



A Very Personal Issue

June was Pride Month in Australia and in other countries. Pride Month, celebrated annually in June, is a time to commemorate the LGBTQIA+ community and celebrate their contributions to society. LGBTQIA+ is an acronym used to represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and aromantic individuals, as well as other identities that don't fit neatly into these categories. The "+", sometimes including "A" and "I" as well, and signifies that the acronym is inclusive of a wider range of diverse gender and sexual identities. Pride Month is a month-long observance that aims to raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ history, promote inclusion, and celebrate diversity. It also acknowledges the ongoing fight for equality and the work that still needs to be done to ensure LGBTQIA+ people are treated with dignity and respect.

For many people in the Church this is a very difficult issue. People's acceptance of or rejection of such people is

rooted in both cultural and Biblical understandings. More than any moral issue, this one seems to be highly emotionally charged and can be divisive when congregations have addressed it. This issue has seen congregations split and has seen people and congregations leave the Uniting Church over both the Uniting Church's understanding of homosexuality and ordination and marriage. Yet, it is not only the Uniting Church which has seen division as a result of these issues. This year in a landmark decision, Canberra Baptist Church and Hamilton Baptist Church in Australia were expelled from the NSW/ACT Baptist Association for affirming LGBTQ+ people and supporting same-sex marriage, marking the first time in the association's history.

The Uniting Church Assembly, the gathering of representatives of the Church such as you and me, has endorsed a proposal that seeks to affirm, welcome and honour the life and faith of transgender, intersex and gender diverse people in our

Church. As part of the proposal, the 17th Assembly in 2024 saw members agree "to recognise that transgender, gender diverse and intersex people are beloved by God and full members of the Body of Christ in baptism." The Assembly resolved to "[invite congregations and councils of the Church to welcome and honour transgender, gender diverse, and intersex people, and the gifts and skills they bring to all aspects of the Church's life, including worship, leadership, and social justice advocacy.](#)"

Yet, for many people in the Church, the issue of LGBTQIA+ is an issue of not only sin, but unrepentant sin. Sin is a falling short of the glory of God, it is literally a missing the mark. However, sin has been strongly linked to morality, especially sexual morality in the history and culture of the Church. One hand there is the notion of grace and Jesus' being a friend to sinners and relating to them, and even not condemning them, in the case of the woman caught in adultery, but also not condoning it. Yet on the other hand, people rightly also consider the teachings of Paul, especially in such passages as "Expel the immoral brother (or sister)" in 1 Corinthians 5. It is a difficult issue.

Continued next page

But in all this, some will ask how can something like homosexuality not be considered a sin when the Bible clearly lists it as a sexual sin? One argument is that the word "homosexual" never appeared in any Bible before 1946. It was introduced in the Revised Standard Version (RSV), mistranslating two Greek words: "arsenokoitai" and "malakoi." Most Biblical scholars now agree these don't mean 'gay people'. They likely referred to abusive or exploitative relationships, not consensual same-sex love. The Greek word ἀρσενokoῖται [arsenokoitai] is a compound term meaning "men who sleep with men" or "men who bed with other men". It's formed from ἄρσεν [arsen], meaning "male," and κοίτη [koite] meaning "bed" or "lying". This term is used in the New Testament, specifically in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. Many scholars understand this to be about a particular kind of exploitative relationship in Roman [society](#) . However, the fact remains that it can also rightly be said that the Bible condemns sexual sin.

Many Biblical scholars do not interpret what the Bible seems to be dealing with in relation to same-sex sexual relationships as relating to people of the same gender loving each other, and even engaging in sexual relationships, but it being about a Roman practice where wealthy men and women undertook non-consensual or sexual

relationships with slaves who had no power to refuse. This they would point to underlying Paul's comments in Romans 1: 26-27 where he writes, "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." Here the issue seems to be about lust, not about loving relationship.

