



st. matthew's  
UNITING CHURCH  
BAULKHAM HILLS  
growing together

## Weekly Newsletter

1 January 2023

Christmas 1

### Bible Reading

9am

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–13**

**Matthew 25:31–46**

*Response after Bible Readings*

**Leader:** Hear the word of the Lord



God's Natural World  
Australian Summertime



Resting  
Seagulls

Christmas 1



**9am—Worship**  
includes Communion  
Led by Mary Pearson  
and Clive Pearson

**KUCA** in recess

*There is no evening worship today*

### Livestreaming

• 9am Summer Worship Service

Welcome to St. Matthew's Community Room.  
Children are very welcome at St. Matthew's and  
that means their noise is welcome too. This  
room is here if you feel the need to step out of  
the service or would like some more privacy but  
still want to see and hear what's going on in the  
service.

OPEN FROM 9.30AM

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

### What's happening this week at St. Matthew's

#### MONDAY 2 JANUARY

*Public Holiday*

#### TUESDAY 3 JANUARY

*Church Office closed*

**9.30–11am—Christian Meditation**

in the Church

#### WEDNESDAY 4 JANUARY

*Church Office closed*

#### THURSDAY 5 JANUARY

*Church Office closed*

#### FRIDAY 6 JANUARY

*Church Office closed*

*No Scheduled activities*

#### SATURDAY 7 JANUARY

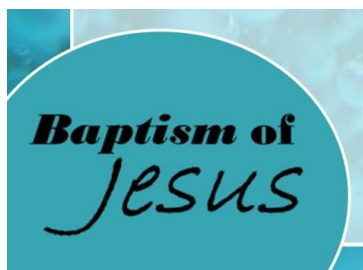
*No Scheduled Activities*

#### SUNDAY 8 JANUARY

**9am—Worship**

**6.45pm—Worship**

Includes Communion



#### SUPPLY MINISTER

REV. CLIVE PEARSON 0409 523 024

Email: minister@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

#### 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**

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SONALI WANIGESEKERA

PO Box 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153

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## 1 January Christmas 1 / New Year's Day

*Theme: New Year Resolutions  
(according to Matthew)*

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-13     Matthew 25:31-46.**

The new year begins with one of the key texts from the gospel of Matthew. In some ways it is strange place to begin the new year. It is the last piece of Jesus' teaching before the 'chief priests and elders of the people gathered in the courtyard of the high priest .. to arrest [him] by stealth and kill him. It thus completes the fifth block of teaching in this gospel. Its placement lends it to being a climax. In some lectionaries it is the last reading for the year, not the first.

It feels like we are beginning the new year with the lead up, then, to Easter. In our consumer-driven society that is not a surprising twist, given the way in which Hot Cross buns appear on the shelves immediately after Christmas Day. Those who have composed the lectionary, though, are not trying to cash in on that marketing ploy. There is a very real sense in which this parable provides us with a chance to get our bearings for the New Year. In terms of the reading from Ecclesiastes we might even say it is the right 'time' for this reading.

The parable is imagining the coming again of Christ. Here he is referred to as the son of man (which can simply mean a human being or it can carry, as it does here, a more apocalyptic mood of the one who will be revealed at the end of time). The parable is cosmic in scope. Throughout the Hebrew Bible there had been frequent references to how the purposes of God would be for all people: that is a strong theme in Isaiah. It is there again in Simeon's words in Luke when he proclaims that Jesus will be a light to the Gentiles.

Even though the language is that of the son of man the text bears the marks of glory and majesty. There are thrones. The people of Israel were expecting a messiah that would demonstrate the marks of kingship and power. We may well imagine that the expectation that those who would be rewarded for their service were those who displayed military courage, conspicuous resistance to the invader, and heroic acts of great valour. But in this kingdom that is not so.

There is no parable of the good Samaritan in Matthew. It could be argued that this parable at the close of Matthew's ministry of Jesus comes closest. What is especially intriguing about its message is how it imagines the anonymous presence of Christ – 'as you did to the least of these, you did it to me'.

These deeds of kindness, mercy, were seemingly unnoticed by those who performed them. They happen within the ordinary unfolding of time, when it is a time for this, and a time for that.

### **Online:**

Sam Wells reflecting on Covid, a work of art and Matthew 25:31-46.

<https://www.london.anglican.org/articles/theology-after-covid-19-the-demographic-impact/>

### **Text for the New Year: Psalm 25:4-5**

Make me to know your ways, O Lord;  
teach me your paths.

<sup>5</sup> Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.

