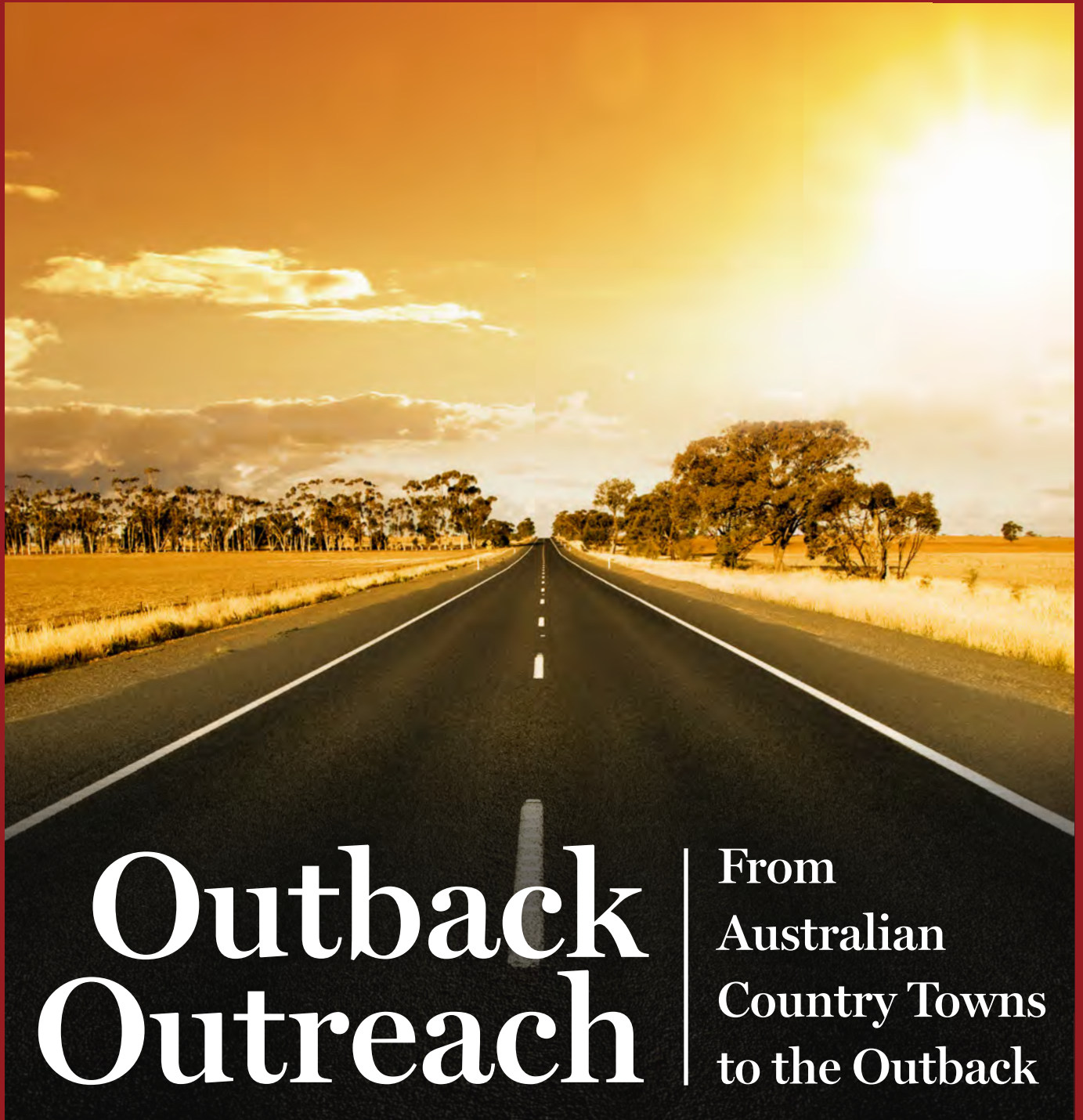


VOLUME 9 NUMBER 6 | JUNE 2016

ACCatalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



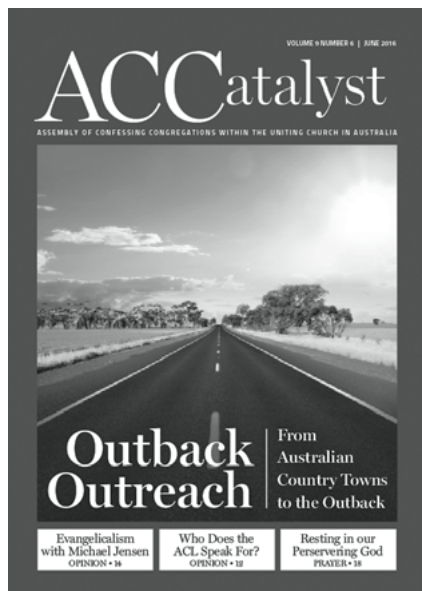
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Cover photo - One of the many roads travelled for Australian outback ministries. (Image: Shutterstock)

EDITORIAL

For the Future

Dear members, thank you to all those who have been able to support the confessing movement during our recent appeal. We are hoping to establish a funding base for the lead up to the 2018 UCA Assembly and your support is vital. Thank you also to members who have sent comments and words of encouragement about the March ACCatalyst, especially highlighting the articles they found helpful. In September, I hope to highlight the uniqueness of our magazine, but if you have comments about this I would be pleased to hear.

Peace and grace,
Peter Bentley



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The Hardest People to Love

by Robyn Painter

Pastor, Peterborough Uniting Church

"Hello, Ma'am, my name is Ajith and I am ringing on behalf of YouCall telephone company"

You know what it's like. You are in the middle of cooking tea. Or you are in the garden with dirty hands and feet. Or you are watching a movie and have just got to the exciting bit, and the phone rings. It's somebody trying to sell you something, or get you to donate money to something, or make you change phone companies, and they talk really fast so you just don't get the chance to say, "No thank you. I'm not interested."

I confess I don't have much patience with those voices on the other end of the phone. I have better things to do with my time than listen to them talking at me. Sometimes I just hang up. Other times I express my irritation to them first.

Now Jesus said love your enemies, which is one thing, but he never said anything about telemarketers, did he? After all, they are only a voice on the other end of a telephone, calling from goodness knows where.

Yet, at the other end of the phone is a man or woman trying to earn a living. I suspect they don't enjoy their jobs much. Perhaps some company went to India and told the people they could earn a lot of money - if they made enough sales, that is.

Those voices are people not much different from me with feelings, who get discouraged when they have a bad day at work. And as everybody is sick to death of those calls, I guess most people are abrupt if not rude to them.

Perhaps I could be different from most people and



Hilary Sandeman

try to be polite. Maybe it will send someone home at the end of the day feeling better about themselves than they otherwise would have. After all, my rudeness is not going to change anything. There are other, more constructive ways of trying to change the laws regarding telemarketers.

And I can't help remembering that Jesus always had time for the outcasts and sinners - the people on the lowest rung of the social ladder. I have a feeling Jesus would love even the telemarketers, and he would see each annoying phone call as an opportunity to reach out to someone. That's a challenging thought!

Living as Christians in our sexualised culture

As ACC continues examination of our sexualised culture, this item from the Australian Christian Lobby's continuing campaign is sadly an apt summary of the issues and dual standards that are so blatant and prominent.

Facing each other at a busy Brisbane intersection are two billboards with messages for young girls. One is sending the healthy message that girls can be girls and the other is of a naked female, seductively lying on a bed.

Australian Christian Lobby QLD Director Wendy Francis said the two billboards faced each other as if in a game of truth and dare.

"If it wasn't so serious, it would be ludicrous," Ms Francis said of the billboards located at the Brunswick Street and St Paul's Terrace intersection, in Fortitude Valley.

"On the one hand we have a government-funded campaign telling girls to "make their move", by playing sport, enjoying life and being active. But directly opposite on a billboard three times the size, there is a naked female seductively advertising moisturiser. The message that this image portrays to girls is that by using this moisturiser young women will attain the

result of being sexually attractive to men.

"Is this really what we want our girls to see? Do we really want our children socialised by in-your-face sexualised billboards? The community has great concerns with children being exposed to sexualised material in public spaces. It is time that the advertising industry reflected community standards and used only G-rated material in public spaces."

Ms Francis said it was another example of where the advertising watchdog, the Advertising Standards Board, has failed to meet

community expectations.

In another recent case, the Australian Christian Lobby has been calling for the removal of a sexually exploitative billboard in Townsville which remains after the ASB confirmed a breach of guidelines over two years ago (14th August 2013).

"We call on governments to introduce penalties for advertisers who refuse to abide by community standards," Ms Francis said.

Wendy Francis is the ACL Queensland State Director. Wendy will address the 2016 ACC National Conference on Standing Firm Together in the Public Sphere.



Cross Tasman Relationships

The ACC National Council was blessed to have with us at the Sydney face to face meeting in March, Rev. Dr Stuart Lange, co-chair of Presbyterian AFFIRM in New Zealand. Presbyterian AFFIRM was founded in 1993 and provides a voice for living, biblical faith and church renewal within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Please pray for Stuart and the leaders and members of AFFIRM as they bear witness to Christ in their denomination and in NZ. Their website is: <http://presaffirm.org.nz/> 



Responding with Grace

The Evangelical Alliance (UK) has a helpful guide to biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality and homosexual practice. This is available as ten summarised points or affirmations (similar to the ACC's statement on Sexuality)

The Affirmations

We are conscious that different evangelicals might apply certain of these points in different ways, but we believe that, taken together, they reflect an authentic, mainstream evangelical response to homosexuality in general and sexually active same-sex partnerships in particular:

1. We recognise that all of us are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people – whatever our sexuality – is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterise evangelical responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in future.

2. We affirm God's love and concern for all human beings, whatever their sexuality, and so repudiate all attitudes and actions which victimise or diminish people whose affections are directed towards people of the same sex. We are encouraged that many Christians now recognise and deeply regret the hurt caused by past and present failures in their responses to those who experience same-sex attraction.

3. We affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship for life. Marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations and homoerotic sexual practice is incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture. We do not accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.

4. We encourage evangelical

congregations to be communities of grace in which those who experience same-sex attraction and seek to live faithfully in accordance with biblical teaching are welcomed and affirmed. Such Christians need churches that are safe spaces where they are able to share and explore their stories with fellow believers for mutual encouragement and support as we help each other grow together into maturity in Christ.

5. We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship and to permit the ordination to ministry of those in such sexual relationships. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.

6. We oppose church services of blessing for civil partnerships and other forms of gay and lesbian relationships as unbiblical and reject any redefinition of marriage to encompass same-sex relationships.

7. We commend and encourage all those who experience same-sex attraction and have committed themselves to chastity by refraining from homoerotic sexual practice. We believe they should be eligible for ordination and leadership within the church, recognising that they can bring invaluable insights and experience to the sphere of Christian pastoral ministry.


8. We welcome and support the work of those individuals and organisations who responsibly seek to help Christians who

experience same-sex attraction as in conflict with their commitment to live in accordance with biblical teaching. This help will involve counsel and pastoral support to live a chaste life and, as part of this process, some may seek and experience changes in the strength or direction of their same-sex attractions.

