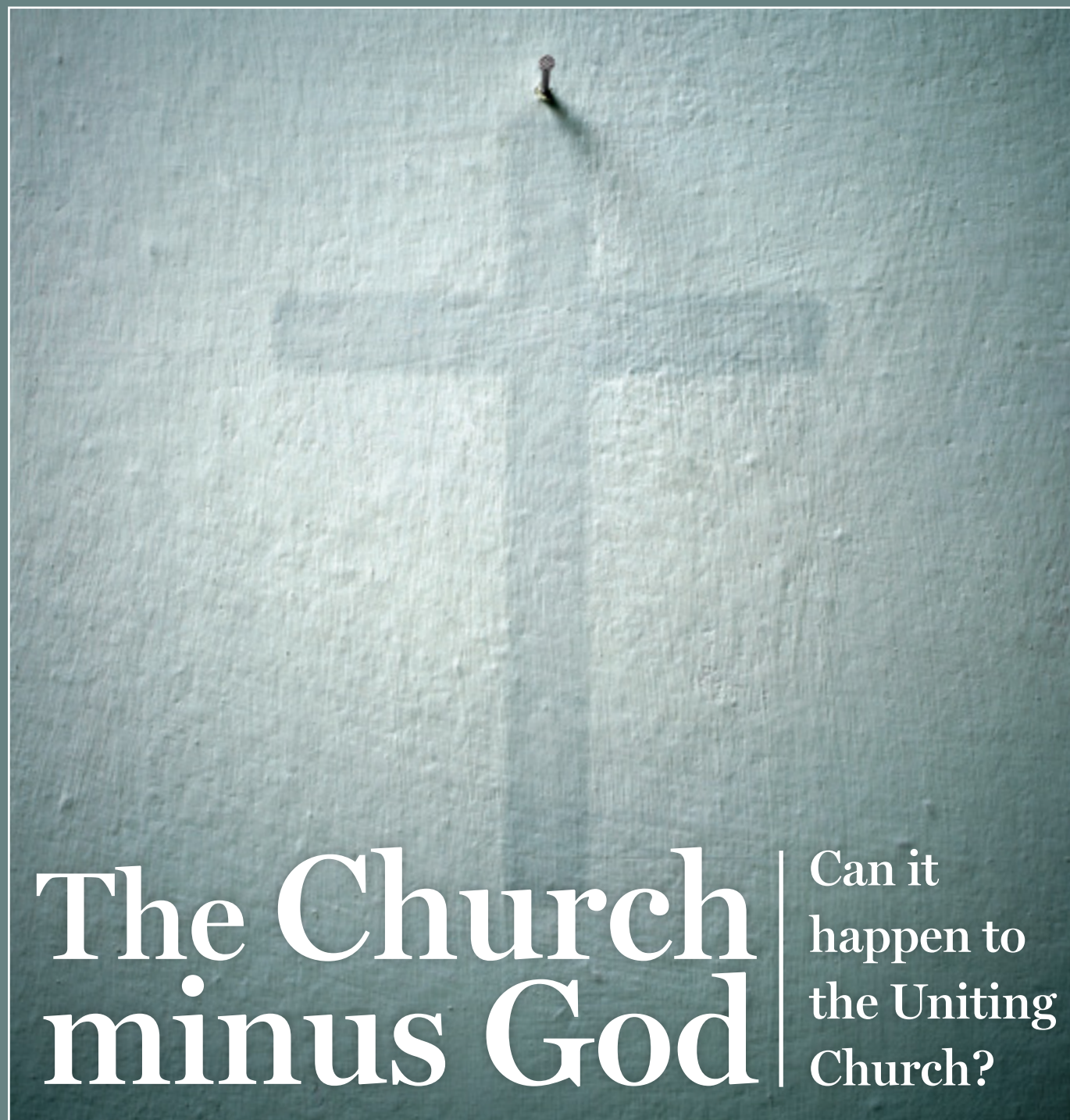


VOLUME 9 NUMBER 8 | December 2016

# ACCatalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



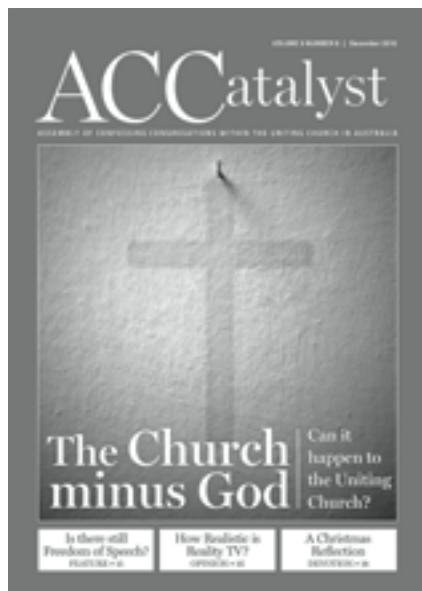
## The Church minus God

Can it  
happen to  
the Uniting  
Church?

Is there still  
Freedom of Speech?  
FEATURE • 15

How Realistic is  
Reality TV?  
OPINION • 16

A Christmas  
Reflection  
DEVOTION • 18



Cover photo - iStockphotos

## EDITORIAL

# It's your ACC

I am aware that sometimes detractors of ACC state that we are obsessed with sexuality and marriage issues. Certainly if one reads our publications we have a good deal to say, but then in reality, so do those who seek to revise our present understanding of marriage and gender. In fact if you look at TV, see a movie, hear political commentary or indeed engage in any conversation, it is difficult to escape from representations about marriage.

ACC wants to help people understand why marriage is important and also help our members understand and critique our culture, and we will continue to provide articles, reflections and soon our declaration on marriage, not for our own sake, but for that of the church and indeed wider society.

Peace and grace,  
**Peter Bentley**

**CORRECTION:** "Photo used with the UnitingWomen 2016 article on page 4 is actually of Rev Amel Manyon, the minister of our Northern Suburbs Dinka Speaking Faith Community"



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Executive Editor: Max Champion  
Managing Editor: Peter Bentley  
Consulting Editor: John Sandeman  
Office: 2 Erskineville Rd, Newtown NSW  
02 9550 5358  
Website: [confessingcongregations.com](http://confessingcongregations.com)  
[accoffice@confessingcongregations.com](mailto:accoffice@confessingcongregations.com)

Email for ACCatalyst:  
[catalysteditor@confessingcongregations.com](mailto:catalysteditor@confessingcongregations.com)  
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# Ebony and the Thunderstorm

by Robyn Painter

Pastor, Peterborough Uniting Church

There's nothing like a cracking thunderstorm to add some excitement to the day. I enjoy a good storm; however a year or so ago, my niece Ebony (around 5 at the time) was not so keen. As the sky started to rumble, she said, "I'm scared of thunder, Auntie Robyn!"

I could have told her to snap out of it, or I could have ignored her and left her to find a hiding spot. Instead, I hit on a good way to deal with it. I sat by the window, with Ebony close by me and I held her close so she felt safe. I explained to her that we were safe there inside, and then I enjoyed the storm. As Ebony sat there with me, her fear melted because she sensed my confidence.

Soon we were saying together "Oooh, that was a good one" as the verandah shook and the rain pelted down. It was a ripper of a storm. When I next saw her after that, Ebony proudly announced to me "I'm not scared of thunder and lightning anymore!"

As adults, we mostly have different fears than kids do, but we have fears nonetheless. Fear can be crippling as it leads to stress and sometimes depression.

So what do grown-ups do with our fear? We tend to suppress it, which is not all that healthy. And when we're frightened we can run away from God, thinking he's going to tell us off, or leave us to fend for ourselves. But God understands us better than that.

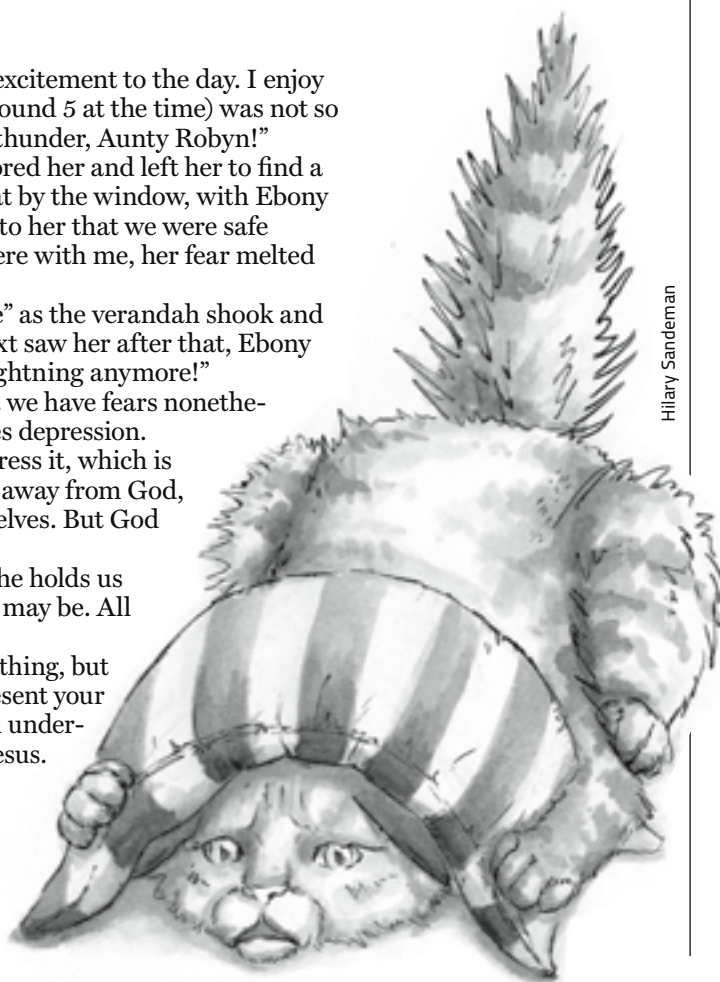
He doesn't help us hide from our fears or suppress them, he holds us close to himself and faces our fears with us - whatever they may be. All we have to do is invite him.

