

## **Copy of Email sent to Parish from Nathan Sandon**

Regarding COVID-19 the Australian Prime Minister directed this morning that there be no public gatherings in excess of 100 people. Our Archbishop has further directed that all public gatherings of the Anglican Church of Sydney are suspended until further notice.

All public ministries of Austi Thirroul Anglican Church are therefore sadly suspended until further notice. This is effective immediately which means that all of our congregational gatherings for this Sunday are cancelled. This includes all public ministries of the church including the HUB, Youth Group, Playtime and Kids Crew which are now suspended until further notice. Growth groups are currently still permitted to meet as small private gatherings of those who are well, with appropriate hygiene precautions.

I am terribly sad to suspend our large family group gatherings. I genuinely love meeting with you, God's people at Austi and Thirroul, for whom Jesus bled and died. There IS something special about meeting together as Gods people- it's a little foretaste of heaven and the thought of not being able to gather together as one grieves me. Even so, God is sovereign in this time and place and as **Jesus said**

**“I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” - MATTHEW 16:18**

**Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?**

**1 CORINTHIANS 3:16**

Whilst we refrain from gathering under our usual pile of bricks and mortar remember that we are HIS church. We are God's beloved children and we will continue to exist like we always have by listening to God in His precious word and responding by trusting in Him, crying out to him in prayer and so being able to love one another (as he has loved us) and the world in which we live. For a little while HOW we do this will be different.

**Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another-and all the more as you see the day approaching. HEBREWS 10:25**

In this time when gathering in large groups is limited we can harness our current technology for good and as such we will begin **“MEETING TOGETHER DIGITALLY”** from this Sunday. Further email notification will be sent with details to connect online and participate in corporate prayer, worship and bible time. More info to come in a follow up message but if you have a laptop, tablet or mobile phone with camera and internet access you should be good to go.

An “**Austinmer Thirroul Anglican Church Coronavirus response and plan**” is being finalised by staff, parish council and wardens, and will be shared with the church in coming days. We see before us a remarkable time of opportunity for the gospel. In the midst of global pandemic, we are have the hope of the risen Lord Jesus, we have God’s spirit indwelling among us, we have a community of love with whom we can share each others’ burdens, we have freedom to daily read his word and creative minds to consider new ways to encourage each other in a time of “social-distancing” and “self-isolation”. We also have new ways to care for our community and meet the needs (physical, spiritual and emotional) of those who don’t yet know Jesus or share in this hope that we have. Please keep bringing your ideas about how we can shine the light of Jesus into the world that is facing a dark time.

Jesus himself gathered with his disciples in groups of ones, twos, threes and hundreds and thousands. We will find ways to gather in his name. We also have a responsibility to care for those most vulnerable amongst us, with increased age or compromised immunity, by not meeting in person to place them at risk, but still demonstrating love in words and actions as we are able.

While we PHYSICALLY distance from each other we need to RELATIONALLY LEAN IN, being mindful of the increased loneliness, anxiety and depression that may result amongst our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. As we all respond differently to these unusual times, please remember to talk and act with gentleness, grace and compassion. **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” JOHN 13:34-35**

Please, stay connected and up to date. Our communication system is 3fold-

- a) **EMAIL**- it’s never too late to sign up.
- b) **Social media**- [Facebook](#) and [Insta](#)
- c) **WEBSITE**- will also have up to date announcements and info

Grace and Peace,

Nate