



SACRED PLACES AND TIMES

The first part of the liturgical year is full of sacred times and celebrations. These add to the sacredness of certain places and certain rituals such as baptism and Communion. Sacred things are meant to help us connect with God. They are often places or times of epiphany. They can mark times and places of epiphany that we have had ourselves in the past or which significant figures from our faith tradition have had significant epiphanic experiences. However, certain places, times and rituals can open us to epiphanic experiences in the present. These then become sacred times and places for us personally.

Sacred means set apart as special or for a special purpose, usually to do with a god or religion. In some definitions sacred places are described as deserving veneration. Being low Church in nature, that is seeing an emphasis on ritual, sacraments, and the authority of the clergy as being less important than

the practise of faith, spirituality and discipleship, I personally believe all space, time and relationship

is sacred. God as Christ broke open the need for a temple in his death and resurrection and in the incarnation within us as Spirit, God made us temples of God's presence as well as part of the priesthood of all believers. All of life is sacred. All of creation is sacred. Every interaction with each other is sacred, because God is present and at work in everything, everywhen and everyone. However, having said that, we who are human often need spaces, times, rituals, things and relationships which we set apart as sacred from the pattern of our normal busyness and life to remind us to look to God.



There are those burning bush, mountaintop, Road to Damascus type moments,

places and relationships where God breaks through to us in revelation and awakens our awareness to metanoia and/or calling. These times and places, we who follow God incarnate as Christ and present as Spirit, often mark as sacred so that we might be reminded of God's efficacy and power to disrupt, disturb and discomfort through awe and wonder. We then mark such times as sacred to help us remember our epiphany and revelation of God.

The problem with sacred places, times and things is that we can be tempted to see them as being sacred in themselves and as having power themselves – whether it is residual or ongoing. Or, we can see them as being portals to an ongoing special connection with the divine. When this happens, we forget that God is always present as Spirit, and instead of living into our own experience of God which the remembering of sacred sites, times, things or ritual is meant to evoke, we try to have a vicarious connection with God through the experience or mediation of someone or something external which we perceive as being sacred. Then, rather than being strengthened, our faith, in reality our faith becomes diminished as we begin to put our faith in the supposed sacredness of the external thing, rather than the active work of God with and within us. **Continued next page**

Sacred things, times, places and rituals are symbols of a greater reality. They are supposed to point us to God rather than become the focus of our attention. They are a blessing in this way. Rather than being efficacious in themselves, and therefore being the blessing, they bless us with the reminder to seek God in our present reality. It is true that God may continue to work through them to reveal or draw us closer to God's presence and work, but often they have had their time and place drawing us into epiphany and revelation, and so become things for memory and reminding rather than having any present power themselves. We are called to new experiences of God which strengthens and deepens our faith and discipleship.

The power of the sacred is that it is always available to us. God is always present and at work in us and our lives, just as God is at work in

others, their lives and the world. In our flawed state, God may specially choose to work through certain places, times, things, rituals or people to awake in us epiphany.



Yet, the blessing of God as Spirit is that we can choose to enter into an awareness of God and to be able to sit in God's presence and talk to God, and listen for God, in every moment, place and interaction of our lives. Sacred times, places and rituals are there to help us in this realisation. They are external symbols which point us to an ever-present spiritual reality. St Augustine, in the 5th Century,

spoke such things as being, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace" – invisible but not incomprehensible or intangible.

We are encouraged in this time of After Epiphany to journey into the sacred, to come to encounter God in new and meaningful way, remembering that God is always present with us and at work in us and calling to join in the bringing of the Kingdom further and deeper into being. Let us make room for the sacred, not losing sight of God as we encounter people, places, things and rituals which direct our attention to God. The sacred gives us much to think about.

