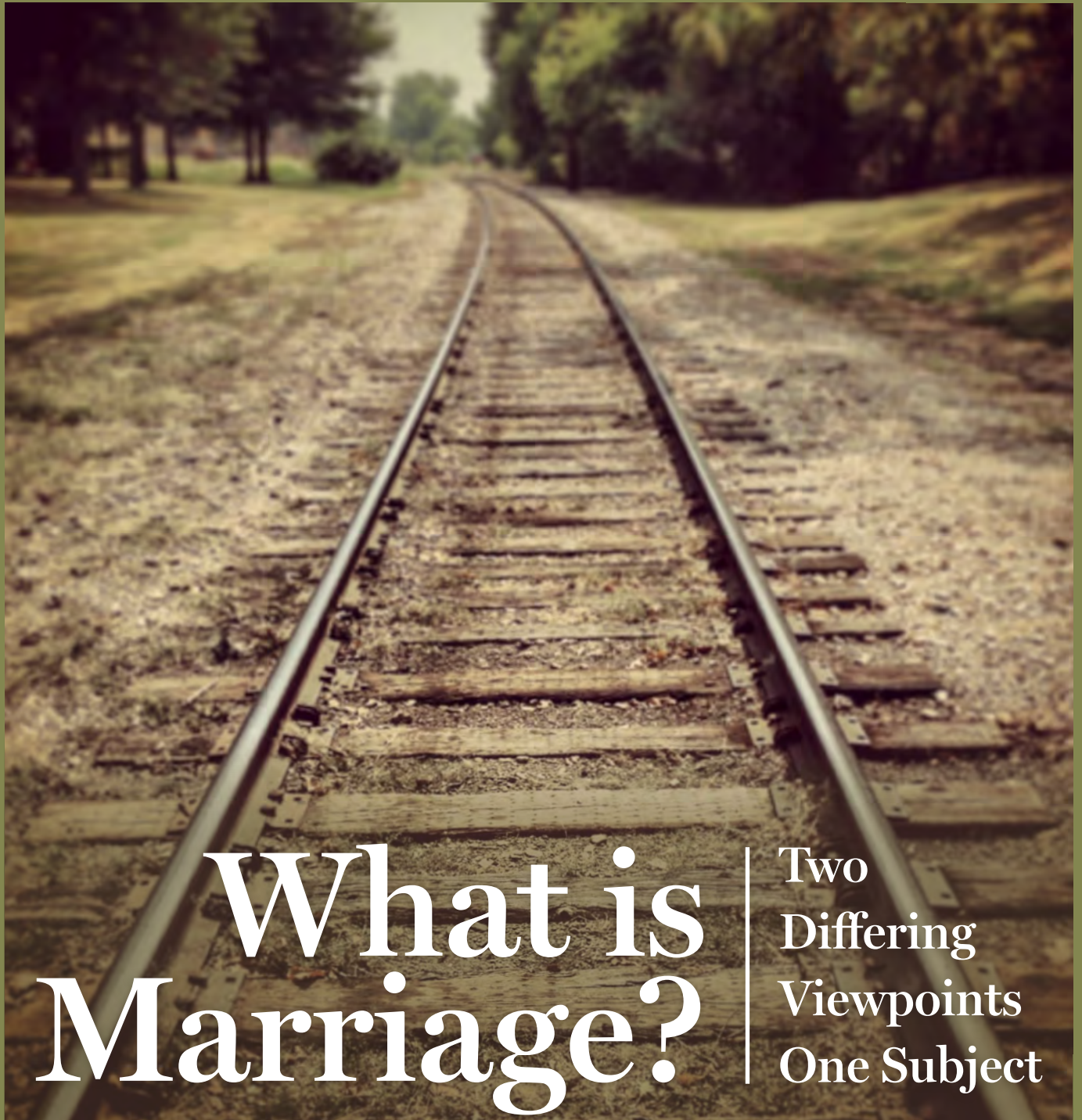


VOLUME 9 NUMBER 7 | September 2016

ACCatalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



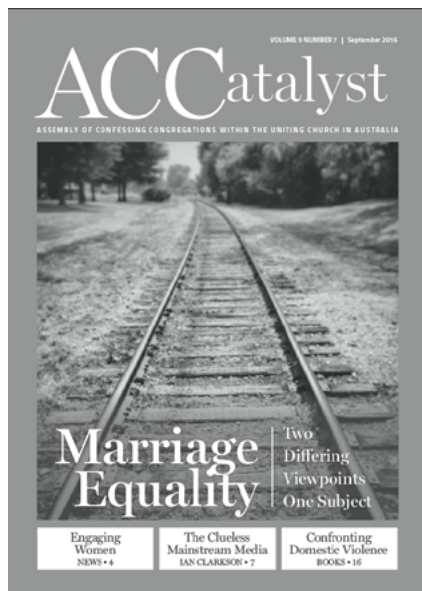
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EDITORIAL

Thank you

Dear friends, my editorial is one focussed on thanks. I am grateful for your generous Christian spirit as you have given toward the work of the ACC through our appeal and membership. I also have my deep personal thanks to all the members who have provided prayer and loving support over the last 3 months for myself and my wife Colleen following her severe stroke. Thank you to God for the daily and weekly provisions shown with Colleen's recovery, for our continued strength, patience and love and help to always trust in our Lord's mercy and peace.

Peace and grace,
Peter Bentley



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In Hot Water

by Robyn Painter

Pastor, Peterborough Uniting Church

On Tuesday morning I woke up and had a nice hot shower. It was a wonderful shower, in fact I could have got on my knees and thanked God for hot showers.

What was so special about that shower? It was hot! For the previous four days I had not had hot water because my hot water system had stopped working. Cold showers may be okay in Summer, but it was not pleasant for the middle of July.

But now, with hindsight I don't need to look back and think with misery about the cold water; I just feel glad about the hot and think about what a marvellous invention hot water systems are.

God never promises Christians that everything will go right in their lives. Bad things happen. Things stop working. As the 23rd Psalm reminds us, sometimes life takes us through the valleys. But what God promises is that we will not always be in valleys. Sometimes we'll have those times when life is great and things go right.

And the thing about valleys is, if we don't know what the bad times feel like, we won't really appreciate the good. A hilltop is a wonderful place to be if you've spent time in the valley. If you've never left the hilltop it's not that exciting.

And the best part is, whether life is good or bad, whether things work or they don't, whether we look forward to tomorrow or dread it, God promises to walk with us each step of the way sharing our journey with us. No problem is too big for him, and he knows the way out of every valley we might find ourselves in.



Hilary Sandeman

The Confessing Movement in the United Methodist Church in the USA provides some very interesting commentary in Happenings Around the Church, especially following the UMC General Conference (held every four years). Perhaps unsurprisingly they deal with similar issues that confront the UCA and our own ACC.

The following is from 'Happenings Around the Church' by Dr Riley Case, published as an e-newsletter 30 June 2016.

General conference holds the line on homosexual practice issues

While the United Methodist General Conference at Portland, Oregon, May 10-20 dealt with many issues, the one issue of concern for many church members is whether the conference would change any of our church's stands on issues relating to same-sex marriage and homosexual practice. The bottom-line report of homosexual practice issues is that the present stance remains as it has been: the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching; marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman; the church does not ordain nor appoint self-avowed practising homosexuals; no church funds are to be used to advocate for the acceptance of homosexual practice; pastors who conduct same-sex weddings are subject to charges.

Unfortunately, this does not mean that the church can now put this matter behind us so that we can concentrate on our mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. More controversy will face the church in days ahead but it should be understood clearly that The United Methodist Church in its beliefs as stated in the Church's Discipline stands for the traditional Christian understanding on human sexuality.

Confessing Movement urges patience; believes in a hopeful future for United Methodism

Reports in the media on the recent UM General Conference did not report one of the most important stories, mostly because it was not a part of the official proceedings. This story had to do with very important confidential conversations among some of the top leaders of the church during the General Conference as to how United Methodism can face its future with integrity. These conversations were initiated by Bishop Warner Brown, head of the Council of Bishops, and included leaders of the Love Your Neighbor Coalition, the group advocating the blessing of homosexual practice by the church, leading centrists, and leaders of the evangelical groups, Good News and The Confessing Movement.

