



Easter Sites

Through the season of Lent we have been preparing ourselves for the Easter season. It is the most important 'festival' in the Christian year. It is a time for us to reflect on our lives and do so from the perspective of the death and resurrection of Christ. That is a rather different standard from many of the 'performance measures' to be found in today's world.



In the ancient world the word of the cross was reckoned to be a 'stumbling block' and a 'scandal' to the Jews; to the Greeks it was 'foolishness', a 'folly'. The underlying assumption behind the stumbling block and a scandal was the conviction that for anyone to 'hang from a tree' was a sign of that being accursed by God. The Greek word for foolishness is very strong: it is the word from which we get 'moron'—in other words, an idiot. It was a folly because the 'Greeks' could not comprehend how someone could be assigned divine status if they were crucified: 'you are out of your mind!'

You might find yourself today engaged in a conversation with someone who is Muslim. There are two key points (among a number of beliefs) where Christians and Muslims do not agree. The first has to do with the Christian confession of the Trinity—the 'three-in-one' God because Islam subscribes to a strict monotheism. The Quran declares

O People of the Scripture. do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs. 4:171

The other point of difference is over whether or not Jesus (known to Islam as Isa) died on the cross: Islam believes in the ascension of Jesus and his second coming. With reference to the cross, the Quran reads:

That they [the Jews] said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:-Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;- 4:157-158.

The Easter message is thus one that can be a scandal, a folly, or simply not believed. Nevertheless it lies at the heart of the Christian faith: that can be seen by the way in which Easter was traditionally the time for baptisms and the renewal of baptismal vows: we die to our old selves and rise to new life in Christ (see Romans 6:1-4).

What does the cross signify?

One of the surprising things about the Christian faith is how the councils of the early church did not specify how Christ's death helps us. The 'Fathers' of the early church wanted to include in the creeds a statement about how 'the Son' was both human and divine but they left the meaning of the cross open. What we mean by that is that we may talk about salvation, freedom, redemption, ransom and the like but how that is effected and tied to the cross is less clear. It is a mystery. There is no single 'theory' about how we are 'saved'.

Frances Young was once the Cadbury (yes, named after the chocolate company) Professor of Theology in Birmingham, England. She was well aware that there are a number of different theories and they are reflected in the songs that we sing. Each one of these theories has strengths and weaknesses.

Frances Young illustrated her understanding through inviting us to consider what hymn we might like to sing on Easter Day: 'There is a green hill far away' presumes a penal substitutionary theory of salvation which is reflected in the line 'there was no other good enough' to placate God. Quite a number of the hymns and songs sang at all services at St. Matthew's reflect that understanding which is very common in Sydney especially. The second option she referred to was 'When I survey the wondrous cross' which appeals more to our emotions, to what we see, and how we understand Christ upon the cross to be a sign of God's love: it motivates us then to self-giving. The third option (which is perhaps more strongly seen in the Hillsong type of video) is represented in 'The strife is o'er, the battle done'. Here there is a sense of the powers and principalities of the age are overcome, defeated.

Easter



Easter Services:

Our Easter services this year will follow a mix of how this part of Jesus' ministry was described in the gospels of Matthew and John. The focus for each day will be in a different place or 'site'. In our Holy Week services last year we focused upon 'characters' in the story rather than places. It can matter where we stand—and when—as to what we see.

The Holy Week services on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday will be on-line at 7:30pm. They will be a time of prayer, song (on video), art and reflection. They will last around 20 minutes each.

The zoom connection is:

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

Monday 3 April Ephraim. John 11:45-57 Sara Weinand
will reflect

Tuesday 4 April Bethany John 12:1-11 Clive Pearson

Wednesday 5 April Gethsemane Matthew 26:36-56 Dean Drayton

Maundy Thursday will be a Tenebrae service in the church, including a recollection of the last supper. It will begin at 7:30pm and **not** be live streamed. The readings will be taken from Matthew and end with Jesus before Caiaphas, the chief priests and the elders—and Peter's denial, hence Matthew 26:57-64. The site is thus Caiaphas' Court.

For *Good Friday* there will be one service at 9am. The Easter site moves from Pilate's headquarters through the streets of Jerusalem to focus on **Golgotha**.

On *Saturday night*, on zoom, we will wait at the **Sealed Tomb** for a short vigil. In many denominations Holy Saturday (as it is called) is a part of a 3 day vigil and is itself a significant time of worshipful reflection.

