



st. matthew's  
**UNITING CHURCH**  
**BAULKHAM HILLS**  
growing together

## Weekly Newsletter

11 January 2026

Epiphany

### Bible Readings

Isaiah 43: 1-7  
Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22



#### Response after Bible Readings

**Leader:** In this we hear the word of God

**Response:** Thanks be to God who speaks to us as spirit.

#### Welcome to St. Matthew's Community Room.

Children are very welcome at St. Matthew's and that means their noise is welcome too. This room is here if you feel the need to step out of the service or would like some more privacy but still want to see and hear what's going on in the service.

**OPEN FROM 9AM**



Epiphany

twitch.tv

Livestreaming at

8am, 9.30am and  
9am in January each  
year

### 9am—Summer Worship

Led by Pamela Leslie  
and Thomas Smith  
followed by Morning Tea

KUCA in Recess for school holidays

### 9am—Worship @ the Willow's

Led by Michael Strong

### 6.45pm—Worship

Community meal

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

### What's happening this week at St. Matthew's

**MONDAY 12 JANUARY**  
7.30pm—Christian Meditation

**TUESDAY 13 JANUARY**  
9.30am-11am—Christian  
Meditation  
community room and church

**WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY**

No Scheduled Activities

**THURSDAY 15 JANUARY**  
No Scheduled Activities

**FRIDAY 16 JANUARY**  
No Scheduled Activities

**SATURDAY 17 JANUARY**  
No Scheduled Activities

**SUNDAY  
18 JANUARY**

9am—Summer Worship  
Followed by morning tea  
KUCA in Recess for school holidays  
6.45pm—Worship



#### MINISTER

REV JON HUMPHRIES

Email: jon@stmatthewsuniting.net.au  
jhumphries@nswact.uca.org.au

#### PASTORAL CARE WORKER

SARA WIENAND  
SUNDAY am, MONDAY, TUESDAY  
Email: saraw@nswact.uca.org.au

#### CHURCH OFFICE SECRETARY

LYNN SAMUEL  
**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS** 8AM-2.30PM  
TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY

**OFFICE :** 9686 3003  
Email: office@stmatthewsuniting.net.au

#### CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

MIKE UNDERWOOD  
Email: mikeu@nswact.uca.org.au

#### CHAIRPERSON OF ELDERS

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BAULKHAM HILLS

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Weekly newsletter available on website

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PO Box 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153

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# Something to think about

## 11 JANUARY

### 1st SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

#### Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

Isaiah 42:1-9  
Psalm 29  
Acts 10:34-43  
Matthew 3:13-17

### Religion and Trauma

Religion can cause trauma and does cause trauma. I haven't limited my statement to "religion causes trauma" because that can be taken to mean that all religion causes trauma, and I don't believe that is so. However, religion doesn't always want to hear about the trauma it causes, when it has been caused. This statement is true when religion as a culture and system of self-validating rules and beliefs dictates how we are as human beings in hard and regulated ways. The reality is that many have been traumatised by their experiences of religion, religious communities and religious people. Of course, religion shouldn't be a source of trauma. It should fundamentally be the exact opposite. However, this is sadly and regrettably not always the case.

Trauma is severe emotional or physical wound from a deeply distressing event that overwhelms coping abilities, leading to lasting negative effects on mental,

emotional, and physical well-being, manifesting as intense fear, helplessness, confusion, or even conditions like PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and can stem from single incidents (accidents, assault) or prolonged exposure (abuse, war). It's a response to events perceived as life-threatening or severely harmful, such as violence, natural disasters, abuse, or significant loss. It disrupts one's sense of safety, self, and ability to regulate emotions, creating feelings of shame, powerlessness, and vulnerability. In essence, trauma is a wound, whether physical or emotional, that fundamentally alters a person's world, leaving deep, lasting effects that require understanding and healing.

When we do religion right, we do want to hear about the trauma we cause. Humans when we human wrong cause trauma in all areas of life and endeavour, even despite good intentions. When we as humankind human kindly then we begin to want to hear of the harm we cause and begin to try to do right better. This is metanoia the transformation of heart, mind and being that great humans like Jesus called people to. It comes from a place of love and compassion and care.

Furthermore, because trauma is an inability to healthily process what has the potential to harm our wound us psychologically and emotionally, not because of any failure in us, but because what happens overwhelms our capacity to cope, religion when we do it right had the potential to increase our resilience. Religion done rightly, connects us through faith to the source of life, the one who is holy and who renews our souls. Religion when it is done right connects us in communion, both with the one who is love and source of life, but also with those who live and embody that love and who can embody that love for us.

