

Pastoral Letter

In the unprecedented times we find ourselves in, fear and uncertainty are very evident. I can certainly understand that in the midst of this palpable global anxiety and panic about our future, the instinct perhaps is to try to seize control and “baton down the hatches” in an attempt to feel a sense of being able to control what seems to be the ever-adjusting response that the coronavirus pandemic is demanding of us.

As baptised Christians, we are to be people of the cross, as well as people of the resurrection. Jesus, in his life and death walked the path of unconditional compassion, kindness and sacrifice. By the power of the Holy Spirit and inspired by the Gospel, this is our journey too. “...just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)...

It is my heartfelt belief that now is actually the very time when our churches are called to witness to, and trust in the generous, risk-taking love of God in Christ. In the wake of borders closing, schools shutting, clubs, restaurants, and cafes stopping their trade, sporting and cultural events being cancelled, the Church is called to be “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16); to feed and sustain those who are spiritually, emotionally and physically in need. As lay and ordained Church leaders we are the bearers of hope; we are the ones to reach out pastorally to the vulnerable, even as we remain vigilant and obedient to government advice. It is imperative for us all to think in new and innovative ways about how we can be faithful disciples, and our places of worship remain beacons of hope, comfort and sanctuary.

At Eastertime, Christians shout: Christ is Risen!, as we give thanks that because of Jesus death is not the end. Of course, the Son rises only after he has taken the towel, served those he loved and walked resolutely to the cross. In loving response to our fearful and panicked world, we must indeed continue to “listen and to pay attention” to our God who says: Here I am! Here I am, and who calls to us individually and as a Church, as we commit and re-commit to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel.

Bishop Kate Prowd Oodthenong

North and Western region of Diocese of Melbourne