9. We believe that both habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance and public promotion of such activity are inconsistent with faithful church membership. While processes of membership and discipline differ from one church context to another, we believe that either of these behaviours warrants consideration for church discipline.

10. We encourage evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active lesbians and gay men. However, they should do so in the expectation that they, like all of us who are living outside God's purposes, will come in due course to see the need to be transformed and live in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness, patience and ongoing pastoral care during this process and after a person renounces same-sex sexual relations.

An extended resource *Biblical and Pastoral Responses to Homosexuality* (2012) from By Andrew Goddard, Don Horrocks is available to buy on the Evangelical Alliance UK website:

 <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/theological-articles/resources-for-church-leaders-biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality.cfm>

Join with ACC Tasmanian members at the 2016 ACC National Conference & Annual General Meeting



Standing Firm Together in Christ

Assembly of Confessing Congregations within
the Uniting Church in Australia

*(from lunch) Monday 7th November
– Wednesday 9th November, 2016 (concluding with lunch)*

Venue: POATINA Conference Centre Poatina, Tasmania

As well as ACC Leaders, ACC is pleased to confirm the following keynote speakers:

- His Grace, Archbishop Julian Porteous, the Catholic Archbishop of Hobart (Monday night)
- His Grace, Bishop Richard Condie, the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania (Tuesday night)
- Wendy Francis, Queensland State Officer for the Australian Christian Lobby (Wednesday morning)

Arrangements for the 2016 gathering were finalised during a visit by Peter Bentley in April and meeting with the Tasmanian ACC committee. The Tasmanian members are very keen to provide a warm holiday Isle welcome. Thank you to all the local members, and also to Katherine and Walter Abetz for their hospitality and help with travel arrangements. Tasmania 2016 will be a conference not to miss.

<http://www.poatina.com/>

Poatina Village is a beautiful Christian connected village located about 60 km from Launceston. The village provides a variety of accommodation styles. We encourage you to plan to attend, and perhaps also include a holiday. It will be wonderful to join together and encourage each other in our common fellowship in Christ at this significant time. Other helpful information about Poatina can be



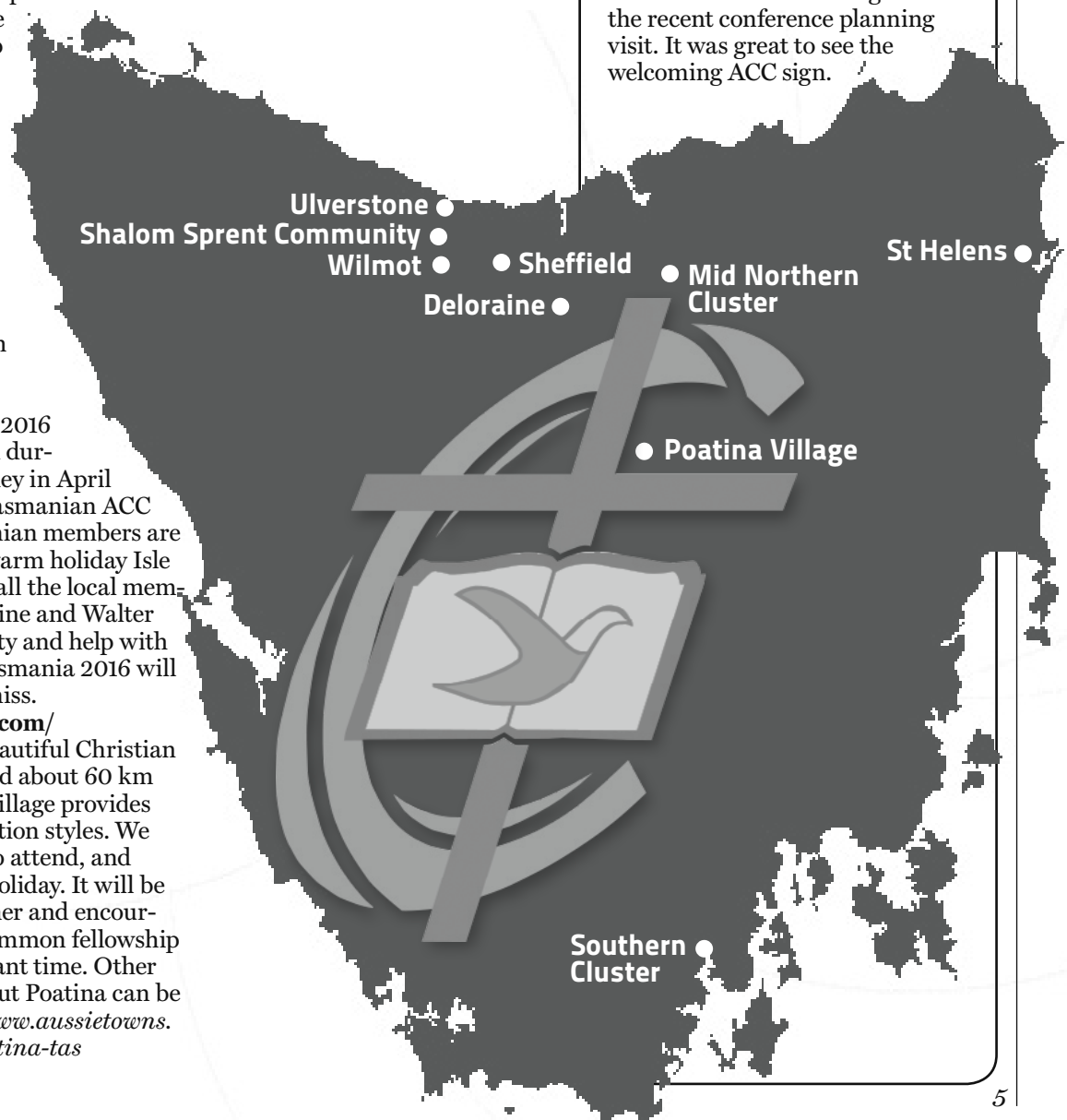
found at: <http://www.aussietowns.com.au/town/poatina-tas>

ACC in Tasmania

ACC has 6 member congregations in Tasmania and 2 clusters.

Details and links are on the ACC website or contact the ACC office. If you are attending the conference or visiting Tasmania for a holiday at another time, please consider joining in worship at one of our member congregations. This is a way we can bless each other.

Peter Bentley had opportunity to worship at ACC member congregation St Helens on the North-East Coast of Tasmania during the recent conference planning visit. It was great to see the welcoming ACC sign.





PUBLIC SQUARE

BY PSEUDO-MAXIMUS

Dishonest Dialogue

Today we are urged to resolve conflict on controversial issues by entering into dialogue. In the church and the community, dialogue is widely thought to be the way to achieve harmony. Certainly, understanding of others' religion, politics, sexuality and life-style is welcomed.

How is it, then, that in the present climate of opinion, dialogue rarely resolves differences but leads to censoring, then denouncing beliefs and practices that are grounded in time-honoured traditions?

Could it be that radicals, who are intent on deconstructing classic Christianity, realise that dialogue is the perfect tool to blunt the Gospel in a church which is more concerned to blend with mainstream society than to proclaim the truth? As dialogue proceeds on the basis that all views are equally valid, it is an instrument that marginalises those who do not pay homage to the god of diversity.

As R.R. Reno notes, this form of dialogue is an intimidating means by which to 'neutralize opposition' and 'shut down conversation' with those who believe, for example, that 'abortion is a moral evil and same-sex marriage is an oxymoron.' (*First Things* May 2016 No. 263, pp. 3 & 4) Thus dialogue is used to justify and entrench incompatible views of reality in church and society.

The noble goal of resolving conflict is illusory. Choice, openness and inclusion are sanctified while beliefs, ethics and lifestyles that are grounded in Christ-centred freedom are demonised. The refusal to embrace the dialogical mantra - to live and let live on matters great and small - is met with fierce resistance that brooks no dissent. Now the greatest sin is not 'sin against the Holy Spirit', which calls good evil, but 'sin against dialogue,' where bad choices are given equal weight with the good.

Eco-sexual Madness

The Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne, was the venue for a kinky, hands-on display at the Eco-sexual Bathhouse, staged as part of the Next Wave Festival (5-14 May).

Participants were 'invited to explore the social and psychological boundaries between ecology, evolution, and sexuality' in an exhibition that 'blurs the lines between human sexuality and the environment. ... Art, activism and carnal desire combine to create a Garden of Eden for a 21st century, climate-changed world.'

You could 'caress orchids (complete with a digital condom), get down and dirty in a turf bath, engage in phone sex with a primeval swamp, or chill out to eco-porn.' (*The Age*, 10 May, p 29) Learn new words: pollenamorous, vegisexual, ecobondage, ecojaculating, ecolingus, etc.

The Eco-sex Manifesto states that, for some people, eco-sexuality is their 'primary (sexual) identity' that may also be shared by 'GLBTQIs, heterosexuals, asexuals and/or others'. As pagan devotees of the four elements essential to life: water, earth, fire and air, eco-sexuals 'make love with the earth'. 'We shamelessly hug trees, massage the earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants.' The compilers of the Manifesto married the earth in 2008.

Can anybody doubt that Christian identity has now been publicly displaced by a pansexual idolatry of creation that blurs the distinctions between God, humanity and nature? When the biblical picture of the Garden of Eden is invoked to sanctify this self-indulgent paganism, our identity in the image of God is defaced beyond recognition.

That permission was given for the exhibition to be staged in a place of great natural beauty visited by thousands of people each year, should alert us to the insidious power of environmental activists who pose as friends of the earth, and to the gullibility of

public officials about this anti-Christian religion.

Is it too much to hope that Uniting Church spokespersons on the environment will protest against the desecration of the Christian doctrines of creation and redemption while continuing to advocate for sensible measures to care for the earth?

Marriage of Convenience

Social justice is no longer the preserve of capitalism's detractors. Corporate heavyweights like Qantas, Price Waterhouse Coopers, KPMG, Deloitte, BHP Billiton, among others, now spend serious money spruiking their equality credentials. Pride in sexual diversity is now their common mantra. When Telstra briefly decided to maintain neutrality in the Marriage Equality debate the corporate bullies pounced.

In a chilling sign of what is yet to come, Qantas CEO Alan Joyce, a gay man and pro-gay activist, warned opponents of same-sex marriage that, soon, they would be unable to conduct daily business in Australia. Elsewhere, opponents of changing the meaning of marriage, like Family Voice Australia and the Centre of Public Christianity's John Dickson, have had their well-argued posts taken down by Facebook. The outrage of online militants with a radical sexual agenda has prevailed.

So much for the myth of promoting diversity, equality and inclusion in a free and tolerant society! The hypocrisy is breathtaking. Telstra was savagely criticised for responding to justifiable Catholic concerns about its decision to take sides on such a sensitive public issue. But there was no hostility to corporations who spend vast amounts of shareholders' money promoting this cause. The threat of financial loss for resisting the standover tactics of activists has convinced business leaders of the rightness of their cause.