While there have been numerous dialogues, discussions, and debates taking place in the church on matters surrounding human sexuality, these recent talks were different in that the participants seriously faced the crisis in The United Methodist Church. According to the participants there really was a sense of Holy Conferencing and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These conversations appeared to be leading to agreement that various compromise suggestions

such as "Live and let Live," or local option, or tweaking language in the Discipline would not be successful. Accordingly, there was the exploration of the possibility that perhaps some sort of division, or separation, or radical structural change was the best way forward.

This, of course, was a most radical proposition, and when the entire Council of Bishops was apprised of the direction of the talks there was reluctance to give wholehearted approval. Disrupting the (supposed) unity of the church seemed impossible. When the "private" conversations became public (secrets are hard to keep) the bishops were asked to give leadership, and with General Conference approval, proposed a plan to work through a special commission to carry on the conversations. This plan was approved. What has been reported is that the General Conference could not decide on matters of human sexuality and is turning the work over to a special commission. It would be more accurate to say that facing the reality of the church's crisis a special commission has been given the assignment to suggest a denominational solution which would respect the integrity of all the interested groups.

We have reason to believe that our Confessing Movement will be an important part of this commission. We were represented before by Dr. Maxie Dunnam, former president of Asbury Seminary, and Senator Patricia Miller, Executive Director of The Confessing Movement. We are strongly encouraging the bishops to continue these two persons on the Commission, as well as other respected evangelicals, so that the church can find a way forward with as little disruption as possible.

See the Confessing Movement



website: <http://www.confessingumc.org/>

How does the ACC engage with women's issues?

The hope for engagement with women's issues came from the ACC Conference in 2015. It was a tentative notion then and still is. Anne Hibbard and I came to the conclusion that it might be a good idea to move outside the ACC and see what was happening in this area in the wider Uniting Church.

Walter and I attended the 'UnitingWomen Conference 2016' 28th April-1st May at Wesley Kent Town Uniting Church, Adelaide. The last conference on women's issues that we went to was in the early 90's, called 'The Church made whole Conference - National Conference on Women'. We were pleasantly surprised by the more orthodox tone of 'UnitingWomen 2016'. This may have been in part a matter of the state which hosted the event.

(The 'Church made whole' was held in Melbourne.) It may also reflect a change of community attitude: the women who were so radical in the early '90s were expressing their deep hurt at their earlier experience (pre-1950s) when it was customary for some country girls to be made to leave school when they turned 14.

The Conference theme was *'Sharing Stories of Hope'*. Some highlights:

- Khadija Gbla from Sierra Leone, a victim of female circumcision and former Muslim, who described the healing nature of her relationship with Christ.

- Denise Champion, an aboriginal pastor, who told a story about two gum trees with a deep connection to each other which were separated by a road. Her question was: 'How do we use the road positively?'

Vicky Balabanski (Director of Biblical Studies, Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, Adelaide) presented a Celtic knot in which 'we', the community of the Trinity and 'others' are bonded together. This led to some correspondence about the relationship between Christ and the Church as Bride-to-be in our in-between situation of the broken creation and new creation, and also about women and the image of God.

Katherine Abetz is a member of the Mid-Northern ACC Cluster in Tasmania.



Rev Amel Manyon, the minister of our Northern Districts Dinka Speaking Faith Community

OPINION

Evangelicalism: a word worth keeping

Michael
Jensen



Evangelicalism

I greatly appreciated Michael Jensen's article on Evangelicalism: its meaning 'good news' and its history. However immediately after describing the good news as "justification by grace alone through faith alone", he goes on to present what 18thC Evangelicals believed was necessary, based on David Bebbington's account, to participate in God's salvation. Firstly, they needed to be born again. Now that was difficult for Nicodemus a teacher of the Jews to get his head round, how much more difficult for sinners, described by Paul as dead in their trespasses and sins (Col 2.13). Secondly, they had to repent and believe the gospel. This again would seem to be a big ask of someone who is spiritually dead and a flagrant contradiction to the gospel as previously defined.

Yes, the gospel includes Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection as he claims, but he omits any mention of that which is also gospel, our new life in Christ, which makes repentance and faith possible. This new life in Christ was so real to Paul that he speaks of our old self being crucified with Christ (Rom 6.6) and claims that it is no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2.20).

I would expect a closer evaluation of the great preachers of the 18thC would reveal that the centrality of their preaching was the gospel in its entirety: Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the power of God for the salvation of all, who by grace, believe, (Eph 2.8/9, Rom 1.16/70). This revelation of God's love for saints and sinners is the power that brings sinners to faith and sustains saints in their faith. This good news, this gospel is the basis of the defining

claim of the reformation: that we are saved by faith in the work of another not by any works of our own.

Unfortunately evangelicals today, as many have in the past, internalised the gospel, so that God's work in us, the fruit of the gospel, has usurped God's work for us. Our faith is thought to have saved us, rather than Christ's faithfulness; our good works understood as a cooperative work of humanity and God taking precedence over Christ's one good work: his life of love and obedience for us, so much so that for most, good works, either implied or as fact, are seen as a necessary adjunct to God's saving activity in Christ.

Jensen exposes the shortcomings of fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and liberalism, but fails to recognise the speck in his own eye: giving precedence of that which is of most importance what God has done for us in the gospel, over that which is secondary, our response. The real conundrum facing the church today is: has the gospel lost it power, or have we diminished the gospel's power by selling it short?

Yours in the everlasting gospel,
Rev. Peter McIntyre (ret), NSW.

The Basis of Union: A continuing cautionary tale

Dear ACC members,
I think the time has come to tell something of our journey with the Presbytery of Tasmania and the Basis of Union.

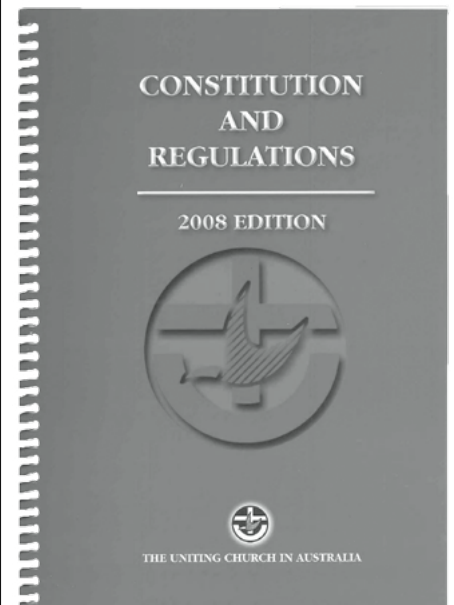
First, a bit of history. Changes to UCA Constitution, ratified after the 2009 Assembly, included the addition of Clause 39 (b) which has the effect of removing the obligation of the Assembly to refer matters of vital importance to other councils for concurrence. After this we placed a symbol of the Basis on our table at Presbytery meetings to say that the ACC thinks this addition is

contrary to the Basis of Union. This caused controversy and eventually our Presbytery applied to the former Assembly General Secretary, Terence Corkin, for a ruling on whether this change was constitutional. He replied to the effect that the Basis is not binding on councils, only individuals. A tacit admission that the addition is contrary to the Basis! I have submitted an article on this matter to Uniting Church Studies.

Meanwhile the Presbytery of Tasmania has instituted a 'focussing session from the Basis of Union' before the business meeting and our recent weekend live-in Presbytery gathering had 'Mission and the Basis of Union' as one of the optional sessions. If we can do it, why not other Presbyteries? Sometimes we have to push through the hostility. Our Uniting Church has a Basis of Union. The Constitution Clause 2 states: 'The Church, affirming that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end, lives and works within the faith and unity of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, guided by its Basis of Union'.

Katherine Abetz, Tasmania

Note: In the original Basis wording, the language of 'she' for the Church derives from the biblical imagery of the Church as the Bride of Christ and Ephesians 5: 21-33. What does this say about proposed changes to the Marriage Act?





