



Rectors Desk

2 June 2020

As we enter lockdown stage three, we are not only concerned with visiting Tops to replenish wilting wine stocks.

The President made a surprise announcement on 26th May. Places of worship have been allowed to reopen albeit under very strict hygiene criteria with a limit of fifty people.

St Margaret's responded immediately on 27th May, having discussed the matter with church Council and Executive. "St Margaret's will not be opening any time soon." (<https://bit.ly/2AulnUY>)

On 28th May, Ndabezinhle Sibisi (our caretaker Bishop) met with Chapter (consultative clergy group) to discuss the President's declaration. They decided that all churches should spend the month of June getting ready to reopen. Chapter will meet again at the end of June to reassess the situation and provide further guidance. In the meantime, we await Diocesan guidelines to make our building ready for collective (and selective) worship.

Today, we met with an Operational Health and Safety consultant who advised that the disease is spread in three ways: through touching surfaces (and one another), through airborne droplets (saliva, sneezing, breathing and coughing), and through faeces. In order to meet the government's criteria and the World Health Organisation standards, the church will have to do many things.

- Shoes left at the door
- People sitting at least 1.5m away from each other
- An area designated for individuals and an area for 'family/household clusters'
- Seats numbered and a record of who sat where and when, so that if someone is infected, those present who sat around them can be notified
- No shaking of hands, just a wave and a nod across the pews at the peace
- Communion will be highly regulated and likely to be in one kind only
- Singing from behind masks and installing Perspex screens at the front of church

Who will decide who can come to a service and who has to stay away? At St Margaret's, a high proportion of our congregation are more vulnerable to the disease. What level of risk are we prepared to take in order to physically worship together?

We are social beings and understandably eager to get back to church, but we cannot afford to take this disease lightly. There are numerous examples of how religious gatherings have aided the spread of the disease, leading to the deaths of church members and even a pastor.

It is clear that St Margaret's is in a privileged position. Many other churches are not able to communicate

with a WhatsApp group, and cannot produce online services or make online tithes.

Over the last ten weeks, I believe St Mags has demonstrated the three primary marks of what it means to be church: mission, service and worship.

We have been able to come together on Sundays for worship, albeit from our own homes. We have continued to serve through our giving, time and contributions to services. We have strongly come together on the issue of social justice, supporting the poorest in our city with our amazing response to the Covid Care Packages appeal. St Mags has been church in an authentic way through lockdown. I would say that virtual worship is real worship.

Jesus said: "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)

Being the church means loving one another and right now, love means keeping a safe physical distance. This is how people will know we are Jesus' disciples.

June Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays

2nd Karen Cunningham
3rd George Muller
4th Robyn-Leigh Naude
Liam Bowers
5th Christian van Rensburg
9th Luke Barrett
13th Marianna Chamberlain
18th Michael Steveni
Leo Russell
22nd Cheryl Foxon
Sinamandla Mgcisane
25th Leigh Parsons
Peter Donet
29th Ezra Naude
30th Sharon Harris

Anniversaries

10th Barry & Jean Bingham
14th Andrew & Leanne Fenwick
Moses & Nana Mbatha
Jeffrey & Sharon Harris
20th Peter & Sheila Naude

Care Packages

By Becca McGowan

Covid-19 and the strict lockdown in South Africa has been hard for all of us. But it has been incredibly challenging for those living in poverty. Those who live hand to mouth and struggle to make ends meet in “normal” life. A small team of us at St Mags decided that we had to “do something”. We wanted to make a difference in the lives of those struggling with hunger, people who others would overlook as food parcels were handed out.

We heard about Father George, a Congolese Catholic priest in Point Road, and contacted him. From that first phone conversation, we knew we wanted to partner with him. Father George had hundreds of destitute families asking him for help. These families were part of the refugee community and were not only excluded from government support, but they were also being targeted by the police and harassed by locals. So we decided to partner with Father George, and also with Starfish Keepers who were trying to feed needy families in our local community.

We launched the St Mags Covid Care Package appeal. We were so happy to receive donations from church members and others in the locality. Then I, Becca, got a phone call from a friend who runs a church in the UK. They wanted to help! The church is called Soul Survivor, it's a big church (much bigger than St Mags!) in a very socio-economically diverse area. Incredibly, they raised R440,000 to provide care packages for Father George. This was added to a corporate donation of R18,000, and R26,000 from our church community.

We are blown away by the provision and grace of God! We have been able to provide 1,240 care packages for Father George (at R250 each), plus a further 1,000 simpler care packages. We have given 1,900 masks - many were made by members of St Mags. We have bought 1800 loaves of bread, tins of beans and apples for the soup kitchen that provides emergency food (also run by Father George). On top of this, we have helped 108 families locally in the Durban North area with care packages.

And the donations are still coming in!

We all know that St Margarets is a small church. We are not incredibly wealthy. And yet we are able to tell a story of God's miraculous provision during the lockdown.

