



Diocese of Willochra

The Willochran

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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



Willochra Home

THE WILLOCHRAN

Published by the Diocese of Willochra

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

Have your say in The Willochran
Suggestions, comments, contributions and insights are welcome.

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Anglican Church Of Australia

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.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians
of this country

We pay respect to the elders, past, present and emerging
And wish to extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander peoples today.

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ACQUISITION OF THE WILLOCHRA HOME AGED CARE FACILITY

Following a prayerful review of the Willochra Home's aged care portfolio, the Diocese intends to sell their aged care business to Barunga Village who are based at Port Broughton. This follows much thought and reflection of the needs of Willochra Home and our own Diocese. We recognise the special place the Home has in our Diocesan history from its opening on 16th April 1964.

Barunga Village is a community-based not-for-profit organisation with long-standing aged care operations and has a strong reputation. The sale is expected to be completed by the 2nd of June 2025 pending approval by the Department of Health and Aged Care. Both parties will work very closely together during the transition period beginning on the 2nd of April 2025.

Barunga Village and the Willochra Home share a similar commitment to the provision of high-quality aged care and as such it will essentially be business as usual for the Willochra Home.

We are pleased to be able to advise that all staff and volunteers who work at the facility will be welcomed by the Barunga Village including our Chaplain, the Reverend Sandra Bryson. This was an important requirement of the Diocese throughout the negotiations with Barunga Village. Barunga shares our values and service philosophy and wants to maintain a high level of professional care for residents. Like the Willochra Home, Barunga Village has been awarded a four-star quality rating by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

We know this change may cause some concern among residents, staff and families and we hope we can also look to support them. We aim to ensure the individual needs of all the Willochra Home residents and staff are carefully looked after with their ongoing wellbeing our main priority.

Our prayers continue for all involved, especially for our residents, staff and families:



**FROM BISHOP
JEREMY**

Lord, we ask for the blessing of your loving presence to surround each resident, bringing comfort and consolation. Grant them peace of mind knowing that they are cared for and loved. May their spirits be renewed, and may they find joy and connection with those around them, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Loving God, bless the nurses, caregivers, and all staff members who dedicate their time and energy to caring for these residents. Grant them strength, patience, and compassion as they face the challenges of their work. Protect them from burnout and exhaustion. And may they find satisfaction in their service, in Christ's name. Amen.

Lord, we pray for the families of the residents, who may be experiencing a range of emotions. Comfort them in this transition period and grant them understanding and patience. Help them to maintain strong connections with The Willochra Home and Barunga Village, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Father, we pray for the residents, staff and families and Barunga Village for the new relationships and renewed care in this time of transition.

The LORD bless you and keep you.

The LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The LORD lift up his face upon you and give you peace.

Amen. Numbers 6, 24-26.

On behalf of the Diocese, I wish to thank the Registrar, Gavin Tyndale and his team who have put in hundreds of hours to bring the Diocese to this point.

Yours in Christ

Jeremy N R James TSSF
Bishop and Chairperson

Central Myanmar devastated by magnitude 7.7 earthquake

We received news on the 28th March that Central Myanmar, and in particular our partner diocese of Mandalay, had been struck by a magnitude 7.7 earthquake. Bishop David Nyi Nyi Naing emailed Bishop Jeremy. He wrote:

"Many people have died under the buildings, still finding but not enough rescue, it is not only Mandalay but it also effects across the upper country. There are five churches and four buildings in Mandalay: Shwebo, Pinkin, Pyin Oi Lwin and Sagain, badly affected by this earthquake. We also need to help people with food, water and shelter who are affected by this earthquake. Your prayers and support are very helpful"



Dear Friends

I am launching an **EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR THE DIOCESE OF MANDALAY, MYANMAR.**

The magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck near Mandalay on 28 March. It was felt as far away as Bangkok, over 1000 kms away.

Myanmar lies on the boundary between two tectonic plates and is one of the world's most seismically active countries.

More than 3,471 people have died in Myanmar (as at 6 April) with another 3,900 injured with more than 270 others missing.

According to reports many people are feared to be still trapped under collapsed buildings.

The BBC's Yogita Limaye is the first foreign journalist to enter Myanmar since the earthquake struck. She writes, "almost every building we saw had cracks running through at least one of its walls, unsafe to step into. At the main city hospital they're having to treat patients outdoors". The daily temperature is 40 degrees. "Mandalay is a city living in terror, and with good reasons. Nearly every night since Friday there have been big aftershocks ... but tens of thousands are sleeping outdoors because they have no home to return to".

In the last 36 hours, monsoonal rain has added to the misery of the population.

We aim to raise \$10,000 by the 30 June 2025 for our partner Diocese of Mandalay. All donations about \$2 will be tax deductible.

To make a contribution please contact the Diocesan office for details.

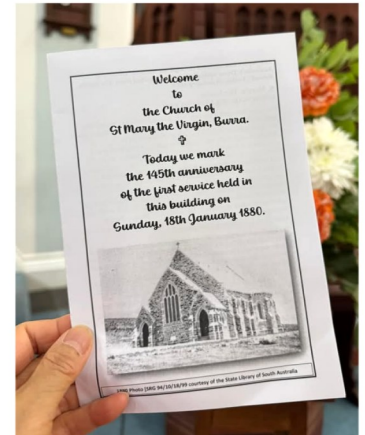
Please continue to pray for Mandalay's bishop, the Right Reverend David Nyi Nyi Naing and his wife Mary, and their son Solomon, at school at Trinity College, Gawler.

Please also pray for the Archdeacon, Joseph Yin Oo and the Registrar, U Aung Kyaw.

