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# ACCatalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



## Where to from here?

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the future  
hold post  
Assembly?

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Cover photo - Supplied

## EDITORIAL

The 15th Assembly of the Uniting Church has happened and while some may say nothing has really changed, clearly the change is substantial and confirms the direction of the Uniting Church since the last time it said nothing had changed (2003, following Resolution 84). ACC is blessed to be in fellowship with many networks and groups throughout the Uniting Church that oppose the decision to revise the Church's biblical and ecumenical understanding of marriage and together we look for a way forward under the guidance of God. May God give you strength and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace and grace,  
**Peter Bentley**



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## ACC NEWS


### The Change to Marriage - the ACC response

*The Change to Marriage -  
Friday 13 July 2018*

**ACC provided the following brief item by email to members shortly after the news release from the UCA Assembly (initially via a tweet - see below). The request by the ACC National Director for members to send bible verses in response proved to be a helpful way of responding. A selection of verses is included in the magazine for your continued encouragement in Christ.**

Dear ACC Members,

**Yes, the decision about marriage and same-gender relationships can be reported.** After another closed session tonight (Friday 13th July), an official tweet emerged at approximately 8.44 pm, announcing:

 *"The 15th Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church in Australia has resolved to allow its ministers the freedom to conduct or refuse to conduct same-gender marriages."*

The full official news report from the Uniting Church Assembly can be found



at: [uniting.church/freedom-to-decide-on-marriage/](http://uniting.church/freedom-to-decide-on-marriage/)

Various verses came to my mind when hearing the result, though **John 11: 35** was the most prominent. No doubt many members will have a verse, or several, and I encourage you to share these with one another over the coming days.

**The ACC will provide a statement for members and congregations for Sunday 15th July.**

**I draw your attention to extracts from the ACC Pastoral Letter (3 April 2018) about what to do Post Assembly July 2018:**

**Stand Firm:** please stand firm; do not make any hasty decisions; do not act alone. We call on all our members and congregations to make a stand and say, "We are not permitted to do this. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. So help me God".

**Wait:** Please wait for an ACC pastoral letter and encourage others to wait and to stand firm. Noting that the ACC is committed to maintaining our current course: remaining faithful and committed to our confession that Jesus Christ alone is the living head of the Church, and adherence to the Basis

*"The 15th Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church in Australia has resolved to allow its ministers the freedom to conduct or refuse to conduct same-gender marriages."*

of Union that commits us to the authority of Scripture.

**Commit:** We encourage you to commit to attending the Conference to be held at Wesley Mission in Sydney 17-19 September 2018. At this conference we will make clear from the Basis of Union and our ecumenical partners what it means to live and work within the faith and unity of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
(turn to page 31 for the verses)

Peter Bentley

# Charlie's Angels

by Robyn Painter

Pastor, Peterborough Uniting Church



**T**he movie, Charlie's Angels is about three elite crime-fighting women who are sponsored by an anonymous millionaire named Charlie. In other words, he employs them and supplies everything they need to do their work. But they never actually meet Charlie.

Each morning the three women meet in the office and Charlie speaks to them via a speaker phone and gives them their daily task. Despite the fact that they know Charlie only as a voice, their affection for him and his for them is obvious.

At the end of the film, the women are relaxing on a beach, having just defeated the bad guy. Charlie calls to congratulate them and they beg him to come and join them there. Charlie declines.

One of the women asks, "But how can we believe in you if we never get to see you?"

"By faith" answers Charlie.

Does all this sound a little familiar to you? We have

someone who desires to meet with us and send us out in his service, and who promises to supply all that we need to do his work. And the relationship we have with God is far more than merely a boss/worker relationship, it, too is based on love and affection.

God has not always been invisible - he came to earth as a man named Jesus. But Jesus has returned to heaven. So how can we believe in the God we cannot see? We hear his voice, we experience his provision, we feel his love, we are transformed and empowered by his Holy Spirit. Though we don't see him, we see the effects of his existence in our lives and in the lives of others.

But, unlike Charlie's angels we don't need to be super fit or super intelligent to be used by God - all of us have a place in his plan.

And God will not always remain hidden from us. One day, when we leave this world we will see Jesus face to face. And what a wonderful meeting that will be!