Silencing voices of sanity may reap rewards for big business in the short-term. But the long-term effects of intimidating citizens, who in good faith support the natural family, will undermine social stability.

Is it too much to expect that the Uniting Church, a strident, long-time critic of corporate misbehaviour, will expose their unethical behaviour in this vital matter? Will UnitingJustice insist that corporate advocacy be accompanied by ethical arguments beyond mere slogans? Or are we seeing a marriage of convenience between sworn enemies? It would be a travesty of justice if the Uniting Church were to collude in this deception.



Unsafe Schools

Determination to stamp out bullying in schools is necessary and laudable. But the Safe Schools Program, sponsored by the Safe Schools Coalition Australia (SSCA) and being rolled out around Australia, is another matter entirely. Purporting to be an anti-bullying program, it is a smokescreen for a radical sexual agenda hell-bent on destroying what it regards as the oppressive imposition of hetero-normativity.

As widely reported, the SSCA provides resources to help primary and secondary school students realise that gender is malleable. As biological identity as male and female is an oppressive social and cultural construct, they must learn to be free to choose their own sexual identity. Sexual experimentation and sex aids are encouraged. Criticism is silenced. Schools must be safe places for the tiny minority who do not identify as heterosexual.

Ironically, those who believe in the binary nature of sex must be intimidated. No safe place for them! So much can be assumed by the vitriolic public outbursts against opponents of SSCA. Divisive. Extremist. A win for bullies. Caving in to bigots. Homophobic. Endangering lives. Unchristian!

SSCA is a sinister, totalitarian program that pretends to be about anti-bullying, but in reality, is designed to deface the image of God, subvert healthy relationships, and destroy the

natural family. Vulnerable and impressionable students are confronted by inaccurate, inappropriate, voyeuristic material that has the potential to cause long-term harm. It is hard enough to go through puberty without being pressured to accept the ludicrous idea that sexuality is manifoldly fluid.

A program that teaches that 'boys' and 'girls' are social constructs is not safe. It is not safe for children or teenagers. It is not safe for their maturing into adulthood. It is not safe for building strong families. But, above all, it is not safe because its authors and supporters are committed to a far greater cause than bullying. They will not rest until the capitalist, patriarchal system, which is blamed for inhibiting sexual freedom and imposing a narrow Christian morality, is defeated culturally and its replacement entrenched in law.

Christian parents, children and groups who challenge this totalitarian, neo-pagan agenda will be hard pressed to find a safe place in which to express their views. Sadly, neither opposition to the program nor support for unhappy families has been forthcoming from justice agencies of the Uniting Church.

Complaint withdrawn

In case you missed it, the complaint against Hobart's Archbishop Porteous for distributing the booklet *Don't Mess with Marriage* has now been withdrawn.

Last year Martine Delaney, a Tasmanian transgender rights advocate and Greens candidate for the Federal seat of Franklin, complained to the State

Anti-Discrimination Commissioner that, according to the terms of the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act, LGBTIQ Australians had been 'offended' and 'insulted' by the booklet produced for schools and parishes by the Australian Bishops Conference.

In May 2016, after conciliation failed, Ms Delaney dropped the case, citing financial costs and the cost of having to remain silent while preparing for further tribunal hearings.

Media reports were muted. Imagine the euphoric headlines if the complaint had been upheld: Church found guilty of homophobia and bigotry banished! A few voices welcomed the decision as a 'victory for free speech and freedom of religion'. But no mainstream media outlet was prepared to risk reputation and the bottom-line by doing likewise. The pro-gay press was virtually silent.

The silence is instructive. Because the debate over marriage is skewed in favour of radical change, supporters of natural marriage must be starved of oxygen, particularly when their arguments make good sense. The closer we get to a plebiscite or parliamentary vote, the more important it is for activists who, until recently, have raged against religious extremists, to appear reasonable.

The fact that beliefs about sexuality and marriage that have underpinned human societies for millennia can now be treated as bigotry makes it incumbent on Federal and State politicians to uphold laws that do not make hurt feelings the basis of legal complaint.

This unhappy episode makes it clear that, no matter how reasonably and respectfully orthodox Christians disagree with proponents of Same Sex Marriage, and encourage others to embrace the splendour of marriage between a man and a woman, they will be accused of bigotry.

The best that we can expect in the foreseeable future is legislation that encourages robust public debate without silencing opposition or endorsing 'hate speech'. In the long-term the clash between incompatible worldviews - pagan and Christian - will only intensify.



Serving in the North



Mandy Jones and her husband Wayne Oldfield

Nungalingya College in Darwin has always been a part of my Christian world. When I was in Youth Group at Kingsgrove UCA in Sydney we heard stories of the revival “up north” and the college that would train indigenous people to be Christian leaders in their community.

Later, when I was a Theology student, I was employed very part time at Riverwood Anglican. The minister there gave me the job, but on the day I started work he told me that he was leaving the next weekend to prepare to work at Nungalingya. For many years I followed what was happening at the College through Rob Hayne’s prayer letters and workshops at CMS NSW Summer Schools.

Later still, I worked at Ingleburn Uniting and Nungalingya was still there. The church got the college’s newsletters and when I wanted them to be praying for a ministry beyond its own interests, we began praying for the College.

Now Nungalingya is an even bigger part of my life. Since January 2011, I have been teaching at the college. I am deeply grateful to God for the many experiences God has used to prepare me for this ministry.

What is Nungalingya?

Nungalingya is an Indigenous training college run between the Anglican, Uniting and Catholic Churches of the Northern Territory. It started in 1973 because there were emerging leaders in the churches in the Northern Territory that needed to be trained. The only option for formal systematic training in the early 70s was to send people south - for a long time. First, they would need to get



From the left: Wangarr; Yurranydjil; Discussion time; Mandy (in front) and Marlene (with mic); Marlene.

their English up to scratch, then do year 12 equivalent and then they would need to do whatever training was required by their denomination. All in all they were looking at between 5 and 10 years away from their communities and their families. This was too high a cost for both the students and their churches.

Today Nungalinya has approximately 300 students per year and operates in the VET sector. Students come largely from remote communities for intensives and keep learning at home. A range of courses offer pathways for students to study: starting at Foundations (literacy and numeracy) or Media or Music and working through to a Certificate IV in Theology and Ministry.

Why are non-indigenous teachers (like me) still coming to Nungalinya?

In an ideal world Nungalinya would no longer need to recruit non-indigenous teachers. But the reality is that there are not enough indigenous people who are qualified and able to teach at colleges like Nungalinya. It is not that there aren't strong indigenous Christians with teaching gifts. It is the need for VET teachers to have highly developed Western style administrative and work skills – something that is very cross-cultural for indigenous people – that makes it difficult to get and keep indigenous teachers.

To address the problem Nungalinya has developed a pathway for creating indigenous teachers for the future.

Firstly students with a gift for teaching are identified during the courses that we run or through church networks. When these teachers have finished their course, they are invited to come and use their learning as Assistant Teachers. These Assistant roles are tailored to the individual. Some may help in a class by quietly explaining things and supporting students in their learning. Others come to assist students but also have responsibility to teach certain concepts under supervi-

sion. Assistant Teachers only come into the college for a week of preparation and two weeks of teaching once or twice a year, so their gifts are not lost to their communities and the wider church.

So far there are 6 indigenous Assistant Teachers on the program. Three, Yurranydjil, Maratja and Wangarr, are supported by the Uniting Church Northern

Synod and James, Marlene and Mandy are supported by the Anglican connected Mission, CMS.

So far I have taught with Yurranydjil and Mandy. Both bring humility and insight to the class. They are aware of where individual students are up to, encourage students do their best. Yurranydjil has an amazing number of car stories to illustrate the Christian faith!

As Mandy describes it "I'm like a 'backyard' for the Aboriginal students, in that I come from a place that they know. I know what's in our country, so I use this to help explain the Bible to the students." (CMS Checkpoint Autumn 2016).

The next step on the pathway will be for these teachers to begin their qualifications for teaching in the VET sector. They will be able to work through the course at their own pace while still being Assistant Teachers. At the end of their course it is envisaged that their role in

teaching will increase substantially but that they will still be supported in their administration. It will be a partnership with indigenous and non-indigenous each bringing their cultural strengths to the classroom.

Long term it is hoped that some of the Assistant Teachers of today will be teachers of the future. Maybe people like me will be out of a job. Certainly our roles will change. Whatever the case, Nungalinya will stay a part of my Christian world as I continue to pray and support the college as it endeavours to empower indigenous Christians.

Mandy Jones, and her husband Wayne Oldfield, are ACC members serving in the Northern Territory.

Nungalinya is an Indigenous training college run between the Anglican, Uniting and Catholic Churches of the Northern Territory. It started in 1973 because there were emerging leaders in the churches in the Northern Territory that needed to be trained.

Reflections of a

It was about 8.15 a.m., the air was crisp, and as I left the “confines” of the small town, heading south, around me was an explosion of bright yellow, as far as the eye could see. Rolling hills of canola in flower were welcoming the day-- it wasn’t a long trip to my farthest congregation, about 83 kms, then to outlying farms according to the elders’ list.

I had to pinch myself - could this be real? All my life I had been a lay preacher, elder, etc. Here I was actually being paid to do what I loved to do, and in such a beautiful place. God had answered my prayer. In my late fifties it was not too late to answer his call. Fifteen years later in retirement, and serving with the Hope Mission Network, (about 60 congregations across SA), another opportunity has opened up—I can assist our overloaded field minister, to touch base with and care, for those congregations. Talking with my long-suffering wife, yes, we could take the caravan, and we could help out. So we pray about being invited, being welcomed, and serving for a time here and there, over yonder, across that horizon... Whom shall I send, goes the song and the Word?

(Matthew 9:37-38, John 20:21).

On returning home, at the back door are two packages, some steaks, and a bag of spuds - God’s people caring for their pastor .

How does God call?

One Sunday I had preached at my home church. A normal comfortable Sunday with friends and family. Feeling good having just been promoted at work (some pride), and all was well. Then after worship, as usual, I went to the door to meet and greet, as Methodist preachers have done for eons. There I greeted Avis, an older lady, and a “regular”. Morning Avis, I said. Hello Grant, tell me— “Why are you wasting your time at that place?”

God has a way of bringing us into contact with his will.

So, now in retirement, on behalf of the Hope Network, we are trying to plan visits to the Eastern Mallee, and the upper South East of S A. Places such as Pinna-roo, Lameroo, Karoonda, Geranium, Penola, Prospect Hill, Bordertown, Keith, Mundulla, Buckingham. Have I missed any?

Grant Jewell



Country Pastor



Grant Jewell with one country congregation

**I had to pinch myself - could this be real?
... Here I was actually being paid to do what I loved to do, and in such a beautiful place. God had answered my prayer.**



Who does the ACL *and why Kerryn Phelps was*

John
Sandeman

Eternity Newspaper Editor



John Sandeman, the consulting editor for ACCatalyst and Editor of Eternity Newspaper, provided a very helpful contemporary comment about the church and Christian context in Australia following a Q & A program earlier in the year.

