

Stay Connected – Sunday 14th December

Third Sunday of Advent

This Week's Reading

Bible Reading: Matthew 11:2-11

Peter's Blurb

It'd beginning to look a lot like Christmas!

Here is the MAWI tree fully and beautifully decorated. They always do a wonderful job of decorating their tree each year – some very creative folk involved 🤖

And, here too is the Guild tree which is traditionally the collecting point for all the gifts destined for the patients of the MAWI Out-Patient clinic. Folk at St. Mark's have been exceptionally generous this year. Confronted by, I am sure, a larger than usual number of gift requests this year, many members came to the wicket and took up ALL the additional tags so that no patient would go without. The final tickets were 'hawked' on WhatsApp and Barbare and others made sure they were all accounted for. Thanks to everyone for this mammoth effort. You may rest assured that the eventual recipients will be overwhelmed by your generosity. It is a poignant thought that, for many of them, this gift may be the only gift they will receive. **"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'** (Matthew 25.40)



The generosity of our members and friends knows no bounds. For this was also the weekend of the "Cottingham Family Great Big Bake Sale which once again was a huge success. So many bakers produced their best confectionary treats for the occasion and delivered them to Debbie for the sale. Many of the bakers also turned up for the sale to purchase their favourites. Al Spearing contributed some of his home-made jams, marmalades and confections – they are a perennial favourite for many of us. (I can't remember the time I last bought marmalade from any store other than "Spearing's Specialities".) Also, Al doesn't just produce for the annual Bake Sale – it is a year-round enterprise for him and has contributed many thousands of dollars to the Stained Glass Window fund over many years.

During all the planning for the Great Big Bake Sale we learned that Debbie's Mum, Tina, well known to many of us, had suffered a stroke and Debbie & Dudley headed off to the UK. But the planning continued in spite of – I don't know who all stepped in to keep the momentum going but I know it was a lot of people for whom Debbie was very thankful. Tina, sadly, passed on the Sunday and Debbie and Dudley were able to return in time to put the finishing touches to the sale. In the final analysis the sale achieved a massive \$2,731 for St Mark's. Congratulations to Debbie, Dudley and family plus everyone who as Debbie said in a chat post: *"I just wanted to say a big thank you to everyone involved with the bake sale on Saturday. Whether you baked, packaged and priced, set us up, or bought goodies, your support was greatly appreciated. I honestly could not have pulled it off this year without the wonderful support received. Our efforts have raised \$2,731.00 for St. Marks."*



We keep Debbie and her family in our thoughts and prayers this week especially as she and Dudley will return to the UK for a couple of weeks.

We enjoyed having Rev. Terry leading our service today and we had a good crowd on hand too. I am sure it was a real eye-opener for him witnessing our church spirit in the support of the MAWI gifts and the bake sale too. His talk with an emphasis on Joy will be found below.

SAVE THE DATE

We all had tremendous fun last year with our "Mulled Wine & Carols" evening. It was a great opportunity for members and children to come together with a glass of spiced cheer and a mince pie or two and just sit in the pews, socialize and sing popular carols. So keep the evening of **Sunday, 21st December** clear from (say 6.00 pm) for this joyful lead up to Christmas. Bring your friends too – the more the merrier.



Seasonal Calendar

Just to remind you of the Schedule of Services and Events at St. Mark's over the Christmas season. Here is a list of dates for your diaries: 😊



CHRISTMAS WEEK AT ST. MARK'S!

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21ST
MULLED WINE & CAROLS
6PM

CHRISTMAS EVE
CHRISTINGLE FAMILY SERVICE
5PM

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
11PM

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE
10AM

We hope to enjoy your support and see you at many of these events or occasions.

These are all happening at St. Mark's in December For other events in the Diocese please also see Coming Events below.

St. Mark's Guild

Guild Members and other volunteers will be busy in the remaining days before Christmas with the Christmas Hamper project. There are always opportunities to be involved and assist in this important project to bring some Christmas Cheer to those who may otherwise be without.

The Lord's Larder – Christmas Hampers

Hi everyone! It's that time again!

