

St Mark's Quarterly Newsletter - June 2026



Transformed by Grace to Love One Another, to Serve the City, and to Share Christ

FROM THE RECTOR
Rev Dr MICHAEL JENSEN

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

At St Mark's, we want to be a church that not only treasures the gospel, but shares it. One of



the encouraging features of the past few months has been seeing our parish deepen its commitment to outreach - not as a programme alone, but as part of our culture and identity. As a Parish Council and ministry team, we have been thinking carefully and praying

deliberately about how we become a church that warmly welcomes newcomers, builds genuine connections, and confidently speaks about Christ. Outreach is not simply an "extra" activity for especially gifted Christians. It is part of the calling of the whole church: to bear witness to the hope we have received.

One practical expression of this has been the beginning of our Hope Explored course. Hope Explored is a relaxed and thoughtful three-week course centred on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the lasting hope he offers. It has been wonderful to see members of our congregation inviting friends, neighbours, and family members to come along and explore the Christian faith in an open and welcoming environment. If you would like to learn more about the course, please visit <https://stmarksdp.org/event/hope-explored-course/>

This outreach vision also shapes our long-term strategic planning as a parish. We are asking how every part of church life - from Sunday

gatherings to music ministry, children's and youth ministry, pastoral care, and hospitality - can help people encounter the grace of God in Christ. As we approach the end of the financial year, I also want to thank you for your faithful generosity, including your support of St Mark's Music and the wider ministry of the parish. Your giving enables us not only to sustain ministry, but to continue reaching beyond ourselves with the good news of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,
Michael Jensen

FRIENDS OF ST MARK'S (FOSM)

The Friends of St Mark's Annual Church Service and luncheon
Wednesday 5 August 2026 at 11am

Where: St Mark's Church. Afterwards we will adjourn to the Upstairs Parish Hall for lunch.

Price: \$80 per person for the luncheon

RSVP: 22 July 2026 at stmarksdp.org/whats-on and to select your meal choice

Please email: fosm@stmarksdp.org for any dietary or accessibility needs or if cost is an issue for you.

[Register for the lunch here.](#)
Email: fosm@stmarksdp.org

FOSM continues to be a great way of building a strong sense of connection and community amongst regular St Mark's members, St Mark's Church and the wider community. We were encouraged at the large number of newcomers at our State Parliament House tour and positive feedback including: "Thank you for another excellent group tour. It was very special and we really enjoyed our time at Parliament House." We are now running the Hope Explored course, providing people with an opportunity to look for answers to big questions about life, the Bible and Jesus. The Organ Recital was sublime! We are looking forward to our Choral Evensong service and annual church service and lunch. Visit <https://stmarksdp.org/whats-on/> for all the details and please invite your family and friends to join in too!

PARISH RETREAT

In his poem *The Bright Field*, R. S. Thomas urges us to "turn aside", to allow ourselves to be interrupted, to pay attention, and in doing so to discover the deeper realities of the kingdom of God. Yet turning aside is no simple task. In a world that is frantic, distracted, and relentlessly hurried, our



attention is constantly pulled away from things that matter most.

To "set your minds on

things above" (Colossians 3:2), as St Paul exhorts, requires not only intention and effort but the slow cultivation of practice and rhythm. The world will not form us into people who seek the kingdom; this is the work of the Spirit of God.

Our spiritual retreat was a precious moment dedicated to turning aside, and to lifting our eyes from the immediate toward the eternal. Our theme this year was "Living Towards What Lasts." We were guided by the wisdom of the seventeenth-century Puritan writer Richard Baxter, who understood that a right contemplation of our end enables us to live rightly in the present. By filling our mind with reflections on heaven we begin to live out a heavenly life here on earth. However, despite how this sounds, Baxter was not advocating some disengaged life that removes us from reality, but rather that our hearts would be so set on the things of God, that we are equipped, refreshed, and eager to love and serve him in every area of our life. One participant shared: "The retreat was such a special time and a cohesive group of people. God has used it. Many deeper conversations with people. I've learnt so much, it was a special time... I didn't want it to finish!"



Our retreat runs each year and is a wonderful way to set time aside to seek God both alone and in community. I encourage you to set 14 - 16

May 2027 in your calendar and join us as we continue to grow spiritually in the likeness of Christ.

Rev Jonnie Wintle
Assistant Minister

PARISH LUNCH

The May Parish Lunch proved very popular, with 80 people of all ages attending and representing all three Sunday congregations. Many new people joined us too. We had fun discussing the decades we were born in (1930s to 2020s!) and getting to know each other over a delicious meal, all helping to deepen our sense of St Mark's community and connection. Next lunch is on 30 August.



Photo: attendees were aged 5 years and 88 years.

WELCOME LUKE SWEETING, 5:30pm Music Director

Luke Sweeting joined St Mark's in late January 2026 as Music Director for the 5:30pm service. He is passionate about helping people use their God-given gifts so the church can sing, respond joyfully to God, and encourage one another in the gospel.

