



The "Obedience of Faith"

I want to introduce this new term to you. I will be surprised if you have heard of it before. It is Paul's shorthand summary of the book of Romans, one of the most important letters in the New Testament. This letter contrasts "the obedience of faith" with "the obedience of the law". We are all familiar with what it means to keep the law. After all isn't religion about goodness and morality?

A few weeks ago I drove by a church notice board. It read, GOD HEARS, GOD REMEMBERS, GOD SEES, GOD KNOWS. It implies God is the almighty one watching, recording, judging, never forgetting. It is enough to chill the soul. It sums up what it means to live before God in the attempt to be obedient to the law. This God who glares at every slip and blip in our keeping of the law. Who then can stand before God and say they have been obedient to God's laws? No one can. A generation has grown up seeing that this is an impossible predicament. Either one has to live before God who dispenses forgiveness for all sinners, or religion is seen as a psychological religious trick that society uses to keep people moral citizens. The result is that religion is either a way of seeking forgiveness or results in people give up believing in a God.

Paul's great discovery, God's great disclosure to him, is that it is impossible for us to keep the law. The revolutionary Paul discovered that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4) and that there is a different way to live a life that is alive to God. It is "the obedience of faith". He found everything depended upon God in Christ to open this new way.

In chapter 7 of Romans Paul devastatingly exposes a fundamental problem with the law. He shows that it is impossible to be obedient to the law. He doesn't talk about our sins and forgiveness of sins, much to the surprise of most readers and those who quote him. He discovered that it is not individual sins that are the primary issue. He found that the law itself is infected and warped with sin. The result is that even when we think we are keeping the law and being good people we are being fooled.

Through the life and death of Jesus Christ God has shown that the reality we live in is infected and warped by sin that has subverted the law for the purposes of sin. We are fooled into thinking our definition of what is good is good. As we have explored in the last few issues of Focus, in Romans chapter 7 Paul deconstructs our efforts and shows how even the highest good is betrayed by our need to be the judge of what is right and wrong, good and bad. For it is our control that lets our priorities bind us, blind us and keep us from being alive to the priorities of God for life. This happens individually and socially as well. For example radically different political groups each claim their particular perspective is right despite the claims of other groups. Extreme voices take over, and it is not long before this leads to violence. Paul cries out for us all. "Wretched man that I am, Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 7:24,25a)

Continued next page

The "Obedience of Faith" Cont.

Paul echoes what Jesus declares in his announcing of the kingdom of God/heaven. When Jesus said "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven", the disciples were aghast. Who then can enter the kingdom of God, the kingdom that is here at hand, the kingdom Jesus announced in all his teaching and healing, the kingdom he urged people to seek and enter. Then come these words of his. "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible." (Matt 19:26)

It is as though the entrance to the kingdom is shut tight with a steel door for anyone who tries to open it by virtue of who they are, or what they have done or earned. But Jesus, having shut tight the door to human action, goes on to share how it can be opened. Yes it is impossible for us to enter the kingdom of God, but it is possible for God to bring us into the kingdom. The door is impervious to a frontal attack, but can be opened by God from the inside.

Jesus reframes our perspective of what is happening. It is not what you can do for God that is important, it is what God has done for you that is the key to life.

So far, most of this article has been about Paul's demolishing of the attempt to obey the law. It is necessary to do this for so much of what passes for religion and faith is in fact a disguised form of morality. The obedience of faith, however, is not primarily about morality.

What then is "obedience of faith?" The obedience of faith is to take seriously that it is God who has acted to bring us into God's presence. It is to focus our attention on the way Jesus, living in the law of the spirit of life, faced the defiled law. He exposed its deadly power. In the name of this law he was rejected and crucified. But God raised him from the dead in the power of the Spirit of life that sustains all life. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2) We discover in Jesus Christ that the true law of God is given in the life of the Spirit, the Spirit of God. The obedience of faith is to live into a

new creation in which we are held and sustained in relationship with God and the creation through the Holy Spirit. It is the life we saw in the life of the one who called us to follow him, Jesus Christ as Lord.

