



ACC E-News July 2020

Pastoral Letter

Dear ACC, Individual Members, Congregations, Clusters and Groups

Once again, our country Australia is again in that place of increased cases of Coronavirus especially in Victoria. But concernedly, unlike before, the majority are community transmissions. Our prayers are with all our Victorian ACC members and congregations. May you and your loved ones be held safe under God's wings even as you bear fruit for His glory.

One of the hardest consequences of the pandemic can be the impact upon our churches. Some of you around Australia have begun services again in limited capacity and wonder what the future holds. Others of you are waiting to see what happens or have begun and have had to stop again. Many of us are frustrated that we can no longer do easily what the Lord calls us to do: worship, witness and service. We may think that the soil is no longer good soil for a harvest. It is important to remember that Jesus' context was Roman occupation and for the early church persecution. Good soil can be found in times of hardship and upheaval as well as stable times.

Jesus told a parable recorded in Matthew 13:1-23, to help explain people's different responses to his words about the Kingdom. We all know the parable of the Sower. What does it mean for us in this time of difficulty? Like the disciples we can draw close to Jesus and listen to his explanation. We can not only be encouraged to hear the word for ourselves but to tell others.

It is through understanding what happens to the unfruitful seed that we can understand the harvest bearing seed.

1. UNDERSTANDING: Firstly, the harvest bearing seed understands the message, but the seed that falls along the path refer to those who receive the word but don't understand it. The evil one comes and snatches it away. Jesus is telling us that understanding is very important. The seed is sown in the heart. Understanding is more than intellectual but also is in our hearts and actions. The Pandemic doesn't stop us seeking understanding of Christ's words. We are to come to Jesus again and again in our confusion as the disciples did, seeking understanding. Genuine faith needs understanding, and this grows with discipleship.

2. ROOT: Secondly, the harvest bearing seed have good soil where the roots can go down deep. However, the seed sown on rocky ground refers to those who have no root and the soil is shallow. They seem to receive Christ and his message quickly, but when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, the faith that's been growing in their heart withers and perishes. In our UCA context it is so important that we put down our roots deep into faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as testified to in scripture.

When trouble comes in the UCA and society because we speak Christ's words, we will not be scorched and dry up in our faith, but rather be resilient. We have deeply rooted nourishment in Christ that sustains us, so we do not deny the gospel in the midst of apostasy.

3. UNDIVIDED HEART: Thirdly the harvest bearing seed grows in an undivided heart seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The seed grown among the thorns is in someone who gets distracted by the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth. These distractions become most important. They choke out the word so that it can't bear fruit. What do you spend the most time thinking about? My husband challenged me yesterday and I'm glad. He told me that all I was speaking about was the coronavirus and it was true. I usually look at several papers online twice a day. This is a good habit because we need to be aware of what is happening in the world. But I was finding I was going to the news anxiously many times throughout the day to get the latest updates on the coronavirus. My obsession was choking out the word, the time I could spend dwelling and thinking upon Christ. No fruit can grow where such thorns make no room for the plant.

My prayer for us all is that the word of God may find good soil in our lives in the ACC not just after the pandemic but during it.

May we grow in understanding that flows out into our lives.

May we have deep roots in the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ

May we have an undivided heart that is not choked out by fear and greed.

And even in times of great upheaval before the great and glorious day of Christ's coming, may we may join in the great end time Harvest for God's eternal glory.

In Jesus' mighty name. Amen

Blessings

Anne

(Rev. Anne Hibbard - Secretary National Council)

ACC NEWS

AGM 2020: Online via Zoom on Saturday 24th October 10am-1pm.

As we explained in the last two Eletters, the ACC conference in September has been cancelled this year due to the coronavirus and its impact on congregations. However, in keeping with our ACC constitution and because it is important, the National Council in May decided we are going to include an online AGM via zoom this year on Saturday 24th October 10am- 1pm. We encourage you all to mark down this date in your diary. It is also helpful for ACC congregations to begin appointing delegate/s for the AGM. We don't want anyone to be excluded because of lack of technology. It is possible to enter the meeting by phone if you don't have a computer. Members may also like to gather in a regional location and join the meeting together. Those without technology in congregations could aid delegates or members without technology. We also send out training guidelines and hopefully a trial session for people to check everything is working okay. If you have any items to go on the Agenda, please email the ACC office. More details about this meeting in our August Newsletter.

ACCATALYST MAGAZINE

The print edition of the combined edition of ACCatalyst for March-June 2020 has hopefully arrived at most locations now. (It has also been on the website to download).

If you are the contact in a congregation or group, we would appreciate you distributing as you are able, and/or keeping copies for when you return to your physical location. If you are concerned about paper at the present you can check the latest health guidelines. One suggestion, you could leave them 'out' for a few days before distributing (as you are able).

