



The Scots' Church Melbourne

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN VICTORIA, FOUNDED 1838

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Dear friends

Trials and trust in turbulent times

What a time we are living through! An unseen virus has upended so many things we had come to take for granted. We have witnessed scenes in our apparently prosperous, safe and secure nation of Australia; scenes that most of us would never have predicted. The rising numbers of this second wave of the coronavirus here in Melbourne have been shocking and frightening as we adjust to compulsory face masks, closed borders and a re-imposed lockdown.

The wave of coronavirus deaths and infections across aged care, including our own Kirkbrae Presbyterian Homes' aged care facility at Kilsyth is particularly distressing.

In his press release of 28 July, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Colin Morrow said, in relation to Kirkbrae's aged care facility: *"The Victorian Health Department has decided to evacuate all residents immediately and transfer them to various hospitals in the region. We fully endorse the department's resolve to protect all Victorians in the current pandemic and we are doing everything in our power to cooperate with the department in the transfer of our residents. The welfare of the residents and that of our staff, is of the utmost importance to us."*

One of our own Scots' Church members serving on the PCV committee overseeing Kirkbrae, told us: *"The staff have done a fantastic job... (but) once all the staff had to quarantine, they could no longer look after the nursing home residents. The staff are exhausted."*

That is just one glimpse into the turbulent times we are now experiencing.

It's been turbulent and testing for the Scots' Church, too. Being unable to gather together in worship and fellowship is a great loss and a deep sadness. The sudden incapacity of our Minister to the CBD, Rev Richard O'Brien, is distressing. Add to this the fact that our Senior Minister position has been vacant since January. Turbulent times, indeed!

Of course, when we consider the sweep of human history, and the ebbs and flows in the history of Christ's church, we can gain a bit of perspective. The Apostle Paul, no stranger to adversity, reminds us:

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:20-21, ESV)

Despite what we are going through, our true citizenship is secure. It rests on simple trust. Trust in Christ; his earthly mission, his perfect obedience, his atoning sacrifice and his sovereign rule over all things, at the right hand of the Father. Our Scots' Church forebears could not have chosen a more apt motto for us: *In God we trust*.

But trusting in God does not mean sitting around doing nothing. Despite the very necessary restrictions and limitations, your church continues to function in many, often innovative ways.

Our pre-recorded Sunday 11.00 am services continue, with Rev Mike Raiter re-joining us throughout August. The preaching schedule for the remainder of the year is being planned. Andrew Wong conducts videoed contemporary services for St Stephen's and the *Engage* congregation, and for anyone else who wants to drop in. Prof Sen Sendjaya and Rev Christian Tirtha continue to provide videoed Sunday morning services to our Indonesian-speaking congregation. Pastoral care, led by Rev Litha Heshusius and supported by the pastoral care team is but a phone call away.

The new look, and much expanded *Scots' Weekly* now arrives in your email inbox each Friday and is posted on the church website to keep you connected and up to date.

In a new initiative commencing on 2 August, you will be able to join a **Scots' Church pre-service catch-up via Zoom** from 10.30 to 11.00 am each Sunday. You'll find the link included in the *Scots' Weekly*.

Following the success of the recent *Big Hymn Sing* on You Tube, preparations have now begun to film this year's *Service of Nine Lessons with Carols*, so it too can be made available to the world. Other events are also under consideration.

Meanwhile, your Selection Committee has been faithfully working away in the background in the search for the 14th Senior Minister; the man after God's own heart who will, together with the elders, lead this church into the future that God has already planned.

Let us pause to thank God for this church of 182 years. Consider your own role within it as sisters and brothers in the living body of Christ. And in doing so, take the Apostle Paul's exhortation and encouragement to heart:

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me— practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:5-9, ESV)

May the Lord bless you and keep you all



REV PHILIP COURT
Interim Moderator



PETER ARMSTRONG
Session Clerk