Thank you
In Christ,
+Jeremy



Cummins at Christmas 2024



Burra, 145 years



*Sunrise over Riverton New Year's Day
2025*



Poonindie, Christmas 2024



Christmas at Tumby Bay 2024



Willochra Home Christmas Party



*David, son of the Bishop of Mandalay in
Myanmar, is studying at Trinity College, Gawler.*



Tumby Bay Christmas 2024

Yes, Boss Bird!

Reflections from where the wilderness meets the sea.

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26).

Each time I take the short walk from the rectory to the church through the back garden gate, I am being watched by avian eyes. Then I hear a loud 'prrip, prrip,' from a territorial Singing Honeyeater, *Lichenostomus virescens*, located within the weeping bottlebrush tree, or, from some other vantage point. It would be amiss of me to think that this bird is always watching out for me, every time I open the back door. Singing honeyeaters are quite common here in Ceduna. You may not see them but they certainly vocalise, letting you know they are around. The regularity though of this bird's response, just to my appearance as soon as I step outside triggers me to respond aloud, 'Yes boss bird. Morning boss bird.'

It is an automatic response of mine to consider birds of the air because for me birds are bioindicators of the robustness and health of the environment. They are more visible, and more audible than other members of the animal kingdom here in Ceduna. Their role and function in the neighbourhood is more easily discerned because of their beak shape, flight pattern or behaviour. Misleadingly, singing honeyeaters, are not *honey* eaters but nectar feeders, with attitude. Their beaks are slightly curved in order to probe flowers and use their tongues to access the energy rich nectar. They can hover in place if needs be and are slight-framed to give them high manoeuvrability in around foliage, especially with the challenging flower spikes of weeping bottlebrushes.

Their beak however is also thick as singing honeyeaters are insectivorous as well. This is a good thing for when flowers are in short supply and insects are a high source of protein. In order to be insect hunters, these birds need a stronger beak, really good wing structure and be able to hawk. Hawking is an energy-intensive activity, involving repeated take-offs, swooping and landings in a short space of time. Insects such as moths, grasshoppers, and locusts are of enough nutritional value to pay back for hawking behaviour. So, boss bird, and clan members glean both flowers and foliage for opportunistic nectar and insects, but they are also confident enough to check out under eaves and around flyscreen doors for spiders, or insects trapped in webs. One can get quite close and personal with these birds, but they are quick. And right on cue, as I am writing this, boss bird has just appeared under the carport as I look through the office window, working the webs, and checking in with its fellow birds, 'prrip, prrip.' Yes, boss bird!

These birds are quite adept at obtaining what is provided in local environs. The disciples were quite adept at foraging, but the lifestyle that Jesus led them meant they were at the mercy of hospitality of others. They were worried, questioning how to provide for themselves and follow Jesus in his model of ministering. Jesus answered, 'Do not worry, strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' God provides!



Singing honeyeater

Provision of food and water has been particularly challenging for much of our diocese over the past twelve months with record-



Red Wattle Bird

equalling or breaking drought conditions, even for the Eyre Peninsula and the Far West Coast. To think that grain producers managed to harvest something, was a credit to reduced tillage practices, timing of sowing, and plant breeding. The elephant in the room at present is the stored water situation for the Eyre Peninsula.

Urban farmers, *a.k.a.* gardeners, too have struggled to keep their gardens alive, yet here, roses have managed to bloom, sunflowers have opened their discs, and frangipanis continue to surprise with abundant flowers. All the while 'boss bird' continues to be active and vocal. Mind you, if I do not hear 'boss' within half an hour of being outside, I start to look about. There are of course other birds.

Red wattlebirds, the biggest honeyeater species, show up around the rectory garden with their raucous chortle, amazing gymnastics on springy branches. I have noticed that they are slightly smaller compared to say, the Mid-North birds and less cranky. I have mentioned before about the very wary, and flighty crested pigeons, but over the past year the small number of individuals that that tend to frequent the rectory garden have become accustomed to my presence and will continue to graze the grounds even while I am outside. One landed on the washing line while I was hanging up clothes and although surprised, I was there, it chose to stay for a while before alighting upon the ground to begin grazing. Just the other day I spied a tree martin for the first time, while I was hand watering plants.

This bird confidently swooped over where I was watering, harvesting whatever insects were being disturbed; especially small moths which are particularly wholesome for birds. Their swooping habit is a hybrid of hawking and the continual flight patterns of swallows. This particular tree martin then swooped a small flock of arguing sparrows as they had ventured into its territory.

How does one tell a crow from a raven? Even crows and ravens get confused. On the far west coast we can have the Australian Raven and the Little Raven. You need to be very observant of the chest feathers, or throat hackles, which are more prominent in mature Australian ravens; they stick out more like a cowlick on a human, but being black-on-black it is best seen to those hackles side-on. The Little Crows here are marginal birds being more abundant north and west of Ceduna. Just to stir the pot, Adelaide Crows are ornithologically incorrect. Crows do not stoop as much as the ravens when they call, and it is in this posture that makes it possible to look for those feathers. Crows have a different call characteristic, but being corvids, these highly intelligent birds like to mimic when their territories overlap and then get confused themselves.

There are times I have seen different birds associate with one another. On the particularly hot evening of Christmas Day, after the maximum temperature had topped at 43°C, and high cloud had finally masked the air-frying sun, it was unusually calm for Ceduna. There was not a breath of wind, yet a small group of birds were resting on the power line to the house. A couple of galahs, a crested pigeon, boss bird and a Murray magpie, not far from one another, roosted down, checking out feathers under wings, having a scratch or yawning. They were done for the day and God had provided.