In the meantime, have faith! Faith to give yourself wholeheartedly to the love and service of our God!



## ACC at the 15th Assembly

**T***hank you for your prayers and financial support.*

ACC was able to provide a 'safe space' for evangelical, reformed and orthodox members during the Assembly through the kind help of St Paul's Lutheran Church, Box Hill. Lunch was provided each weekday and a dinner gathering was held on Thursday night with guest speaker, Rev Professor James Haire AC providing a stirring defence of marriage in the context of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Throughout these five days, over fifty different Assembly members visited the ACC space, and shared and prayed together. Thank you to the ACC members from Victoria who also visited and helped with the practical arrangements.

ACC would like to acknowledge the generosity of members who provided the financial support for the meals, and all other expenses associated with providing a support team at the Assembly event. The prayer foundation, through the leadership of Rev Anne Hibbard was very evident, with many members highlighting how they were strengthened and refreshed to continue to witness during the very difficult circumstances.

*Praise be to God.*



## ACC Observers at GAFCON 2018

**ACC was granted observer status** at GAFCON 2018 (Global Anglican Futures Conference) held in Jerusalem June 17-22. ACC Theology and Ecumenical Relationships Chair Rev. Dr Max Champion and Mrs Ruth Champion were appointed as the official ACC representatives. Nearly 2000 people (500 from Africa) and 53 nations were represented. Bishop Richard Condie (Chairman of the

Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans in Australia) led the Australian delegation and would be well-known to many ACC members as he was a keynote speaker at the 2016 ACC Conference in Tasmania. Max and Ruth attended the Australian group meeting at GAFCON (about 200 present), and were invited by Bishop Condie to speak about the situation in the UCA. Max also read the ACC's pre-Assembly pastoral

letter to the gathering. He reported to the ACC National Council that there was strong support for ACC ahead of the Assembly and outlined the many helpful contacts with Australian leaders, providing ACC with wider insight about the GAFCON arrangements and development. A report on GAFCON prepared by Bishop Richard Condie



is available here:  
[www.fca-us.org.au/](http://www.fca-us.org.au/)



## Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc.

Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia

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# ACC Pastoral Letter Post 15th Assembly

14 July 2018

## Dear ACC Members

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ

On Friday 13th July 2018, the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia exercised its determining authority on matters of doctrine to 'vary its policy on marriage' to include same-gender relationships. This decision is grounded neither in Scripture, nor The Basis of Union, but on a secular understanding of 'diversity'; a diversity that has now gone beyond the acceptance of a diversity of theologies to include a 'diversity of religious beliefs and ethical understandings'.

### Key points

- The lack of opportunity to debate the Report on Marriage and Same-Gender Relationships made the Assembly process extremely difficult.
- Because of the process, many orthodox and evangelical members did not feel the Assembly was a 'safe space'.
- The failure to seek concurrence on such a matter of vital importance should be highlighted in every congregation.
- Despite stating in 1985 that we are a multicultural church, the Assembly did not allow its 12 Migrant-Ethnic National Conferences to participate fully in the decision-making processes.
- Ecumenical relationships have been placed in a low order of priority and this will have a significant impact on local congregations.

In our view, the UCA Assembly has removed itself from the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. On behalf of the National Council of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations, we therefore say in the strongest terms possible, that we reject not only this decision, but the authority of the National Assembly and therefore stand aside from this Council of the Church. We continue to stand firmly in the 'Assembly' of Confessing Congregations as a 'distinct' Assembly through which we can continue to Confess our sole loyalty to Jesus Christ the living head of the Church and as a way of continuing to express our adherence to the Basis of Union.

Please be encouraged to know that though we were a minority in the Assembly, we did not compromise our stance in anyway. I am very proud of the Assembly members who spoke with grace and truth, including several second-generation leaders who stood their ground well, even in the face of distinct opposition. Thank you for all your prayers for us. It is greatly appreciated. Despite the enormous responsibility we all felt for the whole church as members of the Assembly, we still felt peace and joy knowing that we were simply participating in the reconciling work of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The National Council of the ACC will meet on July 23. We will also seek a national meeting of leaders from the various Networks, National Conferences and cross-cultural communities and UAICC leaders. Peter Bentley will continue to keep you updated on these important meetings.