Thus, when we do religion right, we are embodying the love of the one we call God who is love, and we are opened to a way of humanning that is founded of love and compassion. Religion, at least Christian religion, done rightly connects us to the God who became incarnate, that is human, that we might learn the way, will and love of God embodied, so that we might live the way, will and love of God embodied. This opens us up to being properly humankind through grace upon grace.

When our religion is founded on living the light and love of God in grace and truth then, in this way we are less likely to cause trauma through our religion, more likely to be open to hearing and caring about when we do cause trauma and more likely to be seeking to make things right, if possible, or at least do better. We are also more likely to be more resilient and better able to cope with the way others and the world might hurt and wound us, being able to find our way into healing.

Faith is an important aspect of life. Practising our faith and living out our beliefs in patterns of behaviour is what religion is. As followers of the Christ, the Word of God who was God, the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus, and as people of God who claim to believe that God dwells and works within us and through us as Holy Spirit, it should shape our

religion in a way where we are less likely to cause trauma, better able to be open to truth of others who have trauma because of religion and better able to care with compassion, understanding and grace. When our religion is centred in manifesting and living out the love of God as described in Scripture, and manifesting such spiritual markers as the Fruit of the Spirit, rather than just focusing on doctrine, dogma, and a culture of strict morality, then we are likely to be the kind of Church God calls us to be full of grace and truth. This is something to think about.

*God bless*

*Jon*

PEOPLE NEWS



Mary Ross  
Ken Caldwell

*Our very best wishes to all the St. Matthew's community who are celebrating their birthdays this week.*

## Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

11—17 January

*Iran, Iraq, Syria*

Dear Church Family,

With gratitude and a spirit of care for our whole community, I would like to share that, following the congregational vote held on 9 November last year, the Church Council has unanimously agreed to approve the use of our church buildings for same-sex weddings.

We make this decision prayerfully, seeking to live out God's love, welcome, and faithfulness in our shared life together.

Blessings to you all for the new year,

Regards,

Mike Underwood  
Chair St. Matthew's Uniting Church  
Baulkham Hills

Please  
return  
completed  
forms by  
1 February

## Volunteer Form

Assisting with  
Morning Services



**MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2026**

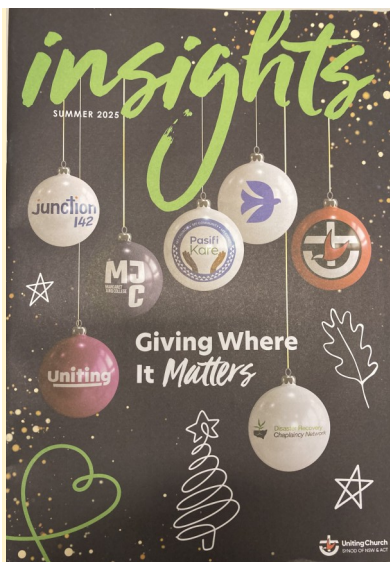
Are available from the  
church foyer.

**NEW HELPERS  
WELCOME**



Please return forms to the blue  
mail tray or church office.

UNITING CHURCH  
BAULKHAM HILLS



Please pick up the  
latest

**insights**

Magazine  
Summer 2025

From the church foyer

# *St Matthew's Social Action Missional Ministry Team*

How doing little things makes a big difference.

## **Topic: Climate Change – Sweltering Cities**

Founded in 2020, 'Sweltering Cities' is Australia's only national advocacy organisation working specifically on issues related to extreme heat. They focus on the health and wellbeing of our communities by advocating for better, climate-safe cities.

Their advocacy addresses community priorities for:

- Cooler suburbs, support to make sure people at the most risk are safe in the heat
- Heat safe homes for everyone.
- Inclusive justice made by and for communities.

Sweltering Cities are having a national day of awareness of the effects of increasing heat called the Extreme Heat Awareness Day on 4th Feb 2026.

### **Sweltering cities are currently campaigning for:**

1. Covering for all bus stops to provide shade
2. Heatwave protection for all renters
3. 'Cool plans for hot suburbs'
4. Stopping the government cutting off Centrelink payments during heatwaves. Explanation: people are expected to attend Centrelink meetings regardless of weather conditions. For people catching public transport in extreme heat, this can be damaging to their health, especially if they are ill to start with. If the appointments aren't attended, Centrelink payments can be cut off.

What can I do?

