

Thursday 28th January 2021

Dear Church Family,

We are about to commence another year together as a church community and it is worth reflecting on the year that has been. Although we have been spared from community transmission of Covid in Wagga, we have felt the restrictive effects of the pandemic throughout much of the year. I have felt particularly heavy hearted for those in retirement villages and hospitals who have had to endure social isolation with even their loved ones unable to see them for significant periods of time. Sadly, we have had to farewell members of our own parish at private funerals with limited numbers able to attend.

Yet, amid adversity there have been new opportunities emerge such as livestreaming/DVD distribution, food hamper deliveries and all sorts of online innovations. We have seen the St Paul's toilet and hall refurbishment take place and are anticipating major work at St Alban's soon. When we returned to gathering in the middle of last year, we duplicated our congregations and we have managed to organise our patterns of attendance with relative flexibility. We have even seen new people join us during these strange times and if you are one such person, I want to give you a special welcome.

We feel both cautious and optimistic as we begin 2021. It seems that ministries are largely returning to some normalcy (albeit with social distancing) and yet we know how quickly things could once again change. It's important that we keep connecting with one another and allow ourselves to express the range of emotions we might feel.

This weekend will be a special weekend of worship, celebration, and dedication. It is our annual *Vision Weekend* and we commence a five part sermon series thinking together about being an authentic and living church. We start with *worship*, and then in subsequent weeks consider *service, fellowship, evangelism* and *impact*.

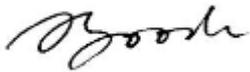
On Sunday evening (5pm) 31st January we will be holding Kylie Polkinghorne's Commissioning Service as she commences her MTS traineeship as our Family and Community Minister.

From Sunday 6th February, at 5pm Evening Church, we will be featuring the award winning mini-series *The Chosen* – a portrayal of the life of Jesus through the eyes of those who encountered him. Over eight weeks we will show each episode of series one and create a relaxed and accessible church experience that you can enjoy and invite your family and friends along to.

Another opportunity worth considering is joining a bible study group, or special interest group, or serving on a team associated with Sunday or a mid-week ministry. Sometimes it can feel lonely in a crowd and connecting in small groups and serving side by side, seems to me, to be God's way of creating and nurturing relationships. Our bible study groups will start up during February as we enter the Lenten/Easter season, and you can speak to myself or Peter Caspersenn about what may suit you.

My prayer, as we commence our year together is that we would continue our journey of being a living church – a community of people who find our ultimate meaning in the triune God and therefore flourish in relationships and service of one another. Such a church will find itself evangelising and impacting our city in ever new and creative ways.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Scott".

Scott