



Bible Reading

9am and 6.45pm



Exodus 24:12-18

Matthew 17:1-9

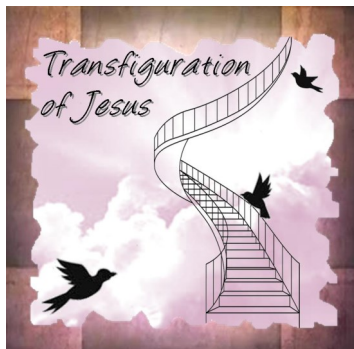
Response after Bible Readings

Leader: Hear the word of the Lord

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



Livestreaming

at all worship services

8am, 9.30am and 6.45pm

8am—Worship

Led by Roland Bryant
and Clive Pearson

9.30am—Worship

Led by Dean Drayton
and Clive Pearson

KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8

6.45pm—Worship

Led by Barbara Gibb
and Alexander Lawless

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

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

MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY

9am—Sorting and Pricing
for Op Shop lower hall

TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY

9am-2pm—Op Shop
9.30-11am—Christian Meditation
in the Church
7.30pm—Church Council Meeting
at the church

WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY

9am-2pm—Op Shop
7.30pm—Ash Wednesday
Worship Service

THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY

9am-2pm—Op Shop
7.30pm—Families, Children,
Youth and Young Adults Focus
Group Meeting
lower hall

FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY

12.30pm-3pm—upstairs hall
reserved for Netball Club

SATURDAY 25 FEBRUARY

No Scheduled Events

SUNDAY
26 FEBRUARY

8am—Worship

9.30am—Worship
KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8

5pm—Shine

6.45pm—Worship



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

EMAIL: office@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

FACEBOOK:

@stmatthewsunitingchurchbaulkhamhills

PRE-SCHOOL DIRECTOR 9639 8570

SONALI WANIGESEKERA

PO BOX 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153

EMAIL: director@stmatthewsps.net.au

19 February

The Transfiguration of Jesus

Good to be Here!

Exodus 24:12-18 Matthew 17:1-9

This Sunday we observe the transfiguration of Jesus. It is a rather unusual event and may be seen as a form of 'apocalypse' – the word means 'revelation'. Jesus has just informed his disciples of his imminent death and informed them that whoever wishes to follow him should take up their cross. The prospects look grim and yet in the midst of the unfolding of this very earthly, mortal story we have this 'vision'. Three disciples—why these three?—ascend a mountain and there they behold the 'glory' of Jesus and the hidden presence of God with him. It is a signature moment standing between the moment of his baptism when the voice declares 'this is my beloved son' and his resurrection. It stands in sharp contrast with the scene at Golgotha: the white robes that shone at the transfiguration are replaced with the suspended naked body on the cross; Moses and Elijah are replaced by the two condemned criminals; the disciples have fled and the women remain.

It is not unusual for reflections on the transfiguration to focus upon mountain-top experiences and the need to return to the valley below. The contrast is made between the experience of the disciples and their descent back down to where the crowd is and them being told to tell no one until after Easter has run its course. It is a common theme.

Sometimes the focus falls upon the words of the voice coming out of the cloud, 'listen to him'. That makes a great deal of sense in Matthew's version of the gospel because of the way it is structured. There are five blocks of teaching, the first ending with 'each of those who hears my words and does them is like the wise man/woman who builds their house on rock'.

In keeping with another of Matthew's themes it is not unusual to place the transfiguration of Jesus alongside Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai. The cloud covers the mountain for six days before Moses enters the cloud, beholds the 'glory of the Lord' and remains on the mountain for forty days and nights.

The theological reading of the text notes that this is the second time that a 'voice' breaks in and declares Jesus to be the beloved son, the chosen one, 'the one with whom I am well pleased'. The first occasion was the baptism of Jesus. These 'episodes' (as they are sometimes called) are well worth-noting. One of the temptations of an Australian reading of Jesus to make him rather 'matey'. We run the risk of domesticating him into the fashion of a rather familiar contemporary of ours through a particular way of looking at his humanity. These 'voices' break in upon that practice and remind us of the otherness, the divinity, Godward side of Jesus.

