



Bible Reading

9am and 6.45pm



Genesis 12:1-4a

John 3:1-17

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

Includes Communion
 Led by Michael Strong
 and Clive Pearson

9.30am—Worship

includes Communion
 Led by Daniel Gibb
 and Clive Pearson

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

6.45pm—Worship

includes Communion
 Led by Alexander Lawless
 and Clive Pearson

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

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

MONDAY 6 MARCH

9am—Sorting and Pricing
 for Op Shop lower hall
3pm—Care and Prayer
 at the church

TUESDAY 7 MARCH

9am-2pm—Op Shop
9.30-11am—Christian Meditation
 in the Church
11am—Lenten Bible Study Week 1
 at the church
7.30pm—Thrive bible study

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH

9am-2pm—Op Shop
10am-12pm—Women's Fellowship
Guest Speaker Mary Pearson
 upstairs hall and church

THURSDAY 9 MARCH

9am-2pm—Op Shop
7.30pm—Lenten Bible Study Week 1
on ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3602745736>

FRIDAY 10 MARCH

No Scheduled Events
SATURDAY 11 MARCH
No Scheduled Events

SUNDAY 12 MARCH

8am—Worship
9.30am—Worship
 Followed by
Mystery Morning Tea
KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8
6.45pm—Worship
 includes
Lenten Bible Study Week 1



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:

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WEB SITE: www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au

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2nd Sunday in Lent

The Midwifery of Faith

Genesis 12:1-4 John 3:1-17

There is an ancient tradition of the church which goes by a rather unlikely name: maieutic (my-yoo-tick). It is not a word that you find in common usage. It is derived from the Greek language and refers to the practice of 'acting as a midwife'. In due course it became associated with a philosophical and theological tradition to do with the bringing to birth of ideas and beliefs that someone was holding but were not yet fully formed. They had not seen the light of day: they had not been brought birth, we might say. It seems like a rather timely word given that our readings speak of the need to be 'born from above'—though the nature of Nicodemus' reply suggests he understands that as being 'born again'.

The readings for the next few weeks turn to John's gospel. Its narrative is very different from the first three gospels. 90% of the material in John is peculiar to John. One of those stories only found in this gospel has to do with Nicodemus. He is a Pharisee, a recognized 'leader of the Jews', and, as such, there is an expectation that he is likely to be sympathetic to those most opposed to Jesus and his public ministry. But that is not the case: Nicodemus appears three times in the gospel of John. On this first occasion he comes under cover of the dark to discuss with Jesus his teaching and is told that he must be born 'from above'. In the second instance (7:50-51) he advises the Sanhedrin that the law requires a person to be heard before they are judged. Following the deposition from the cross he provides the embalming spices and assist Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of Jesus.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus under cover of dark. The gospel of John abounds in images of light and dark. That he is willing to do so means that Nicodemus is sometimes viewed through a later lens of those who are interested in the claims Christ makes upon us, but are not quite sure as to what that might mean. They have questions. In some ways Nicodemus keeps company with Thomas.

It is evident that Nicodemus discerns a difference in Jesus that is worthy of further exploration. John's gospel is full of 'signs' that are designed to bear witness to Jesus' true identity and his divine status. He recognizes that no one can do these signs unless 'God is with him'. Through their exchange the metaphor of 'birth' is employed, much to Nicodemus' surprise: 'how can anyone be born having grown old?' Nicodemus is thinking in terms of a physical birth through a mother's womb. Jesus is speaking of

a birth through the spirit which captures again something of how Yahweh had breathed life in Adam, the earthling.

There is a sense in which Abram undergoes a rebirth as well—even though he is now seventy-five. He is about to start again in a new land. What will lie before him? Will those of these other lands welcome him or curse him? Will he speak their language and know their customs? As the story unfolds further, he will receive a new name, becoming Abraham; he will become a father and the bearer of a promise that God makes whereby he will become the forerunner of 'a great nation': 'he will be blessed'.