Pray for the wisdom of our political and community leaders to plan for climate adaption

Visit the Sweltering Cities website <https://swelteringcities.org/>

Register on the website to receive Sweltering Cities' emails.

Mention this to your local council representatives, state and federal members of parliament.

Plan an activity for Extreme Heat Day on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 to raise awareness of the importance of us dealing with the effects of heat as a community.

*Blessings,*

*Alexander*

*Social Action Missional Ministry Team (SAMMT)*

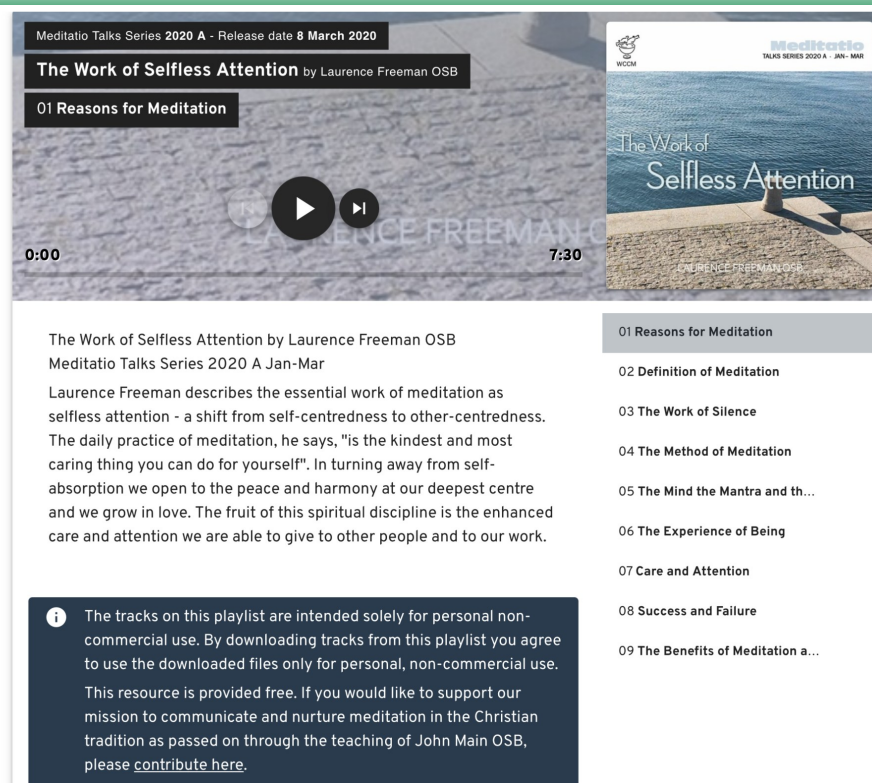
To ask about joining the Social Action Group at St Matthew's

email Alexander on [alexander.lawless7@gmail.com](mailto:alexander.lawless7@gmail.com)

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 7pm in the Lower Church Hall



# “Christian Meditation is not what you think”



The screenshot shows a video player interface for 'The Work of Selfless Attention' by Laurence Freeman OSB. The video is part of the 'Meditatio Talks Series 2020 A' and was released on 8 March 2020. The video title is '01 Reasons for Meditation'. The player shows a play button and a progress bar from 0:00 to 7:30. To the right of the video player is a playlist titled '01 Reasons for Meditation' with the following items: 02 Definition of Meditation, 03 The Work of Silence, 04 The Method of Meditation, 05 The Mind the Mantra and th..., 06 The Experience of Being, 07 Care and Attention, 08 Success and Failure, and 09 The Benefits of Meditation a... Below the video player is a disclaimer: 'The tracks on this playlist are intended solely for personal non-commercial use. By downloading tracks from this playlist you agree to use the downloaded files only for personal, non-commercial use. This resource is provided free. If you would like to support our mission to communicate and nurture meditation in the Christian tradition as passed on through the teaching of John Main OSB, please [contribute here](#).'



Titles of talks we  
← will be  
listening to at  
both weekly  
sessions.

An invitation to everyone to come and taste and experience for themselves that

***“Christian Meditation is not what you think”.***

The talks will begin on  
Monday 5th and Tuesday 6 January 2026 at the church during our  
normal meditation times.

Contact Katherine Pedersen  
kathped56@gmail.com 0437 772 011

## Quiet Saturday afternoons in January 2026

The afternoons will include two periods of meditation/prayer in the Christian tradition followed by Lectio Divina and personal time for reflection and relaxation. Afternoon tea/refreshments will be included and a donation of \$10 to the WCCM is suggested.

