

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 2 | JUNE 2019

# ACC Catalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



## State of the Union

What's  
Happening  
in the  
UCA?

UMC Conference  
Wrap Up  
HAPPENINGS • 9

Remembering  
John Smith  
IAN CLARKSON • 6

An Extraordinary  
Journey  
FILM • 24



Cover photo - Supplied

## EDITORIAL

This edition provides further comment on the continuing difficulties in the UCA. Coming nearly a year after the 15th Assembly decision to revise marriage, I hope that these reflections will stimulate discussion among members and help you to reflect on your local situation and part in the witness and life of the Uniting Church and the nature of and implications for being part of a confessing movement.

I also commend for your readership the reflection on John Smith and the documentary on the life of Billy Graham as we consider our evangelical witness in these challenging days.

Peace and grace,  
**Peter Bentley**



ACCatalyst is published by the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc.  
ABN 73 794 518 715 ARBN 128 001 785.  
Incorporated in NSW. INC 9887628.  
Liability of members is limited. Opinions expressed in ACCatalyst do not necessarily reflect the official views of the assembly.  
Executive Editor: Max Champion  
Managing Editor: Peter Bentley  
Consulting Editor: John Sandeman

Office: 2 Erskineville Rd, Newtown NSW 02 9550 5358  
Email for ACCatalyst:  
catalysteditor@confessingcongregations.com  
ACCatalyst is a member of The Australian Religious Press Association  
Design & Layout: Wes Selwood (Selwood Media)  
Printed by Brougham Press, Scoresby Rd, Bayswater Vic. ISSN 1835 2073



# Signs

by Robyn Painter

Robyn Painter ministers in the Peterborough community

Have you noticed how it seems to be a favourite trick of somebody around here to bend road signs around? As I headed off to Adelaide last Sunday afternoon I noticed that some dim person had bent around the Booborowie Rd sign so that it pointed down the bitumen. I grumbled to myself as I drove.

Why do people do that? Of course it's not a problem for people who already know the way - they won't be fooled. But it makes things difficult for those who don't know the way and are depending on those signs to show them the way. Having a wrong sign is worse than having no sign at all, because a wrong sign gives drivers a false sense of security, because they think they know the way, but they are wrong.

Did you know that in the very early days, before the word "Christian" was invented, followers of Jesus were called "the Way"? They were called The Way because they knew Jesus and pointed others to him. As long as they stayed true to Jesus' teaching and God's Word anyone who was seeking would find the way to Jesus.

There were groups around who were like bent signposts. They claimed to have other "truth" and a different way. In the Bible both Paul and John warned people to stay away from the teaching of these groups. There is only one way and one truth. Any sign pointing in a different direction will lead you astray.

It's important for us to read and study God's road map, his Word, the Bible. No human teacher is going to get it right all the time (In the past I have said things from the pulpit that I have later realized were not quite right!), and that way we can ensure that we are still on the right path and haven't taken a wrong turn.

Even better, we have access to a Navigator, Jesus, who will lead us to himself. Isaiah says when God's people call out to him, God says, "This is the Way, walk in it". Proverbs 3 says when we trust God with all our heart, and acknowledge him, he will direct our paths. In Psalm 32:8 God says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you".



There is a right way, and there are ways that are not right for Christians. But God has given us his Word, his Son and his Holy Spirit. We have all we need to find the right road, so that we can walk it side by side with Jesus.

# Arise Nemo

What does it look like when thousands of young people are on fire for God? What does it look like when a generation of young people encounter the glory and the grace of God in the good news of Jesus? What does it look like to see young people live sacrificially and passionately on mission for God's great saving purposes in Australia and beyond?

Those were some of the questions in my mind as I was driving up from Sydney to Brisbane to speak at the ACC QLD Arise launch event. Three things are clear: We in Australia are living in a culture which is post-Christian. We belong to a denomination which has departed from the faithful and clear explanation of the Scriptures. Too many churches are continuing to lose members – especially young people (under the age of 30).

'Arise' is the National Emerging Leaders Network of the ACC. As we begin this ministry, we desire to be laser-focused on three things:

- 1) Reaching the lost with the Gospel of Jesus;
- 2) Discipling the reached;
- 3) Training and equipping young leaders for faithful and effective service unto Jesus and His Church.

At 'Arise', we hope to train and empower young people who will live out the call of genuine discipleship: "...Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." (Mark 8:34-35). The modern-day church needs more young people who are passionately in love with Jesus, marked by holiness and purity, following Him with grateful obedience, and active in reaching the lost with the saving news of Jesus Christ. We believe God will raise up the next generation of young leaders in the ACC. Will you join us in praying for this?

*Pastor Matt Kang is a member of the ACC National Council.*

## Our Christian Heritage

Here is another fountain far away for many of us - in Maryborough, Queensland. Built in 1966 on the western side of the City Hall, it was a gift of the Junior Chamber of Commerce to the citizens of Maryborough, in remembrance of two heroic nurses who lost their lives in the 1905 plague outbreak in the city.

This fountain commemorates Nurses Cecilia Elizabeth Bauer and Rose Adelaide (Adela) Wiles, who gave their lives in 1905 after volunteering to care for victims of the pneumonic plague, although they did not at the time yet know for certain what the disease was. (There were none of the distinctive buboes of the bubonic variety.) It was a more infectious version of the same bacterium as the bubonic plague, *Yersinia pestis*, a major outbreak of which Queensland and New South Wales coastal ports had experienced only five years earlier, in 1900. Eight people died in the 1905 Maryborough outbreak, the only Australian outbreak of the pneumonic form. The sufferers and a group of nurses were effectively locked away in the quarantined hospital. Nurse Cecilia Bauer died on 6 June and Nurse Adela Wiles six days later. A third nurse, who had been caring for Adela Wiles, became sick but recovered.

The funeral of Nurse Bauer, the daughter of Felix and Annie Bauer, was held on Wednesday 7 June. The arrangement had to be constrained because the danger was not entirely over, and the funeral proceeded from the hospital. It was only on 16 June that it was safe to remove the surviving nurses for recovery.

Nurse Wiles was the daughter of a Methodist Minister, the Rev. Charles Wiles, and Mary Wiles. She was a Sunday School teacher and a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. At her funeral at Wesley Church in Maryborough on Sunday 18 June, the Rev. J.G. Martin said



that she "followed in the steps of one who gave His life for us all".

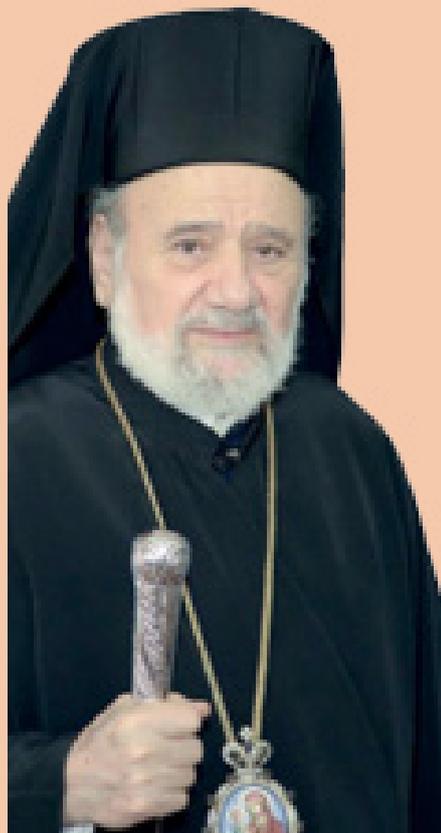
## References

- Department of Public Health, Report on the Outbreak of Plague at Maryborough, Brisbane, 1905.
- Black Death — Pneumonic Plague at Maryborough, Queensland, 1905 (film by Douglas Fraser and Tony Matthews, 1986 revised as DVD 2015).
- The Maryborough Chronicle, May-June 1905.
- A. Matthews, *River of Dreams: a History of Maryborough and District*. Maryborough: Maryborough City Council, 1995
- L. Rossow, *The Saddest Chapter*. Brisbane Copy Right Publishing, 2009.
- M.D. Prentis, "Prayer and Car-bolic: Reactions to the Plague in Sydney in 1900," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 104, 1 (June 2018), pp. 28-46.

# In Memorium

ACC extends our sympathy to the Greek community following the death of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos Harkianakis, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia (Archbishop of Australia from April 1975 to 25 March 2019). Archbishop Stylianos contributed widely to the church especially through inter-church dialogues and was the substantial contributor in the Greek Orthodox - Uniting Church dialogue until its suspension. Archbishop Stylianos stood firmly for the faith and encouraged his members to maintain their Christian understanding and commitment to marriage in the face of the societal changes. In a message received in 2005 via the Reforming Alliance executive, Archbishop Stylianos outlined:

“In due course, I will not hesitate to reiterate my doctrinal, as well as my pastoral, commitment to the non-negotiable Word of God (not only in the Bible, but also in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church).”



PUBLIC SQUARE

BY PSEUDO-MAXIMUS

# Sacrifice

*Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' (Jn 10:11,15,17).*

*... 'Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends' (Jn 15:13).*

**T**hese words, repeated three times in Jn 10:11ff, are apt for our reflection in Anzac week, almost the only time that we are reminded of sacrificial actions which are bigger than our personal desires.

On Anzac day words about 'laying down of life for others' are particularly relevant as we recall the terrible cost of war and the sacrifices made by millions of people, including family and friends, who tragically died for their fellow Australians and humanity in the fight against tyranny. While most of us do not glorify war, we honour their memory.