Please continue to pray for the Church at this critical time.  
Grace and peace

*Hedley Fihaki*

**Rev. Dr. Hedley Fihaki**

*On behalf of the ACC National Council.*



# DEVOTION

## Joy

1 Peter 1:8

*“Though you have not seen him, you love him;  
and even though you do not see him now,  
you believe in him and are filled  
with an inexpressible and glorious joy”*

These words “you do not see Him” reach out to us  
from the time Peter wrote them.

Our Christian faith is based not on what we see  
but what we believe with our hearts.

Our faith is real because we “trust Him.”

The Christians in Peter’s day were facing imminent persecution  
yet still they were “happy with a glorious inexpressible joy.”

Let us stop and ask the question “Is this how I feel?”

We are continually being led into false beliefs  
because of what we see.

We eat too much because we are tempted  
by innumerable cooking programmes on TV.

Our eyes cause us to thirst after new cars or houses.

Our “trust” is not based on what we see with our eyes.

We experience “glorious inexpressible joy”  
because we “trust Him.”

Some later translations  
replace the word “trust” with “love.”

We “trust” Jesus because we have first loved Him  
and we love Him because first He has loved us.

The Word tells us

“We know how much God loves us,  
and we have put our trust in His love.”

Persecution, incorrect teachings, or even schisms  
should not rob us of the

“glorious, inexpressible joy”  
we can experience in Jesus’ love for us.

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

# OPINION

## The fiction of “two valid doctrines”

**T**he 15th  
Assembly of  
the Uniting  
Church in  
Australia has  
now changed  
the Church’s  
received

doctrine of marriage, from that  
exclusively between a man and  
a woman, to that between two  
people, regardless of gender.

The 15th Assembly has used  
the language of “two valid  
doctrines of marriage” to create  
the illusion that people in the  
one church can hold either  
exclusive male-female marriage,  
or same-sex marriage, with  
integrity. However these two  
doctrines are mutually exclusive:  
exclusive male-female marriage  
rejects the validity of same-  
sex marriage, and vice versa.  
Officially adopting same-sex  
marriage actually means that  
this has replaced the doctrine  
of exclusive male-female  
marriage. In other words, the  
essential doctrine adopted by  
the 15th Assembly is “same-sex  
marriage”.

The most that could be said is  
that the UCA has changed the  
Church’s doctrine of marriage to  
that of two people regardless of  
gender (which may also include  
the marriage of a man and a  
woman).

Moving away from Biblical  
and Christian orthodoxy in this  
way has profound implications  
for the church’s relationship with  
the entirety of the Revelation  
and Gospel of Jesus Christ.

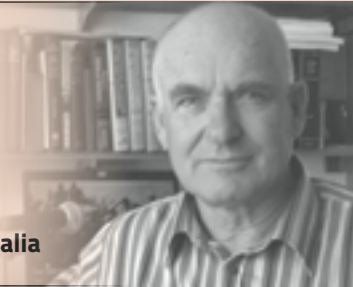
*Rev Jonathan Button is a  
Minister of the Word in S.A. He  
wrote this brief comment soon  
after the 15th Assembly decision  
to explain the overall context.*



# Coming? Here?

## Ian Clarkson

UCA Minister - South Australia



A little known trial; a well-known leader and the widening divide between two interpretations of the Faith. What is there in common between the trial of Dr Patrick Sookhdeo in the United Kingdom last month and the weird destabilising of the UCA here? The jury of twelve at Snaresbrook Crown Court, after deliberating for less than two hours, unanimously found Dr Sookhdeo not guilty on Tuesday 31 July of a charge of indecent assault dating back to the 1970's.

The prosecution's case fell into a disarray of contradictions and absurdities. And what happened next is why I am putting this piece together in the climate of our own UCA disarray. Unable to make anything relevant stick, the prosecution began on their real animus, describing this godly servant as a conservative traditional evangelical! One who rejected inter-faith dialogue and held to the Bible's

plain teaching on marriage and sexuality. In a leaflet he even dared to encourage Christians to love Muslims and hopefully lead them to faith in our Lord Jesus. Cries of manipulation and offence!

Failing to get this Christian leader on facts that might be relevant to the case, the liberal establishment set out to destroy him by casting him as being part of a dangerously anti-social enclave called 'conservative evangelical Christians.'. Apparently, a member of a sect that believes Holy Scripture is divine revelation!

