

SCRIPTURE STUDY, SERMON & WEEKLY DEVOTIONS



LUKE

18th October, 2026

Dennis Webster

Revised Common Lectionary Related

Acts 16.6-12a
Psalm 147.1-7
2 Timothy 4.5-17
Luke 1.1-4



Tatungalung Totem

This is produced on
GunaiKurnai Country and
our respects are paid to the
First Nations people
everywhere.

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

Almighty God, who calledst Luke the Physician,
whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an
Evangelist, and Physician of the soul: May it
please thee, that, by the wholesome medicines of the
doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls
may be healed: through the merits of thy Son Jesus
Christ our Lord.



IMMERSION IN LIVING WATER
Ezekiel 47:9, 12



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INTRODUCTION

Luke's ordered account invites faith and assurance. The Toonalook building, fifty years consecrated and sixty-five in service, embodies a living gospel beyond bricks. The Holy Spirit directs movement; grace calls the congregation onward.

What if the history we celebrate in these walls is actually an invitation to step into something new?

Luke's orderly account, reminds us that the gospel is not just a record of the past, but an active call to assurance and faith.

As the Parish mark years of faithfulness at St Peter's by the Lake, we remember that the true church is the living body of Christ, serving as a vessel for the resurrection story.

Just as the Holy Spirit guided Paul and early believers away from preconceived plans and toward new horizons, God continues to redirect our steps today. We are called to embrace metanoia, turning our hearts toward where the Spirit leads and carrying the light of grace far beyond these walls.



An Ordered Account

Luke's gospel has always drawn me. Reading its words in the language of its birth has opened windows — inviting me to see, wonder and listen more deeply to how the gospel breathes.

The core of Luke's gospel is in its opening lines. He begins with an ordered account (what has been seen and heard). No angel tells the story, and no birdsong dictates it. It's a human hand reaching for clarity, desperate to make grace real to lives.

Luke writes as a letter to a ruler; his words are the language of courts and councils. Yet still beneath the careful order is a simple hope: to make sense of what has happened; assurance; draw us into the story still being told.

Luke's careful account is an invitation: remember your own story. As we celebrate anniversaries of this Church, we are drawn back into memory—of vision, sacrifice, and promise made visible in stone and timber; not only buildings, but hearts gathered and lives formed by grace.

A building waits for consecration until it is free from debt. But the deeper story is not only how these walls were built, but how the gospel has been lived here—through seasons of worship among generations gathered in faith.

On St Luke's Day we don't just remember how a building began. We remember how it has served; how it has been a vessel for the resurrection story — how hope has taken root here and lives shaped through the promise that Christ is risen.

Metanoia — turning, new direction — echoes in Luke's gospel. It calls us to look ahead, imagine what might be; walk our own journey of faith. We remember those who dreamed and built, whose ministry moved through struggle and joy; we are invited to continue their story.

Today is not for names. On All Saints and All Souls we remember not only their memory but their gift. Luke's gospel is not a book of accounts of the past; it is an open invitation: come meet Christ crucified and risen alive among us.

Let's look again at why Luke goes in this direction. He was driven by a deep desire to give certainty and hope to those who had heard the stories of Jesus — so he writes to Theophilus (a name literally “lover of God”) and all who would become part of this community of believers so they might know what truth they have received. Luke gathers eyewitness

testimony and orders his words carefully, not so much to record history as to increase faith and trust in God's work happening right now.

Just as Luke writes so his community might understand their own story, so too we are invited to see how God is at work in us—shaping our congregation's story and calling us onward in faith.

“Many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of what has been fulfilled among us.” Fulfilled among us. It's not a recording of events that happened somewhere else or to somebody else. He collects the activity and gives testimony to God's activity in human history. And today we stop to do that too. The story of God's grace has been unfolding here, in this space and will continue to unfold until we all become one in the fullness of the heavenly banquet prepared for us.

Anniversaries can make us want to party — but the truth is deeper. When these doors first opened, this world was different. Life has changed, yet the call of the gospel remains—quiet but persistent—inviting us to live in hope.

This building has grown with the town—through the lives of those who have been here, young and old, calm and storm. We give thanks for what has been and look forward to what will be, knowing grace will carry us on.

But one of today's readings contains a rather interesting phrase: the Holy Spirit tells Luke and his companions not to go east into Asia.

That may seem interesting in itself. The Church wasn't called there yet. Apostles were sent into that region. Thomas and Philip went into what would later be known as the Silk Route, but Paul was given a vision that he needed to go to Macedonia. The rest of the disciples were told they were required elsewhere in what became Europe. The Holy Spirit directed the disciples to go where they were needed.

