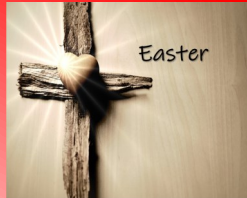


EASTER: THINKING ABOUT IT AGAIN



Easter is really important.

We know this and think this, but we may take a lot about Easter for granted given that it comes around each year, and it doesn't have the attraction of the birth of babies and the giving of presents, although hot cross buns and chocolate do sweeten the experience. We know the cross is at the centre of Easter, but often we prefer Easter Sunday and the whole resurrection part, with eggs and celebration.

The thing about Easter is that it can't happen without the cross. Jesus rises from the dead, only because he was killed in the first place. If we have grown up in the Church the essential elements of the Easter story are just part of our being. We celebrate them each year and get told how God so loved the world that 'he' sent 'his' one and only son into the

world and whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. We know that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin. These things are truths that most of us hold to. However, there is so much to be unpacked in this crucial aspect of our faith.

Did you notice the pun in that last sentence? The word crucial which in our normal English usage means important or essential or key determinant factor. Yet, it literally is derived from the Latin word 'cruX' which means cross and crucial effectively means cross-shaped. The cross is the focus and centre of our faith. It is crucial to our understanding of God who we know in Jesus. Yet, again, we can miss the depth and complexity of the meaning of the cross.

Somehow the cross has got tangled up in the notion that Jesus died to pay for our sins.

Whilst, this kind of theology has some validity, it is very inadequate if that is where we stop. There is so much more to understanding the cross than a simple substitution of Jesus in our place to take away the wrath of God from us. There are literally libraries of books on this subject, and I am not going to attempt to share all the different ways that we can understand the crucifixion of Jesus and how that links with the resurrection. My aim is to simply get us thinking and maybe help us consider stepping out of the rut of the well-trodden path of Easter that we may be used to.

Here's a first challenge.

We know from recent lectionary readings that Jesus is our high priest of the order of Melchizedek, who was both king and priest. We look to Jesus as our king, in faith and the one who rules the Kingdom of Heaven, which is breaking through today even as it did so with his coming. So, have you ever put that thinking together with stories such as when Jesus healed the paralysed man who was lowered through a roof (see Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26)? You may wonder how they might go together. In that story Jesus quite clearly infers that he is God. He says to the man that his sins are forgiven. The religious leaders get quite upset about that

Easter: Thinking about it again continued.

Because only God can forgive sins. Jesus then challenges them as to which is easier, to forgive sins or heal a paralysed person. The crucial part of the story (with the use of that word very much intended) is that Jesus states, "So that you may know the Son of Man has the right and the power on earth to forgive sins, ... I say to you, get up. Take your bed and go to your home." Which of course he did. Have you seen the connection with Easter.

Jesus is God – God as a human: God incarnate (in flesh) – and God has the power to forgive sins. God has the power to forgive sins. [full stop]. Just as a king or queen can pardon whomever they choose without question, God, in the person of Jesus can forgive sins and does. Furthermore, Jesus did this towards the start of his ministry. That is the crucial thing. He didn't need to die to forgive sins. No sacrifice had to be made so that God could grant forgiveness. God in God's grace, in the person of Jesus just forgave and just forgives.

In terms of forgiveness, whilst one can pay other's debt or fine, justice is never served by someone suffering for the crimes or wrongdoing of another. When payment for another's evil is inflicted on an innocent or related

person, then that is vengeance being served. God is graceful, not vengeful. No-one can die in the place of another and have justice served. That is unjust, and God is just and calls us to do justly. So, whilst Jesus taking our place on the cross is a powerful theological metaphor of the great love of God for us, because God sacrifices 'his' son, it is undone when we remember that God is Jesus and that would mean God kills Godself, to satisfy a penalty that God simply has the power to forgive or excuse. It doesn't make sense. Furthermore, it just is unjust and against the nature of God as many of us understand God, but it might fit with an ancient understanding of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, but we know God in the person of Jesus and through the person of the spirit, who demonstrate a different knowing of God.

In all this I am not seeking to create doubt or in any way suggest our theology is wrong. I am simply highlighting that there are other ways of looking at and understanding the cross which are crucial. They open for us deeper ways of knowing God. They are not just something that I or any other person or theologian makes up, but actually arise from the witness of Scripture. Theology is faith seeking understanding, at least according to the definition put forward by St

Anselm and which is widely accept by most theologians. Faith is a knowing and trusting in God. That knowing and trusting moves us to wonder and want to know more and understand better.