Then there is the Old Testament denunciation of men lying with men in such passages as Leviticus 20: 13 which states, "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them." Of course, it can be argued that this is not so much about homosexual sex than about men sinning in their duty to procreate. Men were in ancient Biblical understanding the ones who had the 'seed' and women were the soil. Hence, we have terms like barren and infertile, because ancient people did not have a correct understanding of human reproduction. The wasting of one's seed was sinful as in the case of Onan. avoided impregnating Tamar by performing coitus interruptus (withdrawing before ejaculation), as he did not want to produce an

heir for his brother. This act displeased God, who subsequently struck Onan dead in Genesis 38.

Regarding sin, we need to note that firstly, if we are to take passages such as Leviticus 20: 13 literally, then logically anyone who commits adultery must be placed under the curse of death, which according to Jesus includes divorced people, along with a list of other sexual sins. Even those who condemn sexual sin don't hold with death penalty for them. So, we hold double standards around a range of what the Bible lists as sexual sins and how they should be responded to, and some seem more emotionally charged than others. Secondly, if we are to apply consistency to sin in general, especially unrepentant sin, then we need to get ready to condemn wealth and the holding of it, given that Jesus condemned holding wealth outright in his teaching in several instances and in several parables, and the early Church clearly lived this teaching literally in the sharing of wealth, even to the extreme case of Ananias and Saphira who died for keeping wealth [Acts 5:1-11]. We who have two coats should share with those who don't have a coat. As in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, which further denotes the nature of sin and its penalty, it's not so much about sexual sin, but a failure to love through sharing material wealth and practical care for those in need.

There is more that can be said and discussed around the complex and difficult issue of sin and how we should respond to it. Of course, for me, this is a very personal issue. I have two daughters who identify as LGBTQI+ or queer, and I have many LGBTQI+ friends and colleagues whom I love and respect, many of whom I would consider better people in terms of their character and faith than myself. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but all are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus, is what Paul also writes [Romans 3: 23-24] Similarly he writes, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." [2 Corinthians 5:18-19] For me, I take Jesus very literally when he says, "Judge not lest you be judged" [Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-42] I have a clear bias in this where I have changed from one stance to another in my life and faith and discipleship.

In the end we each have to do our own work to understand the issues which face us and work out how the Bible guides us in our response. This is usually not as easy as it seems. It can be easy to take a

simple stance, but most situations are rarely simple. Pride month is something I support personally, but it is not my place to tell you what to think or believe. Similarly, in respect to marriage of people, I will marry any couple who come to me, be they previously divorced or of the same-gender or of different genders. This is my right within the Uniting Church regulations and guidelines. However, in the same ethos I cannot tell you as the congregation what to think or believe, or who you should accept or reject as being able to be wedded in our Church spaces. It is a journey that we each have to take, and one which we also have to engage in as a community.

As the Marriage Act of Uniting Church allows for same-sex unions, we may be approached by a couple requesting that their wedding be held in our space. In the upcoming months, Church Council will be starting the process of talking about this issue, as the decision of who is married on our premises rests with our congregation. My hope is that we can, like we have been able to do as a Church at the gathering of our Assembly, be able to share our thoughts and beliefs honestly and authentically, but also with grace and respect as we seek to maintain unity in our diversity.

The Uniting Church in Australia has invited congregations and councils of the Church to welcome and honour transgender, gender diverse, and intersex people, and the gifts and skills they bring to all aspects of the Church's life, including worship, leadership, and social justice advocacy. The Uniting Church also believes that sexuality itself is not a barrier to ordination or leadership in the Church. We have two understandings of marriage in response to Australian marriage legislation. We need to consider this invitation and also consider who we welcome into our space in terms of those seeking to exercise leadership or to be married. This is something that gives us much to think about and will require all the fruit of the Spirit, especially that of love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control, as we seek to discuss these issues together and look to see if we can come to consensus or agreement on where we stand as a community of faith and a congregation of the Body of Christ. May God bless us in this endeavour.

God bless

Jon

Project Reconnect

Project Reconnect is an amazing resource to help congregations of all sizes enhance and sustain worship, especially when there is not a preacher available. Each week there is a video message / short sermon, an all-age message option and a pdf resource including discussion starters and resources for music suggestions etc. The resources are usually based around the Revised Common Lectionary.

