

# The Rector's Weekly Message

Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2021

## Encouragement from the Word of God:

**“rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”**

Luke 10:20b (NRSV)

In Chapter ten, Luke records how Jesus had sent out seventy of his followers. They were all sent out in pairs. They were to be mindful, “the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few,” and they were to pray to the LORD as they carried out this missionary endeavour. I send you out like lambs, in the midst of wolves – that would have been daunting. Yet when they returned, and no time frame is given to how long their missionary endeavour lasted, they were filled with joy. Part of their excitement was the experience:

***Lord, in your name, even the demons submit to us!” (10:17)***

It must have been an exciting time for them. Yet, their task was the proclamation of who Jesus was. God blessed their respective proclamation, and they witnessed signs and wonders. When they returned and were excited about the signs and wonders, Jesus reminded them of the very sobering reality: As good as it was to experience those signs and wonders, their rejoicing should be focused on something far more significant:

**“rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”**

As Christians, both you and I have our names is written in heaven. We belong to God. We are secure in that relationship with him. How did our name get written in His book of life? Because of God's grace. That faithful love as displayed in the passion of Jesus. Him being betrayed, mocked, crucified, rising on the third day, and then glorified in heaven. Those who call upon the name of the LORD do have their names written in the book of life. No wonder Jesus instructs the Seventy to rejoice in knowing that their names are written in the book of life.

## From Dr Brett McKern:

*I'd like to thank the singers, parishioners and all at St John's who have expressed kind words, thoughts, and offered prayers for me on the conclusion of ministry as Organist & Director of Music at St John's this week. It is very much appreciated, and I have been touched by these heart-felt messages. I am going to miss the wonderful people of St John's, and I pray God's blessings will be richly upon you.*

## Surprising Announcement:

Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced her resignation on Friday. Regardless of your political persuasion, there is no doubt that Premier Gladys Berejiklian has given solid leadership in one of the most challenging times in the history of the State. I would have liked to have seen the Premier finish the work and experience the fruit of her leadership. It is what it is, and now we wait to see who will be elected as the new Premier on Tuesday.

## Light at the end of the tunnel:

This week the Warden's and I have had another zoom meeting in which we discussed the reopening of St Johns when the Public Orders are modified. As stated in a previous weekly message, we all attended a Regional/Diocesan meeting chaired by Bishop Chris Edwards. To ensure a smooth transition to the reopening of Church Services, we will restart when the fully vaccinated status has reached Eighty percent.

Once we open, **possibly** Sunday the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, there will be robust Public Health Orders to which all Churches must adhere. These Public Health Orders include the following:

- ✓ All staff and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated.
- ✓ Everyone is required to sign in.
- ✓ The wearing of a mask is expected.
- ✓ The 4m<sup>2</sup> rule will be in place.
- ✓ No singing – including no singing of the liturgies.
- ✓ Clear ventilation in the Church – windows and doors open and the various fans being utilised.
- ✓ The Church sanitised between services.
- ✓ No morning teas.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Yet, we can rejoice as we can come and be enriched by the corporate worship of God and the fellowship with one another. Please note carefully that the Warden's & I are keen that the Live Streaming of the Services will continue – and become a regular aspect of the life of St. Johns.

Under the current road map, stage one of the reopening, St Johns, will last for all of November. In December, it has been flagged that the Public Health Orders will allow for:

- ✓ Singing – congregational, choirs, and liturgical.
- ✓ 2m<sup>2</sup> rule will be reintroduced.
- ✓ Morning teas will be an option.
- ✓ Clear ventilation in the Church – windows and doors open and the various fans being utilised.

You can understand we are working towards the above mentioned Public Health Orders. Yet this *road map* is not set in concrete. The Covid-19 Delta variant is more insidious than the first strain. We are rightly planning and praying that our plans may come to fruition. The change of Premier and the 'new' team that she or he will introduce will also be an unknown influence on our planning.

If all goes to plan, the 10am Thursday Communion Service will also recommence. I am tentatively planning this opening will be Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November. Hopefully, this Service will accommodate those who would find attending the numerically larger Sunday Services a little daunting at this time.

I am also continuing to plan how do St Johns continue to offer care for the vulnerable. There will be those who cannot be vaccinated for ongoing health reasons. I am looking at the

options. One option is the establishment of a team who can take Holy Communion to people who are unable to attend Church. This ministry would not commence until St John's is reopen.

Thank you to all who are now fully vaccinated. Your decision to be vaccinated will assist those of our members who cannot be vaccinated for health reasons. The dates I have mentioned are all tentative and will need confirmation. I share the above basic plan with the intention of transparency and inclusiveness. I expect that this information will also shape your prayers. I also share the above to fan into flame the hope you have of returning to Church.

### **Op-Shop:**

The enthusiasm of the volunteers to return is a credit to the fellowship and commitment experienced through working together. At this time, it is too early to give a commencement date. Experience from the last reopening from the previous lockdown suggests it would be more workable once the 2m<sup>2</sup> rule has been reintroduced. What is greatly encouraging is that everyone involved with this ministry does work towards being fully vaccinated. This action will further mitigate the spread of COVID with a large number of people attending the sales.

### **Sermon Series:**

Starting this week, we will be focusing on the Epistle to the Hebrews. You may wish to read through the letter to help in your preparation for Sunday Services. As I preach through this letter, I pray that we all will be edified in holding to an excellent description of what we have essential at St John's – Word and Sacrament.

### **Pastoral Services:**

This week I have prepared two families for funerals. They can only have ten people attend their respective services. Would you mind praying for the families as sitting in the Crematorium Chapel is visually hard with only ten well-spaced chairs? The difficulty of not being able to have a wake also adds to their frustration. Both these families sought an Anglican Priest to organise their Services, albeit they have loose connections with St Johns. For most of the funerals I have taken since being the Rector, I have not known the family before the death of their loved one.

I have already spoken of the two couples who will be married this month. It has been a joy to work through the Services with them. Their respective eagerness just to get married is pleasing to see. Like all of us, they are over this lockdown.

May the Peace of the LORD be with you.

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