Is the UCA Assembly tracking in a similar way as that religious establishment? If federal and state laws fail to protect freedom of religion will our evangelical pastors be vulnerable? Is the idea of following the clear direct meaning of Scripture and claiming it is real and relevant for today to be parodied as conservative junk? Believing the Scriptures have hope for a shamed and bereft humanity seems to threaten the progressive status quo. In the UK, liberal deconstructionist philosophy is becoming mainstream 'church', while Evangelical (so-called conservative) Christianity is marginalised, dubbed extremist and increasingly regarded as legally dangerous.

Yet Scripture believed and proclaimed demonstrates its authenticity and reality. Christ is risen flesh and Lord of all. The Holy Spirit is here. Repentance works, conversion happens. God's way blesses individuals and nations. We shall not, dare not relinquish this saving gospel.





# PUBLIC SQUARE

B Y P S E U D O - M A X I M U S

## Harsh words and vibrant hope

*See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, indeed he is coming says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears?* (Malachi 3:1,2 NRSV)

Little is known of the prophet Malachi (the ‘messenger’) whose writing is the last in the Old Testament – a kind of preparation for the Gospel. Before becoming a prophet he may have been a priest dissatisfied with the flippant way in which God’s name was treated in the sanctuary and in the whole of life.

He probably wrote in about 430BC after the return from exile in Babylon and the restoration of the Temple by Nehemiah and Ezra, when people had become blasé in worship and fascinated by pagan gods who appealed to their natural instincts. They had adjusted nicely to their more settled environment – divorcing their Hebrew wives and marrying foreign women and generally becoming incapable of distinguishing between good and evil.

Into this grim situation Malachi speaks a harsh word. ‘He disturbed

the peace, disheartened worshippers and embarrassed the priesthood with reminders of a Name they would rather forget’. (I Kirk, Unpublished Sermon, 4 Sep 2009). As a fellow Hebrew he insisted that they stop belittling God with their slipshod worship, shonky teaching, tepid commitment, contempt of ethical responsibilities and weak capitulation to gods who gave them what they desired.

Across the centuries Malachi’s harsh word also speaks to us:

- Is our **worship** notable for glorifying the unsurpassable Name of God before the nations, or have we become fascinated that many gods can satisfy our different needs?
- Is our **teaching** notable for centring on the unique splendour of God’s goodness and mercy for the nations disclosed to the Hebrews and embodied in Christ, or have we taught that there is a little bit of god and good in all religions?
- Are our **ethical standards** notable for affirming the unique dignity of our creation as male and female, and their fruition in marriage, or have we capitulated to the belief that

sexuality and marriage is a matter of individual choice?

- Is our **participation in the Church** notable for being joyful and prayerful in worship, sacrificial in giving and using money, and disciplined in learning and practising our faith, or have we settled into a routine which is comfortable, undemanding and amiably accepting?
- Is our **prophetic ministry** notable for calling Australians to honour God, oppose corruption in public life and defend human dignity, or have we become a mouthpiece for sectional interests? (e.g. Labor, Liberal, The Greens.)

Have we let ourselves, our politicians, our Church leaders and our public opinion-makers be shaped by ideologies which are antagonistic to God’s goodness and mercy revealed to the nations through the Hebrews and in Christ?

These are urgent questions for a Church no longer at the centre of public life in Australia. Malachi’s word to his generation 2400 years ago also causes us much soul-searching. But his searing criticism is accompanied surprisingly by a word of hope! Our grievous shortcomings shall not stand in the way of God’s good purposes



for humanity. Instead of darkness he foresees a ray of light. “The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is coming to prepare the way for the Lord of all.” (3:1b)

It is unclear whom Malachi expected to come to judge and forgive the flippant Hebrews. He may have thought it would be his role or Elijah’s. Interestingly, he is the only prophet to say that God will send a messenger before his own final advent (G von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 255). But, as later generations looked back through the events of Christ’s risen, crucified and incarnate life and the ministry of John the Baptist, they saw in Malachi’s harsh and hopeful words the anticipation of the world’s redemption.