Often, however, words about heroism are taken out of context to suggest that dying for one's country is the highest form of sacrificial love. This conviction is expressed in inscriptions on RSL and Church Honour Boards that 'They made the Supreme Sacrifice' for 'God, King and Country.'

It is no dishonour to the memory of those who have died in war to say, emphatically, that the sacrificial love of Christ must not be mistaken for heroic deaths in a national cause, no matter how necessary, tragic or just.

...

In The Four Loves, C.S. Lewis

describes the importance of love for one's country while pointing out the dangers. Patriotism fosters commitment beyond the self, a sense of history and identity, love for real neighbours (rather than for abstract 'humanity'), and a deep affection that can laugh at national foibles and weep over national disgrace and humiliation. It is dangerous and demonic, though, when it fosters racial superiority or blindness to national faults, including of those who died in battle.

C.S. Lewis reminds us that, while we should appreciate the sacrifices of those who died fighting tyranny, we must also think about those who have died and are dying because they challenged national ideals in the name of the 'Good Shepherd who lay down his life for the sheep.'

Jesus did not die for his country on the battlefield. Unlike Mohammed, he did not lead an army in Holy Jihad. Unlike the Jewish freedom fighter, Judas Maccabeus (168BC) he did not return the Temple to its true purpose by military means. He was crucified by his fellow countrymen as the enemy of the State, the Church, humanity and God. Unlike national heroes, Jesus died a dishonourable death!

Such a fate was completely unexpected though, looking back, there is a hint of it in Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isa 52:13-53:7). The Messiah would bring an end to Jewish suffering by defeating the forces of godless tyranny in a Righteous War in which their faith would be vindicated. In stark contrast, Christ's sacrificial action in 'laying down his life for the sheep' added a new and shocking dimension to the traditional picture of the Good Shepherd. Where David

the Shepherd-King risked his life to defend Israel in war, Jesus sacrificed his life for Jews (and others) without use of military force.

This is very puzzling. We don't have comparable examples to help us make sense of the strange power of divine love through death. As Paul puts it in Romans, even the most heroic deaths, in peace or war, are not the same as Christ's sacrificial action 'for us' on the cross. No analogy is adequate for an event without parallel in history. By his death, Christ frees the whole of humanity from the power of evil and death. How can we make sense of this?

Perhaps, though, Anzac remembrance of the 'wounds of war,' when soldiers died to free us from tyranny, can help us understand something of the way in which terrible suffering has healing effect in the life of the community. The few died on our behalf - for us.

Bruce Dawe puts it well in his poem Gallipoli, 'Gallipoli is a victory / that not all nations greet. / A strange paradox that finds / Affirmation in defeat.' He reminds us that freedom and human dignity were restored because of sacrificial actions 'on behalf of others' that seemed to have failed in the face of evil, but actually gave rise to hope.

Anzac remembrance, however, is not the same as remembering the uniquely sacrificial love of God for all in Christ. Where Anzac Day commemorates the sacrifices of often frightened, angry, grief-stricken, guilt-ridden and depressed national heroes who upheld noble values, the Church celebrates the healing power for all people of the One whose sacrificial life and death was without pomp and ceremony or public recognition.

Thus, because Jesus died in love for all flawed people, not only for our fellow citizens, he has healed the deepest rift in the human community - the rift between us and God. His sacrificial death has greater power to transform our lives than even the noblest of heroic deaths. As Paul says (Rom 5:6ff), Christ loves the ungodly of every nation, challenges the sin of every person and community and, remarkably, restores us to fellowship with God.

At this important time in Australian public life, when we rightly give thanks for the bravery of men and women who died for our

country in the cause of freedom and human dignity, let us give thanks even more for the One who 'lay down his life for the sheep' of every nation. The fact that he was crucified outside the walls of political and religious respectability is the mark of the radical difference between his healing love and every other kind of sacrificial action, in war and peace.

This unparalleled form of sacrificial action is what the Church is called to proclaim - on all days.

It is very surprising, then, that we pay more attention to heroic sacrifices on behalf of national or humane causes than we do to people who have been put to death in the service of the crucified Jesus. Perhaps, for too long, we have confused heroic deaths in war with those of Christian martyrs? The Medieval use of the Cross on battle shields and its use to mark war graves suggests so! Think, too, of the low-key media reports about Easter services and the high-profile given to hospital appeals and football matches. The message of Christ-crucified for all gets short-shrift in public life.

Unfortunately, unlike our Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican friends, we Protestants don't mark the lives of 'martyrs of the faith' in the Church year. We do not sufficiently honour people of courage who have died because of their faith in Christ and their refusal to obey national ideals.

Although being ignored in the Western media, many Christian communities around the world today are suffering persecution and murder on a daily basis. Christians in many parts of the Middle East - Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey - are being forced to flee from their homelands in huge numbers. The suffering of our Christian brothers and sisters should open our eyes to the

difference between national loyalty and loyalty to Christ. ...

As we remember terrible personal and national suffering in wartime, let us not forget that the battle for faith is even more important, particularly in countries like Australia where hostility to Christ and the church has become more strident. The Church is being forced to learn that costly discipleship in the service of the One who made the Supreme Sacrifice is not the same as remembering national heroes whose lives were sacrificed.

Perhaps, something of the 'supreme sacrifice' of this Good Shepherd (Jn 15:13) may be seen if we were to transform familiar stories of heroic deeds in a way that can scarcely be imagined.

- If Private John Simpson had crossed behind enemy lines on his donkey to rescue Turkish soldiers and died protecting them from Australian gun-fire, we would have a better parable of Christ's death.
- If an Australian POW, having been appallingly mistreated by a Japanese officer, nevertheless saves him from death at the hands of a fellow prisoner, we would have a closer parallel to the death of Christ.

This is not to denigrate sacrificial actions against tyranny in war. But it does mean that the Church's primary battle is to convince others that the Good Shepherd, who is Lord of heaven and earth, died on the Cross for flawed and fallible people from all nations, including our national enemies.

#### **Lest we forget!**

*Sermon by Rev Dr Max Champion, 29th April 2019*

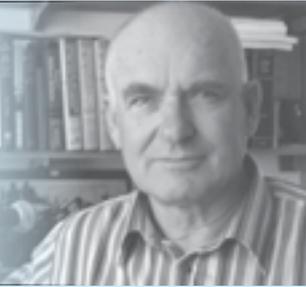


# John Smith:

## Australia's Apologist & Evangelist

Ian  
Clarkson

UCA Minister - South Australia



At 77 and after a long illness John Smith (Smithy) died peacefully in the arms of Glenna his beloved companion of 50 years early on the morning of March 7, 2019.

The memorial service was as hand-crafted and non-conforming as was John Smith. Well over a thousand attending, with hundreds of bikers from most outlaw clubs, plus of course the God Squad founded by John and now an international biker evangelising movement. A recurring theme placed John as the Aussie John Wesley.

John loved Wesley and read and thought deeply into his theology, methods and style. Like Wesley, John at his peak was probably amongst the most compelling preachers in the country. And the quarter of a million miles the founder of Methodism did in horseback the founder of the God Squad did on a Harley perhaps ten times as far. Here are ten parallels between the two Johns separated by nearly three centuries, yet simultaneous in what is weighted with eternal reality.

**1 Seriousness.** A word Wesley often used to exhort his coworkers. Anyone who worked with Smithy felt the seriousness of his mission. There were priorities to fight for. Mediocrity or triviality was not in his bag.

**2 Delight in the Creation and adoration of the Creator.** Wesley frequently referred to the beauty of landscapes. He was probably as skilled a cartographer as any, of England's landscape owing to the quarter million miles he rode on horse-back all around it. Smithy's house was full of flora and fauna species collected over his nation-wide mission sorties. I was pillion on his earlier 'Kwaka' 900 on the far West Coast through extensive scrub when he noticed one stand-out species, a eucalypt tetrapetra (I learned) amongst hectares of bushland. He gleefully collected the gum-nuts.

**3 Church.** Wesley never left the institutional church but pioneered a church planting movement unprecedented in history. Smithy challenged and exhorted the institutional church like no one else. He was once counselled by a (former) UCA Assembly president to stay out of it for the sake of his ministry. Both Johns knew the Word of God proclaimed was the life of church and society. Smithy's base, the 'Jesus Light and

Powerhouse' attracted hundreds of truth-hungry counter-culture youth, but it survived and flourished only by the continuous teaching of the Word of God.

**4 Go first to the marginalised.** Wesley magnetised to the Gospel the miners, oppressed farm labourers, prisoners and others of society's discards. Smithy was the apostle to the urban marginalised. He was fair dinkum. One of the least would have his attention without his eyes wavering in a crowd after a meeting as others waited and waited to have his attention. He was like this to the end at his beloved urban church outpost, St. Martins.

**5 Preaching method.** Wesley's most common purpose in open air preaching was to 'reinforce the text', meaning its application was shot home to heart and conscience. Mere descriptive or even explanatory preaching was insufficient. Smithy likewise sheeted home close application of Scripture. No mere talking about doctrine, or just describing doctrine; the hearers must take its truth to action.

**6 Physical resilience and stamina.** Wesley lost his way walking across Georgia, went to sleep on the ground, awoke at dawn, prised off his garments frozen to the soil and continued. Smithy slept in the desert as he walked and worked with beloved aboriginal brothers to stir their courage with the Gospel. His body was the servant of his mind and mission.

**7 Voracious readers.** Both absorbed massive amounts of information in the service of the preaching yet were keenly and foremostly 'homo unius libri' as Wesley put it, 'a man of one Book'. Brilliant with secondary and tertiary students, Smithy would master set curricula novels and texts, and then be able to critique and commandingly employ their ideas in the service of the Gospel. Thousands heard him at these events, and many were persuaded to follow Jesus.

