

The Rector's Weekly Message:

Sunday the 17th of October 2021

I have endeavoured to keep everyone connected by producing a weekly message which covers many areas of the life of St John's. This current lockdown has been more than a hundred days. On Monday, the 11th, we experienced various aspects of freedom through the changes to Public Health Orders.

One of our men waited in line for a haircut, and by the time he left the barbers, he had experienced a two-hour wait. He said it was worth it. I was more fortunate and only had to wait twenty minutes. For many, this time of lockdown has been the longest since we have visited the Barber. It may sound like vanity, but it was good to sit in the Barber's chair. The Barber jokingly suggested he should charge per kilogram.

Whilst having a health check-up with my General Practitioner, he asked me to keep spreading the word that it is not too late to be vaccinated. He also suggested it would be good to encourage everyone to start the conversation with their GP and ask whether and when they should get a vaccination booster. I must admit that the concept of a vaccination booster was not even on my radar.

Different groups are tentatively resuming this week. The Op-Shop team has had a few helpers start to sort all the material that has arrived during the lockdown. Donated items were placed into the Op-shop and storage area during this time. Even though we were *not accepting* goods, items were still being deposited during the last few months. There are no planned sales until the third level of the Government's roadmap to opening has been achieved. Dates will be published once we are confident that the third level has been reached.

The Cathedral Singers have commenced rehearsals during the week. They are appropriately spaced and are observing the current Public Health Orders. I did have a meeting with a few members of the Cathedral Singers to discuss 2022, which looks very exciting. The diary has the Cathedral Singers down for the Carols & Lessons on the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Returning to in-person Worship will commence on Sunday the 31st of October. There will be both 8am and 9:30am Eucharistic Services. Once the Church is reopened, I must stress that we cannot guarantee that all who attend are double vaccinated. The advice is that those who attend who are *not* fully vaccinated are opening themselves to the Coronavirus. The reality is that we will not know who may be carrying this virus; Hence the importance of being fully vaccinated. Please note, those whose immune system is down, even if they are fully vaccinated, should possibly watch the Service online. The ministry team will be endeavouring to provide sacramental ministry to those who cannot return to Church.

Thank you for your prayers. Fr Ernest is recuperating at home under the care of May. Would you continue to pray for Ernest that he will recover well and be strengthened daily? Please give thanks for Fr Ernest's ministry, especially to the Cantonese speaking members of the Church. Also, please give thanks for Bowen as he leads the ESL ministry.

Not everything goes to *our* plans!

When I arrived at St John's, I honestly thought I would have been able to get to know many parishioners by this time. Getting to know everyone would have been extremely helpful as I

seek to lead the parish. Then came the shutdown, which derailed my intentions and planning. I have been able to use this time well, but not as I would have desired. Nevertheless, God knows best, and He does have plans for us all, as He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah:

*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)*

During this last lockdown, God's goodness continues to be revealed to His people. It has been an opportunity to draw closer to the LORD and set our priorities. As we begin to meet again on the 31st of October, I pray that you and I will have a sense of gratitude that we can come together in fellowship to worship the LORD. Coming together to worship Him is obviously His plan for us as His community at St. John's the Evangelist Gordon. Now there will be those who may rightly be hesitant after a long time of isolation to gather as the Body of Christ. Each of us must make this step when we are comfortable and encouraging doing so.

Each one of us also will be required to earnestly seek the LORD's guidance in the matter of returning together as the Body of Christ. It may require a step of faith. If you have no prevailing health reasons to prevent you from attending Worship on the 31st of October, I urge you most strongly to make attendance at one of the Services at St John's a priority.

I was asked a question regarding the live-streaming of the Sunday Services. Would this option cause people to stay at home? The live-streaming is to ensure fellowship to our brothers and sisters who are **unable** to attend in person.

On the 31st, at this stage, the Public Health Orders do not permit congregational singing. Although no congregational singing we can all still enter into Worship of the living LORD, through the rich liturgies, the Word of God and the Sacrament of Communion. The people of God, worshipping God as the Body of Christ. I will conclude with the words from the well-known and encouraging hymn;

The Church's One Foundation: (Samuel Stone)

The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is His new creation
by water and the Word:
from heav'n He came and sought her
to be His holy Bride;
with His own blood He bought her,
and for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great Church victorious
shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly,
in love may dwell with Thee.

*May the peace of the LORD be with you
Fr Robert H.*