



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

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



Towards the end of his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say: rejoice!" Is he simply being annoyingly optimistic? Make no mistake, Paul knew hardship and deprivation. He was writing from his prison cell, after all. But he had, in Jesus Christ, a profound hope. And because of this he knew what he called 'the peace of God that passes all understanding'.

The post-pandemic world will need to know that peace even more than ever. We've lived through an extraordinary time. Our plans for 2020 and 2021 have been derailed in so many ways. At St Mark's, we've known the ache of separation for months at a time. We've had unique pastoral challenges. We've learnt to rely more deeply on prayer.

But with your help, we are continuing to rejoice - because we hope in a sovereign Lord God who is in control and who, in Jesus Christ, gives us his deep peace. In 2022, we are planning, with his help, to go deeper in our discipleship, to keep building our youth and children's ministry, and to refresh our outreach to the community.

Quarterly Newsletter December 2021

The exciting news is that, with your kindness, we've been able to appoint Michael Figueira as our new Assistant Minister. Michael will have a special brief to oversee our outreach ministry, to work with our many wedding couples, and to lead our 5.30pm congregation. Thank you so much for the support that has made this possible - and please pray for Michael and his wife Louise and their baby daughter Amelia as they join the team.

We are also in the process of setting up a tax deductible fund for all our music called 'The St Mark's Cultural Fund'. This has been made possible by some generous bequests. We do look forward to launching the Fund in 2022 and being further blessed by the ministry of our musicians.

In all our endeavours, we've been taught to trust and hope in the generous and powerful Lord. And for that, we rejoice!

Michael

WHAT'S ON

Scan the QR code to find out more about our services and events.



WELCOME TO OUR ASSISTANT MINISTER - MICHAEL FIGUEIRA

We are delighted to have Michael Figueira join our team as Assistant Minister, well supported by his wife Louise and baby, Amelia.

Michael originally trained as a physiotherapist before studying at Moore College and will be ordained in February. Michael will be working in the area of Outreach and



with the 5.30pm congregation. He is looking forward to seeing many find their hope in Christ and experience God's transforming grace at St Mark's.

TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Over the last several months, we have been separated in body, but still united in spirit. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are not only reconciled with God, but also with each other. The Bible speaks about Christians together as the Body of Christ: united as one, because we all have the Spirit of God in us, joining us together. This means that even when we are apart, we are united.

It has been fantastic to see people continue to express this unity even when we were apart. We had hundreds of people watch and engage in our online services. We had people who hardly used computers manage to learn how to use Zoom to stay connected with their Bible study groups. We had people newly join

groups where they could connect, share, and pray. We had church members catch up with each other over a walk to share, support, and pray with each other. We really did see God's Spirit at work, drawing us and keeping us together in these ways.

**WE'RE PRAYING FOR YOU,
DARLING POINT.**

Want prayer? Text a request to 0485 867 729
or email prayer@stmarksdp.org

Now that we are back, it is brilliant to see each other in body as well as spirit. Even though we are spiritually the body of Christ, God loves it (and we love it) when we express that unity in body. To see each other smile, to greet each other with a warm handshake and pat on the back, and to chat over coffee and cake is refreshing and fulfilling. Coming together like this makes me look forward all the more to the final day when all God's people will be united in the new creation. But then there will be no more Covid, or the emotional and spiritual wounds and anxieties that we carry, or the many other physical ailments that continue to separate some of us from others. Instead, all will be new and Christ will be all and in all.

Until then, we continue to live in fellowship and unity. So pray with us as we seek to include those who still cannot be with us, to express our unity as the Body of Christ through the Spirit, and to grow in our fellowship and striving together for the gospel.

Rev Dr Tim Escott

Assistant Minister



A THRILL OF HOPE: ST MARK'S KIDS

What do you want for Christmas? While you'd doubtless receive a myriad of answers if you asked that question to the children of St Mark's, all would agree on one thing: no more lockdowns! After a long time apart, and whilst we all work at finding our feet again, reading the Bible with children and seeing families milling about in the playground over cake and coffee in the last few weeks has made us hopeful that in God's grace, we will have more and more opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with kids in person.

With this return to church, we're busy planning: sifting through Nativity play scripts, organising next year's Kids Church teaching, looking forward to welcoming people back on site. We're also preparing fresh initiatives for the community, like the relaunch of our Monday playgroup to serve young families in the area. It's time and energy we are praying will be a blessing both inside and outside the church grounds. We appreciate your continuing support in making this important work possible.

Stephanie Leung

Children's Minister



MARRIAGE COURSE

We were thrilled to offer the Marriage Course Online again this year, reflecting St Mark's commitment to promoting healthy family relationships. The course was ably facilitated by Trish Howes, with technical support from Robert Howes. We are grateful to both of them for their passion, care and expertise in running this important course.

Five couples attended the course, and the feedback has been very positive. Participants found the course content helpful, with comments such as: "We have found the sessions engaging and will continue to discuss these concepts for many months" and "We are sad the course is coming to an end, but know that we will continue to work with concepts in this book to improve our marriage."

Couples also appreciated Trish's personal approach to facilitating the course, including her phone calls and follow-up. One couple reflected: "You've been a fantastic teacher and we greatly appreciate the support provided. Our relationship has greatly benefited from your teachings and this course. Thank you for taking the time to invest in us."

BEREAVED AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas Day is commonly a particularly hard occasion for the recently bereaved. It can have a hollow feel also for the long-time bereaved. The joy of Christmas can fall flat when someone is missing. Of course, that's life. Can anything help, apart from time?

Each year, a few weeks before Christmas, we have a service where we deliberately give thanks for those we have lost and pray for 'the peace which passes all understanding' for each one left behind.

The certainty of life eternal, of course, is the beginning of such peace and so is the Holy Spirit's calling to find the meaningful activities he wants us to be doing.



Then life, once again can have relationships and activities that bring anticipation and fulfilment.

This year we are also inviting anyone for whom COVID lockdowns have caused heavy loss – employment, income, plans, health, or hope – to join us.

The peace God's Spirit offers can be wonderfully deep, sitting next to our loss, but drawing its sting. That is what we pray for.

The service this year will be on Friday 3 December 2021 at 7pm. If you would like to be on this year's invitation list, please do let the office know now: office@stmarksdp.org

Rev David Crain

Assistant Minister

JOIN WITH US TODAY

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

Could you please help with all or part of these items for 2021?

NON-TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

- \$500 for a wheelchair to be kept on church property for easy access
- \$30 x 20 for Bibles to give away to newcomers
- \$500 to support our Creche Minister, Bronte Heslehurst

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

You may like to make a tax-deductible donation to St Mark's National Trust to support The Organ Fund (maintenance and tuning).

HOW TO DONATE

To find out more about our finances and about how you can share in the ministry of St Mark's through your financial giving, please visit <https://stmarksdp.org/giving/>

