

Diocese of The Murray, South Australia.

**THE MURRAY
CON-TRIBUTARY
NEWSLETTER**



December 2021

Rebuilding Hope and Confidence

Dear Members,

Looking at the date I now realise that it may be too late for some branches to distribute this at branch meetings. Maybe next year I will adjust the dates of sending this out.

As a rural Diocese I am fully aware of the late rain and wind causing damage to crops nearly ready to harvest and pray for all those affected by the unseasonal weather.

I have not had many contributions for this edition but have lots of odds and ends to tell you about.

At the end of the year do not throw out your Prayer Diary as the 2022 edition has been held up and won't be available for a few months and this way you can still pray for the correct diocese on the correct date. If you are able you could download the early sections from the website. If we come up with another idea we will let you know.

I attended a 3 hour zoom Australian AGM and found from discussions with other Diocesan Presidents that we in The Murray compare very well with what is happening and how we achieve it.

A new informative brochure about AMUA is nearly ready for release so keep your eyes open for that.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is to be marked in many branches with tolling of the bells for those who lost their lives, prayer vigils, white ribbon displays, articles in the local papers. It is not too late to add your personal prayers to this as the campaign runs till 10th December.

Liz Hampel and I joined 5 zoom sessions from Mary Sumner House to discuss Families Equip to allow MSH to update their programs. The main point discussed was just how important this outreach is in communities and how huge is the need for it. We will be on zoom again in February to hear results.

I put some thought into an adult Advent Calender after thinking of how many people are alone especially this past few years of Covid restrictions. Copies have gone to all branch presidents so if you did not see one please contact them. You may pass it on as you wish. I am amazed at how far and wide it has spread already. In my own branch at Strathalbyn we are including a calender with small polystyrene Christmas Trees that we decorated to hand to people in our local aged care facilities.

Several Mary and Joseph nativity kits are ready for their trips around the local districts and this year they may include an Advent calender. If your branch does not have this fabulous outreach contact me for information and then get more up and running.

Our November service and Council meeting was poorly attended but this gave us an opportunity to chat and share ideas as we never have a lot of business at these meetings

I have two very different requests for help. If you love computers and IT and would like to help out with this area please let me know as I am definitely not very good at this. We would also like to hear from anyone who may be interested in being our Prayer and Spirituality co-ordinator as Anne Gardiner feels unable to continue.

The theme for 2022 is 'Transformation Now!'. There will be a lot about this in future Mia Mias but you may be able to plan ahead with ideas and prayers in the mean time. For those who are able there is a lot of resource ideas on the Australian website. We can think of transformation on a personal level, branch level, community level. Changes are taking place each day to transform lives.

Please keep yourselves safe and healthy as we go into another time of Covid 19 spreading into our state.

I send this with my love to you all as we celebrate Christmas and pray that you can share time with someone you love whether face to face, by phone or other electronic styles.

love Jocelyn

Diary Dates:

25th November to 10th December 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

17 - 19th December Our wave of Prayer.

14th February : Exec meeting at Strath 10.30am

18th February: State meeting at St Barnabas Building King William St Adelaide

25th March 2022: Lady Day at Holy Evangelist Cadell Street Goolwa. Commencing 11am BYO lunch. Why make this an occasion for AMUA members only, bring a friend!!!! guest speaker to be advised.

Below is a letter from our Chaplain Fr Daniel.

I sit here in my study on the day before I begin three weeks' holiday to complete my Master's Research Project wondering what to share with the members of Mothers' Union in this Diocese of The Murray. I recall my delightful visit to the Naracoorte Branch for Mary Sumner Day in August and their keen interest in the direction my studies were taking, but I am also aware that Christmas is looming ever larger on the horizon as each year seems to zip by more quickly than the last. But I realise that the two might be more closely connected than I first thought.

My research has been spurred on by joining several dots from key texts that have made up my studies over the past four years. One of the most profound and influential has been "The Universal Christ" by Richard Rohr, where on p.32 he writes on how in Jesus Christ, God's own broad, deep, and all-inclusive worldview is made available to us, he says:

"Too often, we have substituted the messenger for the message. As a result, we have spent a great deal of time worshipping the messenger and trying to get other people to do the same. Too often this obsession became a pious substitute for actually *following* what he taught – and he did ask us several times to follow him, and never once to worship him."

Now without getting too far into the academic side of what I have been working on, I am essentially examining the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man from Luke 16:19-31, based on the injunction to listen to Moses and the prophets, and the logical addition, to act on what we hear. I look through the parable and its surrounding discourse to find the prophetic imagination that moved Moses to create an alternative society that reflects the limitless love of God, intricately tied up in the teachings of Jesus and which stand in stark contrast to the normal way this world tends to operate.

So much for my research, but what about Christmas?

So often at Christmas, those of faith lament at how the world has commercialised this important festival and commemoration, and rightly so. But in a reactionary response many then perhaps place too great a focus on the adoration of the Christ-child and forget to really think about the reasons that God became incarnate in the first place. Or they try but are led down the road of the all too simplistic understanding of the incarnation as some sort of divine back-up plan.

Another key influence in my studies has been from Adelaide based theologian, the late Fr. Dennis Edwards, who was well respected and highly regarded around the world for his work on incarnational theology. He stressed that Jesus was NOT God's "plan-B"! That regardless of any action on the part of humanity that God, who had already poured out an overflowing abundance of love in the very act of creation, was always going to find a way to build on that love and reach out to form an increasing relationship with humankind.

So, this Christmas, while you take time to adore and worship the child in the manger, I hope you also take the opportunity to contemplate on the message that child came to deliver; a message of love and hope that brings light to the darkness we can so often find ourselves in. Living that message of love and hope is our true calling as followers of Christ and sharing it through acts of love in our everyday lives. I pray that members of our churches and branches keep this message firmly in their hearts and minds as they continue to move forward in their faith journeys. Remembering that love is a way of living in this world and not a strategy for growth. When we subordinate love, and our mission to follow Jesus, into schemes to achieve other goals, it becomes insincere and hollow, and Jesus was certainly not either of those.