

**The Rev Dr Matthew Wilcoxon** | Sydney, Australia

February 16, 2025

**The Church of the Incarnation** | Harrisonburg, Virginia

Dear Church of the Incarnation,

I am overjoyed to be joining you as your next rector. For nearly a decade, Annie and I have admired COTI as a model of a gospel-shaped church, committed to loving God, serving one another, and working for the flourishing of the city. Our conversations with the search committee and parish council have only deepened this conviction. We can't wait to be with you in July!

The church is far more than just another earthly organization; it is "the household of God" and "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). The local church is what Lesslie Newbigin calls the "hermeneutic of the gospel", a living community that makes the realities of Christ and his kingdom real, intelligible, and convincing as it lives together in celebration of God's grace. So, I count it both an incredible joy and a weighty responsibility to have this priestly vocation in general, and now to have the specific calling to serve as your pastor. I step into this role with deep gratitude, trusting that the Lord will equip and sustain me as we begin this new chapter together.

My family and I will be coming to Harrisonburg straight from Australia. We've been living and serving here in Sydney since 2021. I have been the rector of the inner-city parish of St John's Darlinghurst. Annie is a pediatric nurse and works as the health center manager at St Andrew's Cathedral School, where our three children all currently attend. With this announcement, we now enter the final stretch of our time here. While transitions are always bittersweet, we're praying these next few months will not only prepare us for change but also deepen our faith and joy in the process.

By the time we arrive this summer, Annie and I will have just celebrated our 17<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We first met as students at Biola University in southern California. I had tried to date another young woman I knew through one of my classes. She rejected me, but she also set me up on a date with her roommate, Annie. That turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to me. Annie and I have been together ever since, seeking to serve Jesus faithfully and having lots of fun along the way. Together we enjoy entertaining friends, going for long walks, and periodically getting obsessively immersed in big sporting events ranging from grand slam tennis tournaments to the NBA Playoffs.

Annie and I got married with the hope of having children together. This is a desire that the Lord has fulfilled in the most unexpected of ways. After many difficult years of trying and failing to have biological children, we took this as a sign that God wanted us to care for children in the foster care system. One thing led to another and, while living in Washington, DC, we fostered and then adopted a sibling set of three beautiful children. It has been a joy and privilege to be part of their ongoing growth and development. It is a journey that is, of course, *ongoing*—as any current or former parent of teenagers can attest.

Ziyra is now 15 years-old and is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Fiercely strong and courageous, she loves just hanging out with friends and is passionate about, and gifted in, music and dance. Deeply emotionally intelligent, Caira is 14 years-old and just started 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She wants to be a counselor to children someday, a vocation we think she was made for. Christopher is an 8-year-old in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He is brimming with humor and charisma, and he loves anything to do with sports, cars, or animals. We love our three children dearly and have no doubt that you will come to love them too.

I hope this letter has given you at least a start on knowing us. We'd love to start getting to know you! If you'd like, feel free to send us a photo and a quick note introducing yourself. We'll read each one with great interest and share them with our kids, who will love knowing they already have friends-to-be in the Friendly City. You can send these through to [matt@theincarnation.org](mailto:matt@theincarnation.org).

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt', with a stylized, cursive script.

Matt