

Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

The Spirit

172 FEBRUARY 2026



The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

As I write we are in the middle of the Winter Olympics, which is ironic given our summer heat! I cannot ski, or skate, and curling is beyond me, but I am enjoying watching talented athletes do their best. One of the things which is very clear is that those who are good enough to compete at the Olympics know their game well and are playing it and no other. For example, the speed skaters do not try and use skis, and the figure skaters do not use granite blocks and brooms like the curlers.

Over the past few weeks our readings in church have included a series from 1 Corinthians. These have struck me as so important for us because the Corinthian letters show Paul working hard to help people who had become Christian examine what the new life they had inherited looked like, and how it differed from the world around them.

Paul's contention, which comes in the context of problems within the Corinthian church, is that all the measures that we would naturally bring to life: our smarts, our wealth, our insight, our wonderful experiences, our strength, and so on are liable to fail and are not reliable. As measures of human worth, and capacity, and power they are actually redundant when it comes to engaging with God. This was rather important for the Corinthian church. It's important for us too. There is nothing good, nothing that will endure, and nothing that will connect us to the source and sustainer of life outside God.

Paul sharpens his reminder to the Corinthian church even further because he highlights that not only is our human strength redundant before God, it is actually foolishness. It's foolish not because these things are necessarily bad in their own right. Rather they are foolish if we rely on them to give what only God can give. This is because we're playing the wrong game. It's like going into a game of curling and trying to play it according to the rules of figure skating. Or perhaps more vividly, trying to ski downhill on ice skates. It's foolish. But the reality is we live in a world where the prevailing idea is that our human strength and attributes are sufficient and are able to make for a

What game are we playing? What would playing 'follow the leader' look like in our own lives?



Bishop Matt Brain

satisfactory life. This world looks down its nose at what God has done to restore life and regards it as foolish.

As Paul works through his letter he actually doesn't argue the point. He's quite content that the world at large regards what God has done, and the message about it, as foolishness. We who are at such a distance from the events of Jesus's life and crucifixion must understand how utterly shameful (and therefore foolish) this was. Jesus had no power and gave up opportunity to accumulate it. He died the death that was designed to humiliate a person and show how utterly feeble they were. God's way does look mighty foolish. Yet we discover it has the power to address the underlying fundamental need that we have, to address the ills of this world which our own power cannot.

So how does this relate then to the Corinthians? Paul analyses the difference between what God offers and its seeming foolishness, and what the world offers in its seeming power. He asks the Corinthian Christians, in the words of chapter 1 verse 26, to '... consider their own call.' The reality is not many were very impressive, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth, not many were wise yet God called them.

Now that was very good for the Corinthian Christians. This was their way into sharing the life which came through

