

Back to St Peter's: Small Steps

Restrictions Easing at St Peter's Eastern Hill - Stage One

15th May 2020

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake."

Psalms 23:1-3

"BEING CHURCH" AT ST PETER'S DURING STAGE-ONE RESTRICTIONS EASING

On Monday the State Government announced that church doors can once again be opened for public worship, permitting: "10 members of the public to gather for religious purposes (in addition to the people reasonably required to facilitate the ceremony). Our Archbishop on Wednesday, however, added a cautionary note: "The Premier made it clear on Monday that, while small religious services may resume, in general people ought to remain at home, leaving only for certain reasons. He repeated 'safe, cautious, appropriate'." The big return-to-church party we've all been dreaming of, in reality, is not going to happen. Rather, over the coming weeks and months, it is going to be "Back to St Peter's: Small Steps."

I have outlined below some of the small steps that I am proposing for St Peter's, during the current stage-one easing of restrictions. These protocols come out of discussions with our worship team and other parishioners, and were formally affirmed by the Wardens at our meeting this week. They will be in place until the end of May 2020, when our Premier and the Archbishop may announce further changes.

i) Ongoing Online Worship and Ministry

As the Archbishop has said: "in general people ought to remain at home." The virus is still out there. As we see on the news each day, it is highly contagious, and in our congregation many of us are over 70, some with health conditions that may compromise your immunity, so we must all be "safe, cautious, appropriate." More and more parishioners are now connecting with St Peter's through the various components of our new online ministry. This will continue to be the primary way we "go to church" at St Peter's for the foreseeable future. Every day of the week there are a number of ways to connect:

- **Sunday Mass:** uploaded on the St Peter's YouTube channel, so you can watch at the time you usually go to church, or at your leisure
- **Sunday "Morning Tea at the Vicarage":** by Zoom; contact – vicar@stpeters.org.au
- **Weekday Mass:** Monday to Friday, on the St Peter's Facebook page
- **Praying the Rosary:** Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 5pm with our Lay Minister, Alae Taule'alo; contact - alaetaulealo@gmail.com
- **Christian Meditation:** Wednesdays at 12noon with Parishioner, Roland Ashby; contact - randrashby@bigpond.com

St Peter's Bookroom: still open, but now entirely on-line - <https://www.bookroom.stpeters.org.au/>

ii) St Peter's Telephone Tree

This weekend, I am delighted to announce the launch of the St Peter's Telephone Tree. A total of 22 St Peter's staff and volunteers have agreed to make at least one phone call to 7 other parishioners every week or two. The St Peter's Callers are members of Parish Council, Clergy, and other Leaders in our parish. We have 161 parishioners on the calling list, so you can all expect a phone call in the coming days. The goal is simple: let's pick up the phone, and check in with one another, to offer support in this rapidly changing time of pandemic. If for some reason you do not receive a call in the coming days, please phone me and I can sort out any problems that might emerge (ph. 0488 960 022).

iii) Attending Mass in Person – "Low Mass" only

Unfortunately, during the Victorian Government stage-one restrictions easing, we cannot resume any of the usual Sunday services at St Peter's. Since the closure of Anglican churches to the public on Monday 23rd March, the sacramental heartbeat of St Peter's has continued to beat, albeit much less vigorously than before. Every day, seven days a week, a small group of us has gathered to say Mass in private. Now that the West Door of the church is once again open to the public, for up to 10 people, you are welcome to join Fr Philip, Fr Greg and myself in person for one or more of these simple "Low Mass" services.

Below is a list of the current public Low Mass at St Peter's:

- Monday 7.15am
- Tuesday 7.15am
- Wednesday 7.15am, 1.15pm
- Thursday 7.15am
- Friday 7.15am
- *Saturday – no public worship*
- Sunday 10.30am

Up to ten people can attend any of these services each week, but you will need to read carefully the rules below.

iv) Rules for Those Attending Low Mass in Person

Our new pattern of worship is not Mass the way it used to be at St Peter's. At each of these services, a priest and a server will lead the Low Mass, and up to 10 people will be permitted to join us. There will be a homily, but there will be no organist, no hymns, no choir, and no large serving team. In order to comply with State and Diocesan guidelines, we have strict rules for those attending Mass in person:

- Only 10 are allowed in the congregation
- Sadly, if there are already 10 people in the congregation when you arrive, you will have to go home
- Spatial distancing will be essential; you must stay at least 1.5m away from the priest and all other worshippers
- Rather than Holy Water, you must use the hand sanitiser on entering and exiting the church
- Your name and phone number will be recorded in a log, for every service you attend, in case the State COVID-19 Rapid Response Squad needs to trace a virus outbreak
- Before and after each service, the pews, door handles and other surfaces will be sanitised with an anti-viral solution, by our church cleaners

v) How to "Book a Pew" for Mass

Another big change is that you will now have to "Book a Pew" for Mass. Because only ten people are now allowed to attend public worship, you cannot just turn up like you used to. It is a simple procedure, but you must plan ahead, or you may risk being turned away from church (something none of us would want to happen):

- **Very important: you must "book a pew" at least 48 hours (2 days) in advance of any service you would like to attend**
- Please e-mail the Parish Office – sphoffice@stpeters.org.au (preferred)
- Or phone Kosta on (03) 9662 2391
- Make sure to leave your name and phone number
- Indicate which service, from the above list, you hope to attend
- Indicate the date or dates of the services you would like to attend
- **Please note: if there are already more than 10 people booked for a particular service, you will not be able to attend that service**
- We will call you if this is the case

These are strange times indeed, and the landscape is shifting all the time. We are all experiencing fear, anxiety, anger, and boredom. If there was ever a time that faith matters more than usual, it is now. So, be encouraged, stay connected, remain faithful, and ...

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding
Keep your hearts and minds
In the knowledge and love of God,
And of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;
And the blessing of God,
Who is Creating, Redeeming and Life Giving,
Be with you now,
And with those you love and pray for,
This day, and always.
Amen.