We are asking for your assistance as we put together this year's list of recipients. Do you know a family in need that would truly appreciate the gift of a Christmas hamper this holiday season?

If so, please contact Jean Flath, 705-2378 or Pansy Nichols 332-2074.

Also, if you would like to donate food items for the hampers, we will be sending out a list of needed items this week, and a sign-up sheet will be up in the church on Sunday.

Monetary donations will also be greatly appreciated, and can be made online via the church's bank account – **please be sure** to include Lord's Larder/Christmas Hampers in the Beneficiary space when you make the transfer.

Let's do our best to make Christmas brighter for those less fortunate than ourselves!

Other Guild requests:

The Guild would truly welcome some new members to share the load and add their own Gifts and Talents to the life of the Church through service in the Guild. We can never have enough people to organize and manage events such as Bingo Suppers, the occasional Dance or whatever social activity is planned from time-to-time.

So, any of our congregation and/or membership not already committed to supporting the work of the church other than attending on a Sunday would be welcome to volunteer for Guild activities. Pansy, Evette and Barbara would be delighted to hear from you. Please seek them out and have this conversation – “What can I do to help?”

I expect I have probably forgotten something – there's so much going on. Before I sign off may I wish you all:



Until next week – stay safe and well,
Peter

Rev. Terry's Talk

Matthew 11:2–11

Sermon: Joy in the Midst of Chaos

On this third Sunday of Advent, the theme of Joy invites us to consider something deeper than the fleeting happiness that depends on favourable circumstances. Biblical joy is not rooted in comfort or ease. Rather, it is a deep, abiding sense of security and freedom that grows from God's unchanging love—a joy grounded in the trust that God will ultimately bless, restore, and heal creation, just as He has promised. Like the steady presence of a faithful friend who walks with us through both celebration and sorrow, we experience true joy in knowing that God journeys alongside us through life's ups and downs. Scripture bears witness to this truth again and again. God's people express joy not only in moments of dramatic deliverance, but also in seasons of exile, persecution, and suffering. Joy, then, is not the absence of hardship; it is the presence of God. As we remember God's saving work throughout history, we are invited to wait with joyful hope—a hope that looks toward God's future restoration, even when the waiting demands patience and perseverance. This is the joy that comes from being united with a God who walks beside us and promises to one day wipe away every tear. It is a joy rooted not only in what is to come, but also in what God is already doing here and now.

With that understanding, I invite you to lean in with me to this messy and deeply human pericope (*extract*) from Matthew—a passage where the full spectrum of emotion is on display: fear, doubt, loneliness, despair, and hope. This text holds up a mirror, inviting us to see where our human frailty coexists with profound faith and an unwavering sense of purpose. John the Baptist is in prison, facing imminent death. This once fiery, in-your-face, truth-telling desert preacher, who boldly proclaimed Jesus as the “Lamb of God,” now sits behind bars. His crime? Publicly condemning Herod's unlawful marriage to his brother Philip's wife, a clear violation of Mosaic Law. John's once bold and free-spirited life has been captured and confined to a dark, damp, disheartening cell. His thunderous voice, once heard by thousands, has been silenced by isolation and doubt. His unconventional desert garments have been stripped away, leaving him exposed, humiliated, and grieving. From this place of remoteness and seclusion, John asks a deeply human question:

“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

That question reveals something profoundly human within all of us. It reveals that we are all susceptible to doubt and uncertainty when suffering appears in our lives.

When you are having one of *those* days—what I call **L.I.F.E.: Living In Frequent Episodes or Events**—if it's not one thing, it's something else... when plans unravel and nothing is going the way you hoped—remember this: **even the prophet had his moment of doubt.**

