

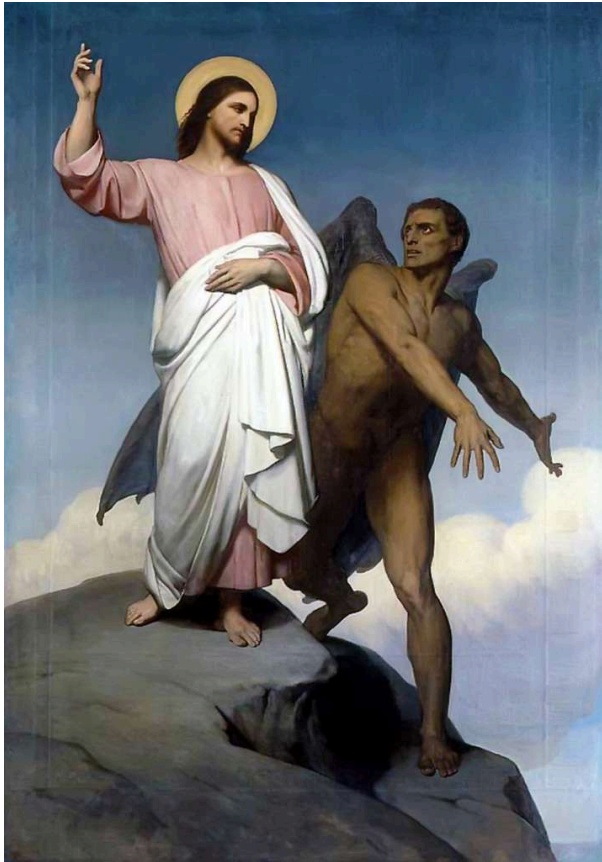
## Monthly update

# The Uniting Church in Australia

## St Luke's Congregation, Highton



March 2025



### Peter's Pen

A friend of mine took weeks planning his holiday and kept a very tight schedule. He would work out the exact time he would leave each morning, when and where on the map he would stop for morning tea at 10.30am, where they would have lunch and so on. Every day was mapped out to the very last detail. He needed to be organised and in control. I once asked, what happens if you get a flat tyre? What happens if something happens to upset your very tight schedule? It was clear that this wasn't something he had factored into his plans.

The season of Lent is a bit like a journey as we move with Jesus toward Jerusalem, through the trials of his passion, the denials and betrayals of his closest friends, and finally the cross. The cross was not something that any of the disciples had factored into their time with Jesus. The cross was the opposite, a tragedy, a desolation; the worst thing that could ever have happened as far as they were concerned. It threw their lives into turmoil. Yet what remains consistent throughout these trials is the faithfulness, the goodness, the

forgiveness of God.

The forty days of Lent are reminiscent of the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness. For Jesus this was a time to prepare for his public ministry. Traditionally called the 'Temptations of Jesus' this wasn't a prayer retreat. It was a time of testing for Jesus, and it also serves to encourage us to reflect on our own temptations - our own motives, and how we behave. **The question is, what is being tested in Jesus?** Luke gives us the answer in the way the tempter put his questions to Jesus. Each time Jesus is asked, "**If you are the Son of God**" .... **IF!** The tempter is clearly questioning Jesus' identity - trying to undermine Jesus' identity by getting him to question that himself. **It's all about identity!**

The first temptation is to use his power to get what he wants for himself, his own survival. "*Turn these stones into bread*" - surely you can do that, Jesus. Come on, be just a little selfish, it won't hurt anyone. After all you're not asking for a banquet, just a piece of bread. Likewise, we are constantly tempted in our consumer society to buy more than we need, to clutter our lives up with more things for our comfort and enjoyment.

In the second and third test the temptation is to control everything, to be a global leader, to be popular, rich and famous - a celebrity. However, through it all Jesus remains clear about who he is. He doesn't need to prove it to the tempter or anyone else. He will not bait God for God already knows what he needs and Jesus trusts in God's care. Jesus has come not for himself but to embody the generosity and compassion of God in his care for the poor, the weak, the sick and the outcast. Jesus constantly chooses to take the path of compassion and

justice. He will not use the powers and processes of the world but rather lives under the sign of the cross, of obedience, and steadfast love.