### **Hymns:**

'Lord for the years'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js>

Tim Dudley-Smith speaks about his hymn, Lord for the years.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPrvURlxI54>

Paul Harvey 'New heavens and a new earth',

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wNfV0w4rXc>

*Yours in Christ,*

*Clive*



## PEOPLE NEWS

Sandra Pentland

*Our very best wishes to all the St. Matthew's community who are celebrating their birthdays this week.*

## Ecumenical Prayer Cycle 1—7 JANUARY

*Egypt, Israel and Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon*

**The St. Matthew's Uniting Church weekly Newsletter is available to view at the end of each week for the upcoming Sunday on the St. Matthew's website [www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au](http://www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au)**  
**Click on the metal dove image / publications.**

**JANUARY SUNDAY  
SUMMER WORSHIP SERVICES**  
at the church

1st January - 9am includes Communion

8th January - 9am & 6.45pm includes Communion

15th January - 9am & 6.45pm

22nd January - 9am & 6.45pm

29th January - 9am & 6.45pm

*Live streaming continues for all services*

**Volunteers needed to help with gardening and trimming the hedges on the lower side of the church in January or February 2023.**  
Also if anyone has a mulcher that we can borrow for that time. Please contact George Haines, Bruce Court or Katherine Pedersen if you can help or loan us a mulcher.

First Sunday after Christmas:

**THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE CHRISTMAS BOWL**



Christmas Bowl envelopes are available as you enter and leave the services from Sunday 27 November.



1. Go to the website and donate directly.
2. If you want to give by cheque or credit card, please fill in the details in the envelope and **PUT IT IN THE POST**.
3. Cash to Christmas Bowl person at the back of the church. (if you want a receipt – put the cash in the envelope, fill out the form inside and hand it to the Christmas Bowl person so that a receipt can be mailed to you).

**VISIT: [actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl](http://actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl)**

International humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 86 619 970 188



***Being prepared  
for next week's  
worship:***

**8 January 2023**

**Theme:  
Baptism of Jesus  
Epiphany on the Jordan**

**Sunday 8 January:  
9am and 6.46pm**

**Bible Readings:**

**Isaiah 42:1-9  
Matthew 3:13-17**



It is usual to associate Epiphany with the visit of the magi in the gospel of Matthew. Their gifts signify that this infant is born to be king, possesses (gold), a priestly nature (frankincense) and will die (myrrh for mourning). The way in which Matthew tells this Christmas story these gifts follow on from the naming of Jesus ("he will save his people from their sins" and Emmanuel ("God with us"). The idea behind epiphany is that something sudden, striking is manifested, realized. There is usually a gap between epiphany and Jesus' baptism, but not this year because of the way in which Christmas fell on a Sunday. But the idea of epiphany remains because on being baptized the spirit of God declares that Jesus is the beloved son in whom God is well pleased.

Throughout the season of Advent John the Baptist played a prominent role. That is despite there being no birth narrative for him as there is for in Luke. We have had John on the banks of the Jordan baptizing with Matthew adding words from Isaiah, 'Prepare the way of the Lord'. Then we had the much later account of the imprisoned John sending his disciples to Jesus asking is he the one to come, or should they expect another.

Today we take a step back in the script, back to the banks of the Jordan. Somehow John knows who this Jesus is but is reluctant to baptize him. John's baptism is a baptism for repentance. Why Jesus says that it is has been a mystery for Christian thinkers down through the centuries. We cannot know. What we might say is that it shows how Jesus identifies fully with what it means to be human.

The descent of the spirit and the declaration that Jesus is the beloved son is one of those instances sometimes described as an 'episode in the career of Christ'. What is meant by this strange turns of phrase is that there are several occasions where the spirit, a voice breaks into the ministry of Jesus to declare that there is something more than earthly about him. His baptism is one of those occasions.

One of the habits of Matthew is to make sure that what he writes about Jesus represents a fulfilment of Scripture. He frequently draws upon ideas taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Our passage this morning comes from book 2 of Isaiah which begins with those words of comfort at the beginning of chapter 40. Book 2 runs though to the end of chapter 55 and is noted for a succession of servant songs. IN their original setting the people of Israel are being advised that God will raise up a servant to deliver them from their Babylonian captivity. That will happen through the rise of Cyrus of Persia. It has been a convention of the Christian faith to appropriate and claim they are fulfilled in Christ.

There are four servant songs in Isaiah. The first is our reading today from Isaiah 42. It carries the theme of 'justice to the nations' in a time of empires changing; it refers to the chosen one of God 'in whom my soul delights' and then describes the humility (rather than the clamour of a military commander or a campaigning politician) of the servant. Its tone is inspirational and one can imagine its impact on a captive people who had lost so much. That list could include status, roots, traditions, customs, freedoms, identity and a sense of belonging.



**West Epping  
Uniting Church**

**WEST EPPING  
UNITING CHURCH  
LEISURE MINISTRY**

Bookings are now open for a Coach Trip on Tuesday 17th January 2023.

Total Cost of \$60 includes comfortable coach travel, Morning tea and admission to Alison Homestead Museum and Central Coast Zoo and Amazement Farm & Fun Park.

Departure time at West Epping Uniting Church 8.30am. BYO lunch

Bookings - M. & J. Ross 9873 3713