

Monthly update

The Uniting Church in Australia

St Luke's Congregation, Highton

February 2026



A voice of justice and loving kindness

As we are well on our way into this New Year, I echo the words of Psalm 111 - 'Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, for God has done so marvellously for God's people, so praise God's holy name.

I give praise and thanks to God, not because I feel indifferent to the plight of the thousands of families and communities around Victoria affected by the raging bushfires, nor am I unconcerned about the suffering of children, women, and innocent people in wars and political persecutions around the globe. But amid this broken reality of our world, this fourth Sunday in the Season of Epiphany reminds us of God's assurance of hope, justice, kindness, and humility shining through the darkness, offering us comfort and peace.

According to the Prophet Micah 6:1-8, such hopeful and just qualities are no longer visible in the community's life. Israel was proud and indifferent. The prophet depicted God accusing Israel of a crime and bringing them to court (v. 1). God calls the mountains, the hills, and the earth's foundations as witnesses for the prosecution. God's charge is that they are selfish people. They have forgotten God's generosity. God loved Israel, freed them from slavery, and gave them a homeland.

"What does God want?" the prophet asks. God wants us to do justice (v. 8)—to be a voice for the oppressed, the unprotected, widows, and foreigners, and to fight for the rights of disabled people, minorities, the elderly, the poor, and every person treated as less than God's child. God wants his people to love kindness.

Perhaps this is our version of a bumper sticker for St Luke's as we face the journey ahead this year. Micah 6:8 puts it succinctly: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

The Hebrew word *hesed* means God's loving-kindness. We respond to God's love by sharing it with others. We are called to walk humbly with God: listening for God's voice wherever it may be heard; listening to each other, even with different views.

As we face a future full of challenges, we will need to rely more on God's loving kindness in our conversations and deep listening. To be more perceptive in our responses and understand how others make sense of their lives, we should thoughtfully consider how our faith influences how we relate to one another. We may not agree on everything, but we should recognise that we have much to learn as well as much to offer each other.

I believe this is both a task and an opportunity for the church to provide the world with a counter-cultural way of living. To present society with a contrast between broken election promises and political posturing at the expense of an authentic voice that advocates for true justice and fairness for all. To speak truth to power without fear or favour, especially when there are costly consequences.

As we look ahead to this new year unfolding, I invite us to embrace God's call to be an authentic voice of justice and loving kindness wherever we are. A voice that reflects compassion and care, particularly for those who are neglected and forgotten.

Shalom,
Rev Ikani Vaitohi

Image: Fasser, Rolf. Blessed Are the Peacemakers, from Art in the Christian Tradition, <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57792>

CHURCH COUNCIL

Advent in 2026 was a bit quieter than it may have been in the past, but the magnificent Advent banner is always a welcome sight to have in the Church and through which to follow the Nativity story. We were able to have a joyful time of Christmas singing with the Geelong Welsh Ladies Choir, who generously gave their time to share their songs, for which we were very thankful. Jenny Patchett also organised a lovely service of favourite hymns during which some of the congregation explained their choices. Rev. Ikani and his family shared their Tongan music; their harmonies are always lovely to hear.

We look forward to Ikani being with us, at least for the first three months of this year. The Council values the way in which Ikani has captured the heart of the congregation and as he continues to walk with us and provide guidance and pastoral care in this time of discernment and change.

Over the Christmas period, the Council had a break and we are back, but our capacity has been diminished. Recently Geoff' Boehm's health has meant that he has required a break from his involvement in the Council meetings, but he is still observing and assisting where he can.

At the January Council meeting, it was with regret, but full understanding, that we accepted Mike Currie's resignation as a Church Council member and Chairperson. We all acknowledged, and whole heartedly agree with him in putting his health as number one priority and upon which to concentrate all his energies.

