



Spiritual Fitness

As we continue to think about our future and to work on rejuvenating our life and witness as we join in the mission of God as a congregation, it might be helpful to think about spiritual fitness. For me coming to be the Church and gathering on Sunday or at other times is like a faithnasium. A gymnasium is where we build up our health and wellbeing through strength and cardio training, physical exercise and fitness classes. A faithnasium is where we come to build up our spiritual health and wellbeing and work on our faith and discipleship to be spiritually fit.

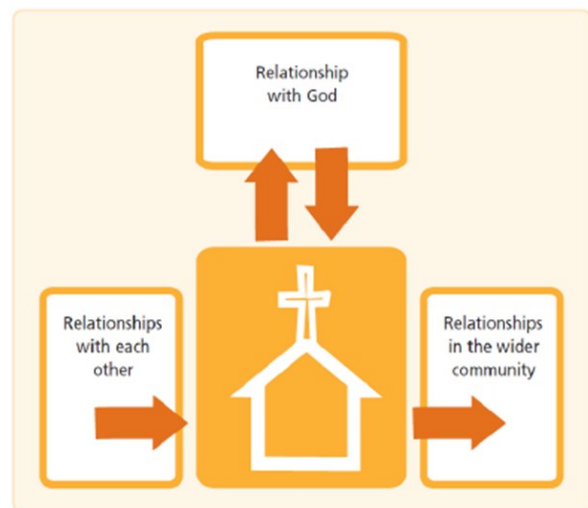
Spiritual fitness is something that maybe we are not used to thinking about. It has not been a traditional element of our language about Church. However, if we are to be a healthy Church then we should be more conscious about our spiritual fitness as members of the Church.

The National Church Life Survey talks about Church health. Relationships form a key element. Healthy Churches help people in their relationships with God, with each other and the wider community.

If we are to be a healthy Church and have spiritually healthy members as well as a program to help newcomers with their spiritual fitness, then we probably need some kind of intentional framework for how we understand it and go about exercising our faith and spirituality as part of our discipleship.

Church Health: Relationships

Healthy churches help people in their relationships with God, with each other and with the wider community.



Source: *Enriching Church Life 2nd Edn*, (2012). Sydney: NCLS Research.



NCLS Research www.ncls.org.au

Spiritual Fitness-Cont'd

So, what is spiritual fitness. Well, if healthy Church help people in their relationship with God, then we should be exercising our closeness with God. At St. Matthew's we are blessed with Christian meditation which is an internal way of practising and exercising closeness with God. Meditation and contemplative practices are important for our internal spiritual fitness.

To exercise and strengthen our external spirituality in order to be spiritually fit, then we should practise how we connect and are in Godly relationship with others. We have markers/measures such as the Fruit of the Spirit to help us check out our spiritual fitness level. However, they are also spiritual exercises that we can work on with each other so that we are healthy and fit when we seek to relate to our wider community.

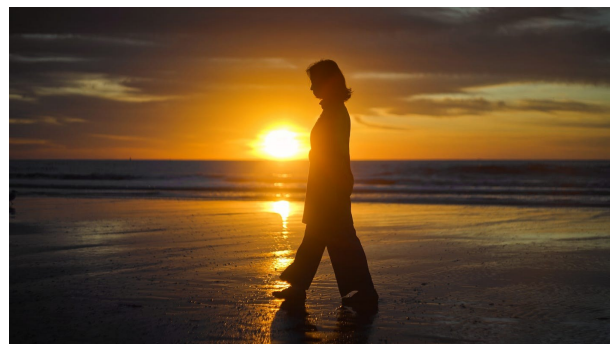
External spiritual fitness is also about how we use our gifts. The Uniting Church in our Basis of Union (Paragraph 13) believes that our being Church together is founded on the reality that, "The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ." To be spiritually fit, we need to work out what our gifts are and then do some training to build them up and use them in ministry.

One very important aspect of spiritual fitness is our love for others. It is part of the Fruit of the Spirit, but if we are to connect with God then we have to love others. If we are connected to God then we have to be connected with others. "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." [1 John 4:16] "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us," [1 John 4:12] "for those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." [1 John 4:20]

How we go about loving others as part of our spiritual fitness regime is something to consider and plan for. There is love in the form of generosity (a Fruit of the Spirit) for, "We know love by this, that he [Jesus] laid down his life for us - and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" [1 John 3: 16-17] We go about loving others through working for justice and equity, for what does the Lord require of us, but to "do justly" [Micah 6: 8] After all, "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]

Thus, one of our final spiritual fitness exercises is to keep ourselves "from being polluted by the world." The best way to do that is to live rightly. When we spend times doing the 'dos' we don't have time to do the 'don'ts' and even if we might be tempted, our focus on God (which is part of our first aspect of spiritual fitness) will help us choose not to.