Now here's the Good News. Jesus does not rebuke John. He does not shame him. He does not tell him to “pray harder” or “have more faith.” Instead, Jesus honours John, and He answers him with joy. John's question reminds us that doubt is not the opposite of faith; often, it is the doorway into deeper faith. Doubt grows in the same soil as longing. When life falls apart, and the story we thought God was writing looks nothing like the one we are living, faith doesn't always shout in triumph. Sometimes it whispers from a prison cell, “*Lord, is this still You?*” Jesus' response teaches us that faith is not the absence of questions—it is bringing our questions to Jesus. He tells John's disciples: “*Go and tell John what you hear and see.*” Not arguments. Not abstract theology. Not guilt or pressure. Just evidence. Just joy. Just restoration. “*The blind received their sight.*” “*The lame walk.*” “*The lepers are cleansed.*” “*The deaf hear.*” “*The dead are raised.*” “*And the poor have good news preached to them.*” In other words, Jesus says to John—and now to us— “*The kingdom is here, even if it doesn't look the way you expected.*”

And family, that is often the heart of our struggle with God. We expect a kingdom of power, but Jesus brings a kingdom of mercy. We expect immediate rescue, but Jesus offers redemptive presence. We expect clear answers, but Jesus shows us transformed lives. The kingdom of God is never smaller than we hoped—but it often looks very different. John's grief was real. His suffering was real. The bars on his cell were real. But Jesus does not deny that reality. Instead, He says: “*Blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.*” Blessed is the one who does not stumble when God refuses to fit neatly into our expectations. Here are three hard truths from this text: John's grief did not cancel Jesus' mission; Jesus' joy did not cancel John's pain; Both realities can exist at the same time.

And this is where the proverbial rubber meets the road: We can grieve deeply and still witness God's goodness breaking in. We can feel imprisoned and still glimpse miracles through the window. We can doubt honestly and still cling to hope. After John's messengers leave, Jesus turns to the crowd—and He defends John's greatness. Not despite his doubt, but in the midst of it. “*What did you go out to see? A reed shaken by the wind?*” No. John's questions didn't make him weak; they made him human. Jesus declares:

“Among those born of women there has arisen no one greater.” The greatest man Jesus ever praised was a doubter sitting in a prison cell. And then Jesus says something even more surprising: “Yet the one who is least in the kingdom is greater than he.” Why? Because in God’s kingdom, greatness is not built on certainty, perfection, or status. Greatness is measured by nearness to Jesus, by grace received, not achievement earned. The kingdom of God is upside down. The broken are lifted, the grieving are comforted, the doubting are honoured, and the least are called great.

The message of this Advent text is not: Stop doubting, don’t grieve, try harder, or be stronger. The message is this: *Whatever your circumstances might be, see joy breaking in.* Joy in prison. Joy in confusion. Joy in fragility. Joy in death. Joy in unmet expectations. It is Joy because Jesus is who He says He is—even when life looks nothing like we imagined, the blind see, the dead are raised, the poor are loved, and the kingdom is here—quiet, surprising, and full of joy. So, my sisters and brothers, bring your doubts. Bring your grief. Bring your doubts and desire for more. John brought his—and Jesus welcomed him with honour. Let Jesus speak His answer over your life. Take another look at your circumstances. Joy is already at work. God is moving closer than you think. And you are blessed when you trust Him, even when life unfolds in unexpected ways. **Amen.**

Closing Prayer

“God of joy, we thank You for the promise of salvation and the hope You offer. Strengthen us to live as people of light and rejoice in Your unfailing presence. Grant us the grace to serve You faithfully until the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.”

In our prayers

We ask for your prayers for Father Don, Margaret Blanchette, Al Spearing, Gill Rossiter, Sam & Marjorie, Gwyneth & Ralph, Jill, Barbara (Dyer), Vinette, Nancy, Gail, Janet & Gary, Tina, Val & Mark, Robert & Kalreeta, David, and for Sally Brown and Hilda Warner. Prayers also for Val Moffatt. And we pray for Carys & Glenn, the Cottingham family and any others who are/will be travelling over the coming Holiday Season.

This Sunday



Previous services and other videos are on our YouTube channel and/or our Facebook page at:

<https://www.youtube.com/StMarksChurchBermuda> and/or <https://www.facebook.com/stmarksbermuda/>

Next Sunday

Next Sunday, **21st December** – services will be as usual – Peaceful Worship at 8 am led by Archdeacon John and Contemporary Worship at 9.30 am led by Rev. Jennie.

