

From The Churchwardens

COVID 19 UPDATE & PARISH NEWS

25th November 2020

Christmas 2020...

The Churchwardens received a further positive update from the Archbishop and NSW health this week. Some restrictions have now been eased before Christmas. As of next Monday (30th Nov), up to 500 people will be able to gather at **outdoor** carol services, as long as they meet specific COVID-19 safety guidelines including electronic QR code reader based registration on the Service NSW website. Where allocated seating is provided, then the number of people will be governed by a 2 square metre rule. (However If seats are not provided, where people are seated on the ground or picnic rugs, then the 4m2 will still be in place). **For these outside events only**, up to 30 singers are able to lead the gathered throng from 5 metres away, and everyone can sing along, provided those over twelve years of age wear a mask. From 1 December, numbers at funerals have also been lifted to 300.

However the Archbishop also advised he has raised with the Minister for Health the incongruence of preventing congregations from singing with masks when they meet **inside a church** building. We were expecting some further news on this last Monday – but none was forthcoming up to today. We are on standby to instigate arrangements for sung Christmas services with our new organ and choirs if and when NSW Health Orders are changed.

Meg Mc Donald and her team have installed an electronic QR code readers system as now legally required for funerals, weddings and community events but the arrangements for the Sunday in-person service with pre-registrations, at this stage, remains the same.

The Op-Shop ...

What a fantastic community operation swung into action last Saturday. Under the careful management of June Miller, Jan McLachlan and their teams the Op Shop was re-opened (see pictures in this update).



The opening at 9.00am was greeted with spontaneous applause from the fifty plus customers who were in the queues by that time – some for over an hour. It was great to see many regulars back, as well as a great many new customers. The tables both inside and out, saw a constant stream of buyers carefully metered by the Marshalls, to maintain social distancing and space limitations.

Over 40 volunteers from amongst St John's Parishioners, most of whom were not in vulnerable age groups or health categories, turned up to assist in setting up or pull down, selling on the tables or to act as COVID Marshalls at various times. Our older and ever-willing Op Shop Team members were also able to manage the operations and operate from behind specially built plastic shielding. A two-way radio system ensured that the maximum number of 28 customers could be maintained within the Op Shop building by counting clients in and out of a one-way system.



Whilst some fine tuning will be instituted before our next Op-Shop on 12 December – as a St Johns community event it was certainly successful in its ministry and mission of re-engaging with the with the outside local (and not so local) community. For many of our visitors and customers – this is the only contact we, or indeed the Church in general, has with them and it is the Warden's prayerful hope that the Faith which drives us all is apparent and inspirational for them also. I like to call it "Osmotic Faith" and it can be a powerful witness!

Financially the day was also successful with over \$5,000 being taken in the three hours and that will certainly help towards the number of extra-ordinary expenses we have had this year in rectory refurbishment, storm damage and indeed upgrading the op-shop area itself.

Finally... a vaccine??

From the encouraging news this week on a vaccine - It would seem that we may now be closer to the end than the beginning, of this COVID 19 Challenge (and we can finally remove the need for this weekly "COVID Update" from the Churchwardens!).

In his bi-weekly letter, the Archbishop expressed his appreciation for the prayers throughout the Diocese for a successful COVID-19 Vaccine free of any ethical compromise in its manufacture. Many parishioners in many Anglican Churches throughout the Diocese pray "together" at 7.00pm each day from wherever they are at that time for the speedy completion of final trials of these vaccines so that the Government's expectation of a release for public vaccinations can occur in early 2021. This would be a truly remarkable achievement when you consider the decades of work by the finest medical minds that has previously occurred in a fruitless search for a vaccine against another well-known Coronavirus – the "Common Cold". As the 18th Century Anglican Essayist Dr Samuel Johnson said "*Nothing so focuses the mind as the sight of the Guillotine!*" and as the Gospel teaches us:

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. [Matthew 18:19-20]

The Church Wardens

Chris Russell AM

JK Seo

James Winter