

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

February 2025



Peter's Pen

I have never been much of a fisherman, but have always been fascinated by the skill and grace of those who have mastered the art of fly fishing, standing in a fast flowing river in their waders and teasing the trout or salmon to catch their 'fly', and when they do the battle begins to land the fish. It's quite a sight to behold when the fisherman finally nets the fish.

Early in the Gospels story we hear a similar tale but with a difference. In this case Jesus is the 'fisherman' and his catch are the young men who become his disciples. Yes they too were fishermen, but this time they are the ones caught. I should add that they were caught very willingly, for Jesus never forces, but rather inspires us to join him.

Luke speaks about Jesus beginning his ministry by setting some boundaries with the crowd who are so eager to hear him. Everyone wants to be close to Jesus. Everyone wants to hear, so Jesus asks Simon the fisherman if he could use his boat to sit in a little offshore in order to teach the crowd about God. In doing that he also teaches us that we are not to be doormats for others to walk on and need to set limits and boundaries which will enable us to engage well with others.

By sitting in the boat, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew find themselves a captive audience. They might have been washing and mending their nets while Jesus spoke to the crowd but I'm sure that they were also listening to all that Jesus said and all that happens later confirms that.

When Jesus had finished teaching that day, he turns to Simon Peter and in effect says, 'Let's go fishing.' His actual words are quite evocative: 'Put out into the deep water and let down

your nets for a catch.' Jesus will always be inviting us to go deeper. However notice how Simon Peter responds. His default position seems to be to resist. That's natural. Its something he shares with Moses and Jeremiah just to name a few, alongside us of course. We also resist God's call and invitation to go deeper. We have a whole store of valid excuses, 'I'm too tired and depressed because we didn't catch a thing last night!' That was Peter's excuse. We might say, 'I'm too busy. I've got so much to do . . .' or something like that.

However, in the end Peter sets the sail and out they go. He's clearly not keen. It's the wrong time of day to be catching fish, any fisherman could tell you that. But then they get the surprise of their life when they haul in the biggest catch they have ever seen. It was so big their nets were in danger of breaking and they needed to call in their partner to help – James and John the sons of Zebedee. All this was too much for Simon Peter, for he immediately and instinctively knew that he was in the very presence of God, and he found that pretty uncomfortable. He found it so uncomfortable that he says, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' Have you ever felt like that? Does this resonate with any experience you have had?

Peter certainly felt unworthy, even stained, in the presence of God, but Jesus doesn't go away. On the contrary, Jesus stays, and shows us that God wants to be with us - and while God sees us warts and all, knows our weaknesses and failures, sees our moodiness, our jealousies, our pride, God accepts us as we are. Yes, God loves us unconditionally, welcomes and invites us to share his life, his passion, his vision, promising us that as we take the step that Simon Peter takes, we will grow more fully in the image and likeness of God.

Peter Gador-Whyte

Minister in supply

Image: The Miraculous Catch of Fish <https://images.app.goo.gl/8biM2jEDhWjqwTV28>

COMING UP

Services:

Thurs 13/2	1.30pm	Mid-week service with Communion
Sunday 16/2	9.30am	Communion Service taken by Rev Bruce Waldron
Sunday 16/2	7pm	House Church at home of Alison and Kenneth Ralph
Sunday 2/3	9.30am	Pancake fundraiser following Service

Activities:

Saturday 8/2	1-3pm	Geelong Repair Cafe
Wed 12/2	7.30pm	Seekers (Easter theme) at Pam and Mark Seller's
Friday 14/2	12 - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday 21/2	12.00pm - 4pm	Collectibles
Sat 22/2	9.00am - lunch	Collectibles
Friday 28/2	12 - 2pm	Sewing group
Wed 5/3	1.30pm	Coffee 'n' Chat @ Brioche

St Luke's Ash Wednesday Service

You are invited to share in the Ash Wednesday service being held in the sanctuary on March 5th, commencing at 7pm and will be followed by a light supper. Ash Wednesday traditionally marks the beginning of the 40-day Lenten journey, and is a time for reflection and spiritual renewal.

Pancake Sunday 2025 Your chance to give

Coming up on March 2nd is the Uniting 'Flip for a good cause' Sunday at St. Lukes, when Pastoral Connections will be serving pancakes at morning tea. This year, your donations will go towards supporting people who are experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol or mental health challenges and other areas of great need where support is needed and offered.

