



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

**FROM THE RECTOR  
Rev Dr MICHAEL JENSEN**



Dear St Mark's Family,

St Mark's exists because men and women need to be transformed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We partner together to share Christ and to serve our city.

God's main strategy for doing his work is the local church - and he is certainly at work in and through St Mark's.

This year, we've been able to share the good news with hundreds of people through our wedding and funeral ministries and also through our outreach courses. We've seen our Monday morning Music Time ministry go from strength to strength. We've served our community with the Marriage Course and by our partnership with local ministries like Rough Edges and Banksia Women. We've rejoiced in the praises of our great God with the help of our choral scholars and our other musicians.

Our Children and Youth work goes forward with the help of our two student ministers, Sam Begg and Jono Dunn. It has been so encouraging in particular to see the growth in our youth group this year!

In addition, we've been working hard to maintain and improve our wonderful property. The paving works around the South side of the church are completed and look absolutely fantastic. This follows on the repairs to the stonework that were carried out in 2023.

## Quarterly Newsletter December 2024

All of this has been possible because of your prayerful and generous support of the ministry. With your help, we are planning and praying for the future that God has in store for us. Please continue to share with us in this joyful task!

**Michael Jensen**

### REMEMBERING AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas Day can be hard when we've lost a loved one. On Friday 6 December 2024 at 7pm we are holding a service to remember and give thanks for those we have lost, and to pray for 'God's peace which passes all understanding' to be with each one left behind. Details:

<https://stmarksdp.org/whats-on/>



## FAREWELL MICHAEL and LOUISE!



After being with us since 2022, Michael Figueira has taken up a new post with Menai Anglican in the Sutherland Shire. Michael has worked as our Outreach Minister, pioneering our Hope Explored courses and

keeping evangelism on our agenda. He's had responsibility for our Weddings and Baptisms and oversight of our 5:30pm congregation. We've so much appreciated his contribution and his friendship. Louise has been central to the success of the Music Time ministry. We will certainly miss them and their two children Amelia and Benjamin!

**Rev Dr Michael Jenson**  
Rector

## ONLINE PRE-MARRIAGE COURSE SUCCESS

Our recent online course was a meaningful journey for all who participated. Covering crucial topics like Communication, Conflict, Connection, Commitment, and Adventure, the course helps couples build strong foundations for marriage. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive:



*"The course had a major impact on us. The opportunity to intentionally talk and reflect on key items that form part of a marriage was invaluable. We have taken away a lot of*

*inspiration for what lies ahead."*

*"It provided a gateway to discuss important topics openly and forced us to plan more broadly for our marriage."*

*"Positives - The conversations starters used with the videos and how the themes provoke really important conversations with your partner. I appreciated how raw and honest some of the videos from a real-life marriage are. Rev Figueira was really transparent about his relationship, and we liked how he encouraged each of us to contribute. I think it made us think about how we can be better partners."*

**Rev Michael Figueira**  
Assistant Minister

## MARRIAGE COURSE



Our current course has been a rewarding journey for the eight couples participating, many of whom are from our wider community. Held in the welcoming atmosphere of the Sheaf Hotel, the course is designed as a "date night," giving each couple a series of special evenings to focus on building a stronger relationship. The course offers practical support on essential topics like effective communication, understanding each other's needs, conflict resolution, and fostering greater intimacy. Participants also explored how individual upbringings influence their relationships, gaining valuable insights and tools for long-term partnership.

We're grateful to Trish, our dedicated course facilitator, whose guidance and warmth have created a comfortable space for these meaningful conversations. A big thank you also goes to Robert and June, who have provided invaluable technical support, ensuring each session runs smoothly.

**Rev Michael Figueira**  
Assistant Minister

## **ST MARK'S CONFERENCE: LOVE IN ACTION**

The recent annual St Mark's Conference marked a significant step in our church's journey towards becoming more like Christ. By grasping the gospel, listening to God's word, praying together, and living out our faith in community, we witness God working within us through the power of His Spirit.

The theme of this year's conference was Love in Action, with guest speaker Rev Dr Rowan Kemp leading us through foundational teachings from Ephesians. He encouraged us to reflect deeply on the love and forgiveness we have in Christ and how these truths should shape every aspect of our lives.

