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The Secretary
St Lukes Uniting Church Mt Waverly
174 Barrabool Rd
HIGHTON VIC 3216



Frontier Services' Bush Chaplain Julia Lennon (right) with Diedre Palmer, former President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

29 October 2021

Dear Friends,

With Christmas around the corner, I would like to thank you for your incredible support throughout the year. Your kind donations have provided a lifeline to many families doing it tough in rural and remote communities in Australia, facing extreme challenges and back-to-back disasters.

As we all look forward to 2022 and the opportunities of reconnecting with loved ones, I want to share with you the story of people who have faced extreme hardship, injustice and isolation for many centuries. The people I'm talking about are those that Julia Lennon, one of our much-loved Bush Chaplains, helps in our Oodnadatta Remote Area in the north western section of South Australia.

The vast distances Julia covers include the APY Lands* that are home to over 2,300 First Nation People, the Traditional Owners of this land. This region faces some of the highest levels of intergenerational disadvantage in Australia including extremely high rates of unemployment, domestic violence, and complex trauma resulting from The Stolen Generation, in addition to family breakdown, poverty and chronic health problems.

In the lead-up to Christmas, of immediate concern is that when Australia's borders all re-open, COVID-19 may sweep through this region, as it recently did in Wilcannia. Vaccine hesitancy in this community is widespread and unfortunately could lead to high incidences of both sickness and death if this problem isn't satisfactorily addressed.

But in spite of their hardships, this remarkable community has been growing in hope and strength. As a Frontier Services supporter, you have been with them on their journey towards healing. If reading about them moves you, please consider a gift this Christmas to keep helping our most vulnerable and isolated Australians, who need to know you care.

The stories coming out of this region are challenging to hear. Families are hurting badly and it simply shouldn't be this way. But we are so grateful to have an incredible Bush Chaplain here helping to support this community. Julia, as part of the Frontier Services team, has been able to help many of them thanks to your generosity.



*Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

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When I think of how selflessly Julia gives of herself, I picture the day I saw her inducted as our first female Indigenous Bush Chaplain.

It was in an 'open air' church in Oodnadatta with no walls. High above, a huge desert sky stretched forever and you could feel the calm and sanctity of the place.

When I first met Julia, I was struck by her warmth and quiet strength. Raised around Oodnadatta – home to our First Nations People for more than 30,000 years – she serves her community with love and a deep understanding. Julia has a dream, to give her people taken from their families a place where they can heal. As a mother of six including twins, she has a huge heart for children and youth.

Oodnadatta is known as the hottest place in Australia, topping records at 50.7 degrees Celsius, but it also gets cold, really cold and recently Julia helped initiate an appeal to provide struggling families with some warm clothes and blankets. **Many children had a warm bed to sleep in this winter and something to wear to keep out the cold because of Julia's hard work and the dedicated support she inspired.**

Given the size of this tiny town, opportunities are few and far between. The Indigenous School is the biggest employer and the mail only comes twice a week. It's hard for vulnerable young people in this town not to lose their way and possibly even turn to drugs or alcohol. But incredibly Julia has been encouraging them to become leaders who envision a better future.

We would appreciate it if you can continue supporting our work so that Bush Chaplains like Julia can continue to improve the quality of life of people in these communities and to inspire the next generation of leaders.

If you can help, I'd be so grateful for your Christmas gift to continue bringing practical, pastoral and spiritual care to people in remote communities like Oodnadatta.

Julia's colleague from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Ian Dempster, can't speak highly enough about her ministry to Oodnadatta's youth. He's most impressed by her ability to bridge divides and connect with people from all backgrounds.

"Julia's been encouraging the young people to get involved, to participate," Ian says. "She's always loved singing and leading worship. Julia plays keyboards and her daughter is a singer. They play beautiful songs together and involve the kids in what's happening."

"The other thing she's always done is 'inma' (dancing to pass on stories). Traditionally it would be for a ceremony but these days they have it for connection too."

"Julia's been on a number of trips this year, crossing the South Australian border into Northern Territory and then on to the APY Lands."