Many thanks to Dean Drayton, Clive Pearson, and Abbey Sim from our congregation (Abbey also works as Worship, Creative and Performing Arts Lay Pastor for Wesley Castle Hill Uniting Church). We are also thankful for Helen Richmond who is currently the ordained minister serving Parramatta Community Uniting church.

On June 19 at St. Matthew's we were able to host the recording of the messages for the month of August. Furthermore, from our congregation we were able to provide preachers for four of the five Sundays in the month.



You can learn more about the work of Project Reconnect and watch the messages using the following link <https://projectreconnect.com.au/>

If you are not able to get to a church service or our online streaming is not working, or just would like some further enrichment in faith during the week, Project Reconnect is always available.

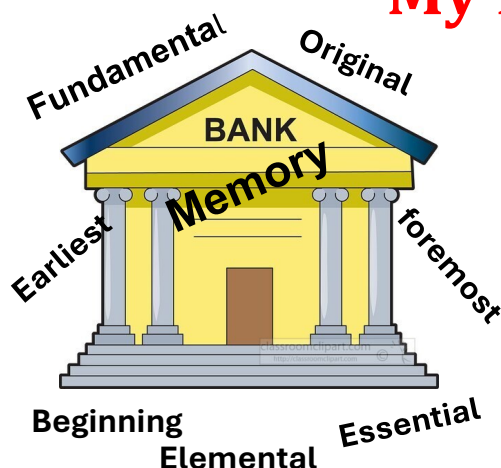


Thursday 3 July

10am-12pm

Guest Speaker: Alan Wright

My First.....and other stuff



Do you remember your first...? Was it the first and last or was it the first of many?

Inevitably, 'firsts' happen when we are young, but not exclusively.

Alan digs deep into his memory bank and talks about some of his 'Firsts.'

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

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

Please see the newsletter for more details

The Past Today 4-part Series led by Clive Pearson

Themes for this first series are;

1. 'We believe'. -**28 June**
2. 'Herstory.' -**26 July**
3. 'Plagues and Pandemics'. -**30 August**
4. 'Allah'. - **27 September**

Last Saturday of the month for 4 months

Where: at St. Matthew's in the Church

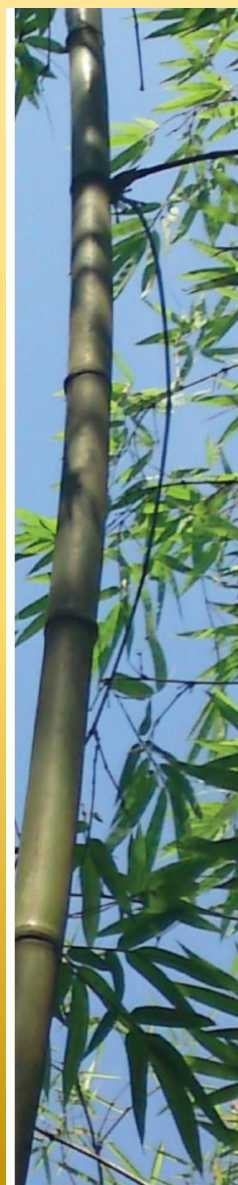
Time: 10am – 11am approx.



Cancer Council Australia's Biggest Morning Tea Fundraising

A HUGE THANK YOU is extended to everyone who donated to our Biggest Morning Tea fundraising either online, at our enjoyable morning tea event held on 30th May, or cash/online donations received since. Every donation is very much appreciated and in feedback from the Cancer Council we have been congratulated for our support of their very vital cause with our contribution of an amazing amount \$3,088.00.

Dulcie & Peter Duncum & Barry Gregory



From the book Silence & Stillness in Every Season Daily readings with John Main



*Two sayings of Jesus are of great importance when we are beginning to meditate. **The first is:** 'Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' To learn to meditate we have to learn to be very simple. We have to re-learn how to be childlike. We have to learn, as a child learns, by accepting the teaching on faith and by devoting ourselves to its practice. We have to learn to rediscover capacity for wonder which comes with faith and practice combined. We so easily*