So, how spiritually fit are we? Even if our fitness isn't too bad, we still need to have a fitness and exercise plan to help us stay fit. Thinking about spiritual fitness is therefore something to very much to think about.



God bless
Jon



Thursday 7 May 2026

10am—12noon

Guest speaker: Thomas Smith

How We do Research into Children’s Creativity



Dr Thomas Smith (Education) is the senior research fellow at the Pacific Hills Christian School at Dural. He has published papers in the International Journal of Christianity and Education and contributed chapters to Collected works on Christian Education. He worships at St. Matthews Uniting Church Baulkham Hills.

Thomas will look at alternative research results into children’s creativity. This will help parents and caregivers to use workable processes to help primary-aged students with their creative writing. We will also look at ways to help Year 7 and Year 8 students to think morally about how groups misuse scientific processes in the community.

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

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

For the second year running Hugh Darling will be participating in the Police Legacy fundraising ride from Sydney to Canberra from the 29th May to 31st May 2026, some 300 kms over the 3 days. Police Legacy is there to support families and loved ones of fallen Police Officers here in NSW, and having 2 sons serving in the NSW Police this is a cause close to his heart and that of his family. At least one of our members is also currently in the NSW Police Force.



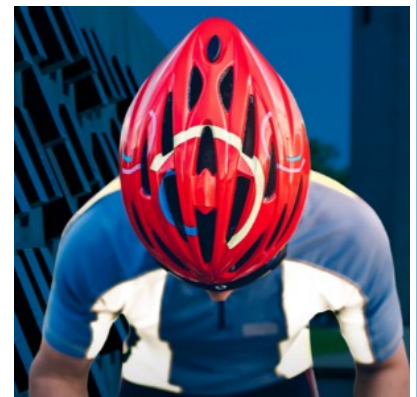
**NSW
POLICE
LEGACY**

Caring for the
Police Family

Hugh's fundraising goal is \$1,000.00.

Detailed below is the link to his fundraising page and any donation amount would be greatly appreciated.

<https://www.policelegacynsw.org.au/my-fundraising/1044/hugh-darling>



March Working Bee

Thank you



Only a small group turned up for this working bee which was disappointing. We did, however, manage to get a number of jobs done.

Thank you to Noni who cleaned the downstairs kitchen. Thank you Keith Pentland who cleaned all the kitchen draws plus the glass in hall doors. Peter Jenkyn cleaned

the foyer windows. Bruce Court cleaned the air-conditioning filters, changed light bulbs over to LEDs, some gardening and a number of other jobs. I concentrated on the church, thoroughly cleaned the red seats including underneath where the dust collects and polished the piano and other furniture. Katherine Pedersen, Roderick Schuster and David Porter spent time in the garden pruning and digging.

Thank you all for your time and effort.



Parramatta Mission



In April, we will be collecting beanies and scarves to be distributed to disadvantaged people at Parramatta Mission. A collection tub will be available at the top of the stairs.



Thanks everyone who knitted and crocheted items last year. Our donations were greatly appreciated.

Christine Haines 0401344800

Garage



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

Upcoming dates

- **2 May**
- **6 June**
- **4 July**

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

St. Matthew's Lower hall

MARCH FOR CHANGE

Speaking out against
Domestic & Family Violence



FRIDAY 1st MAY
7.00 a.m.

Castle Towers Purple Carpark, Castle Place
March to Castle Hill RSL & Bowling Club

Hear the Experts : Have Your Say



From the St Matthew's Social Action Missional Ministry Team

'Doing little things can make a big difference'.

Topic: Update on some of the current social action issues:

1. Wesley Mission's Gambling reform campaign

[The Prime Minister announced on 2nd April that his government will present a bill to parliament, during the Budget sitting in mid- May 2026, to limit gambling advertising on television, radio and online. However, this does not go far enough as it is a partial ban not the full ban as required in the Murphy Report.](#)

Wesley Mission CEO, Rev Stu Cameron, responded to the announcement by the Prime Minister:

"Australians will still be exposed to a flood of gambling ads across sport, online platforms and broadcast. This is compromise, not real reform. The evidence is clear: only a comprehensive, phased ban on all gambling advertising will meaningfully reduce harm. That is the standard set by the Murphy Report and the standard that should be delivered".

What can we do: email our local federal politicians and ask for a full ban on gambling advertising.

