including some elements of the prayer) written by Beth Merrill Neel, [Random Liturgy | Hold Fast to What Is Good](#) Used with permission.

[1] My thinking in part draws on the work of an American writer: Ian Morgan Cron, *Chasing Francis: a pilgrims tale*, Zondervan, 2013 (First published 2006)

[2] Sermon by Jon Bankert, [At That Time, Jesus Said..., St. Francis of Assisi - 1996 – The Episcopal Church](#)

[3] [Francis and encountering Jesus in silence | walk the way \(wordpress.com\)](#)

[4] (Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lessie Newbiggin's Missionary Ecclesiology*, p. 108).

[5] [Francis of Assisi - Wikipedia](#)

[6] Quote in Cron, *ibid.* Quote from John Michael Talbot, *The Lessons of St. Francis*, p. 20

[7] Quote in Cron, *ibid.* Quote from Gerard Straub, *The Sun & Moon Over Assisi*, p. 391"

[8] [Francis of Assisi - Wikipedia](#)

[9] [Francis of Assisi - Wikipedia](#)

Paul Stephens,

Minister in placement

Transition Process for a new Minister

Most of you would be aware by now that Rev Paul Stephens is retiring and will conclude his placement on January 5th, 2025. This has triggered a process which aims to discern the future mission directions and ministry needs of the congregation as well as then moving to consider the calling of a new minister. In this article, I explain what happens to achieve this and look at some of the challenges and how we might respond to these.

The Process

The UCA has established this process with the goal of calling a new minister – one who is in tune with the needs and aspirations of the congregation. The first step is a **Mission Study** "to identify the congregation's mission and ministry emphases and goals for the next 3 – 5 years"

(Doc 1.1, p.3). You might recall that a mission study was previously conducted at St Luke's in September 2017.

The Presbytery and Congregation jointly conduct a mission study. This will then determine the priority of the vacancy and the ways in which the position might be filled. Members of the Congregation are invited to participate in the process which is overseen and guided by the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC).

A Congregational Profile is then prepared and together with the proposed Terms of Placement is submitted for approval by the Church Council and Presbytery and forwarded to the Placements Committee who ideally will nominate candidates to fill the role.

Challenges

With the shortage of Ministers across the country, it could be difficult to find a suitable person. In the interim, the congregation will need to consider ways in which its ministry needs will be met. These could include arranging for a supply ministry for short periods up to a year, having services conducted by suitably qualified members of the congregation or participating in services conducted by another congregation, either online or in person.

Financial decisions will also need to be made. With increasing costs and reduced incomes, many congregations will need to assess whether they can continue to afford full-time ministers. This has become a trigger for some congregations to share ministry.

Our Response

St Luke's Council will soon be calling for members to offer to participate in conducting the Mission Study under the guidance of members of the PRC. All members will be invited to participate in the reflection and discussion that is part of this process.

These reflections may well lead to new directions for St Luke's, such as a greater alignment with other congregations across the region. While this might be challenging for some members, we all need to open our hearts to support each other as we seek the Spirit's guidance.

Michael Currie

Chair, St Luke's Church Council

Coming Up

Services:

Thurs 10/10	1:30pm	Mid-week service. Rev. Paul Stephens
Sunday 13/10	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev Paul Stephens
Sunday 20/10	9.30 am	Sunday Service with Rev Paul Stephens
		Feast Day BYO Morning Tea
Sunday 20/10	7pm	House Church: Home of Ken and Allison Ralph
Sunday 27/10	9:30am	Sunday Service with Rev Paul Stephens
Wed 30/10	7.00pm	Service of Remembrance and Hope
Sunday 3/11	9.30 am	Visit Rev. Bill Clarke Frontier Services
		Retiring Offering for Frontier Services
Sunday 1/12	9.30am	Farewell service Rev. Paul Stephens and Jenny

Activities:

Friday 11/10	12.00pm - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday 18/10	12.00pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Sat 12/10	1.00pm -3pm	Repair Cafe
Sat 19/10	9.00am - lunch	Collectibles
Wed 2/10	2.00pm	Coffee `n` Chat
Friday 25/10	12.00pm - 2pm	Sewing group

Congregation News

Invitation to Real Deal Geelong Action Forum with the Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Marles

You are invited to join us to shape Geelong's future!

Hundreds of Greater Geelong residents, local leaders, and members of the Real Deal Geelong Alliance are coming together to advocate for meaningful change in our community.

