

St George's College gathering Thursday 3 May 2018

This year's annual gathering for interfaith worship, table fellowship, and a fireside chat was again a highly successful occasion. The event marked the sixth such collaboration between the Council and the Winthrop Singers, facilitated through the enthusiastic support and hospitality of the College Warden, Ian Hardy. The Guest of Honour was the Anglican Archbishop of Perth, Kay Goldsworthy, now one of the five Honorary Presidents of the Council. The College Chaplain, Rev Michael Wood, presided at the 6:00pm service in the Chapel. As is traditional, the Winthrop Singers, directed by Dr Nicholas Bannan, sang several works in Hebrew: *Hine Ma Tov* (Psalm 133:1) arranged by Malcolm Singer, as the Introit; *Adonai Roi*, the second movement of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* as the Anthem; and Louis Lewandowski's *Enosh Kechotzir Yomov* (Psalm 103:15–17). Works with English lyrics were Psalm 135, sung by the choir to a chant from the Anglican Psalter; and the congregational hymn *Praise to the Living God*, deriving from the Jewish *Yigdal* of about the 13th century. Prayers were drawn from both Anglican and Jewish sources: *APBA*, and *A New Zealand Prayer Book*; and *Gates of Prayer*, and *Reform Judaism Prayer Book, UK*, respectively. The choral music was sung so superbly that the atmosphere in the Chapel was truly awesome as the Winthrop Singers processed out, and the congregation sat to listen attentively to the Voluntary, J. S. Bach's *Fugue in C*, played by organist Holly Broadbent.

CCJWA members and friends were then invited to the College Dining Room, and enjoyed an excellent meal, before gathering in the Junior Common Room for a fireside chat between Ian Hardy, and Archbishop Kay.

The conversation covered wide-ranging topics, and while it is not possible to refer to all in a brief overview, some themes that emerged can be highlighted. Archbishop Kay has an optimistic outlook, and is happy to be back in WA. She acknowledged that it has been an unsettling time for the Anglican Church here and that there are many challenges, including deep uncertainty, and massive change in the population, both generationally and ethnically. The congregations of cathedrals and evangelical churches are growing, but many parishes are struggling. Consequently, she is engaged in an extended listening tour across the Diocese in an endeavour to learn what are the needs and desires of Anglicans. She spoke of the importance of hope among those undergoing hardship, and has been impressed by finding what she called "stubborn hope."

In response to a question about the "joys" of Anglicanism, Kay spoke of its breadth, commenting that the average Anglican now would be an African woman in her early 30s, living in abject poverty. She also referred to the tripartite basis of the faith — tradition, reason, and scripture — and the fact that ritual is an element of our spirituality, though it is more important to some than to others. Anglicanism was perceived as being about connecting to community. In this light Kay referred to the historical background of Perth College, where she had served as Chaplain, and of Sister Kate's Home — both having been founded by Anglican nuns. However, she was aware that Anglicans in parishes may now wonder how they can contribute in the community other than by making financial contributions. She felt that the Anglican concept of "a church in every village is still part of our DNA, and we want to welcome everyone in," but this is no longer realistic in our changing world.

In answer to a query about what represents the "essence" of the Anglican Church, Kay spoke of the fundamental importance of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and of extending the latter to a concept of hospitality that is not exclusive. She quoted from the Blessing for World Communion Sunday: "And the table will be wide,"¹ and went on to refer to a book titled *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*, by Rachel Held Evans, in which the author describes how the sacraments became touchstones of what was important for her, and concludes that "as I sit at table all should be welcome."² According to Kay, this concept is "not opposed to the sacramental but might be dressed differently." Similarly, she drew on the example of Sara Miles, whose life was

transformed when as a non-Christian, she received Holy Communion, and went on to inaugurate a huge charity — The Food Pantry — in San Francisco.³ Kay perceives herself to be part of a generation that is open to women’s leadership, and believes that: “We’re still holding the baby as securely as ever, just differently.”

Several times, matters were raised that were especially relevant to the interfaith audience. One was Kay’s statement in relation to connecting with community: that “Christians believe in the mending of the world,” an ideal that equates to the Jewish one of *tikkun olam*. Another was her response to Rabbi Dovid Freilich’s query as to whether Anglicans have a feeling for *Nostra Aetate*. She answered with a rapid affirmative, speaking of how the Church is “trying to help people to see how to get rid of prejudices,” how to “live into the future,” and “how we can stand alongside each other in the world.” A third was a question as to the salvation of non-Christians. Kay was swift to emphasise the need to read biblical texts “widely, widely,” and Rabbi Freilich joined the conversation, speaking of the Jewish idea that “all are to be saved,” and adding that Jesus was an observant Jew.

It seemed to me that the recurring themes in what Archbishop Kay shared with us were “optimism, openness, inclusiveness, and hospitality,” and that this augers well both for the Diocese of Perth, and for Jewish–Christian relations. Her fireside chat with Ian Hardy was extremely inspiring, and it was an immense privilege to be in the audience.

Mary J. Marshall
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¹ See <http://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/130377271985/and-the-table-will-be-wide-a-blessing-for-world>.

² See <https://www.thomasnelson.com/searching-for-sunday>.

³ Sara’s story is told in her book *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*. See http://saramiles.net/take_this_bread.