

Vicar's Letter #22: 17 September, 2021

Connecting with God and with one another

Dear Parishioners

It has been something of a rollercoaster ride in the last two weeks, as the number of Covid-19 cases in Auckland has decreased, then surged, then decreased again. There is a prospect that restrictions in Alert Level 2 will be reduced soon, but no certainty of that. In these circumstances, we will continue with our current Sunday morning combined parish service via Zoom for at least the next two Sundays (19 and 26 September). The Parish Vestry meets this coming Thursday, and we will discuss longer term planning then. I hope to update you about that in my next Vicar's letter.

Last Sunday morning around 60 of us met via Zoom, which is over a third of those who regularly attend Sunday morning services in the parish. That is already a good number, but perhaps we could increase that attendance and sense of connection with others in the parish. One way of doing that is by gathering in small groups in homes - as we are permitted to do in Alert Level 2. **If you have the technology to attend the service via Zoom, please consider inviting others to your home this Sunday morning and the next one, to attend the Zoom service and then share a morning tea with those you have invited.** We recognise that meeting via Zoom is not a perfect solution, and the vast majority of us would love to be back in our church buildings to worship together in person, but this will at least help us to connect personally with others in our church community.

Last Sunday morning, there was also a special meeting to provide information about the proposed hall redevelopment. Thanks to everyone on the Hall Redevelopment Committee for the huge amount of work they have done to date to get to the stage where they could outline detailed proposals to the parish. The presentation was detailed, clear and informative, and there was helpful discussion and suggestions at the time. Now the Committee has further work to do before the parish as a whole is invited to vote on this matter at a formal General Meeting of the parish.

At the same time, other planning has been taking place, in relation to our worship in the parish. Starting on Sunday 26 September, we will have an 8-week sermon series on prayer. A booklet is being produced with an introduction to each sermon topic and questions that can be used for personal reflection or small group study. One of the clear indications that came from the Mission Action Planning meetings was that people wanted to grow in their practice, understanding and love of prayer. So this sermon series and booklet is a direct response to that desire expressed by our parish members.

Speaking of prayer, every day of the week there is an opportunity to join with others in the parish in prayer. At Alert Level 2 we are meeting via Zoom, and when we get to Alert Level 1 we will return to meeting in St James' Church. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays we meet at 7.45am. On Wednesdays, we meet at 9am to coincide with the parish staff meeting. We also have a meeting on Saturdays at 8.30am, so that there is one time in the week when those who work Mondays to Fridays can still attend a prayer meeting. In these meetings, we follow a simple liturgy, and have time to reflect on a Bible reading and to share our own personal prayers for others. The Zoom address is: 782 3267 4706 and the password is: Lambchops. Thanks to Richard Lamb for co-ordinating our parish prayers via Zoom.

When you think about it, prayer is an especially wonderful gift of God during the isolation of this pandemic, as it unites us with God and with one another. We are not alone. We live in God's love and are members of God's great household of faith.

Peter Bengé

Vicar
(Anglican Parish of Lower Hutt)