Minister’s Message
Journeying through Lent with Compassion

This year’s Lenten Study has the theme of Compassion. The Latin roots of the word mean to ‘suffer alongside’. While sometimes dismissed as being weak or soft-hearted, true compassion demands a significant capacity for emotional imagination and moral courage. One of the speakers whose stories comprise part of the study series called ‘Lives of Compassion’ is Peter Arndt. Born blind, Peter relies on a guide dog to safely walk around any unfamiliar environment. A few years ago, he and a colleague went to have dinner at a restaurant and were told by the restaurant staff that Peter couldn’t bring his dog in, effectively barring Peter from the restaurant. Peter’s colleague advocated for him, calling for the manager and arguing that the law required the restaurant to allow Peter and his guide dog in. A stranger at a nearby table googled the applicable laws and pointed them out to the manager. The staff relented, and while Peter was disturbed by the incident, he also experienced compassion in the advocacy of his colleague and the stranger on his behalf, and in the later approach from the staff, who thanked him for helping them improve their understanding.

This compassion, this ‘suffering alongside’, expresses one of the qualities of God’s love which the church proclaims. It is one of the ways humans express the image of God, whether they are worshippers of God or not, which is why, so often, offering compassion feels good. Compassion is seen in displays of grief with those who are grieving, whether as a result of a public tragedy like that in New Zealand last week, or because of a private loss. Compassion is seen in acts of kindness for those who are suffering, in words of love and comfort, even in simple presence. Our prayers for others; our support of the Tent of Nations, Friends of Vemasse, and West Papua; our response to the Christmas Bowl and the Share appeal; our Link People program, and our funeral ministry are all official and corporate ways in which we express the love of God through compassion. I know some of the individual ways members of our congregation express compassion, too, and I’m sure there are many about which I don’t know and may never know.

Of course, the other end of this is receiving compassion. This can be in fact more difficult than offering it. There is a vulnerability in receiving compassion – if you allow someone to suffer alongside you, you acknowledge that your suffering is real and that you may not be able to overcome it alone. In our culture, we are raised to be independent, to ‘stand on our own two feet’, and not to ‘burden’ others. However, this emphasis on independence runs counter to the evidence and counter to the Christian understanding of our creation in God’s image. God is not a loner who achieves everything single-handed – throughout the Bible, God seeks out people to enjoy communion with God and to be part of God’s plans. The doctrine of the Trinity is all about relationship within God’s self, and Jesus chooses disciples and calls followers to be part of a loving community among and alongside the marginalised and the suffering. Jesus receives compassion in the gospels when his feet are anointed with perfume – accepting the
gift in the spirit it is given and validating the woman who gave it. So even receiving compassion is part of expressing the image of God within us. As we journey through Lent to the remembering of Jesus’ passion in Holy Week, may we be thankful for compassion and the way it expresses the image of God within us, resonating in our hearts and nourishing our spirits. May we be ready to show compassion for others with gladness, receive compassion from others with gratitude and spare a little for ourselves, remembering that God looks on all of us with compassion.

Grace and Peace,

James

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**From the Church Council**

Members of the Church Council attended a Retreat in February, when a number of items were discussed, and plans made for the year 2019. Each member of the Council offered ideas and points of view during the sessions, listened respectfully and freely shared ideas.

This Mission Statement for 2019 was agreed upon:

- To update and maintain St Luke’s website in order to promote activities.
- To implement Essex Heights Community Hub (EHCH) through production and distribution of a pamphlet available at Essex Heights PS, local businesses and organisations.
- To inform the congregation re EHCH, and ask for prayerful consideration and assistance in leaflet production and distribution.

The Essex Heights Community Hub resulted from a concept developed by David Prince and David Symington and we thank them both for collaborating on this. They make an awesome partnership! Further information about EHCH will be found elsewhere in this edition.

The Church Councillors also discussed the Same Gender Marriage situation at St Luke’s. After the information session held at St Luke’s in November; when we were able to share our opinions and concerns surrounding this matter the Councillors acknowledged that, there are differing views within our congregation.

The Church Council has adopted the following statement on Same Gender Marriage:

- St Luke’s Church Council permits Same Gender Marriage ceremonies to be held in St Luke’s Mt Waverley, subject to the use of an approved UCA liturgy, and performed by a Uniting Church minister. All marriage ceremonies held at St Luke’s require Church Council approval.

As a congregation we are appreciative of the generosity of Elaine Oliver, who enabled the Flinders String Quartet to perform at St Luke’s. Entry was by donation and the resulting money was shared between the work of the Tent of Nations and Frontier Services. Thank you, Elaine! It was a wonderful experience!