PUBLIC SQUARE

BY PSEUDO-MAXIMUS

A Pilgrim People

'Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the hostility from sinners against himself on the cross ... so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.' (Hebrews 12:3)

Courage is integral to faith. Who can doubt it after listening to the lessons? Many faithful men and women have suffered terribly for their bold faith. All experienced conflict and upheaval because of the inescapable presence of God in their lives. 'It is,' as the writer to the Hebrews said earlier, 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (10:31). Faith involves courage. This is not what we might have expected. Christians often treat faith in God as the path to happiness and security. Others see 'faith in oneself' as the key to popularity and success. ... However, it is what we should expect if we are serious about following in the footsteps of the 'great cloud of witnesses' (12:1) and the 'pioneer of our faith' who, having gone before us, now surround us as a community of hope. We stand in a line of brave folk who put their faith in God's eternal purposes. Genuine faith commits us to oppose idolatry and inhumanity, knowing that, despite the apparent triumph of evil, God's purposes shall not be ultimately thwarted. The 'heroes of faith' acted in the belief that the future awaiting humanity will be free from sin and death. So they were free to stand against those who mocked God's good-and-gracious will. Some suffered and were martyred. Others overcame

the odds. All of them, at great personal cost, put their faith in God the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer of the world. Faith is not immune from severe testing. In Hebrews, the faithful know what it means to face insurmountable odds. Military leaders (Gideon) are outnumbered. Public servants (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) face horrible deaths for political disloyalty. Others suffer brutality, death or exile. Across the ages they show us something of the courage of faith. None had an easy life. All are remembered as faithful servants of God who 'encourage' those who follow. However, we mustn't live off their capital. Retelling the story of their bravery isn't an excuse to avoid our present calling. Hebrews recalls the 'great cloud of witnesses' (12:1) in order to call us to live by faith. Is this what we really think the church is called to be in modern Australia? I suspect that we are more comfortable with a 'faith' that leads to self-discovery and 'believing in ourselves' than one that stands against idolatry and inhumanity. Personal growth, not costly service, is now the object of faith. We prefer a faith that meets our needs to one that involves hardship, temptation and suffering. We may be thrilled by 'Christian's' courage in Bunyan's story of 'The Pilgrims Progress' to the Eternal City (loosely based on Hebrews). But none of us wants to be a person of faith in that sense! We would rather walk along a secure path than go down a 'long and winding road' toward an unseen destination. Conflict, suffering and martyrdom seem unreal in a society that fosters instant happiness and personal success. Not for us a lifetime of faith that requires perseverance, courage and hope! ... There is much for us to learn from this 'cloud of witnesses.' They help us re-trace our family history which is full of flawed ancestors who believed in the merciful purposes of God in the

face of danger and death. They urge us to re-tell the Grand Story of Israel's faithful 'pioneers' who looked towards Christ so that we and others may be emboldened to live by faith and hope. There is plenty to worry about with the declining influence of the Christian Gospel in public life. Values that sprang from Christian faith to uphold human dignity, protect the vulnerable, welcome the stranger, and demand integrity in public life are increasingly held in contempt. The clamour to enshrine in law the rights of individuals is matched by strident demands that religious people, and Christians in particular, be excluded from public debate.

The long period of Christendom, in which Church and State shared in shaping a relatively humane social order, is rapidly drawing to a close. In this situation a church that carefully re-traces its family history will expect to be opposed.

That is because faith in God unsettles our naive faith in our own goodness. At the same time, it fills us with hope for the future that God has promised to Israel and fulfilled in Jesus. We must learn what so many faithful people, now and in the past, know from experience. Faith in God's eternal purposes means having courage and perseverance to resist evil while living in hope.

The courage to live by faith isn't something we have to do in our own strength. But we can't make ourselves brave or hopeful by willpower. This is a common mistake among pious believers who think that God's plans depend on the strength of their faith. When God doesn't answer heartfelt cries for healing, this shallow 'faith' often turns to anger or despair.

Notice that Hebrews doesn't say that God acted because of their faith! Nor are they praised because their faith was perfect. Far from it! Moses murdered a man, David seduced Bathsheba, Rahab was a prostitute etc. They are remembered as flawed recipients of God's grace whose confidence in God's present and future plans enabled them to participate in the Great Story of his redemptive work.

Some of them saw God's future in their own time. (11:29-34) Others saw the future despite being afflicted, homeless, persecuted, imprisoned or murdered. (11:35-38) All of them, as well as the disciples, were encouraged to look away from themselves to the One truly faithful man – the crucified, risen and ascended Jesus described here as the 'pioneer and perfecter of our faith.' (12:2)

Like our pioneering forbears, who prepared a future for us by persevering in face of adversity, Jesus blazed a trail for those who would come to faith in God's costly-and-triumphant love. He is the 'pioneer' of the church's faith. He prepared a future for the church by enduring suffering, humiliation and crucifixion in anticipation of 'the joy that was set before him' (12:2) – the joy of celebrating God's victory over evil. ... We are invited to join the epic pilgrimage which stretches back to creation and forward to its perfection. As disciples who look ahead to Jesus Christ, we are called to join runners like Abraham and many others, who set out long ago in hope.

When we become fainthearted and tempted to abandon our faith, strength is to be found in considering the hostility that Jesus suffered at the hands of those who crucified him (12:3). He suffered for all who follow so that we may know that our trials have already been experienced and overcome by him. Therefore, we don't have to worry whether our faith is strong enough. Like those numbered among the cloud of witnesses, we are imperfect folk whose faith is 'perfected' by the One who was crucified, has been raised from the dead and is at God's right hand. Our faith is 'perfected' by God's grace in him.

Faith in God's eternal purposes, promised to Israel and embodied in Christ, is a gift of grace to be gladly received. The invitation to be part of the cloud of witnesses is also a summons to challenge actions and policies that mock God's will and trample human dignity. These pioneers cheer us up-and-on when we are discouraged by what seem to be insurmountable obstacles.

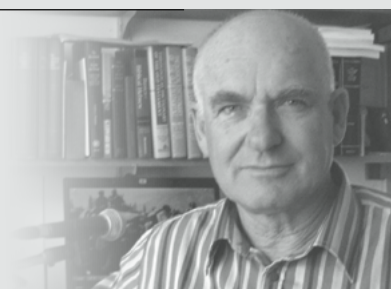
In the challenges that the church faces today, we may find courage in those who have gone before, and supremely in Christ, the 'pioneer' who 'endured the cross, disregarded the shame, and triumphed as Lord of heaven and earth. May we, like them, look for signs of God's presence in protecting the vulnerable, welcoming the stranger, upholding integrity,; not being intimidated by strident efforts to ban Christian faith from public debate. Above all, let us delight at being part of this epic pilgrimage, which stretches from the creation of the world to its perfection. May we 'be of good courage and hold fast to that which is good' knowing that Christ has gone before us to perfect our faltering faith and assure us of the magnificent future that awaits us in the eternal purposes of God.

IAN CLARKSON

Why the mainstream media doesn't get it!

Ian
Clarkson

UCA Minister - South Australia



"Why doesn't our media report the persecution of Christians?", asks Greg Sheridan (*The Australian*). He struggles for an answer concluding "In many other parts of the world persecution of Christians is a daily part of life. But you won't hear much about it at all among the hordes of conformist zeitgeist prattlers in the Western media. That's one bit of reality that just doesn't fit." That last sentence is heading in the right direction.

While a senior Islamic figure advocates the death penalty for homosexuals with not a mention in the media, Archbishop Porteus provides a reasoned document supporting Christian marriage, (which is currently Australian law) and was threatened by the anti-discrimination tribunal. What?

So, why is this? Sheridan: "The Western media cannot bring itself to describe, much less make moral judgments about, the savage persecution of Christians." Fear of Islam? A perverse notion that Christianity is still the oppressor? Inter-faith dialogue? Getting warmer. The clue is in the starkly obvious. Unprecedented silence in the post-Christian world.

And there it is!

How can a pluralist-dominated media report Christian's choosing death rather than converting to Islam? Christian women submitting to decapitation rather than staining themselves sexually with Muslim jihadists? That is untouchable to a media hell-bent on promoting and nourishing sexual licence and hedonistic lawlessness. The SBS coverage with Tom Ballard's commentary on the 2014 Sydney Mardi Gras was vile, labelling all who opposed homosexual marriage as zombies whose death symbolised good overcoming evil. How can the media report this global persecution which is simultaneously a declaration of real Christianity and an expose of the fake pluralist liberalism? They can't.

Ironically the media is more afraid of the Bible than the Koran!

