



# The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

The Reverend Canon Jeff Richardson  
Canon of St Paul's Cathedral Sale  
Rector of the Anglican Parish of Traralgon

7 Burns Street  
(PO Box 303)  
Traralgon Vic 3844  
0400 539 905

4<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Friends,

I have returned from Annual Leave to assist the Parish Wardens and Parishioners to revert to Stage Three Restrictions.

Albert Camus in his book "The Plague" writes "So, week in, week out the prisoners of the plague (sic. Covid 19) struggled along as best they could." I'm sure all of us feel this sense of struggle in one way or another, and how true this is for our fellow Victorians who live in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire, who now live in tough new stage four restrictions. For many of us the struggle is intensified as we cannot have physical contact with our loved ones living in stage four areas, and such separation is emotionally heart-wrenching and painful. Even reverting to stage three restrictions in regional Victoria brings us back to a point of struggle that we know all too well, and yet to return there again evokes a renewed sense of isolation and continued uncertainty. In one way or another we all struggle with social byproducts of the Coronavirus, but the one unchangeable truth during our struggle is our God who strengthens and supports us as the weeks pass us by.

The prophet Isaiah says "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (41:10). These are very troubling times, many people are experiencing high levels of anxiety, caused by the potentiality of Covid 19 and/or circumstances of the environment (isolation). We are called not to fear, simply because "I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am God"; this does not mean God will miraculously change our circumstances, but rather during each stage of the battle against the Coronavirus God is with us, he is one with us, and what is more important God "will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." As always in our Christian faith we know that not only is God with us but he actively and divinely gives to us the things necessary to remain faithful to our baptismal call, and to me hearing these words of Isaiah, I have the image of a father reaching out to his weakened child, to provide the strength they need, then carrying the child some distance to gain their wellbeing, and all the time the father held the child with his right hand never letting go. This may not be the image you have of God in Isaiah 41:10, but for me it is a reassurance that God's goodness, mercy and love prevails and that even in the midst of the Coronavirus epidemic God is with us, supporting us, and leading us by his righteous right hand. I hope this may be the same for you as you reflect on these troubled times.

## **ABOUT WORSHIP SERVICES**

Stage Three were introduced on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August at 11.59pm, this means face to face Worship Services will cease immediately. Weekly Eucharist from St James will be streamed through Zoom (or if possible streamed through YouTube).

Friday Worship Service is to cease immediately.

## **ABOUT COMMUNION BY EXTENSION COMMENCING 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST**

I have prayerfully considered this matter and because of the length of this current stage (six weeks), it seems appropriate to offer Parishioners Extended Communion following the Sunday Zoom services. The following requirements will apply:

- You only need to telephone the Office **ONCE** (Tuesday and Thursday 10am-3pm) to request ongoing weekly Communion. However, if you intend to be away from home on any given Sunday then you must notify Glenda in the Office.
- You will be provided with an abridge Communion Service and Scripture references for each Sunday of the Year.
- Each Sunday a People's Wafer will be prepared for each person requesting Extended Communion.
- At each home where the Communion is to be delivered, you must not invite the courier into your home, you are to receive the Communion at your front door, a short conversation may occur (less than 5 minutes).

## **ABOUT PASTORAL CARE**

I have maintained a regular ministry of Pastoral Care throughout the pandemic and especially during stages three and two, unfortunately for most of this time I could not offer face to face pastoral care, although before I went on leave I did manage to offer face to face pastoral care to a number of people. Once again being in stage three restrictions I am unable to do face to face visitations, and this not only applies to me but also Rev Marilyn Obersby and in any other Parishioner seeking to offer face to face pastoral care.

- The only method of pastoral care appropriate to stage three restrictions is via phone, text, facetime, Skype, Zoom, email, and other platforms. I use most of these regularly.
- Parishioners with pastoral needs or concerns are advised to contact either myself or Rev Marilyn Obersby.
- As I have written before one of the most powerful forms of pastoral care is prayer. May I recommend that if you have a pastoral concern, share it with someone who can uphold you and your pastoral need in prayer.

## **ABOUT COLLECTIONS / OFFERINGS**

- The Wardens would prefer Collections / Offerings are paid through Banking Transfer. Parish account details are as follows: Bank- NAB; Account Name- Anglican Parish Traralgon and St James Church; BSB- 083932; Account Number- 51607 2478
- Collections / Offerings can be left at St James during office hours (Tuesday and Thursday 10am-3pm). Arrangements for receiving your Collection / Offering at St John's Glengarry and St David's Toongabbie need to be taken up with the churchwarden/s from each centre.
- Please telephone Glenda before leaving your Collection/Gift at the office. Please wear a facial covering and refrain from chatting too long.

## **ABOUT THE SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND OP SHOP**

- The Op Shop Coordinator Carla in consultation with a number of Volunteers has decided to close the shop until further notice.
- The Bishop's ad clerum refers to the continuation during these stage three restrictions, it is well worth reading as it is very insightful.

Finally whilst these are challenging days, which cast a dark cloud of despair and a growing sense of hopelessness, there is something that illuminates our faith, our hope, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," Jesus Christ; whose life we share as a community of faith and as a Eucharistic people fed by his body and blood in our daily lives. I hope and pray you will continue with me to uphold the thousands of people in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire who live in what is called the "Covid Norm," the many families disconnected from their loved ones, and the growing number of unemployed people. Like me I am sure you are upholding in prayer the many hundreds of people who have tested positive, those in hospital and especially patients in ICU. We need to always remember people who have died and especially their families. The prayer below opens our spiritual hearts to a Coronavirus change:

## **GOD'S HEALING HAND**

To our brothers and sisters who have contracted  
and are suffering due to the Coronavirus Disease,  
we pray that God's healing hand may rest upon you.  
To medical doctors, nurses, and the supporting staff  
who are in the frontline of the fight against COVID-19,  
may the Good Lord sustain you and inspire you  
to render your life-saving services with due care, love, and compassion.  
To all those who have lost their loved ones due to the Coronavirus outbreak,  
we convey our deepest sympathies.

We pray that their souls, through God's mercy, may rest in eternal peace.  
We pray that God may grant all bereaved families his consolation and strengthen their faith and hope in Jesus  
Christ, the Risen Lord.

**Amen.**

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Richardson', written in a cursive style.

Canon Jeff Richardson, Incumbent

**PS:** In concluding this letter I received the sad news that Noeline Feltham died suddenly in the Sale Hospital. In her final hours The Very Reverend Susanna Paine, the Dean of Sale, visited Noeline who especially wanted me to know and to ask people in the Parish to pray for her. This sense of belonging to the community of faith is symbolic of Noeline's love for others and more importantly her love for God, whom she knew in the person of Jesus Christ. May you rest in peace Noeline and let light perpetual shine upon you. Rest in peace.