One of the responses in the narrative that might be worth lingering upon longer is Peter's aside, 'it is good to be here'. This encounter with the transfigured Jesus, the voice and the figures of Moses and Elijah is far removed from his beginnings as a fisherman in Capernaum. Peter wishes to erect tents, a shelter, for the presence of God.

In the account before us the disciples head back down the mountain with Jesus: the underlying message is that we must return to our ordinary, everyday world—which is true, of course. But what if we dwelt just a little bit longer on our transfigured moments, our mountain-tops. In the normal sequence of events we usually slide down the mountain top pretty quickly. It can become rather difficult to find the path of ascent once that descent has been done.

Peter declares 'it is good to be here'. Note how the disciples are afraid—and then Jesus 'came and touched them'. The transfigured Christ has touched them. The word for glory in Hebrew is *kabod*: it conveys a sense of heaviness, weight, gravitas (a seriousness of purpose): it is 'good to be here' and 'touched' – the most overlooked but perhaps the most foundational of all our senses. Why not allow yourself to be on the mountain top a little longer – recall those times you felt yourself to be 'touched' in some way or other by Christ or 'the good news'?

Music online:

J.J. Wright and the Notre Dame Folk Choir
'Transfiguration'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COaR1juzhYA>

Brian Wren and Ricky Manalo 'Transfiguration'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJec8-pfVQk>

Sylvia Dunstan, 'Transfigure us as you, transfigure'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjbXL22uDN4>

John Bell 'A Touching Place' (with lyrics).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTlwZ3XNyEY>

Reflection:

Ronald J. Allen

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/transfiguration-of-our-lord/commentary-on-matthew-171-9-6>

Yours in Christ,

Clive



PEOPLE NEWS

Warren Arthur
Beverly Denison
Robyn Mathewson

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

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle 19 — 25 February

France, Germany, Monaco

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
Click on the metal dove image / publications.

FEBRUARY SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

at the church

5 February - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm
includes Communion

12 February - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

19 February - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

26 February - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

Live streaming continues for all services

Church Council Congregation Representatives

Positions for Representatives from 9.30am and 6.45pm worship congregations are required for Church Council. These positions are for a two-year period.

Please contact Barbara Gibb if you are interested in representing your worship community, for more information.

Please prayer consider being involved.

Ash Wednesday

22 February 2023 at 7.30pm



The Secrecy of Faith

Psalm 51: 1-17 2 Corinthians 5: 20b-6:10
Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

Ash Wednesday marks the transition into the period of Lent: it is a time of preparation for Easter, the most important festival of the Christian calendar. It is a time in which to reflect upon the call to take up one's cross and contemplate Christ's passion and then celebrate the resurrection. It is a standard practice of an Ash Wednesday service to begin with Psalm 51: it is what is regarded as a penitential psalm that opens with a request to 'have mercy upon me' and the request to 'create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me'. In churches with fine choirs this psalm is often sang as Alleghri's *Mei miserere*.

The apostle Paul possibly wrote five letters to the church at Corinth: there are hints of others in the correspondence that we have. It was a church that had its troubles: there were divisions over who baptised whom, matters of belief (especially the resurrection) and between those who better off and the others as well as between those who thought they were more spiritually perfect than the others. In this reason Paul reminds the members of this church that they represent Christ: they are 'ambassadors for Christ'

and should as such bear witness to being reconciled to God through the grace of God. Paul is able to draw upon his own personal experience in order to show how he has suffered 'afflictions, hardships and calamities' for the sake of commending that work. In terms of a reading for Ash Wednesday it emphasizes the importance of 'great endurance' and persistence in the call to righteousness—and Paul's own testimony to how this reality is worth the cost.