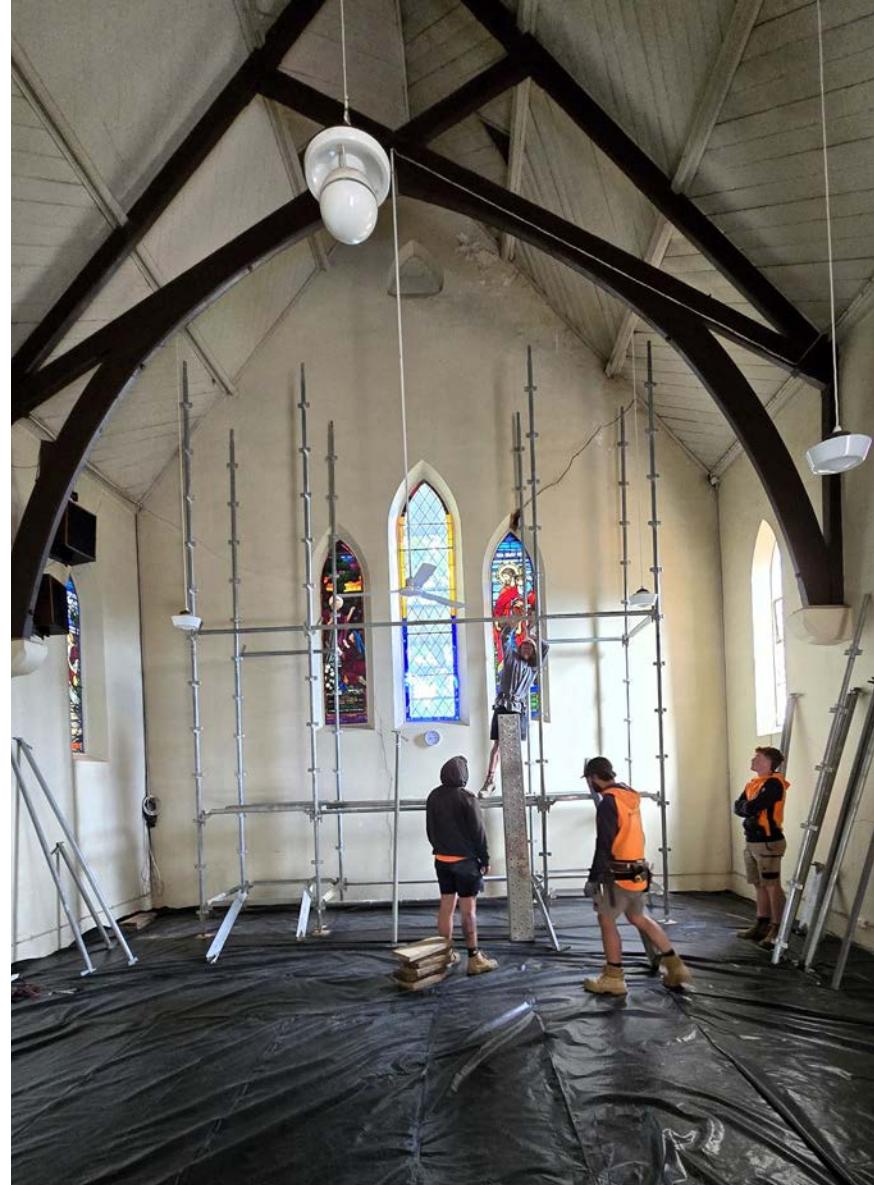
Jesus's foolish death. But it also confronted the world, and with it the Corinthian Christians sense of worth. In verses 27 and 28 we see Paul talking about God's choice of the Corinthian Christians as an instrument to shame the wise and the strong. Not because God's choice was more wise or more powerful, but actually because of their weakness and their foolishness. God works not by supplanting or being better at the game that the world plays but by playing a new game altogether.

And so, friends, we come to the bit which is so important for us. In verse 30 we read that God is the source of the Corinthians life in Christ Jesus who became for them wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. The game that the Corinthians were playing was follow the leader, follow Jesus. The game that they used to play was more like wrestling, where each individual took on the world.

This is probably a good point for reflection as we prepare to enter Lent. What game are we playing? What would playing 'follow the leader' look like in our own lives, and how would it challenge us to let go of the other games we have learned to play.

Your servant in Christ,

that



A Vision for St Luke's

Revd Hannah Gregory

Let me take you back to March 2025; it was a Saturday afternoon and I had a call to say part of the church had fallen off! This began a huge process of investigation. We already could see a massive crack in the front wall of the church from floor to ceiling, but when the apex on the gable end fell off it gave us the motivation to begin a larger scale renovation of the building. St Luke's was built in 1863 and cracks were appearing in the plaster because we had salt ingress into the bricks all the way round the building, with mortar crumbling out of the walls. It was in a sorry state.

During 2025 we graded the grounds, cleared guttering, installed a water drainage scoop, undertook salt-flushing and installed steel bar reinforcement

into the front wall to stabilise it. We engaged contractors to see what was needed for the total renovation. The total cost looked to be around \$125,000! And then Mobile Mission Maintenance came to our rescue.

This world-wide charity helps churches and community organisations repair their buildings. The work is done by Christian tradies who have finished with paid work but still want to give of their time and talents in service to the Lord. A team of twelve people came to St Luke's in November (you can see some of them on the front cover) and we housed and fed them for a week while they filled the cracks, replaced the mortar and repainted the inside. Their hard work and generosity saved us half of the building costs!

There's no way we could have completed it without Mobile Mission Maintenance.

St Luke's is now a cool calm blue in the inside. It is warm and welcoming and means that the church is fit for mission in the future. We look forward to seeing what God will do with us next!