A reminder that Safe Church Training sessions are available throughout the Presbytery from time to time. These are advertised in the weekly eNews. Congregational members are encouraged to participate in one of these sessions.

As this edition goes to print, the Fiesta is occurring on 23 March, and we are looking forward in anticipation to a successful day.

The Annual General Meeting of St Luke’s is scheduled for 24 March.

We continue to be thankful for the guidance and leadership of James and Corrie, and ask for God’s blessing on your work in the Essex Heights area, and further afield.

Thank you to the members of the various Ministry Groups and the Church Councillors, you all enable St Luke’s to function.

Eunice Magee
If you were asked, ‘What are St Luke’s strengths?’ what would you say? One possible answer could be ‘our versatile set of buildings right in the centre of the Essex Heights area’. We are fortunate to have such a well located and flexible base from which to operate. A second, and even more important thing that comes to mind, is the community of people who see St Luke’s as their community centre. Third, are the activities offered by our church community which range from joining the walking group to the opportunity to share craft activities with a talented group of St Lukians.

There are so many other things that could be said about our strengths but let’s turn our attention to the challenges facing us. One of these arises from the strengths we have just identified. How do we let the members of the local Essex Heights community know both about the activities being offered and also that there is a strong, welcoming community operating at 96 Essex Road?

This challenge is compounded by the fact that the community is rapidly changing with a significant number of recent migrants with limited ability in English moving into the area. The Church Council is suggesting that the congregation endorse a program designed to communicate more effectively with those in the local area. As a first step we are proposing to produce a pamphlet for our neighbourhood which advises people of the activities we offer and inviting them to participate where they are interested. Further, it is proposed that the pamphlet be translated to reach out to more recent Mandarin speaking arrivals. If you would like to see a prototype of the pamphlet contact David Prince.

The Church Council is recommending this concept to you, not just for your approval, but more we are asking for your full cooperation in making St Luke’s a true community hub, making all feel welcome.

David Symington
To many of the congregation the story of the Monash Friends of Vemasse is familiar. However, recently the Church Council reiterated its support for the work of Monash Friends of Vemasse as one of the Social Justice Ministry Group’s activities. For this reason I have been asked to give a background to the group and to share some of its work with you.

Back in 2005 Allan Clausen, then the leader of the Social Justice Group at St Luke’s, met and connected with Alexandre Freitas from the very small town of Vemasse in East Timor (Timor Leste). Alex spoke of the inability of the government to provide a Senior Secondary School in Vemasse resulting in many children dropping out after Junior High School. A Community Senior School with volunteer teachers was established so that the children of the area could complete their education. To maintain the presence of this school in the community, assistance was needed to provide the volunteer teachers with some financial support.

Concurrently, Friendship Groups, that is ‘Community-to-Community Friendship — helping Timor Leste rebuild’, were being initiated in Victoria. There were three such groups set up in 2000 and there are now 35 Friendship Groups across Australia. Most of them are in Victoria and may be found under Australia Timor Leste Friendship Network http://www.austimorfn.org/.

Three key principles drive the friendships:
- Respect — support Timorese led decision-making
- Sustainable — long term (10 years) commitment
- Relationships — build partnerships based on mutual respect and understanding

Most groups began with the recognition of their local council but this was not the case with Monash Friends of Vemasse. This changed in 2009 when that recognition was given by Monash City Council. This came about mainly by the persistence of Allan Clausen. In that year four of the MFV committee visited Vemasse, taking with them a Friendship Agreement signed by the Mayor of Monash, Cr Paul Klisaris, for signing by the Sub District Administrator of Vemasse, Sr Tomas Francisco Da Costa.

In the agreement the City of Monash undertook to work together with the people of Vemasse to listen and respond to their aspirations and goals, to build democracy and a sustainable future. To this end Monash Council designated a representative to communicate with MFV. The current representative, Cr MT Pang Tsoi, has taken a great personal interest in the activities of MFV.

At this time Monash Friends of Vemasse made an agreement with the Vemasse Local Government to raise funds to pay the salaries of volunteer secondary teachers if the premises of the Junior Secondary School were made available to the Community Senior School. MFV has raised over $50,000 during the past ten years. The school has been such a success that the Timor Leste Government has now incorporated it as a Government School and pays most of the teachers. MFV still pays for maths and science teachers and a primary school teacher.

Each year since 2015 two or members of MFV have visited Vemasse to reaffirm their friendship and investigate what other projects in Vemasse and the surrounding district need their support.