On *Easter Day* we return to three services and contemplate the **Empty Tomb** as told by Matthew: we renew our baptismal vows.

Music for Easter:

Good Friday

O sacred head, sore wounded

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_OBbjAfVrI

The Gesualdo Six

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M4uUJibpvw>

King's College Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwgM8R7akeU>

Chet Valley Churches

Here hangs a man discarded

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EXisOIsQHA>

Ruth and Joy Everingham

Holy Saturday

When will you rise?

Austin Stone Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDXXF8hpJs0>

Canon of Holy Saturday, Ode 9

Lesser Znamenny Chant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Sbo7BT9iOY>

Easter Day

Christ the Lord is risen today (arr. Rutter)

Kyiv Symphony Orchestra

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_x-HM7lroA

And Chorus

Jesus Christ is risen today

Hereford Cathedral

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duLZz7c-Uaw>

Because you live, O Christ

Renaë Wolfsberger

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-TNFdhH26I>

Farewell

At the end of April my time of supply comes to an end. Let me say how much I have enjoyed my time with you in so many ways. I will be sad to move on ... but there are a number of things in place to which I must now turn my attention. With every good wish for the future.

Yours in Christ,

Clive

What's it like being Pastoral Carer with St. Matthew's?

In other words 'Confessions of Pastoral Carer Mike Strong'.

I was speaking to someone within the fellowship of St. Matthew's the other day about what I did and she was surprised to hear what I said. Subsequent to our conversation, I thought that others within St. Matthew's might also like to have a better idea about what I do – without the detail for that is confidential!

My focus is in making connections with people who are in the senior years of their lives. They mostly already have connections with St. Matthew's and I'm there to strengthen those bonds. I do it by listening and in sharing the experiences we have found through our life's journey. It can happen by phone, in cafes, in hospitals or where people live.

People have very interesting stories to tell. Sometimes there is no one around to speak to about them. I like to think of myself as 'that someone'.

Past joys retold bring back fond memories. Key moments of faith are a joy to share. Periods of doubt and the revelations that arise also are worth speaking about. Health challenges (particularly those ones that will not go away) put on the conversation table sometimes allow people to think about them in a different way.

When loved ones die it very often difficult to re-adjust to their absence. Even under these situations people appreciate the gift of a listening ear.

When much more of one's life is behind rather than in future opportunities sometimes, it is difficult to look for and take hold of sound reasons for living. To be an aid, however small, in the task of discovering purpose in living that brings a desire to live every day to the full, is a very rewarding side of the encounters I have with people.

It is often said that laughter is the best medicine. A full-blooded laughing outburst or even a faint smile when only sadness prevailed previously are signs of good connection being made.

Prayer time, when people being visited are comfortable with it, is a frequent component of time I spend with people. The offered prayer, and all aspects of my part of the mission of Jesus Christ through St. Matthew's becomes easier and important as trust between me and the people I visit grows.

If you know of anyone who might appreciate and benefit from this aspect of St. Matthew's outreach to people then please contact me either through the office or by email on mike@stmatthewsuniting.net.au.

Mike Strong



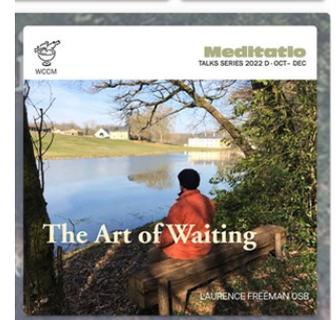
Meditation Talks Series

beginning on the first Tuesday in April

Tuesdays at 9.30am—11am at the church

All are welcome

"The Art of Waiting"



These talks invite us to understand patience as an essential condition for spiritual growth. The ability to be fully present to the moment that we are in, without the need for answers or control, is the poverty of spirit that allows God's power to manifest in our lives. In a culture accustomed to speed and instant outcomes, this insight presents a challenge. Laurence Freeman says we need to relearn the art of waiting through the practice of meditation. The twice-daily discipline of reciting the mantra without expectations teaches us gradually to just be in the present moment, giving God the space to do his transforming work in us.

- Week 1—Conditions for Breakthrough
- Week 2—The Art of Waiting
- Week 3—God is waiting for us
- Week 4—Conversion
- Week 5—Fruits of the Spirit & Divinisation
- Week 6 —Unified Consciousness
- Week 7 —State of Assurance
- Week 8—The last stage of saying the Mantra
- Week 9—Beatitudes; The new way of Being

Enq: Katherine Pedersen 0437 772 011, Rosemary Sexton

Before European Settlement

During the millennia of years before European settlement, the landscape of the Sydney Basin became well timbered with open forest of eucalypts and dense scrub. Small patches of local rainforest could be found in gullies that developed closed canopies providing humid, fire free conditions. The Hills District to the north-west of the basin enjoyed slightly lower temperatures and higher rainfall than the rest of the area.