*lose that as we lose our early simplicity. Meditating is a returning to innocence and a sign of it is a returning to a state of wonder. **The second helpful phrase of Jesus is:** 'No one can be a follower of mine unless he leaves self behind.' In saying your mantra you have to let go of your own thoughts, your own theories and ideas, your imagination, fears and daydreams, and simply be there, listening to the sound of the mantra. Whatever you do, do not think about yourself. If you find, as all of us do, that it is difficult to sustain this, as soon as you discover that you are distracted, or that you are again thinking about yourself, return very gently and very humbly to the mantra. The mantra is a great teacher of humility.*

The Heart of Creation



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

Upcoming dates

- **5 July**
- **2 August**
- **6 September**

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

St. Matthew's Lower hall

**HELP
WANTED**



**CAN YOU DRIVE SOMEONE
TO CHURCH - WEEKLY,
FORTNIGHTLY, MONTHLY?**

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR
8 AND 9:30 SERVICES**

PLEASE CONTACT SARA

st. matthew's
UNITING CHURCH
BAULKHAM HILLS
growing together



OP SHOP

**Open Tuesday, Wednesday
& Thursday 9am-2pm
and**

1st Saturday of the month 9-12pm

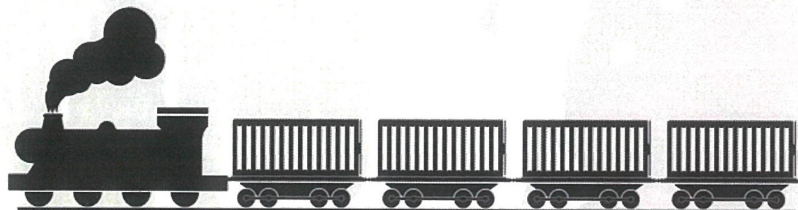
**Pre-loved clothes & accessories,
Books, Haberdashery,**

st. matthew's
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Coffee and Play

Kids! Bring your adults for a
morning of conversation and
play time!

Cnr of Edgar & Charles Sts
Mondays 9-10:30am



Pastoral Care Update

Combined Morning Tea

On Sunday, the 8am and 9:30am congregations joined together for a combined morning tea between the services. Despite (or perhaps because of) the early start for some, much coffee was drunk, slices were eaten and conversations struck up. It was great to see so many people in the church hall, moving out of their usual circles and welcoming each other. Special thanks to Amanda and Annette for their help in the kitchen and to everyone who provided morning tea. The next combined morning tea will be **Sunday 17th August**, the morning of the AGM, where we hope to see many members of 6:45pm also.



Coffee and Play



Coffee and Play got off to a slow start this week, with precisely zero attendees. The Op Shop have kindly offered to advertise it on their Facebook page and it would be appreciated if everyone could mention it to any parents of young children in their lives. Every Monday at 9am in the upstairs hall!

Finally, please reach out to me if you need anything or if there is someone you know who would appreciate a phone call or visit. My email is saraw@nswact.uca.org.au or leave a message with Lynn in the office.

Peace,

Sara



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH
AND PRESCHOOL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrate with us In October/November 2025!!!

SAVE THE DATES

SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER 2025 -

WELSH CHOIR PERFORMANCE @ 2pm

SUNDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2025

WORSHIP SERVICES WITH GUEST PREACHERS 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM & 6:45 PM

SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2025

THANKSGIVING WORSHIP SERVICE – FOLLOWED BY MORNING TEA 9:00 AM

PICNIC LUNCH AT JOHN CURTIN RESERVE WINSTON HILLS FROM 11: 00 AM

SATURDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2025

SOCIAL EVENTS AT CHURCH

– TALENT SHOW FROM 3:00 PM (DEPENDING ON ENOUGH PARTICIPANTS)

– DINNER & GAMES NIGHT FROM 5:30 PM (SHARE FOOD, STORIES & GAMES)

SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2025

WORSHIP SERVICES WITH GUEST PREACHERS 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM

YOUTH SERVICE - GUEST PREACHERS (INCL SHINE CELEBRATIONS) 6:45 AM

SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2025

50TH ANNIVERSARY - CHURCH & PRESCHOOL WORSHIP SERVICE 9:00 AM

- CHURCH & PRESCHOOL SHOWCASE (AFTER WORSHIP)

- BANQUET LUNCH (SHARE FOOD & STORIES) 12 NOON



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH
AND PRESCHOOL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

JOIN THE CELEBRATIONS & GET CREATIVE

AS PART OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 50TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS WE WILL RUN A COMPETITION INVITING HELP TO CREATE AN ANNIVERSARY THEME AND LOGO THAT REFLECTS THE CHURCH'S JOURNEY AND THAT INSPIRES HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

SHARE YOUR VISION AND CREATIVITY
TO CHOOSE A THEME AND DESIGN A LOGO.