Information about MMM can be found at www.mmm.org.au. We are so thankful to God for their ministry.

May Their Memory be a Blessing

Revd Angela Lorrigan

As we prepared for the last ten days of Advent and were just beginning to look forward to Christmas the people of St Paul's, along with the rest of our nation, were deeply shocked and saddened by the dreadful murder of fifteen people at Bondi. People who should have been able to enjoy a community celebration in peace.

So deep and dreadful is the pain of such an event it is difficult to find a way to express sympathy, sadness or distress.

Words are often difficult to find, or sound shallow or cliched.

At St Paul's we decided to remember those who lost their lives with a special and beautiful arrangement of flowers at our Christmas services. This arrangement was set aside inside the west door, in a place where people could be out of the way and could prayerfully contemplate that terrible event.

At our midnight service we drew attention to this arrangement and honoured the dead with the Jewish words of remembrance, "May their memory be a blessing", beautiful words from the book of Proverbs.

Drew Reid putting the final touches on the arrangement





Marilyn Hornsby and Revd Faye Donaldson

Blaze Aid for Harcourt

After the recent day of catastrophic weather and resulting bushfires many of us have been praying and finding ways to support those affected. As farms begin the long process of rebuilding, Marilyn Hornsby and Revd Faye Donaldson have been helping out the Blaze Aid camp for Harcourt.

Blaze Aid have trained coordinators who liaise with farmers and local businesses and then organise working teams each day. They do an outstanding job. The people gathered come from different backgrounds. Some come for a day, others for however long they can give. Most of the volunteers start at 7am and hit the sack by 9pm to get ready for another day.

Marilyn is a long-time parishioner of Cohuna. She has been involved in Mothers Union for many years and has been a fund raiser for ABM. Her next project is for Shrove Tuesday; getting a thousand or so pancakes cooked and delivered to businesses around town! As a competent farmer Marilyn has been clearing old boundary fences and helping construct new ones for those farms affected by fires.

Revd Faye has lived an incredible life devoted to Christian ministry in many forms. She currently serves her church and Cohuna community in a variety of ways. She also ventures farther out, travelling around Australia to serve as part of the BCA Nomads. For Blaze Aid

Faye has been active in the camp kitchen, helping prepare breakfast, snacks, and sandwiches for the volunteer groups who have been going out daily to restore some order to people's shattered lives in Harcourt. The teams return covered in ash and dirt but confident in the tasks they have undertaken. They then unwind with a drink and daily tales of how much fencing has been restored. The cooking team make sure they all have a hearty meal.

We give thanks for the service of Faye and Marilyn, for Blaze Aid, the CFA and all those giving their time and energy to support our communities in this period of need.

Getting to Know our Healthcare Chaplain

Revd Darcy Vaughan

I recently caught up with Revd Emily Payne for a chat about her new role as a Healthcare Chaplain.

Welcome to Bendigo Revd Emily! You arrived in October last year. So far, what do you like about being here?

I'm really enjoying the more cosmopolitan feel of the town. Everyone has been absolutely welcoming and lovely. Catherine McAuley is a brilliant school for my daughter so far. So, there's a lot to appreciate.

What do you like to do with your time off or how do you like to unwind?

I love to sing, so I've joined the Bendigo Chorale. And I volunteer some time moderating an online parenting forum. And I fold origami.

Origami! How interesting. What else do you think people might like to know about you?

Some people have asked me: do I have a health background? Which I was surprised by because you don't need that to be a hospital chaplain. But they might value knowing that I actually do have a science background, I trained as an immunologist originally.

Part of your role is to be a Healthcare Chaplain. When you think of chaplaincy, what do you think is special about that role?

