



Diocese of Willochra

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A PUBLICATION OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA

FOLLOWING Jesus ♦ PROCLAIMING His gospel ♦ CONNECTING with His world ♦ and ENJOYING our common life



Advent
A Season of Hope & Expectation

THE WILLOCHRAN

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Contributions towards the cost of printing publications would be appreciated and may be made to the Diocese of Willochra

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Suggestions, comments, contributions and insights are welcome

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Diocese Of Willochra

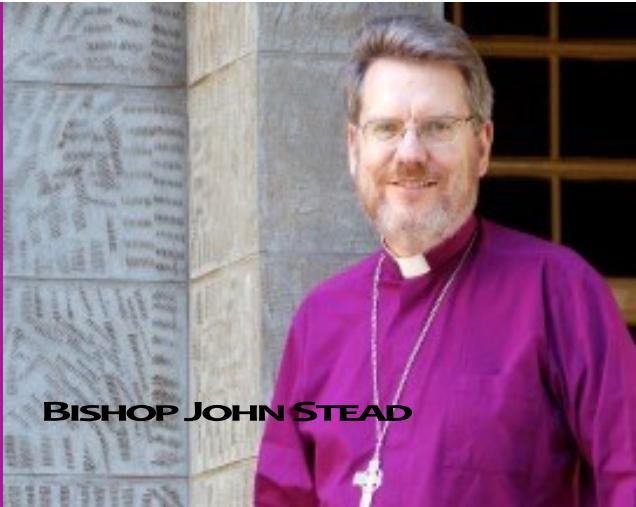
A PRAYER FOR OUR DIOCESE

God of hope and love,
you have called us to be the body of Christ.
Inspire us in the Diocese of Willochra
to worship with joy and energy,
serve with compassion and be welcoming
of others in our communities,
so that all will know the good news of Jesus
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be honour and glory for ever.

Amen.



The Willochran is a member of the Australasian Religious Press Inc and Silver Certificate winner in 2020 and Gold Certificate winner in 2021.



BISHOP JOHN STEAD

As I write, it is just over a week since we started a new Church Year and just under four weeks until we start the new calendar year.

I have been led to wonder why we like to be able to draw a conclusion to one year and assume that we are starting afresh the very next day, as the clock moves from 11:59:59 pm to 12:00 am. In reality, the difference between one year and the next is milliseconds.

These last two years, 2020 and 2021, are not likely to be years that we wish we could repeat. There may be parts of each year that we will remember fondly. Much of the year will contain memories of a level of anxiety, even for those of us who are not ordinarily inclined to be anxious. COVID19, whether the original variant, delta or the more recent Omicron variant, has left us with a level of uncertainty – will someone we know and love be infected, will the borders be open so that we can see family members who we haven't seen since last year, and so forth? The changes resulting from varying circumstances due to COVID19 can be quite sudden; it has become part of the 'pandemic normal'.

We live in a world of uncertainty. For many people across the globe, the tension was evident to them long before COVID19: Where was the next meal coming from? How safe was the water to drink? If you were a girl in Afghanistan, were you going to continue with your education, or in South Sudan and Myanmar, what would the military government do next?

Joseph and Mary were compelled to journey to Bethlehem into an uncertain future – where would they stay once they arrived there, would Mary's baby be born there or while they were travelling, and what would their future be like?

Yet amid that uncertainty, both Mary and Joseph could return to the recollection of their Angelic visitations, the assurance of certainty that they had been given by God's messengers. Life would continue to have uncertainties, yet the greater certainty of God's love for them and God's call upon their lives would always be with them.

This certainty continues with each of us: God loves us, you and me! God calls us, you and me! God is our sure and constant hope!

May the recollection of the birth of the Christ Child fill you with all joy in believing in the certainty of God's love surrounding you and those who you love!

Peace,

The Right Reverend John Stead ♦ Bishop of Willochra ♦ bishop@diowillochra.org.au ♦ Mobile: 0417551689

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FRIENDS OF THE DIOCESE

Friends of the Diocese of Willochra recently met at St Peter's Cathedral in Adelaide to share fellowship and to catch up on all the news. Bishop John gave us an insight on some Bible content and then we were entertained by Archdeacon Dave McDougall.

The Friends of the Diocese has been established to help the Diocese of Willochra See Endowment Fund.



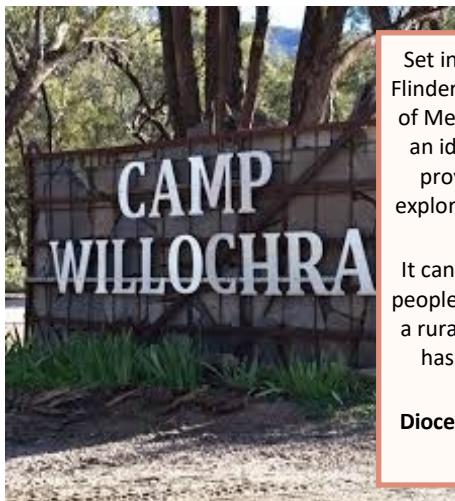
"Entertainment" provided by Dave McDougall

ALPHA AT HOLY TRINITY, RIVERTON



Alpha is a series of interactive sessions that create a safe and honest space, online or in person, where people can explore life, faith and meaning.

Members of our congregation (the younger ones!) have organised to run an Alpha program between now and early next year, using on-line videos. On a Sunday evening we start with a light tea and then the video. Although it took some resolve on our part to launch the program, at this stage our group, although small, is enthusiastic.



Set in the beautiful Southern Flinders Ranges, just 5km north of Melrose, Camp Willochra is an ideal spot for camps and provides a great place for exploration, peace, study, play and worship.

It can accommodate up to 94 people at an affordable price in a rural environment, and also has a swimming pool and coffee lounge.

Diocesan Road, 5km north of Melrose SA 5483

AN ANGLICARE WILLOCHRA UPDATE

In early 2021 the Anglicare Willochra Committee met to consider a new Strategic Plan. The old plan was well and truly out of date, and with a new worker employed for one day a week, it was time to review, highlight and select the work the committee hoped to achieve in the next couple of years. Peter Burke from AnglicareSA, a good friend and supporter of Anglicare Willochra, facilitated the day and helped the committee discern their priorities. For the three years, 2021-2023, Anglicare Willochra aims to pursue:

Reconciliation with our First Nations Peoples – through the nurturing of relationships with Aboriginal people across the Diocese; through active learning in reconciliation in study and reflection; through engagement with the Point Pearce Aboriginal Community and elsewhere such as Whyalla, Ceduna, Port Augusta and Port Lincoln; through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as directed by Reconciliation Australia.

Emergency and Financial Assistance – through our collaboration with AnglicareSA in the provision of Emergency Assistance and Financial Counselling in Whyalla and Wallaroo; through the identification of other ways to contribute to the provision of such assistance across the Diocese; through a focus on Disaster Recovery and Relief, both in terms of practical and pastoral assistance.

Community Capacity Building – through the development of projects whereby people and communities can be encouraged to be more sustainable and just; through learning more about models of 'asset-based management' and how we can participate actively in this; through valuing and supporting the small initiatives which faith communities are already undertaking or desire to commence.

Communications – through the sharing of stories and examples where good things are happening and people's lives are changed for the better; through the support of local leaders engaging in community projects in all times and seasons; through regular communication with the people of the Diocese in relation to the breadth of community engagement and future possibilities; through identifying opportunities to increase the positive and authentic identification of local projects with Anglicare Willochra.

We look forward to working with people in our ministry units across the diocese.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Louise Lang - llang@diowillochra.org.au

SO WE WENT ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE....



This sounds a rather radical thing to do, but it is exactly what the Ministry District of the Yorke Peninsula did over seven weeks in August and September. The Wild Goose series is truly a work of the Holy Spirit.

"Wild Goose" was a term that the ancient Celts had for the Holy Spirit. It is a fourteen-part series featuring Fr Dave Pivonka TOR and various interviews. Shot in various locations from Niagara Falls to the California desert, ***The Wild Goose*** invites participants to an encounter, or a renewed encounter, with the Holy Spirit.