On Q & A [February 29], John Faulkner, “a 65 year old Christian” asked “Who gave Mr Shelton and the ACL the right to speak for all Christians on the matter of marriage equality?”

Lyle Shelton, managing director of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) answered that just as a union can’t claim to speak on behalf of every member, the ACL does not claim to convey the views of every Christian.

There are two surveys that help answer the question of “Who does the ACL speak for?”

The National Church Life Survey reveals that 73 per cent of the people surveyed in the last 5-yearly church census said they opposed same sex marriage. A Galaxy survey organised by Australian Marriage Equality found that 53 per cent of people who said they were Christian supported same sex marriage. Both polls date from 2011. Unlike pollsters like the Barna poll in the US which ask careful questions to define what people mean by “Christian”, the Galaxy poll asked no clarifying questions.

So in opposing same-sex marriage, the ACL “speaks for” the majority of churchgoers, and (if you apply a qualification such as the historic creeds to work out who is a Christian), probably a majority of Australian Christians as well.

That is using the term “speaks for” as “expresses the



majority view of” Australian Christians. The ACL is not a broad-based membership organisation: filling out a baptism certificate does not make you a member of it.

The ACL has good links with the leaders of Australia’s Christian denominations or church networks. At the 2010 “Make it Count” event held by the ACL, Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott met a wide range of Evangelical, Pentecostal, Catholic and Orthodox church leaders.

Eureka Street, a Catholic-based magazine, not generally regarded as a fan of the ACL described it this way: “The broad representation at Old Parliament House and among the participating churches around the country was impressive, though still clearly tilted towards smaller evangelical churches and socially conservative Christians rather than the big established churches. But no church had more senior representation than the Catholic Church. Both Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and Cardinal George Pell of Sydney participated.” (June 30, 2010)

Speak for? *wrong on Q&A*



The UCA was the only church at that event represented by someone other than an official leader. Dr Max Champion, chair of the dissident Assembly of Confessing Congregations in the UCA attended instead.

The ACL continues to take groups of denominational leaders to Canberra for meetings with politicians. There was a recent meeting with the Prime Minister. These are meant to be confidential. Eternity recently wrote about one because a church leader blogged about it. The ACL was a tad annoyed with us, but realised we were just being journalists.

On last night's Q&A, panellist Kerry Phelps questioned Lyle Shelton's answer about who ACL speaks for.

"We don't claim to speak for all Christians. Yes, our name is 'Australian Christian Lobby', but just as the Australian Labor Party wouldn't claim to speak for all workers... we're just being upfront about our name. But certainly all of the Christian denominations in Australia – all of them except for the Quakers whom I've hardly heard of – they all support marriage between a man and

a woman, that's their teaching," said Mr Shelton.

"Forty faith leaders have distanced themselves from you last week," challenged Dr Phelps, referring to an open letter calling on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to abandon plans for a plebiscite. The letter expressed concern that the debate in the lead up to the plebiscite would cause further division in Australian society, and that the "negative case" in a plebiscite would be put by religious groups and leaders like ACL "who claim to speak on behalf of people of faith generally, or religious institutions as a whole".

Dr Phelps can be forgiven for being confused because

"The National Church Life Survey reveals that 73 per cent of the people surveyed in the last 5-yearly church census said they opposed same sex marriage. A Galaxy survey organised by Australian Marriage Equality found that 53 per cent of people who said they were Christian supported same sex marriage. Both polls date from 2011."

most media coverage of the open letter issued by the leaders simply called them "church leaders" and did not say who they were. The only place Eternity has seen the list of leaders is on the website of the LGBTI newspaper The Star Observer, and it reveals that most are parish ministers, (for example Rev. Dr Margaret Mayman, Minister of the Pitt Street Uniting Church, NSW or Rev. Nathan Nettleton, Pastor at the South Yarra Community Baptist Church, VIC) or lay leaders like Melbourne's Muriel Porter who are in some cases well known or influential but hardly official leaders of the denomination.

Lyle Shelton has made the comment several times (including to Eternity), that all of the leaders of Australia's main church groups oppose same-sex marriage. This means that ACL can truly say that they represent their views. Church leaders will also speak for themselves and ACL is careful not to present itself as an official peak council.

This article was first published on the Eternity/Bible Society's News website on March 1, 2016.

Evangelicalism: a word worth keeping

Michael
Jensen

Rector of St Marks Darling Point



In late 1995 I was part of a panel on ABC's *The Moral Compass*. It was a full and frank, no-holds-barred discussion of the place of "Special Religious Education" in schools.

One of the panellists used the word "evangelical" as a term which was clearly meant to ring alarm bells with his audience. The delivery of Scripture classes was by "fundamentalist, ee-vangelical" groups. Self-evidently, we were supposed to be frightened that this indicated a fringe sect, only loosely in touch with sanity and certainly not with reality.

For a second, it crossed my mind to pause, and say: "I identify as an evangelical Christian: as one who shares in the great tradition of Wesley, Whitefield, Simeon and Wilberforce. They were nation builders and compassionate individuals and pursued an intellectually robust and spiritually earnest faith wholeheartedly. I have no shame in trailing in their wake, or in the wake of Stott, Packer, Spurgeon and many, many others. I find it offensive that you use that term to belittle and demean others. Imagine using the word 'Catholic' or 'Muslim' in that way." And then I didn't say that, because as a Christian I don't think I should play the "politics of offence" game.

But it did make me reflect on the word "evangelical" and its usefulness in the contemporary world. Does it communicate anything useful to say you are an evangelical anymore? Does the widespread and woeful ignorance of this terminology mean that there's no point trying?

A little history is needed to address the question properly. Words have histories, and names that applied to groups especially so. The word "evangelical" was used at two moments in history to describe two movements within the Christian church. It's a word that is built from the Greek word for "gospel" or "good news", euangelion.

In the 16th century, "evangelical" was the term used to describe the churches that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church over the authority of Scripture and the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone. These reformers, known later as "Protestants", more usually called themselves "the evangelicals", and described their churches as "evangelical". Even today, the German Protestant churches are called Evangelische.

But the word was also associated with a descendent group of this first group of evangelicals, the "evangelical movement" of the 18th century. This movement was

particularly strong in the English-speaking world, and featured the great preachers John Wesley and George Whitefield. What characterised this movement?

Following the historian David Bebbington's account of the evangelical movement, we can say that it was (and is) conversionist, biblicist, crucicentric and activist.

It was "conversionist" in that the evangelicals held that in order to be saved, a person needed to be born again – to repent, and believe the gospel. Evangelicals did not assume that a person was saved by outward adherence to religious forms or moral codes. It had to be inwardly authentic. And so they preached "you must be born again". They held enormous revival meetings, and experienced extraordinary revivals. They preached outside of the church walls, in the meadows and in the streets. And the evangelicals became great missionaries and the supporters of missions, throughout the expanding world.

It was "biblicist". That is, evangelicals in the 18th century stood for the authority of Scripture over every other in matters of faith. The Bible was the living and active word of God, not human reason or church tradition. Evangelicals thus became interdenominational, because while they were happy to work in different denominations, they did not hold institutional allegiance as being at the heart of Christian faith.

It was "crucicentric" – which means that for evangelicals the cross of Christ has a central place in the gospel. Without the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, there is no evangel. There is no gospel to preach without the death of Jesus for sin. It is fascinating how this comes out in evangelical hymns, such as William Cowper's somewhat disturbing "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood". Lastly, you'd have to agree that evangelicalism was and is an "activist" faith. This is a vague term, perhaps, but evangelicals haven't seen themselves as removed from the world by their faith but rather plunged into it, often in its most difficult and complicated arenas. Evangelicals have been nation builders, sponsors of education and prison reform, advocates for social and political change, and standing for the rights of others. Evangelicals were prominent in the women's movement. The evangelical movement spawned many of the social welfare groups that still serve us today. One thinks of World Vision, Tear Fund, the Salvation Army, Barnardo's, and many, many more.

What's happened since then? Evangelicals were perhaps at their most powerful in Britain in the 19th century, but lost a great deal of their influence by about 1900. They were often ridiculed – and sometimes fairly – as moralistic, which was somewhat of a betrayal of their own message. This happened in Australia where evangelicals campaigned against alcohol and gambling and other vices, and mostly lost.

This is where the social activism of the evangelical movement butted up against its conversionism. It's a ten-

sion that goes a long way to describing where the evangelical movement is today. In the US, the evangelicals decided to become politically active in the 1970s, and to especially throw their lot in with the Republican Party. The election of Ronald Reagan, though not an evangelical himself (or even particularly religious) was seen as a triumph for evangelical political activism. But by aligning with a certain sort of right-wing politics, evangelicals forfeited much of their good name, and their passion for conversion seemed to dissipate. They were active not as servants of their communities, but as lobbyists seeking to control a space – however right they were about the issues.

Three other things have happened within the evangelical movement that have made the word harder to own. The first was the rise of what we know as fundamentalism. It's a complex story, but the bottom line is that a very strong anti-intellectual stream became dominant in a large segment of evangelicalism. This was very much at odds with the evangelicalism represented by John Stott and others in the UK, where the life of the mind was respected and cultivated.

The second was the rise of Pentecostalism, which has emerged as one of the most numerous and vigorous forms of Christianity globally. Pentecostalism is the child of the evangelical movement, but there is great disagreement as to whether it is truly evangelical or something else again. The emphasis put on personal experience rather than Scripture and the eclipse of the cross in some forms of Pentecostalism has made other evangelicals wary of associating too closely. It has certainly confused the brand, much as Pentecostalism has retained the missionary edge of the evangelicalism that gave it birth.

The third was the infiltration of liberal theology in the evangelical ranks. Liberalism is not and cannot be truly

evangelical, since it appeals to human reason and experience over and often against Scripture, and it denies the centrality of the atonement. But many liberals wanted to call themselves “evangelical”, because they liked the vigorous personal faith that it represented and the missionary spirit. So the word evangelical has become so impossibly broad that it verges on meaninglessness. It needs careful clarification when it is used in any context. If I say I am an evangelical, I almost immediately have to qualify it by saying “but I read books, and I don't always vote conservative.”

The growing ignorance of our culture is disturbing to say the least. People are simply ignorant, and often wilfully – especially academics and journalists, who should know more about one of the most influential religious movements of the past 250 years.

But I am not giving up on it just yet. The word “evangelical” is a great word, because it says that you are a gospel Christian first and foremost, and not a church Christian, or a cultural Christian. It is worth telling the story of the evangelical movement because it is one of the great stories of our age, and it has so much that testifies to the power of Jesus Christ in it. It is worth standing in this heritage because it is intellectually rich and yet powerfully convicted of gospel truths. It offers a spirituality that is profound, and it compels people to do extraordinary things to help others.

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How biblical is the *Basis of Union*?

Katherine Abetz provides a short quiz to illustrate. This would be a good take-home task for Church Union Sunday

How biblically-based do you think the *Basis of Union* is? (Very? Not very? Not at all?) Are you willing to test your assumption? Would you recognise a biblical quotation if it wasn't in inverted commas? Well, let's see...