ALSO, WE ARE LOOKING TO PREPARE A BANNER TO ADVERTISE OUR
CELEBRATIONS – IF THIS IS SOMETHING YOU COULD HELP WITH LET
US KNOW.

IF YOU FEEL YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE CREATIVE, PLEASE SEE GREG GIBB,
CALL HIM ON HIS MOBILE [0414 764 437](tel:0414764437)
OR SEND AN EMAIL TO greg.gibb1955@bigpond.com

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR THE COMPETITION IS 15 AUGUST 2025.
A SMALL PRIZE WILL BE OFFERED FOR THE WINNING THEME AND LOGO.



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

ST MATTHEW'S UNITING CHURCH
AND PRESCHOOL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrate with us In October/November 2025!!!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

TO ENSURE THAT OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS ARE A SUCCESS WE WILL NEED VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST IN THE PREPARATION OF THE VARIOUS EVENTS. HELP IN A SMALL WAY CAN LIGHTEN THE LOAD.

IF YOU CAN ASSIST WITH THE FOLLOWING TASKS YOUR HELP WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED BY THE PLANNING COMMITTEE.

- JOIN AS A MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE
- ASSIST WITH PREPARATION OF A GAMES NIGHT (SAT 15 NOV)
- HELP PREPARE OR PERFORM IN THE TALENT SHOW (SAT 15 NOV)
- ASSIST IN PREPARATION OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC SHOWCASE
- HELP TO PREPARE MEALS (**CONTACT ANNETTE WATSON**)
 - ❖ PICNIC LUNCH (SUN 9 NOV)
 - ❖ GAMES NIGHT DINNER (SAT 15 NOV)
 - ❖ BANQUET LUNCH (SUN 23 NOV)
- ASSIST IN PREPARATION OF WORSHIP SERVICES

IF YOU FEEL YOU CAN ASSIST IN ANY OF THESE TASKS, PLEASE SEE GREG GIBB OR CALL HIM ON HIS MOBILE **0414 764 437**

From the Social Issues Focus Group at St Matthew's

'Doing little things can make a big difference'.

Raising Community Awareness of Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking

Modern slavery is when one person treats another as if they owned them. It is a term that covers a range of different legal offences. Modern slavery exists in NSW. There are an estimated 16,400 people in the state who are living in modern slavery.

Some examples of modern slavery:

- Workers trapped in forced labour and subjected to poor working conditions on farms in regional NSW.
- Workers forced into domestic servitude in urban households.
- Cleaners and security guards working in office blocks, caught in debt bondage.
- Young men, women and girls forced to marry in Australia or overseas.
- People living with disability who are being exploited in segregated workplaces or in institutional care.
- Forced labour and forced child labour of First Nations peoples.
- Debt bondage where people are forced to work for an employer to pay off their debts and may also experience wage theft and underpayment.

Modern slavery often preys on vulnerability, whether due to age, gender, migrant status, language skills, disability, poverty, or homelessness. It may intersect with other forms of exploitation like domestic violence, child abuse, gender-based violence, online abuse, and workplace offences. Perpetrators of modern slavery offences often use coercion, manipulation, threats, violence and deception to exercise control and power over a victim's life, creating situations of dependence or a sense of ownership.

For advice, support or assistance relating to a possible case of modern slavery, you can contact the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner on 1800 FREEDOM, which is 1800 3733366 or email antislavery@dcj.nsw.gov.au for confidential support and assistance from the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner.

(reference: NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner's Office factsheet)

*Blessings,
Alexander*

To ask about joining the Social Issues Group at St Matthew's email

Alexander on alexander.lawless7@gmail.com

The next meeting of St Matthews Social Issues Focus Group will be on

Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 7pm in the lower church hall.

