

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

April 2025



Don't forget daylight finishes this week

Peter's Pen



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Palm Sunday – with people waving branches singing 'All glory praise and honour to thee redeemer King', suggests a carnival flavour to the day, and in many ways it was like that. Certainly, the Gospel writers present it in that fashion. But we also know the darker side of the story as the week unfolds from that glorious height of joy to the utter disbelief and horror of Good Friday.

However, Palm Sunday has also become - over time - a day of protest against injustice, where the churches have been in the forefront of challenging inhumanity and discrimination by peaceful protest through the streets of our cities. In democracy there will always need to be checks and balances to authority, and the church has an important role – not to be party political – but rather to affirm and encourage our politicians where affirmation is warranted but also to challenge policies that undermine our common humanity.

Like his cousin John the Baptist, Jesus was not afraid to challenge injustice and the corruption of power, and often people refer to the time when Jesus upturned the tables in the Temple as an indication of at least one dramatic action that Jesus took. However, all through his ministry, we see him responding to the very real needs of people let down by the system, pushed to the edge and marginalised. So he gets the name as someone who spends time with prostitutes and sinners the riff-raff of society.

The Palm Sunday demonstrations are but one expression of the Churches concern to challenge the abuse of power in different fields, and to remind us all that the Christian Faith is not just about our personal spirituality. It is about that but there will always be more to our faith – that will stretch us at times beyond our comfort zone – to grow into the fullness of God. And that fullness is about the wholeness not just of people, but of societies and the whole creation. Our Faith engages us in a very big vision and hope for the world.

Often in evangelical circles we hear the verse quoted, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' It's a powerful verse but we often overlook the depth of its vision – it is a vision of the world, the whole creation made new. Yes, that does involve the transformation of individual people, people learning to stand up for the Gospel and live with integrity and courage in the face of injustice and cruelty, and to do so as people of faith, people who trust in the goodness and mercy of God.

As we prepare to enter Holy Week I invite you to join us for at least some of the services we have planned. Maundy Thursday - April 17th at 7.00pm, Good Friday – April 18th at 9.30am and Easter Day at our normal time. I look forward to seeing you there.

Peter Gador-Whyte

Minister in supply

COMING UP

Services:

Thursday	10/4	12:30 - 4:00pm	Midweek Worship
Thursday	17/4	7pm	Maundy Thursday
Good Friday	18/4	9.30am	
Easter Day	20/4	9:30am	

Activities:

Saturday	5/4	2 - 6pm	Armenian Community Event
Monday	7/4	7:30 - 9:30pm	The Geelong Chorale
Wednesday	9/4	6:30 - 8:30pm	Geelong String Quartet Rehearsal/Concert
Friday	11/4	12 - 2pm	Sewing group
Friday	11/4	4:30 - 7:30pm	Messy Church
Tuesday	22/4	5 - 7:00pm	Environment Action Group

COUNCIL NEWS

Statement from Church Council April 1, 2025

As secretary of the Church Council I am providing an update on where we are as a Church Council. Earlier this month our Chairperson, Mike Currie, was advised by his doctor to take leave from all his responsibilities for a few months.

Firstly, and importantly, we pray for Mike's recovery to full health as he takes time to look after himself and, as a Council, we will support him over this time.

Secondly, I need to stress that, over this period, without Mike, the Church Council consists of only five people: three new members: Catherine Mullen, Des Younghusband, as treasurer and me, as well as continuing members, Geoff Boehm and Shaghek Quassabyan.

I identify this because we are being asked to lead you in a faith journey into our future and ask for your prayers for the Council at this time. As a congregation we are now in the time of discernment as we prepare ourselves for the future and hopefully/prayerfully getting a new minister.

It is a time to ask the question about where God is leading both the Presbytery and congregation and what ministry is needed for the next phase of our journey as a congregation. The Presbytery will come alongside us for a while and discern the future.

The Presbytery process is a phased process which includes firstly a Mission Study, leading to Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) process, finalised by the Call. It is a little different from previous selection processes that may have been undertaken by this congregation. Our Mission Study leader is Rev Linley Liersch – MDSE Presbytery Minister aided by Rev Kel Hodge, Minister in Lara.

We have just started The Mission Study having had a meeting with our Presbytery Ministers to explain how the process works. The Mission Study involves the Council gathering information about our journey over the past five years, including the congregation thinking about the particular gifts and skills of ministry needed for your context. All responses from the congregation will be gathered and will be presented by the Presbytery and Church Council at a Congregational Mission Study Conversation.

At the end of the Mission Study, the report will be presented to Presbytery. If the recommendation is that the ministry vacancy should be filled and Presbytery agrees, then the Joint Nominating Committee process will begin. The Call Process is the final stage.