Below you will find 10 quotations from the *Basis of Union* followed by some biblical references. Your task is to match the biblical reference to its corresponding quotation from the *Basis* (especially to the part in bold), assuming that there is a correspondence that is. Does that sound easy? We challenge you to complete the task without looking up the biblical references first.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

If you have finished the matching exercise, you are free to check your answers. Try the Revised Standard Version. How did you rate?

For correct answers we suggest:

Novice pilgrim: up to 2

Middle of the road pilgrim: 3-7

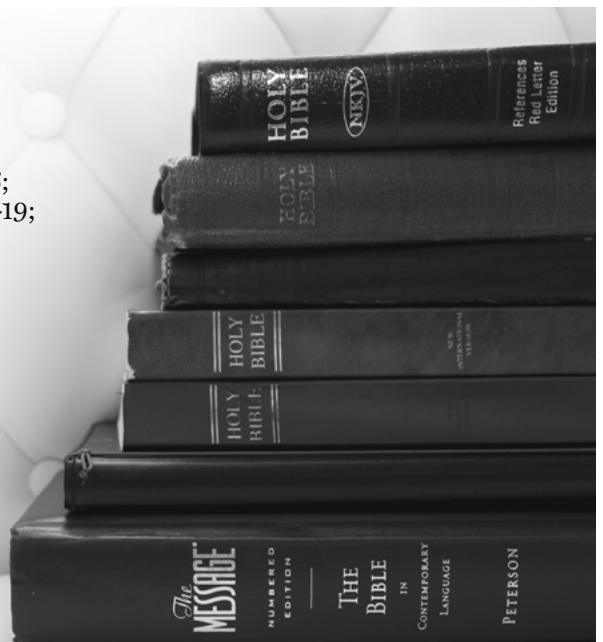
Seasoned pilgrim: 8-10.

We are open to correspondence about this. Email Walter and Katherine Abetz at wkabetz2@bigpond.com

1. 'to hear anew the commission of the Risen Lord to **make disciples of all nations**' (Basis § 1)
2. 'the Church of God... awaits with hope the day of the Lord Jesus Christ on which it will be clear that the **kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.**' (Basis § 1)
3. 'The Church preaches Christ the risen crucified One and **confesses him as Lord to the glory of God the Father.**' (Basis § 3)
4. 'In Jesus Christ **God was reconciling the world to himself.**' (Basis § 3)
5. 'The Church... **does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come.**' (Basis § 3)
6. 'Christ... is the Word of the God who acquits the guilty, **who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist.**' (Basis § 4)
7. 'Thus the people of God... have communion with their Saviour, make their **sacrifice of praise** and thanksgiving, **proclaim the Lord's death**, grow together in Christ, are strengthened for their participation in the mission of Christ in the world, and rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom...' (Basis § 8)
8. 'membership is open to all who are baptized **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**' (Basis § 12)
9. 'The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is **supreme in his Church.**' (Basis § 15) [See also 'To this end they (the uniting churches) declare their readiness to go forward together in sole loyalty to **Christ the living Head of the Church.**' (Basis § 1)]
10. 'The Uniting Church... would have individual members take upon themselves the **form of a servant.**' (Basis § 16)

Biblical references:

Hebrews 13:14,15;
Matthew 28:18,19;
1 Corinthians 11:26;
2 Corinthians 5:18-19;
Colossians 1:18;
Philippians 2: 5-11;
Romans 4:17;
Revelation 11:15



The Church in the Spotlight

Peter
Bentley

ACC National Director



"There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and shame the devil." (Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News*, 1920, p.13).

Spotlight (2015, M) won the Oscar for best film this year. It is interestingly not a film about heroes or super-heroes. In an age of bizarre and distorted reality television programmes and tweeting that can provide 15 seconds of fame or infamy, this is simply a film about people doing their jobs.

The *Spotlight* team are a specialist team at *The Boston Globe*. They combine extensive journalism experience with contemporary research skills and writing ability. Their collaborative work is like a Supreme Court decision - where one person often writes the majority report or article for the 'team', though in the *Globe* case they are more united.

As many readers will now know, the film is about the work by the *Spotlight* team in 2001 and 2002 to expose the nature and extent of child sexual abuse by priests in the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. Their work provided an impetus for further work by other reporters and also the development of official investigations not only in the USA, but in other countries including Australia.

The *Spotlight* team won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. You can read their original reports on the *Globe* website. They make illuminating reading, not only for their investigative style but also detailed and lengthy analysis. The different technological era also stands out. This is pre-broadband and there is still a reliance on primary research, analytical skills and interviewing, all elements that are illustrated well in their very ordinariness and yet

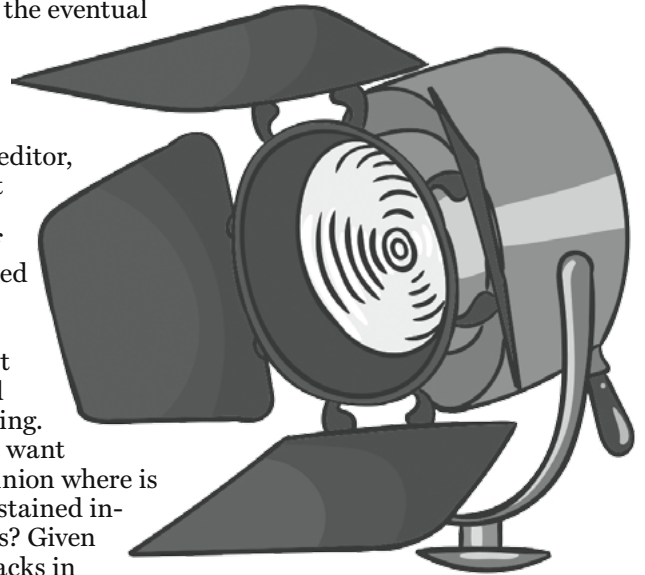
integral foundation to the eventual publishing.

When the idea of *Spotlight* is explained near the start of the film to the new *Globe* editor, it seems almost quaint to our way of thinking today. A small team of experienced and focused journalists consider a subject or area, often spending months if not a year researching and writing before publishing. At a time when people want instant results and opinion where is the opportunity for sustained investigation such as this? Given the large staffing cutbacks in many newspapers, this form of investigative writing is a prime example of professional journalism that is under threat. The film highlights the continued need today for independent journalism that is able to build on the tradition of asking for and receiving no favours from any quarter, including their own publisher.

At one point in the film when the scale of the abuse is uncovered the question is raised by one of the journalists investigating: Why did we not know? Someone must have known? It was evident that even in the *Globe*, certain stories were known, but they were not connected or followed up in a sustained way.

There was an indifference that was part of a wider culture of ignoring or even suppressing information. As noted, the *Globe* did not follow through on reported cases, and this was not because the *Globe* was substantially staffed by people of Catholic faith, or at least nominal Catholic faith, but rather because the overall culture did not encourage a sustained critique of dominant institutions and authorities.

This is a good film in the newspaper film drama genre. The ensemble cast continue the gritty depiction of real events in the pressured and changing journalistic environment as seen in earlier films like *All the President's Men* (1976), and the more recently *Nothing by the Truth*



(2008). The director Tom McCarthy is also an actor, having played a significant role as an ethically compromised reporter in the concluding season of the television drama *The Wire* that focused on The Baltimore Sun. McCarthy picked up many helpful pointers in that groundbreaking drama, and it is good to see a film considering ethics and values without unnecessary preaching.

Spotlight is a sobering film for church members and ultimately contemporary even though it is set 15 years ago. We are all led to consider our response and allegiance - is it to the 'institution', or to the one holy Catholic and apostolic church? It is also illuminating as to why there has been a wider societal change in terms of the trust of and general perception of priests and ministers. As one of the survivors says:

"They say it's just physical abuse but it's more than that, this was spiritual abuse. You know why I went along with everything? Because priests are supposed to be the good guys."

Spotlight is an example of how good writing and telling a story well can lead to real change. It avoids the self-righteousness that can sometimes come out in films from Hollywood that are too didactic, and in this way helps all viewers to examine their own lives and faith.

Sharing in Prayer

Dear ACC congregations, members and clusters,
I encourage each of you to persevere in your prayers for the work of the ACC. I remind you once again of the terms of reference for the ACC Prayer Network

- 1. To pray for the work and mission of the ACC within the UCA*
- 2. To encourage congregations to be a people of prayer and fasting so that together we may discern God's Will for the ACC*
- 3. To establish prayer as a central activity of the ACC*

Please remember in these days to pray for these different aspects of the ACC work.

1. Pray for Hedley our ACC chair – for ongoing wisdom, guidance and protection. Also pray for each member of the National Council for encouragement and focus at this important time in our church's history.

2. Pray for each of the national commissions that the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, would lead and direct each group to the work and mission set before them. Pray for ease of communication with the commissions despite at times working across many states.

- Theology and Ecumenical relations
- Discipleship and Evangelism
- Social Responsibility (now operating as a Task Group)
- Cross Cultural

3. Pray for the planning of the ACC National Conference in Poatina, Tasmania 7-9 November.

4. Continue to pray for Peter Bentley our National Director. Pray for the Lord's equipping and power to continue to do this amazing work he has been called to. Pray for provision of times of rest and restoration.

5. Pray for each state network and for the local members for encouragement.

6. Pray that ACC would lay upon its members the serious duty of reading the scriptures.

7. The National Council held its annual face to face meeting in Sydney on 6-8th March. This was a valuable time of planning and decision-making. Please pray for the Council members and Peter Bentley as they work to implement those decisions

8. The National Council was blessed to have with us at the Sydney face to face meeting in March, Rev. Dr Stuart Lange, co-chair of Presbyterian AFFIRM in New Zealand. Presbyterian AFFIRM was founded in 1993 and provides a voice for living, biblical faith and church renewal within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Please pray for Stuart and the leaders and members of AFFIRM as they bear witness to Christ in their Church and in NZ. Their website is: <http://presaffirm.org.nz/>

9. For the Discipleship and Evangelism Commission of ACC as they finalise the filming of two new DVD studies (completed at the Coromandel Valley UC in SA in May). The DVDs being produced are Grace, Gospel and Life, a series of 20 minute talks which can be used as DVD sermons, and Participating in Christ's Mission, a series of 12 minute talks followed by a testimony and discussion questions. (The first will be available at this year's conference, and the other later.) Please pray for those who will be contributing to these studies, that God will give them true and powerful words to express His glory.

10. For the National Council for follow-up. Please pray for the progress of the matters undertaken at the March meeting and May teleconference.

11. The National Council has resolved to continue Peter Bentley's appointment as National Director of ACC. Please pray for Peter as he takes part-time Long Service Leave until the end of June.

12. Pray also for our ACC finances that we will be able to:

- i. continue employing our National Director Peter Bentley,
- ii. continue publishing ACCatalyst,
- iii. establish the ACC School of Faith.
- iv. reprint our ACC resources,
- v. and continue our work with migrant ethnic members of the UCA.

vi. An appeal letter was sent asking for donations to enable us to continue these vital functions, and to maintain a strong presence in the present concerning times. Please pray for the success of this appeal.

