

the Good Confession



AUTUMN 2023

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Reflections on being part of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations!

with *Dr Hedley Fihaki*



Being part of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the UCA was something I believe was critical and necessary in 2006 to call “the UCA to determine matters of doctrine and ethics according to the teaching of the Scriptures...”, particularly in the light of the failure (apostasy) of the 2003 and 2006 Assembly to uphold orthodox doctrines on the question of sexuality and leadership”.

Sadly, in 2018 the 15th Assembly of the UCA adopted R64 on ‘religious and diversity’ also known as ‘two integrities’ - the heretical and deceptive doctrine that says that we can hold together two mutually exclusive and contradictory doctrines on marriage within the framework of the Basis of Union which commits the UCA to the authority of Scripture.

As stated in the ACC’s Declaration of Faith and Intent, ‘by flouting Christ’s affirmation of marriage and its significance as the central and unique symbol of Christ’s relationship to the Church, the UCA’s acceptance of same-gender marriage embeds this heresy into the Church’s understanding of Christology and ecclesiology

Do I regret being part of the ACC because of this?

in a way that has not been directly stated previously’. This decision has created schism within the UCA, one that is now unworkable and untenable hence why the ACC has called for ‘amicable separation’.

Making a stand on this issue has led to the removal of the recognition of my ordination by the UCA as well as the termination of my placement on the 14th October 2022. Because the Mooloolaba Christian Church continues to support me as their minister, the Presbytery of Mary Burnett dissolved our congregation (similar to what happened to the former ACC Sunnybank UCA) on the 18th March 2023.

Do I regret being part of the ACC because of this? Absolutely not! I continue to be very proud of being part of the ACC and their unflinching and unwavering commitment to sole loyalty to Jesus Christ the living head of the Church, despite the cost.

Dr Hedley Fihaki,
*Chair of the Assembly of
Confessing Congregations*

Rev Dr Ian Breward 1934 - 2022

Upon Reverend Dr Ian Breward's retirement from the National Council in 2015, the following Minute of Appreciation was passed by standing acclamation at the AGM. It is appropriate to record this minute in this final edition of The Good Confession as a tribute to Ian. We give thanks for the life of Ian and pray for his wife Eva and his family.

The retirement of the Reverend Dr Ian Breward from the National Council is a significant loss to the leadership of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. Ian is the longest serving member of the National Councils of the Reforming Alliance and the ACC. He was appointed to the first council of the RA at a meeting in Sydney called by Evangelical Members of the UCA in September 2003 after resolution '84' was passed at the Tenth Assembly in July 2003.

Ian's strong, understated contribution has served the confessing movement very well. His deep knowledge of Church history and his insight into the issues confronting our church and society were inspired and fostered by his love of the Scriptures and faith in Christ's saving grace.

Ian's reluctance to speak until he had something to say is a gift that benefited the confessing movement, particularly when the way forward was unclear. His quiet wisdom belied his enormous theological output, his substantial works including: A History of the Churches in Australasia (Oxford University Press 2001), the Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity (2010), Dr Harold Wood: A Notable Methodist (2013), A History of the Australian Churches (1993), and Australia: "The Most Godless Place Under Heaven?" (1988)

His teaching, research and publications as Prof. of Church History at both Knox College, Dunedin (1965-81) and Ormond College, Melbourne (1982-99), along with his many other academic and administrative responsibilities and work as the Archivist for the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (2000-13) fitted him to understand and respond to the current crisis.

In 'Unity and Dissent: An Historical Perspective,' he wrote with typical brevity and insight, 'Our dissenting and separatist heritage has faded in popular memory, so that those who speak of conscientious separation from the Uniting church are seen as underminers of unity.' (The Other Side of 84 2004, p 5) Cautioning against ill-advised schism, he noted some of the reasons that our forbears found compelling in moving from dissent to separation, including the 'conviction that the Scriptures had been misheard, the mission of the Church weakened, worship corrupted, key

doctrines subverted and disregarded, constitutional procedures not honoured, and leaders captured by the spirit of the age.' (p5)

Ian has been a wise leader and a great encourager of many in the confessing movement and beyond. He understands the ecumenical church and the global context in which the contemporary crises have arisen. His love for Christ and his evangelical commitment to God's Spirit-led mission in the world is deeply appreciated and his perceptive leadership in the RA and ACC will be sorely missed.

Presented by the late Reverend Dr Max Champion at the 2015 ACC AGM

Margaret Macmillan 1940 - 2023

ACC gives thanks for the life of Margaret Macmillan and her significant ministry in reform and renewal groups within the Uniting Church over many years. Margaret was involved right from the start, particularly in Victoria with groups preceding (and then continuing alongside) the ACC. Margaret was a foundation member of the ACC National Council in the formative years (2006 – 2009), and an active member of the ACC Social Responsibility Commission during the first decade that produced important statements, providing a substantial resource base for the ACC and

its members. Margaret also supported Victorian members and Melbourne gatherings, and many members would testify to her hospitality and service, along with her husband Malcolm, particularly in their home at Whittlesea.

We remember Malcolm Macmillan, the children Ruth, Anthea, Heather and Hugh and their wider families. Margaret's funeral notice aptly stated:

A life of love, faith and dedicated Christian service in Australia and overseas. *'As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.'* 1 Corinthians 15: 22

Rev Robert Imms 1926 - 2023

'Bob' is warmly remembered for his long-standing ministry and support among Tasmanian UC and ACC Members and his encouraging devotionals Seeds for Harvesting, and other writings published in the ACCatalyst magazine and also published in three volumes.

We give thanks for Bob's life and ministry and pray for Miriam (they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in 2022), and the family. Bob's funeral service on 23 March 2023 was appropriately held at Wesley Uniting Church in Hobart, where ACC Southern Cluster meetings were also held.