**Where: Bundaleer, Castle Hill on 10th and 24th January 2026.**

**Time: 1-5pm contact kathped56@gmail.com 0437 772 011**



**PLAY NETBALL IN THE HILLS!**

## **JOIN ST MATTHEW'S NETBALL CLUB**

- We prioritise a fun, social game to develop your skills or have a weekend run around!
- Completely ungraded - play with friends!
- All ages from Pre Kindergarten - Opens
- Saturday afternoon competition - no early mornings!

**REGISTRATIONS OPEN NOW UNTIL**

**FEB 7 2026**

 **GOODEN RESERVE BAULKHAM HILLS**

**\$110 / PLAYER**  
**ACTIVE KIDS VOUCHERS WELCOME!**



Go to [www.stmatthewsnetballclub.com](http://www.stmatthewsnetballclub.com) to complete your registration.

For enquiries please email [stmatthewsnetballclub@hotmail.com](mailto:stmatthewsnetballclub@hotmail.com)





# OP SHOP Re-opens For 2026 Tuesday 20 January

then Wednesday & Thursday 9am-2pm  
and

1st Saturday of the month 9-12pm

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

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Hills Community Aid  
Empowering Communities to Thrive

GOOD  
MEN  
Project

CH  
RG



***Some helpful reflections about the happenings in Venezuela from Pablo Nunez who is Moderator-Elect for the Synod of NSW/ACT in the Uniting Church in Australia***

***When Dictators Fall and Christians Don't Know Where to Stand***

The news from Venezuela didn't arrive quietly. It came crashing in: alerts, headlines, hot takes, certainty. Too much certainty. Some people popped champagne. Some people reached for the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some people whispered, "Finally." Others said, "This ends badly."

And almost everyone knew instantly which side they were supposed to be on. That alone should give us pause.

Because when a moment this heavy gets flattened into slogans, strength versus imperialism, freedom versus lawlessness, something human is being lost.

And Christians are supposed to be people who notice when that happens. Let's start where the ground is solid

The Maduro regime was brutal. Full stop.

This isn't cable news exaggeration or partisan mythology. It's documented reality: political prisoners, torture, extrajudicial killings, a nation hollowed out from the inside. Millions displaced. A stolen election conducted without shame. Heck, many stolen elections since the times of Chavez.

If someone insists this was just "politics as usual," they haven't been paying attention—or they've decided that some suffering is tolerable as long as it's far away.

And then there's María Corina Machado.

Years of nonviolent resistance. Years of threats. Years of courage. When someone like her, who has paid for hope with her own safety, says, "This feels like liberation," that voice deserves weight. Not blind agreement. But respect.

It's easy to romanticise sovereignty when you're not the one being crushed by it.

So yes, let's say it clearly: the fall of Maduro may very well mean relief for millions of people. That matters. That matters a lot. Just listen to the voices of the expat Venezuelans around the world. I have many friends among them, and I am trying to see the situation through their eyes. Their voices cannot be silenced. Not again.

Christians should care about that.

But then comes the knot in the stomach

Because the question isn't only what happened.

It's how.

And who.

And what story this tells the world next.

International law exists for a reason. Not because dictators deserve protection, but because power, unchecked power, always finds a way to justify itself. If the standard becomes "we'll remove governments we find intolerable," then the line between justice and convenience gets very thin very fast.

And lines matter.

Especially when the one holding the pen is a superpower.

Then there's the tone coming from Washington. Talk of "running" Venezuela. Casual annexation language. A posture that doesn't sound like accompaniment, but ownership.

You can hold two thoughts at once:

A dictator falling is good news.

An empire rejoicing is often not.

Those thoughts don't cancel each other. They keep each other honest.

Right now, we simply don't know the ending of this story.

Will Venezuelans actually get to choose their future?

Will foreign troops leave when the cameras do?

Will freedom mean dignity or just a different kind of dependency?

Anyone declaring victory this early is reading the first chapter and reviewing the whole book.

A fragile world just got shakier

There's another layer here, and it's uncomfortable.

For years, the global order, fragile, inconsistent, imperfect, has been held together by an idea: you don't get to change borders or governments by force just because you can.

That idea mattered when Russia invaded Ukraine.

It matters when China eyes Taiwan. It should have mattered in Iraq, Afghanistan, and so many other instances.

But principles only carry weight when they're applied even when it's inconvenient.

Every exception becomes a precedent.

Every precedent becomes permission.

Great powers always have narratives. They always have reasons. The danger is not that reasons exist, but that power decides they're sufficient.