Reading & Singing the Psalms

A reflection from the Prayer Network co-ordinator Rev. Anne Hibbard

Throughout the centuries, many different Christian prayers and hymns have been written for people to use in their devotional and worship life as individuals and in community. However, through history, the importance and treasure of the Psalms in the Hebrew Scriptures as the primary song and prayer book has been discovered and lost and rediscovered several times.

Oliphant Old (2002, 33-36) describes the regular use of Psalms in Hebrew or Jewish worship from at least the time of King David. During the burning of the sacrifice, psalmody had primacy in worship. After the second temple was built following the exile, there was a regular pattern of psalm singing relating to the day of the week. During Jesus' lifetime, the worship in the synagogues began and ended with set psalm singing. Jesus himself quoted the psalms even upon the cross. (Mark 15:34).

The early Christian church also sang psalms, as referenced in Acts 4:23-31 and 1 Corinthians 14:26 along with other hymns. Following the New Testament time, psalm singing was encouraged within the Christian church (Old 2002, 36, 40) and in the West was almost exclusively used until Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-97). In the fourth century, Athanasius (328-373) wrote a letter explaining to Marcellinus and describing how important the Psalms were. Athanasius writes,

"to those who really study it the Psalter yields especial treasure. Within it are represented and portrayed in all their great variety the movements of the human soul" (cited by Prayer Foundation).

Chrysostom (349-407) also speaks of the daily pattern of psalm reading in the ancient church. He said they divided up each day into four, and at the end of each daily section they glorified God with "psalms and hymns" (Schaff, 1886)

Gregory the Great cultivated psalmody with organ music with what we call today the Gregorian chant. The focus of psalm singing began within the monastic life with only some psalmody in the cathedrals and at mass. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Psalmody and hymn singing continued to flourish, but they were sung in Latin and the common people could not join in or understand them (Old, 2002, 40, 42).

With the advent of the Reformation, the Reformers wanted everyone to be able to sing the songs. Easier tunes were composed and psalms and hymns were sung in the congregations' own languages. Luther revitalised psalm singing by writing more than thirty hymns with

**Ah, there is not the
juice, the strength,
the passion, the fire
which I find in the
Psalter. It tastes too
cold and too hard.**



several of these based on German psalms. Calvin also collected French metrical psalms. Martin Bucer (1491-1551) focused back on the original Hebrew text of the Psalms. During the reformation, says Oliphant Old (2002, 45) the texts of the psalms became the “prayers of the people”. During the eighteenth century Isaac Watts (1674-1748) wrote not only hymns but metrical psalms translated or paraphrased into English. Following this time, even with the Presbyterian Church for over a century, psalm singing was given only a secondary place in Christian hymn books with the main focus being on the vast array of other songs and hymns that had been written during the revivals (Old, 2002, 42, 43, 45, 47).

The Eastern Orthodox Church however continued, even through this time to hold the Psalms as primary. In some of the eastern churches, says Bonhoeffer (1970), memorizing the whole of the Psalms was a requirement for becoming a priest. The Eastern Orthodox church continue to use an ancient rite called “Kathisma” or seat. The psalms as shown in the psalter for prayer (Mitchell James 2011) are divided into twenty different Kathisma. They are spoken daily, evening and morning, with the whole Psalter being read most weeks and twice a week during Great Lent.

However, a few individuals in the western church rediscovered the gem of the Psalms as a primary song and prayer book for the church during the twentieth century. One of these was Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) who rediscovered the psalms in the darkest of places, Nazi Germany. Bonhoeffer spoke of the importance of protecting the psalms. He called them a priceless “treasure” (Bonhoeffer 1970, 25), for it is only this systematic day by day reading of the Psalms that one can truly find the psalms as a prayer book. He explained that when you read the psalms infrequently rather than in a regular rhythm, an individual can find the psalms daunting and unpalatable. But anyone who begins to read the psalms “seriously and regularly” can agree when they come across other kinds of written prayers with Luther. Luther wrote,

“Ah, there is not the juice, the strength, the passion, the fire which I find in the Psalter. It tastes too cold and too hard.” Luther (cited in Bonhoeffer 1970, 25)

Reading Bonhoeffer today encourages us to find this gem of reading the psalms once again. He wrote:

“Whenever the Psalter is abandoned, an incomparable treasure vanishes from the Christian church. With its recovery will come unsuspected power.” (Bonhoeffer 1970, 26)

Billy Graham is also another individual in the twentieth century and early twenty-first, who has encouraged the recovering of the primacy of the Psalms. He gives the example of his own devotional life as an encouragement for others to rediscover the importance of the psalms. Over many years he made it a practice to read five Psalms and a chapter from Proverbs every day. This meant that every month Billy Graham would completely read the whole of

both Psalms and Proverbs. He describes how the Psalms “tell us how to get along with God” whilst the book of Proverbs “tell us how to get along with our fellow man”. (Billy Graham, 2014 foreword).

Recovery of the Psalms through biblical scholarship, has led to Christians discovering again the history of psalms as prayer, not only through metric psalmody but also more contemporary Christian music psalms, put to music with guitars with easy tunes for people to sing (Old 2002, 56, 58). However, there is a move away from this process more recently due to the complications of copyright and the bible and psalmody having a only a very minor place amongst the majority of Christian contemporary songs in the twenty first century.

Throughout history, the primacy of the psalms as a song and prayer book for the whole Christian church has been discovered, lost and rekindled several times over. In contrast, in the Eastern Church this primacy has been more stable. In the early church the psalms were sung by the people and this type of singing continued for a few hundred years. But through the middle ages it became unattainable for the masses, being written in Latin and sung in very difficult choral pieces. During the Reformation the Psalms once again were released for the people to sing but psalm singing was lost again as a primary mode of worship with the great influx of hymnody during the revivals. However, during the twentieth century psalmody was again brought to the fore through such individuals as Bonhoeffer and Billy Graham, but is still to be fully rediscovered for the treasure that it is in the twenty first century among the majority of the Christian Western Church.

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Appendix

Example of Psalter readings for morning & evening worship

prepared by Anne Hibbard for use within Uniting Church

Day 1. Morning: Psalm 1-4	Evening: Psalm 5-7
Day 2. Morning: Psalm 8-10	Evening: Psalm 11-14
Day 3. Morning: Psalm 15-17	Evening: Psalm 18
Day 4. Morning: Psalm 19-21	Evening: Psalm 22-23
Day 5. Morning: Psalm 24-26	Evening: Psalm 27-29

Day 6. Morning: Psalm 30-31	Evening: Psalm 32-34
Day 7. Morning: Psalm 35-36	Evening: Psalm 37
Day 8. Morning: Psalm 38-39	Evening: Psalm 40-41
Day 9. Morning: Psalm 42-43	Evening: Psalm 44-45
Day 10. Morning: Psalm 46-48	Evening: Psalm 49-50

Resting in our Persevering God

Anne Hibbard

Prayer Network Co-ordinator for the ACC

In Luke 11:5-8 Jesus tells a parable that encourages us to persevere in prayer, and not to give up no matter how long it takes. How can we learn to persevere in prayer? I would like to suggest that our beginning point is not in trying hard ourselves but resting in *The One Who Perseveres*, who has never given up on humanity and who does not give up on us.

I would like to introduce you to my two dogs to help explain to you this first step in persevering prayer. Bonnie is an 11-year-old female Bichon Frise. When I take her on walks she follows along beside me peacefully even if we see another dog, cat or person. She looks to me to lead and has a stress-free walk. My 4-year-old male Snoopy Maltese/Bichon

Frise cross, is quite another story. When I've gone for walks with Snoopy in the past he's been highly on edge pulling almost all the time on the lead. If you like, he was taking me for the walk not the other way round. If he saw another dog even behind a fence he'd go crazy. Slowly I've been training Snoopy with the help of Doggy Dan (the-onlinedogtrainer.com) to focus on me and not what's going on around him. I'm helping him to see that I'm the leader and if I'm not worried he shouldn't be either. Slowly he's getting it. I'm using small steps with Snoopy. We start walking just around our front yard and when he's finally relaxed with a loose lead we venture forth into the neighbourhood. If he gets tense or wants to go his own way, we stop, walk in a different direction and when the lead is loose again we walk on. Because I'm persevering he's slowly getting it. Now we can walk right to the top of the hill and even walk past a yard that has a dog with reasonable success. We're still not

able to go on joint longer walks with Bonnie down to our beautiful lake nearby, but he's getting there.

I'm not giving up on Snoopy and God doesn't give up on us either.

Psalm 138:8a says

"The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever" **Psalm 138:8a NRSV**

Many of the times our prayers are filled with anxiety like Snoopy when he goes for a walk. We may feel worried at the slightest disturbance and get overwhelmed and run in all sorts of directions in our spirit. We forget that our Lord Jesus Christ is our captain, our leader, our King in our life. Instead of trusting him to direct our path and protect us on the way, we head off where we want to go and panic at the drop of a hat. Dear brothers and sisters: praise God. He comes to us and by the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. He perseveres with us as I have been persevering with Snoopy. He didn't give up on humanity when we sinned and turned from him in the Garden of Eden. And he doesn't give up on us personally, either. We have a God who perseveres and is changing us into a people who day by day, moment by moment, can abide in Christ, trusting him to be our Good Shepherd as we walk by his side. (John 10). Our confidence is not in our own capacity to persevere in prayer but our persevering God who is at work within us.

"I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus" **Philippians 1:6 NRSV**



Day 11: Morning: Psalm 51-53	Evening: Psalm 54-55	Day 21: Morning: Psalm 103-104	Evening: Psalm 105
Day 12: Morning: Psalm 56-58	Evening: Psalm 59-61	Day 22: Morning: Psalm 106	Evening: Psalm 107
Day 13: Morning: Psalm 62-64	Evening: Psalm 65-66	Day 23: Morning: Psalm 108-109	Evening: Psalm 110-114
Day 14: Morning: Psalm 67-68	Evening: Psalm 69	Day 24: Morning: Psalm 115-116	Evening: Psalm 117-118
Day 15: Morning: Psalm 70-72	Evening: Psalm 73-74	Day 25: Morning: Psalm 119:1-48	Evening: Psalm 119:49-96
Day 16: Morning: Psalm 75-77	Evening: Psalm 78	Day 26: Morning: Psalm 119:97-144	Evening: Psalm 119:145-176
Day 17: Morning: Psalm 79-81	Evening: Psalm 82-84	Day 27: Morning: Psalm 120-123	Evening: Psalm 124-128
Day 18: Morning: Psalm 85-88	Evening: Psalm 89	Day 28: Morning: Psalm 129-133	Evening: Psalm 134-136
Day 19: Morning: Psalm 90-92	Evening: Psalm 93-96	Day 29: Morning: Psalm 137-139	Evening: Psalm 140-143
Day 20: Morning: Psalm 97-100	Evening: Psalm 101-102	Day 30: Morning: Psalm 144-146	Evening: Psalm 147-150

Pastoral Care In A Diverse Church

Pat Noller

ACC Member & Emeritus Professor



Part 3 of the Keynote Address by Emeritus Professor Pat Noller at the 2015 ACC National Conference

Providing effective pastoral care to gays
Here I want to focus first on possible impediments to being able to provide effective pastoral care to a person, and because homosexuality is the “hot potato”, and raises a special set of issues, I will focus on that topic in my remarks. When I mention impediments to providing effective pastoral care, I am focusing on the impediments brought to the situation by the pastoral carer, whether a minister or a lay person.