“Thank you, thank you,” said Father George. He continued, “I want to bless everyone at St Margarets church. The Bible says, “Who every gives to the poor lends to God.” I bless every one of you individually and as a group. Thank you.”

Thank you for everything you have done to contribute and please continue to make masks and donate financially when you are able to. The need is still great. And we believe God's love is even greater.



Diocese of Natal



Diocese of Natal

The Very Reverend Ndabezihle Sibisi
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3rd June 2020

A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND UNITY TO THE NATAL DIOCESAN FAMILY

1. GREETING

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Romans 1:7b*).

2. WE ARE NOT OPENING OUR CHURCHES YET

At a recent meeting of Chapter the corporate and prayerful wisdom of the Archdeacons discerned that it is **too early** to open our churches. This is probably a disappointment to many, but many factors were borne in mind as we considered this important issue, including:

- (a) **Saving lives** and ensuring the good health of all was the first goal. Every single life is honoured and precious to our God and to us. We do not want to lose lives or cause illness because of negligence or recklessness.
- (b) We are entering the **winter** season when the COVID virus appears to be most virulent.
- (c) We are in line with **10 other Dioceses** in ACSA who have prayerfully made the same decision.
- (d) **Bishop Michael** has supported this decision in the following words: *"I am very grateful for the wisdom and common sense of this decision by the Vicar General and Chapter of the Diocese."*

3. PENTECOST

Our celebration of the great Pentecost feast was different (and perhaps lonely) this year and many have struggled to understand the absence of church gatherings in our buildings. We are, however, reminded by the season that the **Holy Spirit is never under lockdown** and the challenge for Christians is to discern the power and energy of the Spirit in our homes, families, friends, hearts (and even our phones can help). Remember that the first Pentecost took place amidst bewilderment, hostility and grief and yet it was the powerhouse from which the message of the risen Christ spread down 20 centuries.

4. PATIENCE

We often find patience difficult but we do not have to do it alone. Gal 5: 22-25 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit includes **patience** and '*if we live by the Spirit let us also be guided by the Spirit*'

- (a) A season of waiting calls for patience to **interrogate our faith**, to re-think many assumptions like the difference between going to church and **being** the church. We are encouraged to move from fear which can cause negligence to a spirit of **understanding and care**.
- (b) So often Jesus modelled **patience**? He prepared for his ministry for 30 years! And, after the resurrection, he advised the disciples to be patient and wait for him in Galilee (Mt 28:6). What a difficult task for them but what rewards!
- (c) We are invited to use this time of waiting patiently, prayerfully and creatively!. In the mysteries of our God this period of discovery will invigorate and renew our faith. And never forget the **power of prayer** which the Spirit will always honour and guide (Romans 8:26-7).

Diocese of Natal
Loving Communities Luke 5:4

5. UNITY

It is essential for us all to work **together in unity** in maintaining our church life and finding new ways of **being the Church**. Our leaders in Chapter have taken this corporate and prayerful decision under the guidance of the Spirit. We look forward to a time when they can steer the ship into calmer waters. Please do not disregard their wishes. Not only could that put lives at risk but it would disturb the **spirit of unity** that Jesus prays for so earnestly in John 17:11. May we **co-operate** with the wisdom of our Archdeacons, and not depart from their guidance.

6. GRATITUDE AND ANTICIPATION

We are so grateful to all the faithful clergy and ministers who are keeping the home fires burning and providing ministry while still observing the rules of lockdown and social distancing. Thank you! Please share with us and each other any special and rich experiences of the Spirit that touch you during this difficult time, both personal and at parish level. Remain strong, courageous and co-operate with the wisdom of our Chapter. Do continue your wonderful work of obedience, prayer and service.

7. **GOD'S TIMING**

On Monday 1 June our Lectionary continuous readings pointed us to 2 Peter 1 which offers superb advice for a time of bewilderment and uncertainty.

"...Make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

8. **May the Holy Spirit be our guide** and support as we go forward in faith and in partnership with our Church leadership. And let us look forward to a time when we can gather together again. The first service in each parish will be a time of glorious celebration and thanksgiving that we will remember for life.

9. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

(1 Corinthians 16:23-24).

Yours in Christ



Ndabezihle Sibisi
Dean/Vicar-General
Diocese of Natal

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Loving Communities Luke 5:4

Giving Back

There are many ways to get involved and help people that are destitute caused from the Lockdown. Many of us have more than 1 mask, probably some to even match your outfit, so Irene's Granddaughter, Meg, wanted to help and she is helping Irene make masks for our church's charity. Never has she sewed before but look at the beautiful masks she has made. Well done Meg!



Giving



We would like to **thank** all those that have generously and faithfully continued their timed/direct payments giving to St Mags during this time.

If you would like to carry on giving to the weekly 'plate/box' manually, there is a Zapper code along with EFT banking details below.

Church banking details:

Bank: Standard Bank, Durban North

Code: 042 826

Acct: 051409615

If you have any articles, information, events or notices relating to St Mags and would like to include it in the newsletter. Please contact Leigh Parsons on mail@leighwillows.co.za



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