



The monthly newsletter of St. Andrew's, Brighton-Le-Sands Uniting Church

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*We reach up to
God, reach in to
one another and
reach out to the
community*

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Brighton-Le-Sands Uniting Church

We have now had seven weeks of church closure. Seems a lot longer to me! While the government is now allowing meetings of up to ten in churches, Synod issued Guidance Note 10 on 19 May <https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/8714/covid19-guidance-note-10-use-of-premises-amended-19-may-2020.pdf>. Synod has agreed that Uniting Churches not open for public worship or face to face meetings in church buildings. However, the NSW government is now relaxing the restrictions on churches, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/changes-for-worship-weddings-and-funerals> and we will wait to see what Synod decides as a consequence.

In anticipation of that time, whenever it occurs, St. Andrew's has been prepared. The colours and banners have been changed at the normal times and pictures posted with the devotions on the website. The pews have been moved into a COVIS-19 safe separation of 1.5 m and we can seat about 23 individuals but more when there are family groups. So... WATCH THIS SPACE!!!

We should be especially grateful to those who have provided the reflections and liturgies that have been emailed, posted on the website or delivered. Alan Harper, Rev Dr Pene Brook, Bruce Wyndham and Rev Charissa Suli. They have certainly helped enormously to make me feel still connected.



Will COVID-19 change the church?

Published in the March 2020 edition of Insights.

Rev. Dr Peter Walker. Principal of United Theological College

The COVID-19 disruption to church-as-usual provides an opportunity for change and innovation, perhaps like no other opportunity presented to the church in

decades. To call this medical and economic crisis an opportunity is not to ignore heartlessly the pain around us. Rather, it is to take full account of that pain and ask how this moment in history impacts on how we understand the nature of the church and its role in God's mission. If our leadership is pastoral and strategic, and offered with love, this opportunity might become the catalyst for changes we believed impossible for the church, or had thought were years away.

The right form of question

Many conversations are currently focused on the question: *How can we keep things going?* Perhaps we should live-stream the 10:00am Sunday service? Can we hold Church Council meetings by Zoom? Those questions are understandable yet must not be allowed to suffocate others. For example, some conversations are currently focused on a different question: *What is this crisis teaching us about the future of the church?* How will the people of God bear witness to Jesus Christ in this time of isolation and financial insecurity? What might these strange days be teaching us about how the church needs to change?

Those who are asking, 'How can we keep things going?', are not off the grid. Some things must be kept going. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility of every disciple to pay attention to the big picture. Yet it is the responsibility of some. The ordained and lay leaders of the church are called (and some are paid) to give their attention to the big picture. Most of us can see the waves. Our leaders are those we ask to read and understand the tides.

Bi-focal discernment

The Covid-19 pandemic has church communities seeking leadership – seeking people who will look beyond the breaking waves and open our eyes to the tide. To switch analogies, this is a time for leaders to be bi-focal. That is, a time for leaders who are focused both on what is in front of our eyes now, the near lens, as well as what's in the distance, the far perspective. We certainly need to act on what we see close to our nose. How can we provide connected worship experiences during the period of spatial distancing? But leaders will also need to bring the far country into view. How will we embrace and begin to implement what is approaching the church through the top lens, on the horizon, during this time of disruption?

The future church will have diverse forms and so those in mission agencies, synod offices, and colleges can only paint broad brushstrokes. The specifics will take shape in each context. However, the sort of questions that may help us all to identify where God is leading the church are: What are we seeing during this disruption that gives fresh expression to the love of God? What do the scriptures teach about where the disciples of Jesus Christ should be and what they should do in this time of emotional and financial distress on our streets, in our homes (for those who have one), towns, and cities? What do we see emerging now that looks like the future church and how can we support those initiatives to ensure they flourish in the future?

The church will be changed by the Covid-19 pandemic, of that there is no doubt. Can we listen and look for the work of the Holy Spirit now so that the coming change is the change God is seeking?

Of what do we need less? And of what do we need more?

Good mission leaders are also good pastoral leaders. A shepherd truly loves the sheep before even considering taking them onto a rocky path. Any leader who tries to lead in mission without loving her or his people will soon turn around and find no one is following. Yet it is a time to lead, pastorally and strategically, with love. And so for the sake of our witness to the love of God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of what does the church need less in the future, and of what does it need more? Put another way, and pushing ourselves to an honest self-assessment: What must be moved backstage, and what must be placed centre stage?

Again, broad brushstrokes are all that should be offered here. I personally hope the impact of the Covid-19 on our communities and congregations will teach the church that we must

- talk less about buildings and more about relationships
- talk less about the institution and more about our communities
- talk less about us and more about the love of God made known to us in Christ

And by talking less and more, respectively, we will show that we care less and more, respectively. In other words, if our conversations and meetings and decisions show that we care about *relationships* over buildings, *communities* over institutions, and *Christ* over the church, the church will strengthen its witness to the love of God for the world.

In a movement, most people believe in the cause. In an institution, most people believe in the institution. We are a movement and our cause is to be a people who reveal the love of God in all we do and say. That is the church's calling – now and always. Relationships, communities, and Christ are the lifeblood of that calling.

Season of Pentecost

'When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.'

Acts Chapter 2 (NIV).



St. Andrew's supports these activities, in particular

COOK MOOREFIELD COMBINED CHURCHES CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BOARD

Supporting Nick's ministry at these schools. Financial donations to Alison (tax deductible).

NICK'S BREAKFAST CLUB AT JAMES COOK HIGH

Alison will be finding out what they need and we will make arrangements for any donations you may wish to make.

THE KOGARAH STOREHOUSE FOOD MINISTRY.

The Storehouse is distributing food parcels on Wednesdays and needs food donations still.

<http://www.kogarahstorehouse.org.au/>



LACLA-LET THE AFRICAN CHILDREN LEARN ASSOCIATION

Carry on collecting your 5cts for donation when worship services resume.



SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

<https://www.samaritanspurse.org.au/get-involved/ways-to-give/>



ACT FOR PEACE CHRISTMAS BOWL

<https://www.actforpeace.org.au/Learn/Why-we-are-here>



Weekly offerings to St. Andrew's

Your offerings may be made direct to the bank account with a regular payment. See the side bar on the front of this newsletter. For offerings at the church, there are year supplies of offering envelopes in boxes in the vestibule. These run from the beginning of April each year and there still some there.

Prayer points

The mission and ministry of our congregation.

Worship leaders, preachers, musicians, readers, helpers, leaders, followers.

Those affected by COVID-19, their carers and families. Those who have lost loved ones.

Those still feeling the effects of the bushfire and floods.

Those who are sick, sad or lonely

Our own people especially Carolyn and Dennis Gates; Ruth Bird and the Gaitau family.

Pam Schofield, knee replacement, St. George Private, June 9th.

Timothy Dain, after foot surgery resulting from a work accident.

To raise up people to work within St. Andrew's.

If you need pastoral care or know of someone needing pastoral care, please see the contact details in the side panel on the first page. If you wish an addition to this list please contact Stephen Dain

Needed

We need volunteers. In particular to edit this newsletter once per month, the weekly notices when we resume worship services and the website. We need help at the working Bs, to assist with the Youth Group. Ask a Church Council member.

Until we meet again

Pray that we all keep safe and well and come back together again very soon.