Remember Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And Psalm 56:3-4 When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Let God's confidence melt your fear!

And for the record, when it comes to scary showground rides, Ebony is much braver than me!





*As the United Methodist Church (UMC) in the USA embarks on appointing a Commission for a Way Forward (see the September 2016 ACCatalyst), it is helpful to read an analysis from a like-minded group to the ACC: the Confessing Movement within the UMC. Given the common Methodist and Wesleyan heritage of the UCA it is illuminating to see the similar issues and problems, and how terms like inclusive and diversity have become foundational for 'progressives' and have distorted the faith that was delivered once and for all to God's people.*



## A Divided United Methodism - What is the Gospel?

by Dr Riley B. Case

I was in a study with some other UM clergy. We were more theologically diverse than probably was good for us. We were arguing the question, "What is the gospel?" We agreed gospel meant "good news" but what was the Good News? Each one gave a definition. Here are some responses: "There are new possibilities of freedom in the way of Jesus"; "Liberation, as from structures and powers - political, social, and economic - that would enslave us"; "Love"; "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". And (and I am not kidding), not on this occasion, but on another occasion a district superintendent giving devotions defined gospel as "There is transcendent meaning amidst the exigencies of life."

This incident took place some years ago. If it had taken place in 2016 we would have had definitions that included words like "inclusiveness," "justice," and "diversity".

One pastor in the group was intrigued enough by the discussion that he went back to his church and had his Bible study group write down their responses to our question, "What is the gospel?" He shared these with us at the next meeting. Good steady United Methodist lay people! They had not been confused by fad ideology. The answers ran something like this: "John 3:16 God so loved that he gave his only begotten son;" "Christ died on the cross for our sins;" "Jesus shed his blood that we might be saved."

We as United Methodists have serious problems. It is not just that we can't agree on the Biblical teachings on sexual morality. We don't have common understandings on the authority of Scripture. We can't agree

on what it means to honour covenants and promises. But far worse, we cannot agree on what are the most elementary Christian truths, such as "What is the gospel?"

This was brought to mind this week as I read Jeremy Smith's *Hacking Christianity* blog entitled, "Unity Requires Flexibility Not Rigid Orthodoxy." Smith argues that rigid orthodoxy does not bring us together but divides us. Smith does not define "rigid orthodoxy" but it must refer to the United Methodist doctrinal standards, or perhaps, what John Wesley referred to as the "essentials." Or, perhaps just the plain teachings of the historic church. According to Smith, flexible theologies (he names as examples black, feminist, womanist, Asian, queer, and liberationist theologies) that are contextual and that grow out of contemporary experiences can best draw persons into circles of love that can serve as a basis for the unity, the unity that is to be found in the harmony of loving God and neighbour and in acts of mercy and justice.

How depressing. This is not to question the importance of loving God and neighbour and doing acts of mercy and justice. But if the call to love God and neighbour is our only message, or even primary message, or if somehow we identify this as "gospel," then we are of all people most miserable. The human problem is not knowing what to do (as in loving), but doing it. This is what Paul agonizes about in Romans 7 ("For I do not do the good I want but I do the very thing I hate"). We will not find unity and harmony in loving God and neighbour because we do not love God and neighbour, no matter how hard we try. That is why we must speak of sin and God's provision for the problem of sin.

This is the message of Romans. This is the message of the Bible. This is the message of the Christian faith. This is the message of Wesleyanism. The answer to the human problem is not "do better and try harder" but to make

known that God has intervened on our behalf through Jesus Christ whose death on the cross is an atonement for sin. In accepting Christ by faith we are reconciled to God and given the hope of eternal life. We also receive power through God's Holy Spirit that then enables us to love God and neighbour.

But this is not where much of progressive ideology is. Like liberalism before it and modernism before that, those who rail against orthodoxy are mostly railing against the basic teachings of the faith: original sin, the need for redemption, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Christ's atoning death on the cross, the resurrection of Christ and the victory over the powers of sin and death. Paul (1 Cor. 1:23) says the preaching of Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and folly to the Greeks. He might have added, it appears to be folly to those who call themselves religious progressives. Progressives have a new gospel, inclusivism, which, when taken to its logical conclusion, leads to the blurring of all distinctions. There is no distinction between the saved and the lost or between believers and non-believers. In the more extreme forms of "inclusivism" there is no judgment and no hell. There is no atonement and the cross at best is only a moral example. Consequently there is no need for salvation. Christianity is reduced to a self-help philosophy or a form of social activism.

So the question that arises is a serious question: Does The United Methodist Church have enough shared values to stay together as one denomination? What is the basis for unity? An appeal to love God and neighbour is not enough; Unitarianism does that. Other religions do that. When the Discipline of The United Methodist Church speaks of connectionalism (para. 132) it speaks of the link of our common tradition of faith including the doctrinal standards and the General Rules. But progressives have already let it be known that they are

continued over...

not bound by the Discipline in those areas where they disagree. They rail against "rigid orthodoxy."

So, what is the basis of unity? If this is a misrepresentation of progressive ideology then let us have discussions. One would hope that such discussions would take place in the Bishops' Commission of the Way Forward. But the church presently suffers from our uncertain message. We cannot even agree on the meaning of the word "gospel."

**From HAPPENINGS AROUND THE CHURCH, 11 August 2016: The Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church**

## Mark Yarhouse addresses Liberty Christian Ministries Conferences

Mark Yarhouse is a professor of psychology at Regent University in Virginia (a Christian university), principal researcher at the Sexual Identity Institute (established 2004) and author of over 80 publications in this area.

Professor Yarhouse's latest major publication is on the very current topic of transgendered matters. *'Understanding Gender Dysphoria: navigating transgender issues in a changing culture'*, Dr Mark Yarhouse, IVP, 2015. This publication provides a very detailed and clinical overview of gender dysphoria. It is worth noting

that in all childhood cases support is essential and that 75-80% of cases are resolved by adulthood.

Liberty Christian Ministries brought Dr Yarhouse to Australia for a speaking tour in 2016. This visit built on the interest developed after the tour by Wesley Hill in 2015. Liberty has a ministry of support to those who are same-sex attracted and their families. You can find out more on their website including talks from Wesley Hill and



Mark Yarhouse (via vimeo) at <http://www.liberty.sydney/>

At the mid-week Sydney conference, over 300 people heard Professor Yarhouse provide an overview of the issue of sexual identity, basically a standard analysis of the different approaches with the focus on multiple pathways within the nurture and nature discussion. He provided some helpful comments on pastoral care, highlighting the need to be careful with our language (and tone) during personal discussions and he warned about the church reacting solely to what it sees in the media and from activism as this focus only represents the views of a part of the gay community, and we need a more nuanced pastoral response.

He commented that for the gay community, there is a strong emphasis on the need to embrace the gay identity and be part of the community, and similarly in the church, there is the heterosexual 'marry/have children', but there are always different groups within this category – e.g., married

couples who cannot have children; single people and how they have often been portrayed. He outlined that as we respond as a local church we use different lenses, so we need to recognise these differences and the related issues. The three lenses outlined were:

**Integrity Lens** - identifies same-sex sexual behaviour as a violation of integrity (marring the image of God). He argued this focus usually resulted in falling short on pastoral care.

**Disability Lens** - recognises homosexuality as a normal variation in nature. Christians may say it is a reflection of the fall - non-moral reality. Compassion is the focus.

**Diversity Lens** - in its strongest form this focus leads to deconstruction of gender and sex, and in the weaker form highlights the issues and generally celebrates diverse sexual expression.

Yarhouse argued that it is best for the church not to focus on behaviour e.g., Behave > believe > belong (this is where behave comes first), and while not endorsing certain sexual behaviour, he thought that a more appropriate order is: Belong > believe > behave.

A question he put before the group attending was a question that people visiting a church ask of themselves - do you really want me here at this church?

Another interesting question and discussion revolved around stewardship; in this case, what does it mean for all of us to be good stewards of our sexuality in all periods of our lives?

**Peter Bentley**

## One God Many Friends

In March 2015 an approach was made that a dialogue between the Lighthouse Church Pt. Pirie Uniting and the Pt. Pirie Roman Catholic Diocese be established with a view to liaising in a social environment.

A joint committee was formed and subsequently on the 14th of August 2015 the Lighthouse Church hosted a dinner for 80 people from the Uniting and Catholic congregations. The theme of the dinner was "The Year of Light" and the Church Hall tables were decorated with ropes of lights and each table was decorated with a boat-shaped candlestick made by refugees in Gaza. Our guest speakers were Geraldine Hawkes, the Executive Officer of S.A. Council of Churches, who spoke of her experiences in the Middle East, including Palestine and Israel. She accompanied her talk with photographs of historical and religious interest. Our next speaker was a member of the Lighthouse Congregation, Mr Frank Miller, who is a former lay preacher who has become vision-impaired in his later years. He spoke of 'Living in God's Light in a world of darkness' The dinner was catered for very professionally and guests were served



*The UCA has different groupings, and the following article from one of the significant North American Confessing Groups is a helpful overview that illustrates the similar tensions in another church, and also provides background to the issues before the UCA, which has sadly lost a good deal of the good heritage it took into union. One of the significant dangers to the faith of the church now is from the last group Dr Case comments on: The Centrists, who are centred more on confessing the goodness of the institution, than confessing Christ.*

## A Divided United Methodism - Players in the Present Drama

by Dr Riley B. Case

Here is an update (as of the end of July) on various groups involved in the present crisis in The United Methodist Church:

### THE CONSERVATIVES

This group is made up of evangelicals, conservatives, "orthodox," and traditionalists. Regardless of the label, for many of us this is the United Methodism we inherited from John Wesley and Francis Asbury. It is the United Methodism of our General Rules and our Doctrinal Standards. It is gospel hymns, the preaching of salvation, the proclamation that Christ died for our sins and we can be saved by grace through faith. It is holy living and seeking to serve the least, the lost and the last. It is the

Discipline of the Church. This is the Methodism that grew from 2% of the religious population in America in 1784 to 33% of the religious population of America in 1850.

