



AN HOLISTIC PNEUMATOLOGY



Recently, when I was ill and not asleep, I rewatched the two series of Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency. It's a wild ride, but a thought provoking one. The essential premise of Dirk being an holistic detective is that he allows the universe to lead him to be where he needs to be and connect people who need to be connected in order to solve relatively bizarre cases which help correct things that are broken or wrong with the universe. Of course, it is science fiction and not meant to be read as fact. However, this got me thinking about God as Spirit and how we are led or guided in life.

So, here's a go at an holistic pneumatology, or at least the beginnings of one. Pneumatology, for those unfamiliar with the term is thinking and learning about God as the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for spirit is πνεῦμα [pneuma]. It has broader meanings in religious and philosophical contexts, including "air in motion," "life," and "the Holy Spirit". It's connected etymologically to the verb "pneo" (πνέω), meaning "to breathe or blow".

The start of an holistic pneumatology is that, like Dirk Gently, we are always where we are meant to be. This is not a statement about fate or predestination. Whether or not God has led us to a particular place, situation, circumstance or relationship is a rabbit-hole that can almost endlessly be debated or explored. An holistic pneumatology begins with the Biblical and theological understand that God is always with us and present as Holy Spirit, given that we are described in Scripture as temples of the Holy Spirit. So, then when we think about us being where we are meant to be it is about every opportunity is an opportunity to be part of the revelation and work of God as part of God's mission for God is also at work in others and the world, just as God is at work in us.

We are meant to be where we are, when we are, and with who we are in order to be a manifestation of the love of God. Again, this is not about fate or predestination, but about the potential for good which is part of each opportunity. Each opportunity and encounter with other people is also a moment to

manifest the Fruit of the Spirit, because God is present in us and when we are intentionally living out a meshing with God and God's way then we should be manifesting the Fruit of the Spirit. This manifesting of the Fruit of the Spirit is an extension of our manifesting the love of God.

Jesus's healing of the man born blind in John 9: 1-5 perhaps supports this holistic pneumatology in that the man wasn't born blind for any reason, but the reason which comes out of the encounter is that Jesus is able to do the work of God. Jesus was where Jesus needed to be. This might be a bit of a loose biblical interpretation, but the principle is still theologically sound, because we see Jesus using the story of a man walking down a road and coming across a person in need, even though the person was not of his tribe or race. This was the Parable of the Loving Neighbour (often misnamed the Parable of the Good Samaritan). Jesus told the parable to make the point of who our neighbour is. However, given the serendipitous nature of the man coming across the one beaten and left for dead, we can also impute that we should love our neighbour whoever they are and whenever they need our care.

So, whilst we might express a specific or special calling in life to a vocation as a result of God's gifting to us Spirit, the reality is that we have a more general and holistic calling to love our neighbour as ourselves as we seek to live God with all that we are. When we live in love then we live in God and God lives in us. In this way it is God as Spirit but also, we live as the Body of Christ, who was the incarnation of God. When we seek to manifest the Fruit of the Spirit in living others then we become the incarnation of God who is Christ and who is love. Let us not also forget that those who live in love live in God and God lives in them [1John 4:16] and "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" [1 John 3: 16]

Furthermore, as Christ, who is Immanuel (God with us) [Matthew 1: 23], is the light of the world [John 8: 12], so we are named and called by Christ to be light of the world [Matthew 5:14 and John 8:1]. Thus, in every moment and every interaction an holistic pneumatology speaks of the need for us to shine that light, to join in God's work of the mission of God to keep making real the Kingdom of Heaven. In the words of the seeming mantra of Dirk Gently, "it is all connected," God being with us and within us, us manifesting the fruit of the Spirit as a way of indicating that we are in synchronicity with God, us loving others as we have been loved by God and the idea that our loving others is a light to the world just as God in the person of Christ was a light to the world as an incarnation of God's love.

