

CHRISTMAS NEWS FROM ST PAUL'S PARISH

Dear Parishioners –

Christmas is coming!

I can't believe it's another Advent! **Advent** is a season of preparation and expectant waiting: preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ at the first Christmas. But it's also a time to turn our attention once again to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time.

The word 'Advent' comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means 'coming'. It marks the beginning of a new liturgical year.

Of course, 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us in a variety of ways, but as we enter Advent we have much for which we can be grateful.

The pandemic has been a 'faith journey' for the parish, but we have done so well! Much of that is down to the fact we responded and adapted quickly to the changing landscape, to ensure we had what we needed to stay connected as a community and remain spiritually nurtured.

In late March, we installed **live-streaming** equipment in the church, which enabled regular access to **Mass every single day of the week**, plus Tuesday night **bible study** and Wednesday night **RCIA** sessions, AND our online **Rosary** (all four sets of Mysteries), the **Divine Mercy** chaplet and the **Stations of the Cross**. This innovation has been a great asset for our parish and has allowed us to reach and nourish thousands of people – not only in our own parish, but across WA and all of Australia, as well as NZ, the UK, US, Italy, India and our latest country to add viewers: Vietnam! And although we in Perth are able to go to church freely, we should remember that in many places, attendance is severely limited to 20 or so, and masks must be worn during Mass – so our 'online congregation' deeply appreciates the fact that we continue to live-stream, and do it so well. This has been a great source of strength for many who have been unable to attend church in person.

The **links** to all future live-streamed events (see below) are on the parish website, along with the archived recordings of all of these events. If you are yet to discover the benefits of live-streaming, I encourage you to watch one or two as part of your Advent preparation at home.

A big thank-you to our many selfless parishioners who come to church every day to produce the live-streamed Mass: our readers, Alessio & Theodore providing beautiful music, and about a dozen primary, secondary and tertiary students who operate the cameras and computer for us. They have been true champions!

I feel very confident that we are well prepared to stay connected virtually, should we need to have any future lock down periods in WA.

And now for some important announcements of coming events:

Advent Program at St Paul's:

We have a number of events offered at St Paul's to assist people in their Advent preparation for Christmas and I'd like to invite you to participate in as many as you can.

A Festival of Lesson and Carols - Sunday 13th December - 7 - 8.30pm

Each year we present this traditional service of Scripture readings, carols, prayer and a short homily by a guest preacher. Our wonderful parish choir of ten professional singers will lead us in singing the carols we all love, plus special music for our listening pleasure.

If you are attending in person, please book an allocated seat in the church; alternatively, the service will be live-streamed on the night.

Booking link: <https://www.trybooking.com/BNEVY>

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Advent Confessions - Tuesday 22 December 6.15 - 7.30pm.

Four priests will be available for confessions, beginning immediately after the 5.45pm Mass that evening. There will be no communal service - simply come to church, take a sheet with the examination of conscience and method of confession, and then approach one of the priests to receive the Sacrament of Penance. You are free to leave when you finish.

If you are attending in person, please book an allocated seat in the church.

Booking link: <https://www.trybooking.com/BNEVZ>

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Christmas Masses Timetable

Holy Mass will be offered:

- Christmas Eve 24 December 4.30pm (cantor)
- Christmas Eve 24 December 6.00pm (cantor)
- Christmas Eve 24 December 12 midnight (choir) with carols program at 11.30pm
- Christmas Day 25 December 9.00am

- NB: There will be NO Mass on Christmas Day afternoon. -

Booking link: <https://www.trybooking.com/BMIZR>

For the past month, parishioners have been eagerly **booking seats for Masses** on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to ensure they can attend their preferred time. This has been advertised at Mass, in the parish bulletin and on the parish website, and most people are well organized and already booked. *All Mass times except Christmas Day at 9.00am are fully booked.*

If your preferred time is fully booked and you would like to attend Christmas Mass, we will provide **overflow seating in the St Paul's school hall, but you must book an allocated seat in the Overflow section for those Masses.** We will live-stream the Masses from the church, and acolytes or extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist will distribute Holy Communion to those in the hall, from a tabernacle with the reserved Eucharist that will be kept in the hall. We do not want to be in the position where we have to turn people away, because there is 'no room in the inn' – so please make sure you and your loved ones are booked in!

