

Annual Meeting 2020

Parish of Swan

Rectors Report

Ngaala kaaditj Whadjuk Noongar moort, keyen kaadak nidja boodja.

We acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the original custodians of this land.

Normally our Annual Meeting is held during the months of May or June but due to COVID-19 restrictions it was only with the introduction of Phase Four conditions that the meeting of all enrolled members could take place in the Minchin Centre. The Archbishop has given her permission for the meeting to be delayed to today's date.

The last few months have certainly been extraordinary both in our wider community and in our life as a parish. I would like to record my appreciation for the good-humoured cooperation and mutual care shown by all members of the parish during this difficult time. Like most parishes during the time of lockdown we made electronic services and home worship materials available using our parish web page and blog, with audio podcasts hosted by SoundCloud and video on YouTube. I am grateful to those who assisted with these services which surprisingly attracted significantly greater numbers than our usual services.

We said farewell to two long-time members of the parish since our last Annual Meeting – both John Shaw who died in April and Ray Wright who passed away in May this year were also previous Wardens of the parish and both are sadly missed.

A total of seven funerals were conducted in the parish since the last Annual Meeting, as well as nine baptisms, one confirmation and four children admitted to Holy Communion. Two weddings were conducted including one at All Saints during the lockdown period with only the couple, their two witnesses and the

priest allowed to be present. This, I must report, was a very happy occasion! I worked with a number of other couples preparing for marriage during the lockdown and consequently another six weddings are scheduled between now and October.

Although services have resumed at both our centres, we continue to operate under some restrictions and despite the success in our State in suppressing the numbers of cases we need to continue exercising care to minimising the potential for transmission. We must also be mindful of the possibility that restrictions or even lockdown may be re-imposed in the event of future spikes in COVID cases. Not all of our parish members have been able to resume worshipping face-to-face due to medical requirements, so I ask that those who are still necessarily absent continue to be embraced by the informal network of care that this parish does so well. On this note a special thanks to Helen Wakefield who has done great work this year with the parish Prayer Tree, and to LPMs who have undertaken an effective telephone ministry during the COVID lockdown.

Thanks are due to all who serve our parish in various ways so I would like to note some of these contributions – and of course hope that in doing so I have not overlooked some who serve quietly behind the scenes! One of the important tasks of the Annual Meeting is to appoint Wardens, members of Parish Council and nominators of clergy who all serve until the Annual Meeting next year. My thanks to parish officers who have served this last year and have attended carefully to the finances and maintenance needs of the parish. Resignations during the year include Warden and Parish Council Secretary David Johnston and Treasurer Mary Wright who both ended their terms as at 31 May. Both Mary and David have served for a number of years as Wardens, and have made significant contributions to the life of the parish. My thanks to Helga Aldinger who took on the role of Treasurer from the beginning of June and to Rachael Kelly who stepped in to the position of Secretary for the remainder of the term. Rachael also finishes her term on Parish Council this morning, as do Lynn Cameron and John Davis, so my thanks to them for their service.

As Wardens, David Johnston, Sharon Zuiddam and Rosalyn Tay-Brighton have carried a significant load especially during the last few difficult months, being diligent in attending to maintenance requirements and supportive in the leadership of the parish, and giving me the benefit of their experience and perspective.

Lay Pastoral Ministers make an important contribution in conducting occasional services, assisting me and Reverend Les in the Worship Committee, keeping in touch with isolated parishioners by phone and performing pastoral visits where possible. We have welcomed a number of new LPMs during the year and applications are still being processed for some others – my apologies to those for whom these applications have been delayed. Liturgical Assistants have also risen to the occasion as the ways in which we have been able to worship have changed. My thanks to parish musicians – Shirley Reynolds, Gwen Bayliss, Margaret Grubb at All Saints and Colleen McGrechan and Graham Fist at St Mary's. Incidentally if there are any secret pianists or organists in the parish or elsewhere who would like a turn at playing at St Mary's please do make yourselves known. It is great that with the resumption of singing this month we are again able to enjoy music in our worship.

Thank you to those who prepare weekly intercessions, overhead projectionists, readers and hosts, those who prepare morning tea (and hopefully will soon be able to do more than just open packets of store-bought biscuits). Thank you also to those who assist with cleaning and in particular have undertaken the additional disinfecting required under our COVID plans. As well as acknowledging the hard work done throughout the year around our grounds and gardens both at St Mary's and All Saints by Tony Murace and his Dept of Justice team, we also need to thank the anonymous gardeners who give our gardens here at St Mary's a little extra love. There is always more that can be done around the churches so if there are people who would like to form a gardening or handyperson team – you also are welcome to make yourselves known.

