



*Wishing you a happy and Holy Christmas*

Dear Friends,

This letter comes with my very best wishes for a Happy and Holy Christmas and a fulfilling New Year. It is wonderful that we are now able to gather freely with our families and to finally see family from interstate. Our thoughts are with any of you who are still separated from family who are overseas. It has been a long and trying year and we have all experienced difficulties that we never thought we would encounter in our lifetimes.

Collectively we have learnt a whole lot of new skills and I am delighting in the on-line contact that I am having with many of you through Facebook and the new connections that we are making as a Parish. Live streaming the service has had its ups and downs and is still a work in progress. It has enabled families who live some distance away to engage with “their” church and others who are still anxious about coming out an opportunity to continue to share in worship with us. While not ideal, the joint service is working well and more and more people are finding the confidence to return to public worship. Fortunately the regulations have relaxed enough for us to have our usual Christmas services. (The Columbarium will be used for any overflow.)

The Wardens and I are constantly up-dating ourselves on the COVID requirements. We have to be sure that we have the appropriate resources – administrative/cleaning etc – to fulfil the requirements - and when there is some certainty that the virus really is under control, we will do our best to return to something that looks like normal.

Advent and Christmas provide a wonderful time to reflect on the year past and to consider how we will enter the New Year. Many of us have learned just how dependent we are on one another and how much we rely on human touch. I for one will be thanking God that in Australia we have avoided the worst of the pandemic. It will be some time before we are able to really measure the emotional and financial costs of the virus.

I came across this quote from Augustine of Hippo. It is a reminder that God, in Jesus turns everything upside down. This, I think, is why people of faith have weathered this storm. We understand that human values and expectations are not the same as those of the kingdom and that God can take the bad and make something good and beautiful. We know too that God chose to enter our existence and to experience both the good and the bad of being human. Whatever life throws at us, we live with the certainty that we never face life's difficulties alone. As we move forward into a future that is unknown, let us do so hand in hand with God who made us, Jesus who saved us and the Spirit who enlivens us.

*"He lies in a manger but He holds the world in His hand; he is nourished at the breast but He feeds the angels; He is wrapped in swaddling clothes but He clothes us with immortality; He is suckled but is adored; He does not find room in the inn but He makes a temple for Himself in the hearts of believers. For Strength took on weakness that weakness might become strong. Therefore, let us marvel at rather than despise His human birth; from it let us learn the lowliness which such loftiness assumed for our sake. Then let us enkindle our love so that we may come to His eternal day."*

Augustine, Sermon 190, For the Feast of the Nativity.

Blessings

*Staugust*