

HOW WILL OUR CHURCH MANAGE?

“The Times They are a Changin!” – to quote Bob Dylan’s 1964 folk hit.

If we can’t gather together for worship – which is the mainstay of parish life – how will we manage? In the wake of this week’s reluctant directive to cease public worship services for the time being, there are some very real questions:

- What about the tiny rural church that meets once a month with a small congregation of a dozen or less? Not meeting for six months or more will kill it.
- What about the frail and elderly for whom the church and the warmth of the fellowship is the centre of their world?
- What about the young mums at the playgroup who no longer have the opportunity to share the struggles of parenthood with friends and have a sane conversation?
- What about the little craft group that ministers to those on the fringe of the church?
- What about the small group or Bible Study that provides regular sustenance both spiritually and emotionally.

In 2016, I visited war-torn Syria. Many of the Christians there faced similar struggles – except their churches had been blown up or bombed!



The church there has survived, and in some places flourished, despite the difficulties they have faced.

Resilience lies first in trusting in a loving heavenly father whose heart is for his people. Psalm 46 says, “God is our refuge and strength; an ever present help in trouble”. Through his Spirit, there will be new ways forward that will enable our churches not only to survive the current crisis, but to grow within it.

Secondly resilience requires a willingness to listen for God’s voice, adapt to change, and be creative.

Here are some suggestions:

Whether you are in a small rural setting, where people are spread out and only really gather on a Sunday or in an emergency; or whether you are in a larger church in a town:

- Recognise that this IS an emergency. The boat is a little rocky, but if we are wise we can prevent it from sinking!
- If you have a parish roll, ask for volunteers willing to make a few phone calls each week, to keep in touch with one another. Ask three simple questions:
- How are you managing? (do you need help?)
- Is there a bible passage or verse that has helped you?
- How can I pray for you?
- For those who have internet access, encourage visiting the online resources and recorded services that the diocesan office is making available.
<https://anglicancg.org.au/keep-connected/>
- Please continue to be regular in your giving! It is within our church members' power to prevent our parishes from becoming further economic casualties. This might be a good time to explore regular online giving if people don't already use it. This will ensure that the church can continue to pay its minister and its bills.