The Confessing Movement counts itself as part of this group. The Confessing Movement in its purpose statement confesses "Jesus Christ as Son, Saviour, and Lord." The Confessing Movement declares it exists "to enable The United Methodist Church to retrieve its classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as disciples of Jesus Christ." The Confessing Movement sees the unity of the church in the coming together around shared values and beliefs and practices.

At the moment these shared values, beliefs and practices are under attack, not so much from outside the church but from within the church. With the election of a lesbian bishop, with resolutions on the part of several conferences and church leaders declaring that the Discipline is hateful and harmful to persons in the church and therefore not to be followed, and with

the breaking of covenants within the church, those who are conservative wonder if there is anything left to hold us together. There is a rebellion within the church.

This is part of a long-festering bigger problem. For those in rebellion the Bible is not the final authority for faith and practice; for those in rebellion the "gospel" has to do more with "inclusiveness" (all are accepted by God regardless of faith and practice) rather than in the proclamation that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. For those in rebellion, religion is basically a social and political ideology wrapped up in religious language rather than a vital relationship with a living God. For those in rebellion the historic teachings of our Articles of Religion such as the article on Son of God (...truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of man") are not particularly relevant for our present day.

continued over...

by volunteers from the Pt. Pirie Roman Catholic Diocese.

Entertainment was provided during the meal from both the Uniting Church choir and a combined choir of tenors who closed a wonderful evening with a rendition of "The Holy City" that brought the house down.

The evening was so successful that we decided to hold another dinner in 2016, that was held on 26th August. This year we catered for 110 people and our theme was "The Year of Mercy"; the tables were decorated with sprigs of olive and a central place mat of scenes of mercy held pride of place, with a hand-made wooden cross as a centre piece on each table.

The headline speakers were Fr. Michael Trainer from the Adelaide College of Divinity Dialogue Committee and Dr. Marelle Harisun also from the Dialogue Committee. Father Trainer was quite impressed with our initiative in joining together in such a special way and told us that to his knowledge, no other churches, certainly in South Australia and probably anywhere in the whole of Australia have done this. He gave us an open invitation to attend

"The International Conference of Receptive Ecumenicalism" to be held from 6th to 9th of November in Canberra. Some of us were very interested in this possibility and are working on the logistics.

Our other speaker was a representative from Kairos, a member of the Lighthouse Church congregation. Our Church is very involved in this prison ministry and Peter Dick one of the leaders in this mission spoke inspirationally of the mission of Mercy we are able to give to these men whom we call our guests.

Again the catering was excellent, this year provided by the combined church members, and the entertainment during the evening was provided by a Uniting Church Choir, The Catholic Cathedral choir and as a finale, a combined male choir, including the Catholic Diocese Bishop, in a rendition of "I'll walk with God" There was hardly a dry eye in the house and we have already started to plan for other combined events, as well as another Dinner in 2017.

May our God continue to guide us'

**Lorraine Kennedy from Lighthouse Church, Pt Pirie.**



A grayscale photograph of a person with their hands clasped in prayer, serving as a background for the left column.

## DEVOTION

# Prayer for the Uniting Church in Australia

An ACC member provided this short prayer from the Welsh Anglican rector Mike Endicott who is blind. He spoke on healing at Hope Valley Uniting Church in 2015 and shared this prayer that he prays for many churches. We know that many members pray daily for the Uniting Church and we encourage you to continue in prayer for the Uniting Church.

**Thank you Lord  
that you have called  
me to watch over  
your church.**

**This is your church  
not ours.**

**I pray that your  
kingdom will come  
and your will be  
done in this church  
as it is in heaven,  
because yours is  
the kingdom and  
the power and the  
glory.**

**Amen.**

## Players in the Present Drama continued...

For those in rebellion traditional Christians are not salt and light in a dying world, but are proclaiming a false gospel. That is the opinion of blogger Chris Kratzer who claims among other things, that United Methodists, because of their belief in the Biblical understanding of human sexuality, are in part responsible for the mass killings in Orlando. And as for the evangelicals in the church Kratzer compares them with militant Islamists:

*A significant segment of conservative, evangelical Christianity worships the same kind of angry, vengeful, hell-wielding, punishing, violence-justifying, penal and militant God as does Islamic fundamentalists.*

Where is holy conferencing when we need it? Despite all of this, conservatives in the church would like to believe in a hopeful future for United Methodism. They are calling on the Council of Bishops to bring into existence the special commission ordered by the General Conference to find a way forward for the church with integrity. They are also calling for the organization of a new association, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, which will have an organizing meeting in Chicago October 7.

### THE PROGRESSIVES

This group is much less convinced that John Wesley is relevant for today, or that the moral codes of our United Methodist forbearers are adequate for the modern age. Progressives believe that the revelation of God is ongoing and that God's authoritative voice can be discerned in science and reason and personal experience and in the emerging theologies of women, minorities, and other oppressed groups. The Bible may be one "word of God" but it is not the final word or the only "word." Since Progressives are quite certain that they themselves have discerned what God's latest new truth is, they have declared that, in matters of human sexuality, marriage is not only between a man and a woman, that a person may

identify as male or female or both or neither and that God approves of various kinds of sexual arrangements and practices. Progressives also believe that ideas of judgment and the wrath of God and hell were culturally initiated and that the modern day church should move beyond that.

Progressives also claim that their superior religious insight trumps the church's Discipline. And since the *Discipline* is hateful, to defy the *Discipline* is an act of prophetic love. Covenants and promises and vows that fail to meet the Progressive vision of inclusiveness can be justifiably broken.

### THE "CENTRISTS"

For some of us the word "centrist" is misleading. This group would be better labelled as "moderate progressives" since they too argue that Bible teaching was culturally influenced and with modern enlightenment perhaps adjustments need to be made in the understanding of traditional Bible teachings. Only in a denomination in which the corporate culture itself is dominated by a progressive mind-set would this group be considered "centrist." Many centrists (or moderate progressives) are loyal institutionalists. High value is placed upon unity and getting along with one another and not offending others. If there is a highest value it appears to be kindness. If persons believe they have been injured or discriminated against they probably have been and therefore the church needs to make adjustments that all might live in peace. "Centrists" are known for a "live and let live" philosophy. They tend to argue that sexual teachings are not of the essence of Christian faith and therefore can be compromised without harm. The Centrists are placing high hopes in the commission the bishops are appointing that will help the church to a way forward.

Stay tuned.

**From HAPPENINGS AROUND  
THE CHURCH, July 2016: The  
Confessing Movement within the  
United Methodist Church**

*Confessing Christians are not a lone voice. Riley Case's article mentioned the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a movement helping to connect like-minded United Methodists at a critical time in the life of the church. This is also a very important development in the world confessing movement and given the significant connection of the UMC in the world Methodist and Uniting scene, ACC has decided to provide for information of all our members the WCA statement that was approved at the launch on October 7, 2016.*

## Chicago Statement to the Bishops' Commission on A Way Forward The Wesleyan Covenant Association

Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on Friday, October 7, 2016, over 1,700 people affirmed and approved the creation of the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

The association is a coalition of congregations, clergy, and laity from across The United Methodist Church, committed to promoting ministry that combines a high view of Scripture, Wesleyan vitality, orthodox theology, and Holy Spirit empowerment. We have come together to support, network, and encourage one another as the uncertain future of The United Methodist Church comes into clearer focus.

We have heard from many concerned United Methodists who believe that the church's current situation is untenable. Some of our members are leaving their local churches or suspending their giving. Some local churches are suspending or redirecting the payment of apportionments, while other congregations are preparing to leave the denomination. Therefore, we call upon the Council of Bishops to:

- Swiftly name the members of the commission and expedite their gathering to begin working together, and
- Approve the call for a special General Conference in early 2018 to enable resolution of the conflict that divides us before further harm is done to United Methodist members, congregations, conferences, and ministries.

As faithful United Methodists, we will fervently pray for the bishops' Commission on A Way Forward. And while we patiently wait for it to

complete its work, we call upon its members to:

- Work deliberately and expeditiously as it prepares a recommendation for a called General Conference scheduled for early 2018;
- Regularly update the people of the church regarding its progress, or lack thereof, and,
- Bring forth a recommendation that would definitively resolve our debate over The United Methodist Church's sexual ethics and its understanding of marriage.

We deeply regret the acts of covenant breaking that have accelerated in frequency and in seriousness since the 2016 General Conference. Therefore, we join with the Southeastern College of Bishops in viewing such actions as "divisive and disruptive."

- The proposed "pause for prayer and discernment" from the Council of Bishops that was adopted by the General Conference has been ignored by many progressives, leaving us to wonder if we have good faith partners who are willing to work toward a common future for The United Methodist Church.

Despite the pledge of the Council of Bishops to uphold and enforce the Book of Discipline, some bishops are now routinely settling complaints against clergy who violate the Discipline with no consequences. This gives us reason to believe they will continue to break faith with the general church, despite what the special commission proposes.

- At least nine boards of ordained ministry or annual conferences and two jurisdictional conferences have pledged not to conform or comply with the requirements of the Discipline. Despite some rulings nullify-

ing those actions, we have no confidence that a covenant that depends upon voluntary compliance can hold in the face of such defiance.

- The election of a person in a same-sex marriage to the office of bishop, in blatant contradiction to the requirements of the Discipline, has undermined the very structure of our global church to the point that its future survival is in question.

We believe it is imperative for the commission to propose a plan that calls for accountability and integrity to our covenant, and restores the good order of our church's polity. If the commission determines no such plan is possible, then we believe it should prepare a plan of separation that honours the consciences of all the people of the church and allows them to go forward in peace and good will. A plan that requires traditionalists to compromise their principles and understanding of Scripture, including any form of the "local option" around ordination and marriage, will not be acceptable to the members of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, stands little chance of passing General Conference, would not definitively resolve our conflict, and would, in fact, lead to the fracturing of the church.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association wants what is best for United Methodist laity and clergy, and we are convinced a speedy resolution of our present crisis is now essential and imperative for the church's future viability.

May God bless our bishops as they select the members of the commission, and may He lead and guide those who are chosen for this important task.



