

# St Luke's Toddlers' Home

1932 – 1979

**Other Names:**

- St Luke's Children's Home
- St Luke's, Bendigo, for Toddlers
- Langley Hall

## Details

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St Luke's Toddlers' Home in Bendigo was run by the Mission of St James and St John. When it opened in 1932, the Toddlers' Home was for children from 18 months to 5 years of age. Over time, St Luke's cared for older children, and by the mid 1970s included adolescents. During its operation, St Luke's housed a total of around 1500 children. It closed in 1979, and the new organisation, St Luke's Family Care, was established.

St Luke's Toddlers' Home in Bendigo was run by the Mission of St James and St John. When it opened in 1932, the Toddlers' Home was for children from 18 months to five years of age. Formerly, the Mission had operated a Toddlers' Home at Ferntree Gully called [Ramoith](#).

St Luke's Toddlers' Home was situated in a building called Langley Hall in the area of White Hills, which was built in 1903 for the then Anglican Bishop of Bendigo. The Home could accommodate up to fifty boys and girls.

In 1932 several Leagues of Mission Helpers (ladies' auxiliaries) were established in the Bendigo district, to raise funds for and support the operations of the Toddlers' Home. The first 'League of Toddlers' Friends' was formed in September 1932 at a meeting at the home of Mrs Arthur Moore.

In the late 1930s, the toddlers at St Luke's were divided into three groups, depending on their age: 'Gum Nuts', 'Brownies' and 'Pixies'. Gum Nuts were the littlest children, aged up to two and a half, and they spent their days playing and resting, before bath and bed. Once a child became a Brownie, they could attend a pre-kindergarten program. Pixies, aged four and upwards, attended kindergarten proper, which was an important function of St Luke's.

The Diocese of Bendigo was very active in the affairs of the Toddlers' Home. Its staff and facilities were praised highly by benefactors from the district who were encouraged to visit the Home. A typical comment from visitors was that St Luke's was 'just like a nice family home', according to Cole, in his 1969 history of the Mission. Cole acknowledges however, that despite the dedication of staff at St Luke's, there was always one thing lacking for its children – 'living a life in an ordinary home with the natural love of father and mother'.

Inspection reports from the Children's Welfare Department in the 1950s described the buildings as 'large' and 'old-fashioned'. It was a large, two-storey brick home with a balcony. Inside the walls had paintings of the Bishop, the Queen and some religious scenes. The children's bedrooms were upstairs and babies and toddlers slept downstairs in iron cots.

Marjorie's Hayes' book *Memories still linger* contains an account of St Luke's during the 1960s described meal times: "The children sat at small tables and chairs for their meals. The staff carried the food from the kitchen to the dining room together with large jugs of cordial. The cook rang a bell when the food was ready to be served. The toddlers used a spoon and pusher. The pusher was used to push the food on to the spoon that made it much

easier for the little ones". This book also mentions the railway line that ran past the Home and the driver blowing his whistle to the waving children. Older children at St Luke's would play near the railway line and put pennies on the track for the train to run over. The bush behind St Luke's was known as The Phoenix (Hayes, 1998, pp.9-10, p.12).

In 1947, the Mission reported that St Luke's was caring for 60 children and spoke in glowing terms about the 'competent and sympathetic staff, healthy climate and beautiful surroundings' at the Home. In 1962, St Luke's 30 year anniversary, it was reported that the Home had provided care to over 1,100 children.

In 1953, Sister E.I. Childe became Matron at St Luke's, having formerly been the Matron at [Winlatoon](#). In 1968, Miss Shirley Simmons became Matron at St Luke's, having formerly been a staff member at St Agnes' in Glenroy and the Mission's Blackburn South Cottages. By this time, St Luke's employed social workers who were responsible for admissions, discharges and contact with parents. According to Cole, fostering and maintaining links with a child's family was of the utmost importance, whether or not the family could be reunited.

Over its history, the ages of children admitted to St Luke's changed. As well as 'toddlers', St Luke's cared for older children, with adolescents being residents at the Home when plans were being developed for its closure in the mid 1970s. In the later years of St Luke's, the institution also incorporated a cottage home where around 7 children lived. This cottage home is described in Hayes' book, *Memories still linger*, with the character Kate moving into the cottage home after she turns 15 (Hayes, p.55).

St Luke's Toddlers' Home closed in 1979 as part of the move towards family-based care, provided by the organisation, St Luke's Family Care, established in 1979. Between 1932 and 1979, some 1500 children had been residents at the Toddlers' Home.

In 1997 the Mission of St James and St John became part of Anglicare Victoria. At this time, records of the Mission were transferred to Anglicare Victoria. These included records of the various orphanages, homes and other residences run by the Mission. The custodian of these records is Anglicare Victoria.

## Gallery

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**The See House Bendigo Langley Hall, 484 Napier Street, White Hills**

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**St Luke's Toddlers' Home**

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**Healthy members of St Luke's Family, Bendigo**

**Description:** This photograph was published in the Mission of St James and St John's journal, *The Brothers*.

Healthy Members of St. Luke's Family at Bendigo

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Sign on the rear wall at Langley Hall Bed & Breakfast, Bendigo (former site of St Luke's Toddlers' Home]

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## More info

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### Chronology

- **St Luke's Toddlers' Home (1932 – 1979)**
  - St Luke's Anglicare (1979 - 2014)
  - Anglicare Victoria (1997 - current)

### Related Entries

#### Ran

- [Family Group Homes and Residential care run by St Luke's, Victoria \(c. 1977 - 2000s\)](#)

#### Run by

- [Mission of St James and St John \(1919 - 1997\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Ramoith Toddlers' Home \(1927 - c. 1932\)](#)

In 1932, the Ramoith Toddlers' Home was closed and resident children were transferred to St Luke's Toddlers' Home in Bendigo.
- [St Gabriel's Babies' Home \(1935 - 1975\)](#)

Some babies were transferred from St Gabriel's Babies' Home to St Luke's Toddlers' Home in Bendigo.

### Resources

- Nunn, H.W., [Social Services \(Chapter VIII of A Short History of the Church of England in Victoria 1847-1947\)](#), Issued by the Editorial Committee of the Centenary Celebrations, Melbourne Diocese, 1947
- St. Luke's Family Care Council (Bendigo, Vic.), *'Back to' St. Luke's Toddlers' Home : 'Welcome to' St. Luke's Family Care*, 1980
- Testro, Ron, [He's a man with a mission](#), The Argus, 26 July 1956
- [Langley Hall Bendigo - History](#), Langley Hall, No date
- [St Luke's Toddlers' Home \(1927-77\)](#), Finding Records, No date. *Relevance:* See the 'List of records held by the department' section for information about records relating to St Luke's Toddlers' Home

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

### Records

- [Anglicare Victoria Records \(1886 - current\)](#)
- ['Closed' Agency and General Correspondence Files \[Charities Board of Victoria\] \(1923 - 1983\)](#)
- [Voluntary Children's Homes Files \(1921 - 1989\)](#)

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