

10 November 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Susanna Denham for the music, Helen Farley for the flowers, Ken Hoy for the prayers and assisting at the altar, Edith Hoy and Marea Niland for advancing the slides and Lynn Mulley for the Pew Sheet. Services at St John's coming up will be as follows:

Holy Communion

- Saturday at 6pm – **21 November 2020**
- Sunday at 9am – **22 November 2020**
- Wednesday at 9am – **25 November 2020**
- Morning Prayer – livestreamed daily at 8am – Tuesday to Saturday
- Evening Prayer – livestreamed daily at 5pm – Tuesday to Saturday

Bishop Peter has called a meeting of Clergy on Wednesday 25 November at the NEX Club in Newcastle – the old Newcastle Workers Club Site – to talk about:

- Our life together following the decision of the Appellate Tribunal
- Sustaining parish ministry following the conclusion of Jobkeeper
- The administration of wine as part of communion services
- Other matters

This Sunday – 22 November – we will be holding a Parish Meeting to discuss how we will move into the future and to talk about the updated COVID-19 requirements. It will be at 10:30am following the 9am service. My thoughts concerning the logistics of this meeting were that at end of Mass, we could stretch our legs and then return to wherever we were sitting in Church – by 10:30am – so as to avoid unnecessary COVID cleaning following our meeting. All the electronics – screens, computers etc – will be in place and won't need to be re-arranged. This meeting should be over within an hour.

I am encouraged by recent public announcements by our Premier concerning the easing of restrictions. At the time of writing this newsletter, our Bishop had not written to us concerning our response to these measures. We had received an invitation from Raymond Terrace Bowling Club concerning participation in the Lighting of the Christmas lights in the Old Rectory grounds. At a meeting of Parish Council, it was decided that: "The parish regretfully withdraws from participating in the Lighting of the Christmas tree, carols and stall this year. We have made our decision in line with Diocesan and Department of Health guidelines regarding safe COVID19 practices."

Also, from Parish Council, the Kinship Carers group is meeting again at the church. A former member has re-joined the group plus a new member. The number permitted to meet in the hall is to be determined in line with COVID physical distancing.

Our Parish response to our usual giving of Christmas hampers has also been affected by COVID restrictions and requirements. The neighbourhood Centre has, in the past, had input into the Parish's decision to modify the usual Christmas hampers for needy families. They are supportive of a more COVID safe initiative – gift vouchers plus a small gift of Christmas items. There will be approximately 20 families receiving the modified hampers and this can be funded through revenue not used during the COVID crisis - some \$3000.

Under the heading "**Your Neighbour Needs You**", I was directed to Leviticus 19:18 – "*You should not take vengeance ... but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.*"

During the American Revolution, a man named Michael Wittman was sentenced to die for treason. A pastor who had been the object of Wittman's hatred walked 70 miles to plead with General George Washington for Wittman's life. Washington refused until he discovered Wittman was the pastor's enemy, not his friend. Because the pastor had shown such love for an enemy, Wittman was released and became the pastor's fast friend.

One of JESUS' best-known parables was about 2 religious men – a priest and a Levite – who failed to show mercy and love to a dying man. Only when an enemy of the man, a Samaritan, came along was love revealed and the man saved (Luke 10:30-37). As CHRIST loved us, so we are to love others (1 John 4:11). The Good Samaritan changed his world with love. Is there a neighbour in our world whose life could be changed by our love? Who is our neighbour? Our neighbour is anyone who has a need that we have the ability to meet.

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

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 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 continued and sustained reduction in the spread of the coronavirus around our nation – especially now in South Australia.
- May we all continue to diligently obey the directions of the health department and use caution in all our dealings
- Peace between and within countries in our world and increasing respect for and between people
- Instability in the United States to come to an end.
- Children to be brought for baptism and their families
- For politicians and their advisors, to be guided to get the appropriate balance between Public Health needs and the needs of the economy
- Those who travel on our roads
- **People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn**

Under the heading: “**Point the Way**”, I was directed to Song of Songs 6:1 – “*Brides-to-be – O rarest of beauty where then has your lover gone? We long to see him too.*”

Never be hesitant to let your love for JESUS spill out and splash on those around you. The world is looking for perfect love. Every person on earth was created to know Him. They carry questions that can only be answered by encounters with Him. Tired of dry and lifeless religion, they long to know the One who has moved your heart so profoundly. Many people live in a state of turmoil. They have closed their ears to condemning Christians – for good reason. They long for truth but need to encounter it through us. When we show unconditional love, when we have a different approach to life, and convey hope in times of hopelessness, people notice. Weary hearts need a touch from GOD, and He wants to touch them through us. Once they encounter Him, they will be gripped with Holy Passion and begin a journey for themselves/ *Father let your light shine through me. I want to be so confident in your truth and power that I don't hold back when someone opens up to me. May my life be a testimony of Your faithfulness, introducing others to the greatness of knowing you. Amen*

The Divine Romance – 365 Days meditating on the Song of Songs – Brian Simmons and Gretchen Rodriguez

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

Fr Steve