2. Uniting Fair Treatment - Drug Reform: The Early Drug Diversion Initiative (EDDI):

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released its report into the EDDI on 30th March 2026. The media report from BOCSAR stated that "while EDDI is intended to reduce court involvement for low-level drug offences, these findings suggest its reach has so far been limited. This matters because diversion offers an opportunity to reduce contact with the courts and minimise harm associated with acquiring a criminal record for minor drug offending. This is particularly important for groups such as Aboriginal people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who already experience disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system". Link to the full BOCSAR media release:

<https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/media/2026/mr-who-is-being-diverted-from-court-under-EDDI-CJB272.html>

3. Uniting Climate Action Network UCAN – Online Community of Practice (OCoP)

The aims of the Online Community of Practice are to:

1. Build connection and relationships across the Uniting Church of Australia.
2. Deepen our faith and theology, especially as it relates to climate
3. Learn from guest speakers, from each other and from the Uniting Advocacy team.
4. Plan coordinated action together
5. Share about our own local/congregational climate action.

The OCoP meetings are held via Zoom on the third Thursday of the month from 7:30pm. The next OCoP meeting will be Thursday 21st May 2026. Previous topics have included:

- ◇ How to fit climate action topics into the liturgical calendar.
- ◇ How to turn a group consisting of representatives of a range of community advocacy groups with different interests, into a single effective lobbying group.
- ◇ The Organising Cycle as used by the Sydney Alliance.

If you are interested in participating in an OCoP zoom meeting, please contact Amanda for details of how to register to get the Zoom link.

Blessings, Amanda M, SAMMT

Silence and stillness in every season

Daily readings with John Main



The Evolving Maturity by going beyond all our personal, historical dividedness.

When we sit down to meditate every morning and every evening, we respond to the task that is given to each of us to grow into that vision and into liberty of spirit, to advance in the infinite expansion of our consciousness in Christ.

St Paul speaks frequently of the evolving maturity of Christians. The call to prayer, the call to meditation is precisely a call to grow up, to leave the ego-centred irresponsibility of childishness behind and to become ourselves by finding ourselves beyond ourselves in union with the All. Again, understand that this requires a personal response, not just an agreeing nod, from each of us. The invitation is to see with our own eyes, to hear with our own ears and to love with our own hearts but also to do this in union with him who is love. Now, in practice this requires of each of us to go beyond all our personal, historical dividedness, All the dividedness within ourselves is required to be transcended. All the barriers that separate us from our true selves and from others and from God must be dismantled. And that means leaving all our images behind. Images that we have of ourselves, the images that we have of others and the images that we have of God.

The Christian vision requires us to be open to God at an imageless depth, and it is in openness there that all the false dichotomies are resolved in union, in oneness. In other words, the call is for us all together to return to a fundamental simplicity. The call of deep prayer is no less that the call to be, to be yourself, to be in love, in trust, in total openness to what is. And it is almost meaningless to say that God is love until we know it for ourselves, through an experience of our being in the being of God. Our call is to know it and that is what Christianity is about. Everything in Christianity must lead us to that or else we are left with a recipe for deceit.