The media actually fears the Bible and Christianity. It must ridicule, expose and linger over its failures and heap slander on the Body of Christ. Reporting courageous martyrdoms overflowing in the Middle-East and Africa disturbingly confronts their idea that all religions are equal. Our media cringes before the truth claims of the Bible. Perhaps some of its leaders were once Christians but for too long willfully pursuing lawlessness cannot find liberating repentance, so must blot out and seek the destruction of the judgment which rises within the conscience. Or perhaps never embraced the Gospel of cleansing grace.

But, we should take this to ourselves. Beware lest we compromise the law of God which brings just and deserved judgment upon our sins! Come afresh to Christ; to his table of communion in repentance and joy. Resist the redefining of holy law by the new Pharisees of legalistic political correctness. When he graciously whispers, let the Holy Spirit do His examination and lead us more deeply into the Saviour. The place the media hates but in which the believer delights. Repugnance to one but rest to the other.

Ian Clarkson is a UCA Minister in South Australia.

Gender & “Marriage Equality”

Postmodernism in Western philosophy, [is] a late 20th-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.”

One of its key parts is a rejection of the metanarratives seen to be largely sufficient to understanding the world up until the 20th Century. By implication it has also meant a rejection of traditionally-held definitions. Logically it has required a deconstruction and reconstruction of concepts that has meant the demise of any absolute truth.

Against this background, it is unsurprising that when a Tasmanian bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, circulated a brochure about marriage for the attention of Roman Catholic parents, this action drew complaints of sexual discrimination. It's not that the church had suddenly attacked the notion of same-sex marriage. It had simply *restated* what until quite recently, Australian Christians (not just Roman Catholics) and most Australians holding to non-Christian faiths OR indeed no faith, would have accepted as the traditional definition of marriage. Not only that but the Bishop's statement was in line with the legal definition of marriage in Australia.

Suddenly this metanarrative, seen to be largely sufficient to understanding marriage over a long time, has become both offensive and discriminatory. To do this, the term 'marriage' has been deconstructed and the concept reconstructed so as to deny any sense of absolute truth regarding the term.

Objectors to the existing definition of marriage “believe a person's gender or sexuality should not affect their legal rights and responsibilities under Australian marriage law...We've always held that marriage equality will be achieved when supporters work together regardless of faith, party, race or sexuality.”

The Marriage Amendment Act (2004) “Marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. Certain unions are not marriages. A union solemnised in a foreign country between: (a) a man and another man; or (b) a woman and another woman; must not be recognised as a marriage in Australia.”

You will notice that there is no mention in the legal

definition of marriage above pertaining to “faith, party, [or] race” as mentioned by Australian Marriage Equality folk. While faith, party and race need not factor in a discussion about marriage, to name these PC hot button issues in an argument around 'marriage equality' seems designed to muddy the waters.

Demonstrably gender is the only real part of the traditional marriage definition with which such advocates disagree. If one disagrees that marriage is defined as “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life...[and]...Certain unions are not marriages”, then the only alternative is to redefine marriage.

It is fair enough that same sex marriage advocates state that they “believe there is no place in the marriage equality debate for prejudice, anger and polarisation.” However, if it is they who are wishing to redefine marriage, who is doing the polarising? ...those who hold to the traditional view or those who wish to change it?

While claiming that the brochure is “a particularly vicious attack”, the complainant also accused Archbishop Porteous of being guilty of child abuse and a hate crime against gay students and students raised by same-sex couples”. Are lobbyists for same-sex marriage innocent of the prejudice and anger of which they claim the traditionalists are guilty?

Gender has also become the subject of a similar kind of redefinition in more recent years. For example: “Biological Gender (sex) includes physical attributes such as external genitalia, sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and internal reproductive structures. At birth, it is used to assign sex, that is, to identify individuals as male or female. Gender on the other hand is far more complicated. It is the complex interrelationship between an individual's sex (gender biology), one's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity) as well as one's outward presentations and behaviours (gender expression) related to that perception, including their gender role. Together, the intersection of these three dimensions produces one's authentic sense of gender, both in how people experience their own gender as well as how others perceive it.”

One can say, I am a woman inside a man's body (as many have), and sought to bring their Biological Gender into line with their internal sense of gender. Despite possessing male physiology, one can say 'I identify as a woman' and that is all that is required. This

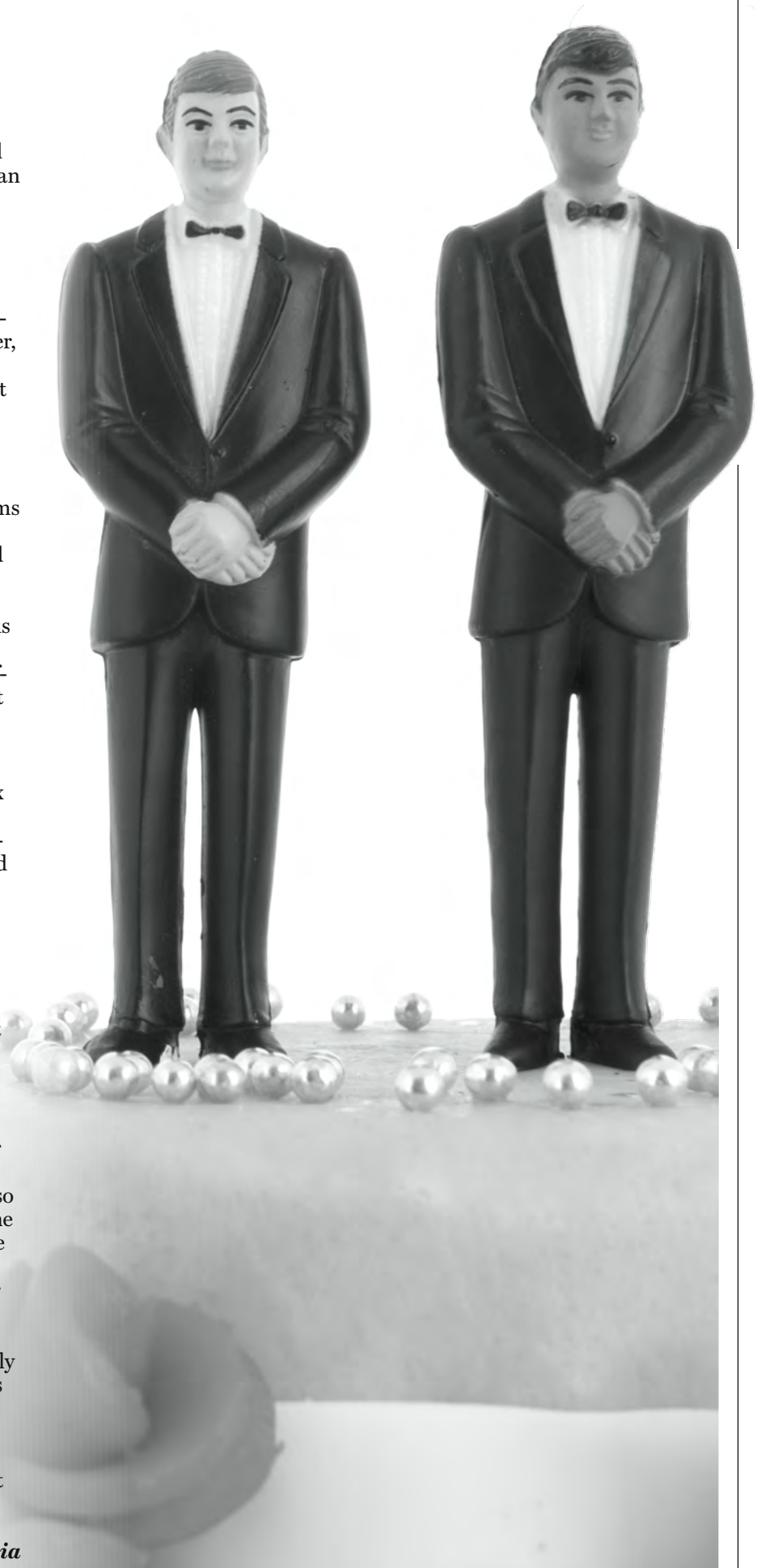
suggests that gender assigning at birth is somehow less real than one's internal sense of gender identity. As one American University webpage says... *"Please Note: It is very important to respect people's desired self-identifications. One should never assume another person's identity based on that person's appearance. It is always best to ask people how they identify, including what pronouns they prefer, and to respect their wishes."*

Why is gender identity something that depends *only* on the person's internal sense? Why is it not OK for me as a Caucasian male to identify as Chinese? Why is it not OK for me as a human to identify as Cat? This inconsistency seems to query the nature of reality. Again, a standard which seems to have managed to assist humanity's thinking about this topic for millennia has been redefined.