A Trinitarian understanding of God and how the persons of God reveal and call us into life and witness to the reality of God and of God's way, leads us to a connected theology which

is more holistic in the way it shapes our faith and discipleship. We will always be where we are meant to be because we are always meant to be manifesting the love of God through such things as the Fruit of the Spirit, because God is always present as Spirit and always at work in all things for good. We are always meant to be who we are where we are and joining with God in God's work as we are able. Everyone and everything is connected, because God is the ground of all being. Whether God, the universe, chance or fate might have led us to a particular moment, situation, person or circumstance is ultimately less important than what choice we will make in that moment to be the people of God and agents of God as members of the Body of God who is Christ. It is at least something to think about.

God bless

Jon



From the book Silence & Stillness in Every Season



Daily readings with John Main

Concerning prayer, the tradition teaches us that Christianity is not basically a theology or an ideology. It does not have its fullest life in the mind. It is, most truly, a personal and total openness to the person of Jesus. In that openness we are taken by him to the father. Christianity is the religion of transcendence which sees us transcending our own limited life and entering the limitless life of God.

We teach meditation in a tradition of prayer that unites John Cassian and the Desert Fathers to **The Cloud of Unknowning** in the fourteenth century and, for example, Abbot John Chapman in the twentieth century. It teaches that

the essential way to respond to the basic Christian truth is to be fully open to the reality of the life of Jesus within us, deeper than thoughts or words can reach. It teaches us that the way to this depth is a spiritual discipleship. We must learn to be disciplines. The essential discipline is nothing less than leaving self behind. This means leaving behind those limitations with which we so often identify ourselves and learning to be open to the limitless being of God. This teaching enshrines an astonishing Christian doctrine.

Indeed, it is for your sake that all things are ordered, so that, as the abounding grace of God is shared by more and more, the greater may be the cause of thanksgiving that ascends to the glory of God.

Word Made Flesh



Thursday 5 June

10am—12noon

Guest Speaker: James Indsto

Forensics in Crime



A Forensic Scientist, James will largely focus on the forensic botany aspect as this is his main area. He will also mention the NSW Police Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO). These are mainly civilian staff with forensic training who investigate 'volume crime' cases, such as break and enter cases.

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

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

Op-shop report

What a fabulous six months we have had!



We have continued to grow the Op-shop through our social media and word of mouth. Our customers tell us they love to visit St. Matthew's Op-shop for the friendly atmosphere, quality of clothing, and reasonable prices we maintain.

Our growth is due to three aspects. The teaching of Jesus to love your neighbour as yourself is first and foremost. Loving our community (our neighbours) is our aim every day, and we continually receive that love back in many ways.

The second thing is the amazing team of volunteers we have at St. Matthew's Uniting Op-shop. They work so hard to provide a very high standard of service, we are truly blessed to have such a great team.

And thirdly the donations we receive. Not a day goes by without something being dropped at the church for the Op-shop or garage sale. Without this kind of support, we would not be able to trade.

We have started to advertise garage sale items on Marketplace, with moderate success.

We are learning how this works, and having fun at the same time.

As I write this report (late as usual) we have just had our third customer and volunteer morning tea. It was a fabulous morning with delicious food and lots of chatter. Thank you to all the volunteers that made this possible.

Our next project will be engaging with our community by running a monthly board games club on a Wednesday morning.

Anyone in our congregation who would like to be part of this new venture, please come and speak with Jon or myself.



*With love
Pamela*

Parramatta Mission Hats for the Homeless

Thanks to all the generous, caring people who have contributed for our donation.

In April we delivered 58 beanies, 9 scarves and a supply of soap.

In May the donation was 37 beanies and 10 scarves which were much appreciated.

We will continue to deliver beanies, scarves, and soap through winter if anyone would like to contribute.



**1st Saturday of the month
9am-12pm**

Upcoming dates

- **7 June**
- **5 July**
- **2 August**

*Pre-loved
Household items,
Electrical, Toys & Books
(Fiction, Non-fiction & children's books)*

St. Matthew's Lower hall

From the Social Issues Focus Group at St Matthew's

'Doing little things can make a big difference'.

Can you send an email to help the Uniting Fair Treatment campaign?