Indigenous inhabitants existed for forty thousand years. The Bidjigal people occupied the north-west region of the basin and were divided into local groups. There is some confusion with the exact locations used by the Bidjigal tribe as early documentation may have muddled them with the Bediagal tribe that occupied the Georges river area. Some historians believe the coastal areas of Bondi and Coogee were occupied with the Birrabirragal, Bidjigal, and [Gadigal](#) groups simultaneously.

In the Hills area the Toongagal or Tugagal peoples roamed the brush area along the Toongabbie Creek, to the west, along the Cattie Creek, lived the Cattie clan and in the south the Barramatugal people lived along the upper Parramatta River.

All of these clans belonged to the group named Darug, and spoke the same language with some variation. The clans roamed the land through to the Hawkesbury River as well as the Cumberland Plain usually camping within 100m of permanent water sources. Evidence of both open camps and cave dwellings have been discovered in the Hills Shire, with charcoal drawings, shellfish middens, animal bones and stone flakes being discovered in caves.

At the time of European arrival the Bidjigal population was estimated to be around 500 people. This would make them one of the most densely populated areas prior to colonisation. They utilised their access to water for fishing, with fish being their main source of food.

Archaeological evidence has indicated different tools and weapons were used for hunting local wildlife on land, such as spears, digging implements, and weapons. Animal traps and hollow log and stone fish traps were also used. Vegetables were harvested from the bush with an acute awareness of how to prepare plants containing toxic substances.

As with most First Nation peoples firebrand farming was used seasonally. This type of 'cool fire back-burning flushed out game and also ensured new grass cover to support sufficient grazing animals for the tribe's future needs.

The arrival of the Europeans also brought disease that killed fifty to ninety percent of the Aboriginals in the vicinity of Sydney. The change from bush to farmland meant that game animals were driven away and the Darug people found themselves increasingly displaced in their own country. For some time clans fought against the Europeans with Pemulwuy leading the resistance until he was shot and killed by Henry Hacking in 1802.

The overarching attitude in European culture was that if you were not Christian, you were a heathen, a barbarian, or a savage. However the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions acknowledged in 1949, the Aboriginal peoples already had a religious life. They knew which parts of the country were sacred and which are believed to be linked with various ancestors in the mythical past.

From 'Kleinert & Neale Aboriginal Art and Culture' 'the land, for Aboriginal people, is a vibrant spiritual landscape. It is peopled in spirit form by ancestors who originated in the Dreaming, the creative period of time immemorial. The ancestors travelled the country, engaged in adventures which created the people, the natural features of the land, and established the code of life which is called 'the (D)reaming' or 'the (L)aw'.' This law was passed from generation to generation through word, song and dance within the tribes.

In his 2020 article 'First Peoples Knew the Creator God Before Colonialism', **David Southwell wrote about** Uncle Vince Ross. Uncle Vince states, "When our old people were talking in this spiritual sort of language, for people who had never been to church or had any of that sort of influence, they were talking the same thing that the Salvos were talking about," "We were calling God 'Bunjul' the creator spirit," Vince says. "As an Elder said, we have known about the father for a long time, now we are learning about the son, Jesus". First Peoples' beliefs and culture are not always well understood, or indeed that easy to understand, from a European perspective.



"If we listen to each other, we can create whatever we want" - Uncle Vince Ross.
Photo: Mikaela Turner

For example, the Dreamtime could perhaps more accurately be called the Dreaming in the same sense of a church that is "Uniting". "We're not worshipping the land," Vince says.

"We've never gone around worshipping the trees or the land, but we've recognised the connection with it. It's actually respecting Bunjul's creation. "It was about us being holistic in our approach to life and ministry. If I reflect back on my life with my old grandparents and folks on the riverbanks, it's stuff they were talking about. It's connecting up with what the Uniting Church was talking about.

In 2010, the Uniting Church adopted a Preamble to its Constitution which states:

"The First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony."

With thanks to **David Southwell**

Pamela Leslie (on the basis of research done for the Community Engagement Focus Group)

Roof repair update – April 2023

On behalf of the Church Council
David Neideck

Isn't it amazing to think just 1 year ago – the plans were just coming together in regard to the roof repair and pre-school extensions.

