

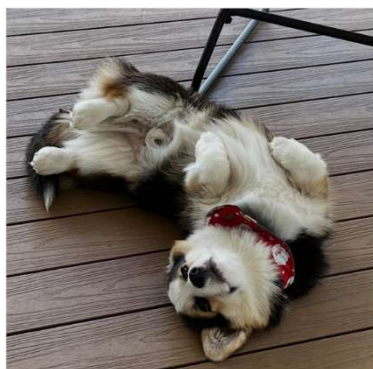
Stay Connected – Christmas 2025

This Week's Reading

Bible Reading: John 1. 1 - 14

Peter's Blurb

Well, as the saying goes, "If that's Christmas, we've had it!"



It has truly been a busy time with all the activities and services etc. I suspect that more than one of us is "dog-tired" at this stage of the season.

Once the pre-Christmas concert season was over, with the big "Joy to the World" concert and other smaller recitals done, we started the festive season with a visit to the Easter Lily Nursing Home at Baileys Bay on the Thursday before Christmas where members of SMC and HTC choirs treated the residents to an afternoon of music. Everyone was supplied with a noise-maker, rattle or jingly thing while Liz Hanson

led us through a presentation of popular Christmas carols and songs. Our audience was appreciative and all were singing along or at least mouthing the words along with us. The afternoon concluded with the partaking of a lovely pumpkin soup and rolls, prepared by the ubiquitous Keith DeSilva and enjoyed by choir and residents alike. Huge thanks to Keith for organizing this and also to Kalreeta Steede and Sue Gilmour who lent their voices to our group.



Then last Sunday, we held the second, of what is likely to become our annual, "Mulled Wine and Carols" evening. A great way of kicking off the season. This popular event drew a large crowd who reveled in singing carols from a

slide presentation, drinking mulled wine and munching on the various sweetmeats on hand. The mulled wine was an excellent concoction devised by master – pause! Look up Google! Find that "There is no specific traditional collective noun in English for a person who makes mulled wine." – continue – an excellent concoction devised by mulled wine maker Steve West who approached his task with great enthusiasm. It was delicious, went down smoothly and was enjoyed enormously. Well done, Steve!

Everything was going along well when the choir, having been asked to sing a specific number, were in full voice when the sound system packed up. This brought a premature ending to the evening but enough of the evening had been enjoyed to be respectable and the crowd had a few more sips and nibbles and quietly dispersed happy. Something in excess of \$900 was received in donations.

Turns out that the "mixer" device through which all the sound components are merged had gone faulty. A couple of frantic days then ensued during which John Nichols, Norris Ebbin worked to install the backup (old) mixer



for the rest of the Christmas Agenda. Huge thanks to them and to Lisa-Dawn.



Christingle Service is magical, a lot of fun for children and adults alike, but a lot of hard work and preparation. We are so fortunate to have so many talented and gifted volunteers to help put it all together and especially Steve West who led the show for both the mulled wine evening and the Christingle service.

Thanks to our organist Angie and our choir who rounded out Shepherd Steve's script with appropriately selected Christmas songs and carols. And, to our collective relief, the backup "mixer" sustained the occasion.



On Christmas Eve we held our traditional Christingle Service for the children. It was packed, as usual, with some 150 adults and 50+ children attending. It was a great success!

Here (left) is Shepherd Steve (West) - a man of many talents - teaching the finer points of Christingle-making with Lisa-Dawn demonstrating. The



Everything, mixer and choir, held together for the final Christmas Eve event which was the "Christmas Mass by Candlelight". This has always been one of my favourite services. It is such a profound reminder of the magic and mystery of that first "Christmas" when our saviour was born in a manger in a stable in Bethlehem.

The church being lit by candles forms an appropriate setting against which to hear again the story and play out the scene as it might have been over two

thousand years ago. Archdeacon John read the classic first 14 verses of the Gospel according to John which starts:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God..."

And concludes:

"...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son full of grace and truth."