All the participants agreed that the material had high production values and was delightfully presented. Fr Dave's teaching was complimented with interviews with a variety of Christians from all walks of life from an elderly bishop to a young nun and a young mum. With topics like: Gifts of the Spirit, The Spirit and the Eucharist, The Spirit of Adoption, The Spirit and the Sacraments, The Fruits of the Spirit, The Spirit and the Desert, The Spirit Convicts and The Spirit's Freedom, we were introduced to a multidimensional vision of God's Spirit and his actions in our life.

We hope in 2022 to run a daytime course and we are exploring the possibility of a Zoom course and exploring the possibility of using other material from Father Dave for Lent. You can check out their offerings at <https://thewildgooseisloose.com> or talk to me.

COMMUNITY GARDEN OPENED

St Neot's Community Garden, Port Vincent was opened on 3 October 2021 at 3.30pm by Bishop John Stead, Bishop of Willochra. The Garden is located behind St Neot's Church on the Esplanade. Although not yet complete, it represents the culmination of nearly five years work of a local committee.

Fraser Ellis our local member and Deputy Mayor Tania Stock (representing the Mayor and Council) spoke about the importance of Community Gardens. Father Andrew Lang welcomed many guests and gave a thank you to the two

hard workers
Theo Kolla
and Bob
Biggs who
worked
tirelessly
building our
beautiful
garden.
Father



Andrew thanked everyone for the wonderful donations that had helped with the building of the garden and looked forward to the continuing partnership with the people of Port Vincent to create a place of peace so close to the centre of town.



HISTORIC DAY FOR THE CHURCH AT CORYN POINT

Corny Point is located about 7.5

kilometres (4.7 miles) to the east of the north-western tip of the Yorke Peninsula. It is the south headland of Hardwicke Bay. It was named by Matthew Flinders on 18 March 1802 as it resembled a corn on the toe (of the peninsula). The population in 2016 was 105 although in summer it is a popular boating and fishing destination.

Church Services are held in the Mission Church. The original community building has been used as the school, church and hall of Corny Point since August 1911. The Anglicans and Uniting Church shared the provision of services in the building owned by the community up until 2019. The Anglicans continue to minister here.

On Sunday November 21, the congregation was pleased to welcome Bishop John Stead to lead worship. This was the first visit of a serving Diocesan Bishop to this place and we think completes the visits of Bishop John to all of our active churches in the diocese. Bishop John and Jan enjoyed a cosy afternoon tea prepared for us by local farmer Heather Shepley.

Have you never been to Corny Point? It is a great place to visit, only 60km from Minlaton. The Howling Dog Tavern regularly looks after our clergy and is a good stop for a feed on your adventure.

Andrew Lang , District Priest Yorke Peninsula



**AN ADDRESS FOR THE BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
AT ST MARY'S CHURCH, BURRA
ON SUNDAY 10 OCTOBER 2021**

While I was thinking about this address, I wondered how many individual mentions of animals and birds have been documented in the Bible. A trip to Google still hasn't provided me with a complete answer, but then again, few people would have unlimited time to check. However, it certainly put me on the right track. There is no shortage of articles that quote scriptural verses about our fellow creatures, their creation, their uses, their treatment and ill-treatment, and their vital and general importance in the world we share. In one survey, at least 100 different species are listed alphabetically. Although some of the big cats are mentioned, there is not a single mention of the domestic cat. Very disappointing - until I suddenly remembered that '**Dogs think they're human, Cats think they're God!**' Of course, in some early civilisations they were treated as gods. In Egypt I saw dozens of carefully mummified cats in the Cairo Museum.

Most of us have been brought up with household pets, (some of us with more than others!) and if you haven't, at least you would have had some connection with the natural world and its various amazing inhabitants, even if it was only through TV and other forms of communication. In this time of Covid, many people who are, or have been subjected to the various Lockdowns, have relied on their pets for companionship and for a degree of normality, while others have adopted animals to help fill that void. But it's not all squeaky bones and balls of wool...

I'm sure too that you have seen pictures of homeless people whose only real friend is a dog or a cat, or heard of people subjected to domestic violence, who are reluctant to leave a loved pet, similarly threatened. On the other hand, it is worrying to learn that animal cruelty is a growing problem, even in our state and it often has wider social ramifications.

One of the reasons why I like the idea of a Blessing of the Animals, (and they *are* a Blessing [most of the time!]), is because it is one way of acknowledging the important role that animals play in so many lives and in the world. They enrich our days in countless ways and quietly reinforce the fact that we are *all a part of Creation*. For folk who have never had a pet, this may be hard to imagine, but for those of us who include animals in our household, they are simply members of the family, requiring love and care. The pets here today attest to this fact. They are very much dependent on us. It is also generally acknowledged and still being discovered that all animals and birds are far more clever than we have ever given them credit for. They can teach us many things. Unfortunately, in many places thousands of creatures have been, and still are, the unwitting victims of cruel practices and experiments.

Growing up in the 1950s with supportive and practical parental influences, part of our childhood centred around an assorted menagerie of resident pets and other domestic animals. Through the added Blessing of Books, other creatures in the domestic and wider world, the real and the imaginary, also

played a part in teaching us about life and death and helped form some of our interests, friendships, and hobbies, and contributed towards making life rewarding, valued, empathetic and fun. They provided the basis for stories, through poems, music and art. So, ... I must add some of the loved characters in Winnie the Pooh, the White Rabbit and others in Alice in Wonderland, Blinky Bill, Peter Rabbit, Aesop's Fables, Black Beauty, the Wind in the Willows, even the Three Little Pigs ...

Admit it or not, human life has always been part of the animal kingdom and as such, we are citizens and stewards of the natural world and the environment. We believe that in the beginning, God created all things and saw that they were good.

However, sections of both the Old and New Testaments are stained with the blood of countless innocent animals and birds offered as sacrifices. Certain places must have resembled a slaughterhouse. For thousands of years, such sacrifices paved the way towards offering all Christians the critically important symbol of Jesus as *the Lamb of God*. In John 1:29 we read, "*John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*"

Innocent animals were seen to be without sin. They were regarded as perfect sacrifices to atone for human sin. (Unfortunately, in many countries around the world, and in the Middle East in particular, inhumane methods of animal sacrifice are still considered to be legitimate ways of following a religion.) One of the saddest of Old Testament readings is from part of the Second book of Samuel, Chapter 12. The cherished pet ewe-lamb belonging to a poor man and his family was torn away from them to be prepared for a traveller's meal, while the rich man who owned many flocks, refused to part with any of his sheep for the purpose. Throughout that reading we might feel the pain brought about by the brutal theft of a much-loved pet.

Ironically, it also reminds me of a mealtime many years ago when Dad jokingly said to Mum that we were eating Patchy, one of our former pet lambs. Of course, it wasn't true. Our forever-tame pets were never eaten. All the same, on principle, Mum made a stand and refused to eat another morsel of that meat.

Whatever the species, be it an ant or an elephant, it is up to us to be their voices when needed. Despite the inhumanity and inconsistencies so evident in many places, we share this earth; this relatively small planet. We are charged to care for and respect it. When we look closely, we can see the glory of God's creation everywhere and like the pets here today, we too are richly Blessed.

The writer of the Book of Job puts it in Chapter 12, verses 7-10: "*But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind...*" Amen.

Mary Woollacott, 10/10/2021

MYANMAR CHRISTIANS FACE INCREASED PERSECUTION UNDER MILITARY RULE

Christian and other ethnic minorities in Myanmar face even greater danger since the country fell under military rule that toppled the civilian government and initiated a wave of violence, experts warn. United States-based international religious persecution watchdog International Christian Concern (ICC) recently hosted a panel discussion focusing on the increased hardships Christians endure.

"Violent incidents are escalating, with airstrikes and ground fighting spreading to various regions around the country. Tens of thousands have fled, and many more are sure to follow in the months ahead," the report explains. *"Instability, food shortages, and great loss of life threaten the Burmese people, especially its vulnerable minorities."*



'A LIVING HELL': CHURCHES, CLERGY TARGETED BY MYANMAR MILITARY

Christians in Chin State say these hymn books were thrown out by soldiers who ransacked their church in August

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is home to several Christian minority groups, including those within the Kachin, Chin, Rohingya and Karen communities. The report also touches Christians in the Wa state, ethnic Indian and Chinese Christians and Karenni Christians in Kayah State.