The reading from the gospel of Matthew comes from the first of its five blocs of teaching—the sermon on the mount. The members of Matthew's 'church' (his is the only gospel that refers to the church) have already been told that they are to be the salt of the earth, a light to the world, and that their 'righteousness should exceed that of the Pharisees and the scribes'. Through Jesus' teaching they are now advised on the practice of prayer, fasting, (almsgiving) and what is of true value (treasure). They are advised not to follow the way of hypocrisy where prayer and fasting are done for outward show. The word hypocrisy comes from a Greek term that means 'behind a mask'. The inward nature of these disciplines is testified to by the God—'your Father who sees in secret'.

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

26 February

**Theme:
Lent 1**

**Testing the
people of God**

**Sunday
26 February:
8am
9.30am
6.45pm**

**Bible Readings:
Genesis 2: 15-17
3: 1-7
Matthew 4: 1-11**



The Genesis story of the eating of forbidden fruit of the tree is a 'myth'. It is a particular kind of myth which goes by a technical name – aetiological – which means that it is a narrative that is seeking to explain how things have come to be. It is a story designed to explain our human situation of not living in a perfect world, in the garden of Eden, but find ourselves subject to the possibilities and struggles of our current existence. (By way of aside: note that there are no apples in the story!)

It is a story that needs to be handled with great care: Eve's handing on of the fruit has led to a history of women being deemed to be responsible for the fall (a word which is never mentioned in the narrative) and (for most of Christian history) having an inferior status. The purpose of the 'myth' was never designed to determine the relative power and status of men and women. Eve's name means 'the living one'; Adam's name is taken from the word *Adamah* which has to do with the earth, the dust, soil. We are 'earthlings'. It sets the scene for the gospel reading through its addressing what it means for us to be human in relation to God.

Through to this point in the gospel Matthew has been addressing the question of Jesus' identity: that has been done so through the genealogy, the birth narrative (and especially the naming) and then his baptism. He has been declared to be the beloved Son who will save his people from their sins and through him God is with us. Now he is subject to three tests or temptations in the wilderness at the hands of 'the devil'.

The temptations that unfold are not simply those Jesus faces: they are not unique to Jesus and his messianic role. They are similar to the testings Israel has faced and indeed are, in variations, ours as well. The sequence is not unlike what Israel experienced in the wilderness: the first has to do with hunger, followed by putting God to the test, and the third fastens upon false worship. The first readers of Matthew's gospel – his 'church' which is mainly made up of Jewish members – would recognize this parallel. These kinds of temptation are those that are faced by any community that is seeking to be God's faithful

people in the world – including the church. They are not really tests about what we would really like to do but know we should not; Thomas Long writes: 'they are temptations to be someone other than who God calls us to be, to deny that we are God's children'.

Each of the temptations is presented by way of a formula: 'the devil' / the adversary represents all that is opposed to the will of God. The devil begins each one with 'If you are the son of God': it is an attack on Jesus identity and designed, we might say, to cast some self-doubt as to who he is and what is his calling. The first temptation would have Jesus overcome his hunger, his being famished, after a long fast. At face value it is designed to meet an immediate bodily need but it represents something more: were Jesus to succumb to this temptation he would have converted his messianic vocation of meeting a private need rather serving the purposes of God for all.

The second temptation signifies the possibility of a lack of trust in God. That may seem odd. Jesus is invited to jump off the Temple to see if God is trustworthy and will save him through the intervention of 'angels'. It looks plausible – like any good temptation should. But - this temptation arises out of doubt and is designed to see whether God's promises really work. It presumes that we can determine how, when and where God will fulfill the promises that have been made by God.

