

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

May 2025



Reminder: Service this Sunday 11/5 is at Wesley UCA 10am



Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/53365791776>

Peter's Pen

One of the powerful themes in our Gospel readings during the season of Easter is forgiveness. The Gospel reading for the third Sunday of Easter recounts the story of the disciples who have gone back to Galilee as they had been instructed to do, on account of the women's testimony that the risen Jesus would meet them there. However, the story suggests that the disciples are a bit under a cloud. They are in Galilee, but Jesus isn't anywhere to be seen. I often walk early in the morning and invariably out on the Point Lonsdale pier there would be several people fishing and often not catching much. Fishermen are generally used to waiting, waiting for a catch out on the lake, but Peter in particular finds this waiting hard. He's an action man, he needs to be doing something, filling his time with some activity to take his mind from going over and over again the events of night he denied knowing Jesus. That would have tormented Peter, I'm sure. How would you feel letting down your best friend and mentor? Could you forgive yourself? That was Peter's struggle. And how could you face that friend, because that's what's in store for Peter. Jesus says he's going to meet them in Galilee, but what's he going to say or do with Peter?

Life can be painful at times, especially when we have the courage to face what we have done which has damaged someone else or find ourselves backed into a corner not wanting to face it and can't find a way out.

So Peter chooses to go back to fishing, which is what Jesus called him away from. Jesus called him to something bigger and more demanding that threatens to stretch Peter out of his comfort zone, and part of that stretching is learning to face our dark side, our failures, our lack of nerve, our cowardice. Accepting that we aren't perfect, that we get things wrong, we

upset others by what we say or do and learning to take that on the chin is a way of growing up and learning to be more humane and accepting in our treatment of others. In the first story of creation at the end of each day God looks back on the work God has done and names it 'good'. God doesn't say 'it's perfect', rather that it is 'good' or wholesome, or fit for purpose.

Well, at this moment in Peter's life he doesn't feel fit for purpose and chooses to go back to what he knows. And it seems that the other disciples are happy to join him. He's still very clearly the leader of the group, and maybe they all share Peter's predicament, wondering what will happen when they do meet Jesus. But going back to fishing doesn't work. They work hard all night, but don't even catch seaweed let alone a shrimp. It's like they are stumbling around in the dark trying to find their slippers and the bedside light bulb has blown so they are down on their knees searching and come up empty handed. Their lives like their nets are empty? If you ever feel like that then you are in good company.

In this dark, empty scene everything changes with the rising of the sun, which is John's way of reminding us of the rising of the Son of God. A stranger is on the shore who asks them if they have caught anything and when they yell back NO! in weary and possibly angry voices, the stranger tells them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat and when they do haul in the biggest catch ever. Everything changes with Jesus, after all he is the Way, the Good Shepherd, the Light of the world, who gathers them around a fire on the beach to warm them and feed them calming their fears, reminding them of the steadfast love that he holds for them, for us. And then he takes Peter aside, away from prying eyes, although John allows us to listen in. What Jesus does is ask Peter? 'Do you love me?' That's what is most important, and each time Peter replies in the affirmative, he's given back his call to fish for people, to care, to love, to forgive. What's more Jesus does the same to us all.'

Peter Gador-Whyte

Minister in supply

COMING UP

Services:

Thursday	8/5	1:30pm	Midweek Worship
Sunday	11/5	10am	Congregational visit to Wesley, Yarra St
Sunday	18/5	9:30am	Communion service Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Sunday	18/5	7pm	House Church. Home of Judy Clark
Sunday	25/5	9:30am	Lay led service (Mission survey review)
Sunday	1/6	9:30am	Sunday service Rev Ikani Vaitohi

Activities:

Wednesday	7/5	1:30pm	Coffee'n'Chat @ Brioche
Friday	9/5	12 - 2pm	Sewing group
Saturday	10/5	1 - 3pm	Repair Cafe
Friday	16/5	12 - 4pm	Collectibles
Saturday	17/5	9am - lunch	Collectibles

COUNCIL NEWS

As Mike continues on sick leave, the Council continues to meet in his absence and fulfil the important tasks of the Church Council.