A trained jazz pianist and composer, Luke holds a Master of Jazz Piano Performance and a Graduate Diploma of Divinity. Luke has previously served as Music Director at Summer



Hill Church and Scots Church Sydney. Under his production alias *Lo! Behold! Projects*, he leads *Majesty Rising*, a 12-piece soul-gospel band that toured NSW in 2026 and has upcoming releases. He also curates *The*

Forgotten Hymns, a revival project bringing rich, centuries-old gospel poetry to life in contemporary arrangements.

Discussing why he took on the Director of Music role, Luke shared: "I really enjoy singing and playing music in praise. I love training up others and seeing them grow to develop their skills to serve well." Luke is excited to serve, encourage, and grow with the St Mark's community. He reflected: "I'm enjoying how keen everyone is to develop and grow, and seeing new people come on board!"

Luke shared that his aims for his music ministry are:

1. To grow our delight and thankfulness in God (personally) and as a team.
2. To grow and develop the wonderful skills that we already have in the team.
3. To faithfully raise up more instrumentalists

and singers so our team's music is more full texture, energy and musicality.

Luke has been finding many things encouraging at St Mark's: "I'm enjoying meeting everyone and serving together with the music and AV team. I'm really encouraged by the congregational singing at 5:30pm. They usually sing with gusto and that encourages me!"

ST MARK'S MUSIC

2026 has been an exciting year for music at St Mark's. From the solemn reverence of our service on Ash Wednesday (a new one for our choir!), through the season of Lent (when we began each service with a choral introit reflecting on themes of repentance and faith), to the drama of Holy Week and the upcoming fiery season of Pentecost, we have sung and led the congregation in a kaleidoscopic range of music from the past 500 years. My hope is that this all of this music has allowed the vivid truths of the gospel to take root more deeply

in the minds and hearts of our congregation.



On a more practical note, we are currently in the process of purchasing new robes and music folders for the choir. Far from

being irrelevant accessories, these items allow our choir to present a unified appearance and sing comfortably and free from distraction. Our current robes are decades old with discrepancies in colour, condition, and cleanliness! This new set of robes will ensure that we are well equipped not only for our current worship but also to accommodate new singers joining the choir. We continue to rely on the generosity of members of the congregation to equip this ministry.

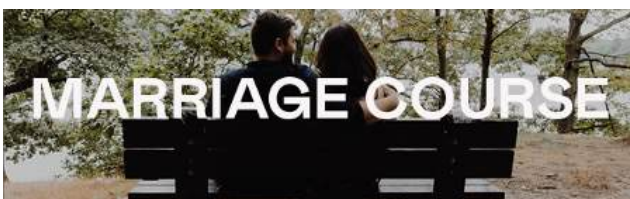
In this coming season we hope to add new people to the music ministry at St Mark's. Some of this growth is happening already, as we are in the process of appointing people to the position of Organ Scholar (which has been vacant for the past year) and the new position of Assistant Organist. These people will assist greatly not only in congregational worship on Sundays but also with the functioning of the choir behind the scenes. We also continue to seek more men (especially tenors!) to join the choir. It is rare for a small parish church to offer such a rich breadth of music in worship, and we hope that this ministry will continue to thrive for many years to come.

Sam Giddy

Director of Music



MARRIAGE COURSE



If you're looking for some practical tools and techniques to keep the spark alive in your relationship and stay connected, then consider attending the Marriage Course. Our next course starts on Tuesday 4 August 2026, 6.30pm – 9pm in the Canopy Room of the Sheaf Hotel in Double Bay and runs for consecutive weeks. We'd love for you to join us! Visit <https://stmarksdp.org/ministries/marriage-course/>

FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH ST MARK'S

At St Mark's Church we are *transformed by Grace to love one another, to serve the city and to share Christ.*

As we seek to love one another and share Christ with the city – one of our key objectives is '*Drawing In*' people of all ages and stages into Christian community. We strive to do this '*Drawing In*' by having *excellent worship services* and a wide range of community building activities - such as our recent *Parish Lunch, the Music Time ministry, and the Friends of St Mark's (FOSM).*

In 2026 we have committed \$125,000 of our resources to '*Drawing In*' people into Christian community and we rely solely on the financial partnership of our congregation members to sustain these ministries.

Your financial partnership can be arranged via *Direct Deposit* (i.e transfer from your bank account) or via *Credit Card*.

Please visit <https://stmarksdp.org/giving/> to set up a secure automated deduction from your Credit Card or you can set-up a direct deposit.

Direct Deposit

BSB: 032 054

Account #: 250036

Name: St Marks Church Darling Point

Tax Deductible Donations

In addition to regular financial partnership in St Mark's Church ministries, there are opportunities for *Tax Deductible* donations in support of *St Mark's Music* programs as well as the maintenance and restoration of *St Mark's heritage buildings* (via the National Trust of Australia). Please contact *St Mark's Church Office* (02 9363 3656 or office@stmarksdp.org) for assistance in making Tax Deductible Donations in support of St Mark's Church.