**8 The doctrine of sanctification.** Wesley and Smithy were both thoroughly reformed in doctrine, but they were not just that. They could constructively critique the greats and find the distinctive angles of the Gospel for their day. Regeneration was more important than unapplied confessionals. Living Faith that glorified God and issued from a changed heart was the object of preaching and the test of effectiveness and indeed faithfulness to the Gospel.

**9 Preaching Perfection.** Not a morally static thing, but a demonstration of true scriptural understanding shown in overflowing labours of love toward God and one's neighbour. The way Jesus expressed it as an imitation of the Father by respectful sons. Fragile humans restored and complete in Christ now on the way with an abundance of opportunity to serve with the Master.

**10 Critique of their culture.** Where it had usurped or opinionated itself over the culture of the Kingdom of God. The tools of logic, a whip-smart lateral mind and a willingness to engage in any forum from a country pub bar to the national press council to scores of public meetings with hundreds of tertiary students and their professors lined up at the back was Smithy's native air. On university campuses he was peerless. I asked him once if on these occasions he set out to win the argument of the truth of the Kingdom over the lie of materialistic humanism. Reflectively John replied, 'no not primarily, but I do set out to make their arguments bleed'. He did that peerlessly and many students thought more deeply about their life goals as a result.

We thank God who endowed and employed for his purposes the gifts and graces which our brother, friend, inspirer and faithful servant Smithy, shared with so many Australians.



# Saved through Faith

Ephesians 2:8

*“By grace you have been saved through faith.”*

Here is another of what I call 'Paul's Gems'. I often imagine Paul, thinking in his heart, through the Holy Spirit.

For us to understand Paul's gems we must let the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts through his words.

In this day there is such a wide difference between godly love and worldly love.

It sends shivers down my spine when a shop assistant says to me “what can I do for you Luv?”

It is God who saves us through his grace.

Yes - the Word says  
“God so loved the world.”  
He did and still does.

But still the world is yet  
to be saved through his grace.

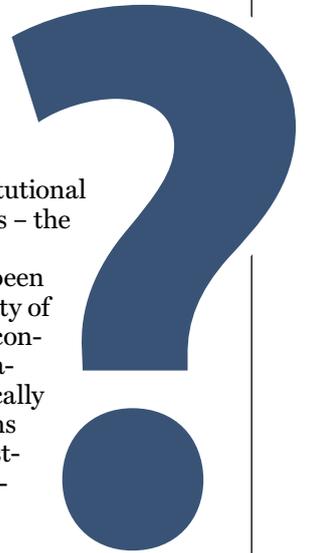
We do not save ourselves through our own faith.

It is his grace that grows faith in our lives.  
Our faith operates in our lives by God's grace that saves first.  
That is why Paul goes on to say  
“not of yourselves lest any should boast.”

Grace is love  
that has cost God the death of his Son.  
There is no greater love than this.  
I find it hard to acknowledge that God did so much for me  
before he ever sent his grace into my life  
that resulted in faith that enables me to say “Yes” to Jesus.

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

# What's happening in the UCA?



Peter Bentley

ACC National Director



If one went by the PR news and letters, it seems the main idea is to continue on without considering the implications of the 15th Assembly decision to revise marriage. The failure to suspend the Assembly decision was not unexpected as Clause 39 (b) (ii) was hardly designed to actually allow a review. In any case, what was needed from union was a separate independent body that would review decisions, rather than a system that placed any review back with the actual body that made the decision.

It has been a tumultuous few months, though the feedback to UCA publications and hierarchy has probably been more minimal simply because most members would now not even bother. My anecdotal feedback from contact with ACC and other evangelical congregations is that at least 3000 people have left since the 15th Assembly. Sadly, many members have just drifted away in hundreds of congregations, one, two, three or four at a time, perhaps some not even noticed, or worried about by ministers and leaders. I am quite amazed now how this happens when often people have been members of the same local church for 50, 60 or 70 years. I have also been intrigued at the number of phone calls and contact ACC has had from non-ACC members who have left or are trying to work through their future, especially in increasingly divided congregations (our social media and website has prompted extensive contact since the 15th Assembly as individuals seek out others who are considering what is happening).

The disappearance of often key lay leaders is not insignificant at this critical time of the UCA in terms of the ageing of members and viability of congregations, especially in terms of offerings and people resources. What will this mean for the UC in those areas that are not propped up by property income (especially property income that can support stipend ministry)? Simply, 50-60% of UC 'congregations' will become non-viable in the next 5-10 years. Many are now more a preaching place (and perhaps occasional at that). The average age of members is such now that in the medium future there will not be the people able to support stipended-ministry and/or undertake many of the normal tasks associated with a functioning congregation (and assets from sales

will mainly go to supporting the institutional life of the UCA and not the grass roots – the congregations).

And yes, the evangelical cause has been weakened (not just ACC as the majority of evangelicals are not in ACC member congregations); but, and here is the fundamental point, the UCA is catastrophically weakened as evangelical congregations are the central ones engaged in consistent evangelistic outreach and discipleship based on orthodox beliefs that provides a foundation for the future.

Why do some leaders have no real empathy or understanding of what is happening?

Some have a very different idea of ecclesiology. For them there is simply no distinction between the church and the world. The church is everyone, even if you are not aware you are part – this is the post-modern idea of the village church.

It is also where the context of 'Uniting' comes in – the UCA will be a social and community service, providing 'good works'. The growth of 'Uniting' and its increasing secular visibility is clearly evident in its advertising campaigns and branding. (For a comprehensive overview of the 'Secular Welfare' scenario, see Dr Keith Suter's work on possible scenarios for the future of the Uniting Church: [www.churchfutures.com.au](http://www.churchfutures.com.au))

Others though want a new church, which actually means a new 'faith' and they believe the present church needs to be cleared out of those who are preventing this new 'faith'. Some don't care about congregations and the local witness over many years even if they say they want to keep property for the continuing witness of the local Uniting members. Some are suffering a delusion that people will flock into a truly liberal church, basically one that has no orthodox belief, denying especially the resurrection of Christ, because after all they believe they are more intelligent now and believe Christ was only a simple deluded peasant. It is an ideological orientation towards a utopian life on earth now, and they believe that evangelicals are the deluded ones! Never mind the fact that there is no evidence to support a growing liberal denomination and where there may be the occasional slightly larger liberal church in a city of several million people, this has more to do with it providing a niche-market to often disaffected members and ministers. It is no wonder that one of the main concerns of some leaders is to maintain the larger evangelical and CALD congregations in the UC fold, because if they left, overnight the UC would become a worshipping community with fewer followers than those who now say they are a Jedi.

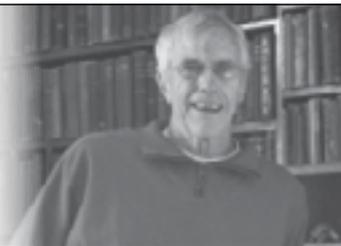
# General '19 Conference Postmortem



*Most ACC members would be aware of the outcome of the Special General Conference of the United Methodist Church in the USA from the extensive news coverage in Christian publications and news services. Dr Riley Case provides a helpful assessment of the meeting, revealing the complexity of the meeting and ongoing dynamics. Further information and articles can be found on their Confessing Movement website: [www.confessingumc.org](http://www.confessingumc.org)*

## Dr Riley Case

**United Methodist (Retired)**



One would wish a report of the 2019 General Conference in St. Louis February 23-26 could be made that would go something like this:

*The United Methodist 2019 special called General Conference is over. Charged with directing the church on a Way Forward and after nearly three years of discussion, meetings and prayer, the conference debated several options and finally chose the Traditional Plan as its directional path for United Methodism's future. The plan calls for reaffirming the church's historic stance on marriage and human sexuality but added several accountability features that should help to reinforce the church's connectionalism in matters of faith and practice. The final decisions were painful for numbers of persons who wished the conference might have taken a different direction but there was*

*a sense that because this conference was bathed in prayer, the decisions made represented God's will for the church at this time. The conference closed with the singing of the Doxology and a commitment that United Methodism was now ready to walk in unity and direct its energy toward its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

That report, unfortunately, is not the one being made. It is true the conference was held after nearly three years of discussion, meetings and prayer. It is true the Traditional Plan was chosen. But It is also true that the General Conference decisions were not the decisions preferred by bishops nor Mainstream UMC nor the Association of UM Theological Schools nor the presidents of UM-affiliated colleges nor a number of church agencies nor various progressive caucuses nor the several thousand visitors recruited by gay advocate groups who were in the stands to celebrate what they believed would be the church's new movement toward sexual permissiveness. These people and groups were (and are) unhappy. The unhappiness was expressed on the final day when progressives sought to create as much confusion as possible in hopes that the Traditional Plan would not be able to come to the conference floor

[cont over...]

# Conference Postmortem



for a vote. The unhappiness was also expressed at the close of the conference when, instead of singing the doxology at the close of the final session with a prayer of blessing on the church, the chair of the session honoured an earlier request by the “leadership team” of the Western Jurisdiction to be given the floor of the conference. It was at that time the “leadership team” basically announced as a Jurisdiction they did not intend to abide by the decisions of the conference. With that the conference ended.

## Time for reflection.

### *The conference from the evangelical or traditionalist perspective.*

The church has reaffirmed its historic stance. It was under great pressure to go in a different direction, but the centre held. The secular press and others may even pronounce the conference as a victory for conservatives. In the church we ought not to be talking about victories and defeats. We want the church to unite and be Christ’s presence in the world. We do not wish to be known for our infighting. Having said that, it can be said that the historic moral and doctrinal teachings of the church are

still intact. And that is a positive.