We hope our service conveyed the essence of that Glory!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



From all of us at St. Mark's Church – Archdeacon John, Rev. Terry, Rev. Jennie, Wardens Nicki Horan and Lisa-Dawn Johnstone, our Vestry and Choir we extend to all our readers our Prayers for a Blessed and Joyful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Until next week – stay safe and well,
Peter

Archdeacon John's Talk

John 1. 1-14

It seems you can't start any undertaking these days without first doing a risk assessment, or having to estimate the environmental impact.

Imagine running the Nativity past the Advisory Council for Safety and Health or the Environmental team at Health@gov.bm or *International Standards* for one thing and another. I'm being playful here:

- Swaddling clothes – they'd need to be bleach free, woven by workers who were paid a fair wage.
- Stable – adhering to Building Code Regulations (1991), constructed with Bermuda limestone, no asbestos in the roof.
- Manger – has to be made of wood from sustainable forests, placed on an impact absorbing surface.
- Shepherds – night shifts not longer than allowed by the Employment Act (2000) – and none of this being 'seated on the ground' - orthopedic chairs are to be provided.
- The Angel of the Lord – SCARS-trained, or course, with Police Check for working with children and vulnerable adults.
- Other angels – issued safety goggles to filter out the harmful effects of ultra-violent light and Glory.

So I wonder, did God do a risk assessment for the Incarnation?

After all:

- He did choose a race of people, the Jews, with a long history of trying to understand his will, who arguably had done this more successfully than most.
- He did entrust the infant Jesus to a family who would take the greatest care to look after him and help him grow up with a strong moral purpose.
- He did choose a time when under Augustus the Roman Empire was at its most stable, so that the first Christians could later travel unhindered around the known world and spread the Gospel effectively.

If, as we believe, the birth of Christ was the highest expression of the wisdom of god, he must have known what he was doing, and covered all risks.

But in reality, think what a huge risk God took, in sending Christ into the world in the way he did!

- His mother – Mary, an inexperienced unmarried young parent.
- Family home – Nazareth, miles away from the birthplace in Bethlehem.
- Accommodation – in alternative provision, meant for animals, highly unsuitable.
- Country – Palestine, prone to political upheaval and military intervention.
- Local ruler King Herod – a tyrant prepared to slaughter innocent children.
- God's great plan for saving the world - entrusted to a little tiny child!

We shouldn't really be surprised. God was starting as he meant to continue.

- Jesus the Son of Man, we're told had 'nowhere to lay his head'.
- Jesus depended day to day on God the Father ('give us this day our Daily Bread').
- He chose ordinary men and women as followers, not the powerful elite.
- He took the form of a servant, and never once never lorded it over anyone.
- He was handed over to religious and political powers without resistance on his part.
- He gave up his life as a ransom, as a sacrifice for many.

And the biggest risk of all?

This great enterprise, on which depends nothing less than the Health and Safety of the whole world, is entrusted now to us.

We, who are:

- Often unreliable
- Increasingly forgetful
- Frequently very selfish
- Sometimes downright sinful

How extraordinary, that God entrusts us, in this strange and wobbly body which is the Church, with his message of wellbeing and salvation, the Good News of Christ.

At this eucharist, as the bread of life is given into our hands,

- The light of Christ is lit in our minds.
- The word of Christ is put on our lips.
- The love of Christ takes root in our hearts.

Just as we are, silly old us.

"Christ has no body now on earth but ours,

No hands but ours, no feet but ours;

Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out to the world,

Ours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he is to bless people now."

(Teresa of Avila)

This is a great responsibility to be sure, and something of a risk on God's part, but then, *he is used to managing that.*

Meanwhile, what a wonderful Christmas present for us, the gift of Christ, to make our own, to adopt in our own way, to become part of us, to bring us joy.

It is with that care and loving kindness that God has for our ultimate health, and safety, that I wish you all a very Happy Christmas.

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. And we pray for Carys & Glenn, the Cottingham family and any others who are travelling.



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, **28th 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.
- **Watchnight Service** – a service will be held at **11.00 p.m. on New Year's Eve** at Christ Church, Devonshire.
- **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**.

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!