As we enter fully into the task of endeavouring to find a minister, we have been blessed to have had the ongoing Supply Ministry of Rev Peter Gador-Whyte. Peter has put a lot of thought and preparation into the services, often beyond what he needed to, such as preparing props to deepen our Worship. This was evident in the moving Easter Services. Wasn't it wonderful to be part of the Baptism Service for little Edson Brown, who seemed to also enjoy the ceremony when Peter held him up to the congregation and Edson held his hands out wide to the congregation. Thank you Peter for leading us over the past months!

We were sorry to see Peter have to finish his Supply Ministry here at the request of Presbytery. We now welcome Rev. Ikani Vaitohi, who will start his ongoing Supply Ministry on May 5th.

The Council's main focus at present is on the Presbytery process required for a new Minister. We are in the first stage of the Presbytery's process, the Mission Study, where we are gathering information about where we are at now, our stress points, where we want to be in five years and what our specific Mission points are.

We have been pleased with the responses that have been provided by the congregation in answering the Questionnaire which has been provided. As we endeavour to capture as many responses as possible, we are just awaiting the opportunity for the Mid-week service worshippers and those that have been sent online. We are endeavouring to get as many responses as possible. At the same time the Council is gathering information required by the Presbytery. When the responses are collated, there will be an opportunity to consider them soon as a worshipping community.

The Council has put in place a Worship plan for the next few months which will include two Uniting Church celebrations, where we meet with other congregants at other local churches. We have also included another opportunity to engage with Wesley in shared worship, as well as a couple of lay-led Worship services. This provides us with an opportunity to consider other worship styles and Churches, so that, when we consider our future, as part of the Mission Study, we can make more informed choices.

The Worship plan is included below. If a service is planned for another Worshipping centre, please let someone know if you require assistance to get to any of them. There will be opportunities available.

We move forward together in faith to determine our future as the caring and active community of St Luke's.

"Let's live boldly as a people of new life, strong in courage and relentless in love. May the joy of the risen Christ bring you peace and renew your spirits."

Rev. Charissa Suli (UCA President- Easter Message)

"The Westerly" newsletter Presbytery of Port Phillip West

Megan Knott

Secretary

St Luke's Church Council

PLANNED WORSHIP SERVICES

Rev Ikani Vaitohi – Supply Minister

May 4	Minister (Bruce Waldron)	July 6	Minister
May 9	Mid-week service Minister	July 10	Mid-week service (Minister)
May 11	Congregation visit to Wesley	July 13	Minister
May 18	Minister (Communion)	July 20	Minister required (Communion)
May 25	Lay led (Mission survey)	July 27	Lay led service
June 1	Minister required	Aug 3	Minister
June 8	Pentecost service @Belmont	Aug 10	Visit Barrabool (TBC)
June 12	Mid-week service Minister	Aug 14	Mid-week service Minister
June 15	Minister (Communion)	Aug 17	Minister (Communion)
June 22	UCA anniversary service @ WH	Aug 24	Lay led service
June 29	Minister	Aug 31	Minister

Rev Ikani Vaitohi

Supply Minister

Congregation News

ENVIRONMENT GROUP NEWS

About 30 people from the Geelong Uniting Churches Environment Groups (St. Luke's, Belmont, Wesley and Western Heights), visited Cleanaway's Recycling and Recovery Centre at Laverton on 29th April. This is the facility where all our recycling rubbish in our yellow bins ends up.

The contents of our commingled or recycling bin is taken by Cleanaway to sorting facilities called Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). There, items are separated by material – paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, steel, and aluminium.

Machinery such as optical scanners and conveyor belts are used alongside manual sorting by staff to separate different materials.

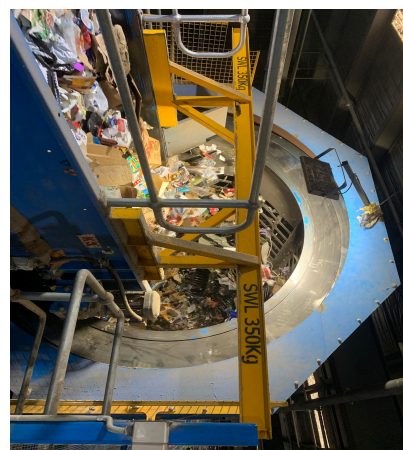
Once the sorting process is complete, the material is sent on to reputable onshore and offshore recyclers to be reused in manufacturing new products. Here, we explain what happens to each material, and the new life we can expect.