Alternatively, all four Christmas Masses will be live-streamed for those not able to attend in person.

Further Pandemic Protocols

Our church is normally packed to the rafters at the Christmas events . . . but not this year. As a place of worship, it's very important that we demonstrate our adherence to the Government guidelines on social distancing and maximum capacity levels. It's also important our parishioners can be proud that we are upholding the protocols appropriately, and feel confident to come and worship at St Paul's safely.

Reserve your seat

In our parish, we are managing the capacity by **booking allocated seats** (by pew and seat number) for each of the major events, so we know when we are at capacity, and also have contact details for contact tracing if we need them. This actually enables us to have a greater number of people attend in person, whilst maintaining the social distancing protocols. *Without booking, we can only accommodate one-half of our seating capacity; but by booking allocated seats, we can accommodate two-thirds of our capacity.*

Contact Tracing Records

From December 5th, the WA Government requires us to resume our protocol of keeping attendance records, for contact tracing purposes.

To make life easier for parishioners, we will use the Government's **SafeWA app** and make available a QR code at the each of the entrance doors to St Paul's Church.

For tech-savvy parishioners with a smart phone (and who have downloaded the SafeWA app) please scan the posted code as you enter either the front or side doors. Manual signing sheets will also be available at each door for those who prefer the 'old school' way.

Note – EVERY attendee/person in the family **MUST** be registered, not just one person in the family. So anyone without a smart phone – adult or child – must be registered in writing.

Weekly Collections

Another adjustment is that with the withdrawal of the physical collection baskets during Mass, many people have transitioned to **direct debit** for their weekly collection support of the parish. The banking details are available on the parish website and weekly bulleting if you would like to set this up also. This has been hugely beneficial and I thank you for your regular and ongoing financial support of the parish. The **Perspex boxes** are still available at the each entrance for those who like to bring cash on the day.

Booking Assistance

Everyone has adapted really well with self-booking, but if you need extra assistance with booking tickets to any of the Advent Program listed above, please contact **Linley Plowman** on linley.plowman@iinet.net.au or **0407383914** ; she is available in the evenings to assist you.

Regular Mass and Confession Times

If you wish to come to church at other times, our regular Mass and confession times are:

- Saturday evening: 4.30pm (live-streamed) and 6.00pm
- Sunday: 9.00am and 4.30pm
- Monday – Friday: 5.45pm (live-streamed)
- First Saturday: 10.00am (live-streamed, with Rosary at 9.35am)
- Confessions: Sundays 3.30 – 4.15pm (NOT live-streamed – ha ha!)

Christmas is when people often ‘come home’ to the Church after being away for a long time. This year maybe more so, as people search for meaning in a challenging year. Please keep an eye out for new faces and make them feel welcome.

Welcome, Father Mariusz!

I’m so very happy to announce that **Father Mariusz Grzech** will be joining the pastoral team at St Paul’s as our new Assistant Priest! This is a first for St Paul’s – we’ve never had an Assistant Priest before, so this is a sign that the Archdiocese recognises the tremendous growth our parish has experienced, and the important role St Paul’s plays as a parish that provides reverently-celebrated liturgy, vibrant preaching, beautiful church music and a variety of opportunities to come together for prayer, education and fellowship. Father Mariusz is finishing up his ministry as Chaplain at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, and after a well-deserved break, will come to us to help us all (but especially me!)

Congratulations – you’ve made it to the end!

Thank you for reading this rather long but important newsletter. Please don’t forget that the weekly parish bulletin is available on our parish website, along with special announcements to keep everyone up-to-date and in touch.

Please do bring this newsletter to the attention of parishioners or friends of St Paul’s who may not read it online – to avoid having people ‘rock up to church’ and find they needed a booking but ‘didn’t know’. Thanks for that!

I wish you all a holy Advent season as we prepare to welcome the Infant Jesus on Christmas Day, and I look forward to seeing you in the coming weeks at St Paul’s! And please pray for me, that I can remain in good health and serve you to the best of my ability.

God bless

Father Tim

Rev Fr Timothy E Deeter, Parish Priest