

21 May 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Susanna, Marea & Tracie for the music, flowers, and prayers respectively for Mass on Sunday. It is good to be able to sing praises to GOD when we can. We will not be able to sing hymns for some time because of possible health regulations when we return to St John's.

We had a Zoom Parish Council meeting on Tuesday. As we have mentioned before, there is much to learn and to consider before we can return to having services together at St John's. As I mentioned last week, apart from the regular cleaning which must occur before and after every meeting, we need to keep records for every group entering our building – name, address, telephone number and email address if applicable so that if anyone tests positive to the COVID-19 virus we can communicate with all who may have had contact with them. There will be alcohol-based hand sanitiser at every entrance to our building and people will be encouraged to regularly wash their hands with soap and water. Holy Communion will still be in one kind – bread – only until further notice. Parish Council has decided that for the moment – and we remain flexible in this attitude – that we will not return to worship at St John's until Stage 3 – which allows 100 people rather than 20 to be present. At each stage, there has to be some sort of registration system – basically saying that people need to book in to go to church which will result in a list to be checked off so we know who has been in the building for worship or whatever other reason so that in the event of someone contacting the COVID-19 virus, we can take the necessary steps to communicate with all who were there at the same time. If we applied to re-open with a maximum of 10 people, what about someone who turns up out of the blue and needs to be in church? I have had personal experience in knowing what it feels like to be number 11 – and it's not nice. I am intending to make application to the Bishop so that live-streaming of services – currently from my office at the Rectory – can take place from the Church. The Diocese must follow the health regulations issued by the State Government so in order to return to worship at St John's, we will have to make application to Bishop Peter in each of stages 1,2 and 3 – coinciding with stages 1,2 and 3 of the NSW Government's regulations.

Thank you to Susanna, Don, Joanna, and Keren who met earlier in the week to record the music for Evensong last Sunday evening. It was a wonderful service

As you probably all know, visiting restrictions have been eased – where Home Communion with the bread only is now possible – but care must still be taken with physical distancing rules still in place. We are also required to keep extensive records concerning each visit

For those who may be interested, I would like to investigate the possibility of starting up some Zoom Bible Study Groups. I have interest shown by a small group of people and we should be able to get at least one started by the first week of June. Zoom is becoming more widely used, Zoom Bible Study groups have been trialled in other parishes and seems to be working well. A connection to the NBN is important and I can see that the use of such technology as part of the ministries we offer going forward will become necessary. When current restrictions are either eased or removed, I can see daily live-streaming of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer and at least 1 Holy Communion Service through the week still making up our "suite" of services being offered.

Under the heading "The Voice of the LORD" in Song of Songs 3:6a it says:

Who is this one ascending from the wilderness in the pillar of the glory cloud?

JESUS is not only our intimate friend; but the Almighty King arrayed in splendour. He's the victorious LORD who overcame every form of evil and has called us to share in His conquest. He rose in glory and brought us with Him. His triumph echoes through the ages with lessons of GOD's magnificent power, love, and faithfulness. Look to Him. Look to this One who could not be defeated – even by the clutches of death.

We are called *believers*, not doubters, for a reason – we believe! Disappointments happen. It's part of life. But how we respond to our trials is what sets us apart from those who live in defeat. We've been called to a glorious life! We can have an amazing future, regardless of how life has been. (We must) never fear the past or (even) current hardships. Happiness starts with choosing to agree with faith and letting go of the past. (We need) to change our perspective and believe again!

Jesus, I choose to believe. I lay aside every mind-set that doesn't agree with your goodness. Ignite me with hope and faith. Strengthen me by Your Spirit and refresh me. Nothing is too hard for you! Absolutely nothing. I trust you. I believe. Amen.

If you would like to explore what's available in studying the bible more or praying more, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or by text message – 0401 061 789, Facebook Messenger, or email – frsteve@bigpond.com

If you are connected to the internet, I encourage you to visit our parish website and have a look around. The internet address is:

<http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org>

Prayer points for this week:

- Our Bishops and Diocesan staff who are working to get information to parishes on how we should structure ourselves as we gradually come out of lockdown
- People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- Families physically separated internationally due to this pandemic
- People who are working on the front-line such as doctors, hospital and aged-care staff, nurses, pharmacists, police, fire fighters, emergency service personnel, grocery store employees, retail workers and truck drivers
- People who have become unemployed because of COVID-19
- People who are struggling because of the isolation of having to live in lockdown
- People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn
- Children and Teachers as they prepare to return to school full-time

Thank you for continuing to support our parish financially. It is important that we all continue to support the Church through our giving. If you have internet access, you might like to consider making a direct deposit into our parish account. Thank you to those who already use this method. The parish account details are as follows:

BSB 705-077 and the Account Number is 00041040 – and our account is with the Anglican Savings and Development Fund. If you don't have internet access or prefer not to give electronically, give our Treasurer Edith a call and she can work with you on the best way to do this.

If you would prefer to make a **DONATION**, it may be done as follows:

At the top of the webpage there are 7 headings – the first of which is Church. If you click on Church, another menu appears. The 7th topic on this menu is DONATE. If you click on that, there are some steps to follow on that page in order to donate.

May GOD richly bless you as you journey with Him this week.

Fr Steve