Uniting Fair Treatment was formed by the Uniting Church NSW/ACT and Uniting in 2018. They lobby all levels of government for increased access to drug treatment services, especially in rural and regional areas, and for the introduction of a compassionate, health and wellbeing-based response to drug use.

Uniting Fair Treatment representatives attended the recent 2024 NSW Drug Summit and below are the priority action items they have selected from the final report of the Drug Summit convenors:

1. Improved Early Drug Diversion Initiative (EDDI), removing police discretion, strike system and multidrug exclusion, to allow more people to participate in this life changing opportunity.
2. Require Police and other first responders to carry Naloxone. This drug is given as a nasal spray to overdose victims to allow time (30 minutes) for the ambulance or a paramedic to arrive to administer further treatment. This will save lives and reduce the stress for first responders.
3. Change the current laws to allow more than one license to be issued for medically supervised injecting spaces in NSW. In NSW there is just the one safe injection centre at Kings Cross.
4. An expansion of the current drug checking trial to include fixed site and mobile drug education and drug checking services. These services not only save lives but give a contact point for drug education and referrals to drug treatment programs.
5. A 'Whole of Government Drug and Alcohol Strategy'.

If you would like to write to your local State member of Parliament to support the Uniting Fair Treatment campaign for the implementation of the recommendations of the 2024 NSW Drug Summit, the link is below. They have suggestions to help with writing your message and have a drop down list of state electorates that you can choose from.

https://www.fairtreatment.org/changemaker-kit/?mc_cid=242476f55c&mc_eid=e16f3efd98

For more information email

advocacy@uniting.org or visit their website:

www.fairtreatment.org

To ask about joining the Social Issues Group at St Matthew's email

Alexander on alexander.lawless7@gmail.com

The next meeting of St Matthews Social Issues Focus Group will be on Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 7pm in the lower church hall.

Blessings, Alexander

***Micah 6:8 (NRSV)** "He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"*

HELP WANTED



CAN YOU DRIVE SOMEONE TO CHURCH - WEEKLY, FORTNIGHTLY, MONTHLY?

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 8 AND 9:30 SERVICES

PLEASE CONTACT SARA

Combined MORNING TEA

9AM



15 JUNE 2025

BETWEEN THE MORNING SERVICES



FUSION

Youth @ St Matts
Term 2, 2025

5-7PM FORTNIGHTLY ON FRIDAYS
Year 3-9 \$10 (includes supper)

WEEK 1
2 May
Movie Night

WEEK 7
13 June
Spy Night

WEEK 3
16 May
Dude Perfect Night

WEEK 9
27 June
ADVENTURE NIGHT

WEEK 5
30 May
Music Night

Rockclimbing @ The Edge

st matthew's UNITING CHURCH BAULKHAM HILLS
growing together

For more information contact Jon Humphries
jonestmatthewsuniting.net.au 9686 3003

St Matthew's HAPPY HOUR!

At The Winston

170 Caroline Chisholm Drive, Winston Hills

13 JUNE

5 PM FRIDAY



COME AND SHARE IN SOME HAPPY CONVERSATION, A DRINK AND SOME FOOD WITH FRIENDS FROM ST MATTHEW'S.

RSVP to Belinda or just come along
belinda.schuster0709@gmail.com



The Council of Nicaea

Part 1

On the 20th May 1700 years ago approximately 300 bishops gathered in the imperial residence in Nicaea (now Iznik), a city to the east of Constantinople (now Istanbul). They had been summoned by the emperor, Constantine, to resolve a crisis that would shape the subsequent history of the Christian faith. How should the relationship of God 'the Father' and Jesus (the Son) be understood?