**“The Prophet Malachi”**  
by Duccio di Buoninsegna (c. 1310)

This expectation of forgiveness and renewal is taken up in Luke’s account of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1-6) who encapsulates the best of Hebrew prophetic speech and points to its fulfilment in the coming of Jesus.

Luke sets the scene to make the point that what is about to unfold is of universal significance – not only for a few Hebrews or Christians! Christ shall come as Ruler of the world (symbolised, on the political side, by Rome, and on the religious side, by Judaism). His reign is for the whole of humanity.

Despite the global importance of this historic event, the pre-publicity is low-key and unpromising! John the Baptist doesn’t appear in a prominent public place, like a Roman palace or Jewish Temple, but in ‘the wilderness’ – a God-forsaken place which represents all that is hostile to God and humanity.

Things don’t sound any more hopeful when we hear that John the Baptist comes ‘preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’ (3:3). So conditioned have we become to think that we humans are basically good that we shudder at such primitive negativity. No wonder some high profile ministers re-write hymns and liturgies to remove ‘grace’, ‘sin’ and ‘penitence’.

Consider though the possibility that, in dodging the truth about ourselves, we will become deaf to really ‘Good’ News! We will not hear:

- if we excuse our poor attempts to honour God and dignify others;
- if we deny the truth about the human race as we look at world history;
- if we ignore the fractures in our own relationships;
- if we believe in our own ‘moral progress’;
- if we deny the corrosive effect of relativism in society; or
- if we ignore strife in the Christian community.

As John the Baptist and Malachi force us to see, our humanity is scarred by sin!

At the same time, we need not despair. The Good News to which John and Malachi point is a Person who is the bearer of hope because he is

the embodiment of the immeasurable grace and goodness of God. In him there is hope for all humanity through the ‘forgiveness of sins’. Even though all of us have settled for a way of life which is far removed from the humanity which God intends for us, Christ has come into our midst to display the mercy of God.

What was foreshadowed by prophets in a tiny, often despised nation and announced by an eccentric prophet in a tiny, God-forsaken part of the world is therefore crucial for all. Far from being an obscure event with relevance for a few people, it is the event of mercy and hope for all nations.

We should remember this at a time in our history when Christian hope in God’s all-sufficient grace, and the need to acknowledge our sins and God’s mercy, is treated as if it were a dangerous relic of a bygone age or a private religious matter. It is not. It is an earth-shaking public event which both challenges sin and declares it forgiven in the person of Jesus.

We must resist the all-too-human tendency (so unerringly exposed by Malachi in his day) to dishonour God and disdain others by accommodating ourselves to the surrounding culture and excusing our part in the brokenness of humanity.

When powerful ideologies shape public opinion in ways that dishonour God and dehumanise our life together, Christians should speak a harsh word to our nation and the Church. We must not let ourselves be hoodwinked by people and programs (in church or community) which falsely inflate our worth or ignore our responsibilities before God. Like the prophets, we may have to be unpopular with our fellow citizens or leaders!

Whatever protests are made, we must never lose sight of the one event in human history in which hope for fractured humanity has taken place. The Good News, which we are invited to greet with great rejoicing, is that the One whom prophets like Malachi saw from a distance has come among us in Jesus Christ. In his incarnate, crucified and risen body that there is hope for the Church and for all nations.

***Thanks be to God!***

# The Basis of Union as a Confessional

Dr Gordon  
Watson

Former Head Systematic  
Theology - Trinity College (QLD)



In considering the matter of Christian unity it may well be true that,  
*“ecclesiastical negotiations are but a fraction of the total work of Christian unity, for it also includes all that happens in the renewal of the Churches in holiness, in worship, in theology, and in mission, and the involvement of Christians with one another.”*<sup>1</sup>

But it is also true that ecclesiastical negotiations, the results of which as evinced by the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church in Australia, are to be considered as essentially practical matters, certainly not divorced from the life situation of churches; indeed as will be shown are firmly riveted in the central activity of the church, its life of worship and thanksgiving.

