



St Mark's E-News

Carterton

19 December 2025

Welcome

Worship this Week

Sunday 21 December

**9.30am Eucharist
(followed by morning tea)**

Wednesday 24 December

**4.30pm Nativity Story with
Carols**

**10.45pm Christmas Eucharist
& Carols**

Thursday 25 December

**9.30am Christmas Day
Family Communion**

Morning Prayer this week

St Marks and South Wairarapa parishes

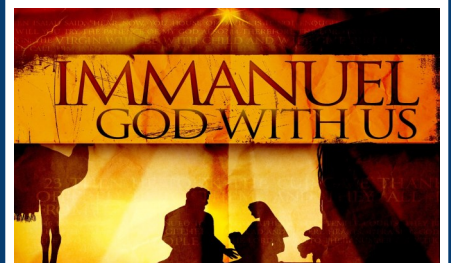
**Only Tuesday 23 December 9.00am
Zoom Meeting ID: 878-669-21496**

Readings and Collect

**Sunday
21 December
4th Sunday of
Advent**

**Isaiah 7: 10-16
Romans 1: 1-7
Matthew 1: 18-25**

Living God,
you called your people
out of Egypt
and gave them the
covenant;
prepare our hearts
to hear your call,
so that we may
receive with joy
the gospel of your Son
and be your faithful
people, now and for ever.
Amen.





Christmas at St Marks 2025

- 24 December Nativity Story with Carols @ 4.30pm
- 24 December Christmas Eucharist and Carols @ 10.45pm
- 25 December Christmas Day Family Communion @ 9.30am

This year the **4.30pm service on Christmas Eve**, particularly suitable for families and children, will be built around telling the story of the journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. The narration, which involves congregational participation, will be interspersed with well-known Christmas carols.

The **'midnight' Eucharist** begins at 10.45pm with 10-15 minutes of vigorous carol singing. The liturgy for the service will be drawn from *A New Zealand Prayer Book*.

On **Christmas morning** Revd Hennie will lead a Christmas service designed for every member of your family—young and old. There will be plenty of story-telling and carols, leading to the Christmas communion. There'll be chocolate fish too!



Youth Alpha 2026 – Invite a Young Person!

Know a teenager or young adult (13-20)? Your personal invitation could make all the difference.

Youth Alpha begins Tuesday, 3 February 2026, and runs every Tuesday at 6.00pm–8:00pm through to Tuesday, 24 March 2026—with nibbles and snacks provided.

There is also a full-day Saturday session on 7 March 2026.

This is a joint venture between St Mark's Carterton, St Luke's Greytown, Crossway Masterton, and St Andrew's Union Church Greytown.

What is Youth Alpha?

A fun, engaging space where young people can explore life, faith, and their big questions in an open, welcoming environment—comprising short videos, real conversation, and plenty of encouragement.

If you know any young people aged 13–20, please encourage them to come along and be part of a community where they can connect, share, and grow.

Youth Alpha is free to join.

Register at <https://forms.office.com/r/ryca4C9H7V>

For more information email alpha.wairarapa@outlook.co.nz

Meri Kirihimete!

From the Archbishops and Primates of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia: Archbioshop Dom Tamihere; Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa; and Archbishop Justin Duckworth

Christ Turns Us from Despair to Hope

Every year we are gifted the blessing of returning to the Christmas season and to the lessons that the story of the birth of Jesus holds for us.

Every year we are reminded just how relevant the story of the Christ-child remains.

Jesus was born at a time of great despair. His people had suffered under brutal conquest and colonisation, most recently by Greek and then Roman invaders. Herodian Kings, set up as puppet masters by the Romans, ruled through corruption and violence. The High Priesthood, once the bastion of faith and hope for the people, had itself been corrupted by greed and selfishness. Very little, if anything, was being done by the ruling powers to make life better for the people. The people were suffering and needed help.

Our own present time may not look so different. Our world has lurched again towards endless wars. We've seen conflicts so rabidly politicised that even our own governments try to justify the killing of innocent women and children. We watch our global political leaders act cynically, doing very little it seems to help the poor and the marginalised. In Aotearoa New Zealand we've seen endless and absurd attacks on the Treaty, and on our sense of racial unity and social cohesion. We appear to have forgotten that climate change is real, that islands and nations in Polynesia are threatened by frequent storms and rising seas, and that we urgently need to care for our environment and each other. Add to that a persistent and growing cost-of-living crisis where so many of our neighbours are struggling, and we too might think this is a time of great and continuing despair.

When times are hard and uncertain, we can sometimes lose hope, and struggle to imagine a better future. That's why the story of the birth of Jesus is such an important and relevant sign for us.