Thus the key to the obedience of faith is to live, keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, as our Lord Jesus Christ did. "For those who live according to the flesh (human perspective) set their minds on the flesh (human perspective), but those who live according to the Spirit (of God) set their minds on the Spirit (of God). To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Rom 8:5,6)

Paul in Gal 5:25,26 puts it succinctly, "If we live by the Spirit let us also be guided by the Spirit." In the Greek, it is a graphic image- let us keep in step with the Spirit, living in the presence of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control- the relational presence of the Holy Spirit. Or as shared in last month's Focus. Get on the e-bike and start pedalling on the way of love, joy, peace etc, and discover the way God's Spirit empowers you to go beyond the you, you have previously known.

The Spirit is not just about us as individuals but about truth and justice for all. In Romans 8 the creation is groaning in labor pains for God's future. In the first fruits of the Spirit we wait with patience for the creation itself to be set free from its bondage to decay. In the mean-time, the Spirit prays in sighs too deep for words on our behalf for us and the world. This is the amazing reality of the obedience of faith. We are called to live in the cosmic and personal reality of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God present in the here and now of God's long term creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

Dean Drayton

Rev Jon Humphries

WELCOME

TO ST. MATTHEW'S BAULKHAM HILLS UCA



Rev Jon Humphries Induction Service

3pm Sunday 15 October

St. Matthew's Uniting Church

Light refreshments will be served
by the Women's fellowship
after the service.

**If you will be attending and would
like to bring a plate of food,
it would be greatly appreciated.**

*Please join Jon as he begins
his ministry with us.*

The congregation is pleased to welcome Jon to ministry in the Baulkham Hills area as the minister of the Baulkham Hills Congregation.

Jon starts in October 2023. He is married to Linda who is head of a Junior School at a Christian College in Narara. They have two daughters attending university. The family will continue living in their home at Hornsby.

Jon was ordained in 2001. His first vocation was as a teacher. Most of his ministry has been as a chaplain, first at Pymble Ladies College and then at Ravenswood School for Girls. He has had wide experience in the care and ministry for these multi-faith communities, and he has been very active in the Turramurra Congregation of the UCA.

Jon is known throughout the country for his prayer ministry and is at present providing prayer leadership to the National Church through the Assembly. His ministry of prayer and preaching in the schools has been vital. To quote, "For me preaching doesn't just mean sermons, but also provocative thoughts, posts in our school newsletter, kids talks, on social media, all about challenging the nature of faith and discipleship to be better aligned with Jesus and the way he walked." And again, "I would seek to broaden the notion of worship to a whole of life perspective and not just what happens in a Sunday (or other day) service." And also, "I will seek to find ways to invite and encourage the congregation to engage with people in the community and allow this relational connection to shape our mission and ministry goals and plans."

We are looking forward to Jon's creative energetic ministry in our midst.



Guest Speaker
Alan Wright

Thursday
5 October
10am—12noon

‘Parochial stuff— transcending borders’

You may recognise some of the stuff inanimate or animated - but do you know the stories behind them?



Alan will provide a wee bit of background and an explanation, which in some cases may come as a surprise.

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

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

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH,
BAULKHAM HILLS

**TRIVIA
NIGHT**

Tables of 8
\$15 per person

SATURDAY | 28 OCTOBER, 2023

7:30 PM

More Info
daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au



**JAZZ ON
HAMMERS**



Come and join us each month for an evening of live music, dinner and fellowship.

When: October 15 from 6-8pm

Where: Northmead Uniting Church, 3-7 Hammers Rd Northmead

Cost: Donations welcome for pot luck dinner

Who: All ages are WELCOME!



For more information contact Noni Medcalf: nones81@gmail.com

Children and Youth Table

You may have noticed something new in the church foyer. This Children and Youth table has some activity sheets for all ages that help the younger members of our congregation engage in the worship services in a more meaningful way.

Along with the activity sheets, we have included some fidget items that can be used to help focus.