Other birds tell me things are not well with the state of the nation. I mentioned sparrows earlier, well they are new to this garden this season, but we all know how messy they can be so they can move on. Galahs come and go, depending on where the fruit trees are, or if the pine trees across the road have any fresh green cones, but here they are in small groups. What I have noticed is that the starling numbers have dropped dramatically in the trees on the foreshore this year. When I arrived in December 2023, it was the screeching shrill of starlings that greeted me each night on sunset as they settled into the trees. There were so many that it was hazardous to walk along the foreshore path for risk of being either bombed with droppings or slipping on them. This year, just a few have returned. But they are nearby because we are being inundated with moulted feathers at the hall. Starlings are certainly an introduced menace, and it is possible to see flocks of them out in farmland country far away from towns.

The swings and roundabouts of the weather brings its joys and frustrations to us all. For gardeners, there are always challenges as we battle to find what we think is the right balance with what we want to grow, and what nature puts up instead. The mental health of urbanites is very much measured against the vibrancy of the environs around the towns. It was very evident during the Millennial Drought when watering restrictions bit hard in suburban areas, the mental health of people declined. I think we have yet to recover from that. The opposite surely has to apply for those who are facing or have faced floods or at least very persistent rain along the east coast of Australia.

‘Look at the birds of the air.’ I might not be able to watch godwits or boobies, oystercatchers, or sandpipers easily, but even around the rectory garden, I am blessed with the company of different birds, their behaviours, calls and actions. Even a flash of a black and white shape flitting across the office window tells me that a Murray magpie has come in for its afternoon drink and wade in the birdbath. Birds encourage us to use our eyes and ears and draw us into thankfulness that we are provided for despite what we appear to lack.

‘Prrrip, prrip’! Yes, boss bird.

Rev’d David Thompson



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St Mary's Church, Burra celebrates 145 years of worship

"For some years past it has been very generally felt that the building used for church purposes for the Anglican congregation in Burra was not at all such as the position and importance of the body demanded..."

So began the report printed in *The Burra Record* on Friday, 23 January 1880 which described the planning, siting, designing and building of the new Church of St Mary the Virgin in this historic town.

The first St Mary's church (on Limestone Hill) was built around 1847, somewhere near the Burra Hospital and was comparatively small. As it gradually became unfit for purpose, moves were made for a well-sited replacement. Those plans eventually came to fruition via the design from Mr. G F MacLagan along with his supervision of the work carried out by the local firm, Messrs Sara & Dunstan (who also built the Gladstone Goal!). The foundation stone was laid on 3 July 1879 by Bishop Augustus Short. Just 6 months later the building was ready for use and so it was fitting that 145 years and 1 day later, a specially planned thanksgiving Eucharist was held to mark the anniversary of the first 3 services held on an equally hot day on 18 January 1880. Back then there was standing room only for the full choral service where the Lord Bishop of Adelaide was again in attendance.

For the 2025 service, the Bishop of Willochra, the Rt Rev'd Jeremy James tssf, led the service with the assistance of Fr Michael Hillier, a former parish priest, who gave the occasional address. The assisting LLM was Mrs Geraldine Smedley who also presented the first reading and led the Psalm. (She sowed the initial seed for marking this event.) LLM Ms Mary Woollacott read the New Testament lesson and Local priest, the Rev'd Anne Ford was the Gospeller.

With other parishioners past and present able to attend and along with visitors from the local churches and several areas in the diocese, the fact that the venerable 1905 Dodd pipe organ was in fine voice brought an added dimension to the service in the congregation's singing the well-chosen hymns. Mrs Rosemary Nairn was the organist. Her family has had a long connection with the church. It was also noted in the 1880 report that ***"A very large congregation including many dissenters assembled to take part in the services."*** Over the years this beautiful church has been generously enhanced in many ways and holds a special place in Burra's heart. In May this year Burra itself will celebrate 180 years since its humble beginning.



Mary Woollacott



At the conclusion of this memorable and uplifting service and over a delicious and plentiful lunch served in the parish hall, everyone made the most of catching up with friends and acquaintances and remembering times past.

[Along with a service booklet, all attending were given a photocopy of The Burra Record report of the opening services from the date listed. Sir Frederick Holder (knighted in 1902) was the editor in 1880 and later, when entering the political arena, was to become the first Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives in Melbourne from 1901-1909.]

*Mary Woollacott
Burra*

Australia Day at Edithburgh

Australia Day at St Mary's Anglican Church

The day started with a Eucharist service in St Mary's Anglican church, Edithburgh. This was conducted by the Bishop of Willochra, Bishop Jeremy James. About 18 people attended from surrounding district as well as other denominations. During the service, Thanksgiving prayers were taken from those written by Revd Aunty Lenore Parker, an Elder of the Yaegl people of the Northern Rivers and a Priest in the Diocese of Grafton. She is also a representative on NATSIAC, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Committee.



Following the service the congregation gathered in the Flying Angel Centre (Mission to Seafarers) for lunch. During this time Bishop Jeremy presented June Harrison (Chaplain of the MtS) with a cheque from the Diocese to go towards the new kitchen planned by the MtS committee.

The Mission is based behind the Anglican church with recreational facilities which Seafarers from across the world enjoy when on shore leave when their ships are loading at Pt Giles. Volunteers and committee members assist by driving the men in the mini bus, also located on the grounds. They enjoy seeing the sights around the district and love visiting the fauna park in Minlaton.

The volunteers and committee are a small band of enthusiastic people wanting to give Seafarers a break from their long spells at sea.

We are always looking for volunteers to help in many ways at the Centre.



The Heart of Ministry

Lay Ministry Retreat

**4th–6th July
at Camp Willochra**

Please register your interest with
Ven. Gael Johannsen
gjohannsen@diowillochra.org.au
Full Retreat incl. meals \$150 per person
Day visitors incl. lunch \$90 or \$45 per day

Vale Bishop Keith

Bishop Keith Rayner, a former Australian Primate and Archbishop, first of Adelaide and then of Melbourne, was one of the most significant Australian church leaders of the 20th century.

