

RESUMPTION OF WORSHIP SERVICES

latest update 18th October 2021

The spring days are beginning to warm. Daylight is shining earlier into the morning hours and setting later in the evening. I have always loved early spring, when the sun is rising as I head home from the pre-dawn run, the sunlight brightly telling me that I have been given a new day. The smell of the rain opens my senses to the springing of new life. The birds seem to be chirping louder, the grass around St Peter's is lush and green, and the flowers are blooming. It is in those moments I say a prayer of thanks, for God has blessed me.

Despite these Covid times - I have confidence because, I know that God is present, God is doing something, God is with us.

Right now we, as the Anglican Parish of Wakatipu, are planning, trying, and executing programs and processes, so we can feel confident that we are doing the right things when it comes to: how we worship, how we commune, when we can have fellowship, how we connect with the community during these times of worry and discomfort with the pandemic that is still going on in our country and around the world. The words from Isaiah 41:10 help me, Isaiah writes "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Although it's impossible to know how we will one day look back on this chapter of life known as "the Covid pandemic", I feel certain that the defining characteristics of our church will be perseverance, grace, and faith.

I have been overwhelmed and humbled by the many phone calls, emails, and texts from church and wider community members to express support, encouragement, gratitude, and confidence in our church's ability to navigate the uncertainty of recent times.

So, above all else, let me start by offering a profound word of thanks to each of you for all the ways that you have helped us BE the church during such a challenging time. It has always been true that our parish isn't the buildings in Arrowtown, Glenorchy, and Queenstown, it's the people. However, during this time of social distancing and separation, you've truly exemplified what that means to gather, grow, and go in a whole new way.

Second, I want to thank everyone for the countless hours of prayer, conversation, and discernment that has been invested into our churches reopening.

So, it is with great joy that we resumed our communal Sunday worship services at St Paul's, Arrowtown (9:00am) and St Peter's, Queenstown (10:30am) yesterday.

The services will continue to operate, under Covid Level 2 guidelines, with - I pray - a gradual easing of restrictions as soon as possible.

The choir will return to St Peter's on Sunday 24th October 2021 :

****** Wednesday morning Eucharist at 10:00am at St Peter's resumes on October 20th ******

Contact tracing, physical distancing, and the wearing of face masks will still be applicable and - as yet - communal singing and post-service fellowship will be further 'down the road' but, nevertheless, WELCOME BACK :)

PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON THE PARISH WEBSITE www.stpeters.co.nz FOR ALL THE LATEST INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Like any good set of plans, there's always the possibility that we'll hit some unanticipated delays or necessary detours on our journey. Because the circumstances around the pandemic are ever-changing, there may be some unforeseen future developments that will affect our plans and cause us to readjust our route accordingly.

But the good news is, no matter how many tweaks we have to make to our plan, the destination never changes. Our ultimate goal is to have all of our buildings open and our missions and ministries FULLY resumed, so we can continue to live out our calling to show the life of The Risen Christ to the world.

Of course, if there's one thing we're reminded of in the process of creating this plan, it would be that reopening the doors of a church is different to any other business or organisation. After all, our ultimate responsibility isn't to shareholders, revenues, bottom lines, or profits; it's to God and taking care of God's people.

I ask for your patience, kindness and support as we re-open and come together under 'different' circumstances. However, I am absolutely sure that our plan will be wholly imperfect and wonderfully flawed; but it's in times like this that I'm comforted by the words "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven."

I hope you know that the Lay Ministry team, worship service team, your brothers and sisters across the parish, and your Vicar are SO looking forward to welcoming you back to worship whenever you're ready. In the meantime, know that you are loved, you are missed, and you are prayed for everyday!

David

A POST-SCRIPT FROM BISHOP STEVEN

Along with the Government, my main plea is for people to make sure they are fully vaccinated. This is the only way that we can fully protect ourselves and show our love to others around us. We can't mandate this, but we are asking everyone to arrange to do this now so that we can have more confidence to meet with each safely and protect everyone we love.

I realise there will be some for whatever reason do not want to be vaccinated: please be kind to each other, respect different points of views but also encourage people to access the best sources of information on this to help make good choices.

As someone who has accessed the vaccine and for the undecided, I am very willing to talk to anyone to give my understanding of theological and medical viewpoints to anyone who wants to speak to me. Please contact my MA Nicola Wong (phone 03 488026) to make a time to talk on the phone or in person.