

From The Churchwardens

COVID-19 UPDATE AND PARISH NEWS

1 September 2020

“Spring is sprung” and we are all looking forward to a new season of hope and fulfilment rising out of the ashes of the tragedy, disruption and uncertainty of the last six months!

Happily, in that time, much has been learned about this virus and its foray into our lives and indeed many scientists are optimistic that a vaccine is now within sight. In addition—the ability of the NSW Government to trace, accurately target and quarantine contacts and minimise the size and therefore the cost and inconvenience of the “ground zero” that must surround each infection hot spot has improved geometrically since the first clusters started to become established in February. Along with a better understanding of infection control for coronavirus, this has become a major factor in allowing churches to create viable COVID safety plans and re-institute and continue limited in-person services and activities, even during this second wave of infections that has emanated from Victoria over the last two months.

Based on NSW Health and Diocesan advice—in simple terms—our COVID safety plan at St John’s is therefore based around two key tenets:

- 1) Personal awareness and declaration of where we have been over the previous fourteen days and a personal legal declaration of that at each attendance
- 2) The maintenance of social distancing, hand sterilisation and the use of personal protective equipment after cleaning and/or a quarantine period for the church itself and any printed material before, during and after each service. Clearly, however, this will only work and avoid another total shutdown if we make sure we maintain our awareness of where we go in our day to day lives.

If an area becomes a hot spot and you were there in the crucial infectious period as advertised by NSW Health—then for your own protection and that of your fellow parishioners—please stay isolated and join us for our 9:30AM on-line service on Sunday rather than visiting the church in person.

Whilst the hot spots are being narrowed down both geographically and time-wise due to careful contact and genomic research by NSW Health—there are a number that are around us at Gordon and still appearing. You should check the NSW Health website for the latest information at:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates>

However, a few places and times where infections have been found that are close to our parish as at today (Tuesday 1 September) are:

Chatswood: “Sushi Rio” - 5:00PM to 7:30PM on Thursday 27 August

Hornsby: PRP Diagnostic Imaging—10:00AM to 11:15AM on Monday 24 August

St Ives: St Ives Village Shopping Centre—2:30PM to 3:30PM on Monday 24 August and 5:30PM to 6:00PM on Wednesday 26 August
Coles, St Ives Shopping Centre—1:00PM to 2:00PM on Friday 28 August

Turrumurra: “The Matterhorn” Swiss restaurant—6:00PM to 8:00PM on Saturday 22 August

Wahroonga: Parish of Holy Name—9:30AM to 10:15AM on Sunday 23 August

Waitara: “Magpies Waitara” - 11:30AM to 1:15PM on Monday 24 August

If you have visited any of these at the times indicated—NSW Health recommends that you watch for COVID-19 symptoms and if they occur, get tested and self-isolate. In addition, do not attend our in-person services (or the church) for fourteen days or whilst in self-isolation thereafter.

Nomination Committee News ...

The Archbishop advised the Wardens and Nominators last Friday that the suspension of the nomination process that has been in place since March due to the COVID pandemic will now end on (has ended) 31 August. At St John’s—our nominators have continued to meet (by Zoom meeting) and indeed conduct some on-line and in-person interviews during this suspension. However, assessment of the theological “fit” of nominees to our church is clearly difficult without being able to visit churches or travel interstate as may be necessary and attend normal in-person services. So discussions are currently occurring between the nominators and our Regional Bishop Chris Edwards as to effective ways to overcome this and maintain appropriate diligence and awareness in our selection and nomination process under ongoing COVID restrictions.

We would ask that you remember our nominators in our prayers and pray that, with God's guidance, they can carefully and purposefully bring our future Rector to us over the coming months according to His will.

As regards our Church Fête and Raffle ...

At the request of the Parish Council—I (Chris Russell on behalf of the Wardens) have convened a meeting of past and future Fête organisers and stakeholders over the next fortnight to discuss our fundraising strategy over the coming six months. It is clear that large scale events such as the church Fête will not be permitted, or be possible, in the medium term and so the group will consider a time in early 2021 when a Fête may be able to occur. We will keep you informed as to their conclusions in future updates. However, it is possible for us to hold a parish raffle (without shopping centre ticket sales).

In that vein—if any of you have contacts who may be able to support us with attractive prizes, as we have seen in previous years, please contact me (Chris Russell) via the office, phone or e-mail, so we can assess the resources we have available for a raffle. We have some of the minor prizes—but we need a significant first and second prize to make the raffle the success it has been in previous years. Acknowledged sponsorship may be available to sponsoring businesses looking for increased profile in the parish for products appropriate to a church-organised event. Also, if you have any other ideas for fundraising initiatives that will help us reach our fundraising target for the year—please contact the Wardens or parish office at any time.

Nurturing our spiritual growth ...

A key way in ensuring we nurture our spiritual growth and our relationship with God through Jesus is by informed, exegetical study of God's Word through the Bible. We are very blessed to have one of Australia's great scholars of Biblical writings—Bishop Michael Hough PhD—as our Missioner to guide us in that process. He does this on-line from his home in Linton, Victoria through our parish Zoom meeting facility each Thursday night at 7:30PM. Currently we are working through the imagery and messages of the Book of Revelation—and what a “revelation” that has been! I could not recommend these sessions more strongly—they are as insightful as they are interesting! If you would like to be part of this group from the

comfort of your own home (particularly if you have never been able to be part of a Bible study group before) - please let the church office know by e-mail (office@stjohnsgordon.org.au) or by phone (9498 2744) during working hours and Meg will e-mail you the notes and “one click” Zoom link so that you can join us knowing that you will be very welcome.

Finally ...

The Treasurer will be releasing a budget update incorporating the recent extension of the JobKeeper programme in the weekly update shortly. However, as you may have noticed and as previously reported in this update and taking advantage of an insurance payout for the damaged canopy—work is now underway to construct a permanent and substantial roof over the Op Shop collection and sorting area between the hall and the church buildings. In addition, repair work on the roof and fences due to the November 2019 storm has now all but been completed, as has the refurbishment of the Rectory, ready for our new Rector. The Wardens, and in particular the Treasurer, have carefully managed our funds to ensure this essential work has been done within our financial resources. However, assumptions as to ongoing offertory and donations are inherent in that planning, as shown in the financial records received at our recent AVM. Hence, there is an ongoing need for (and the Wardens would prayerfully request that) all of us review our personal position and level of support to our church and where possible, consider raising our financial commitment to keeping our parish and its operation and mission financially sound—particularly as we inevitably have to wean ourselves off government COVID supplements and support over the months ahead and prior to a COVID-safe re-opening of the Op Shop or the holding of a Fête being permitted or possible.

*“Look at the birds of the air;
they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not much more valuable than they?”*

Matthew 6:26

The Churchwardens Chris Russell AM JK Seo James Winter