We have doctrines and teachings. They are good and helpful, but are a stepping stone in faith. Belief should not be static when we encounter the living and infinitely amazingness of God. Jesus came, that we might know God better, and much of that was him breaking open simple or fixed beliefs and understanding about God and religion. The cross is crucial for our understanding of the depth and breadth of the love of God. It stands at the centre of our faith and our calling to discipleship.

That discipleship calls us to learn more, as well as to lead us into deeper ways of being than just thinking and believing stuff in our heads. After all, as I am fond of quoting, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life," (John 3 16) and "We know what love is because Christ gave His life for us. We should give our lives for our brothers." (1 John 3: 16). There is a lot to think about in regards to Easter.

Blessings.

Jon

New giving method – Smart Debit

St. Matthew's invites all regular financial givers to consider this new method of direct debit giving from your own online banking. As always we wish to thank all the regular givers.

Special thanks to those who have commenced regular giving to the roof fund – which is now paying off the principal of the loans granted to St Matthew's to complete our major roof rebuild completed in 2023. A total of \$22347 has been given to date (end Dec23).

As well we invite our newcomers who maybe considering starting a program of regular giving to St. Matthew's to peruse all the regular giving methods that are available.

Envelopes – can be ordered from the office which are stamped for a weekly cash gift which is then put in the offering plate

Pushpay – enables one off and recurring gifts from credit card (Visa/Mastercard)

Standard direct debit – a fixed arrangement lodged at your bank branch

NEW Smart Debit – setup your own direct debit online

What is Smart Debit?

It is simply the setting up of a schedule of making a payment from your own bank account using the facility in the online banking portals and apps, but not a one-off like you would use to pay a bill, but a regular scheduled event.

All banks do offer this facility, managed through the online banking systems.

How to setup?

Access your online banking

Look for the feature to 'Pay anyone' or 'create scheduled payment' or similar

Select the specific account if you have more than one

Create St Matthew's as a payee – see the BSB details below

Set the start date, frequency (weekly/monthly or other), set the amount for the gift.

Set the appropriate reference as shown below

Some banks send an SMS code when creating a new payee.

Save and done!

Flexibility to change anytime

You can make alterations at any time to the schedule or set an expiry date.

How does this benefit

St. Matthew's

All types of regular giving are very beneficial to St. Matthew's because of the regularity of the income, this allows the church leaders to plan to cover the ongoing expenses with confidence.

BSB details

Here are the bank details

BSB: 634-634 Acct: 1000 25924

Please use these references – (same as Pushpay)

Offering 8.00

Offering 9.30

Offering 6.45

Roof fund

David Neideck

On behalf of St Matthew's church council - Feb 2024

Smart debit regular giving

Do your own direct debit direct to St Matthew's

1. Login to your online banking
2. Create a schedule to 'Pay Anyone' from your acct
3. Create St Matthew's as a payee
BSB 634-634
Acc 1000 25924
4. Use reference :
Offering 8.00 or 9.30 or 6.45
5. Set the amount and frequency as you wish – weekly/monthly
6. Done!

- ✓ Similar to Pushpay but uses your savings accounts not credit card
- ✓ More flexible than a direct debit form lodged at a branch
- ✓ Start/vary/stop as you choose
- ✓ No fees
- ✓ Regular recurring gifts allows St Matthew's to budget more accurately

Thankyou to all St Matthew's regular givers whatever method – cash, envelopes, direct debit and Pushpay!



**10am
to
12noon**

Guest Speaker

Dr Meredith Gresham

who will speak on
Dementia and brain health.
Please see details below

**Thursday
11th April**

These informal morning gatherings include devotions, morning tea and guest speakers which cover a large range of interesting and informative topics.

***** ALL WELCOME *****

FREE Community Seminar



Worried about dementia and brain health?

This is your chance to have all your questions answered.

- Learn about dementia and how to recognise the early signs and changes.
- Hear about NEW treatments and supports.
- Find out how, why and when to get an assessment.
- Learn how to reduce your risk of dementia.
- Get tips to improve your brain health.
- Learn from people with lived experience and dementia researchers.