Recently the controversial Safe Schools Program has erupted into rowdy public discourse. The program states that it "offers a suite of free resources and support to equip staff and students with skills, practical ideas and greater confidence to lead positive change and be safe and inclusive for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families." Likewise the Australian Government states that this program "aimed at creating safe and supportive school environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people by reducing homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools."

As a teacher in schools for decades, and a school chaplain I can tell you that there's a lot of discrimination and bullying in schools. Gender issues are but one of many in this malaise. Yes it is absolutely true must that we create safe and supportive school environments for all students, but this program only addresses one issue. And it appears to do so tangentially, by educating children in the redefinition of gender. Why not educate students in the innate value and worth of each person? Let us fund training for teachers to conduct values, ethics, and philosophy classes. Let us help our students to deal positively and appropriately with all difference not just some. Let us build values in children's lives like compassion, joy, peace, patience, kindness, decency, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Surely no one in their right mind can argue with those.

Dr David Pohlmann is the Interim minister at Ashburton UCA in Victoria



Marriage: Complementary or

A Secular View

If the redefinition of the word 'marriage' was a matter of human rights, we could ask: how can we live with our homosexual friends respecting their choices while protecting the foundational unit of mother-father-child.? However here we have a proposition that suggests this issue is much more than just a matter of individual human rights.

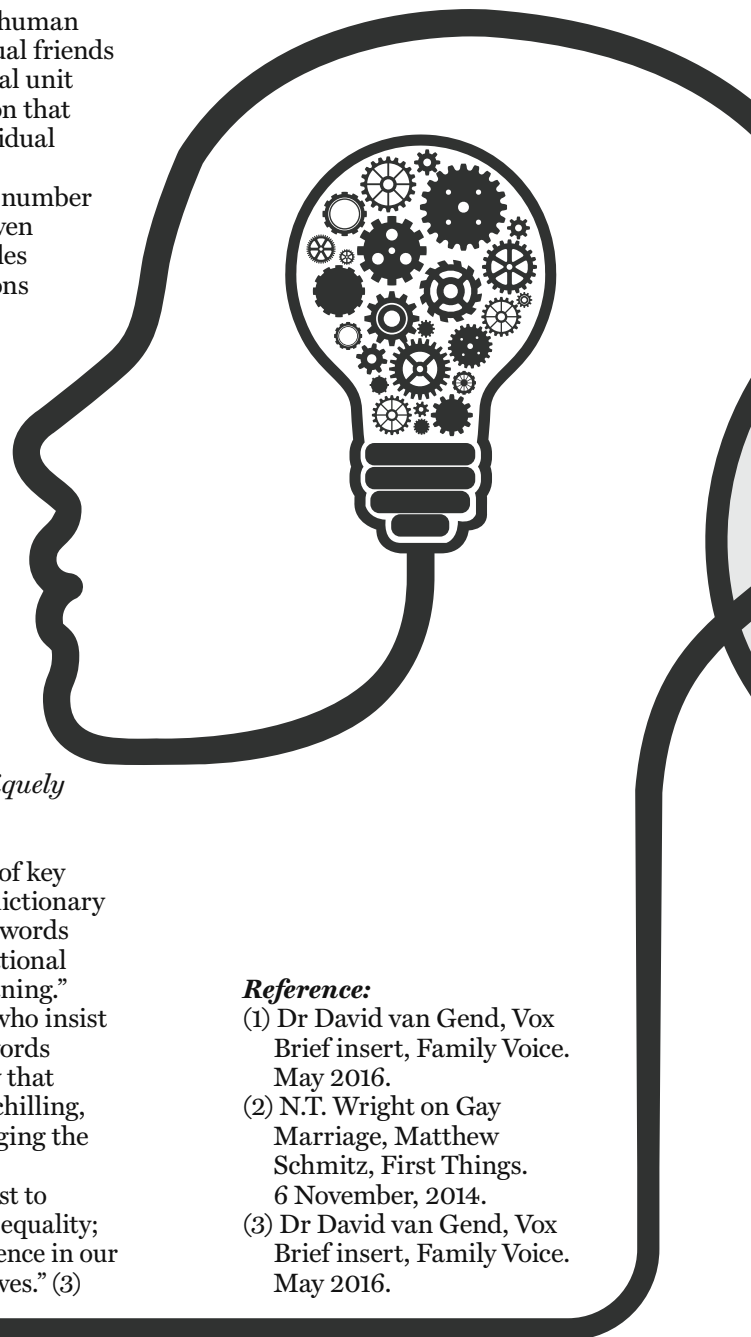
According to the ABS Australian Social Trends 2013, the number of same-sex couples is very small- only 1% of all couples. Given that laws have already been changed so that same-sex couples already enjoy the same benefits as any other couple, commonsense must now question why the push from 1% to redefine marriage and parenting for the 99%?

There is something seriously wrong here and again common sense can be excused for suspecting that beyond individual human rights there must be a much bigger, less obvious hidden agenda here. This makes sense when you stand back from the emotive nature of the debate to realise the magnitude of what is being proposed. For thousands of years across all cultures the word 'marriage' has been between man and woman. Monogamy has not always been respected but through history even polygamy has recognised the givenness of maleness and femaleness.

Without any Christian presuppositions this is how it is across all cultures. Dr David van Gend, President of Australian Marriage Forum has confirmed this by saying, *"The truth that marriage is given to us by nature and affirmed by every culture, because man and women are uniquely empowered to nurture new life."* (1)

N.T Wright has said, "When anybody---pressure groups, governments, civilisations---suddenly change the meaning of key words, you really should watch out. If you go to a German dictionary and just open at random, you may well see several German words which have a little square bracket saying 'N S', meaning National Socialist or Nazi. The Nazis gave those words a certain meaning." --- Wright points out that in the same way, there are those who insist that when we talk about assisted suicide we shouldn't use words like 'suicide' and 'killing' because those sorts of words imply that you should not do it. He continues, "I find that sort of stuff chilling, the attempt to change an ideology within a culture by changing the language." (2)

Former Prime Minister John Howard has said that the quest to redefine marriage, ---"is not an exercise in human rights and equality; it is an exercise in de-authorising the Judeo- Christian influence in our society, and any who pretend otherwise are deluding themselves." (3)



Reference:

- (1) Dr David van Gend, Vox Brief insert, Family Voice. May 2016.
- (2) N.T. Wright on Gay Marriage, Matthew Schmitz, First Things. 6 November, 2014.
- (3) Dr David van Gend, Vox Brief insert, Family Voice. May 2016.

Interrelated views

A Christian View

In an interview with J. John of Philo Trust, N.T. Wright explains why he views the complementarity of the sexes as essential to the Christian story, and to marriage itself.

"With Christian or Jewish presuppositions, or indeed Muslim, then if you believe in what it says in Genesis 1 about God making heaven and earth---and the binaries in Genesis are so important---that heaven and earth, and sea and dry land, and so on and so on, and you end up with male and female. It's all about God making complementary pairs which are meant to work together. The last scene in the Bible is the new heaven and the new earth, and the symbol for that is the marriage of Christ and his church. It's not just one or two verses here and there which say this or that. It's an entire narrative which works with this complementarity so that a male-plus-female marriage is a signpost or a signal about the goodness of the original creation and God's intention for the eventual new heavens and new earth.