Also, a great positive; we are demonstrating that we are a global church. United Methodism outside the United States is growing and is in the process of assuming more leadership in the connection. The African presence had much to do with the outcome of the conference. In that respect the future for United Methodism is bright.

### *The conference from what should be a general unbiased perspective.*

If the truth be known; the conference never had a chance to fulfil its purpose to bring together the church in unity. The expectations were unrealistic. There was good talk about A Way Forward and finding a solution that all groups in the church could live with, but the goal was an impossible goal given the present divisions in the church. The one solution that might have promised some hope was one that would involve some form of amicable separation, but the bishops would not allow that solution even to be considered. It is premature to assess the General Conference as a failure (despite the cost of 6 or so million dollars and much time and effort) since it is quite possible that out of the ashes of St. Louis there may now be a willingness

to consider options that previously have been ruled off-limits. But that is not apparent at the moment.

### *Comments about the problem of The Gap.*

I have written on different occasions (along with others) that there is now, and has been for many years, a serious gap between the leadership of the church and the people in the pews. At times we live in different worlds. This was so obvious to me over 60 years ago when I entered seminary. It was so obvious to me 40 years ago when I was involved in conversations on behalf of Good News with persons responsible for Sunday school curriculum. I see this now when I realize that United Methodists by political persuasion favor Republican over Democrat by a margin of 2 to 1 (some say 60-40) and yet our general boards, and specifically our General Board of Church and Society (and actually our whole corporate culture), operate from an ideology that is overwhelmingly progressive and liberal. At one time Methodism was a bottom up movement. Its social stances, its leadership, its moral convictions grew out of revivals and class meetings and quarterly conferences and annual conferences. But in a world growing sophisticated that seemed



inadequate. So a person like Borden Parker Bowne of Boston, Methodism's most articulate modernist, could state as early as 1900:

The church has need of a body of scholarly investigators to do its intellectual work. They will have the function of formulating the spiritual life so as best to express it and keep it from losing its way in swamps of ignorance and superstition. They will have to adjust religious thoughts to the ever-advancing thought of cultivated intelligence so as to remove endless misunderstanding.

Bowne's philosophy helps to understand the 2019 General Conference and the events leading up to it. The bishops received three plans from a specially-appointed Commission On a Way Forward. The Traditional Plan which, it should have been known from the beginning, was strongly favoured by the overseas UMs and probably by a majority of US church members (not the delegates but the people in the pews) was, evidently, never seriously considered by a majority of the

bishops. Indeed, in what appeared to be a deliberate snub to conservatives, the bishops originally did not even plan to have it presented to the General Conference.

What the bishops preferred and wanted badly, and seemingly believed was the only salvation of the church, was the One Church Plan. This plan called for scuttling all negative references to restrictive sexuality in the Discipline to bring the church in line with "the ever-advancing thought of cultivated intelligence." The bishops needed a colossal sales job to promote their plan and they did their best. The presidents of UM-universities endorsed the plan, as did the Association of UM Theological Schools, as did the University Senate and many of the general boards and agencies. Of course, the progressive caucus groups gave support as did many of the ethnic caucus groups. Then someone recruited "youth." At the last minute 15,000 "youth" who responded to a social media appeal announced they favoured ending hate and discrimination in the church by passing the One Church Plan. In annual conferences there were bishop-inspired "discussions" and "information sessions" which mostly were thinly veiled attempts to promote the One Church Plan.

Then, a number of respected pastors (and a few laity) organized a lobbying group called Mainstream Methodists to promote even more. LGBTQ advocates recruited supporters from all across the country to come to St. Louis as a witness or a presence or to rally or demonstrate or rejoice when the One Church Plan was approved. While this was happening, no bishops and no official agencies and no official institutions openly identified with the Traditional Plan and several who even attended the Wesley Covenant Association were criticized for doing so. The Africans' concerns were not honestly dealt with. Common, ordinary UMs were hardly referenced.

The bishops (and others) badly miscalculated. The Traditional Plan was approved. There is much more to the church than the institutional establishment. What is surprising is that the bishops were surprised when the One Church Plan failed. How well do they know the church? That is why we reference "The Gap." The bishops and others would have done better to have had conversations with and sincerely listened to the evangelical renewal groups. They especially would have done better if they had been sensitive to that fast-growing part of the church, the overseas UMs, which are not nearly as impressed with American secularism and gay advocacy groups as what we should now refer to as "the mediating elite."

This is an early assessment. Much more is still to come. Those of us in The Confessing Movement are still committed to the proposition that the United Methodist Church has the polity and the doctrine and the world-wide structure that can make it a powerful force for the work of the gospel. There we continue to serve and live and preach and worship.

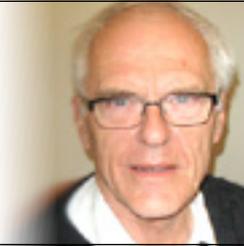
*Dr Riley Case is a retired United Methodist minister. He writes Happenings Around the Church for the Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church in the USA. This article was first circulated on 7 March 2019 and is reprinted with their permission.*



# Different Gospels? I

Walter  
Abetz

Retired Minister  
Tasmania



*The problem of two “faithfully” held tenets  
- Ephesians 4:20-21*

The matter of two faithfully held views raises the question of UNITY. The Assembly decision on marriage is based on one interpretive scheme of Scripture and Tradition. The resistance of the Assembly

## Two Interpretive Schemes

Issue	Assembly Doctrine Working Group	Assembly of Confessing Congregations
<b>View of the Universe</b>	Nature is inscrutable	Nature is created good, but humanity and all creation are under a curse for disobeying God. God’s revelation makes it ‘scrutable’.
<b>Sin</b>	Can’t be too sure about it.  We have a better understanding than the ancients.  Sin is culturally determined. Western Culture critiques and corrects Scripture.	Scripture is moderately clear.  There are always boundaries, but it is clear where the centre of the playing field is located.  We can’t change God’s commands.  There is no evidence for a Third Covenant.  Scripture critiques all culture.
<b>View of the Faith of One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church</b>	The Assembly can unilaterally declare that the understanding of marriage does not enter into the substance of the Faith	A received Faith, to which our personal faith is progressively conformed to. Any assertions about that Faith need to be tested within the wider fellowship of churches.
<b>What does Christ’s death and resurrection achieve for us?</b>	Forgiveness, to make us feel better, to be more inclusive.  Affirmation of an individual’s projected self-identity.  Culture of “niceness” to “victims”.	Forgiveness AND restoration, which implies radical change.  Dying to self-identification. Conversion is accepting God’s definition of us.  Culture of encouragement to live as God’s people
<b>Basis of Inclusion</b>	UCA trying to be a multi-faith church.  Humanity’s search for God is personalised, comes in many forms.  Faith as a human construct, a psychological palliative necessity.	No one comes to the Father but through Jesus Christ.  There is a true Faith, it is “received” and “acknowledged”, not modified without consultation of the wider church.  Faith as ontological truth. Belief in the God who is there who calls us into his kingdom.

of Confessing Congregations of the Uniting Church is based on a different interpretative scheme of Scripture and Tradition. The Basis of Union in Paragraph 11 requires the Uniting Church in Australia to seek agreement with the wider church so that the Uniting Church in Australia is not outside the understanding of the Australian Churches, as to what constitutes the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

It may be that there are two gospels operating in the UCA because of the two different schemes. The Assembly's Doctrine Working Group (ADWG) produced a paper that set out its interpretive scheme. If I have misrepresented the Assembly position, I am happy to be corrected. The table below tries to set out the differences.

While one will not find all the points, I listed under the heading of the ADWG in the report, the matters listed are stated in UCA publications, or have been genuinely held by UCA ministers who presumably claim to live out the vision of the Basis of Union, according to the Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice.

I am inclined to say that there are two gospels at work in the UCA – of course, they both mention Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, but the context makes them radically different. The Assembly thinks and acts as if it can alter the doctrine of the Church without reference to the Australian churches. The Assembly of Confessing Congregations of the Uniting Church does not arrogate this power to itself. Instead it receives and acknowledges the doctrines of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Two different gospels? Certainly, two different ways of being church!

Are both expressions legitimate according to The Basis of Union, the Constitution and the Code of Ethics? That is the question the UC Assembly has so far refused to ask itself. Hence the 'rumour' of two gospels is alive and well in the UCA.

# Different Gospels? II

## Katherine Abetz

Secretary, ACC School of Faith



*'To actively choose to encourage that which the Bible calls sin and to do so in the name of Jesus, frankly, I do not see hope for those who have done this.'*<sup>1</sup>

Do we have two different gospels in the UCA? Is it possible to have two different gospels? The apostle Paul assures us that it is. This is what he writes to the Church at Corinth:

*I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)*

This is a cry from the heart on Paul's part. He cares deeply about the people at Corinth. So does the writer who sees no hope for those in the Uniting Church who, in the name of Jesus, encourage what the Bible calls sin.

The Basis of Union Paragraph 3 states: 'The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which he will bring; she is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here she does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come'. The image of the Christian life as a pilgrimage seeking the city to come stems from the book of Hebrews. Chapter 10 of Hebrews also warns against apostasy: 'For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin'.

Given this warning, the Uniting Church should carefully examine the current arguments in favour of redefining what constitutes sinful behaviour in the area of sexuality. But the Assembly process has not permitted this nor has the step taken by the 15th Assembly been discussed with other Churches in Australia. The Report by the Assembly Standing Committee to the 15th Assembly includes a hermeneutic which challenges 'the very tight nexus of creation, nature and order evident in, for instance, Romans 1 and which appear to be assumed in passages such as Ephesians 5'.<sup>2</sup> Setting aside the mooted hermeneutic of re-imagining, what is the result if this nexus is broken? How can God command everyone everywhere to repent, as Paul announces to the Athenians, if there is no certainty about what constitutes sin? How can Jesus judge the world in righteousness if the Bible is unclear about the moral order?