This table will also be used to keep the wider church community up to date on what is happening amongst the various Children and Youth ministries at St. Matthew's.

This table is a work in progress that we will be constantly updating as we continue in ministry with Children and Youth at St. Matthew's.



Before

Have you noticed the new addition to the Edgar St garden area?

Thank you to all who installed an additional sandstone seat, repointed sandstone paving and edges and gave the area an intensive pressure wash. It looks fantastic and so inviting for all to use.



After

PASIFIKA EMPOWERED 2023

A Community Event for Climate Justice and Cost of Living



Saturday, 7th October
Nexus Meeting Room
Pullman Hotel

NEW LOCATION!



REGISTER NOW

9 OLYMPIC BOULEVARD
SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK NSW 2127

1pm - 4pm | Followed by Fiji Day celebrations nearby!



TWILIGHT JAZZ

ON THE BANKS OF THE HAWKESBURY RIVER

8th OCTOBER 2023

4.00PM TO 8.00PM

A PERFORMANCE BY

HARMONIX BIG BAND

AND SUPPORTED BY

WARRAWEE PUBLIC SCHOOL STAGE BAND

ON THE LAWN OF
EBENEZER CHURCH

BRING A PICNIC, CHAIRS, BLANKET & BYO
BBQ, TEA, COFFEE & GAME AVAILABLE

TICKETS \$20 EACH

CONTACT REBECCA ON 0439 309 303

TICKETS SOLD ON NIGHT IF NOT SOLD OUT

Find us on Facebook



Ebenezer Uniting Church - Twilight Jazz

FUNDS RAISED GO TO THE WEST PAPUAN DEVELOPMENT COMPANY - FOR CLEAN WATER WELLS

Synod 2023 - Transforming Spirit

On the 15th, 16th and 17th of September, myself and two other representatives from St Matthew's, Daniel Gibb and Abbey Sim, attended the NSW/ACT Synod 2023 event, held in Katoomba. We attended as part of Pulse, the Uniting Church's team for encouraging leadership in youth and young adults.

Over the weekend, there was much prayer, worship and discernment, as the Synod body met and discussed a number of proposals for the future

direction of the Uniting Church. The theme this year was "Transforming Spirit", and this was clearly reflected in the proposals that were made and the subsequent discussions. As the world goes through changes, the Uniting Church must respond, and the Holy Spirit is there to guide us on God's path.

It was a time of open and honest conversation about important issues that the Uniting Church is facing. We discerned on topics such as our mission to walk together with First Nations peoples, gambling reform, the approach to ministerial placements, and the importance of younger generations for the future of the Uniting Church.

I really enjoyed being surrounded by so many passionate followers of Christ. We ran into old friends, made new ones, and caught a glimpse of the inspiring things that are happening in other churches. We also heard many good things said about our upcoming minister Jon, from people who know him well. It was really encouraging to see the good work being done in Christ's name, and to take part in such an important process. I have come back energised and excited about the future of church in Australia.

Alexander Lawless



Christian Meditation

"We have been meeting most Tuesday mornings from 9.30- 10.30am in the Community Room since 2016. Previously, since 2003, Betty Carmody led and helped set up groups.

In St. Matthew's and surrounding areas introducing many people to Christian Meditation.

Since 2016, 13 people who attend worship here have learnt how to meditate.

21 people from the community, either from other churches, researched online, word of mouth, op shop have learnt how to meditate.

At present, on average 7 people, mainly women and sometimes men, young mothers, teenagers, attend the sessions. A time of fellowship follows at the Mint Fresh cafe for those who wish to attend.

During covid a daily zoom time of learning and meditation was offered and proved a valuable lifeline particularly for people living alone or experiencing health challenges.

The heart of the small meditation group is the sharing of silence together where we are recapturing a prayer that leads us from the head to the heart, from fragmentation to unity, from isolation to caring.

The power and strength of meditation together comes from the words of Jesus, 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them'. Matthew 18:2. We realise that we need the support of others if we are to persevere on our personal journey.

We all need the affirmation of others and thus our faith can be strengthened through the bonds of love, care and fellowship that develop in the small group.

