

23 March 2020

Dear Parishioners

As you are now aware, we have shifted into an unprecedented time, in general and in the history of our parish. Never before have we had to suspend worship services for a time in order to keep one another safe. But here we are. This brings a new challenge to all of us. How do we continue to BE the church and shine the light of Christ in a broken, fearful, and hurting world? How do we stay safe, strong, and connected during this time?

In consultation with the churchwardens and Parish Council we have decided that these are the best ways that ALL of us can stay connected, supported, and cared for in our current circumstances:

* We will be very much holding one another in love, staying connected through prayer, and making regular contact via phone and email
* We will be continuing to offer pastoral support, including food, medicine, and grocery drop-offs, and other practical support as is possible
* Fr Anthony will be contactable at all times by mobile phone (0409 012 543)
* Members of the Pastoral Care Team will also make themselves known to you and provide regular phone contact offering prayer and pastoral support
* We will be providing you with electronic versions of pew sheets with readings and copies of the sermons via email each week
* If you don't have access to email, we'll be dropping pew sheets with readings and copies of the sermons to your letterbox
* We encourage everyone in the parish to “down tools” to pray for the world, for the church, and for each other at 9:30am and 5pm each day. You may wish to use the green prayer book format for daily prayer (pages 383-424) or for your own intercessions (pages183-222). I will be praying in the church at those times each day (except on Tuesdays when I’ll be praying from home). Please collect a green prayer book from the narthex if you need one. It will be very powerful if all parishioners could join together in prayer at these times.
* You will find links to a list of the lectionary readings for the rest of March and April in the Resources Page of our website. If you need help to know which readings go with which services, please contact me or one of the churchwardens.
* The church will remain open for private prayer and devotion and you are each invited to come in at any time to pray, to just be still in this sacred space, or to pray the Stations of the Cross.
* This is an ideal time to dive deeply in the Holy Scriptures. Please phone me or email me if you would like suggestions on readings or passages, or if you would like to share suggestions or any insights yourselves
* The following parish activities are suspended until further notice - There will be no Wednesday Eucharist or gathering afterwards for bible study (although please keep up with your Lenten studies and contact me at any time to chat about your insights!), no Wednesday Scrabble, no Friday Coffee and Chat or Friday Playgroup. “Not Home Alone” gatherings are temporarily suspended, and Bishop Paul Barker’s Lenten Talks have also been cancelled
* At this stage it is very unlikely that we'll be able to join together for our Holy Week and Easter services. We will provide the service booklets and sermons for each of the services (as well as some other goodies - check your letterboxes during Holy Week)

Please let me remind you that I am available at any time to talk, to pray, to share how you are feeling. And I encourage you to do that for one another too.

These are challenging times. We do need to keep our spirits up. But please keep your hearts open and if you’re feeling sad, anxious, or isolated, talk to someone either at home or by phone and share how you’re feeling. Please stay in touch with one another, hold one another in prayer for good health and an end to this time of dis-ease.

We continue to hope and pray and look forward to that day when we can ALL gather once more as the body of Christ here at the Church of the Ascension.

Peace and every blessing,

Fr Anthony

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