The thesis of this paper is that the development and form of the documents related to the production of the *Basis of Union* have a characteristic style which implies an ecclesiology that precludes the facile distinction, often made, between theoretical and practical concerns in the matter of Christian unity. I call this style ‘confessional’; this is to be clearly distinguished from Confessionalism. This latter is understood to be concerned with sectional or factional interests. I am using ‘confessional’ to mean that the *Basis of Union* presupposes in its content and structure that disciplined thinking about church life and theology is not done in some empty space. It is seen to take place within the definite context where God’s Word comes to meet the church in the Scriptures and the Sacraments. This is the concrete ground where humans relationship with God becomes actual in the *Una Sancta*.

Speech about God according to this understanding of its ground and context is confessional in the sense that it can only be understood in terms of the structure of the event in which it actually takes place.<sup>2</sup> The *Basis of Union* in the critical paras 3 and 5 makes this quite clear. These paragraphs deal with the questions of the nature of the church’s unity and the authority of Scripture. In these paragraphs the *Basis of Union* uses the word “acknowledge” with respect to the truth of the statements which it makes. In this way the authors of

the *Basis of Union* wish to make it plain that the truth of what they say arises in the definite situation where it becomes a possibility. This is the worshipping life of the church constituted by the presence of the Lord of the church by the means which He has chosen to mediate His presence with His people, His Word and Sacraments. What the *Basis of Union* indicates by its use of the word “acknowledge” is that knowledge of God and union with God whilst it does not come about without our work it does not come about through it. With the use of the word “acknowledge” the *Basis of Union* confesses that in knowing God it does not comprehend how it comes to know what it confesses. This can only be ascribed to the free grace of God which compels this avowal.

It is not our intention to discuss further in any detail the theological epistemology of the *Basis of Union* but to emphasise the importance of taking into account its ‘confessional’ nature in understanding its theological meaning.<sup>3</sup> For example, if its true as stated in para.3 of the *Basis of Union* that the unity of the church is “acknowledged” to be built upon the unity of the person of Jesus Christ, then it is important to realise that the two propositions - one concerning the unity of God’s people, and the other concerning the unity of the person of Jesus Christ the God-Man - presuppose an unexpressed condition which derives directly from, the ‘confessional’ nature of the statement. This unexpressed condition is the assumption that the unity spoken of, its theological coherence derives from the truth of the God who addresses human beings in Jesus Christ as present with His people.<sup>4</sup> Here theological coherence about God and God’s action in the history of salvation derive from God’s own self considered as personally present and active.

For this reason it is logically inept to draw conclusions from such statements without taking it into account the very specific context which condition their structure and meaning. For the ‘confessional’ nature of the statements *presupposes deliberately* that there is no middle term joining the propositions as they appear in the *Basis of Union*. That is there is no middle term joining the propositions which embrace the truth of the unity of God and human being in the person of Jesus Christ and human beings with each other in the church. This logical discrepancy is to be emphasised at all costs if the ‘confessional’ nature of the *Basis of Union* is to be appreciated. It is the same disjunction to which St. Basil the Great drew attention in his celebrated defence of the deity of the Holy Spirit. The disjunction is to be “observed in silence” the apparent difficulty of understanding taking place for “man’s advantage.”<sup>5</sup> For St Basil theological

# ion Statement



coherence can only be expressed in relationship to the truth of the church's dogma concerning the unity of the triune God if the unexpressed condition of 'confessional' statement is fulfilled, viz., that the theologian is the recipient of the free grace of Christ who in Himself unites the truth of God in relationship to human beings and human beings in relationship to God and each other. A similar sentiment is expressed by D. Bonhoeffer with respect to the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ.

*"To speak of Christ means to keep silent; to be silent about Christ is to speak. The proclamation of Christ is the church speaking from a proper silence.....To speak of Christ, then, will be to speak within the context of the silence of the church."*<sup>6</sup>

What Karl Rahner maintains as true for the church, as the fundamental sacrament, is here to be maintained as true for its theology. For this 'silence', this logical discrepancy, this "difficulty in understanding" which takes place for humans' benefit exists to make plain that God's,

*"redemptive grace in Christ is free grace, his own operation in us and not a factual reality always of necessity present, and in regard to which it is really only a question for us, of what attitude we adopt to it."*<sup>7</sup>

If the 'confessional' structure of the statements made in the *Basis of Union* is not taken into account in determining their meaning then logical problems are bound to arise which soon become theological problems. In this situation the *sitz im leben* of the statements, their basic liturgical and doxological structure is ignored. Then it will appear possible to survey questions concerning the self revealing God of Jesus Christ and the nature of human existence as two distinct entities coordinating both in a 'higher unity' of either a realist or idealist nature; in this way the differing roles of divine and human causality in human redemption is understood and defined.

