



THE MESSENGER

Newsletter of

St Luke's Uniting Church

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SUMMER 2015-16

Minister's Message

Celestial Navigation

Sailors have used the stars to guide their journeys for centuries. Familiar companions like the North Star in the Northern Hemisphere, and the Southern Cross here in the Southern Hemisphere have provided comfort and direction, even certainty of position in the vast and darkened oceans. This Advent, we're using stars to help us see our position and chart our course. Guided by Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, we're being invited into conversation about how our faith informs our journey and how the lights of love, joy, peace and hope inhabit our lives. Advent is a time, as I've been saying in my preaching, when the church looks forward to the return of Christ, and the coming of the Reign or Kingdom of God. As individual Christians we may understand this in different ways, particularly in regard to timing. For some the Kingdom of God is something that we institute in the here and now as we live out Christ's call to justice; for others, God's reign will be brought in by God's open intervention in history at a time of God's choosing; for still others different understandings are possible while still drawing on the rich resources of the Biblical text. Whatever understanding of the timing of God's reign, there is still an element of anticipation; a hoped-for outcome, a vision of a new reality, even a plan of action. We explore the readings in Advent with this anticipation in mind.

Each week, a different St Luke's family is presenting a star that they've decorated to raise during worship, and sharing their response to the theme for the week. Because Advent is a time for us all, you may want to consider your own responses to the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

- What does each theme mean to you?
- Is there a particular Bible verse about each of these themes that resonates with you?
- Where would you particularly want there to be Hope/Peace/Joy/Love or who would you particularly want to experience these things during this Advent and Christmas time?

And a follow-up question for all of us – what are you going to do about it? Each of us will have our own responses to the questions, and I encourage you to share yours with your friends at St Luke's and beyond. If you find yourself thinking lots about what hope means this Advent, and thinking through the implications, especially what you're going to do about it, talk through it with a friend or put it on Facebook, or share it with a group you're part of. We happily share our holiday plans, our Christmas shopping stories and our Christmas dinner preparations, why not what we think of when we hear the word hope? Or why not some place or person we would love to have hope this Advent and Christmas? Or why not some action we're planning (even if it's something as simple as giving someone a phone call) to bring hope? Who knows – maybe your willingness to speak and act will inspire others!

May you know Hope, Peace, Joy and Love this Advent, and may your Christmas be blessed with the presence of the Christ Child.

James Douglas

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From the Church Council

We, at St Luke's have many things for which to be thankful. We have just celebrated our fifty-fifth birthday. We are thankful for the six families who were the original members of St Luke's, their faith, vision and foresight. Three of those families are still worshipping with us today – John and Beverly McArthur, John and Jean Sale and Lawrie and Yvonne Smith. We look forward to more birthday celebrations for the St Luke's community.

Since our last edition of the Messenger we have been involved in a variety of activities including:

The Preschool Service and the Blessing of the Animals. James proved adept at managing to work with both the children and the animals (all well behaved), and it was wonderful to have so many families visiting with us for this special annual event.

The Social Justice Group organised a dinner and entertainment evening to raise funds for the West Papuans, who are suffering political persecution. Another most successful time, with singing and dancing, food and discussion.

With regret, we farewelled Melissa Reoch, who has been co-ordinating the Playgroup activities for some years. Melissa has accepted fulltime work, and we will miss her at Playgroups. We have recently appointed Leanne Boucher to that position, and will welcome Leanne from the 8th December.

Our Stewardship program will enable us to continue our programs and community involvement into the future. Thank you to all members of the Finance Team, especially Tom Spurling.

The usual Church Council business has continued, with all Ministry Groups working well to keep everything operating smoothly. Thanks go to all members of the Ministry Groups, and all who take positions of responsibility – the flower arrangers, the morning tea bakers, the Sunday School teachers, the coffee makers, the Fun@Five members, the door managers, the music makers, the cleaners, polishers and dish washers, the UCAF members, the Fiesta group, the worship assistants, the e-news and notice people, and of course, those who attend worship.

A big thank you to EVERYONE!