I'm not saying all situations are the same. They aren't. Context matters. History matters. Human rights matter.

But I am saying this: the erosion of shared norms doesn't happen all at once. It happens moment by moment, decision by decision, each one defended as unique.

And eventually, the rules-based order becomes a polite story we tell ourselves while everyone sharpens their knives.

A Latino memory that won't let me simplify

I grew up in Uruguay, under a dictatorship.

It ended, not with bombs, not with foreign armies, but through democratic pressure, courage, persistence, and time. It was slow. Painfully slow. People suffered. People disappeared. There are wounds that still ache.

So I don't romanticise patience. Waiting can be violent too.

But I also know this: when freedom finally came, it came with ownership. It was ours. No one could say it was imposed. No one could claim the country as a prize.

That history lives in my bones. It makes me ache for Venezuelans. It also makes me wary of freedom delivered at gunpoint by another empire.

Both instincts are real. Neither cancels the other.

So where does that leave a Christian?

Not with slogans.

Not with certainty.

And definitely not with celebration.

Christians don't throw parties for violence, even when it's "our side." Scripture doesn't leave wiggle room here: do not rejoice when your enemy falls. If your heart rushes to triumph, pause. Something sacred is being trampled.

Christians are also meant to be sceptical of war. Not allergic to hard questions but resistant to easy ones. Just war theory isn't a permission slip; it's a warning label. It says: if you're going to unleash this, you'd better be absolutely sure there was no other way.

And Christians are, stubbornly, inconveniently, called to peace.

Jesus didn't bless the decisive or the dominant. He blessed peacemakers. The ones who slow things down. The ones who absorb tension. The ones who refuse to let violence have the final word.

Or as Nick Cave once put it, "Peace will come in time."

But only if someone is willing to keep choosing it when it's unpopular.

Which means we have to ask the question that sits underneath all the others:

Who owns our loyalty?

Not a flag.

Not a party.

Not an ideology that makes us feel righteous.

Our allegiance is to a kingdom that hungers for justice and refuses to worship power. A kingdom that tells the truth about suffering without pretending violence can save us.

So, what do we do now?

We grieve.

We watch closely. We listen to the voices of the people that matter the most.

We pray with our eyes open.

We advocate for real self-determination, not symbolic freedom.

We refuse cheap narratives, especially when they flatter us.

And we keep our hope anchored not in empires, but in a promise:

That one day, the tears will stop.

That death won't get the last word.

That swords really will become ploughshares.

Until then, we live in the tension.

Faithfully. Uncomfortably.

With our hearts broken open just wide enough to still believe peace is possible.

***Rev. Pablo Nunez - Moderator-Elect Synod of NSW/ACT UCA***

# Calendar of Events for January 2026

School Holidays

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			<b>1</b> <b>New Years Day</b> Public Holiday 	<b>2</b> Church Office Closed No scheduled events	<b>3</b> No scheduled events	<b>4 Christmas 2</b>  9am Summer Worship Includes Communion Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in care 6.45pm Worship Includes Communion
<b>5</b> 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	<b>6</b> Church Office Reopens 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	<b>7</b> No scheduled events	<b>8</b> No scheduled events	<b>9</b> No scheduled events	<b>10</b> No scheduled events	<b>11</b>  9am Summer Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in care 9am—Worship @ the Willows 6.45pm—Worship Community Meal
<b>12</b> 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church	<b>13</b> 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	<b>14</b> No Scheduled events	<b>15</b> No Scheduled events	<b>16</b> No Scheduled events	<b>17</b> No Scheduled events	<b>18</b>  9am Summer Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in care 6.45pm—Worship
<b>19</b>  9am Sorting & Pricing for Op-Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	<b>20</b> 9am—Set up for Op-Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	<b>21</b> 9am—Set up for Op-Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches upstairs hall 10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea @ the Willows	<b>22</b> 9am—Set up for Op-Shop	<b>23</b> No scheduled events	<b>24</b> No scheduled events	<b>25</b>  9am Summer Worship Followed by Morning Tea KUCA in care 5pm—Shine setup from 4pm 6.45pm—Worship
<b>26</b> 7.30pm—Christian Meditation <b>Australia Day</b> Public Holiday 	<b>27</b>  9am-2pm Op-Shop <b>RE-OPEN'S</b> 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room 7.30pm—Property meeting Church office closed	<b>28</b> 9am-2pm Op-Shop  Church Office Closed	<b>29</b>  9am-2pm Op-Shop Church Office Closed	<b>30</b> No scheduled events	<b>31</b> No scheduled events	