"No ethno-religious minority has been safe from persecution or discrimination," said Nadine Maenza chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *"Since the coup, the situation, however, has deteriorated significantly."*

Despite an election last November, the Tatmadaw military refuses to accept the result and has alleged voter fraud. The military declared a year-long state of emergency and put its civilian leaders under house arrest. The military-led coup has led to widespread violence, protests and worsened conditions for religious minorities. In recent months, churches have been damaged or destroyed by military shelling as thousands of displaced individuals have taken shelter in churches when their villages have come under attack. The United Nations has estimated that as many as 100,000 people were displaced due to increased fighting, including "indiscriminate attacks by security forces against civilian areas."

Source



In August, 2021, Bishop David Nyi Nyi Naing, Bishop of the Diocese of Mandalay in Myanmar, with whom our Diocese is paired, wrote '*while COVID-19 and other major factors have had negative impacts on the country's societal woes, I remain hopeful.*'

"We have not only faced the COVID-19 problem, but also we have political problems. We are under a military coup. We have no rights under the military. This is another huge problem for the peoples. Most of the young generations are away from the family and they stay in the jungle.."

Bishop David sees people *helping each other and he sees the face of God all around.* *"I do believe God is here. God is with us. So, I do believe God will take care of his people. We can get a good situation in the near future."*

Despite the current challenges, "I have a bright hope for a new future for my country. Our peoples are suffering, there are difficulties and challenges, but despite all these things we are coming together. We are becoming united. I do hope in near future we can get a beautiful future for a beautiful country and for the next generation."

Bishop David concluded simply, *"Please remember us in your prayers."*

I'm hoping that regular readers of my column will be familiar with the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, which aired on both free to air TV and Foxtel. *The Big Bang Theory* ran for twelve seasons from 2007 until 2019, winning many awards including seven Emmys. It is centred around five friends, Leonard and Sheldon who share an apartment, Penny, who lives across the hall, and Howard and Raj. With the exception of Penny, who works as a waitress, the friends work at high-end tertiary colleges and are all considered socially awkward. Sheldon in particular can be awkward to the point of being obnoxious and tactless.



And while I enjoy watching *The Big Bang Theory*, it is the prequel *Young Sheldon* that I have taken a shine to and which has become must-watch TV at The Rectory.

Set in the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Young Sheldon* introduces us to Sheldon Cooper at age nine living with his family in East Texas and attending Medford High School. Sheldon's family are a mixed bunch, none of whom share Sheldon's intellect and academic prowess, however, they all have their own qualities and come across as not too dissimilar to your average family.

George Sr is head football coach at Medford High, where both Sheldon & older brother Georgie attend, and is married to Mary, a devout Southern Baptist, who works at her local church. Sheldon has a twin sister Missy and while Missy isn't as academically smart as her twin brother, she is very perceptive and street smart and has the ability to keep her brother grounded when Sheldon begins to act superior. The twins' older brother Georgie lacks any kind of academic prowess but makes up for it with his charm and good looks. Georgie also plays on his father's football team and will later exhibit great skill as a sales clerk. Added to the mix is Mary's mother Connie, who lives next door. Connie is no fan of George Sr and makes no secret of the fact that she thinks her daughter could have done better when it came to choosing a husband. Connie is a widow but hides her grief well by maintaining an active lifestyle, sometimes a little too active for her daughter's liking.

The appeal for me with *Young Sheldon* is the authenticity and believability of the main characters and their ability to invite the viewer to share their lives, the good times and the bad times, and become emotionally involved. This is particularly evident when Mary miscarries in Season Two and we share her tears at her loss. For those who have been through this, the scene was handled with great love and care.

The other aspect of *Young Sheldon* which appeals to me is the Christian element. Mary's faith, while not shared by the rest of her family, is infectious and is respected by all who know her, although Mary does experience a crisis of faith when she learns of the death of a teenage neighbour. Not understanding how a loving God could allow this to happen, Mary no longer asks the family to join her in saying Grace at meal times, ceases attending worship services and goes on a drinking and gambling spree with her mother. As she nurses a hangover on the front porch, Sheldon joins his mother, curious as to why his mother is behaving so out of character.

In the end, it is Sheldon, a self-described 'atheist Baptist', who convinces his mother that there is a greater creator out there who is ultimately in charge and continues to watch over the world and its inhabitants.

Young Sheldon screens on Foxtel on weekends, but those who know more about these things than I do should be able to find it on the internet or via a streaming service.

John Fowler (Ministry District of Southern Flinders)

THE MUSINGS OF FR BART

DOG GONE!

Mick the black curly haired retriever was my father's gun dog. He was part of a group of men in our village who went duck shooting and Mick was Dad's retriever. As an infant I grew up with Mick as a playmate and there are photos of me at a young age cuddling him and even asleep on the lawn using his tummy as a pillow. Mick had a brother that belonged to my great uncle George named Wattie. He was a brown curly haired retriever. Wattie was named after Oswald Watt, local grazier and aviation pioneer who was a World War 1 fighter pilot hero. He was the first Australian fighter pilot to take part in World War 1. At that time the Australian Army had not formed an air arm, so he went to England and joined the British Army Air Force wing, seeing action over Europe. I used to pat Wattie but his personality was a bit like Uncle George, polite but no liberties could be taken with him. I was a bit frightened of Wattie in the same way that I was about Uncle George.

Later Paddy was another of my father's gun dogs. He was a black Labrador. By this time neither my brother Ross nor I were allowed any liberties with him. Making a pet of a working gun dog by older children was a sure-fire way to compromise their worth. Our interaction with Paddy was to have the chore of feeding him every night. Dad had the strategy of only feeding a dog once a day after they were on the chain for the evening. They then identified the chain with food, so we had no trouble calling him to come and be chained because he knew that once the chain was on, he received his meal for the day. If Dad was not around, we sneaked him a pat. Come to think of it my sister Dianne was not barred from making a pet of Paddy. Perhaps only males can spoil dogs?

Later again when my young sister was older, she asked for a puppy. This time it was to be her pet for Dad had given up duck shooting. Dad bought a pedigreed Australian Terrier from a breeder. He had an official name in his papers, but my sister called him Bob and Bob he was for ever after. He was a great personality and very active. Every year when a great nephew of the people across the road came to visit them for the summer holidays Bob was his constant companion. When we children grew up and left home Bob became the constant companion of my father who took him out every week as he worked as a building maintenance contractor on the district sheep stations. Everyone for many miles around, in the village and on the properties knew and loved Bob.

Sadly, Bob had a bad ending. One morning out on Uardry Station Bob was missing. Dad looked everywhere



Pi Dog?

and later found him in a sheep dip. During the night Bob had sneaked away and fell into the long race dip which still contained water from the sheep dipping activities. The water level was well below that level from which a small dog could climb out. He would have swum up and down the long narrow dip for some time until exhausted and drowned.

Another dog, Pi Dog came into our lives when our family lived in Broken Hill. I had allowed a lady and her children to use a vacant house owned by the parish. They were escaping a domestic violence situation and with them came Pi Dog. She was a beautiful standard Sheltie with the most wonderful nature. She was frightened around men and would hide whenever one came close, including me. My children fell in love with her and when the family in the house moved interstate and could not take Pi Dog with them, I agreed to look after her. For some days I fed her each morning and evening. She took up residence under the house and I would leave the food and water in a bowl near the space in the foundations she used for ingress and egress. Early on Christmas morning as I went to give her some food, to my delight she came out and greeted me and allowed me to pat her. I waited while she ate the food and then asked her to follow me through the church yard to the Rectory, which she did. "Hey everyone!" I called out from the back door, "Look what Santa brought us!" From then on Pi Dog lived with us wherever we went, ending up in Elizabeth Downs where in old age she died and was buried under a nectarine tree.

We have not had a dog since then but maybe at another time I could write of the cats that have owned us. Each of those were unique personalities whose stories are worth telling.

Father Bart O'Donovan

The Willochran Remembers

An Excerpt from 'The Willochran' No. 171, the 1st of July 1955 .

Supplement to "THE WILLOCHRAN"

JULY 1, 1955

Home For Aged People

DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA WAR MEMORIAL

APPEAL FROM THE BISHOP OF WILLOCHRA

This appeal is for a fund to provide a Home for Aged People which it is hoped will be built in or adjacent to one of our townships in the North, and should supply a need which has been brought to my notice in recent years.

There are some old people who are by no means destitute, but require care and attention in their declining years, and have no relatives or friends willing and able to look after them.