As Acting Primate from 1989 to 1991, and then Primate until his retirement in 1999, Dr Rayner steered the Australian Church through tumultuous debates about the ordination of women priests and then liturgical reform. It has been said that he provided the intellectual leadership needed to wrestle at depth with the fundamental theological and ecclesiological issues involved in what was potentially an explosive fault line in the Church.

The struggle over women priests came to a head early in his time as Primate. Dr Rayner realised that unless the General Synod could now resolve the situation, the unity of the national Church was in peril. Under his careful leadership, as he worked with the House of Bishops, where he was highly respected, and over two separate General Synod meetings, legislation for women priests was finally approved in November that year. The next month, as Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Rayner ordained 33 women priests in three separate services. Other dioceses also moved rapidly; the Australian Anglican Church had 92 women priests by the end of 1992.

In 1995, he chaired another difficult General Synod meeting, at which *A Prayer Book for Australia*, the successor to the 1978 *An Australian Prayer Book*, was debated over long, tortuous sessions. The new book was finally approved, but only as "liturgical resources authorised by the General Synod", because of last-minute opposition from the diocese of Sydney. It is not authorised for use in that diocese.

Keith Rayner was born in Brisbane on 22 November 1929, the youngest of four children of Sid and Gladys Rayner. His father ran a butcher's shop. Educated at the Church of England Grammar School (now the Anglican Church Grammar School), he graduated with a BA from the University of Queensland, gained his theological qualification at St Francis's College, Brisbane, and later undertook a Ph.D. at Queensland University, on the history of Anglicanism in Queensland. Later, he received honorary doctorates, and, in 2001, the Centenary Medal for service to Australian society through the Anglican Church of Australia.

Parish ministry in Brisbane followed his 1953 ordination. He became Bishop of Wangaratta in 1969, and from there he was elected Archbishop of Adelaide in 1975. During his time there, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for "service to religion". His election as Archbishop of Melbourne in 1990 followed the early death of Archbishop David Penman the previous year.

At the time of his retirement in 1999, Dr Rayner nominated the changed status of the laity as the greatest change that he had witnessed in his 30 years in episcopal orders. When he first became a bishop, the clergy *were* the Church, he said, and this attitude was reflected in both styles of worship and church management at every level from the national to the parochial.

By 1999, the laity were playing a very different part, and the changed position of women was an important part of this difference, he said. It was not just that women were now ordained, but there was a new concern to consider the female point of view, with language a symbol of that change.

Shortly before his retirement, Dr Rayner also engaged cautiously in the Church's discussions about same-sex issues. After the contentious 1998 Lambeth Conference, he asked whether God was calling the Church to review its received tradition, "to see whether further light is to be shed on it".

In 1963, he had married Audrey Fletcher, an accountant for the diocese of Brisbane. They had three children. In their retirement in Adelaide, he regularly presided and preached and led Bible studies in his parish. This ministry he continued faithfully until not long before he celebrated the 70th anniversary of his ordination in December 2023.

He died in Adelaide on 12 January, aged 95, and is survived by their children and eight grandchildren.



On Sunday evening 4 December, the cathedral bells rang a quarter peal for the special choral evensong marking the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Diocese of Adelaide.

On 5 December 1992, history was made in the diocese when five women deacons were ordained as priests.

Ordained priest that day were the Rev'd Joan Claring-Bould (the diocese's first woman deacon), Flo Monahan, Susanna Pain, Sister Juliana SI and Susan Straub.



"Have mercy Mr. President"

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell — and great was its fall!" Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

— Matthew 7:24-29

Joined by many across the country, we have gathered this morning to pray for unity as a nation — not for agreement, political or otherwise, but for the kind of unity that fosters community across diversity and division, a unity that serves the common good.

Unity, in this sense, is the threshold requirement for people to live together in a free society, it is the solid rock, as Jesus said, in this case upon which to build a nation. It is not conformity. It is not a victory of one over another. It is not weary politeness nor passivity born of exhaustion. Unity is not partisan.

Rather, unity is a way of being with one another that encompasses and respects differences, that teaches us to hold multiple perspectives and life experiences as valid and worthy of respect; that enables us, in our communities and in the halls of power, to genuinely care for one another even when we disagree. Those across our country who dedicate their lives, or who volunteer, to help others in times of natural disaster, often at great risk to themselves, never ask those they are helping for whom they voted in the past election or what positions they hold on a particular issue. We are at our best when we follow their example.

Unity at times, is sacrificial, in the way that love is sacrificial, a giving of ourselves for the sake of another. Jesus of Nazareth, in his Sermon on the Mount, exhorts us to love not only our neighbours, but to love our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us; to be merciful, as our God is merciful, and to forgive others, as God forgives us.



The Rt Rev'd Mariann Edgar Budde, Episcopal Bishop of Washington, DC

Jesus went out of his way to welcome those whom his society deemed as outcasts.

Now I grant you that unity, in this broad, expansive sense, is aspirational, and it's a lot to pray for—a big ask of our God, worthy of the best of who we are and can be. But there isn't much to be gained by our prayers if we act in ways that further deepen and exploit the divisions among us. Our Scriptures are quite clear that God is never impressed with prayers when actions are not informed by them. Nor does God spare us from the consequences of our deeds, which, in the end, matter more than the words we pray.