The session begins with a reading on some aspect of how to meditate followed by a 15 minute current teaching of some aspect of the benefits and life changing effects of giving undivided attention to Christ's Spirit then 30 minutes of meditation, a closing prayer and question time.

Weekly donations go towards supporting St. Matthew's and the WCCM outreach and scholarship program that teaches meditation and spirituality to anyone in over 100 countries.

Compiled by

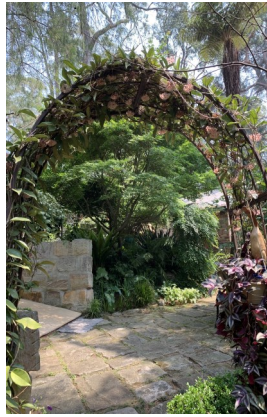
Katherine Pedersen—Leader

Rosemary Sexton—Co Leader

Giosela Jap—Co Leader

Dear Friends of the
St Matthews community.

Bundaleer will be open on several days from 10am to 4pm within the next 3 weeks then closed to St Matthews visitors. The garden is blooming and the temperature is pleasant for a visit relaxing among the trees and by water and having a drink and something to eat.



If you missed coming in autumn this is your last chance.

Please consider visiting by yourself or with a friend or group to enjoy the peace and beauty of this place. For inquiries or bookings email Katherine at kathped56@gmail.com

Last Dates

October 1, 4, 6, 7, 8

Time: 10am – 4pm

All donations go to the Roofing Fund.

Recycling Appeal

St. Matthew's Community Engagement Focus Group are still collecting **glass and plastic DRINK bottles** as well as **DRINK cans**. To raise money for various organisations who support women and children who have been affected by domestic violence.



Collecting for the 2023 Appeal will end at the end of October. Thank you to everyone who has participated in this initiative.

DRINK Plastic and DRINK glass bottles need to have their barcode and plastic wrapper still attached. DRINK Cans should be left uncrushed as the machine needs to read the barcode. **PLEASE LEAVE YOUR DONATIONS IN THE MARKED TUBS LOCATED IN THE UPSTAIRS HALL.**

We appreciate all the donations and look forward to continuing fundraising.

Thank you
Marijke Prinsloo



Please help
Shine support
the school in
the Philippines



By donating small educational
items, soaps and combs

Please place donations in the box
provided in the church foyer

Calendar of Events for October 2023

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

30	31	st. matthew's UNITING CHURCH BAULKHAM HILLS growing together					1
<p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation in the Church</p> <p>7.30pm Property committee meeting Community room</p>  					<p>Remember to put your clocks forward one hour for daylight saving</p> 	<p>1</p>  <p>DAYLIGHT Saving Starts</p>  <p>PENTECOST 18</p> <p>8am—Worship includes Communion</p> <p>9.30am—Worship includes Communion KUCA in Recess</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Public Holiday</p> <p>3pm Care and Prayer in the church</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation in the Church</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12pm In Stitches upstairs hall</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12pm Coffee & Discovery Speaker: Alan Wright 'Parochial stuff – transcending borders'</p>  	<p>6</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9am-12pm Op Shop</p> <p>9am-12pm Mini Mart lower hall</p> 	<p>8</p>  <p>PENTECOST 19</p> <p>We welcome Rev Jon Humphries to today's services</p> <p>8am—Worship</p> <p>9am—Worship @ the Willow's</p> <p>9.30am—Worship KUCA in Recess</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship includes Communion</p>	
<p>9</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation in the Church</p> <p>7.30pm Thrive Bible Study lower hall</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Women's Fellowship in the upstairs hall & church</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group "LEGO MASTERS"</p>	<p>14</p> <p>8.30-11.30am</p> <p>Church Working Bee</p> 	<p>15</p>  <p>PENTECOST 20</p> <p>8am—Worship</p> <p>9.30am—Worship KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>3pm—Rev Jon Humphries Induction Service followed by refreshments</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship includes Community Meal</p>	
<p>16</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop lower hall</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation in the Church</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista</p> <p>10am-12pm In Stitches upstairs hall</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>PENTECOST 21</p> <p>8am Worship</p> <p>9.30am—Worship 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 lower hall</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30-11am Christian Meditation in the Church</p> <p>7.30pm Thrive Bible Study lower hall</p>  	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>7.30pm Elders meeting In the church</p> 	<p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group "Movie Making"</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7.30pm Trivia night</p> 	<p>29</p>  <p>PENTECOST 22</p> <p>8am Worship</p> <p>9.30am—Worship KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm—Worship</p>	