Referring briefly to para. 5 of the *Basis of Union*. It is to be noted that the authority of Scripture is understood in terms of a 'confessional' statement. In contrast to such statements about biblical authority which occur for example in the *Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646*,<sup>8</sup> which appear as deductions from rational principals relating to created and uncreated grace, nature and super nature, the *Basis of Union's* understanding of biblical authority is couched in personal terms. The prophets and apostles become authoritative because they are obedient recipients of God's self giving in love and judgment. The Scriptures are authoritative when

this relationship is repeated on the basis of their unique witness. In this way the *Basis of Union* excludes such authorities either in the form of a juridically determined teaching office or the pious self consciousness or rationality of religious individuals. According to the *Basis of Union* the church stands or falls in relation to the Scripture's authority when it obeys or is "controlled" as were prophets and apostle.

**According to the *Basis of Union* the church stands or falls in relation to the Scripture's authority when it obeys or is "controlled" as were prophets and apostle.**

Here it is a question of a relationship in which the church receives, in which it really has a Lord and belongs to Him. The nature of authority here intended to be grounded in the Scriptures is one which evinces the structure of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving characteristic of the church's worship. Here the unity of human words and their reference to God's will and purpose is one that is achieved in full consciousness of the fact that it is realised in and by God in a manner which passes our comprehension.<sup>9</sup> It is

therefore obvious that unless the 'confessional' nature of the material found in the *Basis of Union* is kept clearly in view positive and critical discussion of its content will be severely curtailed. False questions will be asked and answers given which will be quite irrelevant to the subject matter of *Basis of Union*. This by no means implies that there should be no discussion of its content! Simply, that unless serious note is taken of the structure of the statements made in the *Basis of Union* much discussion will be beside the point. It may be the case that in learning from the *Basis of Union* the direction in which to look one will need to oppose certain or even many of its statements!

*Rev Dr Gordon Watson was Head Systematic Theology: Trinity College Synod of Queensland Uniting Church until his retirement in June 2001. Gordon resigned from the UCA ministry in 2012 and was recognised as a Pastor by the Lutheran Church in Australia.*

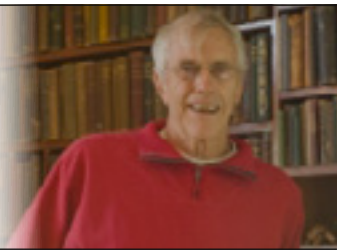
**Footnote references can be found on page 24.**



# The Purpose Confessing

## Dr Riley Case

United Methodist (Retired)



These are precarious days for The United Methodist Church. Because of differences over the church's historic standards on the meaning of marriage and sexual purity, United Methodism finds itself in what appears to be an all-out war on the future of the church.

When it appeared that the 2016 General Conference would re-affirm the long-standing affirmations of ecumenical Christianity on human sexuality, and when it was discovered that some negotiations had already taken place on the possibility of amicable separation within the denomination, a number of bishops and other church leaders with concern about the unity of the institutional church asked that votes be delayed on issues of human sexuality so that a special commission might work with the Council of Bishops to find a solution that would allow the church to stay together. A special General Conference was set for February of 2019 to deal with these matters.

At the present time the Council of Bishops, working from reports presented to them by the Commission on A Way Forward, will be recommending to the General Conference a plan ("The One-Church Plan") which is essentially a resurrection of the "Live and Let Live" failed attempts of the last two General Conferences. According to this plan, all negative references to the practice of homosexuality would be removed from the Discipline which would allow individuals, pastors, churches and conferences to decide for themselves what is considered acceptable in regard to sexual practice. The plan says basically that if evangelicals and those who stand for Biblical faith will give up their convictions about human sexuality and Bible authority, the institutional church as we know it (the status quo) can continue as it is.

This, of course, would be a disaster. It is impossible to imagine John Wesley, or any of the reformers, or the New Testament, or any part of the Bible for that matter, advancing a position in which we all decide for ourselves what is true or false or what is right or wrong. The meaning of "revelation" is that God has given to us the authoritative interpretation of His mighty acts in history, and that includes the moral code.