COUNCIL NEWS

Notes from Council meeting held January 15 at St Lukes attended by Geoff Boehm, Lachie Farran, Catherine Mullen, Megan Knott and Des Younghusband (observing), chaired by Michael Currie. Council considered:

- Proposed CoGG heritage overlay for former Methodist Church.
- Letter of resignation from Helen Amos.
- Collectibles annual report.
- Invitation to Western Heights Council to discuss common issues.
- Accessibility concerns re buildings used by Collectibles.
- Barrabool Rd manse sold recently for \$725K - about 40% of the proceeds go to the property trust/church, the rest are reinvested by them on our behalf for 7 years.
- Bruce Missen has been contacted re commencement of St Luke's transition process.

URGENT CALL: Do you know anyone who would be interested in working 6-8 hrs/week in the St Luke's office. We need someone who is self-managing and reliable, IT and word processing capable and interested in supporting church users and congregation. Regular rates apply. Please speak to Mike or contact 0418538019.

Congregation News

PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

RETIREMENT REFLECTION AND MOVING FORWARD

PASTORAL CONNECTIONS IN 2025

Pastoral Connections ended 2024 by facilitating a formal luncheon to recognise and celebrate Rev. Paul's retirement (and the support of Jenny and the family) after 40 years in ministry.

On the day Church Council chair, Kevin McAvaney welcomed 90 plus visitors and congregational members as highlights of Paul's diverse and long career in ministry, including Presbytery and community outreach were shared. Paul was presented with a beautiful painting done by Noel McMillan. The formal cutting of the ties took place on January 5th, with our Messy Church family providing morning tea with beautiful food from different countries.

Over the past 7 years, Pastoral Connections had appreciated Paul's support at many of the small groups that come under the Pastoral Connections "umbrella". These groups have aimed to cover a wide range of church life. Paul was actively involved with Seekers (a small study/discussion group), the prayer corner and prayer link, Coffee and Chat which provides a time of fellowship and the Midweek service where 30 plus attendees share worship and afternoon tea once a month.

And now as 2025 begins, we look forward to continuing to care for and support members of the congregation. With each of the Connections team members having links with the various church Small outreach groups we will be encouraging members of these small groups to care for and support one another, sharing any joys and concerns with the Connections team member involved. Anyone not involved in one of the small groups listed below will be cared for by ministry team members listed.

Environment Group, Collectables and Repair Café
House Church and Walking Group
Coffee and Chat, Midweek service and Seekers
Christmas Cards and End of year Speaker
Election Cake stalls

Shaghek
Judy
Pam
Valerie
Barbara

If you are close to someone who needs extra support please contact Pam on 0407 557 933, or team members Judy Clark, Shaghek Qassabyan, Valerie Grills or Barbara Cox.

PRAYER POINTS



- Almighty God, we rejoice that your spirit dwells and empowers us to share the power of your word.
- Praise God for Paul Stephen's 40 years of service in ministry. May he and Jenny enjoy a long retirement.
- Praise God for celebrations with family and friends during Christmas and the holiday Season. May the bonds of joy and sharing be a blessing to everyone.
- We celebrate the beauty of summer gardens and the abundance of fruit and vegetables to share with family, friends and neighbours.
- We give praise and thanks for the support of Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte during our time of our transition and discernment.
- Lord God, we pray for the many people in the world who have been displaced by war, famine, natural disasters and drought and we pray that world leaders will show compassion and justice for refugees as they work together to bring about peace and unity within warring nations.
- Lord, we ask for guidance as we seek to discern the way ahead for St. Luke's. We Pray for Mike Currie (council chair) and our church leaders as they work to secure our future direction.
- Our thoughts and prayers are for peace of mind, for those friends and family we know are unwell and in hospital, recovering from surgery, receiving or waiting for treatment or the result of tests.
- Gracious God, we pray for children beginning and returning to school, that they will quickly settle and make new friends. We also pray for those who are beginning University courses or moving out into the workforce.

ALL PRAYER REQUESTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND PERMISSION MUST BE RECEIVED BEFORE NAMES ARE SHARED DURING WORSHIP

St. Luke's Collectibles

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry

2024 Annual Report

We celebrate our 6th Annual Report, 2024 being the year filled with endless opportunities at St Luke's Chapel Collectibles as we supported the Ministry for Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and others in need.

