

From The Churchwardens

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENT & UPDATE

27 December 2020

Without doubt the most critical choice made by the Parish is the recommendation to the Archbishop for a new Rector and that task is entrusted by the Parish to the Parish Nominators who form the majority of a diocesan “Presentation Board” established for that purpose.

Therefore, as announced at the services today at both St. John’s and St. Paul’s – the Churchwardens are delighted to be able to advise you that following an exhaustive (if interrupted) global search and the unanimous recommendation of the St. John’s Parish Nominators – the Archbishop has offered the position of Rector of St. John’s, Gordon to **Fr. Robert Happer B.Th., GradDip., DipMin.**, and he has accepted.

Despite the travel and worship restrictions from the pandemic, the Nominators carefully considered over 25 candidates, including from four states of Australia and from overseas – however, our future new Rector was in fact right under our noses at St. Paul’s, Wahroonga. God, indeed, moves in mysterious ways!

After leaving the Royal Australian Air Force to take up ministry, Fr. Robert was ordained in the Diocese of Gippsland in 1993, having graduated from Ridley College in Melbourne the year before. He has served as an Assistant in the parishes of Warragul, Bairnsdale, Sale (Cathedral) and has been the Rector of the parishes of Westernport (Gippsland Diocese), Minto (Sydney Diocese) and Traralgon (Gippsland Diocese). He has most recently been Rector of St. Paul’s, Wahroonga since 2009. He is married to Melinda and they have three adult sons.

The Churchwardens would, on behalf of the Parish, like to record their thanks to the Parish Nominators who have been working in the most difficult of circumstances over the last 14 months – including five months of COVID-19 suspension by the Archbishop. We greatly appreciate their careful assessment of the theology and “fit” of candidates with the specific needs and Anglo-Catholic traditions of St. John’s, Gordon as a church within the Diocese of Sydney. They have undertaken their responsibilities, as a team, with sensitivity, diligence, enthusiasm and focus and we do not take that for granted.

Although an exact date for the Commencement Service has yet to be announced by Bishop Chris Edwards – the Wardens anticipate Fr. Robert and his wife Melinda will move into the Rectory in February and take up their position in time for Lent 2021.

The work on the Rectory has been all but completed and we are endeavouring to find a date when restrictions will allow COVID-safe viewing by parishioners after a Sunday “in-person” service during January. Our grateful thanks go to Bill Killinger and his team of willing workers in this work.

We warmly welcome Fr. Robert to our Parish and we ask you to remember him in your prayers and offer him all the support you are able as he takes up the reins of the Parish and steers us back to normality after the challenging events of 2020.

In those prayers, we could be well guided by Fr. Robert’s favourite biblical passage from Thessalonians (Chapter 5, verses 16-18):

*“Rejoice always, pray continually,
give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

As regards our post-Christmas worship ...

Like the rest of Sydney – we are watching developments in the latest Northern Beaches outbreak and awaiting the day-to-day announcements of the Premier and the subsequent instructions and/or advice from the Archbishop. In the meantime, we will continue with one “in-person” service at 8:00AM and a further “on-line” service at 9:30AM. However, we will resume our “in-person” 9:30AM service with singing (using masks) as soon as NSW Health advice and the Archbishop indicates it is safe to do so.

Please pray for our leaders at all levels, that their wise governance will continue to see us avoid the health catastrophe that has beset much of the rest of the globe.

The Churchwardens Chris Russell AM JK Seo James Winter