

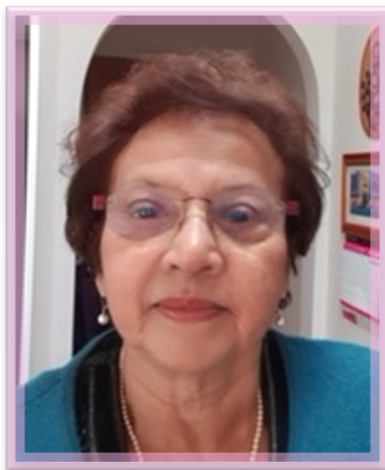
st. matthew's
UNITING CHURCH
BAULKHAM HILLS 
growing together

Newcomers: Stories and
recollections of coming to
St Matthew's as a
newcomer

Eulalie Herat

I was welcomed to St Matthews as a new mum in 1978 by Don Grant, who was then treasurer, and his wife Heather.

Heather's mother had been worshipping with us at Auburn Methodist Church and told her daughter that we would arrive on a Sunday. I had three young children, five, one and six weeks old and had worked at Auburn District Hospital with my husband Bandula before moving from Pendle Hill to Baulkham Hills.



When I arrived, I was so glad that there was an active choir that sang every Sunday and I later joined the choir, becoming the organist, and then the choir director for about ten years on and off working with Ted Page who also stills worships here at St Matthews. We also joined a young families' group, our kids went to Sunday school and later became involved with the church soccer, cricket and netball teams. Bandula and I both became elders, joined Bible studies and helped in worship.

As the children grew older, they were active in youth camps and other groups and we were also confirmed here. Our eldest daughter Rosanne was also married in St Matthew's in 2020

So, Baulkham Hills is where I still stand tall!

Best wishes





Pamela Leslie

I arrived at St Matthew's during the 1990s after previously attempting to connect with a different church.

A few key people warmly welcomed me, despite my shyness and refusal to engage.

Although it took a couple of years for me to feel 'at home' in St Matthew's, today I am very grateful for the perseverance of those initial Welcomers.



Sandra Gordon

I had been watching the construction of St Matthew's from my house down the hill; by its completion, I had decided to make it my home church. In those early days, there were many new people and like most shy worshippers, I would sit up the back.

Initially I felt a little lost as my former church had offered a different service but two kind ladies, Mrs. Garside and Edna Bell, took me under their wings. They invited me to sit with them and kept a kindly eye out to help me fit in. I am forever grateful to them.



Eventually, the huge increase in children attending resulted in a

call for Sunday School teachers. I volunteered and soon became friends with the other teachers. That all happened nearly fifty years ago, but the kindness and friendliness of people in those first few months has remained with me.

Christine and George Haines



In 1983, when George and I moved to Baulkham Hills, we decided to visit the local churches to see where we best fitted. We began with St Matthew's (walking distance from our house) and a new neighbor spoke highly of the preschool.

We arrived with our ten-month-old daughter and felt so welcome on that first visit that we didn't visit any other churches, and are still here. Both our children attended the preschool, which was indeed very good.

George's family background is Catholic and mine is Greek Orthodox. I became a Christian through scripture lessons at school and began to attend an Anglican church as a young adult. George and I were married in the Anglican Church.

Looking back, joining St Matthew's, was like a friendship that begins with an attraction and develops over years to a deeper relationship of seeing strengths and attributes not obvious at the beginning.

What I have come to love about St Matthew's and the Uniting Church (UC) is its inclusiveness, progressivism and stance on social justice.

I love our welcome call to share communion, "If you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more." Unlike other denominations, the UC doesn't expect parishioners to be either baptised or confirmed in the church to share communion.

I also love the ordination of female Ministers of the Word. As they are relatively rare, when our minister Christine Bayliss Kelly was expecting her third baby, I would delight in telling friends and family that our minister was expecting. They would invariably respond, "No, your minister's wife is expecting a baby" and I would say, "No, my minister is pregnant".

I love the social justice commitment by the UC. We actively reach out to help others and speak up for the humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, something George and I hold dear.

We both feel very privileged to be members of St Matthew's: our spiritual home for the past 40 years.

David Porter

Our family came to St Matthew's around 2003 or 2004, before our third child Zac was born in 2005. Nic christened him, and was also a key reason for us becoming a part of the St Mathew's community.

Although my attendance was initially sporadic, I was familiar with church life thanks to my parents and growing up in the Uniting Church.



What impressed me most about St Matthew's was the feeling of always feeling welcome.

I appreciated those who made the effort to come up and say, "Welcome".

I also recall with great fondness Ken Lewis, who welcomed me at the door and the good friendship I made with Greg Adams, a crèche volunteer even before his own children were born! I believe the preschool offers a natural pathway into the life of St Matthew's for young families.

The church music is essential because it contributes to the atmosphere of worship, creating another pathway that encourages people to come into St Matthews.

I feel blessed to be part of our church here and I enjoy being involved. And, I think it's wonderful that St Matthew's is here for the wider community, and it's great to be a part of that.



