



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

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

It has been an extraordinary year.

It began with the terrible bushfires over the Christmas period, and now we are dealing with the terrible global consequences of COVID19. Mercifully, our nation seems to have been spared the worst. However, the community is showing signs of stress and anxiety. The things on which we have built our lives all of a sudden seem much less solid.

It's not surprising that there's been an increase in spiritual questioning. I've had a number of conversations with people for whom this crisis has meant a renewed interest in God and in the person of Jesus Christ. While this has been a period of immense change, I am also very conscious that God has called us to be a loving presence for our neighbours and a witness to the peace of God that comes in Jesus. It's been a huge encouragement to hear of members of congregations ringing one another and supporting each other - and also to see people reach out to others with the love of God.

As you are no doubt aware, COVID19 has meant we have had to move all of our services on-line. This has been very difficult. It's certainly heart-breaking to see the church doors closed on a Sunday morning, when there should be people going in, and we should be hearing the sounds of God's praises being sung and his Word being preached. But we've managed to reach a whole

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new congregation online each week - using Zoom for our 'morning tea' and indeed for the entire 5:30pm service. Our YouTube services have been viewed by far more people each week than actually attend our services!

With your help, the ministry staff have been very busy ministering in the new conditions. Our Children's Minister, Stephanie Leung, had barely started at St Mark's when COVID19 happened. So Steph has had to keep our ministry to children going while not having Kids' Church on site each week. Rev Dr Tim Escott, who only started in November last year, has been managing our Connect Groups on Zoom and has been in charge of moving our services to online services. Rev David Crain has continued to connect with people pastorally and to lead his amazing Tuesday groups. Erica Oliver, who has been officially on maternity leave until recently, has been working on a voluntary basis to get Alpha going again and to keep our 5:30pm service together. Our admin staff have been working from home, but have been equally busy keeping St Mark's going while we can't meet in person.

Soon the lockdown will end, and we will be able to meet again. What a day that will be! I am looking forward so much to giving thanks to God for his kindness to us alongside all my brothers and sisters in the St Mark's community.

Michael Jensen



STAYING CONNECTED DURING COVID-19



These last few months have seen us have to creatively adapt our ministries to the new situation. Even though many of our structures have changed, the abiding gospel of Jesus Christ and the living word of God remains the same, and God's Spirit has continued to work through our efforts.

All three of our church services have moved online - <https://stmarksdp.org/sunday-services/>. We record the sermon and other parts of the 8:00am and 10:00am services on a Thursday - it's been a bit of a shift from preaching to a full house to an empty church with a camera! The 8:00am and 10:00am services can be viewed online, and we are having excellent numbers of people engaging in this way. After our morning services we have online 'Morning Tea' via Zoom videoconferencing, while our 5:30pm service is conducted entirely on Zoom. We give thanks to God for the team of people who serve us all to make this happen every week. We also give thanks that we have seen the services being taken up by plenty of people who do not normally come to church, which is an unexpected blessing from God. Please pray with us that the good news of forgiveness and life in Jesus will continue to be shared in this way.

We have also moved a number of small groups online and begun new groups too. Many of our Connect Groups have been meeting via Zoom and email. We have started some more groups too: A Psalms reading group; a Scripture memorisation course; and another Alpha course. Michael's Daily Devotionals emails have been taken up by more people than ever, and we have started a music devotion email too. Our MusicTime playgroup has also been meeting on Zoom each week. Finally, we have recently held

an online parenting evening via Zoom that has attracted good interest. In all these ways, we continue to meet as a community around the word of God with the Spirit of God among us. Give thanks with us to God for His provision of this technology, His continued blessing of energetic fellow-servants at St Mark's, and the way he has blessed our efforts with great fruit.

MEN'S DINNER WITH GRANT DIBDEN

On Thursday 5 March a full room enjoyed another excellent meal at the St Mark's Darling Point Men's Dinner. The speaker was Rev Grant Dibden, a former Australian Army Colonel and now Anglican Bishop Designate to the Australian Defence Force. Through his presentation Grant shared parts of his life story looking at the theme of 'decision-making'. He shared how differing circumstances create opportunities for new decisions and that aiming to be part of God's plan to build His Kingdom under Christ has been encouraging and satisfying for him and his family,



including during times of personal loss. Grant also shared research he has conducted in the military with soldiers who suffer with post traumatic illness. His findings revealed the phenomena of conscience trauma, or moral injury, and the

opportunity of healing in those instances. Scripture memory has been a significant blessing and personal discipline for Rev Dibden, with a favourite verse reminding us of the supremacy of Christ and the day when all creation will bow to him: "...To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever!" Revelation 5:13.