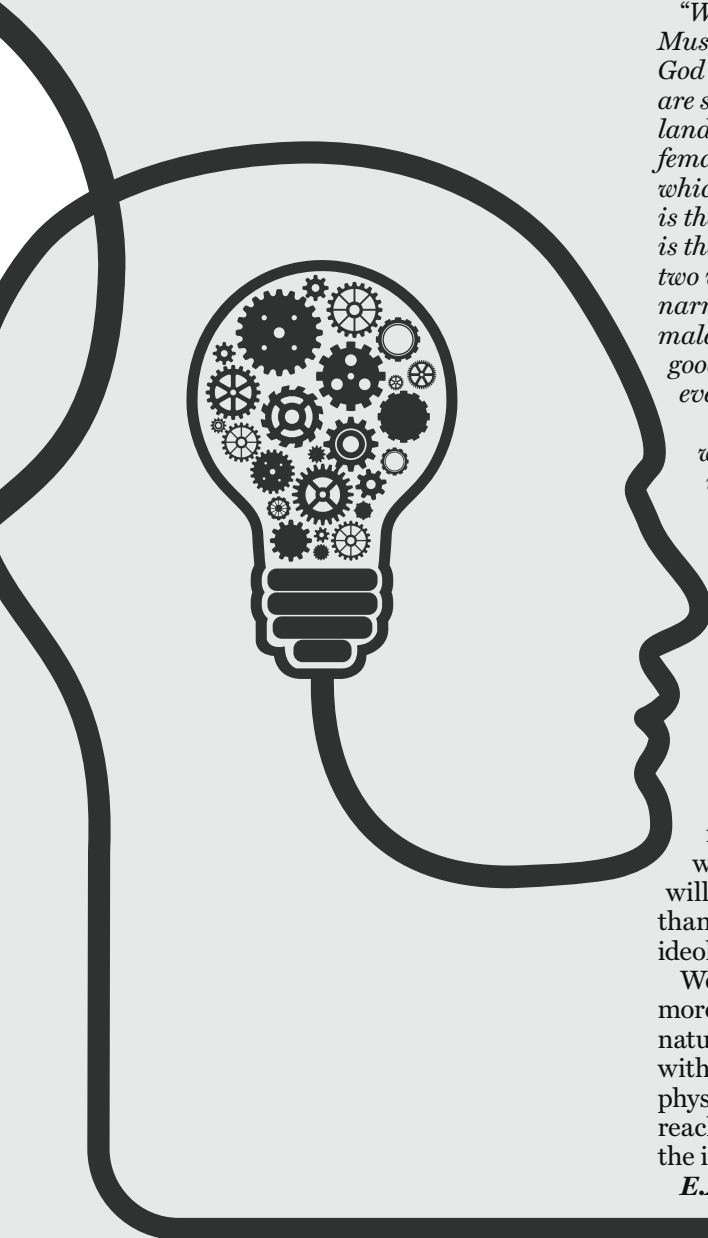
If you say that marriage now means something which would allow other such configurations, what you're saying is actually that when we marry man and a woman we're not actually doing any of that stuff. This is just a convenient social arrangement and sexual arrangement and there it is---Simply at that level, I think it's a nonsense. It's like a government voting that black should be white. Sorry, you can vote that if you like, you can pass it by a total majority, but it isn't actually going to change the reality---All the press is on-side, most of Parliament's on-side, and people are saying---get this---that unless you support this, you're on the wrong side of history."

Wright concluded by pointing out that ironically it was none other than Communist, Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 who had originally said. "History is on our side and we will bury you." Wright claimed that this was nothing more than a rhetorical smokescreen. In other ways we could call it ideological brainwashing, brash social engineering or bullying.

We conclude that marriage between man and women is more than a convenient social construct. It is a complementary natural moral law built into the created order and to mess with it is a bit like messing with the ecological balance of the physical environment. Not to respect the creation has far reaching consequences. In a similar way to fail in respecting the institution of marriage can only lead to social dysfunction.

E.A. (Ted) Curnow May 2016

[Continued...]





A Prayer for Sexuality and Marriage

Loving God, although we have often failed in our love
for you and in our relationships with others,
with humble hearts we thank you for your mercy
and love poured out towards us in
Jesus Christ.

Lord who created us male and
female,
we thank you for the
complimentary
rhythms of life and for the purpose
of sex.

Help us to regard gender and sexuality
as your sacred gifts so that we don't
trash our instincts and affections
by being slaves to self desire or
to passions that exploit others.

We thank you that in the mystery
of marriage two become one.
We thank you that you planned the family
as the foundational unit of society so that
we could live together in loving company.

Lord be especially with those who are single parents
and with those people gifted to remain single.
Where marriages are broken or unhappy, forgive us.
Where there is hope, fan again that first love.
Where there is no hope strengthen and comfort people
with your everlasting love.

We pray for people deeply affected by the
traumas of social disorder, domestic violence,
sexual abuse, alcohol or drugs.
We pray for adolescents exploited by a sexualised society,
for those who struggle to understand themselves
and who battle with their feelings and impulses.
Lord as you were tempted from different directions
empower all of us to face subtle temptations,
to surrender our secret desires to you
and with patience and strength to choose that which is good.

Lord where there is confusion, depression or emotional stress
give wisdom to those with whom we
can share our troubles and bring hope and reason
into hopeless situations, in Jesus name,

AMEN

*Rev. E. A. Curnow's writings can be accessed on the ACC website in
the Resources Section: [http://www.confessingcongregations.com/
resources/devotional/practical-pastoral-ted-curnow/](http://www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/devotional/practical-pastoral-ted-curnow/)*



The Real Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Peter
Bentley

ACC National Director



It is now often commonplace to read about the **Wesleyan Quadrilateral**, though John Wesley did not use the term himself. It is generally agreed that these four sources were the basis for his public ministry and in particular, the way he developed his theological conclusions. These four sources were first referred to as the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” in 1964 by United Methodist ecumenical theologian and scholar Albert C. Outler in a collection of Wesley’s works edited by Outler and simply entitled John Wesley. The four areas are:

- **Scripture** - **Tradition**
- **Reason** - **Experience**

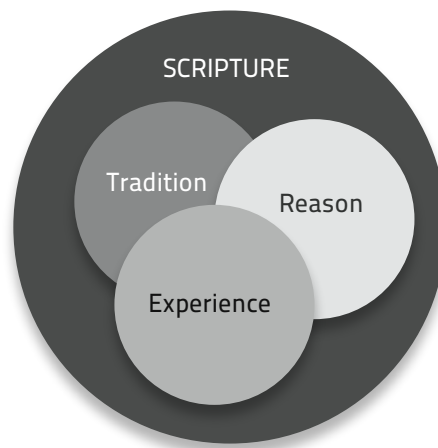
Scripture refers to the inspired and sufficient written word of God, the 66 canonical books of the Bible. Upon this foundation church traditions are adopted which relate fully with the biblical text, and those which are inconsistent are (hopefully) discarded. Reason is received as a gift from God intimately related to being created in the image of God, and as human beings we experience the reality of God’s love, mercy and grace.

It is interesting to note the reflection of Albert Outler on his formulation, “There is one phrase I wish I had never used: the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. It has created the wrong image in the minds of so many people and, I am sure, will lead to all kinds of controversy.”

Over time, various images have been used for the quadrilateral - four equal squares has been a significant one. The problem here is that the Quadrilateral is seen as “equilateral,” and all four “sources” for authority and decision-making are depicted as equally weighted. This was never a more disturbing image than the Maslow pyramid model of hierarchy - in this image, one is hard pressed to

work out what is the top, though in progressive Christian circles one does not have to guess too hard.

I believe a good image showing the best intent is that based around circles, with scripture as the main circle and the other parts in smaller circles inside - scripture being the centre and connector; the overarching source of our revelation. Scripture is to be viewed as the foundation on which the other sources are built.



Where are we today? I believe the latest Uniting Church Assembly confirmed that experience is now the cornerstone for many Uniting Church delegates, and it is personal experience - not the experience of the church or in the context of Wesley - the conversion experience of God’s love.

It was evident in much of the debate and discussions during the plenary sessions, but especially during the times to consider homosexuality and same- sex marriage.

Scripture is marginalised as there is now a standard viewpoint among some progressive Christians that as the Bible does not explicitly exclude same-sex marriage then it must be okay today because the experience of progressive Christians allows it.

Tradition is expanded to include a variety of different religious sources and certainly not limited to the tradition of the Church.

Reason is not related to prayer for wisdom and discernment in relation to the conscience, but rather humanist science and the best of

human rationality is proclaimed.

And finally Personal experience is linked to a simple re-writing of the Bible as the basis for the quadrilateral toward one’s own personal ideological theology: “this is my experience so it must be right”.

In essence, the 14th Assembly had a tendency to focus on personal story and experience, usually with a secular base in order to highlight the perceived need to revise the Church’s position on marriage, including the right to perform the marriages of friends (if legislation changed in Australia), and the validation of one’s personal relationship by being married in the church.

It is very difficult to have a discussion using Scripture as a foundation when this type of personal experience is the context, so what can we do?