## PUBLIC SQUARE

BY PSEUDO-MAXIMUS

# Plebs & Pollies

Shrill cries to abandon a plebiscite on 'same-sex marriage' in favour of a parliamentary conscience vote are emotional blackmail. Debate among politicians is not less likely to safeguard the mental health of vulnerable youth wrestling with their sexual identity. In either case the issues must be faced. What is being proposed is not a benign expansion of a fair society, but the dismantling of its Judeo-Christian roots. False arguments promoting this destructive social agenda must be exposed.

## 'Love is love, fair is fair, and marriage equality is not negotiable'

This declaration by the Hon. Daniel Andrews, Premier of Victoria, neatly captures the power and strategy of the aggressive pro 'same-sex mar-

riage' lobby. By appealing to vague notions of love, fairness and equality, with which tolerant citizens agree, he falsifies the issue and silences dissent.

**'Love is love'** resonates with a public familiar with the portrayal of modern families where sex or gender is irrelevant to a happy home. It is not surprising that the institution of marriage is treated with suspicion or contempt. In fact, the breakdown of marital and family bonds is a sign that 'love is not simply love.' Love may be misguided. A more profound concept of married love is needed. Otherwise, laws endorsing polyamory, polygamy or consensual adult incest are inevitable.

**'Fair is fair'** resonates with a public for whom acceptance of ethnic, cultural and sexual diversity is a given. That everybody must be treated fairly doesn't necessarily mean that people treated differently under the law are unfairly discriminated against. For example, the fact that people under a certain age cannot marry is discriminatory, but not unfairly so.

It is not unfair, therefore, if those who don't meet the biological and social conditions of marriage can't marry. They are equal in dignity but, in important respects, their relationships must be treated differently, not least because the test of fairness is due to any children involved.

## 'Marriage Equality'

Hijacking equality in the service of marriage is a tactical masterstroke. It de-sexes LGBTQ unions, dismantles marriage and misrepresents equality. While assuring the public that there is nothing to fear, it downplays the difference between same-sex and opposite-sex couples and hides the fact that equality between men and women already exists in the Marriage Act. It ignores the clear biological purpose of the body for sexual intercourse and the social function of parenting to teach children the differences between men and women. Changing language doesn't change the fact that the social embodiment of the mysterious otherness and unity of our creation as male and female can't be modelled by 'same-sex marriage'.

Ironically, advocates of gender equality, who rightly argue that the presence of both sexes is necessary to humanise society, see no need for gender equality to be embodied in the most important social unit of all.

## Redefining birth

The hypocrisy is compounded by institutionalising a form of 'marriage' which always precludes children being raised by their biological parents, in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). As David van Gend, President of the Australian Marriage Forum, says in his recent book *Stealing from a Child*, 'marriage equality' is unjust to the most vulnerable members of a family - children.

Studies show that the absence or loss of a biological parent directly affects the development of a child's identity. When a child can't live with a parent, they still yearn to know their father or mother. A child can be helped to cope with the loss, but this is not the same as deliberately establishing an institution in which the loss is embedded.

Redefining marriage to make sexual difference optional is the final step, beginning with donor conception and surrogacy in redefining birth and childhood. Disconnecting the sexual act from the parent-child relation is social engineering in which sexual intimacy and family life are determined by consenting adults. What child would consent to being conceived in a way that prevents them being brought up by their biological parents?



Left:  
Victorian  
Premier  
Daniel  
Andrews



## Legal Ramifications

The social implications of this dramatic shift in language are troubling.

Birth certificates are already being changed to replace 'father' and 'mother' with 'parent one' and 'parent two.' Elsewhere, they now list biological, donor, surrogate and social parents as well as a place for children to list their preferred sex and gender identity. 'Boy' and 'girl,' 'husband' and 'wife' are being replaced by genderless descriptions which mirror more flexible forms of identity based on a person's felt needs and desires.

What will be the long-term effects of legislating to de-sex birth and parenthood? Will it become impossible to trace biological ancestry? Will birth certificates have to be constantly updated to satisfy the changing sex or multiple genders with which a person identifies? Will future generations need to apologise to children legally deprived of the right to live with their biological mother and father? Will the churches be happy to endorse such radical changes?

## State versus Church

The Victorian Premier's insistence that 'marriage equality' is not negotiable shows that totalitarianism isn't confined to fascists or communists. The State knows best! The Church will conform! In our so-called liberal democracy, illiberal tactics are being employed to gag Christians who disagree with the government's radical agenda.

The hypocrisy is breathtaking, and dangerous. Radical activists insist on the separation of Church and State as long as the State has the right to force churches to adopt practices in parishes, schools, hospitals and welfare agencies which contradict their core beliefs.

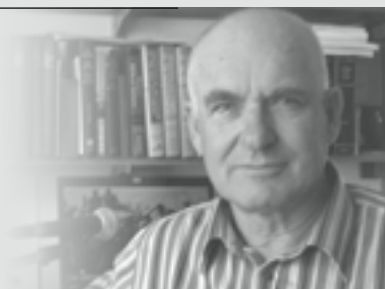
Premier Andrews' ultimatum on love, justice and equality exposes the totalitarian spirit that informs much of the case for 'same-sex marriage' today. No matter how reasonably expressed, disagreement with this radical agenda is met with a ferocity designed to intimidate the bravest soul and shut-down dissent.

Churches should not be deluded. The aggressive push to legalise 'same-sex marriage' is about much more than sex and marriage. It is the means by which the Judeo-Christian heritage, which has underpinned our free and humane social, political and legal traditions, is to be dismantled.

# Therein lies the ABC

## Ian Clarkson

UCA Minister - South Australia



**Few know that the word 'broadcasting' in the ABC is from the BBC depicted on a plaque at BBC London headquarters showing that it comes originally from the parable of the sower 'broadcasting' his seed.**

Remember those days when ministers would do their pastoral rounds in the country to coincide with Blue Hills? Most cockies would be in for lunch to tune in to the Gwen Meredith ABC serial. It was also the days when we trusted the reporting and comment of our ABC. Those days are mostly gone. It's not our ABC, it's an alien propaganda machine and many of us trust it with few exceptions no longer. The gap widens ever more!

The ABC Four Corners program on marriage was mostly a lie to the Australian public. Our billion dollar taxpayer funded broadcaster treats us as sim-pletons as it rages on with its arrogant propaganda of homosexual marriage. Q&A leads the charge. Leigh Sales treats same-sex marriage (SSM) as a moral truism. The Four Corners program was actually One Corner of the debate.

On the program, those speaking for natural, real marriage which incidentally is currently enshrined in Australian law are 'anti-marriage equality'. Their people are always 'the conservatives'. At no time were the pro-homosexual lobbyists described as 'progressive leftists'. The children being raised by homosexuals all presented one viewpoint in the interviews and it all sounded much rehearsed. Nowhere was a child or adult of same sex parents with a testimony of lament for a mother and a father brought on, even though there are plenty to select from.

And then there was the hate factor. Given ready access to politicians appearing to be fearful of being called homophobes heavy activist Rodney Croome showed his hate-filled stance, declaring that those who oppose him have 'hearts full of hate'. Those who hold to real marriage were described as 'hard-line anti-gay campaigners' running 'sophisticated' campaigns against SSM.

Nowhere was a substantive argument presented for SSM except 'love'. And at no time were the real marriage spokespersons allowed to develop the case on the rights of children, divisiveness in society over anti-freedom of religion exemptions, or the devastating results of re-configuring society on a totally different primal foundation, or indeed the negative social effects of changing the law in other countries. Twenty countries have done so we were didactically informed. What about the 172 that haven't?

I exhort our ACC congregations: keep reflecting and preaching the beauty and mysterious wonder of the meaning of marriage from Ephesians and the Gospels. Check Resources on the ACC website, on our YouTube site (the DVD series on the Mystery of Marriage) and articles in our magazine ACCatalyst and the ACC resources website: [unitingviews.com](http://unitingviews.com).

You are guardians not only of that which is the eternal best, but that which sources and sustains a democratic society.

The ABC listening? I should note in fairness, that after my last column on the 'Clueless Media', about the failure of the media to report on the persecuted church, on Monday Oct 10th ABC news ran a report on the persecution of Christians in China; here was a story on the church's courage and growth under vigorous opposition. Other than audio reports on the Religion and Ethics program this is an almost unprecedented report. The ABC's integrity on this will be demonstrated only by regular weekly reports.

# Two Churches or One?

Hedley Fihaki

ACC National Chair



**A**CC Chair, Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki addressed a Queensland-based regional meeting on Sunday 16th October 2016 at Mooloolaba Uniting Church. This was also a part of the public teaching program and lecture series that is forming the developing “School of Faith”

“Two churches or one? The challenge of continuing to allow two fundamentally different ecclesiologies to develop within the Uniting Church.”

The topic has been taken out of the conclusion of Peter Bentley’s paper titled “Liberalism, Sexuality and the Future of the UCA.” Peter Bentley is the National Director of the ACC and his paper can be found on the ACC website and Unitingviews.com website.

Peter concluded his paper by saying:

As I have continually raised, the Uniting Church needs to address how it can continue to allow two fundamentally different ecclesiologies to develop, particularly when one has the tick by the official leadership.

I question whether post-modernism is possible in a church of our history, development and the age of our members. Here is a key factor for the current debate - our present dispute is quite natural and destined to happen when the majority of the membership basically believes one thing and the Assembly tries to tell them it doesn’t, shouldn’t, or perhaps never actually did.

I believe the way sexuality has been handled in the Uniting Church has established a dangerous precedent and this is partly why our doctrine, our Basis of Union and our unity in Christ continue to be challenged and the future of the Uniting Church is clouded.

In this presentation, I will seek to continue on with this theme regarding the possibility of having two churches within the Uniting Church. Of course, to say that there can be two churches within the one church is an oxymoron, for there can only be one church as Christ only has one body. But, that is the strange situation in

which we find ourselves as members of the UCA, the suggestion that two opposing and contradictory ecclesiologies can coexist within the one body.