Paper recycling

Paper is shredded and mixed with water to create pulp, followed by de-inking, a process which removes ink from the original product. The pulp then goes on to be manufactured into new paper products. You may have seen products such as printing paper, toilet paper, and cardboard packaging made from recycled materials available to purchase.

Plastic recycling

Cleanaway has continued the upgrade of its Laverton Material Recovery Facility (MRF) centre in Melbourne with an investment of more than \$1 million in new equipment to increase recycling of plastic.



Chief Operating Officer Brendan Gill says the investment, supported by up to \$500,000 of funding from Sustainability Victoria, includes the purchase of new conveyors and optical sorting equipment and the optimisation of existing equipment at the plastic recycling facility at Laverton.

Brendan says the new equipment will allow the separation of plastics such as coloured PET bottles and plastic trays commonly used for meat and fruit, from mixed residual plastic, reducing the volumes of plastic being sent to landfill and increasing the recovery of valuable commodities.

"At Cleanaway we see all waste as a resource, so this investment supports our objective of creating a circular economy in which waste is reduced and materials are reused and recycled, rather than sent to landfill," he says.

"Recovering, finding markets for, and selling, single polymers like coloured PET plastic not only creates value but is consistent with our mission of making a sustainable future possible."

Plastics are shredded into pellets, which become the building blocks for new plastic items when used in the manufacture of new products.

Container Deposit Scheme across the country play a role contributing to 'bottle to bottle' recycling. The pellets, derived from the recycled bottles, are small plastic pieces that can be used to create new bottles from, such as those produced through Circular Plastics Australia (PET) a joint venture between Pact Group Holdings Ltd, Cleanaway, Asahi Beverages, Coca-Cola Euro-pacific Partners.

Aside from bottles, the pellets can also be turned into flakes where they can then produce other items such as polar fleece jackets and stationery.

Steel and aluminium recycling

You might have aluminium cans at home and wonder what happens when they're placed into a recycling bin with plastics, or returned via a Container Deposit Scheme.

Steel can easily be sorted from other recyclable materials with the help of industrial-scale magnets at facilities. Steel can be melted down at high temperatures, and paint and coatings are removed. They then become processed into ingots, which are blocks of pure material.

The recycled aluminium and steel ingots could be turned into a new can, or even used to make parts for cars and aeroplanes.

Glass recycling

Glass is often the last material to remain on a recycling conveyor belt for a variety of reasons.

Lighter materials are generally sorted first and being denser than many other recyclables like plastic and paper, it is easier to handle glass later in the process. Furthermore, glass can break easily and pose a safety hazard to staff, so specialist equipment is required. Once separated from other materials, glass items such as bottles and jars are crushed at facilities and undergo a cleaning process to remove labels, caps and remaining liquids.

The glass is then melted at a high temperature and can be formed into new products such as glass bottles with high-grade material, and road bases with lower-grade material.

Outcomes

The above are examples of closing the recycling loop and helping work toward a circular economy in Australia, where needing to use new virgin materials is avoided.



Cleanaway is a big contributor to resource recovery in Australia, and in the 2023 financial year, we have recovered 431 kilo tonnes (kt) of paper, and 32 kt of steel and aluminium.

To give you an idea of the scale of these amounts, 1 kilo tonne = 1,000,000 kilos, or the weight of two and a half large commercial airplanes, showing the power of recycling correctly to preserve precious resources and prevent materials ending up in landfill.

We can all play a part in ensuring recycling outcomes are maximised by putting items in the right bins and helping avoid contamination.

REPAIR CAFE NEWS

On May 10th at Repair Cafe we celebrated the work of two of our long serving volunteers.

Ian Allen and Doug Jackson have been with us for several years now working tirelessly on repairing so many different items it is miraculous.

Over the seven years that the Repair Cafe has been running, we have saved over 9,000 kgs from landfill, a tremendous effort by all volunteers, our environmental angels. Our thanks to Doug and Ian for all their time and effort.