The story of the birth of Jesus is a reminder that, even in times of great despair, hope can be made real. In the Gospel of Luke, we see a surprising and almost shocking reaction to the pending birth of this Christ-child. Despite the despair of the times, the response of Jesus' mother Mary, and his Uncle Zechariah, and the Shepherds of Bethlehem, and even, as Luke's Gospel tells us, that of the very angels of heaven, was to burst into song. That is to say, their hearts turned from songs of despair to songs of hope.

To those who believed, the birth of Jesus was a powerful sign and a reminder that hope need not be lost. With a different song, those who felt hopeless could hope again. With a new song, those who felt exhausted by life could be renewed and could imagine a new future.

The song we speak of is a song of the heart. The kind of song that hearts sing when they are cared for and loved. It takes only small acts of care and kindness to change the tune of someone's heart. Imagine then what it must have felt like for those of Jesus' time when they realised that his birth was more than a symbol. It was God's way of saying "Don't be afraid. Don't give up hope. You are deeply loved."

It is no wonder that their hearts burst into song.

We too, in our own way, can be that same symbol to the world. With a small act of kindness, of compassion, of manaakitanga and care, we can help change the tune of someone's heart. And in a world riven by conflict and war, cynicism and harm, acts of kindness and compassion are no small thing. They become radical, subversive, and powerful acts.

May you find a way this Christmas season to fill your own heart with a new song and reach out to those who need it most. May you find a way to be a little more like the Christ-child and turn despair into hope. May you become radical, subversive, powerful, and relentless in your love, kindness, and compassion for others.

May you be Christ-like in the world.

Christmas Letter from our Bishops

Earlier this week, I (Bishop Ana) saw a video of Bishop Justin busting some dance moves at a Christmas party. Though, what particularly struck me was who else was at the party.



It was a party for people who often go uncelebrated and unnoticed in society. People whose lives are incredibly vulnerable and at-risk. But at this party they were celebrated and noticed. They were guests of honour and from the short clip it was apparent how much joy and love filled that celebration.

At the ordinations of our priests this year I reflected on Jesus' invitation to party and protest in John chapter two, with the proviso that sometimes the party is the protest. In this season of Advent, with its many gatherings, functions and parties, it feels particularly apt. We open our doors and welcome the Christ child and welcome the overlooked in a quiet but powerful protest against exclusion and the individualism that so often defines our world. It is a living sign of God's kingdom breaking in.

Christmas reminds us that God's kingdom looks like this. Celebrations where joy is shared freely, where the vulnerable are honoured, and where love overcomes fear. The birth of Jesus is God's declaration that every person matters, that light shines in the darkest places (John 1:5), and that His love transforms the world.

In a year that has brought challenges for many, we stand firm in the reality of God's faithfulness and goodness. His Spirit goes before us, calling us to live and proclaim His good news (John 16:13).

Whatever your plans for the summer, may you know the peace that only comes from God (Philippians 4:7). May the joy of Christ fill your hearts and homes, and may His presence guide you into the new year with hope and courage. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2:14).

With every blessing in Christ,

Bishop Ana and Bishop Justin



Summer Sundays

After Christmas and during January we will be joining with the congregation of St Lukes Greytown for worship.

28 December — @ St Marks: Eucharist in the church at 9.30am

4 and 11 January — @ St Marks: Summertime Liturgy (outside under the trees if fine) at 9.30am

18 and 25 January — @ St Lukes: Eucharist at 10.00am

Mark the Date

21 December	Carols and Readings @ Gladstone Church, 5.00pm
21 December	Nine Lessons and Carols @ St Matthews, 7.00pm
24 December	Nativity Story with Carols @ St Marks, 4.30pm
24 December	Christmas Eucharist and Carols @ St Marks, 10.45pm
25 December	Christmas Day Family Communion @ St Marks, 9.30am
28 December	Eucharist @ St Marks, 9.30am
4 January	Eucharist @ St Marks, 9.30am (outside if weather permits)
11 January	Eucharist @ St Marks, 9.30am (outside if weather permits)
18 January	Eucharist @ St Lukes Greytown, 10.00am
25 January	Eucharist @ St Lukes Greytown, 10.00am

Bible Readings this week

Mon	Luke 1: 46-56
Tue	Luke 1: 57-66
Wed	Luke 1: 67-79
Thu	Luke 2: 1-14
Fri	Matthew 10: 17-22
Sat	John 21: 20-25

Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)
John 1: 1-14

Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus,
 Master of both the light and
 the darkness, send your
 Holy Spirit upon our
 preparations for Christmas.
 We who have so much to do
 seek quiet spaces to hear
 your voice each day.

We who are anxious over
 many things look forward to
 your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so
 many ways long for the
 complete joy of your
 kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy
 seek the joy of your
 presence.

We are your people, walking
 in darkness, yet seeking the
 light.

To you we say, "Come Lord
 Jesus!"

Amen

~ written by Fr. Henri J. M. Nouwen.



*Revd Hennie, the Churchwardens
 and the Vestry wish you all the
 Blessings of Christmas and the
 Hopes & Joys of a New Year.*

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