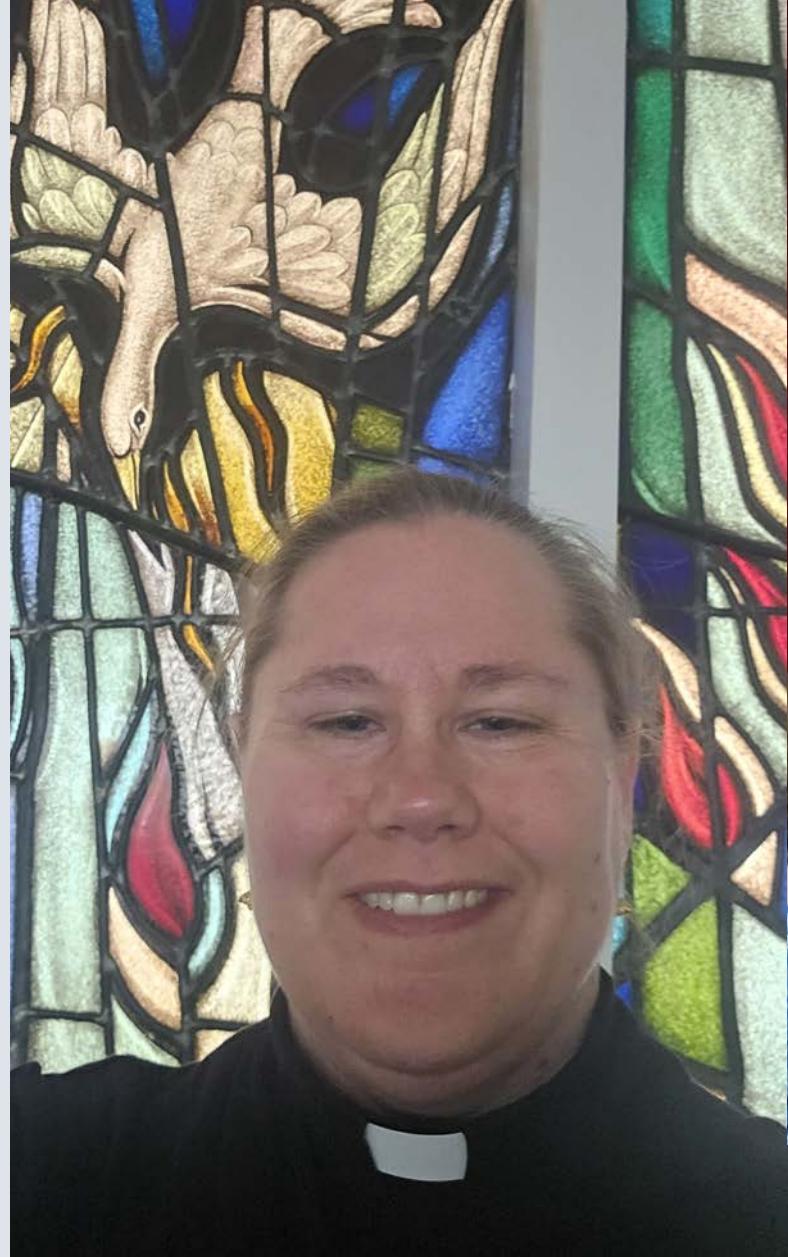
I think in parish ministry, in many ways, you represent a particular tradition. You're there to tell people, or at least invite people, to see what scripture has to say, invite people to pray in a particular tradition and that kind of thing.

Whereas in the hospital, it's much more about where that person is at and how can I meet them, where they are.

Not that we can't reflect on scripture together or open the *Prayer Book* or those type of things. But if you don't do those things, if that's not where you're at, then I can keep those resources in my bag, and we can talk about what's important for you. I'm not there to impose a particular traditional way of understanding or way of relating to God. I'm there to facilitate and support and resource where you're at.

What is it like working in the hospital?

Well I'm still only putting one foot through the door, but I would say it's a very different world to the parish. The parish priest is kind of connected to everything, knows everyone, has their finger on the pulse of everything. Whereas in the hospital, you are one function amongst many, and actually, a very



peripheral function from many points of view. For some people it's like: spiritual care, what's that? So, it's a much more negotiated space and you have to be much more sensitive. For example, if the physiotherapist walks through the door, their time might be more important than mine. I need to get out of the way sometimes, that kind of thing. It's got to be much more collegial and much more about teamwork and respecting all of the other disciplines and what they're doing.

What excites you about being able to offer hospital chaplaincy?

Well, nobody's in hospital because everything's going well, usually. Maybe maternity aside. But generally, people are in hospital because something's gone wrong; they're sick, they're injured, there's some crisis. And to have the privilege of being invited into that space with them, to hear what's going on. To hopefully be supportive or encouraging or contribute something positive. That is a massive, massive privilege.

