

Matthew Wilcoxon | Sydney, Australia
Rector - St John's Darlinghurst

September 6, 2024

Nell-Marie Colman | Harrisonburg, Virginia
Chair - The Church of the Incarnation Rector Search Committee

Dear Nell-Marie and members of the Rector Search Committee:

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! God has stirred my heart to engage you in a conversation about my possible fit as the next rector of The Church of the Incarnation. I would love to explore this with you in the months to come. Allow me to explain my interest in COTI by telling you a bit more about myself and my family.

In Wendell Berry's novel *Jayber Crow*, the title character reflects on the shape of his life and its purpose, saying:

I have had my share of desires and goals, but my life has come to me or I have gone to it mainly by way of mistakes and surprises...And yet, for a long time, looking back, I have been unable to shake off the feeling that I have been led—make of that what you will.

As I have prayed about the possibility of life together with you in the Shenandoah Valley, I can't help but identify with this fictional barber in his sense of wonder at the wending paths God uses to lead us to the place we belong.

I was born to a young single mother in an agricultural city in central California, spent formative years in rural Idaho, went to high school in suburban Phoenix, and have lived and worked in big cities like Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Sydney. I enjoy relating to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, political persuasions, vocations, and education levels. During the four years we lived in D.C., Annie and I spent most holidays in Rockingham County visiting her aunt and found that it uniquely combined so many of the things that felt like home to us.

The story of my life took a redemptive turn when my mom responded to the gospel when I was a toddler. So, I grew up in the church and have believed firmly in Jesus since a young age. However, the fundamentalist churches I grew up in left me with a story of the Bible that started with sin and stopped at the cross. It was a stunted theology, which left me spiritually hungry. In college and seminary my heart came alive as I studied the Bible under the tutelage of authors like those mentioned in the COTI Parish Profile—Wright, Kuyper, Newbigin, and Keller. As they have for you and COTI, these thinkers have expanded my vision of the gospel and mission.

When I was still in college, I was asked to be the full-time youth pastor at a large non-denominational church in southern California. Over the course of my ministry there, I realized that my newly forming theological convictions were not compatible with a church culture of entertainment and moralism. I wasn't sure it existed at the time, but I longed for a Christianity that combined orthodox theology, reverent liturgy, an emphasis on mission, and healthy culture. I found what I was looking for in the Anglican Church, first in the Diocese of Sydney and then in the Diocese of Christ Our Hope, where I was ordained. I have long been familiar with COTI and know it to be an exemplar of the best Anglicanism has to offer.

Immediately following graduation from university, I married Annie, a nurse, and we celebrated our 16th wedding anniversary in June. Together we have structured our life and ministry around the hospitality that is at the heart of the gospel. The Lord never allowed us to welcome biological children into our home, but called us to foster care in Washington, D.C. Eventually, this led three siblings, Ziyra (14), Caira (13), and Christopher (8) to find their 'forever home' with us through adoption. Our congregation at the time, The Church of the Resurrection, was instrumental in helping us to form these beautiful children in the love of Jesus, and we believe the same would be true of your church family.

My four years on staff at the Church of the Resurrection were fruitful and deeply formative for me as a leader. I not only got to use my gifts of preaching, pastoral care, and staff leadership, but was able to contribute significantly to strategy and execution during an era in which the church went from a vibrant (though fragile) church plant to an embedded embassy of King Jesus with a permanent presence on Capitol Hill. I saw what is possible when you combine gospel fidelity, prayerfulness, visionary leadership, and a church committed to seeking the good of the city. I am interested in being your rector because I know that COTI shares this same missional DNA and wants someone who can help build the people, property, and practices required for sustainability and replication.

I am currently in my fourth year as rector of St John's Darlinghurst, an inner-city church in Sydney, Australia. I took this role because I was attracted to the opportunity to help revitalize this historic institution now located in a highly secular post-Christian setting. This has involved starting and growing a new service that is reaching non-believers, embedding a vision and strategy for the future that creatively builds on the past, thinking missionally about the development of our heritage property, and restructuring our social services nonprofit organization to reinvigorate it for effective mission. With a high degree of difficulty, everything I am doing requires the type of institutional thinking that you are looking for in your next rector.

In many ways, life here in Sydney for us is wonderful. My ministry is challenging and rewarding. Annie enjoys her job as the health center manager at St Andrew's Cathedral School, the private Anglican school where our children are getting an excellent education. We live near the church

in the beautiful suburb of Paddington and go for walks and runs along the foreshore at Rushcutters Bay. Until recently, we had no thoughts of going anywhere anytime soon. However, we believe that COTI is a special church in a special place. We believe that we may be able to make a unique contribution to the long-term flourishing of COTI and find great joy in making our home with you in the Friendly City.

All that to say: I am an Anglican pastor-theologian who loves God's people through preaching and teaching, relating wisely and authentically, building systems and structures for gospel mission, and modeling cultural awareness and sensitivity. I would love to talk to you more about what you are looking for in a rector, and thus I am submitting my resume along with three sermon links as requested. Thank you in advance for your consideration; I look forward to hearing from you.

Grace and peace,

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

Matthew Wilcoxon