Firstly, what is it that constitutes the Uniting Church? And, what is it that makes us members of the Uniting Church in Australia, a church that is part of the wider universal Christian church.

Paragraph 3 of the ‘Basis of Union’ says this:

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the faith and unity of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church are built upon the one Lord Jesus Christ. The Church preaches Christ the risen crucified One and confesses him as Lord to the glory of God the Father. In Jesus Christ “God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19 RSV). In love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world’s sin.....

That is, just to make clear, the church is built upon the One Lord Jesus Christ. This means, there can be no other foundation upon which the church is built.

We are, therefore, called in the light of this strong and sure foundation in Christ, to preach “Christ the risen crucified one” - risen and crucified. Both are part of our preaching. The resurrection and the crucifixion go hand in hand. That is, the Good news of the resurrection and the bad news of his crucifixion and all that that signifies must be part of our preaching and our evangelism. Noting, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 1: 18-31, that ‘the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God’.

It is curious, says theologian, Gerhard Forde, in a book titled “On Being a Theologian of the cross”, that in spite of attempts by people in Western society to try and avoid offending others (and this is what political correctness is all about), things do not actually seem to have improved. For example, though there is an increase in the language of affirmation being used in our society today, we are experiencing less and less of it.

In the church itself, preachers are avoiding more and more the confrontational nature of the cross and the gospel as a whole in the hope that this will prop up our self-esteem. However, what we are finding, says Forde, is that ‘more and more people seem to suffer from a deteriorating sense of self-worth’ (p. 949). Forde goes on to suggest, that, perhaps, a return to calling a spade a spade has its place.

Pastor and missionary Lesslie Newbigin in a very good book titled “Gospel in a pluralist society” says:

All true thinking about this, as about every matter,

must be held within the magnetic field setup between these two poles: the amazing grace of God and the appalling sin of the world. To live in this magnetic field is to live in an atmosphere which is charged with power, tingling, as it were, with electricity.

One is always in the (humanly speaking) impossible position of knowing that one is – along with all others – at the same time the enemy of God and the beloved child of God.

To live in this charged field of force is always at the same time supremely demanding and supremely affirming. But we are always tempted to slacken the tension by drawing away from one or other of the two poles (Newbigin 1989: 195).

As a Church, we cannot slacken this tension. That is, for example, we cannot overemphasise the love and the grace of God in such a way to suggest that the question of sin and our need for confession and repentance is no longer required.

It is why the Basis of Union calls us to proclaim the “risen crucified one”. Both realities must be held together in tension.

What does it mean to be a member of the Uniting Church? The Basis of Union paragraph 12 says:

“...membership is open to all who are baptised into the Holy Catholic Church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.

That is, membership is not just about an intellectual and a verbal assent to a particular propositional truth claim; it involves also a physical engrafting into the very body of Christ. It is why water baptism is important. It confirms the fact, that we are not just saying we believe in Jesus, but that we are also committing ourselves to actually living ‘as’ the actual body of Christ on earth as it is in heaven. ‘Confessing Christ as Lord, then, is an ontological matter; our whole ‘being’ is transformed in Christ by the Spirit for the glory of God the Father.

What is the ‘other’ ecclesiology within the Uniting Church? What is this other truth that is being confessed

and practised in the life of the church?

Let me highlight this other ecclesiology by referring you to the ‘welcome’ video clip on the St. Michaels Uniting Church (Melbourne, Victoria) website. Words on the video say:

- We do not need faith in a supernatural being.
- We need to have faith in ourselves.
- Faith in the goodness of humanity.
- Faith in the process of healing, hope and humanity

Is there anything wrong with this statement? Is it OK for a Uniting Church Minister and a congregation to preach that ‘we do not need faith in a supernatural being, and that all we need is to have faith in ourselves’? Is this the message of scripture?

In the United Church of Canada, there is a minister by the name of Rev. Gretta Vosper who defines herself on her personal website as a ‘minister, author, atheist’. She says, “In 2001, I made it clear that I did not believe in a supernatural, interventionist, divine being.... In 2013, I embraced the term “atheist” which means, literally, no belief in a theistic, supernatural being.”

This is quite incredible, that for over ten years of ministry she has been practising atheism while still claiming to be a Minister. To put the Word ‘Minister’ and ‘Atheist’ together in the same sentence is, of course, also an oxymoron. The two do not fit together without creating a false reality, i.e. a lie - the deliberate distortion of the truth.

Sadly, the issue of ‘unbelief’ is also an issue in the Uniting Church. This is highlighted in Dr. Keith Suter’s 2013 doctoral dissertation in which he pointed out that the real problem is “unbelief or to put the matter more neutrally, inability by clergy to believe much that they think they should believe” (p. 288).

The Uniting Church’s code of ethics (3.3) says, that “ministers have a responsibility to represent accurately the teachings of Scripture and of the Church. When teaching, preaching or leading worship, ministers have an obligation to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, guided by the witness to Christ in Scripture....” It also says, “Ministers shall live out the vision of the Basis of Union.”

The question is, what do you do when a minister does not adhere to the UCA’s Basis of Union and its Code of ethics?

The United Church of Canada did the right thing and “found” (the Rev. Gretta Vosper), as stated in her website, “to be unsuitable for ministry in the United Church and recommended a formal hearing be undertaken to place (her) name on the Discontinued Service List”.

Of course, she is upset about this ruling as are members of the Uniting Church who are part of the progressive movement.

In relation to the situation regarding the St. Michaels Uniting Church, I had previously raised the issue a number of times with the Moderator of the Synod of Vic/Tas at the time, as well as tried to bring a formal proposal to the National Assembly to remind the Assembly about the ‘discipline’ of the Church. However, no disciplinary action has been taken.

What this clearly reveals, then, is that the National Assembly allows such a contradictory situation to exist within the Uniting Church. That is, it allows the proclamation of Christ as Lord, on the one hand, as well as

**continued on page 14...**

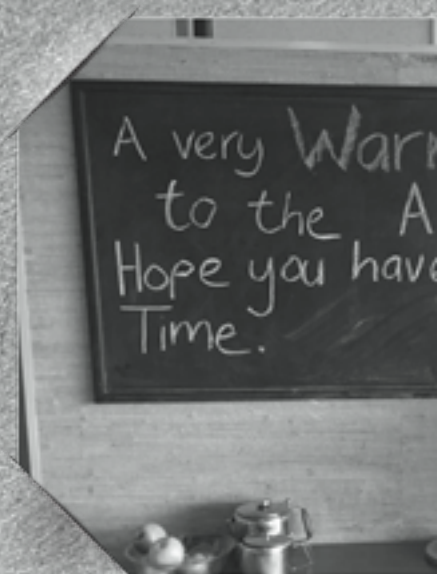


**Rev Gretta Vosper,  
atheist and  
church leader**





*UCA Assembly President Stuart McMillan and Anglican Bishop, the Right Rev. Richard Conne.*



*A very warm*



*Opening worship led by ACC Chair Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki*



*Rev. Dr Max Champion leads the discussion session on Marriage*



**Over 80 A  
in the vill  
ACC Nati  
AGM 7 - 9**

A beautiful intentional Christian after very well by the wonderful the Poatina Village in their min

We were blessed by presentati The Catholic Archbishop of Hob Porteous presented an overview society especially in relation to s address on the theme of 'Standi Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, t provided a word of encouragement (Confessing Christ together). M State Officer for the Australian overview of the public work being today within the wider Christian continue to be 'salt and light' in in the public sphere). Our own E of the issues that have developed of redefining gender (Standing I

The ACC Declaration on Ma mally approved for submission and the whole declaration and congregations and summary for website and mailings.

Strong representation was als emsby President Mr Stuart Mo the Assembly Doctrine Working ence for a special session as par theology of marriage. This is pa further debate at the 2018 UCA the overall process that is being ments were provided for the AC

The conference was blessed b worship team and through being environment. The papers and included on the ACC website published in future edition





*Firm welcome*

ACC members gathered at the stage of Poatina for the annual conference and on November 2016.

In community, we were looked after by a team and extend our blessings to the ministry of hospitality. Messages from our keynote speakers. Archbishop of Hobart, The Most Reverend Julian Porteous, of the changed worldview in our sexual practice (in a wide-ranging 'Standing Firm in times of trial'. The Right Reverend Richard Condie, a true ecumenical spirit. Wendy Francis, Queensland Christian Lobby provided a helpful message undertaken in a variety of areas in community, encouraging us to 'Standing Firm Together in Australia (Standing Firm together Rev. Rod James gave a full overview of the ACC and are developing in the context of 'Standing Firm Together on Gender). Marriage and the Family was forwarded to the UCA National Assembly, and resolutions will be provided to the ACC included in the magazine, also made to the UCA National Assembly. Millan and representatives from the Anglican Group who attended the conference of the UCA's consideration of the part of the process happening before the Assembly. The ACC heard about the process followed and questions or comments to consider in the debate. By our bible study leaders, by the way in a prayerful and Christian spirit, reports (as available) will be made and some of the papers will be included in the magazine.



*Wendy Francis presenting the final address to the conference on Wednesday morning.*



*Archbishop of Hobart, the Most Rev. Julian Porteous addressing the ACC conference*



*Rev. Rod James (retiring Council Secretary)*

# Two Churches or One?

from page 11

...also allowing the proclamation that 'Christ is not Lord', to coexist within the UCA.

Is this OK?

No! It is not OK. Again, it is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. It is the same as trying to put two contradictory sexual ethics together, as in Resolution 84 and Resolution 108, as well as the current attempt to hold two contradictory definitions of marriage together. This cannot be done without distorting truth and reality.

How does the National Assembly seek to justify allowing such a contradictory situation to occur? That is, how does the National Assembly, the only 'council' of the UCA that has responsibilities for matters of faith and doctrine, allow two contradictory ecclesiologies to coexist?

It does so by employing, I believe, the same method employed by Satan on Jesus during Jesus' temptation in the desert (Mat. 4:1-11—Mk 1:12,13; Lk 4:1-13).

