



Pastoral Letter (1)

Mother Sorel Coward, smms

Locum Tenens - Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

Friday, 9 February 2024

My dear friends,



As most of you have probably heard, Bishop Jeremy has appointed me a *Locum Tenens* until such time as an incumbent for the Ministry District is appointed. Bishop Jeremy has further reflections he wishes to make and consultations with the Ministry District before formally appointing me to the position and the terms of my responsibilities. He will write to you at a later date.

After discussion with Bishop Jeremy, at present the scope of my ministry amongst you will be for being celebrant at Sunday liturgies and travel, which is a continuation of the present agreement. Bishop Jeremy has asked he be given time to consider before he decides on any other arrangements.

Archdeacon Andrew has prepared a roster until Easter, and Bishop Jeremy wishes this to remain in place, unaltered.

I am rostered for the Wednesday morning mass. I have decided I will keep this commitment and stay on at the Rectory until the Sunday, as my gift. Where possible I will attend to the pastoral care of the Ministry District when I am available.

It is vitally important, for the Ministry District to remain financially viable, so your financial support is even more critical now than ever. A drop in giving may restrict your ability of having a choice for your new incumbent. Equally important is you continue to provide confidence to the bishop that you can continue to sustain a full-time stipend and be willing and able to go beyond this and grow and flourish.

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I am grateful for this opportunity to be amongst so many of you I already know and love.

Whenever I turn towards Yorke Peninsula from Port Wakefield, I experience a deep sense of belonging both to the land and to the people.

First, a little about myself.



My early days included serving as a signalman with the Royal Australian Navy. Entering civilian life I served in the New South Wales Police Force, once again specialising in radio communications and emergency co-ordination.



HMAS Perth



Graduation: Able Seaman Simon Coward

I married my beautiful and wonderful wife, Jane, in 1992.

Entering seminary, I completed a Bachelor of Theology, with dual majors in Systematic Theology and philosophy.



Figure 1 Wangaratta: Father Simon with Jane, after my ordination in (1996)

I was ordained in the Diocese of Wangaratta in 1996.

My curacies were at Shepparton (Vic) and Albury (NSW). This was followed by my first appointment as Rector of the parish of Bright, in the Victorian Alps. During the Winter months I excelled in cross-country skiing, which I enjoyed on most Mondays.

Whilst in the parish of Bright, I planted a Pin Oak sapling in the Rectory garden. Accompanied by a planting ceremony, it was a symbol of the work I intended for the parish: from small things, big things can grow.

Twenty-five years later, the Pin Oak remains and what a splendid tree it is becoming.

Two other appointments occurred afterward, both in the Diocese of The Murray. The first was as Rector of Morphett Vale, which was then, one of the largest congregations in the diocese. Morphett Vale was and remains, my only experience of being a “metropolitan” “suburban” priest.



Figure 2 Bright (Vic): The Tree of Growth

During this time, I was appointed by the bishop as his examining chaplain and Director of Vocational Formation. Additionally, I was elected as member of Diocesan Council.

During the time I went back to the country again and this time as the Rector of Southern Vales (McLaren Vale, Old Noarlunga, Willunga and Aldinga).

After being very seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident, it was necessary to take some time away from parish ministry. I know what it is like to be vulnerable and how quickly life can change.

Once I had recovered from my injuries, further recovery was necessary. I returned to university and completed a Graduate Diploma in Psychology, and then a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology (Honours).

I began work as a Community Mental Health Practitioner with a large NGO. I worked with people who mostly suffered from schizophrenia and personality disorders and those who were socially isolated in the community with an array of various serious mental conditions.

I returned to university to further my education and completed a Masters of Social Work. I then began a long stint running my own private practice as a clinical psychotherapist in the Adelaide's CBD.

Through all these experiences, I remained a priest, and my ministry, "outside of the Church" became my response to this core vocation and calling.

In 2020, after meeting with Bishop John Stead, and, with his blessing, I was appointed as associate priest in the Ministry District of Southern Flinders. I worked at St. Alban's, Gladstone doing Sunday supply work.

I was, soon after entering the Diocese, elected to Diocesan Council. A position I still hold and enjoy.

At the invitation of Archdeacon Andrew, I was appointed as associate priest for the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula.

The present moment sees me with the privilege of the pastoral leadership amongst you.

As a priest who places great importance on pastoral care, I promise to love you, to care for you, to support you when you are sick, and to rejoice and celebrate with you in moments of great joy in your lives. Remember this: pastoral care, healing, and visionary leadership have long been the hallmarks of my ministry among God's people. Helping congregations grow from surviving to thriving is my passion and my calling.

My first commitment to you will be to celebrate Eucharist every Sunday in our largest congregation – in the Ministry District and one of the largest the Diocese, Minlaton.

If my tenure is extended past Easter, then I may have the opportunity to begin faith development amongst you.



To get an idea of what this may look like I invite you to watch the following four-minute video from the Presiding Bishop of ECUSA. His passion is my passion too:

[The Jesus Movement.](#) This Sunday at Minlaton, instead of the First Reading and Psalm, I will be showing this video for us to reflect upon before the reading of the Holy Gospel.

Going forward, I strongly encourage you to watch the following video (thirty-nine minutes) by a Catholic evangelistic organisation called Acts XXIX. [Mobilising For Mission – episode 1: “Stories:”](#). My future ministry, wherever that may be, will be characterised this type of charism.

I hope this helps you appreciating me a little more, as I hope to have the opportunity of appreciating you more deeply as well.

On the subject of personal address, mostly I prefer to be called *Mother Sorel*. It is very much part of my own tradition, especially as a member of [The Sodality of Mary Mother of Priests \(SMMS\)](#), as well as defining relationship and my core identity. If you are uncomfortable with this, then I am happy for you to address by my first name alone.

I have a NEW WORK EMAIL address. Please note:
priest@sorelcoward.com.au

My mobile number is 0408 406 558.

Yours in the Two Hearts

Mother Sorel

The Reverend Mother Sorel Coward, SMMS
Locum Tenens - Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula
Anglican Diocese of Willochra



Celebrating thirty years of Marriage at La Trattoria, Adelaide