Rev Dibden has sent through a link of the recent Anzac Day Chapel service for those who may be interested: <https://www.facebook.com/duntroonchapel>

LOVE IN ACTION: SUPPORTING ROUGH EDGES

Following Jesus means loving our neighbours, including those who are sometimes very different to us. The pandemic - and resultant shutdown - has given the St Mark's community an immediate opportunity to put this love into practice.

Rough Edges is the support group for the homeless located in St John's Darlinghurst and usually has between 100 - 150 homeless people pass through the doors each week for a meal. In



times of Coronavirus, making these meals and serving the most vulnerable members of our community is more challenging, but especially important.

The St Mark's community usually supports Rough Edges in a variety of ways, including financial support and providing meals to their kitchen one night per month (the second Sunday). However, due to COVID-19, Rough Edges were only able to provide takeaway food and so our community got behind Roughies in a creative way. 10:00am Service parishioners Renae Leith-Manos and her 12-year-old twins Mason and Stella organised a shopping bag drive. Their goal was to organise 50 Coles/Aldi/Woolies supermarket shopping bags full of non-perishable food for Rough Edges by 9 May. Sarah Malcolm, also from the 10:00am congregation, was vital in making sure the Hall was opened twice a week for people to drop off the bags.

Over three weeks the St Mark's, Rough Edges charity drive raised 53 bags full of non-perishable food items from supermarkets around Sydney.

Thank you to Woolworths for donating 1,580 food items, Bakers Delight for offering fresh bread items for upcoming events at Rough Edges and all at St Mark's who donated or volunteered.

In addition to the shopping bag drive, St Mark's also arranged a cash drive, with the goal of raising \$10,000 by the end of May. Thank you to all those people who generously donated in this way. Together we have raised \$16,500 to date.

Organiser Renae Leith-Manos has been thrilled with the response. "This has been a wonderful way to give back to the community and support Rough Edges at a difficult time, when their service is in more demand than ever. Again, at St Marks, we were reminded it is better to give than to receive."



Photo above: The St Mark's team who raised food donations and funds for Rough Edges. Pictured (left to right) are Jen Webster (from Rough Edges), Rev Michael Jensen, Renae Leith-Manos and her twins Mason (to left) and Stella (to right) and Sarah Malcolm.

PARENTING COURSE

St Mark's held their first online parenting course evening on 1 June. Following the popularity of this course (25 parents attended!) and reflecting their recognition of the important role parents have in raising their children, we are delighted to be offering the remaining four topics in the *Building Strong Foundations* online parenting course. The course will be presented via Zoom for four consecutive Monday's 7:00pm–9:00pm. The evening will be hosted by Trish Howes; who has 30 years' experience as a family and parenting counsellor; and Erica Oliver, St Mark's Outreach Minister. Cost is \$40 per couple, \$20 per single. The evening will consist of a video presentation and a few self-reflection exercises and booklets will be mailed out to participants.

Come and gain valuable practical advice to assist you on your parenting journey. For more information on topics covered and to register, please visit <https://stmarksdp.org/event/parenting-course-2020/>

The topics covered include:

- 15 June - **Meeting our children's needs**
- 22 June - **Setting clear boundaries**
- 29 June - **Teaching healthy relationships**
- 6 July - **Considering our long-term aim**



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 the ministry of St Mark's.

Please consider making a gift to St Mark's. Donations can either be directed towards non-tax-deductible projects (for equipment and materials for ministries such as the Alpha course, children's and youth ministry and Choir) or tax-deductible projects (such as church maintenance). Could you please help with all or part of these items for 2020?

NON-TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

Suggestions include:

- Support Bill Clark and the Choir - \$6,000
- Support our Outreach Minister Erica Oliver's work with Alpha - \$3,000
- Support our Youth Ministry - \$10,000
- Purchase a Bible to give away - \$50 each
- Purchase equipment for live streaming of services after COVID19 - \$2,000

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION PROJECTS

You may like to make a tax-deductible donation to St Mark's National Trust. In the past, Tax-deductible offerings have enabled us to purchase new carpet and revitalise our sound system. Suggestions include:

- The Organ Fund (maintenance and tuning)
- Maintenance of the stonework (we are currently commissioning stone masons for this task)

HOW TO DONATE

To make a donation to St Mark's please visit <https://stmarksdp.org/giving/>