

COVID-19 UPDATE AND PARISH NEWS

14 October 2020

We are delighted to report that this last week has seen a number of key decisions made as regards our church community activities. The Churchwardens are, of course, very keen to try and “make happen” as many of our activities as we can and as soon as we can, whilst ensuring we keep each other safe and compliant with the NSW Health orders. We are fortunate to have so many willing and driven parishioners who have stepped up to put these ideas together for us!

Firstly, as reported last week, the fundraising discussion group has put forward to the Wardens four initiatives for fundraising events. Following discussions this week—two of those initiatives will occur over the remainder of this year and two are proposed for early next year.

1) After considerable careful planning and brainstorming, we are delighted that the Op Shop team will be recommencing its sale days on 21 November. The format will be adapted to the requirements of our COVID plan and NSW Health regulations, but in essence, you will be welcome to come and view the many useful and interesting items that have been stored up over the last six months and make your purchases on either 21 November or 12 December this year.

To make this work, we will follow the current requirement for registration, social distancing and mask use and will need a number of additional parishioners being added to the operational team. One of the requirements of our COVID plan is to maintain the social distancing and the queueing as we filter the attendees onto the site. This will require a number of volunteer “COVID marshals” as stipulated for all venues in the health orders. It is a simple supervisory job and our volunteer marshals will be briefed at a special briefing on 4 November at 5:30PM in the church. If you are not in a vulnerable group or suffering from a chronic condition that increases the COVID-19 risk and would be able to help in this role, please let Jan McLachlan know via phone on 0408 641 037 or on her e-mail at janmclachlan@bigpond.com.

2) A new initiative from the fundraising group and the WEGS ladies is the establishment of a permanent shop in the entrance area of the church office, just above the crypt. This shop will enable parishioners to pick up their jams, cakes, greeting cards, jewellery or other craft items normally sold on the first Sunday after the service at any time that is open during the week (currently Tuesdays and Thursdays). If you would like to join WEGS and/or help these hard-working ladies either in baking, jam-making, homemade crafts or in manning the shop—please contact Rhonda Cramer or Robyn Kerr via the church office. We anticipate the shop will be open by the end of October at the latest.

We are also anticipating a further two initiatives early in 2021.

3) Firstly, while the concept is still being developed by Cynthia Keithly and her small sub-committee, we are proposing a “drive-thru Fête” over a series of days in one week that will allow parishioners and the community to pre-order Fête stall items including books, plants, fruit and vegetables and even have some novelty items and then “drive-thru” to pick them up or participate at set times on a particular day. More news on this next year!

4) In addition—the Churchwardens realise that this has been a tough year financially for so many, so we have delayed until 2021 a focussed fundraising appeal to reimburse the monies for key projects that have been undertaken by the parish in 2020. These include the Rectory refurbishment, Op Shop storage area roof and storm damage clearance from 2019. The format and timing of those appeals is yet to be finalised—but we hope that parishioners who are able to assist monetarily can keep these in their budgets and support those appeals when they are launched in early 2021.

The Nomination Process

The nominators (Elizabeth George, Belinda Howell, Nigel Hubbard, James Winter and Chris Russell) are continuing to work hard and indeed, “shake the bushes” to find our next Rector at St John’s. If you have any suggestions or know anyone who may have suggestions, please contact any of the above in confidence so that we may ensure we find the best candidate for the job. Please pray for the nominators and their work and that God will bring us His chosen priest at the time of His choosing.

And so ...

We are all excited at the prospect of the first signs of a return to the community activity we have so missed over the last nine months. The Churchwardens are, of course, remaining cautious and conservative in the interests of COVID safety in their planning—but at the same time, they are determined to facilitate “making things happen” wherever possible. Of course, this all depends on a responsible community attitude to COVID restrictions and a consequent continued easing of government and diocesan orders and hopefully a progression towards a vaccine being available in 2021.

In another sign of progress—The Cathedral Singers will be returning to practice at St John’s next week for the first time since March. This will be in groups of five singing at a time only and strictly following the registration and other 4 metre distancing and church cleaning rules for singers in a church and not sharing hard copies of music, but at least it’s a start and allows for the effective reconvening of the ensemble.

We will keep you informed as we keep developing our plans and ask for your prayers and assistance in any way you can as we bring these plans to fruition. Please feel free to contact Father Ernest, the Wardens or the church office at any time if you have any ideas or offers of help—they will be warmly received.

The Churchwardens Chris Russell AM JK Seo James Winter