Those of us gathered here in this Cathedral are not naive about the realities of politics. When power, wealth and competing interests are at stake; when views of what America should be are in conflict; when there are strong opinions across a spectrum of possibilities and starkly different understandings of what the right course of action is, there will be winners and losers when votes are cast or decisions made that set the course of public policy and the prioritization of resources. It goes without saying that in a democracy, not everyone's particular hopes and dreams will be realized in a given legislative session or a presidential term or even a generation. Not everyone's specific prayers — for those of us who are people of prayer — will be answered as we would like. But for some, the loss of their hopes and dreams will be far more than political defeat, but instead a loss of equality, dignity, and livelihood.

Given this, is true unity among us even possible? And why should we care about it?

Well, I hope that we care, because the culture of contempt that has become normalized in our country threatens to destroy us. We are all bombarded daily with messages from what sociologists now call "the outrage industrial complex," some of it driven by external forces whose interests are furthered by a polarized America. Contempt fuels our political campaigns and social media, and many profit from it. But it's a dangerous way to lead a country.

I am a person of faith, and with God's help I believe that in this country is possible—not perfectly, for we are imperfect people and an imperfect union — but sufficient enough to keep us believing in and working to realize the ideals of the United States of America — ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, with its assertion of innate human equality and dignity.

And we are right to pray for God's help as we seek unity, for we need God's help, but only if we ourselves are willing to tend to the foundations upon which unity depends. Like Jesus' analogy of building a house of faith on the rock of his teachings, as opposed to building a house on sand, the foundations we need for unity must be sturdy enough to withstand the many storms that threaten it.

What are the foundations of unity? Drawing from our sacred traditions and texts, let me suggest that there are at least three.

The first foundation for unity is **honouring the inherent dignity of every human being**, which is, as all faiths represented here affirm, the birthright of all people as children of the One God. In public discourse, honouring each other's dignity means refusing to mock, discount, or demonize those with whom we differ, choosing instead to respectfully debate across our differences, and whenever possible, to seek common ground. If common ground is not possible, dignity demands that we remain true to our convictions without contempt for those who hold convictions of their own.

A second foundation for unity is **honesty** in both private conversation and public discourse. If we aren't willing to be honest, there is no use in praying for unity, because our actions work against the prayers themselves. We might, for a time, experience a false sense of unity among some, but not the sturdier, broader unity that we need to address the challenges we face.

Now to be fair, we don't always know where the truth lies, and there is a lot working against the truth now, staggeringly so. But when we do know what is true, it's incumbent upon us to speak the truth, even when—and especially when—it costs us.

A third foundation for unity is **humility**, which we all need, because we are all fallible human beings. We make mistakes. We say and do things that we regret. We have our blind spots and biases, and we are perhaps the most dangerous to ourselves and others when we are persuaded, without a doubt, that we are *absolutely right* and someone else is *absolutely wrong*. Because then we are just a few steps away from labelling ourselves as the good people, versus the bad people.

The truth is that we are all people, capable of both good and bad. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn astutely observed that "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties, but right through every human heart and through all human hearts." The more we realize this, the more room we have within ourselves for humility, and openness to one another across our differences, because in fact, we are more like one

another than we realize, and we need each other.

Unity is relatively easy to pray for on occasions of solemnity. It's a lot harder to realize when we're dealing with real differences in the public arena. But without unity, we are building our nation's house on sand.

With a commitment to unity that incorporates diversity and transcends disagreement, and the solid foundations of dignity, honesty, and humility that such unity requires, we can do our part, in our time, to help realize the ideals and the dream of America.

Let me make one final plea, Mr President. Millions have put their trust in you. As you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now. There are transgender children in both Republican and Democratic families who fear for their lives.

And the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings; who labour in our poultry farms and meat-packing plants; who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shift in hospitals — they may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes, and are good neighbours. They are faithful members of our churches, mosques and synagogues, gurdwara, and temples.

Have mercy, Mr President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away. Help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands to find compassion and welcome here. Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were once strangers in this land.

May God grant us all the strength and courage to honour the dignity of every human being, speak the truth in love, and walk humbly with one another and our God, for the good of all the people of this nation and the world. Amen.

Editor's note: The Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, Episcopal Bishop of Washington, D.C., offered this homily at a national prayer service held Tuesday, Jan. 21 at Washington National Cathedral.

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See the Willochran contact details on page 2

Godaku Tjukurpa: God's Story: Artist's gift to her grandchildren

A new Pitjantjatjara language illustrated children's Bible will bring faith and culture to the next generation of Anangu children. *Godaku Tjukurpa (God's Story)* was a vision of the late NamiKulyuru, a respected artist, teacher, and Pitjantjatjara Bible translator.

Pitjantjatjara is spoken by the Anangu people, who live across central Australia in South Australia, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia.

Project coordinator David Barnett said the book fulfilled Ms Kulyuru's desire of sharing faith with young Pitjantjatjara readers. "Her dream was to have a book that she could pass on to her grandchildren," he said. "The children could learn these stories from the Old and New Testaments that she had grown up hearing around the campfire when she was little."

The book includes 54 paintings depicting stories from the Bible, with accompanying text in Pitjantjatjara and English.

Mr Barnett said Ms Kulyuru started the project after noticing children's Bibles in an Adelaide church library and deciding to create something similar using Anangu art. She noted that while English Bibles showed one scene per illustration, Pitjantjatjara art told whole stories in one image through symbolism. "[Pitjantjatjara artists] can tell a whole story on a canvas by painting symbols and it shows the whole movement from beginning to end and through time and space," he said.

Although Ms Kulyuru passed away in 2022 after battling a brain tumour, the wider Pitjantjatjara community came together to finish her work. Many of the artists were also Bible translators who used their paintings to bring the books they had translated to life visually. One contributor, who worked on the book of Numbers, painted Israel's journey through the wilderness, while another who worked on Joshua portrayed the fall of

Jericho.