It is possible to use the language of 'cross', 'atonement' and 'redemption' while meaning something different from traditional understanding. But such language may not have lasting currency in some quarters of the Uniting Church. I recently asked whether 'the right understanding of the faith'<sup>3</sup> was part of the discernment process for an applicant for candidature for the ministry of deacon. I was told that this understanding was implicit but not explicit in the process. Is the gospel silent in the Uniting Church?

1. Peter Lyne on Friends of the ACC FB Page: January 11, 2019.

2. 'Fifteenth Assembly Report' 3.2.7 'Using and Appealing to Scripture', p. 33.

3. See The Basis of Union, paragraph 9.

# Creation, Cross & Crown

Rod  
James

Minister of the Word - South Australia  
Deputy Chair of the ACC



*Creation, Cross and Crown*  
- three visions of life in Christ

The realities of creation, cross and crown may seem somewhat unrelated, but as we shall see, they are intimately connected in the life of a Christian. Rev Rod James continues this series in:

## Part 3. The Crown An unfading crown of glory

In the age beyond this one who will Christians be, and what will they have?

The doctrines of atheistic humanism have absolutely nothing to offer in regard to this question. The Atheist Foundation of Australia's official 'take' on life beyond death is: 'regrettable as this is, we all must die and that is the end - goodnight'. Their conclusion is that 'Reaching a full potential of life before death is only afforded to those who reject the notion of life after death'. This belief contrasts sharply with the Christian saying that 'the best citizen of time is the citizen of eternity'.

In the Scriptures the idea of a crown is often used to express what God will endow upon those who are his, and especially to those who are esteemed by him. A crown is an interesting thing to have and to wear. It is a symbol of who you are and what you have you have been given.

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
What is man that you are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that you care for him?  
Yet you have made him a little lower than the  
heavenly beings  
And crowned him with glory and honour.  
Psalm 8:3-5*

*Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his  
benefits—  
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the pit*

*and crowns you with love and compassion.  
Psalm 103:2-4*

## Crown as wreath and diadem

There are two words for 'crown' in the New Testament. One (*stephanos*) means a wreath given to a victor, and the other (*diadem*) means the crown of kingship. In the passages we will be looking at the word *stephanos*, a crowning wreath. However, the New Testament makes it clear that those who believe in and serve Christ in this life will also reign with him in his coming kingdom.

*...for you were slain, and by your blood you  
ransomed people for God from every tribe and  
language and people and nation, and you have  
made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and  
they shall reign on the earth.*

Revelation 5:9-10

*Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that  
they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ  
Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy,  
for: If we have died with him, we will also live with  
him; if we endure, we will also reign with him;*

2 Timothy 2:10-11

*The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me  
on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down  
with my Father on his throne.*

Revelation 3:21

So, now to the crowns Christian believers may receive:

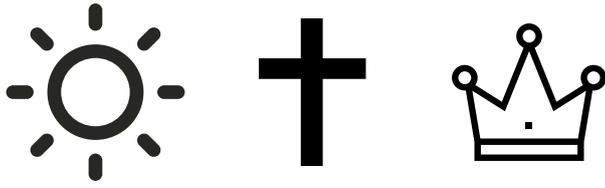
## An unfading crown of glory

1 Peter 5:4 speaks of '*an unfading crown of glory*'. Now, as Martin Luther pointed out, every word in the Bible needs to be understood through the cross of Christ. So, in God's kingdom, what is a 'crown of glory'?

As you will recall, Jesus received a 'crown of thorns' which his enemies jammed painfully on his head. In Christian art he is depicted as wearing that crown of thorns as he hung upon the cross. That crown of thorns was the crown of rejection, mocking, persecution, suffering, and death. But it has been transformed to become the crown of self-sacrificing love and sin-bearing grace. Notre Dame cathedral in Paris claims to have, among its relics (and saved from the recent fire), this actual crown of thorns and it is known there as 'the holy crown'. Now, this is the thing: it is this very crown of suffering, sacrifice and service that becomes the crown of glory. In his resurrection glory, Jesus has in his body the glorified marks of his crucifixion. Even today he can say, as he said to Thomas,

*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put your  
hand, and place it in my side.*

John 20:2



The Basis of Union of the Uniting Church speaks of Jesus as ‘the risen crucified one’. Jesus’ exaltation in God’s kingdom is directly related and inextricably connected to his sacrificial work in the salvation history of God.

*But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Hebrews 2:9

## The crown of life

The letter of James speaks of ‘the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him’.

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

James 1:12

Earlier James had spoken of ‘various trials’, suggesting a whole range of difficulties and undesirable circumstances which we human beings endure.

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

James 1:2-3

These trials, says James, are a test, and those who have remained steadfast in their faith will receive ‘the crown of life’, which simply means that ‘life in all its fulness’ which Jesus came to give (John 10:10). It is eternal life which will never perish (John 3:16, John 10:28). James has used the word ‘blessed’ to describe the person who receives this crown of life. To be blessed is to be happy and fulfilled. Again, we see the link between being ‘steadfast under trial’ here and now, and being blessed in the life to come. Commenting on this passage from James, Motyer says,

The trial and test is a sort of divinely given ‘homework’ in which we work out the truths God has taught us in his Word—for it is through this exercise of working it out that we progress in knowledge and grow in spiritual stature.

Paul makes the same point in Romans 5.

*Through (Jesus) we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us*

*to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Romans 5:2-5

The book of Revelation also makes this link between tribulation and the crown of life, as Jesus speaks of the suffering that Christ’s people endure at the hands of others.

*Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Revelation 2:10

## The crown of righteousness

Towards the end of his life and ministry Paul, assessing his present situation in prison, takes a quick look back at his life and then forward to what lies ahead of him.

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Once again, we see the link between the here and now and what is to come. But what is this ‘crown of righteousness’ that Paul believes will be awarded to him? Righteousness, in the Scriptures, has a particular character. While the believer’s righteousness is real, and ‘the righteous judge’ is just in awarding this crown, it is not a crown of self-righteousness. Paul counts all of his self-righteousness as rubbish that he may gain the righteousness from God that comes through faith in Christ.

*For (Jesus’) sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

Philippians 3:8-9

So, the ‘crown of righteousness’ is ‘the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe’ (Romans 3:22). Having received this righteousness by faith, the believer actually has the righteousness of God in them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And in the life to come, he or she will be confirmed and crowned with the whole righteousness of God in Christ.

[cont over...]

# Creation, Cross & Crown



## Our joy and crown

In Revelation 12 we see a beautiful picture of a woman:

*And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

Revelation 12:1

This figurative woman is Israel, and the twelve stars in her crown are the twelve sons or tribes of Israel. The woman's children are the stars in her crown. In a similar fashion Paul speaks of his brothers and sisters in Christ as his joy and his crown.

*Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

Philippians 4:1

In this life, Paul had loved and longed for them as a mother does her children.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

In the life to come, then, Paul's spiritual children are his 'hope or joy or crown of boasting'.

*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.*

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

So, for Paul, 'this 'joy and crown' is actually people—his brothers and sisters who he has loved and longed for in this life. Once again, we see the continuity between the sacrifice, service and suffering in this life, and the crown of glory in the life to come. Peter makes the same link, first between 'the sufferings of Christ' and 'the glory that is going to be revealed', and then between 'shepherding the flock of God that is among you' and receiving 'the unfading crown of glory'.

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

1 Peter 5:1-4

One reason why this crown of glory is unfading is that it is made up of God's children who, having the gift of eternal life, do not fade in the way we do in this life. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he exhorted us to

*... lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Matthew 6:21-21

## So, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us

A crown of life, a crown of righteousness, an unfading crown of glory, and the privilege of reigning with Christ in the Kingdom of God: all await Christ's people, and each is linked to our sharing in his presence and ministry in this world.

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Romans 8:16-18

Like runners running a race, we run to receive an imperishable wreath.

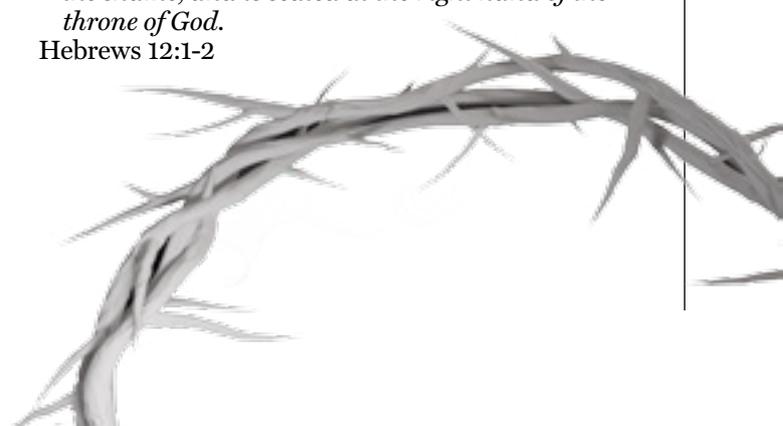
*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

So,

*... let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:1-2



# Implications for Ministry

## Warren Clarnette

Former Editor of *Church and Nation*  
and *ACCatalyst* pioneer (2007)



*And I saw no temple in the city,  
for its temple is the Lord God the  
Almighty and the Lamb.*

(Revelation 21:22)

### PART 2 Self Doubt & Unbelief

Few ministers today have not wondered whether they are contributing anything worthwhile to society.