Calendar of Events for July 2025

School Holidays

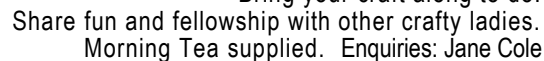
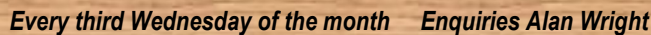
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

	1 8.45-12pm Preschool <i>using upstairs hall</i> 9am-2pm  Op Shop 9.30-11am  Christian Meditation Community Room 11.30am  Care & Prayer	2 9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12noon In Stitches  Upstairs hall	3 9am-2pm Op Shop  10am-12noon Coffee & Discovery Guest Speaker: Alan Wright 	4 No scheduled events	5 9am-12pm  Op Shop 9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall 	6  4th Sunday After Pentecost 8am—Worship Includes Communion 9.30am—Worship Includes Communion Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in Recess 6.45pm Worship
7 9-10.30am Coffee & Play Upstairs hall 9am  Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm  Christian Meditation Community Room	8 9am-2pm  Op Shop 9.30-11am  Christian Meditation Community Room 7.30pm Cricket Presentation night Upstairs hall	9 9am-2pm  Op Shop 10am-12noon  Women's Fellowship Upstairs hall	10 9am-2pm  Op Shop	11 No scheduled events	12 No scheduled events	13  5th Sunday after PENTECOST 8am—Worship 9am—Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in Recess 2-4pm—Upstairs hall in use 6.45pm—Worship Community Meal
14 9-10.30am Coffee & Play Upstairs hall 9am  Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm  Christian Meditation Community Room	15 9am-2pm  Op Shop 9.30-11am  Christian Meditation Community Room	16 9am-2pm  Op Shop 10am-12noon  In Stitches Upstairs hall 10am-12noon  Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista 7.30pm Elders meeting Upstairs hall	17 9am-2pm  Op Shop	18 No scheduled events	19 No scheduled events	20  6th Sunday after Pentecost 8am—Worship 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in Recess 6.45pm—Worship
21 9-10.30am Coffee & Play Upstairs hall 9am  Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower 7.30pm  Christian Meditation Community Room	22  9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am  Christian Meditation Community Room	23 9am-2pm  Op Shop	24 9am-2pm  Op Shop	25 5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group	26 No scheduled events	27  7th Sunday After Pentecost 8am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea 9.30am—Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 5pm—Shine 6.45pm—Worship
28 9-10.30am Coffee & Play Upstairs hall 9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm  Christian Meditation Community Room	29 9am-2pm  Op Shop 9.30-11am  Christian Meditation community room 7.30pm Property committee meeting Upstairs hall	30 9am-2pm  Op Shop 10am-12noon  In Stitches Upstairs hall 7.30pm Church Council Executive meeting Upstairs hall	31 9am-2pm  Op Shop			

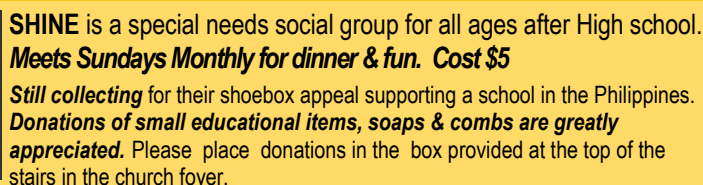
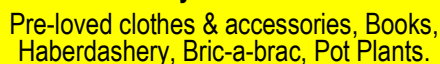
Bible Study
Tuesday Evenings
7pm-8.30pm
in church or community room

IN RECESS

IN RECESS



Tuesdays at the Church 9.30am-10.30am
For more information or to express your
interest in attending please contact
Katherine Pedersen
Facilitator kathped56@gmail.com
ALL WELCOME



If you wish to find out more, please contact the Church Office.

To include your activity in the
AUGUST
In Focus
St. Matthew's
Monthly Newsletter
please send details to Lynn in the Church
Office by **15 July**
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 or by email: office@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

Thank you to all who
have contributed to
this publication.

EMAIL: director@stmatthewsps.net.au