Claire Ziegler, Catherine Mullen and Jenny Pooley.



PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

As always the month seems to race by and we find ourselves already in early May, following our focus on Easter.

The bible story of Easter tells of a journey that commenced at Christmas with the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem and continued, until much later when we find the disciples sheltering in a secret upper room in Jerusalem. Suddenly there came a sound like a mighty rushing wind that filled the whole room, and descended on them, empowering them to begin their own powerful ministry to the world. Like in those early times our St Luke's Easter journey each year is one of reliving that ancient story.

Again this year St Luke's observed each of the Easter traditions, by serving pancakes close to Shrove Tuesday, (signifying the beginning of Lent), to the Kinder children, and the Midweek and Sunday services.



Kinder Pancakes



Church Pancakes

We observed Ash Wednesday with an evening service, and Palm Sunday with a celebration of hymns and praise. Maundy Thursday was a time of reflection and the importance of humility, selflessness and service to others. This was clearly shown by Jesus when he washed the disciples' feet. Good Friday was a solemn day of mourning and personal reflection reminding us of the sacrifice God made for each of us. This was followed by Easter Sunday, when we celebrated the risen Christ, through storytelling and scripture.

In 50 days time we will celebrate Pentecost, the time when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples enabling them to preach and teach the message of God's wonderful gift.

Today we too are blessed with the same empowering power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses and to share his story in our community and with those whose lives we touch.



Ash Wednesday



Palm Sunday



Maundy Thursday



Good Friday



Easter Sunday

Upon reflection, April was a very busy month for Pastoral Connections. Having supported the Easter services with prayer and practical support, we experienced many pastoral needs and concerns that have kept our team and the prayer link very busy.

If you have, or know of, a pastoral need please contact one of the team viz Judy, Valerie, Barbara C, Shaghek or Pam.

We acknowledge the sad passing of Val Mackenzie on the 11th April. Val shared her many talents at St. Luke's, and with the wider community, through her voice, piano skills, friendship and positive attitude. REST IN PEACE VAL.

Pam Seller

Pastoral Care Coordinator

PRAYER REQUESTS

Praise and Thanksgiving

- We give thanks on ANZAC day (and always,) as we are reminded of the contribution, suffering and sacrifice made by so many serving men and women during the great world wars. We also acknowledge those men, women and their families who still serve in our forces today.
- Praise God for Rev. Peter who has led our Palm Sunday, Mid-week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. May the reassurance and joy of the risen Lord fill our hearts with love for others.
- As we pause on Mothers' Day, we give thanks to all mothers. The many who are no longer with us but have left special memories and traditions for us to treasure and pass on to our families, along with those who, today continue to share their wisdom and love with us.
- Praise God for family and friends who support us in times of crisis, either by card, text, a phone call or providing a meal.
- We celebrate the life and witness of Val Mackenzie who passed away on 11th April, 2025.

Prayer Points

- Lord, we pray for our Church Council. For Catherine, Megan, Des, Geoff and Shaghek as they work through the process of seeking a minister. Pray for The Mission Study ongoing and for reflection as to what our future vision and mission should be, for the next 5 years. We uplift Mike as he continues to seek treatment for his pain.
- Loving father we bring before you those people caught up in the turmoil of war. In countries like Ukraine, Palestine, Yemeni, South Sudan, Gaza and many more. Keep us aware of the needs of these people as we continue to pray for them.
- Lord, we ask that the leaders of the world will work towards justice, truth and respect during discussions and negotiations, and that thought will be given for the wellbeing of people living as refugees in their own countries.
- Gracious God, give comfort and peace of mind to those in our St. Luke's community who are hurting physically and mentally. For those recovering from treatment, awaiting surgery, seeking answers following tests and those caring for loved ones at home.
- We especially think of the family of Val Mackenzie who passed away in April. May they know that they are supported as they grieve the loss of a mother so soon after the passing of Stan.



St. Luke's Collectibles

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry

Raising funds for refugees remains our focus. We continue to receive urgently needed donations that make it possible to support people in need.

We are on the 'edge' of Winter.

