

From The Churchwardens

COVID-19 AND PARISH UPDATE

12 August 2020

As the situation deteriorates in NSW—our (the Russells) trip to southern NSW border areas has made us even more aware of the consequences of a lack of vigilance in our daily lives and community activities as has occurred in Victoria. The southern NSW towns are almost completely devoid of travellers (and their expenditure) other than the occasional “refugee” in a caravan in the middle of a paddock in isolation desperate for social contact. The actual border crossings are like something out of a John le Carré novel with masked police and army personnel searching cars for smuggled Victorians and we were the only boat on the Murray River (which is part of NSW) - great for us but devastating for the thousands employed in the tourism industry along the Murray River. This has reinforced the need, in my mind, for us to play our small part in St John’s keeping our parish community safe and trying to minimise, at a local level, the chance of such a shut down being necessary either locally or statewide in NSW.

The fine balance between impositions on our personal worship and freedoms and careful control over who attends church and how they safely participate in our in-person service was again usefully analysed and debated at the recent Parish Council meeting—as it is continuously between the Church Wardens. However, the Wardens have confirmed that the in-person service will continue for the time being, with the current requirements for pre-registration, social distancing and the use of masks from arrival to departure being maintained. We would ask you all to work with the Church Wardens and the sidespersons to uphold these standards, even if they seem unnecessarily restrictive or loathsome to you. They are noting like as loathsome as those being imposed on Victorians at the moment. The only alternative for us in the current situation is to abandon the in-person service. Indeed, if you are in a vulnerable group and want to eliminate any risk from your worship—please continue to join us at our on-line service at 9:30AM.

As previously advised—it is a condition of entry that a mask will be worn by all members of the congregation (as well as sidespersons and the sanctuary team). In this regard, if available, **please bring your own mask with you and wear it** before you enter the church. We have a limited supply if you are unable to procure one but we are trying to preserve those for the sanctuary team and sidespersons.

Please also **pre-register with the office by Wednesday each week if you would like to attend**. This allows pre-declaration as regards the NSW Public Health and our safety plan declarations and saves time for you and the other attendees in recording personal details (as we are required by law to do) on your arrival. It is not a “big ask” and can easily be done by phone or e-mail during the week.

It is also critical to avoid mingling and socialising in the narthex to minimise the risk of any contact to sidespans or each other in a confined area. Please chat in small groups outside if you wish, where the risk is reduced, but observe the distancing guidelines as indicated by the red crosses on the pavers and leave your masks on until you are in your cars.

Some more news ...

As you will have noticed—the storm damage to the church is being repaired under a contract authorised by the Diocesan Insurance Company. This work is substantial and the contract is financially independent of the church. Included in this are repairs to the roof and the cross on the spire which was damaged but is being repaired and replaced in due course. Also included in that work is the replacement of the large PVC cover over the collection area for donations to the Op Shop damaged by the wind and fallen branches. In that vein, the Wardens have decided to take the opportunity to accept an alternative cash settlement for that work from the insurance company in lieu of the cover replacement and then propose to put that money together with a contribution from the investment income from the St John’s Foundation Trust (yet to be approved by the trustees of that trust) and some church funds, to the building of a permanent roofed area between the hall and the church. The DA has been approved by the Ku-ring-gai Council and the Church Wardens expect work will commence in due course later in the year. This will provide a much needed work area out of the weather for the Op Shop volunteers and also lead to better preservation (and therefore quality and value) of goods for subsequent sale, at a minimal cost to the parish.

Finally ...

We all pray for God’s continued blessing on the parish of St John’s and give thanks that He has spared our parishioners from the scourge of COVID-19 so far. Please pray for your ministry team, leadership group, office staff and volunteers as they guide us through these times and facilitate our continued worship and growth as a community of faith in these testing times.

The Church Wardens Chris Russell AM JK Seo James Winter