God bless

Jon

PROPERTY MATTERS

Working Bee: Thank you to the few who came to help at the last working bee on the 30th November

- Katherine Pedersen, Noni Medcalf, Bruce Court, Peter Jenkyn, Jane Jenkyn, George Haines, June Davey . We did achieve to complete a number of jobs, but more people next time would be appreciated. It is your Church where a certain standard of cleanliness needs to be upheld.

Gardens - Katherine Pedersen is reaching out for more help in keeping the gardens looking beautiful. They are a credit to Katherine and her team but Katherine can no longer keep

up and needs more help. If you, or a friend who likes to garden, would like to assist please let me know 0422149530 and I will put you in touch with Katherine.

Jane Jenkyn
Property Committee
Secretary.



The first Thursday of each month from March until December

Next meeting will be **7th March**

10am—12noon

Speaker to be advised

Dates for your diary for 2025

April 3, May 1, June 5, July 3, August 7, September 4, October 2, November 6, December 4

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

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



**1st Saturday of the month
9am-12pm**

Upcoming dates

- **1 February**
- **1 March**
- **5 April**

Pre-loved
Household items,
Electrical, Toys & Books
(Fiction, Non-fiction & children's books)

St. Matthew's Lower hall



St. Matthew's Uniting Church Baulkham Hills

Contemplative Spirituality

SPIRITUALITY IN A SECULAR AGE

The Monday evening 7.30-8.30pm and Tuesday morning 9.30-10.30am Christian Meditation groups will be listening to 7 short talks by Laurence Freeman OSB as part of the hour sessions from

January 13th to February 25th, 2025.

You are welcome to join to listen to these important talks and experience being in community in the silent presence of the Spirit of Christ.

If you wish to find out more please contact Katherine Pedersen on 0437772011 or Rosemary Sexton at morning worship.

From the Social Issues Focus Group at St. Matthew's

'Doing little things can make a big difference'.

Uniting Fair Treatment News:

The first result of the 2024 NSW Drug Summit, to which Uniting and Fair Treatment made submissions, is that the Minns Government has changed its position and will now allow a trial of drug testing at music festivals in NSW. It will be a 12 month trial that will be reviewed at the end of 2025. NSW Police are supportive of this. In addition to the testing of drugs, the testing units will include the opportunity for people taking illegal drugs to have conversations with medically trained staff about the effects of what they are taking and education about the consequences.

Wesley Mission's Gambling Reform News: Put Pokies in their Place Campaign

Wesley Mission's goals for their campaign in 2025 are:

1. Mandatory cashless gambling card with harm reduction measures.
2. Power-down poker machines between midnight and 10am
3. Fund an independent statewide self-exclusion register.
4. Let local communities have a say in local poker machine applications.
5. Publish gambling venue data.

The link to the petition for turning off poker machines from night to 10am is:

<https://www.wesleymission.org.au/get-involved/advocacy/gambling-reform/help-us-put-an-end-to-sports-gambling-2/>

The Reconnect Project <https://thereconnectproject.com.au/>

Do you have old mobile phones and electronic tablets at home that you no longer need? The Reconnect Project aims to close the digital divide and provide a solution to the e-waste of mobile devices where unused devices are securely erased, repaired, and go to a good home. The Reconnect Project forwards the repaired devices to support agencies including women's shelters, refugee services, and youth outreach programs.

The Reconnect Project accepts all makes and models of mobile phones and tablets, regardless of their age or condition; and laptops that are less than 10 years old. Their mobile device repair technicians will repair the device and undertake a secure erase process using Blancco software. Where the device cannot be repaired or refurbished, it will be set aside to use for spare parts. Any broken parts or devices that can't be revived are sent to Mobile Muster for secure recycling.