The Bible Society Australia plans to launch the book in Pitjantjatjara communities in 2025, with a travelling roadshow to display the original artworks. The book is available through Koorong and proceeds will go toward future Pitjantjatjara projects.

Hannah Felsbourg, The Melbourne Anglican, December 2024



Translator and artist Audrey Brumby with her artwork depicting Matthew 2, "The wise men see and follow the star." Picture: Supplied.

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



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The Registrar,

Diocese of Willochra

PO Box 96, Gladstone 5473

Ph (08) 8662 2249



Godaku Tjukurpa - God's Bible (picture supplied)

Tough Questions

"There will never be a day when we cannot say, 'This the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it...'

A day that focusses exclusively on the birth of Jesus is one that should stir us to new heights of joy and gladness as we contemplate God's love, humility and willingness to give up everything for our sakes," says The Rev'd Charlie Lacey.

"The truth is, nobody knows the month and day of Jesus' birth. The first recorded speculation about its being the 25th of December comes from the early third century,"

It is often asserted that the 25th of December is essentially a pagan holiday. Is there any truth to this claim, and how ought Christians to respond to it?

In the Roman world, the 25th of December was a feast day dedicated to the sun, called "The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun". It was also the final day of the week-long "Feast of Saturnalia", which marked the passing of the winter solstice. It is entirely plausible that the early Church chose the 25th of December to celebrate Jesus' birthday in order to redirect society's attention away from paganism and towards Christ.

In 202 AD Hippolytus (who later became the Bishop of Rome) claimed that Jesus was born on the 25th of December.

Further, in 221 AD, the Christian historian Julius Africanus, suggested that Mary conceived on the 25th of March (nine months before the 25th of December).

Whilst these postulations are unlikely to be correct, they show that Christians had been celebrating Jesus' birthday on the 25th of December from at least the beginning of the third century.

Interestingly, the celebration of the sun god on the 25th of December was not instituted by the Roman Emperor, Aurelian, until 274 AD.

We do not know how long "Sol Invictus" was unofficially celebrated prior to that date; however, it does cast doubt over the theory that Christians appropriated a pagan feast day.

We do not know that exact date of Jesus' birth, nor can we be sure why the early church settled on the 25th of December (a decision ratified by Emperor Constantine in 336 AD).

Be that as it may, it is entirely appropriate for Christians to celebrate the momentous event of Jesus' birth, and the 25th of December has been the preferred date for most of Church history.

God is in the business of redemption. The word "redeem" finds its origin in the slave markets of the ancient world; but to understand what it means in a Christian context, we might turn to Colossians 1.13, which says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." If God can take a sinful human being, indeed an actual pagan, and transfer that person from darkness to light, then what is to prevent him from doing likewise with a pagan festival? God takes things that are sinful, broken and evil and transforms them to be used for his good purposes.

You will not find anything in Scripture about celebrating Christmas, but then again, Scripture does not have much to say about celebrating birthdays either. In fact, the only birthday celebrations the Bible recounts are those of Pharaoh and Herod, both of whom celebrated by having someone murdered (the chief baker and John the Baptist, respectively). Yet we do not spurn birthday celebrations on the basis of this grisly history. How much less should we call into question celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour, just because it happens to fall on a day that was once a pagan festival?

There will never be a day when we cannot say, "This the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118. 24, NKJV).

A day that focusses exclusively on the birth of Jesus is one that should stir us to new heights of joy and gladness as we contemplate God's love, humility and willingness to give up everything for our sakes.

The Rev'd Charlie Lacey for Anglican focus



The Rev'd Charlie Lacey

A conversation with Br Michael, Prior of the Taizé Community, France

In November, 2024, the editors of Together were privileged to spend an afternoon with Br Matthew who was on a private visit to his family in Gawler. In an extensive interview, we share something of Br Matthew's personal journey.

In Sheffield (where I was at university) there was a prayer group that used the music from Taizé. I suppose that was my introduction. In my life, a guiding light has always been singing and music. Instantly that spoke to me. On my first visit to Taizé, I had just completed my first year in university. After returning to the UK to continue my studies, I decided to go back to Taizé to volunteer for five weeks, around Easter, and it was then that I spoke with the brothers. I took a year free from my studies and in 1986 on 11th of November, I was received into the community. I was 21. When I went to Taizé, what struck me was that nobody told you what you had to do. You went into the church and the community was singing and you were drawn into the prayer; you were eagerly welcomed and although there were lots of young people there, you didn't have the impression that just something that was being done for young people by the brothers, but you had the feeling of being taken seriously by them. They listened and the Bible studies gave time for ideas and questions, but you were held almost as if you were on the same level. You felt the trust that they had in you; in the sharing groups no adults were looking over your shoulder to try and tell you or check on all you were saying. That was very moving, but I think what spoke to me most of all was the fact that the brothers were from different Christian churches. The prayer in John 17 where Jesus prays for unity with his disciples made everything very coherent. Here was a community that was trying to live something that Jesus prayed for and it made sense. If we speak with God who loves, then we have to love each other as Christians. It seemed like an authentic testimony but at the same time I realised the brothers were human beings – they weren't particularly holy.

For me, the path of the gospel is different, it involves giving yourself for others not just looking for your own interests. It involves hospitality offered to all and being ready to not choose your own path. It gives you the freedom to be able to operate in a world where there's so many pressures to conform. I think that's something that young people find when they come to Taizé, that there isn't that pressure to conform to a particular model. I recall one of the older brothers, who has since passed away, who accompanied a lot of our new brothers, said. "God will always need people who are ready to leave everything behind in order to follow Christ as a sign of the

absolute nature of God's love."

