

WELCOME TO ST MARK'S CHURCH

Bell Street, Swanage, BH19 2SA



SUNDAY 21st December 2025 – 4th Sunday of Advent

10am Holy Communion *Rev Dave Richards*

Bible Theme: Isaiah 7:10-16 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25

Followed by ST MARK'S CHRISTMAS PARTY in the Church Rm

6:30pm Swanage Community Christmas Celebration at St Mary's

DIARY FOR THIS WEEK:

St. Mark's Church & Garden Open 10am- 4pm, Mon – Wed

Mon 22nd: **Funeral of Christine Roberts** 11am at St Mark's Church

Mon 22nd: **Choir Rehearsal** 6:15pm - 7pm Church Room

Tue 23rd: **Funeral of Peter Dykes** 11am at St Mark's Church

Tue 23rd: **St Mark's Junior Singing Club:** 2pm - 3pm Church Room

WEDNESDAY 24th December – Christmas Eve

4:30pm Carols by Candlelight

A traditional Christmas Carol Service suitable for all ages

THURSDAY 25th December – Christmas Day

10am Christmas Family Communion

Bible Theme: Hebrews 1:1-4 Luke 2:1-20 Rev Dave Richards

Followed by Celebratory Refreshments in the Church Room

Please talk to a Welcomer if you need a gluten-free Communion wafer

***Thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to make our
Christmas Services, events and activities go so well***

NEXT SUNDAY: 28th December – 1st Sunday of Christmas

10am Christmas Celebration with St Mark's Band

The Word and the World (John 1:1-14) Rev Dave Richards

Followed by Coffee and Cake in the Church Room

Sunday 4th January 2026 - Team Epiphany Service, St Mark's 6:30pm

COLLECT (SPECIAL PRAYER) FOR ADVENT 4: God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER: Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

COLLECT (SPECIAL PRAYER) FOR CHRISTMAS DAY: Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER: God our Father, whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord.

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- PLEASE let Dave (07779079844) know of anyone who is unwell, in hospital or housebound who would like a visit.



For the latest St Mark's News check out our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/StMarksHerston

St Mark's Church, Herston, is part of the Swanage & Studland Team of Churches www.swanageteam.com

Donations for the Work of St Mark's Church are always welcome

There's a plate for cash donations on top of the font, and a QR code on a poster on the wall near the door if you prefer to give online. Thank you.

TEAM NOTES

**Swanage Community Christmas Celebration Service this evening,
Sunday 21st December at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church.**

All Things Bright and Beautiful – there will **NO** All Things Bright & Beautiful service on December 23rd or 30th.

Community Coffee Studland's Community Coffee Morning has moved back to the Church Hall for the winter season. Please join us on Thursday mornings from 10am to 11am – for coffee, cake and conversation. We'd love to see you there.

Monthly Parish Magazines – you can access both the Church Alive! magazine and Studland Parish News on our new website swanageteam.com/team-magazine.

Cleaning at St Mary's - the existing volunteers are taking on more of the cleaning of the church buildings. If you can help, occasionally or regularly, join us at church on Saturday mornings at 9.30.

Swanage Depression Support facilitators - SDS is looking for more volunteers to facilitate this valuable support group. The group meets every other Wednesday evening. For more information please talk to Revd Natalie or contact Alan Dominy at swanagedepression@outlook.com.

Candle Wax for Ukraine - Ukraine still needs our support. Candle wax is being collected from local churches and communities to create cooking candles ("trench candles") and candles for villages without electricity. Please donate candles ends, candle wax, and unwanted candles in the box in St Mary's Church porch, from where it will be taken to a Ukraine support group.

*The Parish office will close on Christmas Eve and re-open on
Tuesday 6th January 2026*

Funerals in our churches:

Peter Dyke	Tues 23 Dec	11.00am	St Mark's
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Team Contact details

Team Rector	Revd Dr Ian Bird Tel: 01929 422916 (normal day off Friday)
Team Vicar	Revd Jo Levasier Tel 01929 208217 (normal day off Monday)
Parish Administrator	Karon Quirey swanage.team@btconnect.com

REFLECTION

Isaiah 7: 1-16, Romans 1: 1-7, Matthew 1: 18 to the end.

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent cycle through themes of prophecy, covenant, and the Virgin Birth, with Year A focusing on Isaiah's "Immanuel" prophecy and Matthew's birth narrative, Year B highlighting God's promise to David & the Annunciation in Luke, and Year C emphasising Micah's Bethlehem prophecy & Mary's visit to Elizabeth in Luke, all building towards Jesus' coming.

We are in year A and should rightly be holding Mary the Blessed Virgin close to our hearts. Nevertheless on reading through the passage I can't help but think "Let's hear it for Joseph!" The strength of our belief is measured by how much we are prepared to suffer for those beliefs. Joseph was a man of strong beliefs. He was prepared to do what is right despite the personal pain it might cause him.

He faced a dilemma, his betrothed declared that she was pregnant. Despite his love for Mary and the sincere way in which she had described her circumstance, "of the Holy Spirit," he could not put aside the fact that someone else was the child's father. Wishing to be gentle toward her he chose to "quietly" divorce her.

This was not to be the end, for in a dream, he was visited by an Angel of the Lord who reassured Joseph that it was an honourable decision to marry Mary and take the child as his own.

We know little of their family life, however it seems to me that Mary took charge of his spiritual development and Joseph his human life. We know little of Joseph, he is last mentioned when Jesus was 12 years old.

Joseph prepared him through childhood to adulthood. He educated him in the ways of a working life. He prepared him for life in society with all its strengths and weaknesses. Surely this would also prepare him for his mission and Messiahship?

On this 4th Sunday of Advent we give thanks for the commitment of two comparatively ordinary people of great faith. Each is anxious about what has been proposed for them, yet each acquiesces to God's wish. Each puts their trust in God, and each other.

Perhaps this Christmas we should do the same. We ordinary people, each serving Him as best we can, are we ready and worthy of his coming? Is the world ready to do the same?

With Advent blessings
Revd John Cooper.