There are reports in your Annual Meeting papers from a number of our parish groups and each of these show that parish members have been occupied in ministry throughout the year in various forms with passion, care and commitment. We have had meditation groups running at both centres – the All Saints group started up again recently and the St Mary's group are hoping to start again soon. I am grateful for the work of parish members on the Worship Committee, Prison Ministry and Emergency Relief, the Evening Prayer group and in the ecumenical World Day of Prayer service that was held at St Mary's this year. Prior to the lockdown the Children's Ministry team had been doing some planning to think about new approaches going forward, and I would be interested in getting our heads together about that again soon – as well, anyone who would be interested in contributing to this discussion and coming back to children's ministry in the parish with renewed energy would be very welcome.

The Swan Parish Activity Group – SPAG – put on several well-attended functions prior to the COVID lockdown which brought parish members and visitors together to build relationships. Although there is no report in your Annual Meeting papers from the Fete coordinators they put in a tremendous effort in the fete held last October and raised an unprecedented amount for the parish as well as keeping All Saints on the community events calendar, so John Davis and Graeme Grubb deserve special acknowledgement. The Craft Group unfortunately missed the reports deadline for the Annual Meeting papers but have been very active during the year including making a substantial donation to parish funds. A Fundraising Group had started to think about activities going forward just before the COVID lockdown and had already come up with some good ideas, so watch this space in future months.

As the Wardens note in their report some much-needed maintenance was done early in the business year (ie mid 2019) around All Saints including the Cloisters and Mitchell Cottage, and it has been necessary to attend to a few jobs at the Old Rectory in Yule Ave and the Minchin Centre. There is always a need for planned maintenance with older buildings – All Saints needs some lighting upgrade and at St Mary's there is a long-standing need for maintenance on the

roof and flooring. During the last business year Parish Council gave some thought to whether it might be possible to access monies held in the Tanner St Trust for restoration and maintenance – Lynn Cameron will be giving a report on the status of this later in the meeting.

In relation to parish finances, as our new Treasurer Helga Aldinger is not in a position to present a report on our finances as at the end of the last financial year (ie. before she became Treasurer) – with her blessing I would like to make a few general observations. Our Independent Examiner Ian Ludlow will be able to talk in more detail about the finances shortly and answer specific questions on this. Thanks to our outgoing Treasurer Mary Wright who prepared the end of financial year reports in the Annual Meeting papers and also to Ian, the financial position is well documented.

As you may remember, in my report to the Annual Meeting last year I commented that the finances of the parish were precarious and noted that the budget for the year ahead projected a deficit. Due to the need for routine maintenance that had been needed and planned for some time, including painting at the Minchin Centre and Cloisters, and the need for new floor covering and other maintenance at Mitchell Cottage prior to moving in, the eventual deficit of \$20k was foreseen by Parish Council. The previous year had returned an operating surplus of \$42k due to the reduced stipend for that year, and on the plus side my move into the Cottage created an ongoing saving to the parish of \$10k annually.

The financial position moving forward is however of more concern, as the projected income of the parish is barely sufficient to cover the cost of stipended ministry and non-discretionary upkeep costs, let alone the planned maintenance of parish buildings. In January this year, the Treasurer alerted the Wardens and me to the fact that she would not be able to produce a balanced budget for the year ending 30 April 2021. As a result, we held a parish finance workshop in early February with a twin focus on planned giving and fundraising – and at this

workshop the Treasurer, Wardens and I made the point that the financial position of the parish is of significant concern.

This of course was before the COVID crisis, which while primarily being a risk to public health also presents economic risks for parish churches, just as it does for individuals, businesses and the entire community. By mid-March, the Treasurer advised that many members of the parish had shifted their offerings away from cash to direct debit – and I want to commend and thank you for doing this as it creates more financial stability for the parish during an uncertain time. As I noted back then in the parish blog, there were three financial risks for the parish – the risk of reduced offerings as well as lost income from fundraising and hall hire. Our offerings have reduced a little since COVID but it says much about the dedication of parish members that it has been just a little. However we needed to cancel our hall hire arrangements as well as fundraising plans – hopefully with the easing of restrictions both of these can come back soon but it does impact the parish bottom line. On the plus side, we have been receiving the Government's JobKeeper subsidy which is keeping both me and Kristy employed, and this looks like being payable at least until the end of September. All this is to say that it is not possible yet to predict how the financial impact of COVID for the parish will eventually pan out, but the present financial position is very difficult. This will be a challenge for the incoming Parish Council, who will need to balance priorities carefully. It is also a challenge for both our worshipping communities and each of us as we consider our gifts to the parish.

By way of conclusion – it has certainly been an interesting year! One thing that became very obvious, to me at least, during the period we were unable to have face-to-face services – is how much we needed to meet together in worship. As a parish we are not just a collection of individuals who happen to worship God in the same building – but a worshipping community who encounter God in and through one another. If lockdown has reminded us of how wonderful it is to be able to worship together then that is a good thing! My hope and prayer is that we will continually be reminded of this so that we can become a community of reconciliation and mutual encouragement and joy.