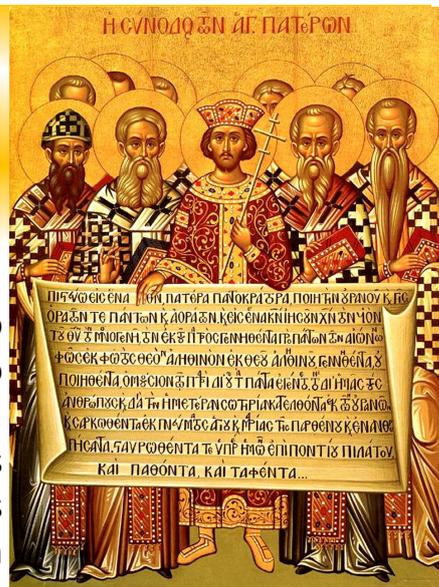
The origins of this deepening crisis had lain in the North African city of Alexandria. In the wake of persecutions during the rule of Diocletian, the city had been riven by division: should those who had lapsed from their faith under duress be welcomed back into ministry - or not? The struggle to find resolution on this matter was compounded by a theological division that escalated. A rather tall presbyter, Arius, (originally from Libya), criticized a sermon given by the bishop, Alexander. Arius believed the bishop had been 'careless' in how he had spoken of how the Father was similar to the Son. Arius believed that the bishop had gone too far and compromised the uniqueness of the Father.

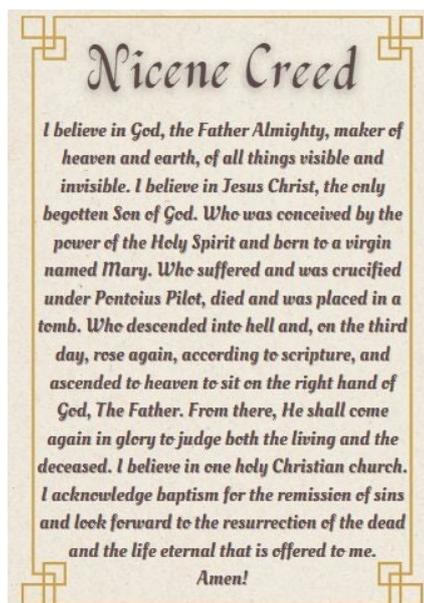
In due course Arius would write a creedal statement where he distinguished between the Father who was 'eternal', 'alone without beginning, ... alone and immortal'. With regards to the Son (Jesus) was not 'co-eternal with the Father'; indeed, 'there was once when the Son was not'. This reading would seem to suggest that the Son was a 'creature', first and foremost, the perfect example for humanity – but with consequences. If the Son was not one with the Father, not co-eternal, divine, then how could Christ (as the Son) truly know God and effectively mediate salvation?

It is not easy to do justice to Arius' thought. Very little of his own work has survived. On

account of the decisions made at Nicaea the emperor ordered his books to be burned and he was sent into exile. Sometime later he was welcomed back, only it seems for him to be murdered in the streets of Constantinople. Our impressions of him are largely shaped by his critical opponents, most notably by the rather vehement Athanasius (one of the great theological minds of the day / 'a pillar of the church') who coined the term 'Arianism' more than a decade after the Council. Whether Arius would have acknowledged all of the ideas associated with his name is doubtful.

The Council would meet for several weeks: most of the bishops who came were from the Eastern churches – in other words, what we know as Egypt, Turkiye, Lebanon, Syria and Greece - and Armenia, amongst others. The bishop of Rome was represented by two deacons; there was a bishop from France but none from Germany or England. The debates were at times a little heated (including one punch-up, it seems). Many of the bishops had suffered persecution.





Eventually the Council produced the Nicene Creed. Sometimes today we hear the criticism that by doing so they put into a place a set of formal propositions

that might serve to constrain belief and be a test of orthodoxy. Some perspective is required. Through until the time of Constantine the church had been a minority and subject to periodic bouts of persecution. In order to express beliefs and Christian practice so much depended on the quality and content of their worship along with their catechetical instruction of new members. Baptism required three years of preparation. They also had to handle critics of their faith and were thus in a situation where they would need to give account of who they were, who they followed and why. It became a custom for bishops to create local creeds, or rules of faith, to assist in catechesis and worship. One of the key issues had been what was the relationship between the Father and Son.

The Council would determine that the Father and Son were of 'one substance'. The work of Nicaea was not yet complete, though. Where did the Holy Spirit fit into the Christian understanding of God and the

reconciling purposes of salvation? That matter was not settled – 'one substance' and 'three persons' – for nearly another 60 years and a Council held at Constantinople in 381. The intervening years between 325 and 381 was full of twists and turns before the Nicene position became fully accepted.