We continue to be blessed with the leadership, care and concern from James and Corrie, and pray they will be strengthened and supported in their work with us.

The Church Council extends Christmas Greetings to all, and may peace, joy and love be with you and your families.

Eunice Magee

Tuesday Circle Christmas Celebration



AUSTRALIA CAN DO BETTER THAN THIS

An Asylum Seekers Information Afternoon Sunday 1 November at High Street Road Uniting Church



It was hoped that the name on the sign outside the church would bring an *overflow* crowd. There was a full church and well over 100 'Clancys', which brought the total to an estimated 300. Yes, they had come to hear Julian Burnside and he didn't disappoint.

Before homing in on the attitude to and the treatment of asylum seekers, he challenged our approach to human rights, citing examples suggesting it was our personal human rights which concerned us and not those of the disadvantaged.

This may have made it easier for governments over the past 15 years to convince us that their actions are keeping us safe.

He was particularly critical of mis-information and the complicity of the press, resulting in the majority believing the government line. This obfuscation has extended to the stifling of information from off-shore detention facilities.

A doctor who served on Manus told Burnside it was 100 times worse than a maximum security prison. Burnside gave us this comment, *'It's really, really hard to understand, how a country like Australia, in a time of peace, has to shove people off to places like that where they get treated like that and for our government/s to say – oh it's nothing to do with us – we just pay the money. Nothing to do with us.'*

He then made a point about it costing us \$5b pa to be cruel to people. Somewhere he said, there has been a re-writing of the biblical edicts which define our beliefs (*particularly Matthew 7:12 – authors note*). And in his vote of thanks, Outer Eastern member, John U'ren, noted the foundation of society and at least 15 different faiths have as a basic tenet, *care for your neighbour*.

Burnside suggested the following alternatives:

- For about \$1b pa, the trickle of asylum seekers heading our way could be processed in Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Then detained for one month, before release into the community with work rights and Centre-Link support.
- Settlement could be in regional centres with populations over 10,000, so asylum seekers would only make up about 1% of the population of selected towns/cities.

He opined that the cost to the taxpayer of settlement would be about \$500m per year and no-one would be locked up without charge indefinitely.

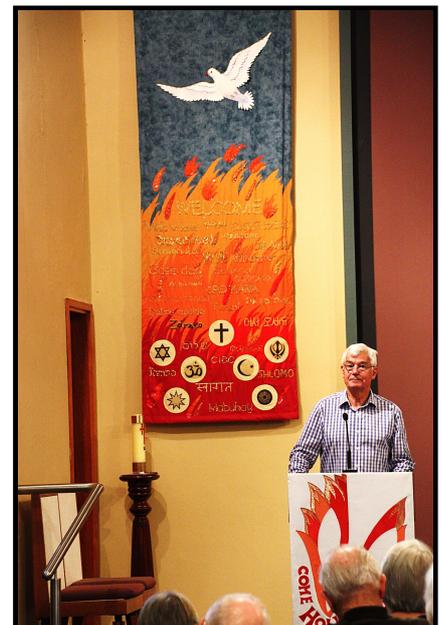
Here are just three points raised in a lively Q&A session:

The language used when referring to asylum seekers:

Australia is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, allowing people to seek asylum by whatever means. Burnside said in part, *'There are two crucial points on which we've been misled. From the time of Tampa onwards, boat people have been called "illegals"'* and the morning after 9–11 *'there were no longer terrorists, only Muslim terrorists, no longer boat people, only Muslim boat people,'* i.e., illegals. Recently we have been introduced to the language of *'border protection'*, and many people think we are being protected from criminals.'

Burnside was urged to keep trying:

He will, but doubts there will be a satisfactory result in his lifetime. He now sees global warming as a first order issue and the asylum seeker problem as a second order issue. He said that if global warming really takes hold, we might all be refugees.



The backdrop of the multi-faith banner and the peace dove send a powerful message as Julian Burnside addresses the audience on his concerns about Australia's asylum seeker policy.