The same questioning in the turbulent 1960s saw priests and ministers exchange the parish for parliaments or other frontiers of social utility.

Today it seems that only the task of ecclesial maintenance remains; of rescuing an industry devoted to building spiritual experiences under denominational brand names, all of them increasingly irrelevant to the world as well as to vast numbers of lay Christians as well.

Ministers consequently find themselves at risk of the modern scourge of depression, a product of the existential enigma of self-obsession and self-doubt whose symptoms include chronic tiredness, lack of enthusiasm and unbelief.

*Revelation* throws light on this dilemma by its contrast between history and its consummation. No city in history has lacked shrines and temples. Christians live within sight and sound of them, even worship in them, sometimes as ends in themselves. Today they stand as monuments to the diminishing power of faith

in a secularised gloom that increasingly loses sight of the present Kingdom whose "true temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." (Rev. 21:22).

What this means for ministers' aspirations and self-fulfilment is the unasked and unanswered question of our time, made more acute by the futile search for mechanisms that might give Christianity a second wind in the race for social relevance.

The question - what is the minister to do? - is answered in Isaiah 6: 9-13, a text that offends the

idolatry of denominational politics, and challenges clergy to grasp the mordancy of their calling.

Another clue appears in John 4: 7-24. Interpreted radically, it releases Christians from captivity to places of worship. Revelation 21: 22 therefore is not a casual aside that something is missing in the holy city, but a trenchant warning to a church in peril.

These texts speak to the situation faced by all pastors and preachers. They demand more than casual inspection. More accessible, down-to-earth instruction may be found elsewhere; for example, from John Wesley's struggle against failure in ministry. He was advised to "preach faith until you have it" - a counsel that sounds suspiciously like mind conditioning or the propaganda technique that knows if something is repeated often enough it will eventually be accepted as true.

Maria in *The Sound of Music* sings "I have confidence in confidence itself" as she begins to tutor a bunch of unruly children. But self-help is no answer to the formidable challenge of Christian ministry.

Martin Luther got it right in his Sunday prayers. Here are two of them:

"O Lord God, dear Father in heaven, I am indeed unworthy of the office and ministry in which I am to make known thy glory and to nurture and to serve this congregation.

And since thou hast appointed me to be a pastor and teacher, and the people are in need of the teaching and the instruction, O be thou my helper and let thy holy angels attend me.

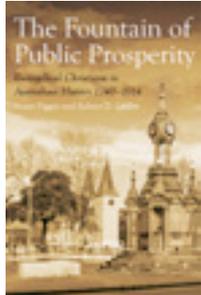
Then if thou art pleased to accomplish anything through me, to thy glory and not to mine or to the praise of men, grant me, out of thy pure grace and mercy, a right understanding of thy Word and that I may also diligently perform it."

"Lord God, thou hast appointed me to be a bishop and pastor in thy church. Thou seest how unfit I am to undertake this great and difficult office, and were it not for thy help, I would long since have ruined it all. Therefore I cry unto thee; I will assuredly apply my mouth and my heart to thy service. I desire to teach the people and I myself would learn ever more and diligently meditate thy Word. Use thou me as thine instrument, only do not thou forsake me, for if I am left alone I shall easily bring it all to destruction."

Jesus said: *When you have done all that is commanded you, say 'We are unworthy servants', we have only done what was our duty.* (Luke 17: 10)

Rev. Warren Clarnette was the editor of *Church and Nation* (Victorian Synod) from the start of the Uniting Church to 1987 and helped establish *ACCatalyst* in 2007.

# Christian history



## The Fountain of Public Prosperity

Monash University Publishing  
2018

Written by Stuart Piggin  
& Robert D Linder

**T**his volume one of a two-volume blockbuster of a book, which has been in the making since 1986. The *Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (1994), Stuart Piggin's *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word and World* (1996) and Bob Linder's, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (2000) have given a foretaste.

The first thing to strike the reader of this volume is the sheer heft of the book, at nearly 700 pages. It is a very attractive volume and a credit to authors and publisher. The cover illustration neatly illustrates the title: it features a sepia photograph of the Centenary Memorial Drinking Fountain (with clock added twenty years later) at Parramatta, with St John's Anglican Cathedral in the background. The title comes from Reflections of Bush Life (1848) by Henry Haygarth, a squatter who returned to England and took holy orders. It is a theme which runs through the narrative like a silken thread, smooth, strong but subtle. Some might find the cover a little dull or earnest; but it has gravitas. The generous time span allotted should arrest the attention of readers of Australian history, especially the starting point, 48 years before the arrival of the first fleet.

The Prologue concerns first fleet naval officer and astronomer, William Dawes (as in Dawes Point). It is a tour de force, exploring Dawes's relations with, and appreciation of, the Eora, their culture and language. It demonstrates not only that Dawes was a genuine evangelical, but also shows how his faith governed his life, and so it is also a polite "one in the eye" for secular historians, exposing their blind spot with dazzling clarity.

The themes stated in the Introduction under 22 dot-points include, inter alia, civilizing the settlement process, Ethical commerce, philanthropy, evangelism, cross-cultural missions, women's rights and other social reforms, effective interdenominational societies, all leading to "creating one of the most 'Christianised' nations on earth in terms of values" (p. 39). The book is divided into three parts, within each of which are chronological and thematic chapters. Part A is purely chronological in five chapters from 1740 to 1835. Part B covers 1836 to 1850 in three thematic chapters each on 1836-50 and 1850-70 (chapters 6-11), while Part C

has four each on 1871-89 and 1890-1914 (chapters 12-19). Evangelism, cross-cultural missions (to the Pacific, Chinese and Aborigines), social welfare, women's and children's rights and nation-building all feature strongly. There is a good section in Chapter 13 on the challenges to faith posed by modernism, science and Biblical criticism.

This volume is on its soundest ground and most convincing when treating Anglican evangelicals, especially those in Sydney and allied dioceses. Indeed, Anglican predominance is explicitly stated as a major theme in the longest of the introductory dot-points (p. 40). Up to a point, this is justifiable. But regarding the influence of Irish evangelicals, for instance, it is Anglicans who tend to be those discussed, to the neglect of the mostly Presbyterian evangelical immigrants from Ulster. It also seems a little odd that the only family from John Dunmore Lang's "Scotch Mechanics" of 1831 to be used as an example (the Housions) is one that became Anglican (p. 140).

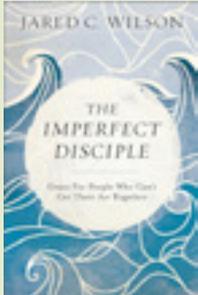
Relations between settlers and Aborigines present a dismal tale, although the tendency to accept completely one side in "the history wars" sometimes leaves the account with insufficient nuance. At least Victorian squatters Horatio Ellerman and Archibald Campbell receive credit for their humanity (p. 348). There were others. In the treatment of the Myall Creek massacre and its aftermath (pp. 204-7), it is all Baptist pastor John Saunders and Attorney-General J.H. Plunkett. All ministers but one in Sydney preached on Acts 17:26 on the Sunday before the verdict was handed down. Evangelical magistrate Edward Denny Day did the difficult and amazingly thorough investigation on which the prosecution was based.

In dealing with the reasons for the prodigious growth of Methodism in the colonies in the nineteenth century, the authors put it down simply to revivals (p. 438). This ignores some research which adds strategic emigration and more importantly, by being the first church to enter many rural and mining areas and attracting members from other denominations. There is an insightful account of the important role Methodists and other evangelicals played in the early trade union movement.

This is an epic achievement which deserves to reorient Australian history-writing in several important respects. The projected second volume of this grand enterprise is entitled *Attending to the National Soul: Evangelical Christians in Australian History, 1914-2014*. We should all eagerly await it.

*Dr Malcolm Prentis edited the UC Historical Society (NSW & ACT) journal, Church Heritage, from 1993 until its final issue, Volume 21, Number 1 (March 2019) and has authored numerous articles and books on church history, Aboriginal history and Scottish immigration.*

# When in doubt



## The Imperfect Disciple

Baker Books  
2017

Written by Jared C Wilson

*Why that book about ministry burn-out you're reading may be doing more harm than good.*

**T**here is an expanding section at your local Christian bookshop dedicated to helping pastors to avoid or recover from burn out. I have read a few of these myself, but with a growing sense of disquiet. I began to notice a certain pattern to these books: firstly, they were written by someone who had experienced burn-out themselves. We respond to this experience-based knowledge, and you'll often find the opening chapters of the book tell the story. You get to hear about the wide-eyed ministry novice, brimming with confidence and ready to see the world changed for Jesus. But the story soon spirals downward and the crash at the bottom is terrible. And yet there is hope, because the author learns hard truths about themselves, they find the mistakes and miscalculations. The slow and determined work of repair and rebuilding then unfolds. They grow into a new phase of ministry: sharing what they have learned, to help others.

I am grateful for their honesty and vulnerability, in sharing their story and hoping to save others from the same pain and failure. However, it is at this point that I begin to feel the unease I mentioned earlier. It is here that the author turns their own personal path to recovery into a system for all of us to follow. All the things that helped them to experience restoration are explained, and often backed up with science, and finally put into dot-points (maybe in a box) at the end of the chapter. But it's not just the universalizing of personal experience that bothers me. It's the subtle move from hitting rock bottom, re-discovering the depths of God's grace, to beginning to do better, do the right things and follow the self-help actions the author offers up. The better versions of the ministry burn-out book serve us well by leading us to the deep, deep well of God's grace in the midst of failure, sin and burn-out. But they often serve us a refreshing drink and then urge us back into the fray of sorting out our priorities; doing more exercise; getting our rest right; observing the Sabbath; or whatever it was the author found renewed

their energy and resource for serving Jesus. My niggling concern is that we fall so easily for the Galatian error each time we read one of these books. I hear the deep need of the author in their downward spiral, that leads them to a deeper understanding of grace. But having begun with grace, many of these books move onto the efforts I must make if I am going to avoid burn-out. Chapter after chapter guides me through the things I must do if I am going to succeed where the author had failed. But what if I needed to stay at that deep, deep well of God's grace? Not just stay there longer (before moving onto the call to get my act together, have this day off, learn that ancient practice of the early church), but just stay there. Far too many of these burn-out-recovery books have the chapter on grace towards the front and leave it there to get on with my effort, and my improved activity.