The John passage concludes with the well-known lines 'For God so loved the world' which is not always fully cited in people's memory. The necessity of stepping out in faith (Abraham) and being born from above (rather than again) through the Spirit is pivotal for the possibility of eternal life and being 'saved'. The Nicodemus story invites us to consider the midwifery of faith – of how people are assisted to be born into this hope.

On line music:

Stainer, 'God so loved the world'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbs6bxHU7a0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5Akz6J8Rw0>

The Golden Gate Quartet, 'God told Nicodemus'

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

The Advent Heralds, 'Look at the world' (Rutter)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUNsj2NSCj0>

The Brilliance, 'See the love'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9dBcE4A6l8>

Hillsong, 'God so loved the world'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7i6c54KEfc>

Tow'rs Circle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dgUxF5N3HA>

On-line Insights

N.T. Wright 'Themes in the Gospel of John',

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF1jYGrDJpQ>

Ben Witherington III, 'The Seven Signs of the Gospel of John'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErefQks4eAM>

*Yours in Christ,
Clive*



PEOPLE NEWS

Noeleen Neideck
Warwick Hayes

Norma Hillier
Alan Watson

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

Christmas Bowl

This year the St Matthew's congregation gave a total of \$2,214.05, in cash gifts in the cash envelopes or through the Christmas Day offering. A great result in a tough year. However many members of St Matthews also give directly to Christmas Bowl in response to the letters sent them by Christmas Bowl. Christmas Bowl did some digging and said that a further \$1,112.35 was received directly that way.

Our Christmas Bowl 2022 total was almost 50% higher than we thought! For great world wide need a Grand Total of \$3,326.40 was given. So a great big thank you for the generosity of St Matthews.

**Congratulations to
Nicole Vandenberg
and
Daniel Gibb
on their recent
engagement.**

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle 5—11 March

*Ireland, United Kingdom (England,
Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)*



The days, location and times are:

Tuesday in the church at 11:00am

Thursday on line (ZOOM) at 7:30pm

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3602745736>

Please contact church office for study notes

Sunday in church during the 6:45pm service

The dates in March are:

Tuesdays 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th

Thursdays 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th

Sundays 12th, 19th, 26th and 2nd April

The Passion of St Matthew

Our Lenten study this year will take place throughout March. This is an important season in the church's life as we make ready for Easter. There will be three different times in which you can participate.

The studies will be led by Clive Pearson and Mike Strong: they will include works of art as well as musical references.

We will be following through on Matthew's account of the passion and resurrection.

1. Setting the Stage (Matthew 26:1-46)
2. Trials and denials (Matthew 26:47-27:31)
3. Crucified (Matthew 27:32-66)
4. Risen (Matthew 28:1-20)

A Guide to St Matthew's Passion (Bach)

James Gilchrist

King's College Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=591fCQvRjmo&t=112s>

MYSTERY MORNING TEA

ALL WELCOME!

WHEN: 12th March
straight after the
9:30 service

WHERE: St Matthew's
Uniting Church
Baulkham Hills

Morning tea
supplied

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH By Evelyn

Hi everyone,

We are excited to be putting on our first special morning tea for 2023 with a 'Mystery' morning tea on the 12th March after the 9.30am service. We hope to see you there to share some tasty treats and to have a chance to enjoy a longer chat. If you would like to cook or create something, please email me at nones81@gmail.com.

With many thanks from Noni and the family team.

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

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.

News From the Finance Committee

Church Budget 2023/24

Here we are in March already! The Finance Committee will soon be commencing work on the church budget for the next financial year. Groups and committees at St Matthew's should start estimating their budgets for the next financial year. During March, Amanda from the Finance Committee will again be contacting leaders of groups and committees to gather their budget information so that the church budget can be compiled.

Roof Fundraising

The loans for the new roof are in two parts, the Schofield Loan and the repayment to Presbytery. The total of both loans is currently \$1500 per month. The repayment to Presbytery is a variable interest loan and is subject to interest rate fluctuations. The Finance Committee gratefully acknowledges the extra contributions that church members are giving via PushPay or by extra cash offerings, in a separate labelled envelope, to help with repaying these loans.