Amongst them are a number of people who have spent the greater part of their life in the Bush and have no desire to end their days at a Home in a city, but would gladly accept the amenities of a Home situated in or near a Bush township in surroundings to which they have been accustomed.

The proposed Home will provide accommodation for aged men, women and married couples, also quarters for a Matron and staff, a chapel, dining room and lounge where people can meet. Each person will have a small separate house containing at least a bed room and sitting room and kitchenette. Anything like a barracks will be avoided.

Included in this plan we should like to provide accommodation for relatives or friends who would like to spend a day or a few days at the Home.

If for a start accommodation is provided for 12 men, 12 women and 12 married couples this with the other buildings referred to having regard to existing prices of labour and materials, will cost about £70,000.

It is hoped the Government will give a £1 for £1 subsidy when we make a start.

Towards this amount there is a sum of £14,500 in hand from over 250 contributors. Contributions have been received from friends interested in the project, but in order to raise the sum required a wide appeal must be made.

The Home will be available to members of any denomination.

An idea of the general appearance of the House is given below. At this stage it is impossible to publish an architect's plan of the proposed Home, but the sketch will give a rough idea. What we build will be governed by the amount raised.

All contributions to the Fund will be free of Income Tax.

We should be grateful if a generous person could give a suitable block of land of 20 acres or more on which to build the Home with ground available for cows, vegetable garden, fruit trees, etc.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, THE RT REV'D JOHN STEAD, SEVENTH BISHOP OF WILLOCHRA

Twenty months ago, we, along with the rest of Australia, felt the impact of Covid19. We moved into an extended period of restrictions. Those restrictions included being unable to gather in our church buildings for worship, travel restricted to essential reasons, working remotely from home, and conducting school online. It was disruptive, but on the whole, the majority of us adapted well to the new circumstances. Indeed there was much innovation and positive initiatives to ensure that congregations remained connected, including the live-streaming of worship. I received reports that the increased pastoral contact was deeply appreciated either via doorstep visits, phone or online.

Some of us seemed to treat it as a bit like an adventure, adapting and starting to use technology to keep in touch, something we could have been doing years earlier. Clergy gathered via WebEx or Zoom; the Ministry Development Program, thanks to the work of Archdeacon Gael Johannsen was delivered online, as was the Clergy Retreat. Most meetings also occurred online, and Synod in 2020, thanks to the effort of the Parish of Whyalla, and the Diocesan Office Staff, was conducted in person while maintaining physical (social) distance and ensuring that the meals were supplied in a COVID safe manner. The Diocesan Council acted to give financial relief to parishes and ministry districts and the Diocesan Office carried out all necessary administration to access Jobkeeper. We innovated and continue to use much of that innovation as we move forward.

As the weeks stretched into months, as we passed the first anniversary of moving into the initial lockdown, our attitude to the situation we were facing changed. We began to hear the phrase ‘the new normal’ rather than a ‘return to normal’. It was no longer an adventure, something new and possibly energising as we rose to the challenge. We were beginning to realise that we were in this for the long haul. The new normal involved a recognition that things could change and could change quickly. Snap lockdowns for six days which became four days; reports of truck drivers infected with the Delta strain of COVID19 entering the state and stopping at Port Wakefield, Port Augusta and Ceduna, locations within the Diocese which then became exposure sites. Our inability to visit friends and family or take holidays interstate when borders were closed. Limits on the numbers who could attend funerals and weddings; for some of us, the reality of not being with a family member who was dying or be at their funeral except online. The emotional anguish we felt either personally or vicariously for our congregation members began to take toll, living with a heightened sense of anxiety about when community transmission would occur and questioning how long we could cope with the added strain associated with the uncertainty.

When we were able to return to our church buildings for

worship, we had to adapt initially to communion in one kind and then to the use of a common vessel from which individual glasses were filled so that we could receive the wine as well as the bread. We had to wear masks and reduce the capacity of our Churches, leaving vacant pews and sitting 1.5 metres from each other unless they were a member of our family with whom we lived. Eventually, we could sing, but only wearing a mask; we had to check-in using a QR code and sanitise our hands frequently. It seems more and more certain that the normal we return to will be different from the normal we experienced at the beginning of 2020.

In some cases, COVID19 has accelerated what had already started to happen in our congregations. We had been experiencing a decline in attendance, exacerbated by the general rural decline, which had impacted the resilience of the communities we serve. Congregations were ageing, with those holding leadership roles doing so well beyond the age where previous generations had handed the role to the generation below them. Quite simply, there was at least one, if not more, generations missing from the congregation; sure, there maybe a spattering of younger folk, young being below sixty! Some church buildings were deconsecrated, with buildings and land being sold. Proceeds of the sale of church buildings and associated land were generally set aside to cover expected Redress Payments under the National Redress Scheme instituted following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The church had suffered a loss of confidence as a result of the findings of that Royal Commission; the Diocese has now either dealt with or is dealing with six Redress Claims, with one judged as being at the worst end of the spectrum with \$150,000 in redress being paid, and an additional payment of \$15,000 for psychological counselling for the survivor; we have been held to account for how we have safeguarded the vulnerable, as we should be. Most recently, the Anglican Church of Australia commissioned a Prevalence Study into Domestic Violence (or intimate Partner Violence) and has found that such violence within the Anglican Church is equal to the prevalence in the general community, if not higher. We have, hopefully, adopted the Ten Commandments as a first step in addressing this issue. Our confidence in the character of our Church has taken a knock; it must be admitted a well-deserved knock. Amongst all of this, COVID19 comes along.

I have heard anecdotes of how both clergy and lay people are responding to these situations and have of course, had the experience of how I and those with whom I work closely have coped. Many were already feeling a level of despondency; they were dispirited and had a sense of gloom about the prospects for the future of the Church even before the pandemic. Now with the advent of COVID19, there seems to be a level of malaise, a lack of energy, even questioning whether anything

be done to stop the steady decline or whether they, as an individual, can do anything and if they could do something, not being sure what that might be. Malaise is compounded by the level of both emotional and physical tiredness, a sense of melancholy, anxiety and anguish which can at its worst, develop into depression. That is not to say that there has not been some fantastic work undertaken that has brought some level of positive progress, but this is not evenly spread across the Diocese's congregations, often due to local circumstances.

In these types of pressured situations, we can react negatively in at least one of two ways.

- Find someone to blame for our situation and our inability to-do something - scapegoating that individual or situation.
- Give up and do enough to keep the doors open until we die! Abandoning our responsibility to have the church operating for others, just as it was left operating for us.

I am saying this, not to blame anyone for what is or is not happening. I also want you to know that I understand the basis for the way people feel. I share the same thoughts and feelings; I would also be a fool not to recognise that we are journeying this path together as a Diocese and as individuals.

My intention today, and I hope you will communicate my thinking on our current situation with members of your congregations, is to undertake a theological reflection to map principles that I will commit to as we move forward. I hope you will commit to it as well.

Genesis Chapter 1 expresses God's good purpose. God brings the created order into existence from the chaos by speaking words, the divine Word, carried on the breath of God which brings into existence that which God desires. God the Creator speaks; the Word he speaks is carried on his breath, the Holy Spirit; the divine Word, the Logos is that which becomes incarnate in human flesh, in Jesus the Christ. Creation is an act of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit driven by God's loving desire for a relationship with what is created. There is an ordering of things; everything is in its place and with its part to play. On the six days of creating, God concludes that it is good. On the seventh day, God contemplates the creation and determines that is not only good but is in fact, very good.

Chapter Two of Genesis gives us a different accounting of God's creative activity from a different perspective. In this second account, particularly verse 19 and the first half of verse we read:

...the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called ever living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field.

There is purpose prompting the writer of the second account of creation, part of that purpose is to express in a different way how dominion works; the responsibility of stewardship. To have named the animals of the field and the birds of the air is to have authority over them. There is a power in naming, a sort of control bestowed upon the one who names them or knows the name of them.

The Jewish understanding is that names represent identity not simply because they are a convenient way to distinguish between creatures, and for that matter, between people. It is

because they define us. The names we are given at birth aren't accidental. They are, to some extent prophetic. They capture our essence. They are the keys to our Soul.

The Hebrew word for Soul is neshamah. Central to that word, the middle two letters, Hebrew shin and mem, make the word shem, Hebrew for 'name.' Your name is the key to your Soul. Naming identifies that thing. To know the name of something gives us some level of authority over it.

