



CHRIST CHURCH

THE ANGLICAN/EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VIENNA

17 November 2020

Dear Friends of Christ Church,

By the rivers of Babylon the people of Israel cried, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" These words from Psalm 137 keep playing in my head as we make our way through the pandemic. They were written down during the people of Israel's exile in Babylon and have been firmly embedded in the Psalter ever since. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 towards the end of the year in Wuhan, China, the landscape of our lives has changed. We all find ourselves in a strange land. We may well be asking ourselves, How can we sing the Lord's song in this strange land in which the pandemic has taken up a prominent place?

On Sunday we heard the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25,14-30). The master gives to each of the servants talents according to their ability. The challenge of this present moment in the light of the Parable is to call on those talents that each has been given knowing that God is generous. While remaining faithful in prayer we must dig deep. Eight months ago to the day I wrote a similar letter to this one. In it I quoted from Matthew's gospel, "Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) Elsewhere in Mathew's gospel Jesus says, "... remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) Wherever we are whether we are in Babylon, like the people of Israel before us or making our way through a pandemic, God promises to be with us. God's promise is not to abandon us.

On Saturday I sent an email promising to let you know how we plan to proceed over the next few weeks and three Sundays: 22 November (Christ the King), 29 November (Advent Sunday) and 6 December. All weekday services and events are moving as now to Zoom.

After consulting with the clergy and churchwardens our Sundays will consist of two services both via Zoom. The first service at 9am will resemble the service as we came to know from during the first lockdown using Common Worship and ending with the Peace. The second service at 1030am will be livestreamed from the church as we have been doing for some months now, but due to the current restrictions only those persons absolutely needed for the service will be in attendance observing all safeguards already in place. During the two services we will leave Zoom on so that we as a congregation can interact with each other regardless of the service we choose to attend perhaps over a cup of coffee or some other light refreshment.

On Advent Sunday there will be an additional service via Zoom in the evening at 6pm to mark the beginning of Advent based on the Advent Service of Lessons and Carols. I hope the above is clear. Contact me if you need further information.

For all services use the same link www.ccv-services.org or the identification code 808 226 2476. If you are having difficulties connecting to Zoom one of the team will be happy to talk to you about how to set up Zoom and connect to the services. The 10.30am service is also being streamed on Facebook and can be watched either live or anytime thereafter. One member of our church wrote me about their experience of Zoom: "For myself, I can only say that it has been a lifeline during the pandemic, in spite of the hiccups. Just to see the inside of the church and the familiar service taking place, gives one the feeling of peace and belonging. Everyone is trying to do their best."

If you require assistance with shopping, need someone to talk to, want to make your confession, receive spiritual direction, or have home communion be in touch with me via the church office. I will be happy to take up your request calling on the other clergy and members of the pastoral team as well as myself to meet it.

Philip Reading writes concerning our bazaar, "The opening of the **Pop-up Bazaar** at the Christ Church Centre has had to be postponed to **Tuesday, 8 December 2020**. It will remain open until Friday 18 December as previously advertised. **All other features are unchanged**, especially the possibility to **order crackers, cards, raffle tickets and Jennie's jams and bakes by e-mail**. Please check our website www.christchurchbazaar.org for updated information as the lockdown situation evolves."

Paul the Apostle had encouraging words for us last Sunday reminding me that not only was he a person of prayer, but he also had a pastoral heart: "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing." Let me end with a prayer that picks up on what Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica as it shows a way to all who cry, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

Eternal God and Father,
you create us by your power
and redeem us by your love:
guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may give ourselves in love and service
to you and to one another;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Curran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

The Revd Canon Patrick Curran