Is it important? What we see emerging is the Christian understanding of the Trinity. We have come to realize in recent decades there are profound consequences to how we understand God and what that means for our life together and the well-being of the planet. In this Creed there is a wrestling with the biblical witness to talk of Father, Son and Spirit. The Creed was expressed in the Greek language and philosophical concepts that do not always travel so easily into our here and now – but Nicaea ensured an understanding of the divinity of Christ / the Son.

The wrestlings which lie behind Nicaea are still with us as we seek to respond to Jesus' question, 'Who do you say that I am?'. They are present in our worship and in the organization of our hymn books. The workings of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople can serve as a check on our worship especially when one or more of the three 'persons' goes missing and is never mentioned. Something then is not right. They are a critical part of our ecumenical heritage. But there does remain a further complication (for next week): what might be the consequences of the Council having been called by the emperor, Constantine?

News From the Finance Committee

The Church Budget 2025/26

Thank you to all the committee representatives who have forwarded their budget estimates for the next financial year. The Budget Sub-Committee has organised a series of meetings to work on the St Matthew's Budget for 2025/26. We will be reporting on it to the Church Council and at the Church AGM in August 2025.

Op Shop

We are so appreciative of all the work done by Pamela and her team of volunteers who give so much of their time and energy to work at the Op Shop, and who have created such a wonderful community of care there. We are also thankful to Annette and the Garage Sale teams who work hard throughout the month to prepare the lower hall for each first Saturday of the month Garage Sale.

When the Op Shop originally started 32 years ago, some of the income was used for charitable work. As the years have gone on and church income has reduced, we have been using the income from the Op Shop for church expenses. The Finance Committee is recommending to Church Council that we return to using part of the Op Shop income for charitable purposes. It is the Finance Committee's position that 10% of the Op Shop's net earnings should be donated to external charitable purposes, and that this could in future possibly include income from auctions and garage sales held at St Matthew's. This reflects our desire to ensure St Matthew's is looking outwards into the community and helping those in our neighbourhood and beyond.

Best wishes

Dom Schuster and Alastair Burn

**Bible
Study
Tuesday
Evening**

**Everyone is
invited to
come
along.**



**Focusing on the Lectionary readings
from the previous Sunday.**

Where: St. Matthew's UC
Church or Community Room

Time: 7pm-8.30pm **Weekly:** On a Tuesday night

Resumes in June

Led by Jon Humphries and Alastair Burn

Calendar of Events for June 2025

Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

30						1
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room</p>		 <p>st. matthew's UNITING CHURCH BAULKHAM HILLS growing together</p>				<p>1 </p> <p>8am— Worship Includes Communion</p> <p>9.30am—Worship Includes Communion Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm Worship</p>
<p>2</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>11.30am Care & Prayer Community room & church</p> <p>7pm-8.30pm Bible Study church or</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Coffee & Discovery Guest Speaker: James Indsto</p>	<p>6</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9am-12pm Op Shop</p> <p>9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>Garage SALE</p>	<p>8 </p> <p>8am— Worship 9am—Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>2-4pm— Upstairs hall in use</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship Community Meal</p>
<p>9</p> <p>King's Birthday Public Holiday</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>7pm-8.30pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Women's Fellowship Upstairs hall</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>13</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group "Spy Night" SPY SPY</p>	<p>14</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>15 </p> <p>8am— Worship 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>
<p>16</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>7pm-8.30pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall</p> <p>10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista</p>	<p>19</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>20</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>21</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>22 </p> <p>8am— Worship 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>5pm—Shine</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>
<p>23</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm— Christian Meditation</p>	<p>24</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation community room</p> <p>7pm-8.30pm Bible Study church or comm room</p> <p>7pm—Social Issues Group mntg lower hall</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>27</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group "Rock climbing" </p>	<p>28</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>29 </p> <p>8am— Worship Followed by Morning Tea 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>9am—Worship @ the Willow's 5pm—Shine</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>