As a side note relating to names, in Genesis Chapter Two, human is split into two, ish: man and ishah: woman. Only now are the two distinguished from each other - oneness and partnership affirmed.

There is nothing wrong in naming that we feel despondent. We are experiencing a sense of malaise, discomfort, unease, and difficulty identifying the cause of that malaise. In naming our everyday experience as despondency or malaise, we go some of the way to taking back control, to name the underlying causes, which may include uncertainty about our future or the future of the congregation. To name the fact that maybe we are unsure of what to do, or even that we don't know what to do, is an essential step in regaining control. Gaining agency is defined by the Social Sciences as one's independent capability or ability to act on one's own free will. In reality, agency is about responding with intent rather than reacting without thinking.

I would suggest, therefore, that the first step in dealing with what faces us and our associated feelings, thoughts and emotions, is to name the situation; to develop a rich or thick description, that is a detailed description of what is happening without blaming those who are feeling overwhelmed or by passing judgement upon ourselves or others as failing. What I have done today is name what I have heard anecdotally and what I perceive to be occurring. It allows me to act, respond and address this way of being in myself and the Diocese.

In Romans Chapter 4, Paul writes verse 3b,

Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

And in verse 6,

So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness irrespective of works... (NRSV)

While in the process of considering the difficult situation we face, as we name what is going on and while we develop a thick description of what is happening for us and to us, we need to be grounded in what we believe, grounded in the faith we hold to be true. Faith founded on the bedrock of God's loving action toward the creation, indeed on the loving action that brought all that is into being in the first place, and the loving action made flesh and blood in the Son of God, in Jesus the Christ. Among the doubts, the emotions, the thoughts, the state of despondency and malaise stands Jesus, God's Son, who went through trials and tribulations, scourging and crucifixion and yet demonstrates agency even from the cross on which he dies, he responds in Luke 23:34

Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' (NRSV)

No one, least of all me, is expecting you to put on a happy and to join those who were crucified at the end of Monty Python's movie *The Life of Brian* and start singing:

Always look on the bright side of life!

What I am reminding you about is that even in moments when we react to the situation which faces us with neither flight nor fight, but rather with freeze, as if we are caught in the crosshairs of an oncoming truck, we can still hold on to the one in whom we have faith, Jesus, and to what we believe in him and through him. To allow Paul's words to resonate within us in the situation we face and acknowledge that we are blessed and reckoned righteous for our beliefs even when the works, which generally are our response to God's love of us, are beyond us.

Psalm 32:6-11 can help us to understand what is the basis of a belief that sustains us, that maintains our righteousness:

6 Therefore let all who are faithful

offer prayer to you:

at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters

shall not reach them.

7 You are a hiding place for me;

you preserve me from trouble;

you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,

else it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous,'
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. (NRSV)

In verse 10 we are reminded that God's steadfast love surrounds those who trust or believe in the Lord. It is that steadfast love that sustains us through trials and tribulations, even in the midst of the times when faith becomes a little slippery and elusive, when we are feeling despondent and a malaise afflicts us. Steadfast love translates the Hebrew word *hesed*. It is a powerful word. In the Old Testament, it occurs some 250 times. It expresses God's complete commitment to God's good creation in its entirety, a commitment that can not be shaken. An unconditional love. *Hesed* is the cosmic glue; it is the dynamic that maintains the communal relationship of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the essence of the incarnation. Jesus is God's *hesed* made human, God's steadfast love which walked among us showing compassion, mercy and grace.

In Luke 12:1-7 we read:

1 Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, He began to speak first to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy."

*2 Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.*³ *Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.* *4 I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more.*⁵ *But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!*
6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. *7 But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.* (NRSV)

It is so easy for us to act according to the norms of society within which we live. We live in an age that seems to have

decided to live down to the lowest common denominator, an age where we are called to be less than that which we indeed can be. It has even become a characteristic of our modern-day politics; we don't seem to have had politicians who call us to a more excellent vision, who call us to triumph over the challenges that confront us, who cast a picture of a future we can aspire to. Instead we seem to have politicians interested in being re-elected and who serve, at worse vested interests and at best, themselves. This is an example of a modern-day 'yeast of the Pharisees'; it is a projection of hypocrisy. We need to take the warning seriously that we should not fear that which can destroy the body, but rather that which can decimate our very being, our Soul. The failure here is not to hold faith with the one who is the living embodiment of *hesed*, steadfast love, Jesus. To the one who knows the value of two sparrows and that human life in comparison is inestimable; the one who has the accounting for each hair on your head. To be known in such detail is to experience the steadfast love of God. Instead of living down to the principles upon which our society seems to be focused at present, we are to live up to the vision of the Kingdom of God to that which we are called to give our primary allegiance to, the place of our first citizenship. To recognise that we are called to serve others, serve our community, and not be self-serving.

It's ok to recognise that we are afflicted; we are! What is not ok is to remain in that state, rehearsing the pain of the affliction. Jesus' time of greatest affliction is surely in the Garden of Gethsemane, yet even there the Christ says in Matthew 26:39

...he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me;...yet not what I want but what you want." (NRSV)

And then later in the second half of verse 42:

...for the second time (he) prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (NRSV)

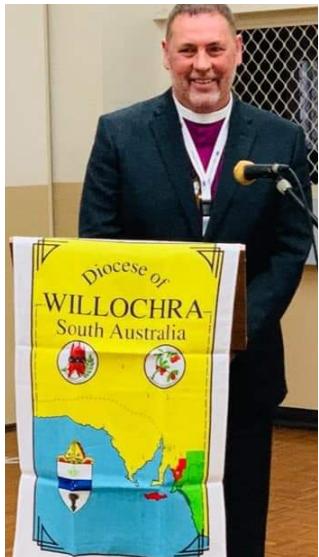
The one who we follow, Jesus the Christ, knew what suffering was, knew what it was to cry out, wanting the situation that he faced to be other than it was: *let this cup pass from me* and yet knowing God's *hesed* for him he follows where his Father leads the way, not despondently, but trusting that the Father is in control, that the Father will bring him through this. To follow in this way is to act with agency; Jesus is not browbeaten into the choice he makes. He embraces it and follows..., and God glorifies him.

Our purpose in creating a thick description of what is happening to us is to use it as a starting place to discover what is happening theologically, to name it and, by doing so, gain new agency within the affliction. Our agency needs to be grounded in belief and faith in God's steadfast love, God's *hesed*, in talking about God, in doing theology about what God has done and is continuing to do in and through us. In acknowledging that God values us so highly that he knows the number of hairs on our head. Even when we feel dis-abled by events, feel un-able to act, our faith in the God who is steadfast love is *hesed*, still counts us as righteous, as blessed. Amid despondency, amid malaise, God's steadfast love is there! You, brothers and sisters, each loved with God's steadfast love. God's *hesed*!

SYNOD 2021



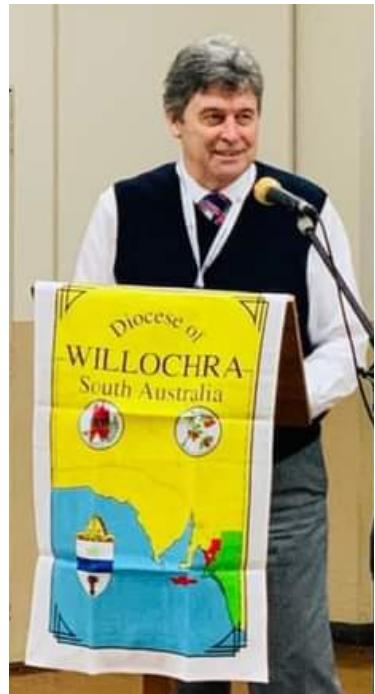
A panoramic view



Bishop Chris McLeod



Rev'd Peter Sandeman



Administrator, Gavin Tyndale



The 'crew' in action!



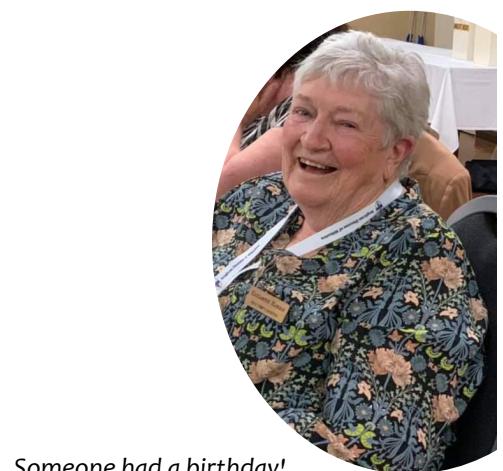
Sunday's Lunch



Lettie Allen serving Michael Ford



Listening intently



Someone had a birthday!

