

TALKING TO THE ARCHBISHOP

Melbourne Archdeaconry

There were quite a range of emotions and experiences described for us, ranging from difficult and disheartening to positive ones that are greatly encouraging. Some of us have felt the whole range of emotions between those two points, sometimes in the same day!

Like many in our communities, a number of us were keenly feeling the isolation of living alone and not having face-to-face contact with the family and friends we rely on for support and encouragement in usual circumstances. Working out new technologies has been a challenge for some as we have worked hard to maintain ministry to our congregations. The changes in levels of lock down have been a challenge for some also, as smaller congregations and ministry groups had a little taste of gathering together once again, only for higher stages of restrictions to be introduced.

Everyone is feeling the pinch financially, but not to the degree we expected. That has been hardest for parishes reliant on Op Shop or other enterprise income.

On the positive side, at this stage of the pandemic, we have had time to come to grips with how we can use new and old technologies to maintain some sense of our regular ministry, and in some cases, to greatly expand it. Those who have been live-streaming services are finding an interstate and overseas audience.

Online Alpha courses are seeing people desiring to continue studying the Bible and moving towards faith. People who previously couldn't attend small group gatherings are able to do so through Zoom. Daily prayer gatherings are happening in many parishes.

The necessity of doing things differently has been a bit of a watershed for some, as it has opened up the opportunity to go about ministry differently, and these ministries will continue into the future.

- Archdeacon Heather Patacca

MARMINGATHA

Stories to Inspire

WEEK ENDING 6 SEPTEMBER 2020



COMMITTED TO MISSION

St George's Travancore

As everyone else has done, we have felt the social and spiritual impact of the current lockdown. Financially also, it has hit us hard. This is some of what we have done in the lockdown: We were able to make the most of the short period during which we could worship in congregations of 10 and then 20. Some of our people did not feel comfortable meeting in those groups, but we did reconnect quite well during those weeks in a way that was really only possible because we were already small, but strong!

We have enhanced our online resources to enable the St George's folk to maintain a connection to their parish community. What we have done is no more than many parishes have done and less than others, but it has been important to do something doable, connected, and sustainable, in the spiritual and worship life of our parishioners. Financially we have lost most of our sources of income: the Op Shop, Hall Hire and our regular concerts, including our important Friends of Music Series, have not yet been able to resume. We have some rental income coming in and we have the regular giving from our people which has thankfully remained strong with many people who haven't contributed online before doing so while we are not meeting together in person.

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- The Reverend Richard Murray



GROWING FAITH IN LOCKDOWN

St Paul's Kew East

I have experienced great joy during our time of Lockdown, as I have prepared one of our Parishioners for Confirmation and as I have led weekly Bible Studies. Our young candidate suddenly appeared in church one Sunday with her father, in the latter quarter of last year. Occasionally her mother came to church with her and at Christmas, her twin brother and their parents were all in church together in the front seat, as they usually were week by week. The young lady and her father 'tried' the later more Contemporary Service, but she preferred the earlier more traditional Service. When a new Roster of readers and Intercessors was being prepared, she volunteered to read (she is 14 years old) and reads beautifully. Her father said that during the week prior to reading she writes the entire Scripture passage in her own hand and practices with her parents listening.

One Sunday, her father mentioned that his daughter would like to be Confirmed. After checking with Bishop Genieve the only date free was 6th September, Father's Day. This was not going to pose any difficulty for the family and we excitedly set our eyes on preparing for that date. Our young candidate, almost immediately invited her friends from school to come to her Confirmation Service. She explained, one is an atheist (and we talk about the Christian faith), one is Orthodox and another is Roman Catholic - they were all keen to come!

Following advertising the Confirmation in the Parish, no other Candidates had come forward. I felt for our young Candidate not having companions - looking back on my own Confirmation and the many other times I had prepared Candidates for Confirmation. When I ordered the Preparation book from St. Peter's Bookworm, the Staff person volunteered to hand deliver it to our Candidate's home "it's on my way home" - she said! The Wardens agreed that the Parish would pay for the book - the family were most grateful!

I have loved our Tuesday's @4 pm with our Candidate and a Parish Observer - on Zoom. She has been an absolute inspiration and a delight to be with and interact with throughout the entire time of preparation. We have read two chapters of Luke's Gospel each week and discussed any points we have noted. She makes copious notes and asks questions when she doesn't understand a passage of Scripture. We have also read through a chapter in the preparation book, "Count Me In!" and discussed our way through each chapter.

When Melbourne was plunged into our current Stage Four Lockdown several weeks ago, it was clear then, that her Confirmation could not go ahead on the planned date. She was so relaxed about this. I proffered other options for her Confirmation for the various other Stages of Lockdown - but she really wanted her family and school friends to be at her Confirmation and is calm about when this might be.

This young lady has truly inspired me throughout the time that I have known her. She has always completed all homework tasks and is happy to discuss these matters, she has a wonderfully happy attitude and delights in engaging in discussion. She is very keen to learn and most interested in all the topics which have been part of the curriculum. This week, I commented to her that we only had two more sessions with the material from the preparation book and I posed a number of scenarios which would continue to see her supported by the church going forward towards her Confirmation, whenever that may be! She is happy to continue being supported by us.

I have also been leading two Bible Study Groups for most of the year. One of the participants has commented a few times recently: "I am loving this time of having to stay at home. I have never felt so close to God in my life and I'm loving the Bible Studies, I've learnt so much and have grown so much in my faith. I'm changed forever." State Four Lockdown has not been all negative - God gives us bright moments of encouragement on our journey - these wonderful people have inspired me greatly!

All thanks and praise be to Him for the great work He continues to do in all who are open to His Presence.

- *The Reverend Gail Bryce*

My 'staycation' was a blessing even though I couldn't go away. It was nice to spend time enjoying the small things in life. Thank you. It's been inspiring for me to hear from clergy at the two deanery meetings I've been able to attend this past week how God is at work through their ministries even in the midst of these restrictions.

Click here for this weeks' video message from the Archbishop



*Please keep sending your stories to inspire...
+Genieve*