Our experience tells us that we will not have enough blankets, doonas, and warm jackets to ward off chilly, freezing and lonely nights in a refugee's new country. We appeal for your help. In your top cupboards, you may have blankets that you no longer need. This could be a good time to clear out your cupboard?

April has been a busy month as we continually refresh the chapel sales. Because of Easter holidays and ANZAC Day – the Collectibles sale was deferred until May 16th and 17th. However, as St Luke's Church is a designated polling booth for the elections on 3rd May, we will open the Chapel Collectibles for sales during that day.

May Opening: Friday 16th May from 12 noon until 4pm
Saturday 17th May from 9am till lunchtime

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

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, figurines, dinner sets, white goods and small furniture.

Do you know: Every Wednesday, between 9.30 am and lunch time, the Wednesday Team is 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 'landfill' 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.



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

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

Rae Anderson (0413 888 884) and Linda Salamy
St Luke's Highton, Collectibles Joint Co-ordinators

This month two books will be highlighted, both very inspirational.

"Out of the Black Shadows" by Stephen Lungu (with Ann Coomes)

This is the story of Stephen Lungu and his amazing transformation from young criminal who targeted Christians into an evangelist. He was "dirt poor", had no job, lived under a bridge and was recruited into a gang to cause as much mayhem as possible. Weapons included petrol bombs.

In a volatile area of Africa, Stephen joined the National Youth League, working for the liberation of Zimbabwe. Violence was the norm for this group. One of the group's planned targets was a group of Christians meeting in a tent. He and his three friends sat at the back of the tent, awaiting their opportunity.

This was to be a turning point for Stephen. The main speaker totally changed his mind and his heart. When a young woman was invited to give her testimony, Stephen was "gobsmacked". "Never in my wildest dreams had I ever thought good-looking women had anything to do with Christianity. Surely only old grannies or ugly girls with flat noses were Christians."

But Stephen was most influenced by the main speaker and wanted Jesus in his life. He became a member of the Dorothea Mission in South Africa. The remainder of the book tells of his missionary travels, his marriage and a very fulfilled life.

"Life Without Limits" How to live a ridiculously good life by Nick Vujicic

Born without arms or legs, this young man has an impressive list of achievements. Nick's strong Christian faith is the catalyst for his positive attitude in times of adversity. He emphasizes attitude. "Think of your attitude as the remote control of your TV set. If the program you are watching doesn't do anything for you, then simply grab the remote and change it. You can adjust your attitude in much the same way when you aren't getting results you want, no matter what challenges you encounter."

Nick lists four types of attitudes which he believes are the most powerful

1. An attitude of gratitude
2. An attitude of action
3. An attitude of empathy
4. An attitude of forgiveness

There is also a chapter on Change.

Nick's parents decided to move to the United States. He found this a challenge changing schools, leaving his Australian friends. He sometimes felt overwhelmed and disoriented. He says, "keep in mind thoughts like 'Okay this is all new. It will seem a bit strange. I will need to stay calm, not panic and be patient. I know it will work out for the best.'"

Among other ventures Nick teamed up with film makers in Los Angeles. Joshua and Rebecca Wiegel. He is also very generous in the financial area, giving a large sum to the poor and raising extra money for them. A good point of Nick's success is due to focus on what he could control and accepting what he could not.

This is an excellent book for anyone facing any type of challenge or adversity.

These books are displayed on the small table in the Hall.

Glenis Stewart

Readings for May

	<i>1st Reading</i>	<i>Psalm</i>	<i>2nd Reading</i>	<i>Gospel</i>
May 11 Easter 4	Acts 9:36-43	Ps 23	Rev 7:9-17	Jn 10:22-30
May 18 Easter 5	Acts 11:1-18	Ps 148	Rev 21:1-6	Jn 13:31-35
May 25 Easter 6	Acts 16:9-15	Ps 67	Rev 21:10,22-22:5	Jn 14:23-29
May 29 Ascension	Acts 1:1-11	Ps 47	Eph 1:15-23	Lk 24:44-53
June 1 Easter 7	Acts 16:16-34	Ps 97	Rev 22:12-14,16-17	Jn 17:20-26