ISSUES

BLESSED ARE THOSE NEEDING CARE?

During my years in active ministry, I spent considerable time at many different city and country nursing homes. Sometimes I was there to lead a Holy Communion service, and was always moved when tears began to run down the cheeks of one or two dementia sufferers, as we said the Lord's Prayer.

At other times I was there to visit parishioners or other church and non-church folk wanting a chat. It always seemed to me that the nursing home residents were very grateful for the visit, and whether or not they were church people, they insisted on my saying a prayer for them before I left.

My time in nursing homes has left an indelible mark on me. I am never likely to forget the numerous residents

who were only ever visited by or rung by their families or friends on their birthdays or at Christmas time. The rest of the year they were pretty much forgotten about or ignored.

Then there were those poor souls who never got a visit from anybody all year. Forever etched on my heart are their looks of loneliness, longing and the huge sadness of having been abandoned, as they sat near windows desperately searching for a recognizable face that never came.

On the 25 October 2017 the then Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt, told the National Press Club that *"I have heard that up to 40% of people in residential aged care have no visitors in 365 days of the year"*. What a disgrace!

How quickly people can be pushed aside when they are old, disabled, and needing care! How easily can their past contribution to the lives of their families and friends be forgotten! I suspect that even more residents in nursing homes will be alone this Christmas when mandatory COVID 19 vaccinations for all visitors to nursing homes comes in on the 6 December.

Perhaps all of us who have been vaccinated could ring a local nursing home and ask to visit a resident who is unlikely to get a visit from family or friends at Christmas time. I could be wrong of course but I have a pretty good idea that's where Jesus will be.

ABC Program Old Peoples' Home for 4 year old's



**It was the old ones,
Anna and Simeon,**
who saw,
who recognised,
who knew.
They who had waited,
persisted,
believed,
despite everything
that militated against
their deep knowing.



**It was the old ones,
Anna and Simeon,**
who had enough patient wisdom
to know
the difference between
swaddling
and shroud,
and the inevitable sameness
of the two;
who could see in that cycle
the grace
to unravel hearts
and set the cosmos spinning.

Picture: Painting by Sieger Köder

**It was the old ones,
Anna and Simeon,**
who had courage enough
to speak out what they had
rehearsed
for so long,
and who saw courage enough
in the eyes
of the child's mother
to receive their bitter blessing.
Only then,
having spoken,
were they free
to go in peace,
knowing that the Word
had been fulfilled.

© Sr Sandra Sears, CSBC 25/12/20

STEWARSHIP - WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Rev'd Dr Edwin Byford., The Advocate, Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta

Stewardship is a subject Clergy tend to try to avoid. It is confronting to talk about money. So, I guess, that I am about to be confronting. The ministry of the church costs money. Many of those costs are hidden. Not only do we need to pay clergy stipends and for the maintenance and running costs of our facilities, but there are insurances and compliance costs associated with obeying various legislative requirements for churches and voluntary and charitable associations. Those who are members of service clubs and other organisations will know of the personal financial commitment that is needed for membership. Belonging to a church in Australia is a voluntary undertaking. Churches are voluntary associations. The Church of England may have occupied a privileged position in the early days of the colonial settlement of Australia but that time is now long past.

Most churches, including our own, have little in the way of great historical endowments to finance themselves. All churches rely on the generosity of their regular worshippers to finance their mission and ministry. Regular estimates of the costs of ministry for a parish with one full-time stipendiary member of the clergy are about \$120,000 per year. So, what do we do to ensure that we have active Christian ministry in our midst? In the first place, we cannot expect somebody else to do it for us. Everybody else is in the same situation that we are. The only people who can provide the money for our local congregations are the members of those local congregations.

In 2002 I spent several months living in Chicago. As I was staying in the Disciples Divinity House at the University of Chicago I was asked on many occasions to visit some local Disciples' congregations. These were all on the South Side and it was often the case that mine was the only white face in the congregation. What intrigued me was that just before the collection the minister always asked the church treasurer to have a few words. The congregation was told how money was being spent and how much was needed week by week to maintain the ministry and outreach of the church. Our American friends were not backward in coming forward when it came to setting out the financial commitments and needs of their churches.

In many ways we are only beginning to understand the kinds of commitments that are needed to maintain a vibrant Christian ministry when churches are voluntary associations.

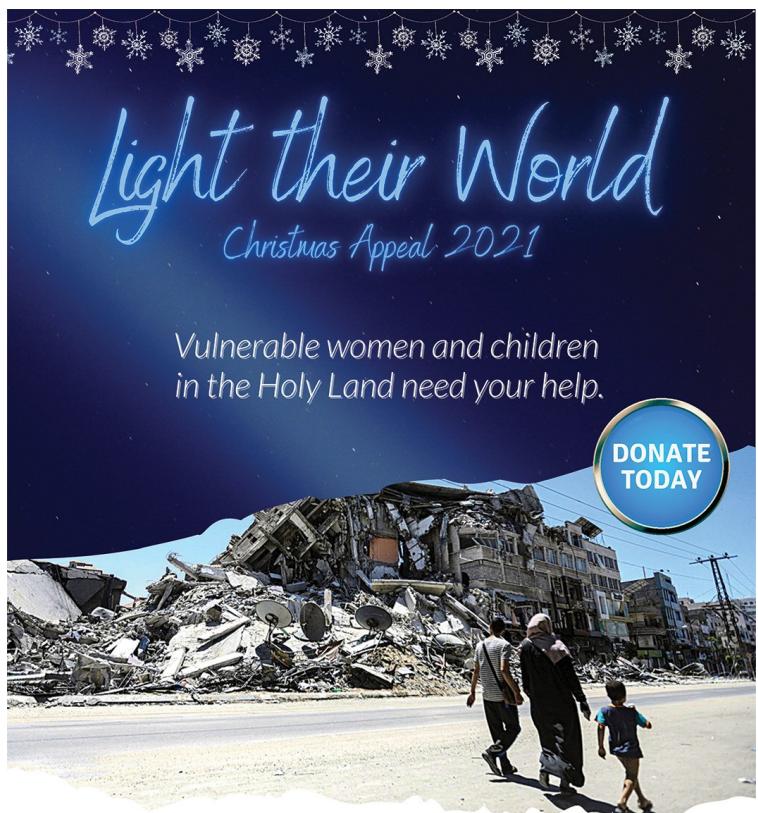
Because the churches here are voluntary associations it means that they are free to organise themselves and organise their ministry in the way that they want. Governments and other external authorities cannot dictate to the church what is preached or taught. Within the law we can decide how we govern ourselves and who it is that has authority to preach and celebrate the sacraments. The corollary of this freedom is that it is our own responsibility to provide the wherewithal to enable the ministry to continue and to flourish.

In the mid seventies, when I was a student at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, the great American theologian James Luther Adams talked a lot about the freedom of American churches. He said something very interesting about the collection and its central place in congregational life. We do not charge a membership fee to belong to the church. In the middle of our worship we send around a collection plate for the free-will offering of those who want to contribute. This is a celebration of our freedom and our trust in each other to give so that the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are celebrated. Adams described it as the "*sacrament of our freedom*."

Stewardship is about money. How we spend our money is one of the most important measures of what we think is essential and important. We spend to house, clothe and feed ourselves. After these essentials we have a set of priorities for our other spending — health, education, sport, entertainment, travel and so on. Somewhere in this, for us who have faith in the God and father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, there is contributing to the ministry and mission of Christ's church.

Stewardship campaigns are times for making decisions — how important is the mission of the Church to me? How much am I willing to give so that the ministry and mission of the Church may continue with the freedom that is essential for the proclamation of the Gospel? Talking about what we do with our money is confronting because we are brought face to face with our priorities. I said, at the beginning, that this would be confronting; I hope that it is.





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THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

In December, 2020, a couple living in Coromandel Valley, SA, came home to find a young koala in their Christmas tree. They had left the back door open and it had wandered in while they were out.



We weren't expecting this. Our nice tidy Christmas plans turned strange by your coming.