It is true that there is a shortage of ministers in the Uniting Church at this time. The Presbytery may invite congregations to collaborate with a neighbouring congregation as we plan for the future ministry and mission. This includes thinking about how our vision and mission fits in with the Presbytery's Strategy and Vision of 'Regenerating the Church' and seeking all congregations to be vibrant, diverse, collaborative and disciple-making communities, in the Geelong region.

As a starting point, we ask the congregation to enter into a time of prayer for this discernment process.

Over the next few months, we will be asking the congregation to contribute their thoughts about our vision and mission. You will be updated as we proceed through this process and if you have questions, please ask one of the Church Council Members.

Megan Knott

Secretary

St Luke's Church Council

Congregation News

GEELONG CLIMATE ACTION GROUP NEWS

The Effects of Climate Change on Wildlife and Landscapes- how do we respond faithfully to the challenge?

The Climate Action Group of the Geelong Climate Action Group of Uniting Churches is hosting a presentation and discussion led by a senior scientist who has devoted his career to conserving Nature.

Emeritus Prof Michael Clarke (see below) will share his understanding of some of the current challenges to the natural world posed by climate change and how he, as a Christian, sees this connecting with his faith and his responsibility to care for the planet.



The presentation will be followed by time for questions and discussion.

Date and Time: Wednesday 14th May, 7:15-9pm

Venue: Western Heights Uniting Church, 31 Douglass Street Herne Hill, 3218



Emeritus Professor Mike Clarke is a zoologist who has studied the ecology and conservation biology of birds, reptiles, mammals, fish and plants. He leads research at La Trobe University, along with his colleagues Profs Andrew Bennett and Jim Radford into the impact of fire on fauna. He also maintains an ongoing research interest in threatened species and threatening processes.

He was the Convener of the Scientific Advisory Committee on the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act to the Victorian Minister for the Environment for five years. In 2007 he was awarded the DL Serventy Medal by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union for his outstanding contribution to the scientific literature in ornithology.

In 2010 he was an expert witness in fire ecology at the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. He was the Head of the School of Life Sciences from 2011-2019. In 2014 his research on fire ecology with Prof Bennett was one of three finalists for a Eureka Prize in Environmental Research. In 2023 he was elected as a Fellow of Birdlife Australia, the highest award available in the discipline, for distinguished service to ornithology. He remains actively involved in research and ensuring conservation policy is based on the best available evidence. He recently served as a member of the Board of Directors of Parks Victoria for three and half years. He is a Fellow of ISCAST (Christianity and Science in Conversation).



Professor Michael Clarke

<https://scholars.latrobe.edu.au/mfclarke>

PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

Once again, St Luke's will be an election centre for the coming Federal election on May 3. This is a great opportunity to support our refugees and other needs of the Church through our sausage sizzle and cake stall. Unfortunately our convenors will be unavailable due to illness so we are calling on anyone prepared to assist with setting up and managing our stalls. If you can assist, please contact Pam on 0407557933 or Mike on 0418538019. Many thanks!

Welcome to our March reflection. March is always a busy month for Pastoral Connections, and the start of 2025 has been no different. It began with Judy Clark and her team serving Pancakes at Morning tea on Sunday the 2nd of March.



*Alice and Oliver
choosing just the right
pancakes.*



Everyone enjoys pausing to make their correct topping choice.



That was followed on the 5th of March by Pancakes at Kinder. Mark and Pam, supported by Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte, (our interim minister) served twenty children and their teachers. Peter shared a story prior to our serving. As normal the children select from the healthy toppings offered like maple syrup, jam, lemon and sugar, honey, chocolate or rainbow sprinkles. As the sprinkles dwindled in the jar, a couple of brave children chose jam and sprinkles. Thankfully we were able to escape prior to their rising sugar levels kicking in.

Then on 13th March following worship and during afternoon tea, the midweek team served pancakes to approximately thirty ladies and gentlemen. A total amount of \$462.40 has already been forwarded to Uniting to support the work of those caring for those in need in our city. A thankyou has been received from Karen Mather, Coordinator at Uniting Norlane Services, Thanking the congregation for nominating them.

Pastoral Connections also hosted Ash Wednesday service on 5th March, led by Rev. Peter. 17 people attended. It was a meaningful, reflective service to open the season of Lent. How fortunate are we to have the opportunity to take time out, as we lead into Easter to stop, and hear the voice of the Lord speak to us.

In late February, St. Luke had the privilege of hosting the City of Greater Geelong Steering Committee. Pastoral Connections were asked to provide supper. Thanks to Bron and Darcy Seller who were available to help. Slices were provided by Carole Findlay, Bron and Pam Seller and were appreciated.