"She works with the people there as well so they can experience the 'inma', the belonging and experience. She also takes some of the kids with her on some of the trips."



Before COVID-19 struck, Julia also took a group of young people, most of them teenagers, to join hundreds of others at a National Youth Convention held by the Uniting Church. **I love looking at Julia's photos of the group that went to this event. Their smiles and enthusiasm are beautiful to see.**

We're blessed to have Julia to encourage understanding, healing and build bridges between First and Second Peoples in Oodnadatta. And as this year draws to a close, Julia's strength and wisdom will be more essential than ever.

Rev. Mark Kickett, another colleague of Julia's from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, is inspired by Julia and her connection within her community.

He also explained to us how she can help as the borders open up again.

Mark said "There are some very dangerous and negative thoughts going around about COVID-19 and the vaccine in this area but Julia is able to communicate and inform people in a caring and compassionate way".

"She's encouraging folks that if you love your family, if you love your community, then this is something that needs to be talked about. And she does it very sensitively."

"English is probably the second or third language for many people but Julia has this multilingual capacity to speak to people throughout the area she serves. She's able to bring real peace in the way she communicates; she understands the hearts of the people."

Our friends in the bush, especially those who are extremely isolated, already struggle to access healthcare and COVID-19 vaccinations are no different. This problem is magnified in indigenous communities where language and culture are additional barriers to people in understanding the health implications.

By sending a donation, you can help make sure our Bush Chaplains like Julia are there to listen to people's concerns and to help resolve the challenges they are facing. This could save lives so it could not be more important.

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Photograph by Tim Molineux.

**“It’s a tough country, a harsh country, but it’s Julia’s home and she journeys with people in love. She’s an amazing woman.”
– Rev. Mark Kickett**

Christmas is also a special time and Julia will walk with her community through its challenges whilst she encourages them to join her in celebrating the spiritual meaning of the season. Julia needs our support and unfortunately she is not the only one.

After months of lockdown, it’s easier than ever to sympathise with the enormous hardships and isolation being felt right now by people in remote areas – whether they live on the APY Lands or they’re toughing it out on a farm with their closest neighbour 100km away.

We’ve all been struggling missing our family, friends and routines, but in the last 18 months, our Bush Chaplains have provided support to people who have endured droughts, bushfires, floods and a shocking mouse plague along with the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on mental health alone is huge as a result of these back-to-back disasters.

This is where our amazing Bush Chaplains step in to help by providing practical, pastoral and spiritual care to people in need.

We currently fund the work of 17 Bush Chaplains across Australia and we are hoping to increase that number to 22 in the coming year. Please help us reach our goal by making a donation, if you are able to.

Thank you for standing with people doing it tough in the bush!

We are so grateful for your vital support throughout the year and all of us at Frontier Services send our best wishes to you and your loved ones for the festive season.

We hope the new year will bring peace, happiness and joy to everyone,



Jannine Jackson
National Director

In the past you have supported Frontier Services and I am very grateful. I now ask you to please donate to our Christmas Appeal. Thank you in anticipation of your renewed support.

P.S. Please turn to the back of the enclosed donation form for a personal message from Julia, our Bush Chaplain in Oodnadatta, and take a look at the brochure to find out how Christmas will look for our indigenous children.

To give now please call 1300 787 247 or visit frontierservices.org/donate

Privacy notice: Your personal information is collected to enable us to provide you with a receipt for donations and news. You can request to have your details removed at any time by phoning 1300 787 247. To read more about how Frontier Services uses your information and our full privacy policy please visit frontierservices.org



Frontier Services

Standing with people in the bush

Please donate to our Christmas Appeal today and know that you are making a huge difference to the lives of people in need.

Yes, I'll show the most vulnerable families in remote communities we're 'In this together'

Please accept my donation:

\$ _____ Or

I would like to make a regular monthly donation of \$ _____ (\$15 min.)
Please debit my Credit Card monthly, until further notice.

My details:

Please fill any blanks or correct any errors below.

