

NEXT STEPS

2026 at St Mark's

Over the last term we have been thinking about what it means to belong to our growing fellowship at St Mark's. We exist because of God's grace to us in Jesus, and he calls us to be people who know his Son Jesus and make Him known for His glory.

We have been considering how this calling takes shape across five markers of a healthy church, being a people who love God, who are deep in his word, who join in his mission, who live in community and who serve one another.

As we look toward 2026, we invite everyone who calls St Mark's their home to consider their next steps in partnering with God's people here.

You will find two documents today. This one is for you to take home and read and consider. The other (enclosed) is for you to fill out today as far as you are able, or drop into the church office over the next week. This will help us plan for the year ahead.

We are asking everyone who plans to make St Mark's their church home in 2026 to consider what these four basic commitments might look like for you.

- Committing to a Sunday congregation
- Committing to a home group or a group to explore the Christian faith
- Serving in a ministry area, including next generation ministries
- Financial partnership

If you would like more information about any of these areas, use the enclosed form in the comments box, or contact the office at office@stmarksberowra.org.

Yet before we think about our more practical steps for next year, we want to devote ourselves to prayer, alert with thankfulness, aware that our time is short (Colossians 4:2). Our first and last response to all that God has done for us is to depend on him in prayer, thankful for his kindness and asking for his help as we take our next steps together for his Glory.

SUNDAYS TOGETHER at St Mark's 2026

***'Meeting together and encouraging one another,
more and more, as you see the Day approaching'***
Hebrews 10:25

This year I have felt the following have pulled me away from being with my regular congregation at St Mark's.

- Holidays or travel plans
- Weekend getaways
- Illness in self or household
- Work commitments
- Family or caring duties
- Visiting/hosting family/extended family
- Visiting another church or a Christian conference
- Sport commitments (children or self)
- School commitments
- Kids parties/events
- Social events or charity events
- Recreation or hobbies
- Home jobs, cleaning or renovations
- Shopping
- Weather
- Grievance with others at church
- Tiredness, feeling too busy, or not feeling the need to go
- Social anxiety/difficulty in large groups
- Too much coming up in the week.
- Transport issues
- Other _____

What might it look like for you to be at church more next year than this year? From the list above, what might you want to ask God to help you with next year, if it is pulling you away from meeting with your church family at St Mark's.

Congregation I am committing to on Sundays next year

- 8am 10am 6pm

FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP at St Mark's 2026

"Remember this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver."
(2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

We encourage everyone you to prayerfully consider your capacity to give with a heart of joyful generosity.

A practical way to do this is to prioritise giving to St Mark's at the top of your household budget, rather than from what remains after your other commitments. When it comes to where we should give, the scriptures also emphasise the importance of prioritising giving to our local church (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:11-14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

It's wonderful to hear that so many of our members generously support various causes outside St Mark's (e.g., TEARfund, World Vision). Furthermore, we actively encourage members to support our St Mark's mission partners (such as African Enterprise, Faith Baptist Church).

However, since St Mark's is where we share a unique responsibility (in the sense that, humanly speaking, no one else is responsible for the ministry in the Berowra area except us, the members) and St Mark's is primarily where we are spiritually fed, we encourage our members to first consider their capacity to generously support the Gospel ministry here at St Mark's and then consider their contributions to other ministries beyond our church.

Thanking God for 2025

This year has been marked by steady generosity and real shared commitment.

Regular giving has grown from **\$404,000 in 2024** to an expected **\$440,000 in 2025**, an increase of 9 percent.

We have also seen our number of regular financial partners grow from about 75 to 83 households or individuals.

Alongside this, our church family has given:

- \$30,000 to the air con and solar appeal
- \$15,000 to Faith Baptist Church
- \$9,000 to African Enterprise

It has been our strongest year of giving since the building project was completed in 2021. We thank God for this!

FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP at St Mark's 2026

Where the money goes

About 65 percent of giving in 2025 has gone toward ministry staff. This is normal for churches like ours and reflects our focus on people and ministry.

Why 2026 matters

For the past five years, part of our staffing has been supported by temporary or one off funds such as JobKeeper and a major donation. These arrangements finish at the end of this year.

In 2026, *for the first time in at least five years*, we will need to fund **our basic staff team** through regular giving alone.

This team includes:

- Full time Senior Minister (Luke Woodhouse)
- Full time Associate Minister (Dazz Diener)
- Part time Children's and Families Minister (Ellyce McKirdy)
- Part time Office Administrator (Nicole Illing)

To support this team across a full year, we need an increase of **16 percent, which is about \$70,000 above this year's giving**.

There are a few clear paths forward:

- 20 new partners (households or individuals) each giving \$300 per month
- Or every current partner increasing their giving by 16 percent
- Or each partner giving the equivalent of two extra months of giving across the year (compared to this year)

Most likely we will reach the goal through a mix of new partners and increased support from those already giving.

How to partner

Our preferred method is regular electronic transfer. Scheduled giving through online banking helps us plan and steward our resources well.

Our account details are:

- Acct Name: St Mark's Berowra
- Bank: Bendigo Bank
- Account Number: 1587 43880
- BSB: 633-000

Looking forward

Our hope for 2026 is to fully fund our basic staff team through the steady partnership of our church family. This will give us a strong foundation for the opportunities God has placed before us. We are already thankful for what God has provided. We invite everyone who considers St Mark's their church home to pray, reflect and consider how they might share in this next step together.