This powerful event will focus on key issues that impact us all: Secure Housing, Meaningful Work and the Cost of Living as we undergo Climate Change.

In a rare opportunity, we'll share our stories, present well-researched policy solutions, and **directly engage with the Federal Member for Corio and Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles.** Together, we will seek real commitments to address these pressing concerns.

Why is this important? As Greater Geelong undergoes a climate and energy transition, these issues are only becoming more urgent. This forum is your chance to stand in solidarity with your neighbours and civil society groups—faith organizations, unions, and community bodies—to make our voices heard.

Details: Date: Thursday October 31 Time: 5.45pm for 6pm start, 7.30pm finish Where: North Shore Football Club, Windsor Park, 39 Rose Avenue, Norlane. Registration Deadline: By 12 pm Tuesday, October 29. Please note, registrants names will be shared with security prior to the event as part of normal security protocols for the Deputy Prime Minister. **Photo ID Required at the door** for security purposes: Don't forget to bring your ID ! This is more than a meeting—this is a movement. Register today to help drive action for a fairer, stronger Geelong. This free Forum is expected to fill quickly, so please register immediately to ensure your attendance. Register now : [Real Deal Geelong Alliance Action Forum | Humanitix](#) Learn more: www.arealdeal.org/geelong **Can you help us spread the word ?** Please follow and share our event from our [Real Deal for Geelong Facebook page](#) – we are constantly sharing the good work happening across our Alliance there.

Claire Zeigler and Megan Knott (for Environment team)



REAL DEAL GEELONG ALLIANCE
ACTION FORUM

Start At 5:45pm – 7:30pm
Thurs, 31st Oct, 2024

North Shore Football Club, Windsor Park, 39 Rose Avenue, Norlane.

St. Luke's Collectibles

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry



Are you our first time reader? Then, I welcome you to enjoy reading our story. A story committed to supporting Refugee Families, and others in need. A story that began at St Luke's in 2005 when we learnt about refugees sleeping on the floor without blankets. We held a blanket appeal and since then we have provided material aid to families from 26 countries as they transition into Australia. Most years, we have provided material aid on average to 150 homes. St Lukes Church Council and Congregation agreed to focus our Mission towards Refugee Ministry and to others in need, as we attempt to live out God's mission within the Community. The Church now employs Shaghek Qassabyan as a Community Ministry Worker. St Luke's also employs other newcomers for church cleaning, carpet cleaning, groundsman, and for Testing and Tagging electrical items.

September Open Days Once again the Chapel Collectibles and Popup looked fresh and new, thanks to the dedicated Wednesday Team who prepared the display for many donated items.

During September we welcomed a Group from Geelong Day View Club for morning tea and a Collectibles tour of the Chapel. It was a happy occasion, providing the Collectibles Team the opportunity to share the story of our Ministry to Refugees.

Do you know: That we accept all household donations other than electric blankets and bed pillows. Household donations can include garden potted plants, tools, all kitchen and linen cupboard items, white goods and small furniture.

Do you know: Every Wednesday, between 9.30 am and lunch time, the Wednesday Team are available to receive donations. Simply drive between the Chapel and Men's Shed to off load.

We can help you: It can 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. Give us a call. We can help you and in turn help people in need. All monies raised supports our Refugee Ministry.

This month many amazing things happened (Here are couple of things):

1. Nineteen (19) families visited our refugee room for material aid.
2. As a part of their Community Service, the Barwon Trefoil Guides have committed to restoring and cleaning donated silverware prior to sale.

October Opening: Friday, Oct 18 (12 - 4pm); Saturday, Oct 19 (9am till lunchtime).

You are invited. Bring friends. Tell us where you are from. Help share our story.

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 0413 888 884 Linda Salamy
St Luke's Highton, Collectibles Joint Co-ordinators



September Reflections from Pastoral Connections



NEWS FROM PASTORAL CONNECTIONS. STORY OF ST. LUKE'S SEEKERS

The Seekers bible study group commenced approx. 18 years ago and comes under the umbrella of the Pastoral Connections ministry team. Gatherings take place at Mark and Pam Seller's home throughout the year except in January.

The group meet at 7.30pm on the 2nd Wednesday evening, those attending participate in a small group bible study where everyone is encouraged to be actively involved. The diversity of views and input during discussions enhances the learning experience for all who attend.