That brings us to: Why build a Church at Toonalook? Why here? At the heart of the mission that was set in the 1800s, shared with our Methodist friends and as part of the parish of Bairnsdale, became St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville. That mission continues today. The same gospel that brought people together to form St Peter's calls the community beyond its walls, too.

We remember: the Church is not bricks and mortar. It's the living body of Christ. This place has stood for decades, but the life it houses is ancient and new. As we celebrate the past, we are called to put the future into God's hands.

We look around. The pulpit is boat-shaped; the lake lights up beyond our windows. We have made new spaces for travel onward. There are burdens to bear, but we go together trusting provision will come.

The call is to empower one another, build up the body of Christ. None of us is perfect, but together we're sent beyond these walls. What we think matters may not be what God asks. We listen, follow, trust.

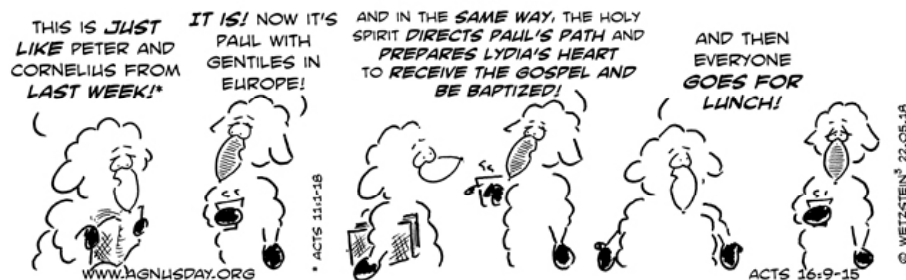
We gather in the nave — a ship on the water. We are the crew, sometimes weary but always called. The strength that carried apostles and evangelists flows through us: to heal, comfort, encourage, and launch again.

The hymn is not only a song but a listening for Christ. Resurrection isn't a past preserved; God's life rising among us. Gospel is not closed; it is a living story of grace calling us to carry its light into the world.

The Church's story is messy. God does not ask for perfection, but for hearts willing to listen, follow, care, and sometimes change direction. Like Paul, we stumble. Grace meets us there.

Fifty years consecrated. Sixty-five years in service. Those are years of faithfulness, worship and proclamation. We may have marks of age, but wisdom is a gift; grace is always new.

We think we're going somewhere else, but the Holy Spirit might have other ideas. The gospel still has somewhere to take us. And really good news today is that God has given us grace in this building so that we can prepare to be the body of Christ again.



Discussion

Reflecting on Your Personal and Collective Story

Luke wrote his orderly account not just to record history, but to give certainty and help believers recognise how God is at work in their lives.

How do you see your own spiritual journey connecting to the broader story of God's grace unfolding in our church community?

Reflect on specific moments of sacrifice, vision, or worship that have shaped your faith.

Navigating Metanoia and Unexpected Direction

The sermon notes that the Holy Spirit sometimes redirects our plans, just as Paul and his companions were guided away from Asia toward Macedonia.

When have you experienced the Holy Spirit redirecting your personal plans or our church's mission in an unexpected way?

How can we cultivate hearts that are willing to listen, change direction, and trust God's leading?

Being the Living Body of Christ Beyond the Walls

The church is not merely bricks and mortar, but a living body called to carry the resurrection light out into the world.

What does it look like for us practically to empower one another and take the gospel beyond the walls of St Peter's by the Lake?

Discuss how your own unique gifts can be used to heal, comfort, and encourage those around you.



Luke wrote so believers could have assurance—an orderly account that turns remembered stories into living faith. Over the next five days, you'll revisit the gospel's core, your community's story, and the Spirit's guidance so you can step forward with fresh trust and direction.

Day 1 Luke 1:1-4

Luke begins with a simple but courageous claim: faith is not built on vague impressions but on a testimony that can be traced, examined, and trusted. He gathers what has been “fulfilled among us,” not to freeze the past in ink, but to give people certainty that God has truly acted in Jesus and is still acting among His people.

That same invitation comes to a Church remembering its anniversaries. Gratitude for stone and timber is good, but Luke nudges us deeper: recall how grace has met real people in real seasons—through worship, repentance, comfort, and calling. Your story and your congregation's story are not distractions from the gospel; they are places where the gospel has taken root and borne fruit.

- Where do you most need “assurance” right now—about God, about your calling, or about your next step?
- Write a brief “orderly account” of one moment when God met you through a community of faith.
- What parts of your story have you treated as too ordinary for God to use?
- Who helped you receive the faith you have today, and how can you thank God for them?
- Choose one practice this week that helps you remember well: journaling, praying through old photos, or revisiting a meaningful place.