Many facets within this ministry encompass:

1. Shaghek Qassabyan's dedicated work as our Community Ministry Worker,
2. The generosity of donations from families and friends,
3. The dedication and commitment from more than thirty volunteers,
4. The delivery of household material aid to over 150 homes,
5. The support of St Luke's Men's Shed,
6. The ongoing support of Norlane Ops Shops (see below)
7. The building of relationships with refugees, donors, customers and volunteers.

Morning Tea and Tour of Chapel Collectibles: Four Probus and interest groups were welcomed during the year. An opportunity to receive our hospitality, share our story, and tour the Chapel.

Barwon Trefoil Girl Guides: We continue to give thanks to the Barwon Trefoil Girls who regularly send a team to clean and polish the donated, but tarnished, silverware prior to sale.



Days For Girls: We support DfG's with donations of soaps, washcloths, and flannel sheets for personal hygiene kits. <https://www.daysforgirls.org/>

Refugee Sewing Classes: We share donated dress making material, knitting wools, and sewing aides to help support the participants.

Planet Earth Environment: All waste products are recycled and sent to hard plastic, metal, batteries, reading glasses, while other items are repurposed.

Receiving Donations: Wednesday morning is set aside to receive household donations. The Wednesday Team follow the following sorting process:

1. Stocking the Refugee Room with essential items, e.g. kitchen ware, baking pans, saucepans, crockery, cutlery, glasses, coffee mugs, doonas, blankets and bed linen.
2. Crystal, vintage and retro pieces and other collectibles items are moved into the Chapel to become sale items – helping to raise funds to support our Ministry.
3. All electrical items are relocated to the Lane Memorial, ready for 'Testing and Tagging', prior to distribution.
4. Donations that are not suitable, are sorted and this stock goes to the Norlane Community Centre, 'Treasures Op Shop' at 10 Wendover Ave, Norlane, and to Norlane Community Initiatives Op Shop, Shop 6 Labuan Square, Norlane. During 2024, St Luke's, supported both Norlane Op Shops by sending 8100 kgs or 8.1 tonnes of stock to Norlane, (State Government claims that Norlane is the most disadvantaged area in our State).

8.1 Tonnes breaks down as follows:

Books	1600kgs	Furniture	200 kgs
Bric a brac	960 kgs	Kitchenware	570 kgs
Clothing	580 kgs	Manchester	1140 kgs
Crockery	2380 kgs	Pictures	100 kgs
Electrical	260 kgs	Shoes	310 kgs

Total 8100 kgs or 8.1 Tonnes.

Our sincere thanks to Des Younghusband, who collects what we cannot use the surplus stock weekly, for distribution amongst the two Norlane Op Shops.

St Luke's Men's Shed: We are kindly supported by the men of the Shed. In December, a Christmas morning tea was provided for the men to thank them for their 'handy man' support during the year.

What's On in Geelong Mag: We gratefully received a 'sponsored' 2-month subscription for advertising in this popular magazine for November and December. We were benefitted from this brief exposure, and we would be delighted to receive sponsorship for 2025.

Word of Thanks

My sincere thanks to all Volunteers, every person being gifted in so many ways. Gifted with passion, concern, listening ears, storytelling, loving hearts and generosity of time.

An enormous vote of sincere thanks to Linda Salamy, whose technical skills, online sales and for her Collectibles attention to detail and passion, inspires everybody with a valuable purpose. Linda, you are a joy to work with, thank you.

Thank you, Lachie Farran, our church treasurer, who looked after our finances. In 2024 we raised \$80,864 to support St Luke's Refugee Ministry.

2024 has been a year filled with new opportunities, growth and strong community support. It's been a year beyond our expectations. We are now a recognised retail outlet by the public, and we give thanks for the privilege to provide support for all people in need.

We look forward to 2025 with great enthusiasm.

Rae Anderson and Linda Salamy

St Luke's Highton, Collectibles Joint Co-ordinators

A planning process between all presbyteries and the Synod Standing Committee has resulted in a draft [Faithful Futures](#) document.

