

Anglican Parish of St John

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2026

MESSAGE FROM REV'D SAM

On the final Sunday of the Church calendar we celebrated Jesus Christ the King. Not only our King but King of the entire created universe. However, Jesus as King juxtaposes our typical perspective on what a king looks like as well as what a king does. When we think about famous Kings throughout history we might think of King Xerxes of Babylon, Alexander the Great of Greece, Emperor Julius Caesar of Rome, King Richard 1 Lionheart, King Henry VIII, Genghis Khan of the Mongols, King David of Israel. These are Famous Kings because of the impact they have had both on their own Kingdoms and on the World as a whole. For many of them, the defining characteristic is War, invasion and expansion. They created Empires by invading other lands and winning militaristic campaigns. It is a little bit strange, then, that the authors of the Bible would choose to describe Jesus as a King, especially when these characteristics are not the same characteristics we see in the person of Jesus. Throughout the life of Jesus we see a person who does not seek to claim any part of earth for himself, he does not invade and oppress his adversaries, he doesn't take up any position within the Senate or the Sanhedrin and so has no political voice or power. What we see, instead, is a person born into a migrant family who became a refugee family for a while. Jesus grew up as an ordinary Jewish boy in occupied territory. Although the Gospels suggest that Mary, Jesus' mother, could see something special in Jesus, it was not until his first miracle at the Wedding of Cana that anybody took notice of him. And from there, he becomes a wandering preacher and healer throughout the Israelite countryside until his contrasting triumphal entry into Jerusalem a week before he is killed. Jesus' ministry, then, is marked by caring for those on the margins, those who have been cast out of society or struggle to operate well within the community. Finally, in a profoundly humble act, on the night before his death, Jesus washes his followers feet, instructing them to go and do likewise. To follow Jesus and become like Jesus is to become a servant of others. In fact in Chapter 20 of Matthew's Gospel Jesus said, "I came to serve not to be served." The kings and rulers we usually remember throughout world history, have had massive impacts often on the world, through power, cruelty and domination. So, we know that power can have a profound impact on the world.

With Jesus, though, his biggest impacts on the world do not happen in moments of power. He does not rise up, like the Jewish leaders expect to oppose Rome and issue in another Golden Age. Jesus does not even gain power among the Sanhedrin and cause reformation like so many did throughout the Old Testament. No, the times when Jesus had the biggest impact on the world were: His birth as the child of a poor migrant family in a stable in someone else's house. The ultimate picture of weakness or vulnerability. His death on a Roman cross, as the face of a non-existent, non-violent revolution against Rome. His resurrection in which he was first seen by those who had no voice within society, and it is not noted that he had any interaction with

anyone of political or religious power. His ascension, where he left his followers on the top of hill with extremely limited guidance, apart from to remain in Jerusalem, before sharing about him to all the world. These are not events of worldly power. In fact, two of these events were common among many who lived under Roman occupation. And yet, it was the impact of these ordinary events, these common events, that has had the most profound effect on the world of all events in history - before or after. Although we have been shown a picture of Jesus who is humble, who is serving and selfless. We are also reminded on this day, by Paul, that Jesus has been placed in a place of power over and above all others. Not just above, but "far above" *and he is the head of the Church, his body, whom he fills and fulfills. So, Jesus is the one who shows us what it looks like to live humble, selfless lives of service.* ***But*** *he is also the one who gives us the empowering of his Spirit and leads us to do so in ways that make meaningful change in our world; in ways that bring about his Kingdom here on earth. The other day I was reminded of the story of Tarore, when Silas asked me to tell him a story as we were driving in the car. I told him how a Chief with his daughter and a small group were heading back over to Tauranga, how they were attacked by a war party from Rotorua. It was Tarore's (The chief's daughter) Kete that was taken as bounty which housed the Gospel of Luke. Through the reading of this Gospel the killer of Tarore went to seek forgiveness of the Chief. And in what would usually be a moment of power, by committing Utu, the Chief forgave the raider. Although his event might not have been common in those days among Māori, it was not a powerful act in the political or military sense of the word. It was powerful because it created a new way of being able to live and respond to offences. It formed ways of making reconciliation without the continuous eye-for-an-eye that Utu allowed for. I wonder, what ordinary acts of humility and selfless service in your own life could have powerful impacts on our community?*

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER & JANUARY

DECEMBER 2026		Location	Time
6th	**Usual Services** Taizé	**OSJ, St Paul's, S.S, NSJ** OSJ	4pm
12th	Carols w/ Brass Band, Warblers, Pirongia Christian Fellowship	St Saviours or Memorial Hall (if raining)	From 5:30pm
13th	**Usual Services** Carols w/ Brass Band, Kihikihi Presbyterian Church	**OSJ, S.S, NSJ** Christ Church	From 5:30pm
17th	Blue Christmas	OSJ	7pm
20th	**Usual Services** *No St Paul's morning service* Nine Lessons and Carol's	**OSJ, NSJ** St Paul's	6pm
24th	Midnight Mass	OSJ	11:15pm
25th	Christmas Day (Eucharist)	S.S. & St John's	9:30am
27th	Sunday After Christmas - Morning Prayer - Eucharist	 - S.S. & St John's - Christ Church	Usual Times

JANUARY 2027		Location	Time
3rd	Eucharist	OSJ	9:30 am
10th	Eucharist	Christ Church	9:30 am
17th	Eucharist	St Paul's	9:30 am
24th	Eucharist	St John's	9:30 am
31st	Eucharist	St Saviours	9:30 am