Your church council is immensely grateful to the project team that enabled the project to proceed on time and on budget...well close to it!



Now that the skip bins, scaffolding and rubbish is all removed— the community can take pride in our rejuvenated building, not just the colorbond sheet roof that you can see in this photo, but the new windows in the church hall, the new air conditioners, the improved lighting in the church, the pressure cleaned external brickwork, and more.

If you are familiar with the layout of the pre-school, go and take a fresh look – completely new entrance foyer, renovated bathrooms and 2-storey west wing extension with storage underneath a generous sized staff room/ multi desk office with kitchen.

Financing

The church is responsible to finance a portion of the hall roof repair and the repairs to the church (not the preschool roof or extension). 2 loans from Uniting Financial Services totaling \$200,000 are now fully drawn and the repayments have begun. The church was encouraged to retain its cash reserves for other projects.

Back in September we launched the start of the roof repair fundraiser. It is called 40/40.

40/40

Can 40 people give \$40 per month on an ongoing basis to the roof fund?

Why 40/40. Simple. $40 \times 40 = \$1600$ which is very close to the monthly commitment to service these loans. When this is achieved, the repayments are not being paid from St. Matthew's general funds that are needed to keep the church running including staffing costs.

We would like to thank the contributors that have commenced this commitment – we are well on the way to the target of 40, but not quite!

The roof fund is available via Pushpay.



Pushpay is our giving platform that allows 1 off or recurring donations by Visa/Mastercard credit or debit cards. Here is a link to the giving page, just point your phone camera to this QR code.



St Matthew's Uniting Church
Roof project
<https://ppay.co/yPISBT5-1DA>

Open Garden at the Pedersen's

Here is another fundraising project that is open to the whole community at various times throughout the year.

This is an amazing private garden on the edge of the bush between Baulkham Hills and North Rocks being opened to our community for inspection on the dates listed.

Those that have seen this garden are lost for words as to the detail and quality of the garden.



Don't miss this opportunity while the weather is warm, light refreshments are provided.

Dates for April

Wednesday Mornings
9.30am to 12noon
19th and 26th

Saturdays Afternoons
1.30pm-3.30pm
1st, 22nd and 29th

\$10 adults 18 years and over includes drink and sweet or savoury offering of the day.

\$5 school children to 18 years includes drink and sweet or savoury offering of the day.

For bookings and enquiries, please contact the owners, Gary and Katherine Pedersen, kathped56@gmail.com



Welcome to
Coffee & Discovery

Guest Speaker
CHRIS D'ARCY

Thursday
6 April

10am until 12noon

Search Dogs INC



Chris will tell us about the Search, Rescue and Recovery Canines and Handlers, deployed in support of the NSW Police, for search and recovery operations in all circumstances of search and rescue and who are available 24 hours a day for 365 days of the year. Chris will bring one of the search dogs along with him.

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

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

CHILDRENS, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS UPDATE

Heading towards Easter, I wanted to give you an update on how the children's, youth and young adults ministry has been going so far this year.

KUCA

At KUCA this year, we have been following the lectionary readings and learning about The Sermon on the Mount, the season of Lent and how this all prepares us for Easter. We have also just been through the stations of the Cross with the children. We are starting to get excited for KUCA Camp Out later this month which will be held once again in Wedderburn.

FUSION

The older kids and youth have been enjoying their time in Fusion where they have been exploring the topic of Faith. Some highlights from Term 1 include our superhero night where we all dressed up as our favourite superhero and completed some basic hero training.

YOUNG ADULTS

Our Young Adult ministry is going strong with regular attendance at the Thrive Bible Study where we have been looking at the letters of John. The 6:45pm service has been participating in Clive's Lenten study which has been insightful and helped us to gain a greater understanding of the passion narrative in Matthew. We have also been exploring different ways we can worship together as a community. This has included some discussion based services and some services held while we enjoyed a meal together.

In Christ,
Daniel Gibb

Childrens, Youth and Young Adults Ministry Worker



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

Care and Prayer

All Welcome

3pm

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

February to November

Next Date: 3rd April

A small, quiet group
are here to pray for
your needs.
Whatever your faith,
you are truly welcome.



MEN'S MORNING TEA

Wednesday 19th April

10am to 12noon

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

We are allocated external seating to
ensure compliance with the recommended
Covid situation.