And the last question: how can people access your chaplaincy ministry at the Bendigo hospital?

At the moment, the best thing is for people who have been admitted to just request a visit from an Anglican priest. It just needs to be that clear and specific, and then the hospital knows who I am and how to find me.



A Big Day for our Diocese

Saturday the 31st of January saw a blockbuster service of various inductions, installations, and collations for the diocese. Revd George Hemmings was appointed the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo. George is well known to the diocese having served here for over a decade, initially as Rector of Echuca, and for the past five years as Archdeacon of Bendigo & the Goldfields. Of his appointment as Dean, George writes:

"I am very humbled and excited by the call to serve as the next Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. Over the last five years I've had the pleasure and privilege of roaming across the Diocese, serving and worshipping with God's saints in all sorts of settings. I am looking forward to once again planting roots and being embedded in a community, and particularly that of the Cathedral Parish."

As well as George, the Cathedral also welcomed Revd Emily Payne as Sub Dean of the Cathedral, complimenting her ministry as a Healthcare Chaplain in the diocese.

And it didn't stop there! Revd Canon Tracy Wolsley was appointed as Archdeacon of the Goldfields, those parishes stretching from Maldon down to Trentham. Revd Steve Weickhardt was appointed Archdeacon of Bendigo and will take up responsibility for property and insurance along with supporting parishes within his Archdeaconry.

The service was well attended by diocesan clergy, members of the Cathedral congregation, family and friends. Those present were blessed by the contribution of the Cathedral choir and organist, with a sermon offered by the newly installed Dean George. Words of recognition and encouragement were also offered by Dean Andreas Loewe of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne who was accompanied by four others from the Deans' Network. The mayor of Bendigo Cr Thomas Prince, and a representative of the Bendigo Interfaith Council also added their welcome to Dean George.

We offer our thanks for those appointed and their willingness to serve. We pray with them that their ministry would be to God's glory.

Gingerbread Houses in Eaglehawk

Revd Dale Barclay

In the lead up to Christmas a gingerbread house making afternoon was held at St Peter's, Eaglehawk. It involved lots of fun, icing, lollies, and Christmas Carols playing in the background. It was a great day! Each kit was placed in a Nativity Scene bag along with invitations to the Christmas Services. Over half the people who attended had been in previous years. This year, 'paint your own iced biscuits' were also included.

Money raised will support both the parish and also the Cancer Council. The activity was enjoyed by all who attended, and it created a great bridge between the church and our community. Our co-ordinator Faye did an amazing job, along with those who cooked biscuits, set up, and cleaned up. On leaving many people said, "see you next year."



Bishop Matt Brain with members of Christ the King Anglican church and St Augustine's Catholic Church all gathered for Christmas Carols in the Phillips Botanical Gardens, Maryborough



A Cathedral Christmas Pantomime

Regina Rich

We ended the year on a musical high,
It was a great hit, there are many reasons why.
Everyone helped so all would be blessed,
singing and telling why Jesus is best!
With a church full of folk and heaps of strangers,
we pray that the story was heard by new faces.
And may the seeds of our planting grow up to be,
a harvest of change that we will all see.

A big thanks for all who helped with the Christmas Eve Pantomime at the Cathedral! It was a joint effort with help from other congregations: we had a family from the South Korean congregation, Joseph came from Holy Trinity, South East Bendigo and folk from our 9.30 congregation joined in along with members of St Peter's. Best of all we had a full house!

Festive Fun!

Revd Julie Worrall

This Christmas Peter Worrall's expertise in designing tabletop gaming terrain and museum pieces was put to the test! Could he create a Christmas light display for the church windows at Christ Church, Swan Hill?

Peter surprised everyone and created a Lego Winter Wonderland! Complete with an elf village overseeing a carnival in the town. A big thanks to Peter for all the time and effort put in to create this masterpiece. We hope that people see the church as part of the community as well as a place of fun and enjoyment.



New Children's Library

Revd Hannah Gregory

The Anglican Parish of Bendigo North have placed this little library in the playground outside the front of St Clement's.

The parish has a thriving ministry to the families in Huntly through this playground and our Hope Community Playgroup. The playground is used every day by families as it is one of the few completely fenced areas in North Bendigo suitable for smaller children. There were complaints that the nearest library is quite a distance from Huntly and the church wanted to encourage parents reading with their little children.