Here Satan comes across in the guise of a religious man, a Christian biblical scholar, an expert in the law. Here Satan seeks to pit the Word of God against the Son of God who is also the incarnate Word of God by saying 'it is written'.

Past president of the Uniting Church, the Rev. Dr. Dean Drayton, is quoted as saying,

"The Assembly has decided that we are a diverse church, we have great and genuinely held differences, but instead of allowing these differences to divide us, we will hold together in something greater—our love of God and our love of the Uniting Church itself."

What we have here is the greatest

injustice of all, the deliberate misuse of Scripture in terms of our 'love for God', and playing on our sense of patriotism to the Uniting Church, to argue that 'love for God' is more important than the 'truth'. That is, the 'love for God' is put over and against the Word of God. To put it another way, 'gospel and law' are separated from one another. The love for God is, then, misused to justify acting in a way contrary to the clear witness of Scripture and our need for adherence to the Basis of Union and the Code of Ethics.

Jesus referring to the Ten Commandments says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Luke 4: 8).

The false prophets, however, of the Uniting Church, cry peace, peace; diversity, let us be tolerant and inclusive.

Jeremiah 6: 14 says, "They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. Peace, peace, they say, when there is no peace".

The Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church was instituted on the 13th October 2006 to put a stop to the lie that two ecclesiologies or two contradictory truths can coexist within the one body of Christ.

That is, orthodoxy cannot be made part of the diversity of the church, when it comes to matters that pertain to the 'substance of the faith'.

God and Baal cannot coexist within the body of Christ. 'Jesus as Lord' (Basis of Union para.3) cannot be preached and practised alongside the message of St. Michael's Uniting Church, and other similar Uniting Churches, that believe "we do not need

to have faith in a supernatural being. We need to have faith in ourselves".

The National Assembly's misuse of the concept of 'unity in diversity' has created a situation where ministers and members of the UCA are now 'double minded', or 'two faced'.

Scripture says this about this situation:

"Elijah went before the people and said, 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.' But the people said nothing" (1 Kings 18: 21).

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24: 15)

To put the matter directly in terms of the 'Assembly' of Confessing Congregations, and 'National Assembly' of the UCA, we are called to make a decision regarding which 'Assembly' is faithful in its witness to Christ as Lord and in terms of its adherence to the 'Basis of Union'.

One says that only Christ can be Lord of the Church, the other says that we must allow for a 'diversity' of theologies, such as atheism, i.e. humanism, to coexist within the UCA.

As I have tried to make clear, this cannot happen; we cannot have two ecclesiologies within the one body of Christ, the church; it destroys what it means to be "United in Christ".

May God our Father be honoured and glorified in all that we do. Amen!

## New ACC Resource Gospel and Grace

The new video series from the ACC Discipleship and Evangelism Commission is called, "*Gospel and Grace*". It is a series of messages about how the grace of God, through the Gospel of Jesus affects every aspect of our lives. Often the Good News of Jesus can seem abstract or unattached to many areas of our lives. In this new series you can hear what the Gospel and the grace of God has to do with such things as our work, our rest, sport and recreation, anger and doubts, money and possessions, gender and sexuality, fear of

death, depression/burn-out, and our life as parents.

There are ten talks (between 20-30 minutes each), and the messages are accompanied by a study booklet for use with small groups.

The series will also be available on DVD and each ACC congregation or group will receive a copy. The series is already up on the Assembly of Confessing Congregations YouTube channel (found on the ACC website) or follow



this link:

[www.youtube.com/user/confessingchrist](http://www.youtube.com/user/confessingchrist)



## CONFESSING MOVEMENT

# Freedom for Faith or Faith without Freedom?

I have been privileged to attend the Freedom for Faith seminars and conferences over the last three years, and witnessed an increasing number of members. FFF is a Christian legal think tank that helps to promote and safeguard religious freedom in Australia. Their website has a wealth of material available to help people consider, debate and understand the issues:



[freedomforfaith.org.au/](http://freedomforfaith.org.au/)

At the latest forum (September 23, 2016), the FFF group focussed on the legal implications of freedom of speech. It was also of interest as Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus was invited to speak, and while I was hoping to hear a reasoned and sophisticated analysis it turned out to be a politically tooled television sound bite and at best a fundamentally naive speech about the then proposed marriage plebiscite. He outlined areas of concern including setting a plebiscite precedent (what will be next?) and the purported cost and damage it could do to the community. He clearly outlined that it was his task to convince those attending that marriage equality is good and that all will be fine. He gently advised all present that we were

‘swimming against the tide’ as the argument has long been settled. And what was the basis for his argument? The simple truth - love is love and we do not have a right to judge a person’s love because it does not match ours. Love thy neighbour has no conditions. When a senior politician argues like this I began to be convinced of one thing at least: namely there is little hope of having a reasoned and substantial debate.

Prominent Catholic priest and lawyer, Frank Brennan wondered whether the context in the whole ‘marriage equality’ debate should also be equality in religious freedom. He outlined that a major challenge is the public endorsement of the context of same sex marriage and what will come in the future, as well as the need to work through some other issues if same sex marriage becomes law, e.g., adoption, surrogacy, IVF, school involvement.

Brennan commented on the difficulties of not having a plebiscite. There had been a commitment and people are expecting it as part of the government position. If it does not happen, then it adds weight to the argument that the ‘cultural elites’ are cutting corners to get their way.

Legal philosopher Professor Iain Benson gave a very helpful overview

of the notion of equality. Why is there such a superficial orientation to the idea of equality today? He made reference to *Animal Farm* in a contemporary exploration of politics and the English language as he unpacked the idea of a civic totalist, people who know what is best for everyone.

Where is the appropriate place for equality? It is before the law, but in the wider context now there is blurred equality. He raised the question of whether different viewpoints will be allowed in the future, and illustrated this point with some consideration of new frameworks and positions in Canada.

Members who attended the ACC 2014 Sydney conference would remember Professor Parkinson. At the FFF conference he presented on the safe schools program. His very full, detailed and researched paper is available on his Sydney Law School website page and is an excellent resource.

Mark Sneddon from the Institute for Civil Society argued that we should not buy the shallow equality line - there is always discrimination. In an examination of discrimination and an explanation of the context of unlawful discriminations and discrimination law, he highlighted that discrimination is based on similar contexts. Exemptions are based on not treating people the same and include consideration for example of strength, stamina and physique and he used a basic example of fashion models - it is allowable to discriminate on the basis of appearance. It is the balancing of exceptions that makes an act workable.

It is worth highlighting for example, that a religious school is actually a religious school - all its staff are part of the school and students attend in that context and if an individual disagrees then they do not have to attend or be employed at that school. Sneddon argued that moves toward inherent requirement fail to recognise real diversity within Australian society and were more likely to encourage division, rather than help peaceful living.

**Peter Bentley**



**Professor  
Iain Benson**

# Bachelor-etiquette

**A**bout of bronchitis this winter saw me lying on our lounge watching *The Bachelor*. It's a popular show in 2016, where we watch 25 women dating one man, or in *The Bachelorette* 25 men all looking to "fall in love" with the one woman. Why do we watch? Why do I watch?

The rejects now have a new show, *Bachelor in Paradise*, where at least the numbers of men and women are more even. However the furniture disturbingly includes many outdoor alcoves with double beds in them. One girl has admitted that she's a virgin. It's rare on TV – an attractive young woman actually waiting to be in a "serious relationship" before she has sex. Nobody on TV is waiting for marriage, it seems! A tall handsome man says he swings both ways – but only on Fridays. He also finds chasing a virgin enticing. Sigh. The double standards are screaming at me!

The strangest thing about these shows is that long-term relationships do sometimes result from these skewed and immoral processes!

The 'Bachelor' has to lie and pretend he likes several different girls to maintain the suspense for the viewing audience! Ratings would drop if he was clearly favouring one girl too early in the season.

Yet, this year's Bachelor mansion is situated "on the fringe of Sydney's Bible Belt." I wasn't aware we still had a bible belt – but in the hills beyond Hillsong is its location. I doubt that non-Christians would be happy to know they live in a bible belt...

I find *Farmer Wants a Wife* more morally appealing – and the country scenery is great too! The farmers' choices are whittled down to 3 potential spouses within the first episode or two, so there is less lying about who they really like. We meet some genuine, lonely farmers who choose to go on national TV instead of the internet to find a life partner – good on them!

One refreshing aspect of these shows is the absence of mobile phones and other electronic devices. Contestants' necks have a chance to straighten up again and their thumb muscles relax. Can they actually make conversation and sustain a meaningful dialogue? The producers prompt them to talk about their bachelor or bachelorette, but maybe these hothouses of competitive lust can be places where live, face-to-face friendships are built?

I love my phone and Facebook, but regular breaks from them are healthy for me.

What other comments would you like to make about shows like these? Write in to or email ACCatalyst with your thoughts.

**Anne Weeks is married to ACC NSW Convenor, Rev. Ian Weeks and they minister at ACC Congregation, Belrose Uniting Church (Sydney) NSW.**



# Gruen and the question of religion

Peter Bentley

ACC National Director



One of the most interesting episodes, but also the most irritating, of Gruen, the TV show on the ABC that explores advertising was Episode 8 in the latest series (and you may be able to watch on IVIEW). The focus was on examining advertising about marriage in the context of the debate on 'marriage equality', and the then proposed idea of a plebiscite on marriage and thus more and publicly-funded advertising.

What was fascinating and unique for the ABC in particular, was that it actually showed adverts in favour of traditional marriage, which is actually true marriage equality: marriage between a woman and a man in which a woman and a man equally agree to commit to each other for life and to the exclusion of all others.