What shines through these trials is profound integrity. Jesus knows that the path he has chosen will not be an easy one but that does not stop him. In Luke's gospel and Luke's community, Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the prophet of the poor who defends God's name in the community in solidarity with the victims of injustice. And the temptations of Jesus are not unique to him, they also test us – test our identity, our character. We don't need to test whether God loves us, that is assured - rather we are called to love God wholeheartedly and so be a sign of God's steadfast love present in our world.

### **Peter Gador-Whyte**

*Minister in supply*

Image: Ary Scheffer - The Temptation of Christ (1854) - PICRYL

<https://picryl.com/media/ary-scheffer-the-temptation-of-christ-1854-c0cef8>

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## COMING UP

### *Services:*

Thurs 13/3	1.30pm	Mid-week service followed by pancakes
Sunday 16/3	9.30am	Communion Service taken by Rev Peter Gador-Whyte
Sunday 16/3	6pm	House Church at home of Judy Clark

### *Activities:*

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

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## COUNCIL NEWS

Notes from Council meeting held Feb 18 at St Lukes attended by Geoff Boehm, Lachie Farran, Catherine Mullen, Megan Knott, Shaghek Qassabyan and Des Youngusband, chaired by Michael Currie. Council considered:

- Progress on the mission study process for a new minister, sharing of mission study materials. Rev Linley Liersch to attend next meeting.
- Agreement by Western Heights UCA Council for informal meeting to discuss common issues
- Insurance options re proposed heritage overlay
- Controlled key access to Church buildings
- Hosting of Geelong Steering Group at St Lukes, 26 Feb.

Reports received from:

- Pastoral Connections team
- Resourcing team
- Treaty Process Support working group

*Mike Currie (Council Chair)*

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# Congregation News

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP NEWS

Clean Up Australia 2 March 2025



*There were 25 of us from the Combined Uniting Church Environment Groups. Western Heights 8, Belmont 5, St Lukes 5, Wesley 7. Ages ranged from 5 to 95. Worked in the Highton basin area. Everyone came prepared to work hard.*

Weather helped us by not being blisteringly hot, although those few light showers earlier in the day did cause some concern. A few larger items, but mainly about a cubic metre of small litter.

Still picking up a fair bit of broken polystyrene pieces knitted into the grass in the bottom of the main catchment dam. The vegetation high on the embankment of the departing side of Barrabool Rd is looking a bit drought-stressed, but very little litter is trapped in there at present. Not much could be done to improve the appearance of Claire and Jean's favourite litter trap dam. There's a relatively high quantity of litter there at present, but it's well into the grass and reeds in the middle, and it's actually surprisingly wet beyond the embankment and very, very muddy.

Disappointingly, up Barrabool Rd, there were multiple instances of a crockery plate or saucer smashed into many, many pieces in the gutter, usually near a pole on the side of the road. Have the youth dreamt up a new frisbee sport?!

*Contributions from Claire Ziegler, Ian Lawrence, Sue Strong*

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## PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

February began with the disappointment of having to cancel the Midweek service as February 13th was forecast to be 36 degrees with a hot northerly wind, so 'our too hot' policy of 34 degrees. That overlays our services was enacted. This was very disappointing as all participants and team leaders really look forward to our monthly gatherings.

We are already looking forward to the March service where we will be serving pancakes in support of Uniting. The Midweek service attendees conduct two fundraisers each year. Both are in support of Uniting, with the first being in March when we serve pancakes during afternoon tea following our service, the donations we receive combined with those taken at the church Pancake event held on March 2nd are gratefully received by Uniting to continue

their work of supporting those struggling with homelessness plus practical and mental health issues.

Our second fundraiser is at Christmas when we appeal for non-perishable food which is again donated to Uniting, Grovedale to be included in food relief hampers.

\* \* \* \* \*

The story below was shared by a minister when he was asked, why have you spent your whole life in ministry? He begins his parable by holding up a blank sheet of paper saying this page represents. **"My Life" (His life) which has just 4 corners.**



He goes on to explain. While attending an important family lunch he received an urgent phone call to say a close friend had been rushed to hospital. Knowing how much reassurance and comfort his friend received from **PRAYER**, he immediately excused himself from the lunch and went to the hospital to pray with his friend. He just gave away part of his life. His life

had 4 corners he **gave away one** and he now has **5 corners**, and his friend received not **one corner but three.**

A new family had arrived from overseas and were unsure where to get help. So, he invited the family and others from the church to lunch. They were all able to share **FELLOWSHIP** together. The minister said, "I have just given away **another corner of my life** and now I have **6 corners** and the other family has **3 corners** to share with someone else."



