

20 August 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Susanna Denham for the music, Heather Buckingham for the flowers, and Elizabeth Cooper for the intercessions for Mass at the weekend. Thanks also to Lynn Mulley who continues faithfully in her ministry of giving us a Pew Sheet every week. St John's is now registered as a COVID-safe site. Services at St John's this week will be as follows:

Holy Communion

- Saturday at 6pm – **22 August 2020**
- Sunday at 9am – **23 August 2020** – livestreamed
- Wednesday at 9am – **26 August 2020**
- Morning Prayer – livestreamed daily at 8am – Tuesday to Saturday
- Evening Prayer – livestreamed daily at 5pm – Tuesday to Saturday

Parish Council met online during the week using Zoom. It was wonderful to have Ann Dendle join us in the midst of all her treatment. The "Job-Keeper" subsidy has provided the Parish with financial assistance as we journey through this pandemic.

Our Kinship Group is continuing to find new ways to keep in touch while they are not able to meet in person. Heather Barbour and Christine Gannon support the grandparents through phone calls and informal "catch-ups" for coffee where possible. Please continue to pray for Heather as she recovers from being struck by a car on the pedestrian crossing in William Street near Market Place, the Mutual Bank and Terry White Chemist – thankfully, no broken bones.

It is still important that we wear masks when we come to St John's. COVID-19 is still casting its shadow over us and we must all continue our diligence in following the health regulations issued by the relevant authorities. Wearing masks is just one of these – hand hygiene and sanitising and keeping physical distance from each other is still important, too. There are signs up around the Church building and regular hand sanitising stations to assist.

On Sunday 23 August, Bishop Sonia will be visiting us. She will meet with Parish Council after the service for a short time. Lynn has featured Bishop Sonia this week in our Pew Sheet.

During the month of September, we will again be holding our **Seasons of Creation** services. It will begin on Sunday 6 September. The fifth and final Sunday is usually a Blessing of the Animals service. This year, I invite you to take a photo of your pet/s and email it to me at frsteve@bigpond.com so that we can pray a virtual blessing on them on Sunday 4 October. I ask your permission to display these photographs on the Parish Website, Facebook, and Instagram pages. Please let me know when you send your photos in, please.

This coming week we have:

- Our usual services on Wednesday
- SRE at Raymond Terrace Public School

Under the heading "**Are You A Learner?**", I was directed to Acts 11:26 – "*The Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*"

We're prone to think of disciples as "turbo-charged" Christians – but originally, the terms *disciple* and *Christian* were synonymous. Differentiating between the two has had the effect of watering down the original demands of following CHRIST.

Theologian Dallas Willard puts it this way: "The word **disciple** occurs 269 times in the New Testament. **Christian** is found 3 times; and was first introduced to refer precisely to the disciples. The disciple of JESUS is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian – especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast-lane of the straight and narrow way. He stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of GOD."

Modern Christians don't often think of using the term **disciple** to describe themselves; but JESUS never put the terms of discipleship in small print. He's not content for us to be distant followers – and He will not rest until we learn to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him (Matthew 11:29).

The word **disciple** means learner – and it refers to someone who is committed to learning to live the CHRIST-life in conscious, daily obedience. Is that you?

[David Jeremiah – Morning and Evening Devotions – Thomas Nelson Publishers]

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

Prayer points for this week:

- A reduction in the spread of the coronavirus around the world
- May we all continue to obey the directions of the health department and use caution in all our dealings
- Peace in our world and increasing respect for and between people
- Children to be brought for baptism and their families
- **Those GOD is calling to the ministry of SRE teaching to come forward**
- For politicians and their advisors, be guided to get the appropriate balance between Public Health needs and the needs of the economy
- The people of Victoria and those in hot spots and clusters in other states as we seek to control the spread of coronavirus.
- A reduction in the incidences of cyber-crime
- People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn

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.

Under the heading of “**Stirring**” the bible in the Song of Songs tells us “Then may your awakening breath blow upon my life until I am fully yours. Breathe upon me with your Spirit wind. **Stir up the sweet spice of your life within me**” *Song of Songs 4:16*

GOD never asks us to wear a mask and pretend we're okay when we are not. He gave us emotions, and He isn't offended when we allow ourselves to feel them. He simply reminds us that He is the answer to everything we go through. When we're having “one of those days”, we should lift our voice and ask Him to stir the sweet spice of His life within us. His love is strong enough to carry us through each devastation. His wisdom will navigate us across the most tumultuous waters. His peace will rise within us and contradict the bellowing chaos. In His presence, our eyes are opened to the wonder of His magnificent and unstoppable sovereignty. Our posture changes and the heaviness melts away when we allow Him to become the centre of our attention. He is the sweet scent of victory stirring within us.

LORD, when our hearts and minds clash, stir your splendour within us. You are the only truth that matters – and you know how to settle our souls. Before we rush into the busyness of the day or lay our heads to rest at night, we will bask in the reality of Your love and experience Your peace that surpasses all understanding. Your beauty inspires us. AMEN

[Taken from *The Divine Romance*– 365 Days Meditating on the Song of Songs]

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

Fr Steve