We focused first on Christ's immeasurable love, a love that surpasses all understanding. We were challenged to pray Ephesians 3:16-21 not only for ourselves but for the entire church, asking God to help us know the immeasurable love he has for us so that we may walk in love as Christ did - sacrificially and wholeheartedly. This call to love others deeply resonated with many attendees, with one participant sharing, "The talks were exceptional, and I left feeling renewed in my commitment to love others more like Christ."

In the second session, Rowan explored the theme of forgiveness. He reminded us that because we have received peace and forgiveness through Christ, we are empowered to extend that same grace to others. The discussions that followed were rich and insightful, with one attendee commenting, "It was so helpful to hear others' views, and the questions really helped us get to know one another." Another participant shared: "Rowan spoke about forgiveness and regret and encouraged us to try to avoid holding onto resentments and bitterness and offered practical advice on how Christians could handle disputes in a godly way." This session led many to see forgiveness as a vital mark of

the Christian life.

The afternoon workshops, led by David Crain, Brian Leung, Alicia Watson, and Diane Speed, helped us put love into action practically. Many appreciated the opportunity to connect with new people, fostering a deeper sense of community. As one participant remarked, "It was great to be in discussions with people I wouldn't normally speak to." Another participant shared: "There were wonderful opportunities to communicate with each other and have good friendship-forming discussions throughout the day."

We are deeply grateful to the entire conference team and everyone who contributed to making this year's event so special. As we continue on this journey of spiritual growth, may we strive to love and forgive like Christ, growing together as His disciples.

**Rev Michael Figueira**  
**Assistant Minister**

## **SAFETY FIRST!**

"It is wonderful to see the paving of the southern side of the church progressing so well at last," Alicia



Watson writes.

"Many years ago, extensive work was undertaken to remove the garden bed, improve drainage and thus

prevent further rising damp in the southern wall. The cost, in addition to this work, to pave the pathway with stone was prohibitive and so we had to be satisfied with a path of gravel. The gravel served us well for many years but with wash off and movement it had become increasingly unstable to walk on and therefore a risk to those using it.



Over the past weeks the old gravel has been removed and is being replaced with sandstone which will complete the paving around the whole church. The paving around the front and north side of the building was replaced or restored following Elton John's wedding when he paid for this work plus the replacement of the wrought iron fence which had been damaged by fans trying to get a glimpse of him at his wedding! At that time there was no agapanthus garden on the front slope and so the fans crowded on it and the fence eventually gave way! The southern side paving has been made possible thanks to a generous gift for which we are very grateful. What a delight both visually and from a safety perspective to have this vital work undertaken."

Di Coates added: "As a member of the 'garden group' who try to keep the gardens, gutters and pathways looking good, neat and tidy, the new paving will be fantastic. The old gravel path was difficult to maintain - when we raked up the leaf droppings a lot of gravel was also raked up, and weeds also grew through the gravel. The water drain was constantly clogged up, which has now been rectified. In general, the new sandstone path is a vast improvement to the church as a whole. Many thanks to the donor for their vision."

## **WELCOME MARK EDMONDS**

Mark Edmonds joined the team in August to assist with our Property and Business Operations over the next six months. St Mark's properties and operations present us with

several complexities and challenges. Mark has been a churchwarden in another parish and has extensive experience in project management in both government and for-profit sectors. We aim to steward our resources for maximum kingdom impact.



## **Describe your role**

The Wardens have asked me to help kickstart a number of projects like the Etham Avenue renovation and the Cranbrook school licence. I'm also reviewing business practices and procedures to look for opportunities for improvements and sourcing information to help the ministry team and Parish Council make good decisions about the future. I like to think of it as some project management, corporate hygiene, and business analysis. So I spend most of my days asking questions and learning, which is a lot of fun. I enjoy working with the team and "looking under the hood" of another Anglican parish.

## **What led you to become involved with St Mark's?**

I recently resigned from 17 years at Sydney Trains, before which I worked in the Intelligence community. I was keen to do some part time work whilst I study a Masters in Theological Studies. So the idea of bringing some of my public sector management skills to help a Christian community really appealed. And in the interests of full disclosure, your Minister was a groomsman at my wedding. So if you want some stories about young Michael, you know who to ask!

## **What have you found encouraging at St Mark's?**

The generosity and energy, you have it together! It's wonderful to see how you engage with your community from one end of the socio-economic spectrum to the other.

## **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 giving whatever you can contribute to help secure our ministries. To share in the ministry of St Mark's through your financial giving; including bequests; visit <https://stmarksdp.org/giving/>