Over the years membership of the group has changed, as people have moved away or develop other commitments. The group transitioned from Highton to Belmont in 2011, when Mark and Pam moved house. At the conclusion of each evening, supper and fellowship are shared.

We always look forward to welcoming new members. For details speak to Mark or ring Pam on 0407 557 933. The following are some pictures taken at meetings over the years.



PASTORAL CONNECTIONS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

October 10th	Midweek service	1.30	St. Luke's
October 13th	Membership service	9.30	St. Luke's
October 20th	St. Luke's Day	9.30	St. Lukes
	<i>Please bring a plate of morning tea to share.</i>		
October 30th	Service of Remembrance & Hope	7.00	St. Luke's
	<i>Open invitation.</i>		
November 3rd	Frontier Services Speaker	9.30	St. Luke's
	<i>Retiring Offering</i>		
November 6th	Coffee & Chat	2.00	Brioche café.
November 14th	Midweek service: <i>Communion</i>	1.30	St. Luke's
November 17th	Christmas cards available	9.30	St. Luke's
December 1st	Paul & Jenny's St. Luke's farewell	11.30	St. Luke's
December 4th	Coffee & Chat – Christmas	1.30	St. Luke's
December 12th	Midweek – Christmas	1.30	St. Luke's

You are invited



Pastoral Connections invites you to share in a service of

Remembrance and Hope.

This time of reflection offers an opportunity in a safe space, to reflect on times when you may have been hurting, perhaps you are concerned about events in this turbulent world or for the changing environment.

The service is open to the family and friends of those who, during the year, may have lost someone close to them, missed sharing a special anniversary or birthday, experienced a separation or divorce in the family or it may be that you have recently, or are about to, move house.

Fellowship over a light supper will follow the service.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Prayer Points

Please use these prayer points as a reference for your personal prayer time.

Praise and Thanksgiving

- 1) Praise God for the blessing of new life as the season changes, for crops, flowers and baby animals, for sunshine, spring rains and winds to freshen the air.
- 2) We are reminded and thankful of the wonders of modern discoveries and we give thanks for the researchers who work tirelessly to ensure outcomes that bring relief, healing and comfort to many.
- 3) Praise for teachers who teach with enthusiasm, bringing the joy of learning to young people. We think of VCE students as they begin exams next week. We pray they will be calm and have self-belief as they reach for their dreams, and may they be reminded that a VCE score does not define who they are, or who they can be.
- 4) Thankyou Lord, for the St. Luke’s environment group who have worked hard during this Seasons of the Creation month, making us aware of our responsibilities in caring for our environment. Every day is a ‘Season of Creation’ day.
- 5) Lord, we praise you for the wonderful, determined attitude of our para-Olympians who strove hard to win, but show joy and respect for their fellow competitors. .

General Prayers

- 1) Our prayers this month are again focused on Peace in all places of conflict. Places where people feel powerless and oppressed. Lord, give them courage to stand up for what is right and bring people into their lives, to help, support, encourage and advocate for them.
- 2) Our love and prayers are with those of our congregation who are transitioning into care. Give them courage and support during this difficult time. We also pray for those families who are experiencing grief, loneliness, ill health or the stress of having to downsize and move house, Grant them peace and strength to cope. Family and friends who help and support have asked for our prayer support. .
- 3) Our thoughts have been with the homeless, the hungry, the refugees and the recent arrivals, who come seeking our support and protection. We acknowledge and support the work that Shaghek does, encouraging and assisting our new arrivals and also give praise and thanks for the Collectables Refugee Room open for new arrivals to collect essentials for their homes.
- 4) Lord, we pray that you will open the hearts of all people to take the step of faith and move into pastoral ministry. We pray for ministers of the word who faithfully share their reflections each week. May God bless them and their families.

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



On the 3rd November, at our 9.30am Service we will be welcoming a speaker from **Frontier Services**. Rev. Bill Clark will lead the service and there will be a retiring offering. Frontier Services is a 'not for profit' Australian agency of the Uniting Church. The agency was founded in 1912 through the work of Rev. John Flynn. The primary purpose is to

support people in rural and remote areas of Australia through their two core programs : Bush Chaplaincy and Outback Links.

Frontier Services works in partnership with the Uniting Church to advocate for communities and mobilize volunteers and resources where they are needed most. These include indigenous communities, isolated properties and farms, mining communities, and other remotely located areas.