Secondly there was open discussion of the politics of advertising on both sides of the debate. It was a program that made me uncomfortable in terms of their supposedly enlightened critique of Christian adverts, and yet I found it intriguingly illuminating, because most of the panel and probably nearly all of the audience was openly supportive of marriage revisionism and thus condemnatory and derisive toward the Christian advertisements. It was illuminating to hear the panel members sometimes make fair and almost understanding comments. Todd Sampson made some of the most intriguing comments, including stating that adverts about motherless families make the best adverts [in an emotional sense], but they are wrong, because he argued that there was no evidence proving that children of gay parents are better or worse off, except that they are

more tolerant. He is quite incorrect of course on his first point, but research in this area is very complex due to the poor and often biased statistical samples, and many of the wider issues are not considered. Perhaps copies of David van Gend's book *Stealing from a Child: the injustice of 'marriage inequality'* would have been a helpful resource for use in this wider discussion, especially given the advertising it has received. I thought that the most interesting question came from fellow panellist Russel Howcroft who asked Todd Sampson "What's the 'Yes' campaign that promotes fear?" Sampson answered by referencing the debate on a proposition to endorse traditional marriage in one state in the USA. (Note he talks about 'Yes' here in the context of YES being the progressive option).

***"Here's what they learned in California - (from an advertising perspective) that the Yes side has to be very careful not to alienate. They have to include the middle. So as soon as they start alienating or get aggressive with it, they will lose the middle which will then float undecided into the No. And what they need to do is focus it positively on what it is actually about, which is not gay marriage, it's about marriage."***

This is not the first time that Gruen has considered religion in a defined way. After all, our churches advertise, especially in the context of community and welfare services, and most denominational publications rely on advertising revenue for their overall budgets. ACCatalyst is unique in that it does not have advertising. Thank you to all our members who donate to help keep this arrangement.

In 2010, the then named The Gruen Transfer considered religion. It was promoted with the blurb: "Atheism's on the rise in Australia. In fact, religion appears to be a brand under threat. Yet few of its branches seem to advertise. Or do they? This week's The Gruen Transfer rounds up religious ads ..., from the deeply spiritual to the deeply disturbing."

The programme centred around Christianity and churches, with a

focus on the Jesus All About Life Campaign. It was again an illuminating discussion, highlighting how some

significant figures in advertising see religion as a brand with different products. If you would like to read more about this see my two articles on the ACC website at: [www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/item/the-gruen-church/](http://www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/item/the-gruen-church/)

And an article in the context of the idea of the 'emergent church', considering similarities with how The Gruen Transfer has developed: [www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/item/gruen-transfiguration/](http://www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/item/gruen-transfiguration/)

In terms of advertising and showing some of the Christian adverts and critique, I also draw readers' attention to the ABC Four Corners program 'For Better or Worse: How the personal has become political in the fight over same-sex marriage' (10th October 2016) as this also played some of the adverts, mainly in order to critique them. This episode was also of interest for the interview with Archbishop Julian Porteous, a keynote speaker at the 2016 ACC National Conference. Four Corners had another angle in their program – purporting to show both sides of the politics of the debate, though of course this did not mean 'news or reporting equality', and the sarcasm could even be detected in some of the reporting comments, illustrating a general and sad trend in news journalism toward advertorial and promotion of views. Why is the side in favour of traditional marriage portrayed as anti-marriage, when it is actually pro-marriage? Perhaps this actually links into Todd Sampson's comment more than one would like to think, and for me illustrates that the debate is far more about the revision of marriage than 'marriage equality'.





# Joseph The Village

Joseph you are not a priest  
Although you are of David's Line

Joseph you are not a farmer  
Although your trade keeps you  
close to the earth

Joseph you are only  
the village carpenter

Your cloak has the perfume of wood  
and your hands are steady and firm,  
as you apply them to your trade.

Those steady hands guide the tools as  
you fashion the yoke  
shaping it and smoothing it  
to fit so perfectly that there is no rub,  
sore or scratch  
on the ox's shoulders.

Joseph you are only  
the village carpenter.

You guide your tools with your eyes  
and caress the wood  
with your sensitive fingers.

But at this moment  
you do not have  
your mind on the job,  
for your thoughts are elsewhere.  
In your mind and heart  
there burns a deep  
and abiding love.  
Well you can remember  
when Mary accepted your betrothal  
offer.  
Well you remember her eyes and face  
fresh with love.

The overpowering joy  
and deep thankfulness  
when your love for her  
was answered by her love for you.

Your beautiful Mary,  
whose whole being seemed to vibrate  
with her faith.  
All of serenity and peace.  
She too was of David's line.  
And all seemed right  
between God and yourselves.

So you applied the draw knife  
to the job  
and the shape of the wood  
took form.

The beauty of the grain shone  
through as that instrument of  
burden - carrying became a thing of  
beauty perfectly fashioned.

Yes Joseph, you are truly the village  
carpenter.

But next day  
in the carpenter's shop  
you heard the unbelievable words  
that shattered the whole of your life.

The message was  
that Mary was with child.  
That could never be.  
Not your Mary; a harlot?  
The message must be wrong.

But the message was from God,  
delivered by God's angel.

How could you deny those facts  
when you were confronted  
with those words  
spoken by God's messenger?  
What could you do?

You could not confront Mary.  
Your love for Mary  
reached beyond this tragedy.

Sitting in your workshop  
your hopes and dreams  
were in tatters.  
Yet still your thoughts  
were for your beautiful Mary:  
how best to shield her from the conse-  
quences of this message.

Then it seemed your workshop  
was flooded with light  
and in the midst of that light  
stood God's messenger again.

A voice seemed to echo  
through the timber stacks  
and the tools hanging on the wall.

"Joseph, listen to God and not to men.  
Mary is truly with child."

You drew back from the messenger  
and said  
"Are you a messenger from God?  
If you are then  
I do not believe you.

My Mary is not a harlot.  
I will never believe it.  
Go from me."

"Joseph",  
the voice sounded again,  
"what is happening to Mary  
is not of man but of God.

# Carpenter

The child Mary carries  
is a God child,  
conceived of the Holy Spirit  
and God wants you  
to be His father.

You are to marry Mary  
and when the child is born  
you are to call His name Jesus.”

“Joseph, you cannot understand.  
It is beyond your human reasoning  
because it is of God,

All that God asks of you  
is for you to believe this message  
and cherish Mary  
and trust God.”

And the angel departed

Joseph awoke from his vision  
and found himself  
sitting at his carpenter's bench  
with his tools in his hand.  
In spite of the fact  
that the messenger  
was an angel from God,  
Joseph's mind was still in a whirl.

Yes he was to cherish Mary and  
marry her;  
and to protect her from the gossip of  
the village.  
So he was to still have his beloved  
Mary.

But what of the child  
whom you will have to father  
for many years  
and call him son  
even though you will not  
be his father?

Joseph then reminded himself  
that he was only  
the village carpenter.

But this child would be  
the Child of God  
and possibly be  
the promised Messiah.

The words from Joseph were:  
“It is unbelievable but true  
that I the village carpenter  
should be included in God's wonderful  
plan for this world.”  
And his final words were  
“Yes Mary and I will love  
and cherish this child of God  
as if he is our own.”

Joseph arose from his vision  
and did as the angel  
commanded him,

He took Mary as his wife  
and kept her as a virgin  
until she gave birth to a son  
whom they cherished.  
And Mary treasured all these things  
in her heart.

As for Joseph,  
he would teach the Messiah  
to become an expert yoke builder  
and cherish those many wonderful  
hours he would spend with the Son  
of God; in the carpenter's workshop.

***Rev. Bob Imms provides a devo-  
tional column and material for  
the ACC website and is a member  
of the ACC Southern Cluster.***

## Explanation

*For years I have taken seriously  
the words of Jesus*

“If you abide in my Word  
you are truly my disciples,  
and you shall know the truth  
and the truth shall set you free.”

*It was not possible for the Gospel  
writers to include much detail in  
their record of what Jesus said or  
did. Many names of those who were  
healed are not mentioned, nor the  
towns where healing happened.*

*I have felt for years that Joseph  
was short-changed in the Gospels.*

*He disappears after the birth of  
Jesus then appears twelve years  
later in Jerusalem. Then when  
Jesus moved His family from Naza-  
reth to Capernaum Joseph is not  
mentioned at all, probably because  
he was dead.*

*So I have tried to imagine  
what it was like for him be-  
fore, during and after the  
birth of Jesus. Through  
this process I have found  
myself “abiding” in the  
Word, and I pray that  
the Holy Spirit and my  
Lord will understand.*





# Academia and Marriage

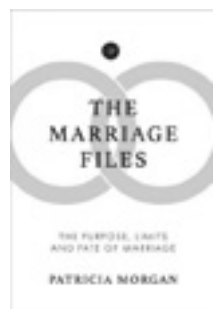
**T**he *Marriage Files*, by Patricia Morgan, was commissioned by the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life to analyse research in the field of sexuality, particularly same-sex relationships and parenting. Morgan, a senior fellow of a social policy think-tank is a researcher and writer on crime, family policy and family development. She presented reports to the House of Commons committee reviewing same-sex legislation.

Her style is incisive, masterful and argued with stripped-down logic. This text is an important body of information for politicians, policy-thinkers and thoughtful citizens serious about the social well-being of our country and who need data and evidence for the current marriage debate. Facts, data, stats and convincing reasoning, while deeply troubling, provide a powerful armoury against the social disaster of the deconstruction of marriage.

Essentially the work reveals what happens in and to a society that institutionalises homosexual marriage, focusing on the UK. Of 277 pages, 54 are taken up with graphs and supporting footnotes that expand her argument. Almost every page yields a quotable sentence.

Morgan roots out material you will never get on main-stream media: for example, in British Columbia phone apps enable children anonymously to rat to the police on 'guilty' fellow pupils, parents or teachers with regard to any perceived negative words or acts towards homosexuality in general. And the dark unspoken facts characterising homosexual lifestyle; disease, mental disorder and transient relationships are exposed clinically and carefully.

Questions raised endlessly in our Parliament and media about the health of gays deprived of the marriage institution and the 'if people love each other why can't they marry' rhetoric are put to the sword of analysis including official reports. The reader is left asking; 'Why can't they see it?'



## **The Marriage Files: The Purpose, Limits and Fate of Marriage by Patricia Morgan**

Wilberforce Publications, UK (2014)  
278 pages

Reviewed by Ian Clarkson

The chapter on 'Abolition' (of marriage) by its amalgam with homosexual unions analysing UK legislation is chilling reading. All of this material is glossed over by media, yet shows up with individual cases of anti-discrimination lawsuits and data on the effects on children.