---

**...there is hope, because the author learns hard truths about themselves, they find the mistakes and miscalculations.**

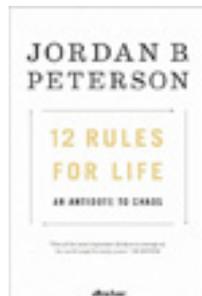
---

The book *The Imperfect Disciple, Grace for People Who Can't Get Their Act Together*, by Jared C. Wilson was a refreshing change. Not least because his exploration of the sufficiency of grace is taken up in the second last chapter (it's not the first time he mentions it, but it is the place where he takes up the topic at length). Wilson riffs on the legend of the old lady verses the scientist. Versions of this story abound, in which the scientist finishes a lecture on how the earth is round and revolves around the sun. The old lady corrects the scientist, with her view that the earth is flat and rests on a turtle. The scientist asks what the turtle rests on, to which the old lady replies, 'Another turtle.' The scientist asks again: 'And what does the second turtle rest on?' And she replies: 'It's turtles all the way down!' Wilson's point is important and good to hear over and over again: '...when it comes to our dependence on God, it is all grace or no grace. If our standing with him rests even an ounce on our works, we are utterly and hopelessly lost. No, it must be grace all the way down.' (p198)

I believe this is the kind of burn-out help we need. It was my effort; me trying to work harder, that led me into danger – how on earth could more of that be the way to recovery? I'd love to read a burn-out-recovery book, which led me to the deep, deep well of God's grace and left me there. And in that place, drinking that refreshing water, I might stand a chance of finding a way to be in ministry, safe from dangers of burn-out.

*This review reflection and essay by Jonathan Holt was first published in Essentials: the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion and is reprinted with permission: [www.efac.org.au](http://www.efac.org.au)*

# 12 Rules for Life



## 12 Rules for Life

Penguin Books  
2018

Written by  
Jordan Peterson

I don't know about you, but suddenly I can't move without bumping into Jordan Peterson, the Canadian professor of psychology who has become a public intellectual almost overnight it seems. He is a polarising figure, who has been involved in controversies over the use of newly-coined transgender pronouns, and whose online interviews and lectures are viewed and listened to by millions. He is outspoken in his intense dislike of the ideological left, and the feeling is mutual. He was recently in Australia, and his conversation with former deputy prime minister John Anderson is at the top of Peterson's YouTube news feed as I write this review. The conservative side of society feel Peterson has cut through in articulating many objections they have to the ways we are being encouraged to think and feel about ourselves, our history and others in a post-modern, politically correct world.

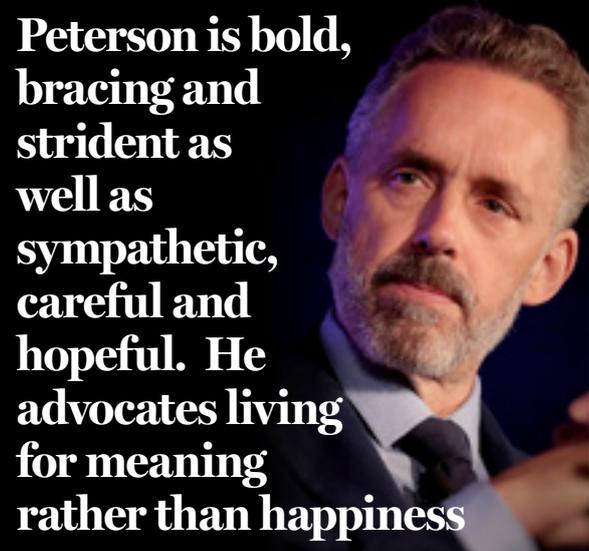
Beyond his controversial profile, Peterson seems strongly motivated to help people live more satisfying, successful lives, and as a psychologist and intellectual he has ideas about how to do that. He is influenced by Jung, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, the Bible and the Tao. He believes in the wisdom of the past, expressed in stories, myths and cultural practices passed down over millennia. His first book was an academic work on the psychology of religious belief. His second book, *12 Rules for Life*, is the top selling book on the Amazon nonfiction charts in the week I write this review and aims to convey what Peterson believes will help people live well. The place to live well, according to Peterson, is on the straight and narrow path between order and chaos. For Peterson it is primary to say that chaos is a threat to

life, and hence we need order, routine, tradition, discipline (and so the book's title and subtitle). But something else also needs to be said, that 'order can become excessive, and that's not good' (p. xxxiv). Chaos is also needed for exploration, creativity and transformation. The individual lives well by living on the boundary of order and chaos, in the zone of their fruitful intersection.

*12 Rules for Life* is a self-help book with a polemical edge, a critique of a certain current sensibility, rooting for taking responsibility for yourself, burying envy as a motivation, aiming at the good without seeking to be avenged upon the world for its unfairness, and sitting at the feet of tradition expecting to be schooled well, amongst other things. Peterson is unusual in his great respect for and extensive use of Biblical episodes and texts like Genesis 1-4, or the Sermon on the

Mount. The twelve rules are cast in the form of wise advice, sometimes quirkily expressed. Rule 5 is 'Do not let your children do anything that makes you dislike them' and rule 12 is 'Pet a cat when you encounter one on the street'. Each rule gets a chapter, and the chapters wend their way towards the rules (which are the closing words of each chapter), covering a rich variety of topics and life issues. Chapter one is about hierarchy and dominance, the second about the necessity of sympathetically and realistically taking responsibility for yourself, the third about the company you keep, the fourth about what to pursue and why, the fifth about parenting, the sixth about responding to the outrages of the world, the seventh about sacrifice, evil and meaning in life, etc. Chapter 10, 'Be precise in your speech' has a lot about marriage in it. Peterson is bold, bracing and strident as well as sympathetic, careful and hopeful. He advocates living for meaning rather than happiness, and thus regards suffering as not merely unavoidable, but potentially the place of productive and

meaningful growth and action. He is for the pursuit of the transcendent good, and against the reduction of human life to a contest of self-interested power. He is for the real distinction of masculine and feminine, and against artificial measures aimed at equality of outcome for all without distinction.



**Peterson is bold, bracing and strident as well as sympathetic, careful and hopeful. He advocates living for meaning rather than happiness**

He has a hard face, a sometimes-aggressive twitter feed and huge doses of charisma. He has gotten lots of people talking. What shall we make of him and his ideas?

It seems to me that Jordan Peterson is for law. He is about recognising the non-negotiable realities of human existence. Instead of destroying yourself and your culture by resentfully and misguidedly going to war with the way things are, Peterson recommends living creatively and meaningfully according to the rules that lead to success in the midst of inevitable suffering. Jordan Peterson is not preaching gospel. His exposition of Biblical texts contains none of the notes of grace that a Christian might point out. This is not to say that Peterson has no mercy or compassion in him, it is more to say that for Peterson, 'Being' (the way things are) is practically synonymous with God. The figure of God stands in at points for all the things (encompassing both chaos and order) that we must accept with awe and humility and be reconciled to as what stands sovereign over us and cannot be changed.

# School of Faith



But since Christians make a momentous distinction between God and the World, the Law of Being is not the final reality in our lives. There is the possibility of divine help coming to us that is utterly different to self-help, or to any other help offered by another. Help offered by another who is not God will take the form of instruction, guidance, counsel, listening and conversation to accompany what is ultimately self-help, a process started, carried out and concluded through an individual's courage, resolution, reflection and action. Such help is not to be sneezed at, but God in his grace may help us in a fundamentally different way. His help can come to us as new birth, as regeneration, as life from the dead, as justification by faith, as conversion. I have not found in Peterson this gospel note. As far as I can see, for Peterson, Jesus is a teacher and an ideal, archetypal human being, but he is not the Risen Saviour who pours his Spirit upon his disciples and in whose name forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.

Still, Jordan Peterson has cut through. He has struck a great chord in our culture. To some it is beautiful, half-forgotten music. To others it is an ominous, dark and unwelcome sound. Christians may find what he has to say illuminating, and we may enjoy the respect he accords the Bible as a popular intellectual with a rather different angle on religion and Christianity than Richard Dawkins or Christopher Hitchens and their ilk. Peterson may catalyse a softening of militant atheism and a revaluation of the Bible in our public discourse, and that would be a welcome development. Beyond that hope, we may also pray that some Christian, some preacher of the Gospel, might cut through and strike a mighty chord in our society in the way that Peterson has, and that the Spirit would blow our way and bring new birth, even to those who are old. For law is not our salvation.

*Ben Underwood is the editor of Essentials: the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion and this review is reprinted*



with permission:  
[www.efac.org.au](http://www.efac.org.au)

**T**he School of Faith has been exploring ACC pathways for ministry including lay ministry. Last year the School of Faith sponsored a season of prayer and fasting in the lead-up to the Assembly. One way to revisit that period is to celebrate the anniversary of the Uniting Church (22nd June) in a way that recalls the church to its foundation in Jesus Christ and its unity with the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church world-wide and throughout the ages.