The role of interpreters with the influx of Syrian refugees:

Interpreters are under enormous pressure and could fall victim to mental problems. The correct training and support is absolutely vital, not only for this but in all we do in the resettlement process.

What can we do?

- Go and see Federal member/s and say you are very unhappy with the asylum seeker policy.
- Write to Federal Members**: But, do not write a 'diatribe' letter saying they are wrong.

Do a handwritten letter, politely asking the following suggested questions:

Do you think boat people are illegal? If so what offence?

Yours sincerely

If a staffer responds and the questions are not answered, send another letter. Ensure they answer. Some politicians do not know facts – they might be 'converted'.

- Offer room in your home for an asylum seeker
- Offer practical support

** LETTER WRITING: Refer to the Julian Burnside web site for letter writing hints. Google 'Julian Burnside' and scroll down to find the 'Julian Burnside letter writing' site.



Mohammed Isah, the Program Manager of the Lentara Asylum Seeker Project, had the unenviable task of following on from Julian Burnside. With the aid of a DVD and overheads, he told us what is being done and what needs to be done for asylum seekers living 'in our midst' in the eastern suburbs.

Help in various forms can be directed to either Lentara ASP or to the Outer Eastern Asylum Seekers Support Network.

Money – can be donated directly for, e.g. The sponsorship of a family or individual, utilities and other expenses, rental payment and/or support of an asylum seeker agency such as Outer Eastern.

Goods – such as non-perishable food, cleaning products and personal hygiene products and household items are most welcome.

Personal contact – just being someone to talk to can make an enormous difference, but should only be done with guidance from Lentara.

Lentara ASP: Lvl 1/503 Sydney Rd., Brunswick 3056 9326 8343
PO Box 3217 Broadmeadows 3147
www.lentarauc.org.au/asylumseekerprograms

Donations:

Cheques to: Lentara Asylum Seeker Project



*Jim Aylmer
Photos: Scott Finlay*

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Dinner with West Papuans

Our fundraising dinner with the West Papuans was most successful, financially and socially. The Social Justice Ministry Group was responsible for the organisation of this evening.

We had musical entertainment, delicious food and lots of conversation!



Bullying does happen

Recently David and I attended a workshop at the Uniting Church Bethel Centre of Counselling, Education and Care. The workshop was run by Julie McDonald and Marcel Koper and they gave it the strange title of '*Who wants to be a bully?*' It made me wonder if anyone ever sets out to be a bully.

I found that there is a lot that I didn't know about bullying and that it does happen in church communities. Although not everyone at the workshop had personal experiences of bullying, some people certainly did. There was some quite emotional sharing.

We enjoyed role-playing of bullying situations and we made suggestions about how the situation could best be handled and also how not to handle it. At one stage David was chosen for the role of a bully. It was the first time I have seen him in such a role, and he played the part really well. We ended up almost feeling sorry for the bully who did such a lot of work in the church.

We also had a session on '*What leads a congregation to allow bullying?*' It seemed clear that many congregations don't understand the connection between bullying and the impact it has on the culture of the community. There was some discussion of the fact that church communities are generally committed to inclusiveness and care for one another, and thus find it difficult to set boundaries that may lead to someone being excluded from church life unless the bullying person can change their behaviour.

Congregations are often not aware of the significant damage bullying can cause to individuals and the church community itself. They do not understand that bullying is a sign of interpersonal difficulties that may impact on the social interaction of congregations, members or the capacity of those in authority.

Members of the congregation may struggle to talk about bullying behaviour when they have close friendships and loyalties to those who are friends or family members of the person doing the bullying. One person attending the workshop said she came because she was afraid that she was the person doing the bullying and she needed some help. This was what the workshop was all about: to help to equip people to cope with such situations in church communities.

The workshop ended with a self-care list, that is suggestions as to how to be kind to yourself. One suggestion I thought was most important: '*Have coffee with some friends.*'

I would be happy to talk with anyone who would like to talk further about the topic.

Corrie Symington

St Luke's Twilight Fiesta

Saturday 5th March 2016

2pm – 7pm

After a little tweaking with the format of the Fiesta we are hoping that we will have a large turnout of families and friends who will come along and buy heaps of gourmet foods and books and toys etc.