You had wandered in while we were not looking and made yourself at home.

At first we were startled. You shouldn't have been there, there among the decorations in our carefully prepared tree. However, you fitted in. Sort of. So long as we treated you as a soft, cuddly toy.

The problem was that you didn't belong there. Your furry cuteness belied a wild toughness that demanded harder stuff, a gum tree, not soft pine foliage.

We had to call in the wildlife man to extract you from your perch. He wrapped you in a towel and prised off the branch, before caging you up, taking you outside and releasing you into your more familiar surroundings

I sometimes wonder what it would have been like to leave you there to sleep peacefully among the tinsel and to mess on the pretty gifts beneath the branches.

But that would have been the problem. The mess.

A bit like you, Jesus. Sweet little baby Jesus, all wrapped up in a shawl, asleep in a manger.

But sooner or later, you had to grow up and go out into the tough, messy, eucalyptus trees of life in order to be what you were made to be; to do what you were called to do.

I'm not sure I want that cosy Christmas any more.

You see, like the koala, you sneaked into my life when I wasn't looking, and I've come to see in you something of the wild, wider world, with all its risks and dangers, and I sense your calling on my life, to be out there, where you are. Besides, I'm too old to play with toys.

©Rev'd Sr Sandra Sears, CSBC 5/12/20

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BUSPA'S CORNER

Through modern technology, isn't it amazing when you watch a video taken from a distance away that keeps zooming in on one particular spot, and as you "fly" through the air towards this spot, the detail starts to get clearer and clearer. From a great height or distance, the point of focus is not very visible, but it quickly comes into view through either aerial photography or computer driven technology.

Zoom in with me from outer space. We can see the planet earth as it orbits the sun – who can forget the images beamed back to us from the missions to the moon? Zoom towards a very small region on the Earth's surface on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea – the sea between the lands.

We come down to a small settlement called Bethlehem nestled in hills that surround Jerusalem to the North and Hebron to the South, along with a range of hills between the mountain on which Jerusalem was built – Mount Moriah and the adjoining Mount of Olives.

In the geography of the world, these hills and mountains are nothing spectacular – nothing at all like the mountains of Switzerland or the Andes. The hillsides are sparsely vegetated and the stock that wander around under the watchful eye of their shepherd really are constantly on the lookout for any form of green pick.

It was these two mountains that hosted the world changing events of God's personal involvement in human history through a series of events that even changed the calendar. The focus of history began some two thousand years before when the prophet Abraham took his son Isaac to sacrifice him as a test of his faithfulness and obedience to God. (*Genesis 22*) When David became King, he settled in the area around Hebron and Bethlehem before he moved his palace to Jerusalem, and it was on Mount Moriah that his son, Solomon built the Temple of the Lord.

God is a God of intricate detail and it is no accident that these events occurred where they did, nor when they did. The substitution of a ram caught in a thicket for Abraham to sacrifice in place of his son Isaac is a foretaste of the event that was to occur on Mount Moriah when Jesus was sacrificed as a substitute for all of us who repent and believe. The Garden of Gethsemane on the slopes of Mount Olivet is a peaceful olive grove overlooking Jerusalem that featured in the pre-dawn agony of Jesus.

And it was from this region on the opposite side of the hill near Bethany that Jesus ascended to heaven following His resurrection.

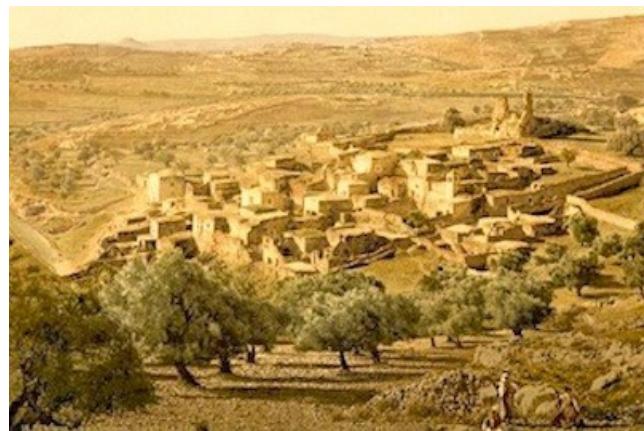
Wow! What an amazing collection of historical facts that have been witnessed in this small focussed region of the Earth's surface. As we zoom in on an area measured only in a few square metres but stretched over a long period of time, we are reminded of God's purpose in such a small region.

- Abraham and Isaac (*Genesis 22*)
- King David and his lineage (*Samuel 2:1-7*)
- Bethlehem as the City of David and the need for census registration (*Luke 1:26-56/2:1-21*)
- Emmanuel – God is with us (*Matthew 1:22*)
- Jesus voluntarily offers His life as a substitute for our sin (*Luke 22:39-46*)
- He died and was buried (*Matthew 27:57-61*)
- He was seen by many as he was taken up to heaven (*Luke 24:50-53*)
- He is sitting at God's right hand (*Hebrews 10:11-14*)

ALL OF THESE FACTS AFFIRM ONE THING – JESUS WILL RETURN.

- "He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen.
Come Lord Jesus (*Revelation 22:20*)

John Cronshaw



Ancient Bethlehem



ANGLICAN MOTHERS UNION

A U S T R A L I A

At the recent Annual General Meeting of AMUA held at Balaklava, Marlene Long from Balaklava branch was made a Life Vice President. Marlene is pictured with Diocesan President Lynette Pole receiving her certificate.

At Synod, Diocesan President Lynette Pole presented Bishop John with a cheque for \$1,000 for the Myanmar Girls' Orphanage. The money was raised from trading tables held at our group meetings throughout the year.

The purpose of Anglican Mothers Union Australia is to be specifically concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and family life. Membership of Anglican Mothers Union Australia is open to people who have been baptised into the Christian faith and although these days there are fewer branches, Diocesan members (where there are no longer branches) are welcome to become part of the organisation.

Mothers Union began 150 years ago in England and now exists in many countries across the globe, providing a variety of individual programs for Christian care and education of families.

For further information or application for membership please contact Secretary Jane Tanner at jane@tanner.id.au

As we enter the season of Advent and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, I quote the following from the Mothers Union Prayer Diary for Sunday 28 November.

"Lord God, as we begin our Advent journey to meet your promised one, open our eyes to see the wonders of Christ's appearing; open our ears to hear the angelic song of salvation; open the way for us to bring hope in lives of despair."



Diocesan President Lynette Pole presenting a Life Vice-President certificate to Marlene Long from Balaklava. Marlene has served in a number of roles in AMUA over many years.

CHRISTMAS BOWL A PRACTICAL WAY TO SHOW LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOURS IN NEED

In 2021, the pandemic has continued to have a devastating effect on so many communities around the world, especially the 82 million people uprooted from their homes by conflict or disaster, and the people caught up in the humanitarian crises caused by this year's conflicts in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Gaza, and Afghanistan.

The contrast between the relative abundance we enjoy here in Australia and the needs of uprooted people is even more obvious at this time of year, and the Christmas Bowl was born of the desire to redress the balance.

One of the longest standing Christmas appeals in Australia, the Christmas Bowl, was established in 1949 by Rev'd Frank Byatt to raise money for post war refugees. On Christmas Day that year, Frank put a Bowl of Remembrance on the dinner table and asked his family to place a gift inside to help those less fortunate than themselves. The Christmas Bowl was born.

The modern day Christmas Bowl Appeal takes place in churches and through online donations, but the sentiment is the same.

Janet Cousens is the CEO of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches.

"The Christmas Bowl is needed as much now as ever. It enables us to actively express our unity in Christ, to share our faith through positive action and shine a light of hope into the darkness," Ms Cousens said.

Since the first Christmas Bowl began over 70 years ago, more than \$100 million has been raised. A gift to the Christmas Bowl will remind our neighbours around the world that they are not forgotten, that they are loved and that we are all part of God's love. As we celebrate Christmas, may our love for our neighbour grow.



MARY, DID YOU KNOW?



Mary,
did you know that
your childbearing and
all your mundane
daily chores, would shift the axis of the world?

Did you know,
your sweeping floors
and feeding and nurturing your son,
rocking him to sleep
and tending his scrapes and bruises
would realign the cosmos?
And as you watched your son grow
and step out, confident in his Father's love,
did you know that it was you
who made it possible?
Through life
and cruel death
and life again
you were the God-bearer,
making love possible.