Coming Events

- **Life Group Startup** – The popular Life Groups have resumed but it **may not be too late** to get involved. Reach out to Cathy or Stephen West if you would like to know more: cathjwest@gmail.com or cswestmd@logic.bm.
- **Bereavement Support Tea** – our next monthly chat will take place at **3.00 p.m. on Sunday, 4th January 2026** in the Parish Hall.
- **Vendor’s Market** – The next Vendor’s Market will probably be on **Saturday, 24th January 2026**.
- **Other events around the Diocese.** See posters below for a sampling of what is going on elsewhere

Down the Debt – St. Mark’s needs your help in reducing the size of our debt which inhibits future investment in our church. If you feel you may be able to help with this please go to <https://stmarks.bm/donate/> where you will find details and an opportunity to donate.

Links:

Just a reminder – if you want to check vot’s happnin’ or vot’s comin’ dahn de road – you can find it all at our:

- **Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/stmarksbermuda/>

- **YouTube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/StMarksChurchBermuda>
- **Website:** <https://anglican.bm/churches/st-marks/>
- **Holy Trinity Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/holytrinitychurchbda>

End Stuff:

Here's a thought. It is always a great time for us all to review our pledging. If each of us is able to increase our pledge by 10% that would be a great boost to our cash flow (which as you know is tenuous at best). And, with our in-person collections still inhibited by numbers restrictions, please consider the opportunity to convert to pledging by Direct Deposit (see below). Your support is vital.

As always, another huge thank you to all of you who continue to support our church family with your pledges and donations via online transfer.

Direct deposits can be made to: Butterfield Bank for the account of:

St. Mark's Church Wardens – A/c No. 20-006-060-104125-100.

- **For Grave Payments** – when paying Grave Maintenance fees be sure to enter Grave Number and Name of Lessee e.g. "Grave 273 Peter Nash" in the **Beneficiary** space on the on-line transfer form.
- **For Cash donations** – if you do not have an Envelope # just be sure to also enter your Name and "Donation" e.g. "Nash Donation" in the **Beneficiary** space on the on-line transfer form.

Use of the "Beneficiary" space is IMPORTANT – it is the only way we have to identify who is paying and for what.

Come to St. Mark's – not just a Church but a family!

AROUND THE DIOCESE



CELEBRATE THE SAVIOUR

Christmas

SERVICES 2025

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18

18 Dec. 6pm Carol Service

CHRISTMAS EVE

24 Dec. 6pm Crib Service with Christingles
11pm Midnight Holy Communion

CHRISTMAS DAY

25 Dec. 9.30am All-Age Holy Communion

The Anglican Parish Church of St. Paul
69 MIDDLE ROAD, PAGET
TEL: 236 5880
paget@anglican.bm
anglican.bm/churches/st-pauls/



THE WARWICK PARISH COUNCIL & ST MARY THE VIRGIN, WARWICK
Invites

THE COMMUNITY OF WARWICK
JOIN US ON THE LAWN OF THE
POST OFFICE NEXT TO THE RUBBER TREE
(OPPOSITE ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH)
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24 2025 CHRISTMAS EVE
FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENING OF SINGING
YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROLS, INCLUDING...

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING
O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL
AWAY IN A MANGER
SILENT NIGHT
JOY TO THE WORLD
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
HOT CHOCOLATE N' COOKIES WILL BE SERVED
WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

6PM - 7:30PM
BRING A CHAIR

CHRISTMAS EVE- AT ST. MARY'S
DECEMBER 24TH, 2025
10:30PM
FIRST PARISH EUCHARIST OF CHRISTMAS DAY

CHRISTMAS DAY
DECEMBER 25TH, 2025
8:00AM HOLY EUCHARIST
10:30AM FESTIVAL FAMILY EUCHARIST

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER 28TH, 2025
8:00AM HOLY EUCHARIST
10:30AM PARISH EUCHARIST

Chairman Hon Neville Tyrrell & Members of the Warwick Parish Council and Priest in Charge Rev Carl Williams, Vestry & parishioners of the St Mary the Virgin, wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.