Well, we can simply keep proclaiming the truth as evangelical members did at the 14th Assembly, often resulting in derision and judgement, an irony that pseudo-tolerant people were of course not able to see.

We need to keep helping our members understand what is the right basis for their theology and true right relationships. Many ordinary members are sadly becoming more marginalised in their local congregations, particularly as liberal progressive ministers play up their own experience and supposed knowledge. We can all play a role through our own reading, the use and dissemination of the excellent Christian resources around now, especially on marriage (the ACC website has a wealth of material). We can also help people to come back to focus on the Bible and the church and tradition as properly understood, with reason related to discernment and wisdom and experience validated by the Bible, rather than experience being validated by our own experience. Above all returning to the centrality of Scripture will help people to focus again on Jesus Christ who calls us to be one in unity, rather than the God of diversity in unity.

Peter Bentley is the National Director of the ACC.

Pastoral Care In A Diverse Church

Pat
Noller

ACC Member & Emeritus Professor



Part 4 of the Keynote Address by Emeritus Professor Pat Noller at the 2015 ACC National Conference

Pinciples for Counselling Gays
The Irish Presbyterians in 2006 set up a list of principles for counseling gays and I am going to move on to talk about them now. They argue that confidentiality is paramount. It is never appropriate to pass on to someone else what has been told to you in confidence, without that person's permission. Only with his or her permission may it be appropriate to pass information on to a professional to whom you are referring the gay person.

The second point they make is that quick prayers and "Bible verse sticking plasters" should be avoided. Working with people, whatever their issue takes time, patience and commitment. Many people have been hurt, often permanently, by glib one-line answers that deal with their issue at a very superficial level, and do not hear or acknowledge their pain.

It is also important for the pastoral carer to be aware of his or her own sexual brokenness, and the issues it causes for them. Self-righteousness is the last thing that is needed in this situation. It is also necessary to avoid stereotypes and accept the person as they are. Every person's experience is different.

In addition, these Irish Presbyterians argue that we should be careful that the person is not ostracised by us or anyone else. Even the lost sheep needs to be welcomed into the fold and needs to feel safe there.

Pastoral carers must also be prepared to refer the person to a professional, preferably a Christian professional if one is available, if specialised counselling is needed. Sometimes it may be difficult to acknowledge that a person needs more specialised help than we can provide, but in the best interests of the person we should refer them on.

The next principle enunciated by these Irish Presbyterians is to encourage a person to set personal boundaries and to be accountable to you or a mentor. This suggestion presumes that the person has reached a stage where they are wanting to change their behaviour and to live in line with God's Word. It may take several (or more) sessions to reach that point, but they may be prepared to

take a first small step such as avoiding situations where they are tempted to indulge in homosexual fantasies or behaviour.

It is also important to make clear that our failures are not final. We can make a new start. A few years ago there was a lot of work done with alcoholics on relapse prevention. The problem was that alcoholics tended to believe that if they relapsed (i.e., had one drink) then they would very quickly spiral into full-blown alcoholic behaviour. The point of the relapse prevention focus was to encourage them to immediately start again with their program of abstinence and to try to stick to it each time they relapsed.

The final point this group focused on was that counsellors or pastoral carers must also be prepared to acknowledge that the same principles apply to heterosexual sin. We may struggle at times but failures are not final and we can start again with the forgiveness of God.

Opening a conversation

Switzer presents an interesting example of how one might start a conversation with someone gay (or really anyone) who comes seeking help.

DS: What is it that has led you to come to see me?

Client: I'm gay

DS: It sounds as though your being gay has something to do with your being here. Can you clarify that for me, please?

(Alternative inappropriate response might be "You poor thing!" "That's terrible" "Being gay is a sin, you know" "Let me show you what the Bible says".)

DS: But what is the reason you've come here to tell me that?

Client: My mother wanted me to talk with a minister about it.

DS: But now that you're here, what's important for you to talk about?

By taking this patient approach, the carer/counsellor finds out a lot about what is happening for this young man and for his family.

Switzer also presents goals for an initial interview. It is important to find out what they want from the interview as happened in the conversation we just discussed. Otherwise, we are likely to be relying on preconceived notions.

You may also need to help him or her identify other undisclosed needs apart from, in this case, wanting acceptance from parents.

He also suggests that the carer assist the person to understand himself more clearly. What does he want? How long has he felt like that? Why does he want that? How important are God and the church to him or her? The carer needs also to help him or her make responsible decisions about his or her behaviour. And keep in mind that by modelling the love of God to them, they may become more aware of their need for God's grace.

What do gay members need to hear?

They need to hear that they are still loved by God and that his love has not changed. They need to know that you appreciate that it has taken courage for them to tell you about their struggles and that you appreciate the trust that they have placed in you. They also need to know that you are willing to listen to their struggles and that you want to understand what they have been going through.

What would Jesus want to say to the gay community?

Of course Jesus can only speak to the gay community through his followers – people like us. In an article on the Church Leaders website and attributed to Newspring Church, “Five things Jesus says to the Gay community”, the following points are made:

1 First, **I LOVE YOU**. I have to admit that it took me a while to come to the point of realising that Jesus loves gays just as he loves other sinners, like Zacchaeus or the woman at the well, a message that is often drowned out by the noise of rebuke and censure.

2 Second, Jesus would say that **he understands rejection**, having been rejected and then crucified. What's more, the crowd who loved him on Palm Sunday may have been, at least in part, the same crowd that shouted “Crucify him” less than a week later.

3 Third, Jesus would say that **he understood temptation**. After all, as I noted earlier, Scripture tells us that he was tempted in all points like we are – but without sin. Many years ago I saw a program on TV that depicted the temptations of Christ. It was different from any version that I had seen before, because it showed Jesus in a brown robe actually struggling with the temptations. I think I had always imagined Jesus in a white robe virtually flicking the temptations off. As I thought about that story, I realised that if Jesus “was really tempted in all points as we are”, then he almost certainly would have struggled.

4 Fourth, according to this article, Jesus would say, “***I want more for you***” and point to the divine plan of marriage between a man and a woman. The reason that God clearly defined marriage and sex is because he wants the best for us. On the other hand, as I've said before, heterosexual marriage is unlikely to be the answer for a gay person.

5 Fifth, ***Jesus would assure them of his loving presence***. The fact that we are going against his will does not mean that he deserts us, or gay people. Jesus can wait for people to come to him. As he said, “Come to me those of you who are bowed down with the heavy load of sin and worry that you are carrying, and I will give you rest.” He will wait patiently, drawing you to himself.

Finally I want to finish with a passage from Ephesians 4 that reminds us of how we should treat one another as Christians and even more so, how we, as pastoral carers should treat those in our care. One of my granddaughters asked me what my paper for this conference was about. I told her the title and she asked, “But what are you going to say?” I told her that I thought I would say that it doesn't matter how diverse the church might be, if people need pastoral care they should receive it in a way that is in keeping with the great love of God.

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were also called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4: 2-6)

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Counselling Christian Women *on how to deal with Domestic Violence*

In this book, Lynne Baker reports the results of her doctoral research that explored the experiences of Australian Christian women suffering in a marriage in which they were victims of domestic violence. Her focus is mainly on the experiences reported by the women in interviews with her, and, having changed their names for the sake of confidentiality, she presents many of the comments they made.

While the 20 women interviewed were all Christians, they came from various denominations, age groups and educational levels and had suffered from different types of abuse including physical, sexual, emotional and economic. Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse reported by the women, but verbal, physical, social and financial were also regular experiences of the women. In addition, it is important to realise that many of the women were victims of more than one type of abuse. By the time of the interviews many had left their marriages, and some had left their denominations, although they had put up with the abuse for many years.

The stories they tell are very poignant, and the book is full of descriptions in the women's own words about how they were treated and how they experienced that treatment. For some, however, the treatment they suffered within their churches, particularly from the clergy only served to reinforce the abuse and increase their misery and their tendency to blame themselves for what they were suffering.

Nevertheless, many were able to find support within their congregations, or in their small groups, if they were permitted to attend them. In some churches, women were blamed for the abuse because they were presumably not accepting completely their husband's headship and their need to submit to that, irrespective of how he



Counselling Christian Women On How To Deal With Domestic Violence *by Dr Lynne M Baker*

Australian Academic Press (2011)
288 pages

behaved. Of course, abusive husbands also blame their wives for their own bad behaviour, further reinforcing their guilt.