DATE: Thursday 11 April 2024

TIME: 10.00am

VENUE: St. Matthew's Uniting Church, Baulkham Hills
Cnr. Charles & Edgar Sts, Baulkham Hills NSW
2153

CONTACT: Dr Meredith Gresham
mgresham@uow.edu.au
www.facedementia.au



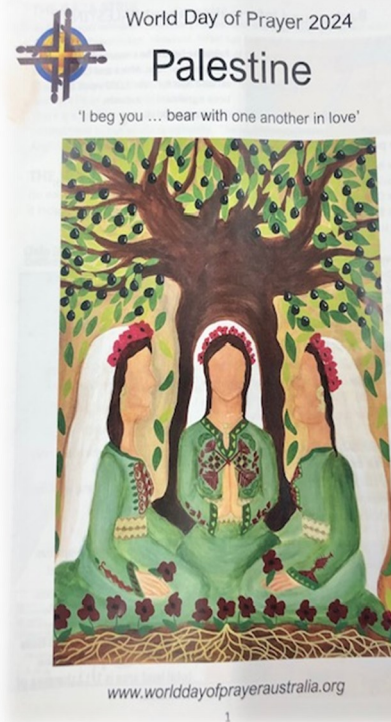
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2024.

The first Friday in March, set as World day of Prayer, saw Peter and Dulcie Duncum, Keith and Sandra Pentland, Earl and Margaret Gray and myself set off for Our Lady of Lourdes church in Baulkham Hills to hear the stories and wisdoms prepared by the ladies of Palestine. some ten years ago.



We heard three stories about women who lived in Palestine, their struggles, their hopes and dreams. Never did they lose their belief and hope in Jesus, in their faith.

The keynote speaker, Nellie, told us of being a child in Palestine, of hiding in the cellars whilst bombs dropped around her. She spoke of her decision to come to Australia as a young woman with English as a third language.



Her struggle was real as she studied and finally qualified as an RN, rising to become charge nurse of a dialysis

unit by the time she retired...no mean feat.

Her faith remained strong although her journey was long and hard.

The baton was passed to Holy Trinity Church to host the World Day of Prayer for 2025 which will be presented by the ladies from the Cook Islands.

Talk was followed by a really tasty supper and time of fellowship.

Jane Cole



INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

YOU ARE INVITED TO A SIX WEEK COURSE

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH BAULKHAM HILLS
Corner of Charles St & Edgar St, Baulkham Hills

CONTACT:
Phone: (02) 9686 3003
Office@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

This course provides an opportunity for those interested in finding out about Christian Meditation to experience the practice in a small group, to learn about its origins and to discover its relevance as a form of prayer for the contemporary world.

SUNDAY MORNINGS

11.00am-12 noon
(Weekly for 6 weeks)
From 7 April – 12 May

TUESDAY MORNINGS

9.30am-10.30am
(Weekly for 6 weeks)
From 9 April – 14 May

KUCA CAMPOUT

12TH – 14TH APRIL

AT WEDDERBURN
CHRISTIAN CAMPSITE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT DANIEL GIBB



Garage

SALE

Saturday
6th April
9am - 12pm

**Pre-loved Household Items,
Electrical, Toys & Books**
(Fiction, Non-fiction & Childrens Books)

St. Matthew's lower hall Edgar St

Calendar of Events for April 2024

School Holidays

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<p>Public Holiday</p> <p>Easter Monday</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>11.30am Care & Prayer Community Room</p> <p>7.30pm Thrive Bible Study lower hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12pm In Stitches upstairs hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group upstairs hall</p> <p>Scavenger Hunt</p>	<p>9am-12pm Op Shop</p> <p>9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>Garage SALE</p>	<p>Easter 2</p> <p>8am—Worship includes Communion</p> <p>9.30am—Worship includes Communion</p> <p>Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>11am-12pm—Christian Meditation Introductory course in church Week 1</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship includes Communion</p>	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room Includes Introductory course week 1</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Women's Fellowship in the upstairs hall & church</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12pm Coffee and Discovery Guest Speaker Dr Meredith Gresham 'Dementia and Brain Health'</p> <p>Coffee Discovery</p>	<p>KUCA CAMPOUT 12TH - 14TH APRIL AT WEDDERBURN CHRISTIAN CAMPSITE</p>	<p>KUCA CAMPOUT 12TH - 14TH APRIL AT WEDDERBURN CHRISTIAN CAMPSITE</p>	<p>Easter 3</p> <p>8am—Worship</p> <p>9am—Worship @ the Willows</p> <p>9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in recess</p> <p>11am-12pm—Christian Meditation Introductory course in church Week 2</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship Community Meal</p>	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room Includes Introductory course week 2</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12pm In Stitches Upstairs hall</p> <p>10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>Easter 4</p> <p>8am—Worship</p> <p>9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in recess</p> <p>11am-12pm—Christian Meditation Introductory course in church Week 3</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room Includes Introductory course week 3</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>Public Holiday</p> <p>ANZAC Day</p>	<p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>Easter 5</p> <p>8am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea</p> <p>9.30am—Worship includes Baptism KUCA in recess</p> <p>Followed by Morning Tea</p> <p>11am-12pm—Christian Meditation Introductory course in church Week 4</p> <p>5pm—Shine</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>	
29	30	<p>st. matthew's UNITING CHURCH BAULKHAM HILLS growing together</p>					
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p>	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room Includes Introductory course week 4</p> <p>7.30pm Property Committee Meeting</p>						

**MONTHLY ACTIVITIES and
REGULAR GROUPS**

YOUNG FAMILIES

KUCA.....