The edition contains theological and historical reflections and material related to this COVID-19 virus era, as well as continuing reflections on the state and future of the UCA. The second volume of the Piggin-Linder history of Australian evangelicalism is reviewed (**including reference to reform and renewal movements in the UCA**), along with ACC news and updates. Two articles about what is happening in the UMC in the USA and the confessing movement in that denomination provide a helpful link and wider context to understanding what is happening in Western Christianity.

Download

http://www.confessingcongregations.com/uploads/ACCatalyst_06_2020.pdf

BARNABAS FUND

As we told you last Eletter, ACC is now a Donor partner of the Barnabas Coronavirus Emergency Network. Dr Angela Geary from Barnabas Fund Australia has sent these prayer points to ACC to help us to continue remember the Persecuted Church in our prayers.

To help you to pray for persecuted Christians around the world in this time of coronavirus

Please pray for our persecuted family around the world experiencing a time of great hardship and added pressure due to the coronavirus lockdown. Hunger has become a huge need for millions of Christians. Many in countries including India and Pakistan are low-paid daily-wage workers whose jobs disappeared overnight. Parts of East Africa and Pakistan were already gripped by severe food shortage due to locusts when the coronavirus crisis hit. In India, some Christians were left to starve when local extremists in control of distribution withheld government food rations from them because of their Christian faith. Praise God that Barnabas has already fed over 500,000 hungry Christians during the crisis and ask that aid will reach all in need as He continues to provide for His righteous ones (Psalm 37:25). Lift up to the Lord the most vulnerable, including widows and orphaned children, who are particularly hard hit.

Anti-Christian violence has soared in West Africa under coronavirus lockdowns, as terrorists took merciless advantage of reduced security and curfews that made Christian communities sitting targets. India too has seen an increase in extremist attacks against Christians. Ask that the Lord will be a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5) protecting His people. Pray that Christians affected by violence will be upheld in their faith, especially during this time of isolation from churches and community. Mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15), asking that God will comfort those who have been bereaved, heal the injured and meet the needs of those who have lost their homes in the destructive spate of attacks seen in countries including Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali. Ask that the Holy Spirit will enable our brothers and sisters to forgive their persecutors (Matthew 5:44) and that their Christ-like response will impact on the hearts of those who try to hurt and destroy them.

To find out more about how Barnabas Fund is helping persecuted Christians affected by the global coronavirus crisis please visit our website: barnabasfund.org/bcen

You may also like to consider attending the online **Barnabas Supporters' Evening on 16 July 2020, 7pm Australian Eastern Standard Time**. This remote event, hosted by Australian CEO Ashley Saunders, is an opportunity to hear directly from Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of

Barnabas Fund, and Caroline Kerslake, International Director of Projects. Mrs Rosemary Sookhdeo, International Director of Finance, will also be present. <https://barnabasfund.org/au/live/>

ACC PRAYER

- Praise God for His eternal glory and loving kindness that never changes, even when everything in the world is shaking.
- Praise God for the faithfulness of many of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Africa and Asia who are holding firm to their Christian faith through the pandemic even though it means they go hungry.
- Pray for the ongoing work of the ACC and for the next national council meeting on Monday 27th July 7pm. Pray for ongoing wisdom, courage and strength.
- Pray for the work of the ACC School of Faith and for Hedley Fihaki who is the interim chair. Pray the Lord would call many people to be an ACC Pastor or Lay Preacher and they would greatly encourage ACC congregations.
- Pray for preparations for the zoom ACC AGM on October 24th for the Lord's guidance and help in practical issues and also for good decision making.
- Pray for Daniel Andrews that he would cry out to the Lord in the state's distress and seek wisdom and help and that the Lord would hear. Pray for all the state premiers and for our Prime Minister, Scott Morrison for strength, wisdom, protection and unity – to help us all through this difficult time. Remember to pray for their families as well.
- Continue to pray that the virus would die out in Jesus' name. Remember in your prayers the many countries that have little resources to deal with the rapidly numbers of increasing cases.
- Pray for courage and strength for all ACC leaders and their families, facing difficulties because of standing firm to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY SCHOOL OF FAITH DEVOTIONAL

If you would like to subscribe to the ACC School of Faith weekly devotional, please see the ACC School of Faith Website.

ACC ONLINE SERVICES

Some congregations are still unable to meet in person. If you don't have an online service to join yet, please check out the list of ACC congregations on the ACC website.

You can also attend our **ACC Sunday afternoon Communion Service by Zoom**.

This service going now for 2 years will continue even after the restrictions have lifted.

And the ACC prayer meeting **every Wednesday** at 8am NSW, Vic, Tas, Qld; 7:30am SA, NT; 6am WA.

[Details available from the ACC office.](#)

Now unto Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen

Rev. Anne (Hibbard) Prayer Co-ordinator

Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc. ABN 73 794 518 715 ARBN 128 001 785 ; Incorporated in NSW INC9887628 Liability of Members is Limited. Registered Office: 2 Erskineville Road, Newtown NSW; Postal Mail: PO Box 968 Newtown NSW 2042; Tel: (02) 9550 5358; 0423 637 576; accoffice@confessingcongregations.com; www.confessingcongregations.com