So that we have lots of items to sell at the Fiesta we would ask that if you are cleaning out your garage or doing some gardening or cooking over the Christmas break to put things aside that we can sell.

- The Book Stall would like lots of fiction books.
- The White Elephant prefers small items.
- We can never have enough jams and relishes.
- Quality Corner is always in search of more small treasures.
- Plants always sell quickly, so go potty!

A list of all of the stall manager's details is on the noticeboard in Hall 2.

We are also in need of someone to be our nominated First Aid officer on the day, so if you have a Certificate II in First Aid (or know someone who does) and would like to volunteer, it would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or suggestions please see David Prince or Geoff Swan.

Geoff Swan

Happy Birthday St Luke's

For fifty-five years St Luke's has been in existence in Mt Waverley, thanks to six families who were responsible for the beginning of the church.

We are fortunate to have three of those families still worshipping with us –
The McArthurs, Sales and Smiths.

On Sunday 6 December, we celebrated with a lunch and birthday cake, and enjoyed sharing stories and memories.



Preschool Church Service and Blessing of the Animals

It is always a joy to have the Preschool children, parents and grandparents at St Luke's, and participate in our worship. We enjoy their singing very much.

In October we had the blessing of the animals also, and James proved it is possible to work with children and animals – even a speedy turtle!



Fun@Five Outing

On Sunday 20th September the F@F gang had their very first outing. We gathered at Jells Park to share a picnic together. We were very lucky as it was a beautiful day weather wise.

We had a fantastic turn-out with lots of F@F families present. We were even fortunate enough to have some of the St Luke's congregational members come along as well (and even some four-legged friends too!). It was fantastic to see the F@F families and St Luke's members mingling and spending time together.

There was lots of food to share, flowing conversation, playing with the football and bubbles, playing on the playground, roller skating and much much more. It was a fabulous way to deepen our friendship in a different environment and to become closer as a group.

Thank you to all who were involved and contributed to this being such a success. We are looking forward to more outings together in the future!

Amy Douglas



St Luke's Managers' Door Roster 2016

2016	<i>Captain</i>	<i>Team Members</i>		
JANUARY	Gavin Faichney	Ros Faichney	Tom Spurling	Heather Spurling
FEBRUARY	Don Sharp	Mary Sharp	Yvonne Smith	Laurie Smith
MARCH	John Sale	Jean Sale	Tony Lucas	Scilla Lucas
APRIL	Ian Jobling	Gwen Kay	Yvonne Jeffs	
MAY	Jim Douglas	Clair Kendall	Ken Kendall	Rennus Crossley
JUNE	Jeff Brien	Gay Taylor	Alan Taylor	
JULY	Edna Deans	Lois Brown	Graham Lawrence	
AUGUST	Eunice Magee	June Bann	Roger Browne	
SEPTEMBER	David Symington	Allan Clausen	Helen McGeorge	
OCTOBER	Barbara Fowler	Geoff Swan	David Langley	Ann Langley
NOVEMBER	Byron Savory	Janice Savory	Rena Douglas	Arthur McQuiggin
DECEMBER	Gavin Faichney	Ros Faichney	Tom Spurling	Heather Spurling

For more information, please speak to Scilla Lucas, 9898 1189.

ADDITIONAL PEOPLE ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS ROSTER AS A TEAM OF FIVE WOULD BE IDEAL.

OP SHOP REMINDER

January 2016

St Luke's are on duty at the Lions Club Op Shop, Wadham Parade, Mount Waverley from **Monday 25th January to Friday 29th January.**

With Tuesday being Australia Day we have four days.

See Rosemary McQuiggin if you can assist at the shop during those four days.

Contact Lois Brown 9808 1224 if you have suitable goods.

Please **DO NOT** leave goods in Church halls or foyer.

THANK YOU

Thank you to Andy Magee and Amy Douglas for the photos in this issue and to all who have contributed to the Messenger throughout the year.