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The Secretary
St Lukes Uniting Church Mt Waverly
174 Barrabool Rd
HIGHTON VIC 3216

Phone: 03 5244 2997
Mobile _____

Please email me my receipt.

Email: _____

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will

I have already included a gift to Frontier Services in my Will

I wish to pay by:

Cheque/Money order (made payable to **Frontier Services**) or

Debit my: VISA MasterCard AMERICAN EXPRESS

Card number

_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|

Expiry date

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Name on card

Signature

Direct deposit/bank transfer:

Account Name: Frontier Services
Account No.: 116430

BSB Number: 032-014
Please quote reference No.: C000115

Donations \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Please return this form
in the envelope provided OR mail to:
PO Box 3424
Parramatta NSW 2124

You can also donate by calling 1300 787 247
or visit frontierservices.org/donate

Thank you



'Oodnadatta' is believed to be an adaptation of the local Arrernte word 'utnadatta', which means 'blossom of the mulga'. Aboriginal people have inhabited this country for more than 30,000 years. It's also where our founder John Flynn's first nursing home was established and the land from which some of our early Bush Chaplains set off to bring practical, pastoral and spiritual care to people in remote Australia.

Julia Lennon shares her goals as a Bush Chaplain in our Oodnadatta Remote Area:

"For me, it's about learning to walk alongside people in different communities, reaching out and letting people know that we're here to care.

The dream for our open-air church in Oodnadatta is to build a structure of some sort and a garden. My hope is to give people who were taken from their families a space for healing.

I want to help bring First and Second Peoples together. It would mean we were finally being heard."



It costs us on average \$125,000 a year to bring one Bush Chaplain like Julia to a remote community. But the difference they make is priceless, easing the devastating toll of isolation and hardship, helping people find the strength to carry on through their challenges. Thank you for considering a Christmas gift towards their incredible work serving bush communities.



Frontier Services
Standing with people in the bush

CHRISTMAS IN OODNADATTA Will you be there with them?

Did you know?

People living in very remote areas were **twice as likely** to be hospitalised for **self-harm** in 2019-20 as those in major cities.¹

Suicide is the **leading cause of death** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **children** aged 5 to 17 years.²

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, October 2021
2. 'Causes of Death' Australian Bureau of Statistics, 29 September 2021

You can bring urgent help and support to our most vulnerable and isolated communities like Julia's this Christmas. Your generous donation can show them you're by their side. **To give today, visit frontierservices.org/donate**



Children and young people on Easter Egg Hunt at Oodnadatta last year.



**Rev. Mark Kickett,
Interim National
Chairperson of the
Uniting Aboriginal and
Islander Christian
Congress, describes how
Christmas might look for
the people Frontier
Services Bush Chaplain
Julia helps.**

“Christmas in Oodnadatta is unique and can only be truly understood by those that have experienced it first-hand. Julia is helping provide care and support - emotional, spiritual as well as financial - to this tight-knit community. Challenges are many, but Julia’s love for her community will guide them through the good times and the bad.”

Whatever their Christmas looks like – whether they sit down to a massive feed or whether it's a kangaroo from the bush – I know she will try to make it a special day for everyone.



Bush Chaplain Julia Lennon helping baptise her youngest daughter, Dayla.

This Christmas will be very hard in Oodnadatta, similar to many other bush communities across Australia.

There has been an increase in demand for our services like never before. People in remote areas have faced back-to-back disasters such as droughts, fires, floods, a mouse plague and the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges within communities and also at an individual level are huge and seem to be never-ending.

The most urgent problem being faced by many Aboriginal communities is the comparatively low take-up rates of the COVID-19 vaccine. Julia will play a lead role in her community ensuring people receive accurate information about the vaccines and she can help dispel any vaccination myths in order to keep her community protected and safe.

Julia’s big heart is for children and young people, and her focus will be to put smiles on their faces.

You can be there with our Bush Chaplain Julia, giving people hope, by sending a gift we'll use to support her and our other Bush Chaplains at Christmas.