Frontier Service volunteers are the friendly faces who turn up to offer support when no one else has.

MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY

You are invited to join us during our worship service, on Sunday 13th 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 FOR THE TREATY PROCESS IN VICTORIA



We, the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands where we do our ministry across Victoria. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge the Covenant relationship that we have with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

We acknowledge that when it comes to First Peoples communities, cultures and lands, the true experts are of course First Peoples themselves, and we are grateful for the leadership of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

We acknowledge that the past cannot be altered or erased, but we choose to take steps today that will foster healing in the enduring pain caused by injustices. As an organisation firmly committed to advancing social justice and equality, we want to play our part in righting the wrongs of the past and be part of collaborating towards a better future together.

We believe a better tomorrow is possible. Consistent with the Church's declared support for the principles in the Statement from the Heart, we commit our support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria.

To help build support for the shared journey to Treaty, we will:

- Collaborate with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria on the advancement of a Treaty in Victoria;
- Advocate in support of the Treaty process;
- Continue to provide information to our congregations and faith communities about the Treaty process and its importance to First Peoples, as a significant step to address some of the injustices of racist colonialism;
- Encourage members of Congress Victoria to enroll to vote and participate in the First Peoples' Assembly processes as they work on the advancement of Treaty in Victoria •

- Continue to develop and communicate a clear theologically robust rationale for supporting the Victorian Treaty process;
- Inform church members about the role of churches in past injustices related to First Peoples in Victoria;
 - Encourage our congregations and faith communities to
 - o learn the stories of First Peoples in their areas;
 - o acknowledge Country in their services and meetings;
 - o seek to forge relationships with the Traditional Owners in the places where they are situated;
 - o consider how they might support the Treaty process
 - Partner with other churches and organisations, as appropriate, to foster the Victorian community's acceptance and embrace of the Treaty process.

In making this commitment, we affirm the right of self-determination for First Peoples in charting a path towards Treaty.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Victorian Regional Council, are united in this support. Together, all Victorians can create a future where First Peoples' voices are heard, rights are respected, and justice is realised for generations to come.

A small sacrifice can make a big difference

Let's get ready to brew up some change.

Thanks to everyone that has already signed up for the 2024/2025 **Coffee Cup Challenge**. For those that haven't, it is still not too late to join. This year's **Coffee Cup Challenge** officially kicks off today (**International Coffee Day**), and runs all the way until

Tuesday 4th March 2025, Shrove Tuesday. [Click here](#) to hear from St Leonard's Uniting Church member, Barry Schofield, as he shares the history of the **Coffee Cup Challenge** and how your small, weekly sacrifices can create a ripple of change in our communities.

Because every cup counts.

Every cup sacrificed is not just raising funds but also collective awareness and compassion for those who have fallen on hard times, uncertainty and crisis.

How to get involved:

- Register your congregation to join the challenge by visiting our [Coffee Cup Challenge](#) page.
- If your church isn't participating as a group, we encourage you to [share this link](#) with your members so they can sign up individually and be part of this meaningful journey.

Promotional materials:

Attached, you'll find two posters to help promote the 2024 Coffee Cup Challenge.

- A customizable version for congregations that want to register collectively
- A separate version for individuals to sign up directly.

The challenge doesn't have to be limited to coffee. You may not drink coffee or you may prefer to choose to sacrifice having a chocolate, sweet treat or another indulgence in its place.

If you drink but don't buy coffee, you could consider adding some loose change to a collection when you boil the kettle to make one.

Together we can forgo caffeine (or some other indulgence) for kindness and advocate for a better future for all.



Uniting

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 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

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
October 13 Pentecost 21	Jb 23:1-9,16-17 10:17-31	Ps 22:1-15	Heb 4:12-16	Mk 10:17-31
October 20 Pentecost 22	Jb 38:1-7, (34-41)	Ps 104:1-9, 24, 35	Heb 5:1-10	Mk 10:35-45
October 27 Pentecost 23	Jb 42:1-6,10-17	Ps 34:1-8, (19-22)	Heb 7:23-28	Mk 10:46-52
November 1 All Saints Day	Is 25:6-9	Ps 24	Rev 21:1-6a	Jn 11:32-44
November 3 Pentecost 24	Ru 1:1-18	Ps 146	Heb 9:11-14	Mk 12:28-34