

HANG IN THERE: EVERY MORNING IS EASTER MORNING

Greetings Everybody to Saints A & A and beyond in some cases. I guess you have all sorts of emails, blogs and a variety of social media to enjoy so I hope with this pastoral letter, keeping in touch won't be a burden to you. It has been wonderful seeing many of you on Zoom Sunday mornings. The feedback has been positive in that people are enjoying connecting in this way. I reflect that other than those who come to the front of the church Sunday mornings we get to see 'all' your faces in worship. However for many of you, you only see the back of a fabulous looking heads as you only look forward, but on Zoom we get to see each other's faces so it feels a lot more engaging. It is almost like gathering in the circle.

As I ring around it is affirming to know the church is doing what we are meant to be doing and that is proactively keeping in touch with not only those on our list, for those who have a list, taking time to ring those in and beyond your circle. People are beginning to feel isolated now, even when they know there is a neighbour, somebody close by yet it is not the socialising we are used to, some are lonely. So keep up the calling and letting people know we are in touch and our thoughts are with each other in this time.

This year, the resurrection story has become relevant in a very different way. Gone are the processions of crosses, baskets of Easter eggs, Easter youth camps and family long weekend holidays. If like me you love the sunrise service, getting to a beach or a mountain top may not have happened and if so it would have been in solitude. Because we are not encountering the same traditions does not make Easter any less relevant as we have gathered in the 'virtual' sense, which has been fun.

We could reflect and say our Easter experiences are more like the first disciples than the celebrative Easters with all the trappings we enjoy. For the first followers of Jesus, resurrection experiences came at the darkest hour, in isolation. These resurrection experiences brought new life despite continued persecution and uncertainty.



Fortunately, as this cartoon sent around by Ian hilariously proclaims, Jesus was not confined to his 'bubble' (tomb), he broke his bubble. He entered into the bubble of his disciples as they met in locked rooms or travelling on isolated roads.

Like me, you will have been reading the stories, watching the news (hopefully not too much). You will see that our politicians are working together, that our communities are supporting each other, enjoying many examples of New Zealand humour, altogether wanting to ensure that New

Zealand remains healthy. There is talk of some positive changes in our environment, which is excellent. Unfortunately, we also see increases in family harm, rises in psychological and financial stressors but also the creative ways people are coming together to address these issues. You might note that the 'Easter Road Toll, ZERO' this must be a good thing.

If nothing else, perhaps this time of lockdown is helping us recognise that what we understood as "normal" previously, is not "normal". Whatever a new "normal" might be, we pray that we will not go back to our pre- COVID'19 existence that is no resurrection. We will no longer normalise greed, inequality, exhaustion, isolation, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, poverty, discrimination, hate and even the traditions and philosophies that maintain and perpetuate these things in religious, social and political organisations.

Perhaps we can begin to see the real impact of Easter and live with the belief, that new life can happen. Resurrection suggests nothing can separate us from the love of – neither life or death – or anything else in creation can separate us from being God’s love in all we do, no matter what our beliefs or traditions. Resurrection is not an escape from death. Nor does resurrection take our attention from earth to heaven. Resurrection embeds us in daily life, in this good earth. Resurrection inspires us to embrace this holy moment, encouraging us to live each day fully, loving wholeheartedly, and not wasting a moment.

Universal God, we embrace resurrection with every new day. Let us live fully today, loving fully, reaching out to one another. **Amen.**

Peace to you and yours Colin