It's not to say that life in Taizé isn't demanding. You are expected to come to worship three times a day, to attend Bible study, to help with the practical work. In a world where structural reference points are often blurred, to have something that points

you in a particular direction whilst leaving you free, has great relevance. It's amazing, but our volunteers often say, "When we sit down at table for lunch together that's a new experience". Simple table hospitality is actually building community. When people come to Taizé they feel that they belong to a community. They discovered that community, that prayer, are not things which are so alien as they imagine, but that they respond to a deep down longing.

Taizé was founded in the situation of war and as such is part of our founding experience ... The work with young people, is wonderful, but we mustn't forget this other side to our life, the expression of solidarity with those who are in situations of suffering. We have fraternities, as we call them, in Brazil and Cuba, South Korea, Bangladesh and then in a suburb of Paris. There has also been a provisional fraternity in Ukraine for the past few months...

Peace-making and reconciliation are high on our list, but it's not a call to be peacemakers. We offer a space for prayer and listening ... taking time in prayer to try and understand what the Spirit is saying to us today, but also being ready to listen to people who are on the margins of the Church, on the margins of society.

There's a great polarisation in society and in our churches today. But when we listen, often there's a path that opens up even if we're not in total agreement with one another. It is a fellowship, a communion which is given. Often in the past churches have been linked with power structures ... what seems to be important for today is to renounce this position of influence in society, to go back to the time when Christianity wasn't the majority religion; to become again the salt of the earth, the yeast in the dough and to rejoice in what we learn from others, especially listening rather than to telling them what they should be thinking.



Brother Michael (picture provided)

With thanks to Fr Bart O'Donovan for this article

Biggest threats facing the Church: 'We've reached a time of Christian invisibility'

George Barna, a leading expert in church and worldview trends, has weighed in on some of the biggest issues facing the Church — including the steady decrease in a biblical worldview and dwindling concern for spiritual formation — at a time of “Christian invisibility in our culture.” In an interview with The Christian Post, the 69-year-old founder of The Barna Group, a market research firm specializing in studying Americans’ religious beliefs and behaviours, said that over the last few decades, he’s seen certain negative trends increasingly permeate Western Christianity. “People have become more selfish, churches have become less influential, pastors have become less Bible-centric,” Barna, who now serves as the director of research at the Cultural Research Centre at Arizona Christian University, said. “Families have invested less of their time and energy in spiritual growth, particularly of their children. The media now influences the Church more than the Church influences the media, or the culture for that matter. The Christian Body tends to get off track arguing about a lot of things that really don’t matter.”

On a wider scale, one of the most troubling trends Barna highlights is the decline in discipleship and a lack of solid, biblical training from seminaries. He criticized the prevalent metrics used by churches to gauge success — attendance, fundraising and infrastructure — which he stressed have little to do with Jesus’ mission. “There is poor leadership in seminaries that mislead local churches into thinking that they’re actually training individuals whom God has called to be leaders and are qualified to be leaders and certifying them to lead local churches, not knowing any better bringing them on,” he said. Barna clarified that while many seminaries have “good intentions,” they set young ministry leaders up for failure. “You get what you measure,” he contended. “So, if you measure the wrong things, you’ll get the wrong outcomes ... pastors measure how many people show up, how much money they raise, how many programs they offer, how many staff persons they hire, how much square footage they built out. Jesus didn’t die for any of that.

So, we’re measuring the wrong stuff and, consequently, we get the wrong outcomes.” To address these issues, Barna advocated for a radical return to biblical roots — but that, he said, might require rethinking the modern church structure. “If we were to go back to the Bible, I think we’d recognize the local church, the institutional church, as we’ve created it, is man-made. It’s not in the Scriptures,” he said. “The programs, the titles, the buildings, all the stuff that has become sacrosanct in Western culture around the world is not necessarily

biblical. “Jesus didn’t come to build institutions, He came to build people. And we see that model in His life. He devoted the ministry portion of His life to investing in individuals. And that’s what each of us who are followers of Christ need to be doing.”

Instead of focusing on programs and buildings, Barna, a father and grandfather, urged believers to invest in children, whom he sees as the future of the Church. This includes prioritizing spiritual education, modelling biblical principles and creating accountability structures within the family. “We make a huge mistake by simply using children as bait rather than as the primary focus of who we want to build up through whatever ministry, impact or influence we can have,” he said. “We need to back and recognize it starts with families; parents have the primary responsibility to raise their children to become spiritual champions ... local churches need to support parents in that endeavour. Our primary focus needs to be on children ... and growing their biblical worldview. If we do that, we’ll be able to grow the 3 percent of adults who are disciples in America today to a larger proportion.”

Barna said his journey into religious research began with a desire to fill a crucial gap he observed in the church’s understanding of its own congregations. “When I first got started, I was trying to figure out how I could add value to what was happening in the Church across the country,” he said. “There didn’t seem to be a lot of trend-oriented information relating to the depth of people’s faith.” While existing data captured church attendance and Bible sales, Barna identified a need for insights into what people believe, why they believe it, and how these beliefs translate into actions. Over the years, Barna’s focus on deeper, trend-based data has provided pastors with tools to foster more meaningful spiritual growth, rather than simply tracking superficial metrics.

One trend Barna said he’s also concerned about is the potential negative impact artificial intelligence (AI) will have on the Church. “We’re already seeing an impact on sermons across the country,” he said. “Pastors, because they want to do well, in some cases, because they’re lazy, are realizing AI is a means of getting perhaps a better sermon. “There are other ways that we’re going to see it impact us in terms of fundraising, in terms of media presence,” he continued. “As the Body of Christ, we’ve got to be very suspicious of and careful about anything that even labels itself ‘artificial.’ It’s probably not good for our mental health, our physical health or our spiritual health. I just encourage genuine leaders to be very cautious about inviting any of that into our lives, and particularly into how we’re going to take that and then influence other people’s lives.”