For bulk donations, the Reconnect Project can arrange to collect directly from you in the Sydney metro area. For individual donations see the website for collection points or you can mail in your old devices to: Reply Paid 90698, The Reconnect Project 8 The Strand Penshurst NSW 2222

To ask about joining the Social Issues Group at St. Matthew's email: Alexander on alexander.lawless7@gmail.com To subscribe to the Uniting Advocacy Social Justice E-News emails, send an email to register to: advocacy@uniting.org

The Easter Experience 2025



**at Gordon/Pymble Uniting Church
Sunday 6th, Monday 7th, Tuesday 8th & Wednesday 9th
April**

**If you would like to take part please contact
Gordon Uniting Church at info@guc.org.au**

For 20 consecutive years just before the end of term 1, the Gordon Uniting Church building has been transformed into Jerusalem 2000 years ago. The place comes alive with people from ancient times telling the story of Jesus' last week on earth, in a production called "The Easter Experience".

This is an outreach to the local primary schools (year 4) telling them the story of Easter. The event is participatory, children walk down a time tunnel into a world 2000 years ago, into a marketplace in Jerusalem. They then walk through the last week of Jesus' life.

The Easter Experience is staged each year with volunteer actors from our congregation and others. For many children it is their first experience of the Easter story, and they walk through the scenes of The Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Trial of Jesus in the courtroom scene, and then experience the impact of the empty tomb, with Jesus re-appearing to assure them that he is alive.



WORLD DAY of Prayer 2025

**Focus country: The
Cook Islands**

**7.30pm
Friday 7th March**

**Holy Trinity Anglican Church
295 Windsor Road, Baulkham
Hills.**

**Join your local one-hour prayer
service**

The logo for Parramatta Nepean Presbytery, featuring a stylized cross with a red flame-like shape inside, and the text "Parramatta Nepean Presbytery" and "The Uniting Church in Australia NSW & ACT Synod" below it.

**Join us at our next
Presbytery Meeting**

Saturday 22nd February, 2024 | 9:30am
Parramatta Centenary Uniting Church
46 Sorrell St, North Parramatta

For further information, please contact
the Presbytery office: (02) 9683 5023

Calendar of Events for February 2025

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

					<p>1</p> <p>9am-12pm Op Shop </p> <p>9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>Garage SALE </p>	<p>2</p> <p> Epiphany 4</p> <p>8am— Worship Includes Communion</p> <p>9.30am— Worship Includes Communion Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm Worship Includes Communion</p>
<p>3</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>6-10pm Introductory bible study Upstairs hall or church</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30–11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>11.30am Care & Prayer Community room & church</p> <p>7pm-9pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall</p> <p>7.30pm Finance Committee meeting lower hall</p>	<p>6</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>7</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group</p>	<p>8</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>9</p> <p> Epiphany 5</p> <p>8am— Worship</p> <p>9am— Worship @ the Willow's</p> <p>9.30am— Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm— Worship</p>
<p>10</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30–11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>7.30pm Thrive Bible Study lower hall</p> <p>7pm-9pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon Women's Fellowship "Social morning" Upstairs hall & church</p> <p>7.30pm Church Council executive meeting</p>	<p>13</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>14</p> <p>No Scheduled events</p>	<p>15</p> <p>No Scheduled events</p>	<p>16</p> <p> Epiphany 6</p> <p>8am— Worship</p> <p>9.30am— Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>6.45pm— Worship</p>
<p>17</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30–11am Christian Meditation Community Room</p> <p>7pm-9pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>19</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall</p> <p>10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista</p>	<p>20</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>21</p> <p>5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group</p>	<p>22</p> <p>No scheduled events</p>	<p>23</p> <p> Epiphany 7</p> <p>8am— Worship Followed by Morning Tea</p> <p>9.30am— Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8</p> <p>5pm— Shine</p> <p>6.45pm— Worship</p>
<p>24</p> <p>9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall</p> <p>7.30pm— Christian Meditation</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>9.30–11am Christian Meditation community room</p> <p>7pm-9pm Bible Study church or community room</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p> <p>7.30pm— Church Council meeting upstairs hall</p>	<p>27</p> <p>9am-2pm Op Shop</p>	<p>28</p> <p>No Scheduled events</p>		