Over this time until now, Monash Friends of Vemasse have been able to not only pay the volunteer teachers, but also provide the schools with reconditioned computers which have been especially reset for use in Timor Leste. These have been accessed through Rotary who provides this reconditioning service free at their ‘Donations in Kind’ warehouse. It costs $80 per computer to buy and send to Dili.

Over the time we have also sent two overhead projectors, soccer balls, soccer ball uniforms, bookcases and books, in the local language. Money has been donated for curtains to keep dust from invading the computer rooms and recently a large donation was made to provide 30 chairs for the science room. Also some of the members have invested in the local community credit society which finances many local ventures.

In 2019 MFV have been able to provide scholarships for two deserving students, one to attend Senior High School and the other to attend a Technical School. This has only been made possible by the generosity of Wheelers Hill Lions Club who is sharing the cost of this venture.

As a spin off from visits to Timor Leste by members of MFV, Tom Spurling, along with Professor John Webb, was involved in the formation of the Timor Leste Chemistry Association. This is the first Scientific Society in Timor Leste.

Monash Friends of Vemasse are very grateful to know that they have the support and interest of the St Luke’s congregation through the Social Justice Ministry Group.

Heather Spurling
Secretary Monash Friends of Vemasse
An inaugural meeting held in Deli, showing Allan Clausen.

Dancing with the students.

Head Girl and Head Boy receiving soccer balls.

Student displaying School Uniform.

Scholarship student.

Visit from West Papuans

St Luke’s hosted the West Papuan group recently; and heard an update of the present situation for the West Papuan community.
We often hear that there are many people who are spiritual but not religious. But what does that mean? There is plenty of evidence that Australians are no longer as religious as they were. The decline in church attendance is one indicator of this fact. But what do spiritual people believe? Who are these people? And what difference, if any, do their beliefs make to their behaviour? These are questions that were brought to the surface when I saw a book in the church library entitled ‘The Spirituality Revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality’. So I borrowed the book.

The first surprise that I got was to read that the author, David Tacey, lectured at Latrobe University in Spirituality. I had no idea that such courses existed. I also saw that the author had published a number of books on the subject of spirituality. My curiosity about the content of the book increased!

I have read the book. It took some time as I constantly stopped to think about the issues the book raised: as indicated by some of the chapter headings — ‘Mind the gap: youth spirituality and religion’; ‘Losing my religion: recovering the sacred’, and ‘Towards a new image of God’. In the book the author draws on the writing of his students to illustrate his arguments as well as that of well-known thinkers in the area, such as Jung.

Who are these spiritual but not religious people and what do they believe? The quotes from the writing of his students that the author includes in the book give some insight into the answers to this question. For some their links to Christianity are quite apparent.

I aspire to be a religionless Christian. I want to get back to the essence of Christianity. For me religion gets in the road of Christianity. I want us to return to the simple message of the gospel. (Danny, 18)

The most destructive force against Christianity has been Christians and the complacency of the church. Churchianity has practically destroyed a good religion. (Simon, 19)

It would be helpful to be able to chat to these people and to learn something of their background, but it is clear that they don’t see the church as offering a path to spiritual development.

There are some who find spiritual experience in nature:

The age, wisdom and endurance of the land had a big impact on me. I felt so peaceful, words cannot describe the feeling. It was spiritual for me.

(Bronwyn, 18)

Looking out across the land from the hilltop, I felt a sense of holiness in the scene around me. I will always be thankful for this experience, and to nature for showing me my path and making me focus on the important things in life.

(Lisa, 19)

After covering 250 pages I was left with the conclusion that it is inappropriate to expect a simple answer to the question I posed earlier? Who are these spiritual but not religious people and what do they believe? However I was left with a few tentative generalisations. I apologise to the author that there are many issues raised in the book that I am not dealing with here.

- There are many young people who have not espoused traditional religious beliefs and practices but do believe in a spiritual world. (The numbers of students enrolling in the courses in spirituality at Latrobe exceeded expectations.)

- Amongst these people there is a great diversity in their understanding of spirituality and associated practice.

- For some of these people developing their ideas in the area is something that they see value in pursuing.

Should we be looking at ways to explore the topic amongst ourselves or even better still by finding ways to enter into dialogue with some ‘spiritual but not religious’ people?

David Symington
There are two very lovely churches in the town of Killarney, in County Kerry in south western Ireland. Killarney is located on the famous travel destination: the Ring of Kerry.

Both of the churches are named St Mary’s. The smaller St Mary’s is Church of Ireland and is right in the centre of Killarney. The larger one is St Mary’s Catholic Cathedral, also very close to the centre of the town.