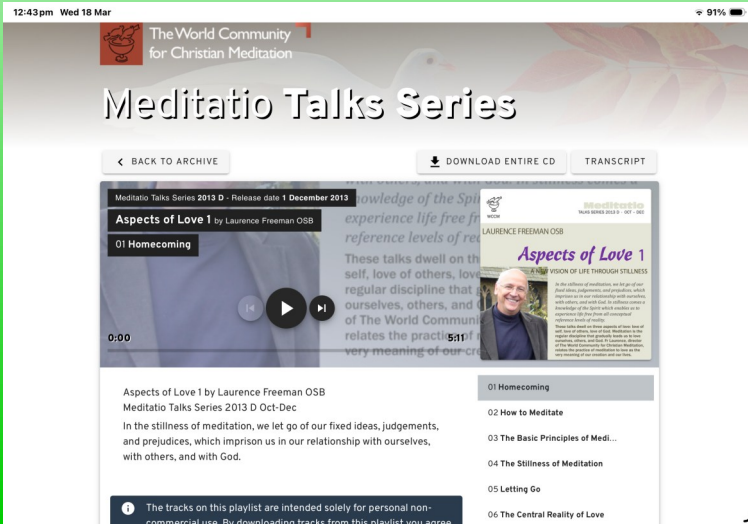
The Way Of Unknowing





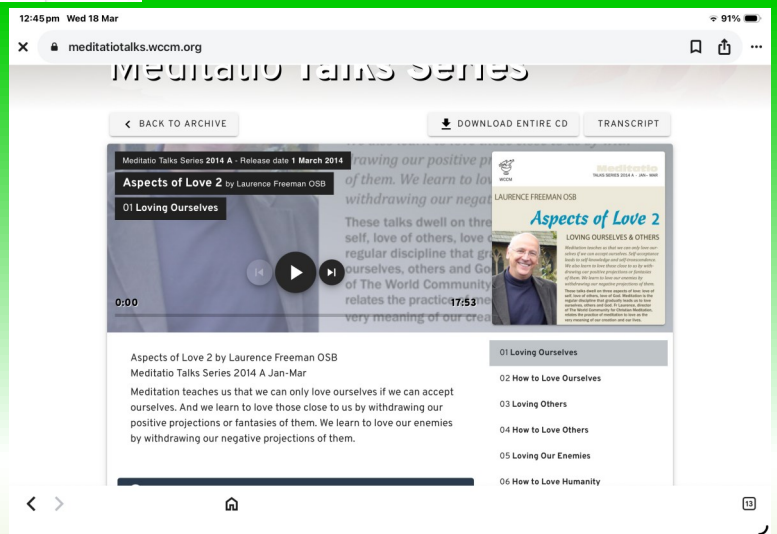
Meditation talk series starting on Monday 13th of April. Both groups will be listening to these before meditation time.

Aspects of Love 1 – Homecoming
Aspects of Love 2 – Loving ourselves
Aspects of Love 3 – How to Love God

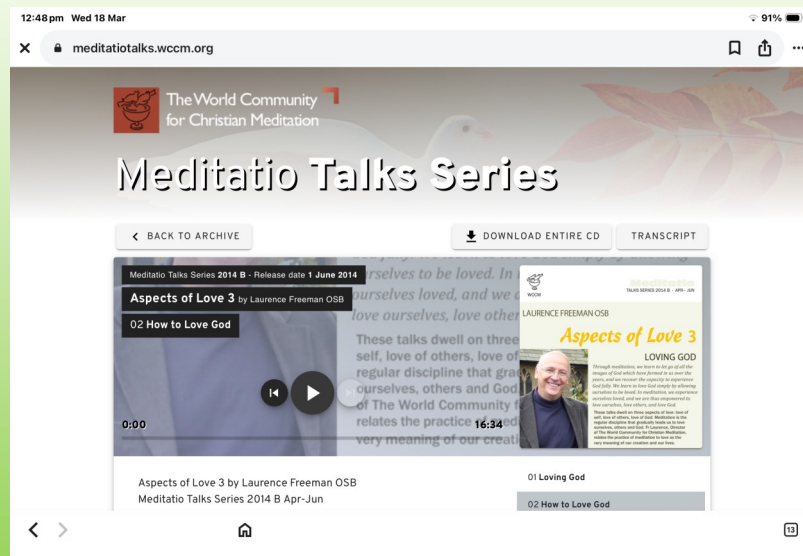


In the stillness of meditation, we let go of our fixed ideas, judgements and prejudices, which imprison us in our relationship with ourselves, with others, and with God.

Meditation teaches us that we can only love ourselves if we can accept ourselves. And we learn to love those close to us by withdrawing our positive projections or fantasies of them. We learn to love our enemies by withdrawing our negative projections of them.



Through Meditation, we learn to let go of all the images of God which have formed in us over the years, and we recover the capacity to experience God fully. In meditation, we experience ourselves loved, and we are thus empowered to love ourselves, love others and love God.



Calendar of Events for May 2026

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
				5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group	9am-12pm Op Shop 9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall 	 8am—Worship Includes Communion 9.30am—Worship Includes Communion followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool , Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm Worship Includes Communion
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room 11.30am Care & Prayer Community room & church	9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall 7.30pm Finance Meeting lower hall	9am-2pm Op Shop 10-12pm Coffee & Discovery Speaker: Thomas Smith	No scheduled events	No scheduled events	 8am—Worship 9am— Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am— Worship followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool , Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm Worship Community meal
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church	9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon Women's Fellowship 7.30pm — Church Exec meeting	9am-2pm Op Shop	5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group	No scheduled events	 8am—Worship 9.30am—Worship Followed by morning tea KUCA Preschool , Years K-2 & Years 3-8 2-4pm— upstairs hall in use 6.45pm— Worship
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church	9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall 10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista 7.30pm— Elders meeting upper hall	9am-2pm Op Shop	No scheduled events	No scheduled events	 8am—Worship 9.30am—Worship Includes Baptism Followed by morning tea KUCA Preschool , Years K-2 & Years 3-8 5pm— Shine setup from 4pm 6.45pm—Worship
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation community room	9am-2pm Op Shop 7.30pm— Church Council upper hall	9am-2pm Op Shop	5pm-7pm Fusion Youth Group	No scheduled events	 8am—Worship Followed by morning tea 9.30am—Worship Followed by morning tea KUCA Preschool , Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm— Worship