**This seductive rise of the state and public institutions in the gay movements shows "(their) increasingly needy relationship to the state, since the cultivation of lifestyle 'identity' requires continual external support and flattery"**

The UK Equality Act requires promoting gay thinking throughout all schools. Homophobia unlike all other phobias is a moral problem requiring re-education and punishment. A parliamentary committee recommended the need of a child for a father be removed from the Human Fertilization Act, so as to advance equality.

Cameron's launch of 'marriage equality' prepared the ground for the 'cumulative dismemberment of the conjugal institution' and the removal or dilution of the distinctive connections to permanence, exclu-

sivity and procreation. Government policy has encouraged the breakdown of families with devastating social and economic consequences'.

The chapter on deconstruction and reconstruction untangles and clarifies the prime purpose of the marriage assault. Morgan delves into the society-transforming works of activists like Peter Tatchell, politicians, feminists and neo-Marxists, revealing their intent that conferring the 'legitimacy of marriage on homosexual relations will introduce a revolt against the institution into its very heart ... the substitution of sexual for economic oppression'.

This seductive rise of the state and public institutions in the gay movements shows "(their) increasingly needy relationship to the state, since the cultivation of lifestyle 'identity' requires continual external support and flattery".

The eminence and usefulness of this work is in its laying bare what is happening in and to the advanced first-world post-Christian democracies, where the marriage equality junta demands its way in legislation, nationwide educational facilities, corporations, advertising, media, churches and pervasively in everyday life. As Christian cultural commentator Os Guinness summarised Patricia Morgan's work, "explosively sane and coolly reasoned it boldly challenges the madness of much contemporary social thinking and policy. Will Morgan's work be debated as it deserves? The future of the western world hangs in part on the answer to that question"

A criticism? This is not for casual readers, you can't let your mind wander, and must have a pencil in hand.



# Unto us a Son is given

## Isaiah 9:6

**“For a child will be born to us,  
a Son will be given to us.”**

*This wonderful promise comes to us from an ageless God,  
then from the prophet Isaiah,  
and has been a part of the celebration  
of the birth of Jesus for over 2,000 years.*

*More importantly  
it is a part of the history of God's creativity.  
Also it was real for each of us  
when God recreated in us a new life  
as He called us out of darkness into His glorious light.  
Jesus says, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”.*

*Because God is eternal and yet ever present,  
He greets us at the beginning of a new day with his gifts.  
We sing, “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”.*

*Yet the re-creativity of God cannot be locked  
into our human time-frame of days and years.  
He is a re-creative God because that is His very nature.  
Therefore God's gift of a new year,  
or day, is as important for us  
as God creating the universe  
in the beginning.*

*“Unto us a Son is given”  
is a wonderful promise for us  
at the beginning of a new year  
as it is for the beginning of each new day.*

*It is the unbelievable truth  
that God is sharing His Son with us  
and that makes each new day  
glow with His presence.*

*Reverend Bob Imms is a member  
of ACC Southern Cluster  
in Tasmania*



# Legalism vs Living Faith

**C**hristianity is a relationship not a religion, so they say. I've heard the phrase many times as a cry of freedom against legalism. Exchanging legalism and works-based theology for a genuine, living experience of God is beautiful and Biblically-based. However, when I look at the dichotomy of relationship versus religion, I wonder if the phrase could serve to obscure the truth of the Bible on both counts.

The Bible certainly speaks against false religion, in both the Old Testament and the New. The Israelites who performed surface-level rituals while neglecting to love God or care for the oppressed among them were little better than the nations with their pagan gods. Time and time again, Jesus came into conflict with the Pharisees, whom he described as whitewashed sepulchres – appearing pure on the outside but dead on the inside. Superficial, legalistic religion such as this is to be rejected. However, one verse comes to my mind that challenges absolute statements on the matter. James 1:27 speaks of 'pure and faultless' religion, acceptable to God; namely caring for



orphans and widows and remaining holy and uncorrupted by the world. It's not religion itself that's anti-Christian, but religion detached from love for God and others.

Seeing Christianity only as a relationship with God can lend itself to another extreme, a subjective, individualistic experience of faith. It can become just about 'me and God', without the need for commitment to other Christians or pursuit

of Biblical truth. A relationship with God, as shown in the Bible, is deeply grounded in faith in Jesus Christ who restores us not only into fellowship with God but also into fellowship with others. This is a relationship deeply concerned with truth and holiness, on God's terms and not ours.

It may be better to say that Christianity is a religion grounded in a covenant relationship. We see in the Old Testament, God gathering a people to himself, through his promises made to Abraham, Moses and David. His people are called into genuine relationship with himself. They are also given a way to live that overflows with thanksgiving for all God has done. It was through God's covenant faithfulness that he sent Jesus to be born into this world, initiating a deeper fulfilment of the covenant in which we find salvation through faith in God's sacrificial love. As we are called into this covenant, we enter into a personal, living relationship with our God while also embracing a commitment to truth, holiness and Christian community – not as a way to be saved or feel superior but as an overflow of thanksgiving to our Saviour God.

**Bella Easterbrook is an ACC member and School Teacher in NSW**

## REFLECTION

# Being Transformed

***"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."* (2 Corinthians 3:18).**

The Holy Spirit is always at work transforming us into the likeness of Christ. Whether we face hardships or times of ease, sadness or happiness, He is always doing His transformation work.

Sometimes we ask, "What is the Lord teaching us through this thing?", as though transformation is about our 'learning lessons'. But He is often simply transforming and shaping us and how He does it is far beyond our

understanding. It is not only that He is driving sin out of our lives (although surely He does do that), but also that He is transforming our thoughts and consciences to the mind of Christ.

The chief way that the Spirit transforms us is through the hearing of the word of the Gospel. As we hear again of the cross and resurrection, the full forgiveness of sins, justification, redemption and adoption into the Father's family, the Spirit wonderfully encourages, matures, even heals us in ways beyond our understanding. He is transforming us from one degree of glory to another.

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: [www.confessingcongregations.com/assembly/members/individual-members/](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](mailto:accoffice@confessingcongregations.com) mail:

PO Box 968 Newtown NSW 2042

## What happens next

- March 6-8:  
ACC National Council

- September 11-13:  
ACC National Conference,  
Mount Louisa House of Praise,  
Townsville

### ACC Resources List

All ACC resources (except the DVD resources) are available on the ACC Website: [www.confessingcongregations.com](http://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: [vimeo.com/53983980](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



## FILM



Andrew Garfield as PFC Desmond Doss - *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016)

# Redefining Heroes



**Hacksaw Ridge**  
(2016) MA 15+

**Starring:**  
Andrew Garfield,  
Sam Worthington  
**Directed by:**  
Mel Gibson

The story of WWII Medal of Honor winner Desmond Doss, has now received full treatment in a major Hollywood production by Mel Gibson (though much of the official publicity refers to him simply as 'the director' of *Braveheart* and *The Passion of the Christ* – clearly Gibson is still being 'rehabilitated' before being returned to the Hollywood directing elite).

Hacksaw Ridge received an R rating in the USA for its violence and war depictions, and MA 15+ in Australia, recognising its adult content. It would of course be difficult to avoid the use of violence given the context. I refer to the citation for Doss's medal that reads in part: *...for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty from April 29 – 21 May 1945, while serving with the Medical Detachment, 307th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division, in action at Urasoe Mura, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands. Private First Class Doss was a company aid man when the 1st Battalion assaulted a jagged escarpment 400 feet high. As our troops gained the summit, a heavy concentration of artillery, mortar and machine gun fire crashed into them, inflicting approximately 75 casualties and driving the*

*others back. Pfc. Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying all 75 casualties one-by-one to the edge of the escarpment and there lowering them on a rope-supported litter down the face of a cliff to friendly hands. ...*

Doss is portrayed as a 'conscientious objector', but I think the term 'conscientious supporter' is more accurate as he supported the war initiative and was willing to be a medic. He was very aware of the dimensions of evil on the axis side and believed that the war was justified. Doss refused to kill though, or to carry a weapon and this was based on his conviction as a Seventh-day Adventist, stemming especially from his mother's bible training, views and own experience. Doss believed God guided him and gave him strength to serve in these almost unbelievable situations. He was willing to lay down his life for another, and was wounded three times during his service.

It is as Mel Gibson has highlighted, very much an Australian production, not only with the location filming, but Australian actors, including well-known actors Sam Worthington (Captain Glover), and Hugo Weaving (Desmond's father) and Rachel Griffiths (Desmond's mother). Desmond Doss is played in an understated and sincere manner by Andrew Garfield a US born English actor.

Hacksaw Ridge is simply quite an overpowering film, telling a story that is somewhat hard to fathom at any time, and I believe can only be understood from a Christian viewpoint.

## Watching Films and Classification

Following my last review, I was made aware of my failure to include a disclaimer and explanation reference as I have often done in the past when reviewing non-Christian films. My apologies. I thought it would be helpful to take the opportunity now to include references for three helpful resources for fuller consideration and advice about films (and also for IMDB – TV).



### Christian Movieguide

The Movieguide website provides a detailed parent based information guide for nearly all movies released and is very easy to navigate.

 [www.movieguide.org](http://www.movieguide.org)



### The Internet Movie Data Base

IMDB is probably the most comprehensive guide for movies and TV overall, and if you look up a title, you can scroll down and (usually) find a parental advisory guide for content that

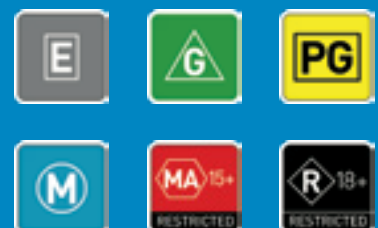
 is very helpful.  
[www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)



### Classification Australia

I have also found the official Classification Australia website helpful and the website also explains the current rating system

 for Australia.  
[www.classification.gov.au](http://www.classification.gov.au)



Peter Bentley