Barna also advised parents to approach AI and other media with a strategy of monitoring, minimizing, mediating and moralizing content to ensure it aligns with biblical values.

"Parents are the gatekeepers. Act like a leader, take the lead, and make the tough choices," the *Raising Spiritual Champions* author said. "Make those tough choices in relationship to the vision that you have for what it means to be a parent of a spiritual champion." Barna said that today, he's focused on worldview development and cultural development more than ever before. The Church is at a critical juncture, he warned, and the path to a thriving Christian community lies in returning to the core biblical principles, the empowerment of parents as spiritual leaders and the intentional discipling of the next generation. "All the other stuff is noise," he said. "If we don't do those things, we're going to lose even more in this war ... this is our moment, we've reached a time of Christian invisibility in our culture. What I'm seeing now is that we're getting to this place where the typical American ... will not have anyone in their circle of influence who has a biblical worldview. You're not going to be influenced with God's truth.

"The consequence of that is that the elites in our culture will have the opportunity to shut down spiritual freedom," he stressed. "We will no longer be allowed to go to churches; we'll no longer be allowed to buy and read Bibles; we'll no longer be allowed to speak in public about our faith. Why? Because it all traces back to disciples not making disciples. So, this is our moment. We either will put up or shut up. And I would suggest that we put up."

Source: Christian Post

Posted By *Australian Prayer Network* On August 2, 2024

CENTRE AND EDGE

There was a time in history
A monumental time,
when everything was inverted,
turned inside out.
It seems that was central,
on which all substance and spirituality
pivoted,
began to lose its grip on reality,
and curled itself into a tight ball;
a baby,
a tiny particle,
not much bigger than the one
from which all matter sprang.
And suddenly
*the edge became the centre
and the centre became the edge.*

There
was where he grew,
this receptacle of central wisdom,
drawing the frayed hem of humanity
to himself,
into his deep, deep heart of love,

*so the edge could become the centre,
so the centre could become the edge.*

So immersed was he
in this cataclysmic venture
that he moved further and further
out,
treading the dusty roads,
away from central power plays,
into the houses,
the lives,
the experiences of those
on the fringe,
to the point of suffering and dying
with them -
for them -
*for the edge to become the centre
and the centre the edge.*

Then,
the ultimate inside-out job:
tearing open the heavy curtain of death,
turning the tomb into a cocoon,
from which to emerge
with bright wings of life,
to counter the dark smudges
of his deep wounds,
*bringing from the furthest edge
he living hope of the centre.*

Here is the One who calls us,
here and now,
to follow in his Way,
from the safe centres of our lives
into the unknown,
edgy future.

Here is the One
who places his scarred hands in ours,
leading us out of central security
into a deeper, heart-love security,
who leads us from centre to edge,
to call others into this love,
from edge to centre.

Here is the One who calls us
to love with his love
both those in the centre
and those at the edges,
to the point that distinctions
become blurred and blended
*so that the edge becomes the centre
and the centre the edge.*

That was His mission.
And that mission is ours.

© Sr. Sandra Sears CSBC 27/10/24

The Last word - The Rev'd. Elizabeth Harris



Greetings all,
At the time of writing, we have already reached 7 February - what did we do with the month of January?

The first thing I did at 6.00am, was to visit a friend in her home at the top of Riverton, to watch the sun come up. It's a very humbling experience to see this golden ball of fire, slowly rise above the hills and shine on our world with such brightness and promise for the year to

come. So here's to 2025 - may it bring us joy and happiness.

On the morning of Boxing day, I sat with a resident in our nursing home as she passed away. I had been sitting with her for several days as she came to the end of a wonderful country life with a great love of animals, especially cats, dogs and horses. So many little figurines scattered around her room would have given her much pleasure throughout her time in care.

I visit the nursing home on a regular basis, having spent three weeks there during my recent respite period and it is a pleasure to revisit the residents and to join in their activities. One lady has reached the age of 102. She is bed-bound but my time with her is fun - we make each other laugh. Of course my dog Alfie accompanies me on these visits as he and residents also enjoy each other's company.

I have spent a few days in Brisbane indulging myself with an invitation from the food company Lite n' Easy to take part in a video presentation for television, advertising their meals for seniors.

I have been using this service for some time to save cooking an evening meal and lately, I have decided to avail myself of lunches too. The food is good, nourishing and convenient. As someone who 'forgets' to eat lunch, these midday meals have well and truly kept me on track through the day. How good is it to open the refrigerator door, take out the packet labelled 'day 1' etc and make myself sit down and eat.

I'm sure this will be a great experience, and if nothing else, it is an excuse to catch up with my family and grandson. We've just been told that his little brother is on the way and due in August. Two great grandsons for 'GiGi'. How exciting!

I am recovering well from my accident last September in which I fractured my pelvis. Still a bit slow getting about and threatened by all that I must not fall again. I wish could promise that!

I pray that we may all use the forthcoming Lenten and Easter periods to reflect on God's grace in our lives.

Elizabeth

CHALICE

(John 2:1-11)



As wine conforms
to the contours of the cup
so Christ graciously conforms
to the contours of the chalice of our
broken hearts,
not to be hidden, but to overflow,
to be passed around the table
and shared unstintingly.

Like wine,
his life's blood,
spilled out in love
to satisfy our thirst,
invites celebration,
gratitude,
joy,
as at a wedding feast.

© Sr Sandra Sears CSBC 4/12/24

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 periodic electronic payments or to make a bequest to the Diocese for any of its missional initiatives.

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.

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CVC: ____ (3 digits on back of card)

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Bishop David and Mary