For some, however, the treatment they suffered within their churches, particularly from the clergy only served to reinforce the abuse and increase their misery and their tendency to blame themselves for what they were suffering.

Baker consistently relates the women's stories to available research in the area, including the well-known work on the "Cycle of Violence" that includes tension (walking on eggshells), explosion, and loving contrition that may involve expressions of guilt and remorse on the part of the perpetrator, along with peace offerings in the form of gifts.

There is also a fascinating chapter in which the women report on how their faith in God and in his goodness helped them to cope with their situations and gave them the strength to plan a better situation for

themselves and their children.

In the final section of the book the women provide advice to other women as well as to the clergy. The advice to other women includes maintaining their faith in God, seeking help, refusing to accept the abuse and realising that separation is an option. Advice to the members of the clergy includes listening to the victim and believing their story, being supportive, demonstrating love and respect, not promoting male headship in abusive relationships, and confronting the perpetrator.

I would recommend this book for any clergy or other professionals who are dealing with spouse abuse in their congregations or in their work. I think it could also be useful for women who are victims themselves, as it may help them to realise that they are not alone and their experiences are not unique. The book may also help them to see that many women have made the break from an abusive relationship for their own sakes or for the sake of their children, and have survived to tell their story. Although the media tend to focus on the cases where the victim, and sometimes even the children, are murdered by abusive husbands or partners, it is important to acknowledge that many are able to leave and start new lives.

Patricia Noller

Emeritus Professor Pat Noller is an ACC member in Brisbane. You can read the final part of her 2015 ACC Conference address on pastoral care in this edition of ACCatalyst.

For help Lifeline provides initial assistance call: 13 11 14

The Sufficiency of His Grace

2 Corinthians 12:9

**“My grace is sufficient for you,
for my strength is made perfect
in weakness.”**

Here are wonderful words
that we can meditate on day and night.

God is offering us something very special.

It is “my strength” and “my grace”
that he offers us.

These special gifts are for me,
and all members of the Body of Christ.
What wonderful good news for us.

Now we must appropriate it for ourselves
by not coming to him in our fullness of knowledge
but in our utter dependence upon him.

It is only through his grace
that we can appropriate these gifts.

We do not have to remind ourselves of our weaknesses.

We are continually mindful of them.

They can weigh us down so often
and cause us to question the truth of the Living Word.

God’s message to us is
that we should not let this happen.
Remember the words “my strength”,
that is God’s strength,
“is made perfect”.

We do not have to turn
our human weaknesses into our strength.
God takes them and makes them “perfect”
through his “strength.”

We could never do this ourselves.

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



Married Life

Sometimes now, it still seems surreal to believe that I am married. In a relatively short time, God has changed my situation from singleness to being permanently united to my husband. The wedding day is over but the marriage is just beginning.

In this season as a new wife, I have discovered the wealth of online resources written by Christian women. The vast majority of the ones I've come across are homemakers, and therefore the advice largely centres around marriage, motherhood and housekeeping. I have found many of them very encouraging. A few of these blogs, however, reflect a trend in some evangelical circles in which traditional gender roles – the husband as the breadwinner and the wife at home keeping house – are held up as the sole way to return to true masculinity and femininity. To some extent, I have the heart of a traditionalist. The idea of wearing a pretty apron while preparing good home-cooked meals and keeping the home warm and inviting appeals to me. In a future season, God may call me to stay at



home and care for my children, a profoundly important ministry. Yet, my work outside the home is deeply fulfilling, indeed I see it as part of my present calling – and it's financially necessary at the moment.

To gain some biblical insight on the issue, I turned to the most detailed description of a wife in the bible: Proverbs 31. The thing that struck me is that although this woman works hard to serve her family, she is clearly engaged in work that extends beyond the home, as she buys fields, plants vineyards, and makes and sells linen

garments. This wife of noble character doesn't resemble the stereotypical 1950s housewife as closely as we might think.

So then, should Christian wives model their lives on the Proverbs 31 woman by starting up some sort of home business? To insist on this rather than the role of homemaker seems to miss the point. In one of the marriage books I've read recently, Kathy Keller (The Meaning of Marriage, T. Keller & K. Keller. Hodder & Staughton 2011, p.185-186) suggested that although the roles of husband and wife as 'servant-leader' and 'strong-helper' are presented clearly, the Bible says relatively little as to how these roles play out in real life. Whether my work is in the home, the external workforce or a combination of both is not the main issue. As a Christian woman whatever work I may have is a gift I can offer first to God, but also to my husband and any children we may one day have. I am now called to be the 'ezer (helper) as Eve was to Adam and he is to love me as Christ loved the church. This attitude of devoted service, me to him and him to me, seems to be at the heart of Christian marriage.

Bella Easterbrook

REFLECTION

Faith

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. He is the one who designed it, wrote it, established it, built it and he is the one who will finish it off. He did this at the cross. Then, raised from the dead, he sat down victorious at the Father's side where he rules over all things. Through his work of salvation Jesus has authored and perfected our faith.

If we think of our faith as something we can make

ourselves, or strive to achieve, or convince ourselves of, then 'our faith will be in our faith'. Our trust will be in our ability to convince ourselves that it is true. But we can't, if our faith is something we build ourselves then we will end up crushed and disillusioned because we have doubts, fears and hard times.

But when we have faith in Jesus (the faithful one) then our faith is not in ourselves but in him, and by the Spirit, he gives us the ability to trust God in the first place.

Fix your eyes on Jesus, who will carry the good work of our faith to completion.

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 *ACC Catalyst* 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:

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

iii) calling the councils and congregations of the Uniting Church to uphold the Basis of Union and Constitution:

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

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

vi) 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

- 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

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Willem Dafoe on location in Tasmania in *The Hunter* (2011)

The Theatre of Tasmania

I thought it was appropriate to consider some Tasmanian films given our first conference outside the mainland. These two films in particular, provide an excellent visual feast in terms of the natural beauty and wilderness areas around where ACC will gather for its annual community time.



The Tale of Ruby Rose (1988) PG

Starring:
Melita Jurisic,
Chris Haywood,
Sheila Florence
**Written &
Directed by:**
Roger Scholes

One of the most intriguing Australian films I have seen is this classic gem from Tasmania. It was made in an infamous era of film-making; the 1980s when a good deal of rubbish was produced, and unfortunately many interesting films were overlooked.

It was the first and only feature for Roger Scholes, who was born in Launceston in 1950, and went on to harness a long portfolio in the documentary field, especially in the Tasmanian context. There are certainly links to a documentary style as it is a study of a young woman in the 1930s who uses stories to help her deal with being alone and often isolated as the rest of her family are often away hunting and trapping in the Central Highlands. The story it is based on a personal experience that

was related to Scholes' by an older Tasmanian woman.

The making of the film was itself a monumental journey for most of the crew, and the filming around the Walls of Jerusalem in Central Tasmania are integral to the uncompromising and often brutally stark storyline. A vital aspect that most critics missed was the underlying Christian theme of light versus darkness, with good confronting evil, and seeking a way to cleanse the difficulties of the past, toward a redemption that enables a new life. It is a strong and visually striking film that brings the Tasmanian wilderness to life.



The Hunter (2011) M

Starring:
Willem
Dafoe, Sam
Neill, Francis
O'Conner
Directed by:
Daniel
Nattheim

While this is a vastly different film in terms of its modern-day setting and themes, there are also some

features in common, especially the use of and focus on the Tasmanian wilderness. *The Hunter* is based on a book of the same name by Julia Leigh and was filmed in the Hobart area and the Central Plateau, adjacent to the Walls of Jerusalem. This is a film full of Tasmanian issues; ecology, protests, and centrally, the search for the missing thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger. Other related themes include corporate greed which is connected to the perceived preciousness of what the tiger's blood and 'venom' can provide.

Willem Dafoe plays the hunter, a professional killer, tasked with 'bagging the tiger', and bringing specimens back for analysis. Like other hunters he is drawn to question his role, and the film raises issues about the ethics and values of not only his life, but everyone he encounters.

It is perhaps a surprisingly interesting film that leaves one questioning, perhaps wondering what was the real intent and purpose. It certainly shows another marvellous tourism scape, and along with a wide range of films, is available to see on DVD from the Village collection when one stays at Poatina.

Peter Bentley is the National Director for the ACC