Both have wonderful stain glass windows, particularly the Church of Ireland church. The following pages will give you an idea of the quality of the windows.

**St Mary’s Church of Ireland, Killarney.**

Known as the Church of Sloes, St Mary’s Church of Ireland was built in the 1870s on the site of former churches. There is some evidence that parts date back to the 1200s. The main features are eight pairs of stain glass windows as well as the Great West Window. Most of them were installed in about 1880.

Some of the scenes in each of the pairs has a caption and these captions have been included underneath the pairs.

Captions for these scenes; top Left in clockwise direction:

The Left hand pair of windows:

*The Lord’s Christ; Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me; Hosanna; Jesus Called a Little Child Unto Him.*

The Right hand pair of windows had no captions.
Captions for the pair of windows above:

Left:  The Seed is the Word of God; Behold and stand at the Door and knock;
Here am I for Thou didst call me; Thou art the man.

Right: No captions.

Nor were there captions for the pair below.
Captions for the pair of windows above:

Left:  *He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God [John3:5]; Behold here is Water, What doth hinder me to be baptised [Acts 8:36]; They had been baptised by Philip. Into the name of the Lord Jesus [Acts 8:16]; Buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him [Col. 2:12].*

Right:  *Ought but Death Part Thee and Me; The Master is Come and calleth for Thee; There Shall they lie in one Fold; I will Feed them in a Good Pasture.*

The windows were gifted to the church by the Herbert family of Muckross House. Muckross House, dates back to the 17th Century when the first member of the Herbert family, who were originally from Wales, came to settle in Killarney. It is located in the Killarney National Park. The Herberts are members of St Mary’s Church. The windows were made by the studio of William Wailes in Newcastle on Tyne, England. The colours remain strong and vibrant.
The other wonderful window is the Western Window.
The scene at the top is the Last Supper; below that is a sheaf of wheat on the left and the grapes on the right.
The captions for the four panels below have suffered over the years and are a little hard to read.
From the Left:
\[\text{Faith, Bread and Wine; Man doth not live by bread alone;}
\text{They need not go away, Give ye them to eat; and their eyes were opened and they knew him.}\]

The next issue of the Messenger will include St Mary's Cathedral Killarney.
Happy 80th Birthday Georgie Day

Many people know Georgie Day as St Kilda Football Club Heritage Museum Co-ordinator, but there is more to this amazing woman, who is now an icon at the club.

Georgie and her husband Fred arrived in Australia from Scotland in early 1961. In August, a boarder living with Georgie’s Aunty and Uncle, who followed a VFL team called St Kilda, took Fred to Junction Oval to see his first game of Australian Rules Football.

When Fred returned home, he told Georgie all about the game and said, ‘you will like it, it’s different to soccer’.

So Georgie attended the next St Kilda home game – vs North Melbourne, the first of many hundreds that she would attend.

Georgie became a member in 1962, receiving it as a gift from her boss at the time. Georgie and Fred immediately became involved with the club. They were both members of the cheer squad and helped out in many areas. In 1979 Fred joined the newly formed volunteer group the Sinners, with Georgie joining in the following year. Their main roles with the Sinners were to raise money for the club, help out at functions, sell memberships, merchandise and sell raffle tickets on game days.

Georgie was always interested in the history of the St Kilda Football Club but struggled with obtaining information about the club’s history, past players, board members and awards. In the early 1980’s, on behalf of the club, she set herself a task, to obtain photos and information on every player who has played in the red, white and black. To acquire much of this information, Georgie turned to Saints members with a quest for help in St Kilda’s newsletter at the time – ‘The Saint’. Members were very generous and donated many items to Georgie’s cause. As time went on and the donations kept coming, Georgie began her quest to catalogue every item. After a few years the number of items became too much to store in the small room she had. The Social Club came to Georgie’s rescue, offering her a bigger room which they were no longer using. This enabled Georgie to actually display the collection. This became St Kilda Football Club’s very first Heritage Museum. Georgie has accumulated over 4,500 items to date.

Georgie officially became a club employee in 1999, but continues to volunteer outside of work hours. She regularly sponsors players, including three in 2018. In 1994, she was awarded Life Membership of St Kilda Football Club. 2019 will mark her 57th continuous year as a St Kilda member.

St Kilda Football Club Heritage Museum Newsletter
Congratulations to David on receiving his OBE in January. It was a very special celebration with St Luke’s family and also his own family members.

Due to the generosity of Elaine Oliver we were privileged to hear the Flinders String Quartet perform at St. Luke's.

The Tent of Nations and Frontier Services benefitted from the donations received on the day.