

From the Rector

24 March 2021

Thank you to all who were involved with cleaning the sanctuary and chapel on Saturday. It was a pleasure to work with such keen workers. St. John's is a beautiful church. Many of the various items aid the people of God in the worship of the LORD. You and I are custodians of these items. "To the glory of God" is the inscription on many of these items. I thank all who were able to assist in honouring the reason behind these gifts by giving them some tender loving care.

There are termites within the church, church hall and the rectory. The damage by the termites is evident. The Parish Council have authorised Rentokil to eliminate or exterminate the termites. Gordon and whole Upper North Shore will continually be required to deal with termite issues due to the bushland we all enjoy. There are "bait boxes" installed throughout the church complex; this includes the Rectory. Fortnightly monitoring and refreshing of these bait boxes will be a reality for St. John's for the immediate future. Practically, all of us are required not to disturb the termites. Disturbance can take the form of moving anything from the affected areas and/or touching the bait boxes. Once the professional exterminator gives the all-clear, then various repairs can be authorised. Disturbance of the termites may result in them moving to another area of the church complex. I have added to my prayer time the successful treatment of this infestation.

The reinstating of morning tea after the 9:30AM service is an excellent step in the right direction. COVID-safe principles are prominent during morning tea. The ministry of serving others is great to witness. This time of fellowship is an essential step for the health of us all. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help in this ministry. It is another positive sign that normality is slowly returning.

Palm Sunday is a glorious day in the life of the church calendar. Some see this day as a time to focus on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Some also celebrate this day as Passion Sunday, thus focusing on the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. Both approaches go hand in hand and complement each other.

I am looking forward to experiencing Palm Sunday at St. John's. The palm crosses have arrived and I believe a team will decorate the church with palm branches. Do you have good memories of previous Palm Sunday services? Do you think it is the correct time for you to start to recommence worshipping in person at St. John's? I know the rain is bucketing down. I am praying that there will be a reprieve in the weather by Sunday to allow everyone to prayerfully consider attending church this Sunday.

Services for Holy Week, including Easter -

During Holy Week, the chapel will be open for Daily Office **Monday to Thursday at 8:00AM.**

Maundy Thursday will have the **10:00AM** service of Holy Communion. The evening service of Sung Communion will commence at **7:00PM**. As per the custom of St. John's, the service will also include both foot washing and the stripping of the sanctuary. You are invited and welcome to attend this service or any of the others.

Good Friday I am introducing an **8:00AM penitential service**. This service is designed for the participants to focus on the cost of our salvation—the Cross of Christ. My prayer is that it will enhance our understanding of the forgiveness freely given by God.

9:00AM Stations of the Cross and Ante-Communion This service is one of the great traditions of St. John's. This service encourages the participants to reflect on the various aspects of the crucifixion. Participants may be encouraged by attending this 8:00AM service then to move into the great drama of this service.

2:30PM Devotional service Stainer's *Crucifixion* is another example of the strength of St. John's. An opportunity to enter into music. Stainer's *Crucifixion* can be seen as a good time to reflect by listening to music.

Easter Day

6:00AM The Easter Vigil This is the Service of the New Fire. It captures the dawn of Resurrection Sunday. Both the symbolism and the liturgy will focus on the celebration of the resurrected Jesus. Communion is part of this service.

8:00AM Choral Communion This celebration of the Resurrection also includes the reaffirmation of our baptismal vows. This Communion service is BCP.

10:00AM Festal Sung Eucharist This Communion service will include Easter anthems, the renewal of baptismal vows and a modern rite.

You are welcome at any or all of the worship services. Feel free to invite friends and family to join you during Holy Week and Easter celebrations.

Biblical reflection

Isaiah 7:14

*The Lord himself will give you a sign.
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.* (ESV)

Last Thursday was the day set aside to remember the LORD's promise revealed by the prophet Isaiah. It was the feast of the **Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, who is called Blessed**. Centuries before Mary encountered the Angel of the LORD, the LORD spoke through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah proclaimed the Word of the LORD, claiming a **virgin shall conceive**. I wonder what the people would have thought when they first heard of this prophecy? Isaiah's faithfulness is evident as he proclaims the virgin shall conceive, knowing that it goes against the natural order. I wonder, did they ridicule Isaiah for making the prophecy known? Or did his proclamation create a sense of awe? There was more to the prophecy. He shall be a son and shall be called Immanuel. I do not doubt that human nature being what it is, there would have been those who scoffed at this proclamation. I also have no doubts that there would have been an air of intrigue; God is with us? A virgin shall conceive? A son shall be born? Would this son be God's son? We can only ponder what Isaiah experienced. One fact that we should not lose—it was an initiative of God.

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and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Father Robert H.