@ 9.30am service during term
for Preschool, Years K-2, and Years 3-8

YOUTH and YOUNG ADULTS

Fusion Youth Group.....

Years 3 to 8. Meet Friday evenings at the church during term time. 5pm—7pm

Contact Daniel Gibb

daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

THRIVE BIBLE STUDY.....

For young adults

Fortnightly on Tuesdays

Contact Daniel Gibb

daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au



Wednesday 10th April @ 10am
"Gift packing for the Philippines"

Enquires: Dulcie Duncum & Margaret Gray



3rd Wednesday of the month 10am to 12noon

Mckel's Café, Shop 14, Circa Boulevard Bella Vista

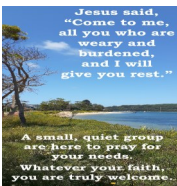
Every third Wednesday of the month Enquiries Alan Wright



Meeting Dates April 3 and 17

1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays of the month
in the upstairs church hall. 10.00am to 12.00pm

Bring your craft along to do.
Share fun and fellowship with other crafty ladies.
Morning Tea supplied. Enquiries: Jane Cole



Care and Prayer

Next Date:

All Welcome

11.30am on the first TUESDAY
of each month at St. Matthew's
February to November

2nd April

**CHRISTIAN
MEDITATION**



Tuesdays at the Church 9.30am-10.30am

All welcome

For more information or to express your
interest in attending please contact

Katherine Pedersen. Facilitator of the Tuesday 9.30am sessions
and for information. kathped56@gmail.com



OP SHOP

Open Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9am-2pm
and 1st Saturday of the month 9-12pm

Pre-loved clothes & accessories, Books,
Haberdashery, Bric-a-brac, Pot Plants.



**Saturday
6th April
9am-12pm**

Pre-loved Household Items,
Electrical, Toys & Books
(Fiction, Non-fiction & Childrens Books)

St. Matthew's lower hall Edgar St



SHINE is a special needs social group for all ages after High school.
Meets Sundays Monthly for dinner & fun. Cost \$5

Still collecting in 2024 for their shoebox appeal supporting a school in the Philippines. Donations of small educational items, soaps & combs are greatly appreciated. Please place donations in the box provided at the top of the stairs in the church foyer.

Giving From time to time, we receive questions on how someone can make donations to St. Matthew's Uniting Church Baulkham Hills, to further support God's work through the Ministry team and congregation, in the wider Community. To assist with this, we have set up the following account with Uniting Financial Services:

Account Name: Baulkham Hills Uniting Church
- Giving Direct
BSB: 634634
Account Number: 100025924

If required a Direct Debit Request Form is available in the foyer or speak with Barry Gregory.

For your support of God's work here at St. Matthew's, a big thank you!

* To include your activity in the *
* MAY *
* In Focus *
* St. Matthew's *
* Monthly Newsletter *
* please send details to Robyn and Lynn in *
* the Church Office by 15 APRIL *
* Thank you *

Maintaining contact with you and your family is very important to us.
We would be grateful if you change your address, phone/mobile or email details that you let us know by phoning and leaving a message on 9686 3003

Thank you to all who have contributed to this publication.

MINISTER
REV JON HUMPHRIES

**CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
MINISTRY WORKER**
DANIEL GIBB *Part Time*
Email: daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

SENIORS PASTORAL CARER
MICHAEL STRONG *Part Time*
Email: mike@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

CHURCH OFFICE SECRETARIES:
ROBYN MORRALL AND LYNN SAMUEL

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9AM-3PM MON-FRI

OFFICE : 9686 3003

LOCATION:
CNR CHARLES & EDGAR STREETS
BAULKHAM HILLS

POSTAL ADDRESS:
BAULKHAM HILLS UNITING CHURCH
PO BOX 773 BAULKHAM HILLS 1755

WEB SITE: www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au
Weekly newsletter available on website

EMAIL: office@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

FACEBOOK:
[@stmatthewsunitingchurchbaulkhamhills](https://www.facebook.com/stmatthewsunitingchurchbaulkhamhills)

PRE-SCHOOL DIRECTOR 9639 8570
SONALI WANIGESEKERA
PO BOX 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153
EMAIL: director@stmatthewsps.net.au