Pam Seller

Pastoral Care Coordinator

PRAYER REQUESTS

Praise and Thanksgiving

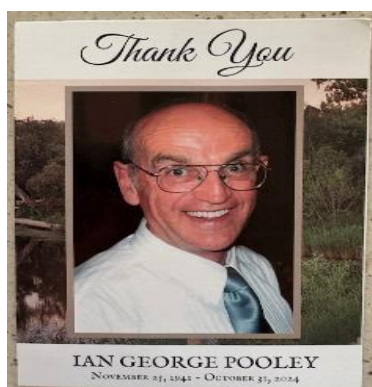
- Almighty God, we rejoice in the generosity of our congregation who donated \$462.40 at our pancake fundraisers to be assigned to Uniting Norlane Services.
- Praise God for the interim ministry of Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte. May he be encouraged and supported as he ministers to our Congregation, during this time of transition.
- Praise God for family and friends who support in times of crisis, either by card, text, a call or providing a meal.
- We celebrate the colours of Autumn, and the appearance of early bulbs.
- We give praise and thanks for our Geelong medical system. For our hospitals, Doctors, Paramedics and nurses, along with those providing meals, cleaning and many others who work behind the scene to provide essential services.



Prayer Points

- Lord, we pray for our Church Council as they work through the process of seeking a minister. Pray for guidance, strength for the journey and support from the congregation.
- Loving father we bring before you the thousands of people around the world caught up in conflict areas, and who see no hope or future. We pray that food, shelter and medical supplies will be made available for them.
- Lord, we ask for guidance as we share the Easter story with those around us. Help us to be aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of others especially our refugee friends who can feel very isolated.
- Our thoughts and prayers are for the many caught up in the recent Queensland cyclone and heavy rains that have followed. We pray especially for farmers who seem always to suffer the most. We pray that there will be people around to comfort and support.
- Gracious God, strengthen each of us, to be agents of encouragement each day.
- Lord Jesus, restore and renew us with your grace, and guide us to serve others with love and prayer.

A Special Thank You From Jenny and Family



Thank you from Jenny to the Congregation.

St. Luke's Collectibles

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry

Shaghek Qassabyan, our Community Ministry Worker, does an excellent job supporting people in need with material aid, banking arrangements, Centrelink queries, or household queries, while extending the hands of friendship.



Hospitality: A warm welcome was extended to the Barwarre Retirement Village 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.

During March: We accepted an invitation from Wesley Uniting Church, to share our Collectibles story with members of their Afternoon Fellowship.

March Open Days: Open Days for Collectibles are usually held every 3rd Friday afternoon and the Saturday morning. We continue to welcome new shoppers, people who come to enjoy all our collections, people who simply come – bringing their memories of the 'good ole days'. However, once again we had good 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.

April Closed for Sales:

During April, Wednesdays will continue to operate and receive drive through donations.

Barwon Trefoil Guides: As a part of this Group's Service within the community, the Guides clean our donated tarnished silverware in preparation for sale. They come every second Wednesday and we are delighted to welcome them and give thanks for their good works.

Wanted: We are seeking donations of Single Bed Doonas. With winter soon to arrive, blankets are also sought after.

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

Rae Anderson 0413 888 884 and Linda Salamy Collectibles Co-ordinators
St Luke's Uniting Church, 174 Barrabool Road, Highton 3216.

Drive through donations are received each Wednesday from 9.30 am till 12 noon.

Rae Anderson and Linda Salamy

St Luke's Highton, Collectibles Joint Co-ordinators



PRESBYTERY

The following comes from a workshop titled *Covenanting, Truth, Treaty, Voice*, run at a recent Presbytery of Port Phillip West Meeting.

Covenanting

Jill Tabbart on July 10, 1994, as the Uniting Church's first female President, joined Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) chairperson Pastor Bill Hollingsworth to sign the document that joined the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia and the Congress in a covenant.



Jill Tabbart

Jill says "We wanted the Church (both First and Second Peoples members) to work together towards awareness-raising truth-telling resulting in national and state policy changes, to increase understanding between First and Second Peoples in every locality, and to build relationships which respected the right of First Nations People to move towards self-determination in the Church and wider society."

Living The Covenant Locally

Living the Covenant Locally is a grassroots movement, made up of congregations, faith communities, schools and agencies, who are growing in understanding, encouraging others, connecting with UAICC and/or other First Nations Peoples locally and who then are equipped to take action, walking together as First and Second Peoples, in binding covenant relationship. The Walking Together as First and Second People's Circles invite you to explore listed resources below for study, worship, advocacy and more."

Series Of Studies

- Listen and Learn (Introductory Resources), 'First Australians Documentary' History
- Going Deeper (Bible and Theological Resources) UCA Covenant
- Action (Liturgy, Advocacy, Partnering).