Our minister explains that **PASTORAL CARE** has always been a big part of his life. He says, "as I visited the sick, made home visits and comforted the grieving, I realised that I had just given away **more corners of my life** – will there be any corners left??" – yes, he now has **7 corners** to give away, despite having given away **6 already.**

There was one last corner to give away, so he chose to give it to **SERVICE**. Such an easy corner to give away because the bible says – "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" Luke 6:31. So he volunteered to relieve an outback chaplain. Now he finds he has given away all the corners of his life. However he has in fact, gained more than he has given. **He now has 8 more corners** to his life, despite having given away **12 corners.**



The moral of this parable shows how simple it is to think of, and support others, it costs only your time, a smile, a lunch with friends or an offer to help.

MINISTRY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

**Pam Seller**

*Pastoral Care Coordinator*

## PRAYER REQUESTS

### Praise and Thanksgiving

- Almighty God, we give thanks for people and organisations that give time and money to help restore and protect the amazing diversity and beauty of our world.
- We praise you God for the joy of sharing with family and friends. Our thoughts are with those families who are separated by distance or illness.
- We give thanks for the gifts that you have blessed us with. The gifts of fellowship, service, pastoral care and prayer. These are given to members of your 'body' the church, to bring comfort and blessing to those placed in our care.



- We give thanks for those within our fellowship, who give so much of their time and skills to enabling the smooth operation of our church services and surrounding grounds.
- Lord, we pray for opportunities to share your story within our community, through word and deed.

### Prayer Points

- Lord God, our hearts go out to all refugees. Like us they know fear, hope, love, and a long to return to their homes. Help us to reach out and show understanding, compassion and support.
- Our prayers are for all ministers of the word who share the gospel every week. May they be inspired and led by the Holy Spirit as they prepare for worship.
- God of grace, we bring before you our concerns for the world and our society. We pray for justice, peace and for wise leaders to discern the best interests of the people they serve.
- Our thoughts and prayers are for peace of mind, for those friends and family who we know are unwell, in hospital, recovering from surgery, receiving or waiting for treatment or the result of tests.
- Our thoughts and prayers go out to those we know who are facing changing circumstances, such as losing a loved one, a driving licence or having to move into care. Give them patience and strength to cope.

## Banyule Network Theological Hub

*The Banyule Network comprises five congregations in the Ivanhoe, Heidelberg and Rosanna area.*

The Banyule Network Theological Hub is trying something different this year. We'll be offering a unit called "Understanding the UCA" which is designed to introduce the Uniting Church and its distinctive understandings. If you'd like a refresher or introduction to the Uniting Church, then this is a great opportunity to learn.

The course covers several different areas of study:

- History of the formation of UCA
- Theological foundations of the Basis of Union
- The place and role of key aspects of the Church's life and witness
- Understanding the Councils and Ministries of the UCA
- Understanding the UCA's commitment to First Nations People and Intercultural Ministry
- Act2

The course will have 4 evening classes that can be done online, but we will organise a time during the day to go through the course materials prior to the class. If people prefer, we can also do the online class together - we're happy to make it as accessible as we can.

The time commitment is only 4 tutorials in semester one - 25th Feb, 18th Mar, 29th Apr, and 27th May at 7-9pm. The information in the unit covers:

The enrolment details for the course are attached.

<https://events.humanitix.com/understanding-the-uca-xkjcix8r>

For further information please contact David Landis-Morse 0409 180 176 or [david.landis-morse@banyuleuc.org.au](mailto:david.landis-morse@banyuleuc.org.au)

*Contributed by Megan Knott*

# *St. Luke's Collectibles*

*Raising funds for Refugee Ministry*



So much has happened since our Dec news. Sit back and read, enjoy, and share the story!

During January, we took time off from opening to the public, and reviewed/rearranged the Collectibles Chapel stock. During this time we continued to provide material aid to families from Pakistan, Syria, Karen, Afghanistan, and Iraq. A newly arrived Congolese family of eleven were able to stock their home with many of our donated items. We are blessed to have Shaghek Qassabyan, our Community Ministry Worker, with her many languages – supporting people in need with material aid, banking arrangements, Centrelink queries, or connections to power, while extending the hands of friendship.

**Hospitality:** A warm welcome was extended to another Probus Group with morning tea and tour of the Collectibles Chapel, and hearing the story about our Ministry to Refugees, a journey that commenced in 2005.