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES and REGULAR GROUPS



Wednesday 11th October @ 10am

Make your favourite recipe and bring for sale.

Enquires: Dulcie Duncum & Margaret Gray



MEN'S MORNING TEA

Wednesday 18th October 10am to 12noon

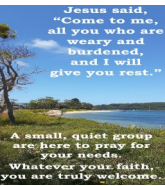
Mckel's Café, Shop 14, Circa Boulevard Bella Vista

Every third Wednesday of the month Enquiries Alan Wright



Meeting Dates October 4, 18

1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays of the month in the upstairs church hall. **10.00am to 12.00pm**
Bring your craft along to do. Share fun and fellowship with other crafty ladies. Morning Tea supplied. Enquiries: Jane Cole



Care and Prayer

Next Date:

All Welcome

3pm on the first Monday of each month at St. Matthew's
February to November

2nd October

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



Tuesdays at the Church 9.30am-10.30am

All welcome

For more information or to express your interest in attending please contact

Katherine Pedersen. Facilitator of the Tuesday 9.30am sessions and for information. kathped56@gmail.com



OP SHOP

Open Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9am-2pm and 1st Saturday of the month 9-12pm

Pre-loved clothes & accessories, Books, Haberdashery, Bric-a-brac.



Saturday 7th October 9am-12pm

Pre-loved Household Items, Electrical, Toys & Books (Fiction, Non-fiction & Childrens Books)

St. Matthew's lower hall Edgar St



SHINE is a special needs social group for all ages from high school up. **Meets Sundays Monthly for dinner & fun.**

We are **still collecting in 2023** for their shoebox appeal supporting a school in the Philippines. **Donations of small educational items, soaps & combs are greatly appreciated.** Please place donations in the box provided at the top of the stairs in the church foyer.

Giving From time to time, we receive questions on how someone can make donations to St. Matthew's Uniting Church Baulkham Hills, to further support God's work through the Ministry team and congregation, in the wider Community.

To assist with this, we have set up the following account with Uniting Financial Services:

Account Name: Baulkham Hills Uniting Church

– Giving Direct

BSB: 634634

Account Number: 100025924

If required a Direct Debit Request Form is available in the foyer or speak with Barry Gregory.

For your support of God's work here at St. Matthew's, a big thank you!

 To include your activity in the
NOVEMBER
In Focus
St. Matthew's
Monthly Newsletter
 please send details to Robyn and Lynn in
 the Church Office by **15 October**
 Thank you

Maintaining contact with you and your family is very important to us.

We would be grateful if you change your address, phone/mobile or email details that you let us know by phoning and leaving a message on 9686 3003

YOUNG FAMILIES

KUCA.....

@ **9.30am** service during term

for Preschool, Years K-2, and Years 3-8

YOUTH and YOUNG ADULTS

Fusion Youth Group.....

Years 3 to 8. Meet Friday evenings at the church during term time. 5pm—7pm

Contact Daniel Gibb

daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

THRIVE BIBLE STUDY.....

For young adults

Fortnightly

Contact Daniel Gibb

daniel@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES



Church Working Bee

Saturday 14 October

8.30am—11.30am

Many hands make light work

MINISTER

REV JON HUMPHRIES

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](https://www.facebook.com/stmatthewsunitingchurchbaulkhamhills)

PRE-SCHOOL DIRECTOR 9639 8570

SONALI WANIGESEKERA

PO BOX 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153

EMAIL: director@stmatthewsps.net.au