Mike's contribution to the Council as a member, and especially as Chairperson, has assisted St Luke's Church Council in being able to lead and support the congregation

over several years. His wisdom, guidance and good council have enabled St Luke's congregation to fulfil God's work in this place, and at this time, which would not have been possible otherwise. His steady and constant dedication and commitment to the congregation has, and remains, of great value. We, the Church Council, will continue to consider his advice on important matters, especially in the important and changing times that face St Luke's.

We are very appreciative of Mike's willingness to continue to support the Council in its work by organising the Worship Service powerpoint slides each Sunday and produce the Monthly Update, as he is able.

This leaves the Council with limited capacity to fulfil all that is required of a Church Council. With only four members, it is not possible to do everything. We are at maximum capacity, if not, over capacity. As a consequence, over the next few weeks/months the Council will be identifying, and asking for, assistance from others in the congregation to do some aspects, however small, to assist. We also will be looking for additional members on the Council.

In the coming months we will need to have more discussions with Presbytery and possibly Synod, regarding the next stage of looking for a Minister and also our relationship with Uniting-St Luke's Kindergarten.

Please keep us in your prayers as we move forward into 2026.

Megan Knott
Secretary

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Meetings

- *Thurs Feb 12*
 - *Wed Feb 11*
 - *Friday Feb 13 & 27*
 - *Sat Feb 14*
 - *Mon Feb 23*
 - *Sunday Feb 15 7pm*
 - *Fri Feb 20 & Sat Feb 21*
- Midweek Service with Communion**
Coffee'n'Chat St Luke's 1:30pm
Sewing Group
Repair Cafe 1pm
Connections meeting
House Church: Alison & Keith Ralph
Collectibles

ENVIRONMENT GROUP AND REPAIR CAFE

Repair Cafe

We are starting 2026 with Repair Cafe on February 14th. Opening at 1pm. We have saved over 9,000 kilograms from landfill with the items our great team have repaired over the last 9 years

Clean Up Australia Day

Clean Up Australia Day is next on the agenda on Saturday February 28th combined with Wesley, Belmont and Western Heights Environment Groups.

Recycling Bay

We continue to distribute the items collected in our Recycling Bay in the church foyer, to save them from landfill.

Recycling Guide

Our Recycling Guide is still current at <https://ucappw.org.au/recycling-greater-geelong>. This guides you to the businesses in Geelong who have receptacles for recycling. It is updated regularly and is on the Presbytery website and available to all.

Leader: *Claire Ziegler*

St. Luke's Collectibles

Raising funds for Refugee Ministry



- So much has happened since our last news shared at the end of November last year.
1. December sales were held a week earlier to avoid the Christmas rush. New donors arrived providing much needed donations, and we had new customers on sales days.
 2. A special morning tea was given to Men's Shed together with thanks for their never-ending support.
 3. A Christmas function, loaded with sincere thanks for an amazing year, was held for volunteers.
 4. Five (5) people from the community have asked to become volunteers during 2026.
 5. A Collectibles Drivers Team will commence every Wednesday, starting from February.
 6. During Dec/Jan the Collectibles Chapel, volunteers have spent many hours completing a stocktake. Resulting in the need to hold a 'clearance sale', planned for Saturday, 31st. January.
 7. Refugee Room: Although raising money through Collectible sales is very important, more important is our **Refugee Room**. This is the area in which people in need can access, for kitchen ware, linen, cutlery, crockery, glassware, and some personal items. Unlimited 'thanks' go to Jeannine and her team who diligently add new stock and ensure that the room is a friendly and welcome place.
 8. Monies raised from the Collectibles Sales are directed to support Refugees and others in need.

Group Tours in Collectibles Chapel and morning tea: If the Group in which you belong is seeking to have a delightful morning out, why not book a tour and hear our story about our Ministry to Refugees and Asylum Seeker families. Phone Rae to have a chat.

February at St Luke's: SALES WEEKEND

February Collectibles Sales Opening: Friday 20th. Feb from 12 noon until 4pm.