A Prayer for the Church the one holy, catholic and apostolic church

Heavenly Father, make us one! Make your church one in Christ. You see the fragmentation of the church in the western-world, and we know your heart weeps. Help us to have Jesus in the centre of your church, not a Jesus that we make up to suit our own agendas, but the richness of Jesus Christ your Son, as testified to in the Scriptures. He is the one who lived, who died on the cross for us, who rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is now seated at your right-hand side. He is the one who is coming back to judge the living and the dead. Forgive us for placing other things in the centre and expecting or even demanding unity to that which is not Christ. Have mercy on us Lord. Father, make us one in Christ!

Heavenly Father, make your church holy! Jesus Christ your son washes us tenderly with water and the word (Ephesians 5:25). Through your Holy Spirit, you constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life (Basis of Union paragraph 18). Oh Lord, forgive us as your church, when we resist your cleansing, and show contempt for the riches of your kindness, forbearance and patience not realising that your kindness is intended to lead us to repentance. (Romans 2:4). Forgive us when instead of being regulated and controlled by your holy scriptures, we allow ourselves to be regulated by whatever agenda our culture is currently pushing. Have mercy on us Lord. Father, make your church holy!

Heavenly Father, empower your church to be catholic, in the sense of being for the whole world, not just our corner. We thank you that for all who belong to Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female (Galatians 3:28-29). Forgive us O Lord when we put up barriers between different groups who believe in you and believe that one part is less or more than us. Forgive us for having hard hearts and not loving all our brothers and sisters in Christ and laying down our lives for them as Christ did for us. Forgive us for turning a blind eye to the persecution that some are going through and forgetting that when part of the body is suffering the whole body suffers (1 Corinthians 12:26a). Have mercy on us Lord. Father, make your church catholic!

Heavenly Father, make your church apostolic! Thank you for the first apostles who bore witness to the resurrection of our Lord and who taught the early church in the truth of the gospel. Thank you for all those who have followed, who have both proclaimed and guarded the Christian faith and passed it on from one generation to the next. Forgive us Lord for breaking the chain and discarding our responsibility to protect the treasure of the good news about your Son until He returns. Forgive us for not holding firmly to the word that was preached to us, and then neglecting to pass it on in its fullness to the next generation. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Have mercy on us Lord. Father, make your church apostolic!

Almighty Triune God, thank you that even though we are faithless, you remain faithful. (2 Timothy 2:13) Thank you that Jesus Christ your Son is coming back for a holy bride and that she will be ready. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, prepare us O Lord to be that bride, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church for your eternal glory, in Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

☪️ Father,
make us
one in
Christ!

"Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the
Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made
herself ready;
it was granted her to
clothe herself
with fine linen, bright
and pure"—
for the fine linen is the
righteous deeds of
the saints.

Revelation 19:6-8
(ESV)

Rev. Anne Hibbard,
National Council Secretary
and Prayer Co-ordinator

My Deep Thanks

with *Peter Bentley*

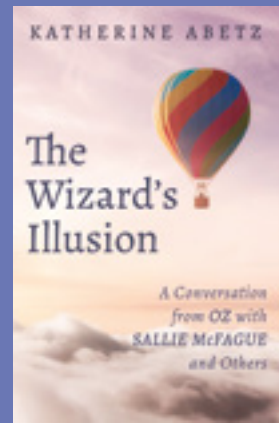
As I wind down from more organised and public service in the confessing movement, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all those members who have supported me (and help to facilitate the ministry of RA and ACC) in so many ways through my various staff person roles since 2005 with Reforming Alliance and then the last 3 ½ years of voluntary service, highlighting:

- Hospitality: over 200 visits with many entailing extended stays with members, including wonderful meals and times of sharing
- Transport provided for visitations (I think my 'oldest' driver was 95 years young)
- Prayer Support Teams, particularly during the UCA Assembly meetings
- Notes, emails and messages of encouragement from members
- Practical care and support, and the enabling of various staff roles through generous financial support of the ACC from members
- Support and service of the members of ACC committees, commissions, boards and the National Council, and other ACC staff, and contractors, particularly for the ACC publications and resources

It has been a privilege to stand alongside people in their local witness of Confessing Christ. I give thanks for the lives of many saints that have now departed and rejoice in the hope we have to come, the continuing proclaiming of the truth in new ways and the renewal of the Church.

Peace and blessings in Christ.
Peter Bentley

Book
Review



The Wizard's Illusion

Congratulations to ACC Tasmanian member Dr Katherine Abetz, on the publication of her book *The Wizard's Illusion: A Conversation from Oz with Sallie McFague and Others* (2022).

Using illustrations from L. Frank Baum's book *The Wizard of Oz* in the context of the unmasking of an illusion, Katherine engages with eco-feminist theologian Sallie McFague (1933-2019), critiquing her metaphorical foundation particularly in the series of works *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language; The Body of God; Super; Natural Christians*.

Purchase information is available at the publisher website: *The Wizard's Illusion* - Wipf and Stock Publishers.



WHO WE ARE

Within the Uniting Church context of a very broad range of theology and practice, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc. is a nationwide body of congregations and individuals whose vision is:

- Confessing the Lord Jesus Christ
- Proclaiming the Truth
- Renewing the Church.

We do this by:

- Prayer, with our prayer network and regular (online) prayer meetings.
- 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, particularly within the ACC School of Faith.
- Providing resources through our websites, social media, newsletters and gatherings that build up believers, develop their gifts, and equip them for life, mission and works of service.



For more information about the ACC visit: confessingcongregations.org.au

Note: the website now contains the collection of ACCatalyst magazines. confessingcongregations.org.au/accatalyst-magazine/
Download digital copies now or contact the ACC office for information about future digital arrangements.