Presbytery asks congregations to help grow this grassroots movement, committed to deepening relationship, as you Live the Covenant Locally



<https://uniting.church/livingthecovenantlocally/>

What Are You Doing Locally For Our Covenant?

This can include;

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Plaques
- AIATSIS maps
- Special services - day of mourning, NAIDOC week
- Walks on country
- Indigenous Symbols in worship
- Knowing the indigenous lands and story
- Relationships with first nations people

Truth, Treaty, Voice

The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's support for the Treaty has been long standing. In 1987, the (then) Synod of Victoria made resolutions supporting the design of "a treaty which recognises prior Aboriginal ownership of Australian land, and which will begin to address the continued dispossession and needs of Australian Aboriginal people". In 2019 the Synod resolved to support the 2017 Statement from the Heart, which includes a call for a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement making between governments and First Nations.

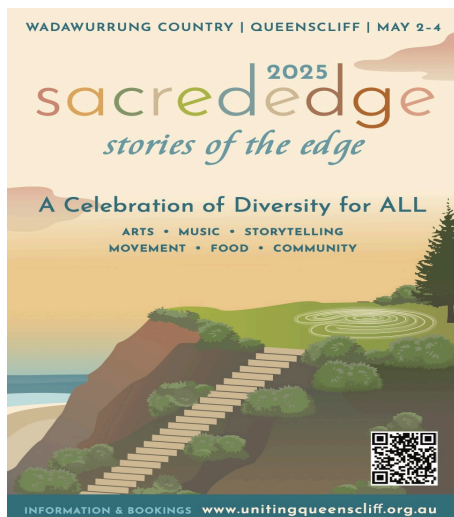
The First People's Assembly of Victoria, which is a form of elected Voice for First Peoples in Victoria, called on the Victorian Government in 2020 to establish a truth and justice process. The Yoorrook Justice Commission was subsequently formed in 2021. The Commission is leading a process of truth telling, which is a significant step for helping the whole community to understand First Peoples' stories and experience. The recommendations of the Commission will contribute to any agreement-making which follows.

At this stage, the form of a Treaty or Treaties to be developed within Victoria is unknown, and it is not known what kind of direct involvement that churches may have. However, it may be hoped that the process of treaty-making will help to build community as it works to articulate our obligations to one another.

At its **August** 2024 meeting the Synod Standing Committee adopted the Statement of Support for Treaty.

Contributed by Des Younghusband

SACRED EDGE FESTIVAL QUEENSCLIFF



Tickets are ON SALE NOW for Sacrededge May 2-4, 2025. We look forward to our Sacrededge Community returning to Queenscliff; welcoming back familiar faces and welcoming new friends to the space.

UNITINGCARE FEDERAL ELECTION 2025 POLICY PLATFORM

A stronger, fairer Australia for all. Together, we can.

Addressing The Cost-Of-Living Crisis: A National Imperative

Australians are navigating an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis marked by soaring inflation, rising rents and financial pressures that are preventing many from affording basic necessities. Despite low unemployment rates, increasing numbers of Australians are unable to make ends meet, leading to heightened anxiety, social fragmentation and strain on essential services. Vulnerable groups, including those relying on income support, facing unemployment, violence, housing instability, or otherwise dependent on community services and care infrastructure, bear the greatest burden.

While urgent action is needed to support struggling households, the government must also take a long-term approach to addressing the systemic drivers of inflation. A strong economy should work for everyone, not just a few, which means tackling the root causes of disadvantage and ensuring economic growth is equitable and leads to shared prosperity. By addressing the underlying structural issues that are amplifying price shocks in the current environment, we can create a future where wealth is fairly distributed, no one is left behind, and all Australians can afford life's essentials.

The affordability crisis reminds us of the need for bold policies that put people first. Ensuring a strong and adequate safety net and investing in a robust care and support economy are critical priorities to boost community resilience, wellbeing and opportunity for all.

UnitingCare Australia affirms the importance of every person's right to live with dignity and wellbeing. We believe a strong and compassionate response to the cost-of-living crisis is not only possible, but essential. By prioritising people and the care and support infrastructure they rely on in times of need, we can build a society where no one is left behind and where all Australians have the opportunity to thrive.

Readings for the Month

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
April 13 Palm Sunday	Is 50:4-9a	Ps 118:1-2,19-29	Phil 2:5-11	Lk 19:28-40
April 20 Easter Day	Acts 10:34-43	Ps 118:1-2,14-24	1 Cor 15:19-26	Jn 20:1-18
April 27 Easter 2	Acts 5:27-32	Ps 150	Rev 1:4-18	Jn 20:19-31
May 4 Easter 3	Acts 9:1-6	Ps 30	Rev 5:11-14	Jn 21:1-19
May 11 Easter 4	Acts 9:36-43	Ps 23	Rev 7:9-17	Jn 10:22-30