



The Anglican Parish of Kangaroo Flat

St Mary's Church

ABN 28 460 347 396

Anglican Diocese of Bendigo

20 March 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters

There is no doubt we are living in unprecedented times whereby each day the landscape seems to be changing and causing rising anxiety. Whilst keeping ourselves and one another as safe as possible from the Covid-19 virus, as the people of God our challenge is how we worship God and be the church during these times. I have every confidence that together we will work this out. It may involve some creative thinking and the strict development of some policies and procedures, but this is not beyond us and nor is it cumbersome if we keep in mind the two priorities of safety and worship.

By now I am assuming you have heard the news, as from this Sunday (inclusive) our regular 9.00am and 11.00am Sunday Services will be 'paused' until further notice so as we can meet the needs of our community. In addition, Merry Music will not reconvene until further notice and most of our planned events will also be on hold or postponed until a later date that is unbeknown at this time. Whilst this may cause angst and disappointment for some, it may also bring a sense of relief to others. Either way, we are facing 'unchartered waters'.

What we do and how we do it, may at this time be a bit unclear but we have a blank slate to 'reinvent' ourselves as the church of God in our community, at this time. The old pattern of being is out for now but this brings new missional opportunities and the permission to try new things and new ways of 'being church' together.

Parish Council and the Pastoral Care team have already met to discuss measures needed to be taken in this extraordinary time. Each of them have already begun actively communicating with allocated groups of people across the Parish with the aim of keeping everyone informed, connected and, supported. Together we are committed to ensuring everyone has access to the ministry of the church (worship, prayer, sacraments, teaching, pastoral support, practical service) whilst remaining safe. I know the people at St Mary's are very good at caring for one another and I praise God for this and encourage you to continue doing so during this 'strange' time. Over the coming week(s) we will explore a range of innovative technologies and other means to maintain our sense of belonging, encourage one another in our faith and importantly, live out our mission and ministry in our community. This time will pass and our need to socially distance ourselves will not be forever. Whilst our regular public services are not being held, under strict controls around numbers, maintaining safe distances, and strict levels of hygiene, the church will be open for prayer, small gatherings, pastoral care and celebrating Holy Communion at various times to be worked out (please stay tuned for days and times).

I understand there are more questions than answers at this time, however I am confident we can work through these and I ask for your patience as we do so together. In the meantime, let us continue to look to God and trust Him to lead us during this time so that we might be faithful disciples and witnesses to His love and grace in a very troubled world. Please be prayerful as we navigate our way forward and are no doubt challenged in this new space where we find ourselves.

In the meantime let us continue;

- to find ways to safely connect by - phone, messenger, SMS, small groups, walks, coffee meetings, email, Facebook, small gatherings, home visits
- look out for those who are vulnerable, alone or may need extra support
- make sure we have you on our email list and your details are up to date so we can continue to send you our weekly email (this will also be made available for you to pick up, or delivered to you)
- look after yourself and regulate how much news you watch
- sit out in the sun with a cup of tea
- borrow a 'worship@home' pack (available on the Welcome Table in the Narthex) that includes a prayer book, hymn book and guided daily readings to do the morning/evening office or some other Order of Service each day. Just think, all of us wherever we are joining in worship together and lifting our voice to God!
- ask for help if you need it
- don't buy into the panic and fear that unfortunately is so prevalent at this time around us
- trust God who is able to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think of (Eph 3:20)
- remember you are not alone, we are the family of God.

Over the coming week, times and days when the church will be open for Holy Communion, prayer and small gatherings will be worked out.

Grace and peace

Rev Tracey