**Volunteering:** Two people from within the wider community have asked to join our 'Team'. We are looking forward to sharing the journey with them.

**February Open Days:** Those who attended, will remember that the heat was extreme - 39 degrees tested everyone. However, once again we had bumper sales which confirms our belief that when purchases are made, the purchaser knows that all funds are used to support Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and people in need.

**MARCH OPENING** Friday 21st March from 12 noon until 4pm.  
Saturday 22nd March from 9am till lunchtime.

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

We are God blessed as we remember to share our time, talents and resources amongst refugee and asylum seekers and needy people within our community and beyond.

We give thanks for those who connect with us, giving donations to support people in need.

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



### **Our Covenant in the Uniting Church**

The Uniting Church covenant relationship with First Peoples is at the heart of our Church. It is a commitment to walk together with our First Nations siblings in Christ in their struggle for justice. In this covenant relationship, we acknowledge the ownership and sovereignty of First Nations people in this land and commit to First People's self-determination, truth-telling and working together for reconciliation.

In 1994 the Uniting Church in Australia formally entered into a Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress so that together we may contribute to a more just church and nation.

### **OUR COVENANTING JOURNEY**

Our covenanting journey began with the coming together of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

### **Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress**

Through a series of gatherings in the early 1980s, a vision developed among Aboriginal and Islander Christians from across Australia to come together to form a National Congress. In 1985, the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia unanimously welcomed the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC).

### **Entering a Covenant**

In 1994 the Uniting Church in Australia formally entered into a Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress so that together we may contribute to a more just church and nation. On behalf of the Second Peoples of the UCA, the Uniting Church's 7th President Dr Jill Tabart read a statement acknowledging past wrongs and making a new commitment to the relationship. On behalf of First Peoples of UAICC, Congress Chairperson Pastor Bill Hollingsworth responded acknowledging past pain and looking to the future with hope. He presented a Covenant Painting to the UCA.

### **Acknowledgement and Apology - Stolen Generation**

In 1996 the Assembly Standing Committee on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia acknowledged the trauma and ongoing harm caused by the racist policies and practice of separating Aboriginal children from their parents and community. Further the Church apologised to the Traditional Owners of Croker Island for taking over a large part of their ancestral lands without permission to provide care for children separated from their parents and for falsely leading them to believe that Croker Island would be their permanent home.

This acknowledgement and apology urged further action at state and national levels, and in 1997 the full national gathering the Assembly expressed its appreciation to Sir Ronald Wilson and Michael Dodson for the 'Bringing them Home' report and its recommendations. The Church committed to supporting the Report's recommendations, affirmed the 1996 apology and committed to advocate and act to seek justice, healing and reconciliation.

### **Preamble to the Constitution**

In 2009 the Assembly of the UCA passed a resolution to revise the Preamble to the Constitution, acknowledging: Aboriginal and Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia; the tragic colonial history of injustice, violence and dispossession of First Peoples and the Church's complicity in this history; the First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony.

Sovereignty

The 15th Assembly of the UCA held in 2018 resolved “to affirm the First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Islander Peoples, are sovereign peoples in this land”. In recognising this fundamental truth, the UCA affirmed sovereignty as described in the Statement from the Heart, as a “spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land...and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”. Likewise, it acknowledged that this sovereignty “has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.”

### **Living out the Covenant**

Uniting Church congregations and presbyteries are encouraged to build relationships with local First Peoples communities, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which they meet at all gatherings and to work together for reconciliation with and justice for First Peoples of Australia.

*Contributed by Des Younghusband*

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## **Readings for the Month**

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
March 16 <b>Lent 2</b>	Gen 15:1-12,17-18	Ps 27	Phil 3:17-4:1	Lk 13:31-35
March 23 <b>Lent 3</b>	Is 55:1-9	Ps 63:1-8	1 Cor 10:1-13	Lk 13:1-9
March 30 <b>Lent 4</b>	Jos 5:9-12	Ps 32	2 Cor 5:16-21	Lk 15:1-3,11-32
April 6 <b>Lent 5</b>	Is 43:16-21	Ps 126	Phil 3:4b-14	Jn 12:1-8
April 13 <b>Palm Sunday</b>	Is 50:4-9a	Ps 118:1-2,19-29	Phil 2:5-11	Lk 19:28-40