A Schofield Loan is a low-interest loan available to Uniting Church organisations for repairs to church buildings and manse properties and for installing solar power. Established in 1898, Schofield Loans were created following a bequest from the late Reverend William Schofield, who died in 1878 and left a sum of £22,000 in his will to be employed as a perpetual loan fund for churches. We are most grateful for the foresight of Reverend Schofield.

New Members of the Finance Committee

Are you interested in helping to guide the financial decisions for St Matthew's? St Matthew's Finance Committee is actively seeking new members. We meet on the first Wednesday in February, May, August and November, to review the previous quarter's financial accounts and to make suggestions and decisions on financial matters occurring within our church. We also have a special meeting in mid-June to finalise the church budget for the following financial year. If you are interested, please make yourself known to Dom or Alastair or any of the other members of the Finance Committee.

Best wishes

Dom Schuster and Alastair Burn

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

12 March

**Theme:
Lent 3**

**Thirsting
for Life**

Sunday

12 March:

8am

9.30am

6.45pm

Bible Readings:

**Exodus 17:1-7
John 4:5-42**



The Lenten period is often likened to a time spent in the wilderness and, like the people of Israel, being tested. They had been an enslaved people back in Egypt. The irony is how the precariousness of being a slave had also provided some degree of security. It can be so much more of a challenge stepping out into the unknown, into uncharted territory. In their case they find themselves having been threatened not simply by the chasing Egyptian army: that was difficult enough. Being in this wilderness and no longer settled exposes them to the prospect of starvation and thirst. The very basics of life are at risk and not unnaturally that leads to protest. The people camp at Rephidim which was perhaps a *wadi* where one might expect there to have been water—but there is none. They quarrel with Moses; their livestock, their children need water. Moses is at his wits' end: in response to his urgent petition the Lord advises him to take his staff with which he struck the Nile and now to strike the rock at Horeb. Water pirs forth. The climax of the story lies in the name of the place, Meribah or Massah: it is a place of testing and quarrelling and ultimately one of whether or not 'the Lord among us'. The temptation is to lose hope, lose conviction in the midst of desperate circumstances, that God is with us.

In the case of the John reading the quarrel that is presupposed is between the Samaritans and 'the Jews'. The Samaritans are descended from two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Following the Assyrian invasion of the 8th century BCE they were not deported and hence came to think of themselves as the true Israel. They considered Mount Gerizim rather than the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to be the holiest place on earth. The initial exchange between Jesus and the woman reflects this tension which had lasted through time. The well (which today is in the city of Nablus) was reckoned by the Samaritans to have been given to them by the patriarch, Jacob.

This well-known account of Jesus and the woman at the well at Sychar is full of themes. At one level these have to do with the woman: why had she come to the well at noon? How did Jesus know her life situation? She has had five husbands and the man who lives with her now is not her husband. This domestic situation leads into a discussion on true worship and the rival claims of the Samaritans and Jews.

This exchange then turns on the imagery of water. Jesus himself is tired and thirsty – and, obviously hungry, for the disciples had gone into the city to buy food. The woman has come to draw water from a well that reaches back deep into their ancestry. The contrast is made between the water from the well (which will need to be drawn time and time again) and the 'living water' that Jesus will give becomes water that will gush up to eternal life. The woman does not fully understand Jesus' words – in a way similar to Nicodemus' uncertainty around the imagery of needing to be born from above. Jesus advises the woman that the historic tensions between Jew and Samaritan will eventually count for nothing as 'the hour is coming' when worship of God will not be on this mountain, nor the Temple, but in spirit and truth.

The encounter then begins to turn on the recurring theme in John of who Jesus is. Initially the woman had referred to him as a 'Jew', and then a 'prophet'. She knows that the 'messiah is coming'. In the midst of this exchange we have the first of the claims Jesus makes about himself using the formula of 'I am': in this instance, he is 'the one who is speaking to you' and as such is the Messiah who is called the Christ,

The woman is the first to bear witness to who Jesus is – after John the Baptist's testimony. Whereas in the other gospels Jesus may pass through Samaritan territory quickly, in the account he stays for two days: the Samaritans listen to him and declare him to be 'the Saviour of the world'.