UNITING CHURCH VIC & TAS DRAFT VISION, VALUES & GOALS

**Following Christ, walking together as First and Second Peoples,
seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation;**
Inclusive, diverse, seeking justice, journeying with Jesus

Coordinated Ministry Coordinated ministry and mission in each Local Government Area (or suitable equivalent), attentive to the life and needs of the local context, by 2030.	Respecting Country Every congregation will be able to tell some of the story of the Country in which it is located by the end of 2028, and be invited to develop local and appropriate ways to respond.	Intercultural Leadership By 2028, to: (a) be providing leaders of different cultural groups with appropriate formation and equipping; and (b) develop networks to support worship, witness and service among communities of diverse languages and cultures.	All-age Growth 80% of Local Government Areas (or equivalent) have at least one all-age community of faith that is interactive, diverse, inclusive and transformative by 2030.
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The Uniting Church is called to be a pilgrim people, participating in the movement of God. Presbyteries and the Synod have been engaging in a "Faithful Futures" Project discerning ministry and mission ahead. The VISION is widely recognised.

The VALUES have been distilled through the 2023 Synod meeting Working Groups. The GOALS have been developed through Bible study, survey, prayer and consultation. This poster shows the progress of this work, which is expected to be finalised in March 2025. Shared goals will help to relieve burdens and strengthen new mission opportunities as we follow Christ together.

For further information contact FaithfulFutures@victas.uca.org.au

PRESBYTERY NEWS



SPIRITUAL CARE AT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL AND MACKELLAR CENTRE, GEELONG

The Presbytery currently provides 2 days per week (Monday & Friday) of spiritual care to the greater Geelong community based at University Hospital, Geelong. Rev Isabel Greenall is in the Placement offering care and support to patients and staff primarily at the hospital but also to those at the Mackellar Centre, as needed. Historically, the Uniting Church chaplain has been able to access a list of all Uniting Church patients and visit them. However, with recent review of procedures alongside privacy legislation, it is no longer possible to do this. The process now is that a patient will need to ask their nurse or another member of the ward staff for a visit from the Uniting Church chaplain or Spiritual Care team. They will then put in a referral requesting a visit.

For family members, congregation members and Ministers, sometimes you may know someone in hospital that might need some care during their admission. The most important thing is that you ask for their permission before letting Isabel or the Spiritual Care team know. If the patient is not able to give their own consent, it needs to then come from the next of kin. The best way to contact Isabel is through the Spiritual Care team direct phone number 4215 0627 or email spiritual.care@barwonhealth.org.au

LOCAL NEWS



SCRgroup is pioneering the way Australians reuse and recycle their unwanted clothing. We offer solutions for local government, national and local shopping centres, schools, private organisations, charities and retailers.

SCRgroup is Australia's largest and most innovative company for the recovery of Australia's unwanted clothing. Each year, we divert over 30 million kilograms of clothing from landfill and instead find new homes for them, giving them a second life in local and global communities where they are needed most.

Our business model is based on maximising social and environmental impact. We work with Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and social enterprises to provide employment opportunities for people living with disabilities and youth at risk. We also support and work with Australian charities such as The Smith Family, Lifeline and Save The Children, often buying back items of clothing that haven't sold in their stores. This provides a vital and sustainable income towards their important social causes and reduces costs. Through our clothing collection programs and monetary donations, we contribute over \$1.99 million to Australian charities annually.

94% of what we collect from the 1,500 clothing drop-off hubs visited by over 2 million Australians around the country, is diverted from landfill. What can't be reused, is either turned into rags or converted into an alternate fuel called biofuel. SCRgroup is also investing in fibre to fibre recycling options and collaborations through their global partnerships to offer to their clients and to contribute to an evolving circular economy in Australia.

Contributed by Claire Ziegler on behalf of Environment Group

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
February 9 Epiphany 5	Is 6:1-8, (9-13)	Ps 138	1 Cor 15:1-11	Lk 5:1-11
February 16 Epiphany 6	Jer 17:5-10	Ps 1	1 Cor 15:12-20	Lk 6:17-26
February 23 Epiphany 7	Gn 45:3-11,15	Ps 37:1-11	1 Cor 15:35-38,42-50	Lk 6:27-38
March 2 Transfiguration	Ex 34:29-35	Ps 99	2 Cor 3:12-4:2	Lk 9:28-36
March 9 Lent 1	Dt 26:1-11	Ps 91:1-2,9-16	Rm 10:8b-13	Lk 4:1-13