©Rev'd Sr Sandra Sears
CSBC 20/2/20

LENT BOOK AND PILGRIMAGES IN 2022

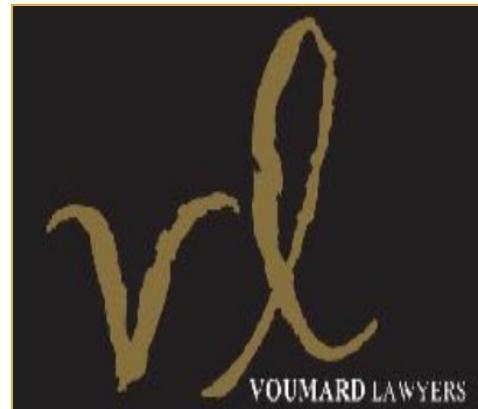
We are all looking forward to a future that has the ability to give us more freedom. The opening of **overseas** borders will enable Spiritual Pilgrimages to happen once again in 2022.

Our pilgrimages to Israel will take place in March and to Oberammergau in July 2022. These journeys of faith are great opportunities to help deepen the faith of people we have the privilege of ministering with. Promotional materials can be found at www.grassroots.com.au/Promo2022/PilgrimagePromos.html

You may wish to use our Lent Study Book for 2022 written by Bishop Bill Ray. Bill is a prolific Christian writer with a real down to earth way of expressing the faith and his latest Lent Book testifies to that.

"Conversations with an awesome God" also has a number of practical exercises, and that style proved very popular in 2021. The studies will help deepen the faith of Christians and are in booklet and epub versions.

More information can be found at www.grassroots.com.au/Studybooks/StudyBk.htm



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CONTACT:

Dave McDougall
0407636247

The life-blood of the Diocese of Willochra is the commitment, faith and compassion of its members and friends.

Generations of women and men have invested in our diocese, so that today it is healthy, alive and growing.

Now the future is in your hands.



“Like a tree planted by water, with roots that reach deep by the stream.” Jeremiah 17:8
Legacies can make a lasting difference to the Diocese of Willochra’s future. To find out how you can include us in your Will, you can contact

The Registrar,
Diocese of Willochra
PO Box 96, Gladstone 5473



The Anglican Church of Australia - The Diocese of Willochra

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

BIBLICAL MANDATE

Jesus came and said to his disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Matthew 28: 18-20

Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

OUR VISION

To be followers of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, confident in faith and sharing it boldly.

OUR GOALS

Growing Christian Communities

OUR FOCUS

Growing Christian Communities

OUR FOUNDATIONS

FIVE MARKS OF MISSION
(ACC 2012)

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

“Mission and evangelism are the very life-blood of the church”
(Stephen Pickard).

We, the church in the Diocese of Willochra, are not only about ensuring a “future church”, but about “entering into God’s mission which desires life in all its fullness for the earth and all that dwells therein” and allowing that mission to transform our church now. *(Life in Abundance: Imagining the present Church.)*



No doubt many of us have borne children and inherited grandchildren and possibly great-grandchildren. My first child, a boy, was born on the 9 December and my first grandchild also a boy was born on the 28 December. Both could be called

"Christmas" babies. Sixty years ago, I can still recall how excited but tremulous I was to find that I was pregnant. I was only 20 years old and like Mary, thankfully, had a supportive husband all the way through my pregnancy.

Mary had a pretty tough time of it from the time of the angel's visit to the long ride from Nazareth to Bethlehem for Jesus' birth. I hope that she was able to relax during her three month visit to her cousin Elizabeth, but even that was quite a journey from home.

No doubt Joseph was comforted by the visit from the angel who explained to him the reason for Jesus' birth but even so in a small community, there must have been many 'whispers' about the couple. Fortunately he was strong enough to stand up to the gossip and innuendos.

I can imagine how difficult it would have been for Mary to walk and sometimes ride on a donkey over the rugged countryside and then to get to Bethlehem and discover that there was no available accommodation. You couldn't take much with you under those circumstances - no special baby clothes, no lovely baby blankets, no disposable nappies (not that we oldies had them.)

During Advent as I wait for that special birth, I remember the last weeks of my first pregnancy. Excitement, scariness, being very uncomfortable, wondering whether I could look after a little baby. Mary would have had all of these feelings, and added to them was the knowledge that she was to bear a special child, the Son of God. What a responsibility.

I wish you all the hope and expectation of Advent and a happy and holy Christmastide.

Elizabeth

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25% discount if two successive editions	
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See the Willochran contact details on page 2

ONE THIRD OF AUSTRALIANS THINKING MORE ABOUT GOD AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC

Posted by Australian Prayer Network, November 2021

Australians are experiencing a renewed spiritual awakening with three in ten praying more since the pandemic started. A new report, has revealed that the experience of COVID-19 has caused many Australians to experience a renewed spiritual search. A third of Australians have thought more about God, while 28% have prayed more. During the pandemic almost half of Australians have thought more about the meaning of life (47%) or their own mortality (47%). The collective experience of the pandemic has ushered in a return to a focus on the local community, with half of Australians (53%) valuing a strong local community more than they did three years ago. The local church is a key element of the local community with three in four Australians (76%) agreeing the churches in their local area are making a positive difference to their community.

The research, which was conducted by McCrindle Research and surveyed 1,000 Australians also found that two thirds of Australians are likely to attend a church service either online (64%) or in-person (67%) if personally invited by a friend or family member. Far from religion and spirituality being only for older Australians, Gen Z (45%) are twice as likely as Baby Boomers (21%) to be extremely or very likely to attend an online church service if personally invited by a friend or family member. Mark McCrindle, Founder and Principal of McCrindle Research says, "This data is worth reflecting on a little longer: in this seemingly secular era, where the church is perceived by many commentators to be on the decline and culturally outdated, almost half of all young adults invited to a church service by a friend or family member would very likely attend."

The report also found that Australians are accepting of others' religious views. Nine in ten (90%) agree that in Australia people should have the freedom to share their religious beliefs, if done in a peaceful way, even if those beliefs are different to mainstream community views. There is, however, wavering support for religious symbolism in public life. Almost two in five Australians (39%) agree that Christian practices in public life such as parliament opening in prayer, oaths in court being taken on the Bible, or Christian chaplains in hospitals or jails should be stopped. Three in five (61%), however, disagree and are therefore open to Christian practices in public life continuing.

Interestingly, religious discrimination is a genuine issue in Australia with almost three in ten Australians (29%) having experienced religious discrimination, this equates to about half of those who identify with a religion which is six in ten Australians. Australians who identify with a non-Christian religion are more likely to have experienced discrimination (54%) than Protestants (27%) or Catholics (32%). Religious discrimination is also more likely to be experienced by younger Australians who are four times as likely as their older counterparts to say they have experienced religious discrimination (51% Gen Z cf. 13% Baby Boomers).

Source: McCrindle Research

The Friends of the Diocese of Willochra has been established to help support the Diocese of Willochra See Endowment Fund, but now also helps other groups and projects in the Diocese which need ongoing support.

These include Ministry Training, the Cathedral Endowment, our Linked Diocese of Mandalay, Anglicare, The Willochra Home for the Aged at Crystal Brook, Camp Willochra at Melrose, and our Indigenous Bursary Fund.

Any of these can be accessed on our Website under 'Make a Donation'.

We invite you to consider making a bequest to the Diocese for any of its missional initiatives.

THE FRIENDS OF THE DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA

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Please send me information on making a bequest to the See Endowment Fund in my Will

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Allan Street, Crystal Brook 5523

Email: rcm@willochraagedcare.org.au

Website: <https://willochraagedcare.org.au/>

Phone no: 08 8636 2320

The Willochra Bursary. School completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are well below the rates for non-Indigenous students. In recent years there has been an improvement in retention rates and we are proud to be involved in this movement for change.

Mission, it's been said, is finding out what God is doing and joining in. (Archbishop of Canterbury)

We established the Willochra Bursary in 2015 to assist bursary winners with the costs associated with their study. The bursary grant may be used for stationery and equipment, books, IT supplies, uniforms, sporting goods, school excursions, or school fees.

We invite you to consider making a donation to the Bursary Project.

THE ANGLICARE WILLOCHRA BURSARY PROJECT

for THE WILLOCHRA BURSARY

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