I believe that there are at least six major possible impediments, and some of these ideas come from David Switzer's (1999) *Pastoral care for gays, lesbians and their families*.

1. Unhealthy family background

This is a difficult issue because not too many of us come from perfectly healthy backgrounds, and people who come from quite unhealthy family backgrounds can be good counsellors or carers. The problems come when the unresolved emotional reactions of the carer are hooked by the story that the person being cared for tells. And I'm not just talking about dealing with people who are gay, but about people reporting sexual abuse as a child, an abusive parent, an alcoholic parent or a neglectful or neurotic parent. Each of these situations can trigger emotions in the carer that are not appropriate to the context of caring for the person they are dealing with.

2. Homophobia

This word is not one of my favourites because of the way it is generally used. (I couldn't find the word in my older Macquarie Dictionary, but it was defined in the Compact OED as “having an extreme and irrational aversion to homosexuality and homosexuals”). Unfortunately, attitudes do not need to be extreme or irrational to be labeled homophobic in today's climate. Nevertheless someone who has an extreme negative attitude towards homosexuals would have a problem in seeking to be caring and compassionate towards a homosexual. Prejudice and anger are likely to be involved.

3. Heterosexual bias or heterosexism

David Switzer talks about the automatic response that heterosexuals are likely to have when faced with homosexuals and the homosexual lifestyle, and the difficulty we may have in understanding that people can make other choices and be involved in different lifestyles from our own. After all, the whole society, at least up till now, is organized on the basis of heterosexuality, and as Christians we believe that that was God's plan. The aggressive homosexual lobby that exists presently reacts strongly to these biases and objects to them, which is one of the reasons I suspect that they want gay marriage – to have a ‘piece of the main action’.

4. Stereotypes of gays

All heterosexuals are likely to have stereotypes of gays, both positive and negative. The problem with stereotypes is that we are likely to apply them to everyone we meet who fall into a particular category, such as an ethnic group, a religious group or even an age group such as adolescent or elderly, whether they apply to that particular person or not.

5. Lack of compassion or empathy

People who lack compassion or empathy are unlikely to be effective pastoral carers for anyone. We have to be willing to walk in others' shoes, to seek to understand where they are coming from and show them the love of God, preferably not in a patronising way. Some of my favourite Bible passages are Jesus' spirited conversations with women – the woman at the well and the Syrophenician woman with her talk about dogs getting the crumbs under the table. Both of these women responded positively. Jesus showed them compassion but also moved them forward.

6. Assuming that all people in a particular category respond in the same way or have the same experiences.

There is a belief in the community that people who are going through a particular experience all respond in the same way and can be dealt with in the same way. This belief is at the heart of assuming that alcoholics can best be cared for by other alcoholics, or that recently bereaved people are best cared for by other bereaved people. The problem is that those people are likely to assume that the other person's experience will be the same as theirs was. “I know how you feel” is not a caring statement and is unlikely to be correct. The carer cannot know how someone else feels, no matter how similar their experiences. They are different people with different backgrounds, different goals in life and different personalities. We need

to explore with them how they are feeling in their particular situation and not make assumptions.

Dealing with a young person who believes he or she might be gay.

At this point I want to move my focus to the issue of dealing with a young person who is having unwanted sexual thoughts and is concerned about the possibility that he or she might be gay.

An important factor to keep in mind is that agreeing to talk with a minister or pastoral carer and telling that person about this issue will have been a huge struggle. They would have been fearful about whether to reveal their concerns or not, and have been unsure about whom to tell. If they have been prepared to tell you and you have listened to their concern and accepted them as God would, then you will be in a very privileged position in that person's life.

It is important to remember that they do not need to be preached at. If you do preach at them or fail to listen to their concerns, you may well have lost both the young person and their family, and alienated them from the church for life. They also don't need to be told that they are imagining it, or that they are sick, perverted or demon-possessed. It is important that both the young person and the family hear that you, as God's representative, have a compassionate understanding of the feelings and struggles that are going on in the life of that family. There are likely to be so many issues and agenda.

To the extent that it seems appropriate to proclaim the Word, it needs to be balanced. It is important to make the point that sexual temptation is not sin. We can all be subject to sexual temptation but it's what we do about that temptation that is important. Also, a number of sins, including sexual sins, such as adultery and sexual immorality, which can take many forms, as well as having sex with men, are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10.

It may also be important to acknowledge, when ap-

propriate, the fact that the prohibitions in Scripture are against homosexual behavior, not necessarily same-sex feelings or inclination. A homosexual can be faithful to God by refusing to engage in the behaviours. Given the ethos of our age, however, denying oneself is not a popular stance. On the other hand, marrying a person of the opposite sex may not be the answer for the homosexual, either. I have heard some disturbing stories about those who tried this alternative, including from the wife of a Lutheran minister in the US who decided he was gay after several years of marriage and left.

We also need to remember, as Mark D. Thompson writing for the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Commission quotes Vaughn Roberts as saying that homosexuality is not just a hypothetical issue but it involves people who are loved and created and many of them are Christians, a fact that we need to take very seriously. Al Mohler has said that:

"The Church has often failed people with same-sex attraction and failed them horribly."

He goes on to say that, *"We must not fail them now by forfeiting the only message that leads to salvation, holiness and faithfulness"*.

I would counsel against going that far in an early interview. As I have noted before, we have to win the right for people to listen to us by first listening to them.

(Part 4, and the final part will be included in the September 2016 ACCatalyst)

References

- Mohler, A. (2014). *God and the Gay Christian: A Response to Matthew Vines*. Louisville: SBTS Press.
- Thompson, M. D. (Ed., 2015) *Human sexuality and the same-sex marriage debate*. Sydney: Anglican Youthworks.
- Switzer, D. K. (1999). *Pastoral care for gays, lesbians and their families*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.



John Dickson on the Bible

- exploring the inspirational narrative

Although not a doubter, I found this small volume (217 pages) very interesting and helpful, and I have no doubt that other long-time committed Christians would also find it helpful. Many Christians seem not to really understand the way in which Jesus Christ is the main focus of the Bible, including the Old Testament. Dickson begins his book with a short introduction about the extraordinary popularity of the Bible and sets out his main goal as giving “a sense of the whole biblical narrative and of the ‘theology’ that emerges from it”.

The book is divided into ten chapters, the first six of which focus on the Old Testament and the other four on the New Testament, but the focus is continually on explaining the links between the two. The first chapter focuses on the creation story and how everything that God made was good. Dickson sees the first few chapters of Genesis as an ode to creation and the Creator, but not as historical prose. This position may upset some readers, but is well argued. The second chapter focuses on the way that Adam and Eve defied God with consequent social, physical and spiritual impacts on themselves and the rest of the world.

The next four chapters focus on the main heroes of the Old Testament: Abraham, Moses, Joshua and King David. The significance of the promises made to Abraham that if he obeyed God and moved to the land God would show him, he would become the ‘father of many nations’ and would be blessed are discussed in detail and related to the ‘new heaven and new earth’ promised in the New Testament.

Moses and the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the law, and the way that the law has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension are dealt with in the next chapter, along with a discussion of law versus freedom. Finally, Joshua who led the Israelites into the promised land, driving out the pagan inhabitants is the focus. Here Dickson emphasises both the judgment of



A Doubter's Guide to the Bible by John Dickson

Zondervan Publishing
224 pages



God and his “incomparable love”. He argues that love and judgment often tend to go together as God in his love punishes the perpetrators of evil.

“Dickson sees the first few chapters of Genesis as an ode to creation and the Creator, but not as historical prose. This position may upset some readers, but is well argued.”

After David was anointed, God used him many times to save Israel and he is often seen as a Messianic figure, a thousand years before Christ. Dickson shows how God fulfilled the promise he made to David over that millennium, despite the fact that the reigning kings across the period tended to be “spectacularly sinful”. During this long period in Israel’s history, God raised up prophets like Isaiah who warned of judgment to come and also foretold the coming of the Messiah, “the suffering servant” who would come from the royal line of David.

The Christmas story is actually dealt with quite briefly but Christ’s life is dealt with in a long chapter, emphasising how his life, death and

resurrection fulfilled the Old Testament, particularly replacing, in a spectacular way, the Jewish Passover festival instituted by Moses to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt.

There is also a chapter on the growth of the church as Jesus Christ’s disciples and those who believed their witness set out to spread his message across the known world as recorded in the book of Acts. The epistles are summarised briefly in this chapter in terms of those who wrote them: Paul, James, Peter and John, or written to, in the case of Timothy.

The final chapter focuses on ‘recreation’ as the Bible moves from creation in Genesis through to the renewal of all things in Revelation, emphasising that Christians live in a far from perfect world, but because we know that death is not the end, we can look forward to being with Christ for eternity.

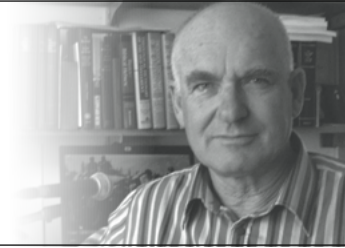
Dickson has also included a whole lot of incidental material that I found helpful. These included timelines for the historical material, book notes that provide suggestions for further reading and plenty of quotations from Scripture. He also deals well with the arguments of many sceptics. I am encouraging those in my Bible Study groups to read this book to help them understand how it all fits together.

Patricia Noller

Emeritus Professor Pat Noller is an ACC member in Brisbane. The third part of Pat’s 2015 ACC Conference address on Pastoral Care in a Diverse Church is on page 22.

The Concept of Identity

Ian
Clarkson



Iden- tity - who are we? From headscarves and jihadi-joining youths to gender dysphoria desperates, identity obsessives are doing more than identifying and shaping themselves; much more. Their leaders want to get inside our heads and transfigure western and indeed global society. Check the television advertisements, media articles, litigation cases, political agendas, yes and even denominational silences.

So, what are the identifiers of Christians? On a simple level for me, it's things like avoiding shopping on Sundays, church attendance, and symbolic actions like benignly removing a cup of coffee or other object someone has placed on a Bible, eschewing trashy verbiage like 'omg'. But there's much more of course.

Like the courageous Christian couple in IS-occupied Mosul who said, "our identity is to live like Jesus Christ". Or the determination 'silence is the enemy of truth', portrayed in the not to be missed 'God's Not Dead 2' movie.

Essentially it gets down to this. Our identity - and I exhort Christians here, is just this: actively holding true to any and all vows you have made to God. Inviting Jesus Christ into your life; baptismal vows, including parents over children; ordination vows; marriage vows. Any success our lives might achieve, flows from truthfulness to the vows we have made under God before men and women. That's it. Our identity is wrapped up in a lifestyle that exhibits and vindicates faithfulness to the promises we have made.

Identity is essentially relational and is located above our self.

