



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

**FROM THE RECTOR -
Rev Dr MICHAEL JENSEN**

I don't think we've ever experienced a year like 2020! It's been a lesson in dealing with uncertainty and in finding new reasons to trust in God's grace – and new ways to see his blessings. God has indeed been very kind to us. Through your generosity, we've been able to keep open and active as a church community and to welcome many newcomers.

As we come to the Christmas season, we are further reminded that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son'. Jesus is this world's true light – and we will be celebrating that light in our Christmas services this year.



But what of the year to come? Recently, the Parish Council agreed to focus on three themes in 2021. First, we are going to **grow together through serving one another**. At our recent Vision Sunday, we launched our Active Service booklet, which shows all the remarkable things that people do to serve at St Mark's. We've been blessed by God with many gifted and godly congregation

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members. We're going to put this great resource to work!

Secondly, we are going to more **deeply connect with one another** in 2021. COVID19 has been a challenge for a community like ours, since we haven't seen as much of each other. But in 2021, we are going to go against the trend of social isolation. We're going to start more Connect Groups, and we're going to work at our life together – since God has called us into his people to belong to one another.

ST MARK'S YOUTH

Thirdly, we're going to **develop our youth and children's ministry**. 2020 has been especially tough for kids. At St Mark's we have a special commitment to passing on Jesus to the next generation. We want to make sure that our kids and youth ministries are thriving by the end of next year.

For this vital work we need your help! In this dark and anxious time, Christ is the light of the world who promises to shine his light through us. Your support continues to make a huge difference.

Blessings

Michael Jensen



GROWING COMMUNITY

It has been a wonderful time for reconnecting at St Mark's over the last several months. When we first returned to church the new social distancing rules and the anxiety in the air made things feel unusual. But over the last few months we have relaxed into things, reconnected with more and more people, and we continue to enjoy fellowship together and with God.

Our Connect Groups have continued to meet, with more and more meeting in person during the week. We have also been able to restart refreshments after two of our services, and so enjoy the enhanced fellowship of eating together.

Our Youth Ministry has been back on Friday nights and Sunday mornings, with the youth having a great time growing as disciples together, led by our Outreach and Youth Minister Erica Oliver.

The Children's Ministry has regenerated too, with families at our 10am service continuing to grow together, which has been supported by enjoying morning tea together in the playground after the service.

COVID has given us new opportunities to connect with our community. We have welcomed back some faces who we have not seen in a while, and we have been introduced to faces too. Jesus Christ welcomed people from all walks of life, and it's a privilege to seek to follow him in this.

Please join with us in praying that God will continue to grow us in love and fellowship with each other, as we seek to display the

reconciling and relationship-building good news of Jesus Christ among us.

Rev Dr Tim Escott
Assistant Minister

'ROUGHING IT' FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Demonstrating God's love in practical ways resounds for members of St Mark's and was demonstrated yet again in the involvement of St Mark's congregation members in Roughtober. This annual sleepout raises much needed funds to support the disadvantaged and marginalised, while challenging supporters to step out of their comfort zones in order to achieve this goal.

This year's team were very encouraged by the community generosity, with an impressive \$18,575 raised. Michael Jensen reflected: "Being involved in Roughtober is a natural reflection of the Christian message of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. Likewise, it is a natural and personal extension of the other ways in which our church members partner with Rough Edges. Personally, it has been great to meet with others who share the same desire to help the homeless. Roughing it gives you just a glimpse of what it might be like to have to sleep rough."

Photo: St Mark's 2020 Roughtober team.





MARRIAGE COURSE

This year the Marriage Course released its new film series which is excellent in so many ways. The content is great, they have a number of world-renowned experts contributing, as well as powerful testimonies of couples overcoming everyday challenges.

We hosted the course on Zoom instead of in-person at The Sheaf Hotel. Although there were a number of concerns (such as that the participation wouldn't be as strong or that the couples would have a lesser experience with it being online), it's been great. We have had 10 couples participating, three from church, two couples from the Parenting Course, and five couples who discovered it via our community advertisements. One participant said, "We're really enjoying the time to be able to speak about things that we think are important but previously didn't have the framework to talk it through." Another participant shared: "Our friend who did the Marriage Course last year said they loved it and that we should try it, and we're so glad we did!"

Erica Oliver

Outreach and Youth Minister



LIFE EXPLORED

Michael Jensen and Erica Oliver hosted this new introductory faith course, which

was produced by the Christianity Explored Ministry with Rico Tice. It was very artistic in its presentation and the talks were powerful. Hosted on Zoom for seven weeks, the course was well received by participants.



ST MARK'S YOUTH

We have a fantastic group of young people in our Youth ministry. It's been a delight to be able to lead and encourage them every week through our Friday night youth program. This term we focused on stories in the book of John and looked at various encounters Jesus had with different people. We also held some fun activities like making toffee apples and learning fun interactive games. We're really looking forward to next year and including the Year 5's who are going into Year 6.

Erica Oliver

Outreach and Youth Minister



NICO TJOELKER

St Mark's organ scholar shares his passion for sacred music

Nico Tjoelker commenced his one-year St Mark's Organ Scholarship in August 2020 and is passionate about his vocation. "As an organist and church musician, my mission in life is to facilitate Christian

worship through sacred music. Having just graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, I am still at the very beginning of my career, and hope to continue building upon my professional skills as a musician through experiences like this scholarship at St Mark's. When I'm not playing for church services, my aim as a musician is to share the joy of music through activities such as playing concerts (in normal times), teaching and composing. Music really is at the centre of what I do," Nico shared. Nico already has plans to begin a master's degree sometime in 2021.

Nico plays for the weekly Sunday 8am services, as well as extra services around Easter and Christmas, and fills in for weddings and funerals for the Director of Music, when required. He also plays a scholarship recital at St Mark's once per year and enjoyed this opportunity on Sunday 25 October. Nico summarised the commitment involved as follows: "I practice several hours per week for any given service, but it varies quite a bit depending on what music I have been asked to prepare; for example, whether or not it is a piece I have played before, and the technical difficulty of the music itself.

IT'S COOL

Because of a generous gift, we've been able to install fans in the ceiling at St Mark's! The tasteful, quiet, and unobtrusive fans will make a huge difference to our comfort and hospitality. Up until now, we've sweated through services, especially on hot afternoons. More than one bridesmaid has fainted during a wedding! The fans will be installed in time for summer.

JOIN WITH US TODAY

St Mark's relies on the generosity of our community to fund the ministries within our parish and beyond. We would be grateful if you could consider just giving whatever you can contribute on a regular basis to help secure our ministries.

Please consider making a gift to St Mark's. Donations can either be directed towards non-tax-deductible projects or tax-deductible projects. Could you please help with all or part of these items for 2020?

NON-TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

Suggestions include:

- Youth Ministry - \$500 x 10
- Children's Ministry - \$500 x 10
- Children's Ministry resources - \$1000
- SRE (Scripture) Resources - \$200 x 5
- COVID safe cleaning products - \$1,000

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

In the past, tax-deductible offerings have enabled us to purchase new carpet and revitalise our sound system. Suggestions include:

Suggestions include:

- The Organ Fund (maintenance and tuning)
- The Organ Scholarship, currently led by Nico Tjoelker

HOW TO DONATE

To make a donation to St Mark's please visit

<https://stmarksdp.org/giving/>