



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

## Weekly Newsletter

1 February 2026

Epiphany 4

### Bible Readings

Micah 6: 1-8



#### 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**



twitch.tv

Livestreaming at

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

### 8am—Worship

*Includes communion*

Led by Jon Humphries  
followed by Morning Tea

### 9.30am—Worship

*Includes communion*

Led by Jon Humphries

KUCA returns for 2026  
Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8

followed by Morning Tea

### 6.45pm—Worship

*Includes communion*

Led by Jon Humphries

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

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

#### MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY

7.30pm—Christian Meditation

9am—sorting and pricing for Op

Shop & Garage sale lower hall

#### TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY

**Church office closed**

9am-2pm—Op Shop

9.30am-11am—Christian  
Meditation

community room and church

11.30am—Care & Prayer

Community room & church

#### WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY

**Church office closed**

9am-2pm—Op Shop

10am-12pm—In Stitches

Upstairs hall

#### THURSDAY 5 FEBRUARY

**Church office closed**

9am-2pm—Op Shop

#### FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY

5pm-7pm—Fusion youth group

#### SATURDAY 7 FEBRUARY

9am-12pm—Op Shop

9am-12pm—Garage Sale  
lower hall

### SUNDAY 8 FEBRUARY

8am—Worship

9.30am—Worship

Followed by morning tea

KUCA returns for 2026

Preschool,  
Years K-2 & Years 3-8

6.45pm—Worship  
Community meal



#### 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 : lynns@nswact.uca.org.au

**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

HELEN OLLEY

Email: helen.olley@optusnet.com.au

#### 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

#### FACEBOOK:

@stmatthewsunitingchurchbaulkhamhills

**PRE-SCHOOL DIRECTOR** 9639 8570

SONALI WANIGESEKERA

PO BOX 321 BAULKHAM HILLS 2153

**EMAIL:** director@stmatthewsps.net.au

# Something to think about

## 1 February

### 4th SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

#### Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

Micah 6:1-8  
Psalm 15  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Matthew 5:1-12

## Religion

### What is Your Religion?

What is your religion? Many of us in the Church would answer that question with a response saying that we are Christian, or that our religion is Christianity. Others from different faith traditions would answer with, 'Muslim,' 'Jewish,' 'Sikh,' 'Hindu,' 'Buddhist' etc. However, in the way people answer this question, or what they want to know in asking, we get a sense of the complexity of how people understand 'religion' in different ways. For some religion is not just about the faith tradition compared to other world religions, but our faith tradition in respect to our cult, denomination or religious sect. Here, it is important to note that sect and cult are not about extremist or deviant religious groups (deviant meaning deviating from mainstream) but are technical and broad terms where sect means brand/tribe/denomination/group and cult (as in cultic) is a system of religious belief and practices. When you check into hospital, we are often asked about our religion,

and this is not just asking our broad faith tradition but which sect or denomination we associate ourselves with. So, in thinking about what our religion is we get a sense of the complexity in understanding what religion is.

### What is Religion?

The word "religion" comes from Latin, likely from religare ("to bind back/tight") or relegere ("to read/consider again"), and is associated with a bond to the divine or careful consideration of the sacred, evolving from general duty/piety to often formal systems of worship, encompassing devotion, ritual, and communal beliefs in divine power or ultimate realities. Its core idea, though, is a considered understanding or belief and a strong connection to something larger than ourselves, whether through obligation to gods, self, or community, or through mindful observance.

For me, I define religion as the practising of our faith, beliefs and spirituality. In sharing our faith, beliefs and spirituality as a community of faith then we end up developing a sense of consensus and commonality. This is an organising of religion. However, religion can be personal and differentiated even within a broader group or faith tradition. Each of us will likely have some individual way that we practise our faith, beliefs and spirituality, even when the organised religion has clearly defined ways of acting, praying, and ritual, as well as beliefs which must be accepted and confessed in order to be a member of the group. However, even those who do not associate with any particular organisation will still have beliefs and ways in which they construct meaning and purpose in life [aka spirituality] and will therefore have ways of acting and behaving which are a result of those beliefs their faith in them.