*Here is one way to celebrate:*

### A lamp to the feet

Put tea-light candles in bottles. Arrange in the outline of a cross. Place the Christ candle in the centre. Include symbols of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The tea-lights symbolise the biblical witnesses. Light the candles. Take turns to reflectively walk the lighted cross. This activity could take place outside. (See The Basis of Union, paragraphs 5;6;7;8)



## Events : Tasmania

### The Bible & the Basics

*Saturday 29th June  
Ulverstone UC, Tasmania  
10 am for 10.30 -12.30*

*Morning tea supplied BYO lunch*

We hope to make this teaching event accessible by ZOOM. This opens out the possibility that we could be joined by other states. ZOOM participants will be encouraged to form a local team of two or more. Participants will also be asked to prepare for the event beforehand by reading the Basis of Union and attempting to do the Quiz 'How Biblical is the Basis', see [www.confessingschooloffaith.com](http://www.confessingschooloffaith.com) then click on Basis of Union at bottom of home page, and select Basis of Union Quiz in the side panel. We will share our answers at the event.

Please contact us at [wkabetz2@bigpond.com](mailto:wkabetz2@bigpond.com) if you wish to participate in the teaching event at Ulverstone by ZOOM.

## Events : Queensland

### Teaching

*ACC Sunnybank Uniting Church,  
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
22 Hillcrest St,  
Sunnybank Hills*

ACC Qld is now holding a School of Faith teaching event on the last Wednesday of each month.

#### Past events have included:

Wednesday 27th March 2019  
*"The Polity of the UCA"*

Wednesday 24th April 2019  
*"Proclaiming the Truth in the public space"*

Bible Study: Matthew 14:22-33

Wednesday 29th May 2019  
*"Gospel in a pluralist society"*

More info contact

Rev. Lulu Senituli

[lu.senituli@accucsunnybank.com.au](mailto:lu.senituli@accucsunnybank.com.au)

## REFLECTION

# A Word for Today

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations”  
(Ephesians 2:14-15).*

Hostility between us and God, and divisions between us and others, have all been destroyed by Jesus' work of the cross. When Jesus died on the cross the curtain that kept us from a relationship with God was torn from top to bottom (Luke 23:45). Jesus destroyed the barrier between us and God. Through Christ's death, God is no longer hostile towards us. His death allowed communication and communion with our Father. Now we have peace. This world is always searching for peace in a million different places and ways, but it remains

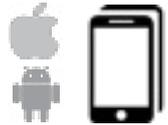
out of reach!

'For he himself is our peace' is not simply about knowing about him - but receiving him and living in him. That on the cross he took our death and we now live in him. If you want true peace you need Jesus!

### Prayer

*Father we cannot comprehend that your Son would die for us. Even if we were to have loved you and accepted all your ways would we have thought that this exchange of death would be a possible action. But in our total rebellion and hostility towards you, you chose to die to make it possible for us to know of your love. Father, thank you that through the cross you have dealt with all our failures, and that we can have a peace that is beyond all understanding. Amen.*

*Devotionals are provided by Rev. Derek Schiller (Minister of the Word at St George Uniting Church, Qld), and are available via an APP for iPhone or Android. Each day a new devotion is provided. You can download the APP from the St George or ACC Website.*



## 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.

### The objectives of the ACC

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;

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

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

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

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

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

### How to join us

Membership rates for supporting members:

- ☎ Concession (single or couple):  
\$20.00 pa. (financial year basis)
- ☎ Full (single or couples):  
\$40.00 p.a. (*see website*)

☎ Contact (02) 9550 5358.

☎ Email: [accoffice@confessingcongregations.com](mailto:accoffice@confessingcongregations.com)

☎ Post: PO Box 968 Newtown NSW 2042

# In the Cry Room

## Bella Easterbrook



Gabriel's Mum

Since having my son, church has changed a lot for me. I remember the days when I'd sit with the congregation, singing and listening to the sermon. Most of the time now, I'm in the crying room. We start out sitting with everyone else, but by the time of the sermon he wants to feed. My church has a pretty good crying room, not completely separate from the rest of the congregation, but still it's made my experience very different and sometimes rather difficult.

I stand in the crying room as the church sings. I can hear the musicians up the front, but the immediacy of communal worship is muted. I try to listen to the sermon as my baby fusses on the breast. Other parents come into the room with their little kids that squeal and cry and clatter their toys around. I end up chatting with the other parents. It's nice to connect, but it means I can hear the sermon even less.

Sometimes it makes me wonder if there's any point of going to church at all. If I can't hear the sermon properly and I feel disconnected from the rest of the congregation, why simply go through the motions?

But, even though my church-going looks different in this season, it still has value. Church isn't only about what I can receive. It's also about encouraging and serving others, and God can do this through me even in this season. And, as I speak to myself when my motivation is weak, going to church even when it's hard provides a role model that my son will see as the years go on. Week in, week out establishes a pattern I pray he will continue.

Even if it's only in snippets, muted through partially soundproof glass - I still do receive something. I hear the truth of the gospel proclaimed. I take whatever I can on the day, and I try to listen to the full sermon at home later. I lift my spirit up to God as I sing worship to him, even if I can only hear my own voice. And there's something valuable about those connections forged in the crying room. Those little chats or words of encouragement might mean more for the kingdom than I'll know.

So really, it's about worshipping God right where I am. Seeking him and trusting that he'll meet me right there. It's a bit different to the way I used to do church, but he's still the same God. I wonder if you've been in a similar place. Where, for whatever reason, church feels different, like a struggle sometimes. Keep faithfully turning up each week and trust him to draw near to you. He can use this situation, any situation, for his glory.

## Anne Hibbard



Gabriel's Grandma

I was with Bella the first couple of Sundays there in the crying room in her church just after she had given birth to Gabriel. I had gone down to stay with them for a little while, so I went with them on the Sundays to their congregation. It's a rapidly growing Anglican church plant in South West Sydney that preaches faithfully the word of God and loves and cares for people.

So, there I was as a visitor, soon after Gabriel's birth and I was glad to be there. I remember on one particular day, when Bella got up to go to the crying room, I asked if she'd like me to go with her. We sat down and there was another mum and even a dad there with their baby. It was good to be with my daughter and my new grandson. But I remember also, the disconnection with the rest of the congregation. A pane of glass separated us, and, in some sense, we were cut off. But we made the most of it and got up to sing the hymns in the midst of babies and feedings. It was to the Lord we were giving worship.

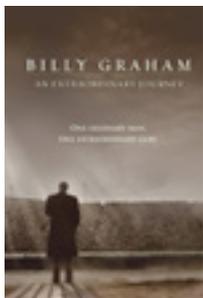
In many ways it was how I was feeling about the Uniting Church at the time. It was October and the aftermath and grief of the national Assembly was heavy in my heart. Every time I went to church, I felt like I was in the cry room, cut off, disconnected, a pane of glass separating me and the rest of the people. But I still went. It reminded me of the psalmist that cried out: *"My tears have been my food day and night..... these things I remember... how I used to go to the house of God"* (Psalm 42:3-4).

That afternoon I went back to Bella's place. Then at 3 p.m., I got my laptop and went into the nursery and sat on the floor and opened up. I had my bread and my wine ready, and there I found the small group of my ACC brothers and sisters on line with me as we shared communion together as we have been doing every Sunday since Assembly. I was so thankful for them. Even though the technology played up sometimes, it didn't feel like the cry room right then. I felt a deep intimacy with the Lord Jesus and with those who shared Christ's meal together. I once again echoed the Psalmist: *Why my soul are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.* (Psalm 42:5)

## FILM



# Extraordinary Journey



### **Billy Graham: An Extraordinary Journey (2018)**

**Starring:** Billy Graham, Morrow Graham, Franklin Graham

**Written by:** Daniel Camenisch, Vonda Harrell

**Directed by:** Daniel Camenisch, Vonda Harrell

Many readers would have attended the 60th anniversary gatherings held earlier this year that were arranged by the Billy Graham Association (BGA) in recognition of the impact and long-term ministry of Billy Graham. Soon after Billy Graham's death (February 21, 2018), the BGA released a documentary to provide an 'official' film of Billy Graham's ministry calling. The documentary is now available via streaming services.

This is a personal journey, and features Billy Graham from his early years and at different and pivotal points of his life and with members of the Graham family.

His wider connections and ability to relate to a wide variety of people is a feature. In the USA and in other

places, his regular appearances on radio, and then TV talk shows brought him into contact with many people who would never have attended a crusade. The ecumenical foundation of his crusade gatherings, and his general support for integration are prominent in themes, but of course the central focus is on his calling to preach the gospel.

There has been some debate over the style of the documentary and criticism that it was not a critical or academic documentary, though I think this misses the point as that was not its purpose. It is a relatively short overview (about an hour) and serves the purpose of being a visual eulogy for the countless millions of people that Billy Graham connected with, and clearly could attend the actual funeral. People are invited into the life of Billy Graham and towards the end of the documentary the actual funeral service is featured. I found the documentary to be quite illuminating and humble in its approach, with a focus on giving thanks to God for the life of one person who was called to tell others in this very public way about his lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

(Another interesting film, though not BGA produced is *Billy: the early years (2008)* - this was reviewed in an early ACCatalyst: March 2009.)

# *I am not ashamed* of the **Gospel**

*It is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believe.*

Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia

## 2019 ACC National Conference & Annual General Meeting

1.30 pm Monday 23 September – 12.30 pm Wednesday 25 September

Alexandra Park Conference Centre | Alexandra Headland, Sunshine Coast

Registration available from April 2019 (See ACC website)