We are not seeking to be somebody. That deadly virus infected at the fountain-head of humanity 'you will be like', has us scampering everywhere to be something, somebody. Human doings rather than human beings. Doing, trying to be somebody, or looking for novel tastes in food, sex and travel without Godly relationship.

Identity is in right relationships. And a right relationship is felt and enjoyed in right(eous) deeds that vindicate that relationship.

The person who tastes life with vigour and joy says; "for you, God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name." (Psalm 61: 5). Heritage, identity, and personhood are all indicated by keeping one's vows, and promises.

Failed here? Get up and go again. That's the grace of repentance.

Trust in the Lord

Proverbs 3:5
"Trust in the Lord
with all your heart and
do not lean on your
own understanding."

Our minds are a part of God's creative gifts in us.
He expects us to use them
for our spiritual and human development.

The Word says that we must
"Trust...with all your hearts."
There is no other way to "Trust in the Lord"
except with "all your hearts."
It's in our hearts that we experience
the Godly presence.
Therefore our heart experiences are different
from our everyday banal knowledge.
We truly experience God in our hearts.
It's the birth place of our emotions, inspirations,
and knowledge of God.

It is through our heart-warming experiences
that we can truly "trust in the Lord."
It is also through our "Joy in the Lord."
Trust means an active, continuing,
reliance in the Godhead.

Many so-called Christians today
try to grasp God by banal observation
but lack the authority of the Word
and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, we must trust our own understanding
as we humanly grow in knowledge.
When there is a conflict between
our human understanding
and what the Word is saying to us,
then we must always trust the Word first,
and do it "with all your hearts."

*Reverend Bob Imms is a member
of ACC Southern Cluster.*

The countdown is on

As I open up my diary to its week-per-page display I am inundated with a list of appointments, sometimes several in one day: dress fittings, menu tastings, marriage classes. Since August 2015, I've been living in that exciting, stressful, expensive stage of life – engagement.

Most of our wedding planning has been done together, with important decisions made by the both of us. However, on top of those collaborative plans, I have also been busy with the secret women's business of preparing my bridal ensemble. This has involved hours spent on Pinterest, many shopping trips with my bridesmaids and trial runs with my hair and makeup artists. So much time, effort and money put into making sure I look as beautiful as I could possibly be, right down to the tiniest details. Through this process, I've been reminded of the church and how she is described in Revelation 21 as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Rather than physical adornment, God's holy people will be clothed in righteousness, in spiritual purity. We are called to prepare ourselves spiritually just as a bride prepares for her wedding, so that

even the tiniest detail is beautiful and pleasing to our Bridegroom.

We are never, though, called to do this alone. Ephesians 5:25-27 (which will be read at our wedding) reminds us that Jesus himself is washing us and it is he who will present us to himself as pure and radiant.

I have a countdown app on my phone that tells me how many months, weeks or days until 'our big day'. Often during our wedding planning sessions we'll look at it and imagine how amazing it will be to call each other husband and wife. The reality of marriage, though, in all its fullness is something we're still waiting for – sometimes with excited, nervous anticipation and sometimes with mere impatience. The one thing we never feel is complacency.

As a people of God we are waiting for our big day, the day when Jesus comes on the clouds to take his bride to the great wedding feast. Do I eagerly anticipate this day as I do my wedding and marriage or do I sink into complacency, failing to grasp the wonder of what is to come? Waiting for the full consummation of

his kingdom is not without difficulties. We still live in a fallen world of pain and disappointment; we cannot yet enjoy perfect fellowship with our Bridegroom as we one day will in heaven. Even so, as the engagement ring on my finger serves as a promise that I will soon be a wife, the Holy Spirit in our hearts promises that we will one day dwell in the presence of our God forever.

Bella married Daniel Easterbrook on April 8th. We pray for God's blessing on their marriage.



REFLECTION

Eternal Dwelling

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling" (2 Corinthians 5:1-2).

One of the things I most look forward to when I get to heaven is that this body of sin will be finally done away with. The constant struggle with sin with its many failures and occasional victories is so tiring. My sinful nature, the devil and the world are ever assaulting me with temptations, accusations, fears, doubts, etc.

Can we really imagine this wonderful place? The devil

will be forever removed from us; the world with its many lusts gone forever; the evil that springs from our own hearts will no longer have a source! No more guilt, shame, anger, slander, hatred, idolatry, pain, tears, violence, war, divisions, pride, self-righteousness - just pure love eternally as it flows from the Father himself to us and through us.

The life God has given us as believers is good indeed but how much better will our lives be when we live in the fullness of everything that the Father has for us in Christ.

Are we there yet??

Devotionals are provided by Rev. Derek Schiller and are available via an APP for iPhone or Android. Each day a new devotion is provided. You can download the APP from the Website by following the link: <http://stgeorge.unitingchurch.org.au/wcms/acc-devotion-app/>



THIS IS THE ACC

Who we are

Within the Uniting Church context of a very broad range of theology and practice, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations is a nationwide body of congregations and individuals whose vision is confessing the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming the truth, renewing the church.

Our goals include

- Encouraging the confession of Christ according to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, as that faith is described in the UCA's Basis of Union.
- Providing resources, seminars and conferences to build up believers, develop their gifts, and equip them for life, mission and works of service.
- Encouraging Christian believers in earnest prayer through our Prayer Network.
- Encouraging younger members of the Uniting Church in their faith and participation.
- Communicating about current events and issues through our website, our national magazine *ACCatalyst* and local newsletters.

What does ACC do to help you?

The ACC conducts meetings, events and seminars to assist believers to

- grow in their faith and be active in prayer, worship and fellowship
- share their faith and respond to current issues in the church and the world

- develop their congregations as vibrant expressions of the Good News.
- experience God's Word in action through healing broken lives and reconciling relationships.

What we want to do

The objects of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations are:

- To confess Christ according to the catholic, reformed and evangelical heritage in the Basis of Union, by:
 - upholding the Scriptures' prophetic and apostolic testimony to Christ as the final authority for the Uniting Church's faith and life;
 - calling the Uniting Church to

determine matters of doctrine and ethics according to the teaching of the Scriptures and the faith as understood by the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;

- calling the councils and congregations of the Uniting Church to uphold the Basis of Union and Constitution;

- providing biblically-grounded leadership in partnership with other confessing movements;

- developing ecumenical partnerships for the more effective proclamation of the Gospel in our pluralist nation; and

- establishing national, state and territory bodies to implement the Charter as approved by the inaugural meeting of the Association, and seeking the renewal of the Uniting Church.

b) To undertake such religious, educational or other charitable activities which are incidental to the above objectives.

How to join us

Please consider joining the ACC.

Supporting Membership forms are available at: <http://www.confessingcongregations.com/assembly/members/individual-members/>

Membership rates for supporting members: Concession (single or couple): \$20.00 pa. (financial year basis) Full (single or couples): \$40.00 p.a

Contact (02) 9550 5358. email: accoffice@confessingcongregations.com mail: PO Box 968 Newtown NSW 2042

What happens next

- 18-20 August 2016:
Basis of Union Conference
SA ACC in Adelaide

- 12 September 2016
ACC National
Council Meeting

- 7-9 November 2016:
ACC AGM and National
Conference: Poatina, Tasmania.

ACC Resources List

All ACC resources (except the DVD resources) are available on the ACC Website: www.confessingcongregations.com

A selection of ACC DVD and video resources including the 2012 Conference presentations are available on vimeo; eg., Max Champion introducing the ACC: <http://vimeo.com/53983980> A limited range of earlier material is still published in Disc form, and all ACC Congregations have received ACC DVD resource material for their use.

Founding Documents

The Charter (2006)

Statement on Sexuality (2006)

Confessing Statement from the Executives of the Reforming Alliance and Evangelical Members within the Uniting Church (EMU) (2006)

ACC Brochures and Statements

ACC Vision and Goals 2007-2017 (2008)

Cross Cultural Commission Statement (2008)

The Church's Social Responsibility (2008)

Theological Declaration (2008)

Theological Declaration: Commentary and Study Guide (2009)

Abortion in the Australian Community (2010)

A Christian Response to Euthanasia and Medically Assisted Suicide (2011)

Marriage: An ACC Statement (2011)

Bible Studies

Bible Study: Mark ISBN 978-0-9804493-0-3

Bible Study: Galatians ISBN 978-0-9804493-1-0

Faith That Works: Studies in the Letter of James ACC Bible Study No. 3. Brian Edgar (2008) ISBN 978-0-9804493-2-7

DVD Resources

Conversations Series

No. 1 Conversations in Discipleship and Evangelism: A Study Guide with DVD (2010) ISBN 978-0-9804493-3-4

No. 2 The Hope of a New Heaven and New Earth: A Study Guide with DVD (2011) ISBN 978-0-9804493-6-5

No. 3 This is Love: A Study Guide with DVD (2012) ISBN 978-0-9804493-8-9

Devotional Booklets

Seeds For Harvesting Vol. 1 (2011)
– Rev Robert Imms ISBN 978-0-9804493-5-8

Seeds For Harvesting Vol. 2 (2012)
– Rev Robert Imms ISBN 978-0-9804493-7-2



From passion to resurrection



Risen
(2016) M

Starring:
Joseph Fiennes,
Peter Firth,
Tom Felton
Written by:
Kevin Reynolds
Directed by:
Kevin Reynolds

Risen had quite a reasonable cinema release before Easter this year and was no doubt helped by word of mouth. This is a helpful film to view and well worth seeing on DVD. If you watch it with non-Christian friends you can consider together some of the themes it raises. It is certainly one of those films that will help you to think long after viewing.

Joseph Fiennes stars as Clavius, a Roman Centurion and perhaps 'ancient day fixer'. He is continually given problems to solve and

soon after dealing with another zealot and followers, he is tasked by Pontius Pilate (played by Peter Firth, the lead from the BBC spy drama *Spooks*) to find the body that had vanished from the tomb or find out what happened to Jesus after his burial. Pilate is concerned about any implications for further rebellion or trouble.

Frank Morison (pseudonym of Albert Henry Ross) is well known for his book - *Who Moved the Stone?* (1930 and reprinted every few years) and this film has a similar investigative base in that certain possibilities are examined. Written by Paul Aiello, this is a solid and intriguing Hollywood style film. The script is respectful of the context, allowing the ideas developed to flow into telling the story of two men: Clavius and Jesus Christ.

The director Kevin Reynolds has made several well-known Hollywood films, including *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991) and *The Count of Monte Christo* (2002)

which highlighted Jim Caviezel's physical acting in a major role. Caviezel would go on to play Jesus Christ in *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). There is a certain orientation in Reynolds' movies toward the outsider or rebel character, and this continues with the somewhat world-weary Clavius, as the film explores his past and the challenges to his worldview that this new task provides.

The film was also known as *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, but perhaps to give a simpler and less religious title, *Risen* was chosen for release. One interesting factor in the development is that the film is seen as an "unofficial sequel" to *The Passion of the Christ*. It has certainly not had the same amount of publicity and controversy, but then *The Passion of the Christ* was a Mel Gibson directed film and Hollywood heavily promoted that film in church and Christian circles.

Peter Bentley is the National Director of the ACC.