Continued next page

## ***Being Religious***

How do you practise your religion? Some people might answer in terms of their sect or denomination. I have in the past tried to shy away from the idea of religion. I have said to people that I am not very religious, which is sort of ironic for a professional Christian who leads weekly religious services. I have struggled with and tried to distance myself from organised religion because when religion becomes less focused on faith and spirituality and becomes more centred around ritual, culture, tradition, rules and morality, it tends to become judgemental, discriminatory and prescriptive in terms of beliefs, ways of doing things and morality. This is the kind of religion many people in society find themselves objecting to and it becomes a reason for them to reject God because they believe that if this kind of religion represents God, then they want nothing to do with such a god. Yet, because I define religion as the way in which we practise our faith, beliefs and spirituality, then I am religious. Even those who do not adhere to any particular organised religious faith tradition will have rituals and patterns of behaviour and a system of beliefs which shape the way that they live. I believe that humans tend to live religiously in one way or the other.

## ***What Does God Desire as Our Religion?***

What God desires or requires of us is not usually related to ritual, doctrinal belief, rigid moral codes or certain ways of practising spirituality – at least not in terms of some key Scriptural passages. Of course, we need to recognise that the Pentateuch/Torah in the Jewish Scriptures/Old Testament does contain some very clear exposition about such things. However, as we move through the Bible towards the New Testament, we get a message that is less about rules and regulation, and more about right living in right relationship with God. We have passages such as Micah 6:6-8 where it explicitly states that what God requires from us is not religious ritual and sacrifices offered as part of that, but to do justly, love with mercy and humbly

walk with God. The epistle of James states that, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." [James 1:27 NIV].

Then we have Jesus condemning religiosity – that is religion for religion's sake, in the name of God, but not honouring God – when he says, "These people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." This can be found in Matthew 15:8-9, quoting the prophet Isaiah 29:13, criticizing hypocrisy, where outward religious praise (lips) isn't matched by genuine inner devotion (heart). It speaks to empty rituals, teaching human rules as divine commands, and contrasts superficial worship with true, heartfelt commitment. There are many other passages where in the writing of the Prophets God is not pleased by religion, in fact the offerings and sacrifices literally get up God's nose. What God desires is compassion and justice which cares for the poor and the oppressed.

## ***Right Religion***

Right religion is that which connects us authentically to God and which leads us to rightly honour God. The word orthodoxy comes from the Greek *ορθόδοξος* [orthodoxos] which combines *orthos* (straight, correct) and *doxa* (glory, belief, opinion), meaning "right belief" or "right glory/worship." Right religion is not prescribed by the Church or any tradition. It is prescribed by God and arises from a right and true connection with God. Religion is how we practise our faith, beliefs, and spirituality in a way that helps us connect with God and then live in a way which honours God. What our religion is and how we are religious is therefore something very important to think about.

*God bless*

*Jon*

PEOPLE NEWS

HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY



Margaret Bell

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

## Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

1—7 February

**North Africa:** Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia

Garage



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

### Upcoming dates

- **7 February**

- **7 March**

- **No Sale in April**

*Pre-loved*

*Household items,*

*Electrical, Toys & Books*

*(Fiction, Non-fiction & children's books)*

*St. Matthew's Lower hall*



**World day of  
Prayer**

**Friday 6  
March**

St. Matthew's is hosting this year's World day of prayer. Volunteers are needed to assist. Please contact Pamela Leslie on  
0404 023 588

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

How doing little things makes a big difference.

## **Topic: Poverty in NSW**

*from the Salvation Army Social Justice Stocktake 2025*

The Salvation Army Social Justice Stocktake contains important statistics. As we all appreciate, NSW is experiencing a housing crisis. The best estimates available suggest there are around 34,985 people experiencing homelessness in NSW alone. Not having a safe and secure home makes every part of life more difficult.