Saturday 21st. Feb from 9am till lunchtime.

You are invited. Bring friends. Help share our story.

Will you remember: Every Wednesday, between 9.30 am 11.30am, the Wednesday Team are available to receive material aid donations. Simply drive between the Chapel and Men's Shed to off load.

The Collectibles Chapel story continues.

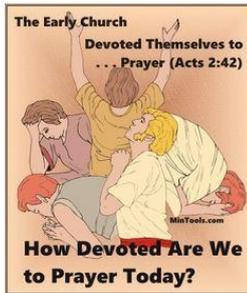
We give thanks for those who connect with us, donating material aid to support people in need. St Luke's Uniting Church, 174 Barrabool Road, Highton 3216.

Rae Anderson 0413 888 884 and Linda Salamy Collectibles Co-ordinators



PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

What is Prayer?



Prayer is spending time in God's presence, praying for the people you know and love, and situations that concern you.

When we pray, we can kneel, stand, walk around, have our eyes open or closed. We can pray silently or verbally. No matter how we pray God is waiting and listening.

However, prayer is much more than just 'talking to God, prayer is trusting in God, communicating with God and seeking after God's will.

At St. Luke's we consider prayer to be an important part of our worship and ministry and we offer several opportunities to spend time in God's presence.

We have an active **Prayer Link** where prayers are shared with those who have committed to pray for the needs and concerns of the congregation and their family and friends. These prayers are always confidential and are only shared with the wider congregation if permission is received.

Urgent prayers can be emailed to Seller on pamseller@bigpond.com any time during the week.

There are **Prayer Request Forms** in the back of each pew. These can be filled in and handed to Pam Seller or placed in the offering plate during or following worship.

Prayer Candles are available at the front of the church. Candles represent prayers for people or situations that we care about and maybe lit at any time before or during the service.

Prayer Corner a time of shared private prayer is also offered following worship. Please contact the minister in placement or Pam Seller.

All the above provide us with opportunities to communicate with God.

PRAYER POINTS

We uphold family and friends who need our support and help, and we continue to pray for our church council as they seek the way ahead for St. Luke's.

- Pray for our St Luke's families who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Those who have passed away recently are Mary Baird, Joyce Champion and Helen Swan.
- Pray for Ikani and his work load as he supports the families of those who have met to plan services.
- Pray for our folk who are unwell, waiting for surgery or medical results.
- Our prayers are for peace in our communities and in the world, as we seem to be overwhelmed with bad news.
- Pray for the leaders of our country, state and local council.

Pam Seller

Pastoral Connections

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.

An illustration of Jesus Christ with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a blue robe over a white garment. He is shown from the chest up, with his hands slightly raised in a gesture of prayer or teaching.





The Orthodox Church minister will run Arabic service in St. Luke’s Church on the 1st Sunday every month.
Shaghek

NATIONAL NEWS

2025 PRESIDENT’S CONFERENCE

When members of the Uniting Church gathered for the 2025 UCA President’s Conference last November, they did so as pilgrims and partners.

Hosted by President Rev Charissa Suli, the conference in Tonga was a homecoming of faith, friendship and renewal, celebrating the enduring relationship between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga.



Over four days on the island of Tongatapu, delegates moved between theological colleges, schools and churches, sharing worship, dialogue and deep cultural immersion. Voices from across the Pacific, Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, including First Peoples, came together to listen, learn and strengthen the cords that bind our churches in love and justice.
From National Update 28/1/26

BELMONT UNITING CHURCH

Celebrating 100 years of the use of our Thompson St site as a centre for worship, ministry and mission.



1926



2026

A Service of Holy Communion and Thanksgiving will be held on **Sunday, March 1, 2026 at 10am**

Guest preacher: **Rev Charissa Suli**, President of UCA

You are invited to share in this significant occasion of the life of the congregation.

To assist catering, please RSVP by 22 Feb to belmont@victas.uca.org.au