



3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Dear friends,

As you are adjusting to the new normal, I write to assure you of my prayers and to let you know that while the church doors are closed we all, the clergy, the Wardens and Parish Council and the staff are doing all that we can to maintain some sense of community. If you need someone to chat to, or if you'd like to suggest something that we could do in these circumstances please do not hesitate to be in touch. (Our contact details are below or in the pew sheet.) If you have not already given us an email address perhaps you'd like to do that so that we can more easily keep in touch.

In the meantime,

- for those of you on Facebook, we are live-streaming our services at 8:30 on Sundays at 8:00am on Good Friday.
- Each day a member of the Parish or one of the clergy is saying Morning Prayer at 8:00am if you'd like to join us. (The ePray App makes this easy.)
- There will be posts on Facebook to give you something to think about, and the website will have a copy of the sermons.
- The list of names to be remembered on ANZAC Day will still be read out.
- The Pew Bulletin will continue to be emailed to those who have asked us to do so (let us know if you'd like to be added to that list).

We are including with this letter a copy of the Palm Sunday pew bulletin, the Good Friday and Easter Services to enable you to keep in touch.

If you are in a position to do so, it would help the Parish Finances if you were able to contribute your regular offerings by direct debit. Our bank details are Hamilton Anglican Parish, BSB 704-901, A/C# 00000210, Ref: Surname and or Offerings. Thank you in advance.

For many it is already a time of anxiety on many fronts and for some recovery might be slow and long. We pray daily that those who are suffering financially, physically or socially are given the resources to survive and the strength to continue.

It causes me great sadness to have to forbid you to come to worship, to use the Chapel or to use the grounds. I have come to see that this is not only a fitting response to the situation, but a novel and extraordinary way to spend Lent, even if it is a longer Lent than we had expected. A time of separation from those things that sustain us, a time in the wilderness is a gift that we don't often allow ourselves in the midst of our day-to-day lives. Now that we are being forced to stay away from our usual social and spiritual activities, we have an opportunity connect with God at an even deeper level and to reaffirm our trust in God through good times and through bad.

It is true that we won't be able to gather for Good Friday this year, but that may make it the most extraordinary and profound Good Friday ever – going without the one thing that really makes it Good Friday! We don't need to be in church to intentionally stop and reflect on that moment when God seemed truly absent. The loss and grief of being unable to gather will help us to share Jesus' cry: "My God, my God, why?!" and to reflect on Jesus' willingness to give up everything so that we might have life.

And Easter – what will it be like to celebrate Easter without gathering to sing those wonderful triumphant hymns that are a reminder that we have pulled through the darkness to the light on the other side? It may feel so empty and even joyless, but I would encourage you to celebrate none-the-less. When the crisis is deemed to be over. Then what celebrations will there be! Easter and new life will never have seemed so real.

This is an unusual moment in time and your clergy team, your wardens and Parish council will do all that we can to support you through it.

My friends be strong, be careful, care for each other, be safe and above all keep the faith until we meet again to proclaim the new life that awaits, to remind ourselves that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God and that not even the grave could contain Jesus our Saviour and our friend.

With every blessing,

Marian



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