Katherine Pedersen

I began to feel part of St Matthews by helping with the children's activities and doing what I knew I could manage. Sunday School teaching, cooking for functions; arranging fruit, flowers and plants for our fetes and helping with sports, soccer and netball. I even joined the choir for a short time along with friendship and social family groups. I helped with gardening, property and the elders.



I am a door Welcomer, steward at the 8am service and still remember when there were many Welcomers! One upstairs and even downstairs who would wait outside to greet everyone and

help parishioners exit a car. They held an umbrella in the rain and briefly chatted and, if an unknown person arrived, we introduced ourselves.



Amanda Mason

I had previously attended an Anglican Church for around 40 years, but at the end of 2017, I began regularly attending the 9.30am service at St Matthew's.

I felt a certain amount of familiarity at the church, as my daughter had attended the preschool 20 years previously and I knew a few of the church members.

The eldest son, of the former minister Dirk Van Doorene, had been my student and I previously met Dirk and his wife Sharon at parent teacher interviews.

I was made to feel very welcome. Meryl Pickering, helped me get to know other members of the congregation, and I sat with her each week until she passed away over a year ago. The church often mentions love and social issues in its services, all which are important to me. I was encouraged to join several committees and I am regularly on the roster for the 9:30am service. I certainly feel very included at St Matthew's.

Beverley and Bruce Chivers

It has been a joy and blessing to worship at St Matthew's since its official opening on November 22, 1975. I had previously worshipped in the South Baulkham Hills Methodist Church all my life.



I played the little reed organ there from the age of 14 years when the elderly organist died and there was no one else to take over from her.

At the opening service at St Matthew's, I played the electronic organ, while my dad, Ron Napper due to his hard work in its establishment, was also honoured by officially opening the new church.

We have had wonderful ministry over the last 48 years and during that time, my faith in the Lord Jesus has grown while the fellowship with other Christian parishioners in various activities has been a blessing. I retired from playing the organ when I turned 80, as there were now enough younger folk available.

"May God continue to bless St Matthew's and all who worship there."





Barbara Fiedler

My original welcome to our church in 1979 is but a distant memory, but obviously St Matthews Uniting was a friendly place and our daughter was baptised there.

What followed were many years of moving around as an Air Force family but in the early 2000s, I think, I found my way back via a Christmas Eve service. I was welcomed once again!

Post Links and many other church activities helped me with the "getting to know you" plus services and Bible studies with ministers Nic, Dirk and Clive and others helped develop my understanding of being a Christian in today's world. What a blessing to be a part of this community.

Barbara

Judy Mann

I briefly attended St Matthew's in 1993 just after I moved to Baulkham Hills after remarrying. We were a multi-denominational and blended stepfamily and I ended up following one of my children to another church whilst my husband Mick continued to worship at St Michaels (Catholic).

During COVID and after my husband died, I realised that I was



seeking a deeper spiritual connection in a church that aligned with my family roots – Presbyterian and Uniting.

So, in June 2022 and co-incidentally on the anniversary of the establishment of the Uniting Church in Australia, I walked back into St Matthew's and met such warm and kind door Welcomers.

Since then, I haven't looked back. I studied all the leaflets, and attended all the activities and discovered that people were very friendly. I even attempted some intellectual academic Bible Studies, which challenged me to start thinking critically again.

Then, I began to put my hand up to do some jobs. St Matthew's is now my church family.



Sandra Drayton

Our first visit to St Matthew's was in 2000.

After the service, morning tea was served in the courtyard. It was there that we were introduced to several people.

We were new to the Baulkham Hills area and it was the immediate follow up to this first visit that became so memorable for both of us.

We had given our phone number to the minister - and very early the next week we were asked if we had any particular needs: including perhaps suggestions for local dentists and doctors. Twenty-three years later, we still visit the same dentist and I still walk with someone I met on that very first day!

Dulcie and Peter Duncum

Peter and I were among a number of 'newcomers' when the new St Matthew's Methodist Church as it was called then, was officially opened on November 22 1975.

We had previously attended the South Baulkham Hills church and had lived in the area for 10 years, we also had the advantage of beginning our St Matthew's journey with people familiar to us, which of course made being 'newcomers' not the daunting experience it may have been.

For us with our four young children, three of them having attended the South Baulkham Hills Church Sunday School, we soon joined in and worked together within the developing groups and all the activities.

St Matthew's Uniting Church at Baulkham Hills has continued to be an inclusive and friendly place of worship for our spiritual journey over many years.





Terry and Anne Oliver

Thank you for asking.

Anne and I came to St Matthew's in 2008. We were "spotted" on the first Sunday we attended by Rev Nicholas Fried who made a special point of speaking to us and asking for contact details.

We had a phone call the next day asking for a meeting within the next week. A letter of "Welcome" from the church on Tuesday and a visit from the minister on Friday of that week.

This process is very welcoming for new potential members. And we found a new church home!

Regards

Terry