We all know how important early literacy is. The library was built by a member of the congregation and books donated by members of the parish. Families began using the book library as soon as it went in and we have already received some donations from the community to help fill the drawers! What a success!



Michelle lights a candle

Prayer for a New Year

Revd Emily Payne

He makes all things new.

This was the central message of the New Years Eve prayer vigil at St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo. The service drew on iconography, Scripture and Taizé inspired song to be reminded that the one who is seated on the throne of heaven is making all things new, and that this is good news which brings hope to a world desperately in need of renewal and transformation.

One worshipper, Jenny Devlin, described the service as "a precious moment to reflect on the year past, and the one which lies ahead."

There is a tension between the rhythms of everyday life and the ultimate future of God (of which we have just a foretaste

now); but in that tension we trust, and hope, and commit ourselves to a way of life marked by love, joy, and peace. At the two prayer stations set up for the service people were invited to symbolically let go of the old year by placing a stone in a bowl, and express hope for the new year by lighting a candle and setting it afloat.

Jenny reflected; "the two prayer stations facilitated a step of faith; letting go of those perceived hindrances to faith and wholeness, then by lighting a candle igniting hope and faith for the coming year."

The service finished with a prayer that Jesus, Lord of tomorrow, would draw us into his future; a very fitting way to start the new year!

Aboriginal Clergy Gathering

Revd Canon Shannon Smith

February provided the opportunity for the Aboriginal Clergy of the Province of Victoria to gather at Bishopscourt and meet with the new Archbishop of Melbourne, Bishop Ric Thorpe, and his wife Louie. We were very blessed to also have Bishop Matt Brain and Rachel join us for the gathering.

It is not often our Aboriginal clergy have the opportunity to get together to share with and support each other. It is always a delight to see our clergy from Gippsland, Reverend Kathy Dalton and Reverend Phylis Andy. I am not sure if folk realise just how much harder it is for an Aboriginal female priest out on the ground (the mission field). There have been several extreme events that have taken place in regional Victoria amongst our communities, so it is always wonderful to be able to sit with the girls and debrief.

The gathering at Bishopscourt gave Archbishop Ric and Louie the opportunity to sit with the clergy and hear them share their own story of responding to God's call and their spirituality. It was



exceptionally wonderful to hear Reverend Kathy speaking about Welcome to Country and helping the new Archbishop further his understanding of this ancient ceremony.

A second gathering is to be held later in the year and it has been proposed that our Diocese of Bendigo will host.

ACU Interfaith Breakfast

Revd Canon Shannon Smith

It was a great honour to be invited to the joyous occasion of the Australian Catholic University Annual Interfaith Parliamentary Breakfast. I have to admit that I was quite taken back by the invitation! This year's keynote speaker was Geraldine Doogue AO, esteemed Australian journalist. The ACU Parliamentary Breakfast provides a low stake environment for parliamentarians to sit with religious leaders and engage in conversation around community welfare rather than legislation.

I personally enjoyed catching up with Mata Havea Hiliau, moderator of the NSW/ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. Mata and I hadn't seen each other since we were just two teenagers kicking around in Griffith almost forty years ago. It was a great delight to be reunited. Both Mata and Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church of Australia, were very excited to meet our Primate, Bishop Mark Short. The girls were interested in how they could establish a connection with the Anglican Church.



L-R: Revd Mata Havea (Uniting Church Moderator of the NSW & ACT), Bishop Mark Short, Canon Shannon Smith and Revd Charissa Suli (President of the Uniting Church in Australia)

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Photo of Bishop Matt on page 2 credit of Bendigo Advertiser.



McKenzie and her backpack

Blessing the Backpacks

Recently a blessing of the backpacks was held at St Paul's Cathedral as part of their Kids Church. Canon Revd Shannon's granddaughter McKenzie was especially excited to participate ahead of her big year of learning!

And at Christ Church, Swan Hill those young and older who are studying this year

brought along their backpack or textbooks for a special blessing. They were also given a bookmark to remind them throughout the year that they are blessed by God and always part of the church community.

It's not too late in the term for your church to also celebrate all those studying this year with a blessing of the backpacks in your Sunday service.

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