Every third Wednesday of the month

Enquiries
Alan
Wright

Women's Fellowship Wednesday 12th April @ 10am

The Women's Fellowship meeting on Wednesday

*Ladies are asked to bring something over
80 years old and to talk about the item.*

All ladies are welcome to join with us in a
relaxed and friendly time together.

Enquires: Dulcie Duncum
& Margaret Gray



Saturday

1st April

9am-12pm

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

St. Matthew's Lower Hall



We are Hiring!

The St. Matthew's Op Shop is looking for anybody who is prepared to give up five and a half hours a week working with our friendly team. Whether you like engaging with new people and having a chat, or prefer to work 'behind the scenes', we have a job for you. Training and mentoring is provided.



Volunteers required on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9am to 2.30pm.



For more information, please contact Pamela Leslie, M: 0404023588.

KUCA CAMPOUT

22ND – 23RD APRIL

AT WEDDERBURN
CHRISTIAN CAMPSITE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT DANIEL GIBB



St. Matthew's
HAWKSHAM HILLS
UNITING CHURCH
growing together

WANTED!!!

Mr. and Mrs. Help Needed!

For some time now a mysterious couple have often been on the duty roster. They are an unusual couple: they are rather shy and a little hesitant about putting their name forward: sometimes they end up hiding behind someone else's more well-known name and face. They do not appear to have a fixed address and sometimes they seem to inhabit the 'cloud' as we seek to track them down.

This couple are now beginning to get known as 'Mr and Mrs Help Needed'. They are an important part of this congregation and its understanding of being 'the body of Christ'. It is not always clear which member they are of that body but they appreciate how much the life of the whole is enriched by their assistance.

There are various tasks with which Mr and Mrs Help Needed turn their attention. Sometimes it is on multimedia, sometimes liturgy, sometimes they like to welcome people, and sometimes they like to pray for others.

Mr and Mrs Help Needed are looking for a few more friends: if you can assist them, please let Clive or the office know. If you would like to 'help' out with prayers and liturgy, Clive is willing to spend some time with you in order to come to terms with what needs to be done.

Recycling Appeal

St. Matthew's Community Engagement Focus Group will be collecting **glass and plastic bottles** as well as **cans** for this year again.



We have raised \$83.60 so far! Thank you to everyone who has participated in this initiative.

The money raised will be donated to various organisations who support women and children who have been affected by domestic violence. Plastic and glass bottles need to have their barcode and plastic wrapper still attached. Cans should be left uncrushed as the machine needs to read the barcode. We appreciated all the donations and look forward to a successful year.

Thank you
Marijke Prinsloo

Calendar of Events for April 2023

School Holidays

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

						1 9am-12pm Op Shop  9am-12pm Mini Mart  lower hall	2  8am Worship includes Communion 9.30am—Worship includes Communion KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm—Worship includes Communion includes Lenten Study Final 
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop  lower hall 3pm Care and Prayer  Meet in the Church 7.30pm ZOOM Holy Week 20min service	9am-2pm Op Shop  9.30–11am Christian Meditation  in the Church 7.30pm ZOOM Holy Week 20min service	9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12pm In Stitches  upstairs hall 7.30pm ZOOM Holy Week 20min service	9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12pm Coffee & Discovery  7.30pm Maundy Thursday Service  at the church	Public Holiday 9am Good Friday Service at the church	7.30pm ZOOM Holy Week service The Sealed Tomb	8am Worship 9am—Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am—Worship KUCA in recess 6.45pm—Worship	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Public Holiday No scheduled events	9am-2pm Op Shop  9.30–11am Christian Meditation  in the Church	9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12noon Women's Fellowship  in the upstairs hall & church	9am-2pm Op Shop 	No scheduled events	No scheduled events	8am Worship 9.30am—Worship KUCA in recess 6.45pm—Worship	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop  lower hall	9am-2pm Op Shop  9.30–11am Christian Meditation  in the Church 7.30pm Property Committee Community Room	9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea  McKels Café Bella Vista. 10am-12pm In Stitches  upstairs hall	9am-2pm Op Shop 	No scheduled events	KUCA Camp Out 	8am Worship 9.30am—Worship KUCA Camp Out 5pm—Shine 6.45pm—Worship	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop  lower hall	 Public Holiday No scheduled events	9am-2pm Op Shop  7.30pm Elders Meeting in the church	9am-2pm Op Shop 	5pm-7pm FUSION Youth Group upstairs hall	No scheduled events	8am Worship 9am—Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am—Worship KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm—Worship	