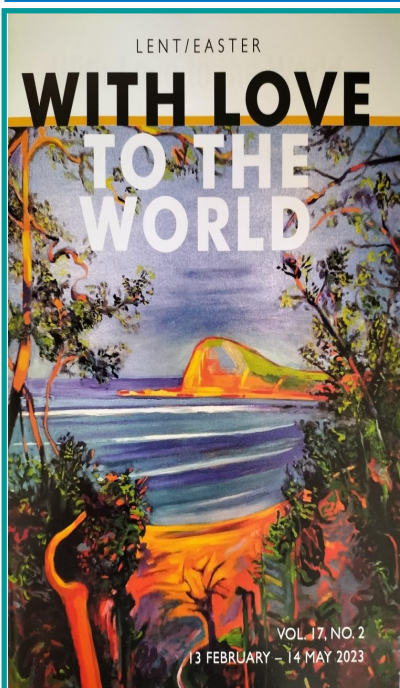
The third temptation revolves around the lure of false worship. 'If Jesus was to accept this temptation whereby 'all the kingdoms of the world will be given to him; then he would need to serve Satan who represents a very different order of power. The contemporary world knew enough about military power, occupation, tyranny and excessive taxation. There would be no need for Jesus to journey to the cross. This temptation is one that does not require suffering and the need for disciples to learn what is required of them. It is seeking to fast-track the kingdom of God. With respect to the church it represents the pathway of a quick solution rather than a way of sacrificial love and costly grace.

Used stamps

We are still collecting used stamps for Synod. Please bring in your old stamps pre-cut with a 2cm border around the stamps. There will be a box available in the cupboard in the foyer to place your stamps. Or you can drop them in to the church office.

Eulalie has very kindly volunteered to take them to Synod for us.

In January 2022, the stamp room was reopened to volunteers and customers and to receive many donations of private stamp collections and material from congregations. To all the volunteers who have collected, trimmed and sorted stamps has enabled the stamp committee to give away \$31,200 from the sale of used pieces of paper. A total of \$31,200 was distributed to forty six congregations in NSW and ACT to assist volunteers to provide resources for community projects.



LENT/EASTER

WITH LOVE TO THE WORLD

a daily Bible reading
guide based on the
Revised Common Lectionary

**Volume 17,
Number 2
13 February
to
14 May 2023**

is available
in the church foyer.

**Please place \$6
in offering bag
to cover costs.**

VOL. 17, NO. 2
13 FEBRUARY – 14 MAY 2023



Welcome to Coffee & Discovery for 2023

10am until 12 noon

Our first meeting for the year
will be held on
Thursday **2 March.**
with

Guest Speaker
Clive Pearson

'Ballyhooing in public'

Late last year Clive presented an address to the Global Network of Public Theology in Curitiba, Brazil. Its theme was faith, climate change and cities, with particular reference to Sydney. That journey to Brazil began more than thirty years before in a congregational weekend camp in Hanmer Springs, 2 hours north-west of Christchurch. With Dean Drayton and William Emilsen Clive initiated a degree in public theology – that is, how do we draw upon the resources of the Christian faith to address contemporary concerns for the sake of the common good. In response to that call he has visited and worried about the future prospects of low-lying islands like Tuvalu, wondered how local churches might prepare for increases in heat and wondered about how the churches might have responded to public events like the Cronulla race riots. The title comes from a newspaper column by Peter FitzSimons who argued that Christian should not 'ballyhoo' their faith in public, but, rather 'go tell it on the mountain with the volume turned down'.

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

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

MARCH SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES at the church

5 March - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm
includes Communion

12 March - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

19 March - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

26 March - 8am, 9.30am & 6.45pm

Live streaming continues for all services



Saturday

4th March

9am-12pm

Pre-loved
Household Items,
Electrical, Toys & Books
(Fiction, Non-fiction & Children's Books)

St. Matthew's Lower Hall

St. Matthew's
BANKHURST HILLS UNITING CHURCH
growing together



WORLD DAY of Prayer 2023

Taiwan

**7.30pm
Friday
3rd March**

**Wesley
Uniting Church
Showground Road
Castle Hill**

Jesus said,
"Come to me,
all you who are
weary and
burdened,
and I will
give you rest."

A small, quiet group
are here to pray for
your needs.

Whatever your faith,
you are truly welcome.

Care and Prayer

All Welcome

3pm

**on the first Monday
of each month
at St. Matthew's**

February to November

Next Date: 6 March