

A Note from the Rector

14th of July 2021

Life in Lockdown:

When you look back over a few months, there was a cautious note as we entered into the season of Winter. Sadly the pandemic has taken at least two more lives. The current Delta variant is far more contagious – again reminding us all of the insidious nature of COVID-19. I was shocked to hear that some of those hospitalised through this latest outbreak have been in their twenties, reportedly with no major underlying health issues. COVID-19 is far more than an inconvenience. It is a deadly pandemic. I thank God that we have not experienced the great numbers of deaths as in many other countries.

I hope you are obeying the Public Health Orders and are abiding by the lockdown rules. When the current Lockdown commenced, I wondered if the duration of the Lockdown would be only a fortnight; speculation is that we all could be Lockdown for a far more extended period.

How are you coping with life in Lockdown? One routine that a few members of the Church had before the Lockdown was to enjoy either morning or afternoon tea in one of the many good Cafes in our area. Another good routine was to host a morning or afternoon tea at their home. All these enjoyable activities are on hold. Yes, we will get to enjoy them again, but they are now part of the sacrifice we make for society's well-being and that of others and ourselves.

Essential workers are those whose employment requires them to continue to work. Melinda and a few others who work in hospitals are obviously in this category. Many of these essential workers are very mindful to keep in place procedures to protect themselves and further mitigate any spread of COVID-19. Would you please continue to pray for them?

As the Rector, I am also an essential worker. I conducted the funeral for Dr Alan McEwan on the 8th. I will be conducting a funeral Service for Mrs Helen Doyle on the 19th. I am only permitted to do pastoral visits at the various hospitals if the patient asks the staff to contact myself.

Melinda and I have both had our second vaccination, and I am pleased to say with no side effects. By the average age of the members of St. John's and those who are essential workers, there should be a good growing number of people who have received their second vaccination.

The Lockdown is extended for another two weeks. Today, Wednesday the 14th, the news has confirmed that the Premier has announced the extension of Lockdown orders. This news is disappointing but understandable. I know we have all missed attending Sunday Services. We are all required to continue to exercise patience. The Church doors will be closed for all of July.

Another essential prayer point is for all the Australians who are trying to return home. There are members of the Parish whose family members have been trying to come home for a very long time. Please pray that our Government Officials make their decisions with compassion and that we will see those longing to come back to Australia able to do so.

Fellowship is part of the vitality of every Church. We have fellowship with the LORD and with one another. I have prepared a prayer diary which will be available the very first Sunday after Lockdown. I know we can all further strengthen our dependence through our daily quiet times. A verse worth pondering as we enter into extended Lockdown is from Jeremiah the Prophet,

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (29:11 NRSV)

As you ponder the verse in which the Prophet Jeremiah testifies to be the Word of God, ask the LORD to continue to show you his plans for your welfare. Plans to give you a future with hope.

Tuesday the 20th, I am planning to host a zoom chat. This chat will be an opportunity to join the group for about an hour. This chat may facilitate people to share their joys and/or frustrations regarding the stay at home orders. The possibility of this style of conversation was a helpful suggestion forwarded to me.

Fr Robert Happer is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Fr Robert All Parish Meeting

Time: Jul 20, 2021 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87951507869>

Meeting ID: 879 5150 7869

Sunday Services:

My thanks to JK, who has successfully managed to coordinate the technical upgrades for the Parish. The enhancements include a camera system to enhance the live streaming of the Sunday services. There will be training on operating the new systems. Due to the Lockdown, there is a delay in this training.

The Sunday 9:30 Service will be live-streamed. Only the people involved in the production of this Service can attend the Church. I have asked Brett to consider staying home, as he lives outside the lockdown area. Of course, he would love to serve the Church by playing the Organ. As Nicola lives within the lockdown region, it is more practical for her to serve as Organist at this time, albeit with Brett's encouragement.

Would you consider joining me in praying that Public Health Orders regarding lockdowns will be rescinded soon? I have organised a guest preacher at St John's on the 1st of August. I

envisage that he will preach at both Services. Would you please pray that we will all be able to come to St. John's on the 1st of August?

What is happening?

During this time, Meg has been at work from home and at times in the Parish Office. The Lockdown has given Meg uninterrupted time to work on the records of the cemetery and upgrading various Church records. Meg has also been assisting me in various aspects of Church Services, getting ready for Sunday Worship, albeit the Services are online.

I have asked Cynthia to focus on pastoral care, especially to members of the Church who are not receiving emails. Jen continues to phone and encourage those to whom she has been ministering. Fr Ernest is likewise exercising a pastoral ministry. Last week I had asked Ernest to preach, which, as you can appreciate, a sermon takes time to prepare.

I have been visiting, albeit within the COVID-safe protocols. I have also taken the opportunity for further planning to make life easier when we all return to Church. The Parish Council continues to meet via zoom. Likewise, the evening bible Study is also meeting through electronic media.

Each day I have continued to commence the day with daily prayers. I have moved from the Chapel to the Rector's Office – from the practical reason the Office is a more comfortable place to pray. I continue to make various phone calls to those I know the pastoral team members are not able to reach. I have spent time planning the sermon series until the end of the year.

Biblical reflection:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV)

As Anglicans, we know the great invitation of Jesus as recorded by Matthew. Thomas Cranmer placed them strategically in the Book of Common Prayer (1662) Communion Service: Jesus statement addresses how people can approach God.

We can all be refreshed during the extended Lockdown knowing that we have the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus. No wonder these words of Jesus are sometimes referred to as comfortable words. Jesus' ever-present invitation to '**come to me.**' Even in these uncertain days, we can bring before the LORD all that is on our hearts, knowing we can come to him freely through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I know what I have written is not new nor profound. What the Biblical reflection is intended to do, is remind us of the great and faithful love of God and his ever-open invitation to come to Him in prayer

May the Peace of God be with you all.

Fr Robert H