Day 2 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Luke's careful storytelling centres on the message that Christ died, was buried, and was raised. This is not only doctrine to recite; it is the heartbeat that turns a building into a vessel of hope. The Church's life—every baptism, funeral, confession, and hymn—makes sense because

resurrection is not a metaphor but God's decisive act.

When a congregation marks years of worship and service, it is really marking the steady re-telling of this good news. The point is not that a community has endured; the point is that Christ is risen, and His risen life keeps forming people who can grieve with hope, repent with courage, and love with endurance. What God did in Jesus is what God keeps doing among us: bringing life where we expected only loss.

- If someone asked you for the “center” of your faith, how would you describe it in one or two sentences?
- Where do you feel most in need of resurrection—emotionally, relationally, spiritually, or vocationally?
- Name one way your Church community has carried you in a season of loss or change.
- What would it look like to treat resurrection as present power, not only past event?
- Take one concrete step today that aligns with resurrection hope: attempt reconciliation, do an act of service, or pray bravely.

Day 3 Acts 16:6-10

In Acts, the Spirit prevents Paul and his companions from going where they planned, then redirects them through a vision. It reminds us that mission isn't simply our best ideas baptised with religious language; it is a relationship of listening and obedience. Sometimes God's guidance feels like an open door, and sometimes it feels like a closed one that protects us from running on determination alone.

For a Church remembering its past, this can be both sobering and freeing. We give thanks for earlier vision and sacrifice, but we also admit that God may lead differently now than before. Metanoia—turning, a new direction—doesn't deny faithfulness; it expresses it. The Spirit who guided the apostles still guides congregations and individuals, calling them to pay attention, adjust, and step forward in trust.

- Where might you be pushing ahead without pausing to listen for the Spirit's direction?
- Recall a “closed door” in your life. In hindsight, how might it have been God's protection or redirection?
- What decision is your Church or household facing that needs more prayerful listening than quick certainty?
- Identify one small practice that helps you discern: silence, Scripture meditation, counsel from a mature believer, or fasting.

- Pray specifically for clarity this week, then watch for one sign of guidance: a confirmed opportunity, a wise warning, or a deepened peace.

Day 4

Ephesians 4:12

The Spirit's guidance is never merely for personal fulfilment; it builds up the body of Christ. Paul says leaders are given to equip the saints for the work of ministry—meaning the Church is not a stage with a few performers, but a living community where every member is formed to serve. The “ship” image fits: we are not passengers attending a program; we are a crew learning to move together.

Anniversary gratitude becomes missional when it turns outward. The question shifts from “How did we maintain this place?” to “How is Christ forming us here so we can bring His light beyond these walls?” God does not ask for perfection, but for people willing to be equipped—humbled, strengthened, and sent. The same grace that gathered generations can empower today's congregation to heal, comfort, encourage, and launch again.

- What gift or strength do you sense God has given you for the good of others?
- Who has equipped you in faith—through teaching, example, or encouragement—and how can you mirror that for someone else?
- Where do you see a real need in your community that your Church could meet with presence and love?
- What would change if you viewed Church as a team you serve with, not only a place you attend?
- Choose one act of “building up” to do this week: encourage someone, volunteer, reconcile, or pray with another person.

Day 5

Revelation 19:9

The story Luke tells, and the mission Acts describes, are headed somewhere: the wedding banquet of the Lamb. Scripture ends with an image of feast, welcome, and fulfilled hope—God gathering His people into joy that cannot be undone. This future does not make the present irrelevant; it makes perseverance meaningful. Every ordinary service of love becomes a preview of that coming table.

So anniversaries are not only backward-looking celebrations; they are rehearsals for hope. We remember what God has done among us so we can entrust what comes next to Him. The Spirit may still redirect, the work

may still be messy, and the Church may still feel weary at times—but the invitation remains open: keep meeting the risen Christ, keep telling the living gospel, and keep carrying resurrection light into the world until the feast is complete.

- How does the promise of God's future reshape the way you view today's burdens or uncertainties?
- What is one “small preview” of God's kingdom you can offer someone this week—hospitality, generosity, time, or listening?
- Where have you grown tired of doing good, and what support do you need to keep going?
- What hope do you sense God calling your Church to hold for the next season?
- End today by praying a simple surrender: “Lord, take our past with gratitude and our future with trust; lead us where You will.”



End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew

Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John

Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke

Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians

Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg

N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A

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Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



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