The rising cost of living has impacted everyone in Australia in some way and NSW is no exception. 52.1 per cent of respondents in NSW reported that financial hardship and inclusion was an issue in their community and 33 per cent identified it when thinking about themselves. Though the overall child poverty rate in NSW is 15.1 per cent, it is much higher in some areas, for example the area of Guildford/South Granville in federal seat of Blaxland, where the child poverty rate is 40.7 per cent.

Cost of living pressures are affecting almost all Australians, but they are not affecting us equally. It is critical that we make sure those who are doing it toughest can still have their needs met. NSW echoed the general sentiment of Australia when asked what could be done about these issues and what decision-makers needed to know.

Roughly 295,615 people living in NSW are reliant on JobSeeker or Youth Allowance. The rates of both these payments are demonstrably too low and have the unintended consequence of trapping people in poverty. Although poverty is often hidden in Australia, it can be a crushing reality for those experiencing it.

For the full article go to: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/socialjusticestocktake/nsw/>

### **What can I do?**

Pray for the wisdom of our State and Federal politicians to make wise decisions that will help to reduce the cost of housing and rentals and to increase the amount of Jobseeker and Youth Allowance.

Contact your state and federal politicians to encourage them to work in a bipartisan way to help to resolve the issues of poverty, homelessness, housing costs and the cost of living.

Pray for the people working with organisations like Uniting Care, Food Bank, Salvation Army and Wesley Mission that they will continue to receive financial support for their important work.

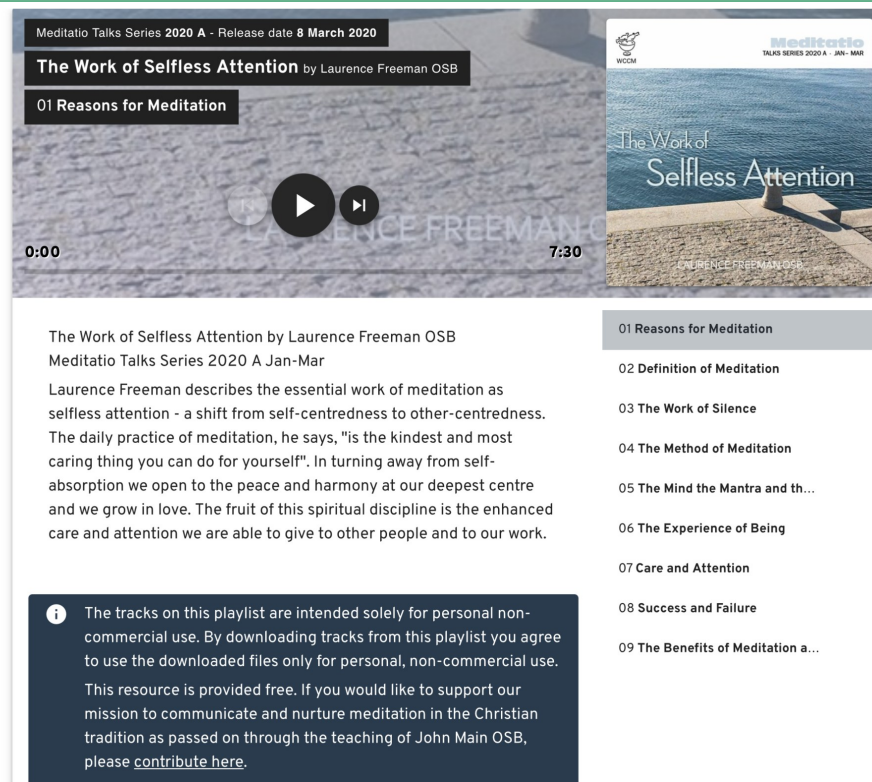
To ask about joining the Social Action Group at St Matthew's

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 a talk titled "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 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" which includes the following items:

- 01 Reasons for Meditation
- 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
- 09 The Benefits of Meditation a...

Below the playlist, there 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



**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**



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

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

**The St. Matthew's Uniting Church weekly Newsletter is available to view at the end of each week for the upcoming Sunday on the St. Matthew's website**  
**[www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au](http://www.stmatthewsuniting.net.au)**

**Click on the metal dove image / publications or find in recent posts.**