

Dear Parishioners

No contact services

Following the decision by President Ramaphosa to allow churches to reopen from 1 June, the parish staff has been working on an implementation plan while waiting on guidelines from the diocesan leadership. The Bishop's chapter has subsequently decided to **postpone 'contact services' until August**, which would give opportunity for all parishes to adequately prepare a Covid health and safety compliance plan, train teams, and acquire the necessary PPE while we anticipate reaching the peak of the pandemic. Some will be disappointed by this decision, while others would call this wise. Many churches across the country are refraining from opening as they #waittocelebrate.

Following a discussion I had with other clergy, my interpretation of the proposals by the SACC to the government is that the lifting of restrictions is to particularly help rural parishes and their communities who cannot minister online. We acknowledge, however, as set out in the SACC's document, that digital ministry cannot substitute the physical gathering of community, and the sense of oneness that it brings. A new normal nevertheless is that services in the future will occur both physically and be streamed.

Since the beginning of the lockdown, St George's has taken to safeguard the health of our parishioners very seriously, adhering to the regulations as best possible. You can be assured that reopening will be done in the same spirit and concern. In the meantime, as we continue with our online ministry, please send us a picture via WhatsApp or email of what church at home is like for you. Take a photo of the kids watching and engaging with Goded or of the family gathering around the computer to listen to the sermon. Please show us your home as we showed you ours. We would find it meaningful and as a wonderful gesture of the spirit of community that prevails.

With the arrival of level 3, a new sense of purpose has filled the hearts of South Africans. We are earnestly working towards the full opening of the parish office. We continue to work efficiently from home, but want to be more accessible to you. Our part in the social relief efforts is also something that we take seriously. The primary reason it seems for the President to allow churches to reopen is to offer psychological support. Increasing studies and our own experience indicate that the stress of this time is as unprecedented as the pandemic itself. If you or anyone you know need counselling, please contact Nomawethu at Secretary@stgeorges.org.za for a referral to one of our AngliCare counsellors. There is no shame in simply wanting to chat things over.

We will stay in touch as we try to stay on top of ever changing circumstances,
Rev Eben.