The Confessing Movement, ever since its beginnings in 1994, is one of several evangelical renewal groups working to uphold the authority of the Bible, the historic Wesleyan essentials (Original Sin, the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, Salvation by Faith, the Work of the Holy Spirit, and the Bodily Resurrection), the high moral teachings of the Bible and the ministry to all people (Salvation is for All).

This emphasis on Biblical and historic doctrine as understood in the Wesleyan tradition is resisted by church leadership influenced by Progressivism. Indeed, not long after The Confessing Movement was started the Omaha Sunday World-Herald (a secular paper no less) carried an article by some leaders of the Nebraska Conference that appeared July 12, 1998, which sought to "expose" and condemn The Confessing Movement:

The Confessing Movement is a fringe group with no official connection with the United Methodist Church. It clearly does not represent our tradition and is declared an opponent of many parts of the official Book of Discipline of our church. It is trying for a take-over...

The Confessing Movement has much to say about Jesus, which is nice, but then it goes to a basic premise that there is no other name but Jesus through which one can have salvation. That kind of proof-texting, ignoring other major passages of scripture which give another witness, would block non-Christians from heaven. Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and all who never heard of Jesus are out.

In one area The Confessing Movement is guilty as charged in the article: The Confessing Movement is built on the basic foundation statement of "Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior and Lord." There are no other names but the name of Jesus Christ by which we are saved. Another of the accusations in the article, however, is curiously wrong. It declares The Confessing Movement an "opponent of many parts of the...Discipline?" This is an accusation on different occasions by critics of The

# of the Movement



## THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFESSING MOVEMENT

Confessing faith in Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord, The Confessing Movement exists to help retrieve and celebrate the Church's classic biblical and doctrinal identity and to live it out together as followers of Jesus Christ.

The task is critically important in our relativistic age, which insists that every individual comes to her or his own personal truth, morality, and understanding of righteousness. Within the United Methodist Church, this situation has often led to the promotion of political ideologies and personal agendas overlaid with religious veneers, positions frequently in opposition to the historic biblical and doctrinal teachings of the faith. In this process, as each individual advocates what is "right in his own eyes" (Judges 21), the teaching of Christian truth is often confused or even lost and those whom Christ came to save are instead led astray.

The historic Christian faith as read in Holy Scripture, summarized in creeds and confessions, and articulated in the richness of our doctrinal heritage, is not the product of personal opinion but a gift from God. It offers the world something much more life-giving than the limited and transient wisdom of the culture; it offers no less than a transformative relationship with the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Confessing Movement is working to re-establish this clarity of purpose within the United Methodist Church

Therefore, as United Methodist lay women and men, clergy, and congregations, with one voice we pledge our confident allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ according to the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) and seek to renew the Church in the power of this faith. We invite you to join us in this holy and happy work: recalling our beloved United Methodist Church to the fullness of its biblical and doctrinal identity in the Lord Jesus Christ through the renewal of the Holy Spirit!



[facebook.com/umcforward](https://facebook.com/umcforward)

### Bishop Gregory Palmer sharing during the Commission on A Way Forward

Confessing Movement. The truth is that it is The Confessing Movement which wishes to uphold the Discipline. It believes that Discipline when it defines connectionalism as "sharing a common tradition of faith, including Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules" (para. 132). It believes, according to our Discipline's Social Principles, that marriage is between a man and a woman. It believes that bishops should uphold the parts of the Discipline which prohibit the ordination and even the election of bishops of practicing gays and lesbians. It is not The Confessing Movement that is insisting the Book of Discipline be changed to conform to progressive standards and modern culture, but the liberals in the denomination, including some bishops.

The Confessing Movement intends to be very much involved in the discussions leading up to the 2019 General Conference. We believe we and other renewal groups represent the greater majority of United Methodists. In this spirit we offer the following statement, recently adopted by The Confessing Movement board, for consideration. If this represents your own convictions we ask you stand with us.

# The Emperor is Naked

David Kowalick

Minister of the Word  
Walkerville UC



**I** watched in astonishment as the ‘Emperor’ i.e. – Western philosophy/science, paraded before the thronging crowd of admirers. He was unabashedly naked: but no one seemed to notice.

Indeed, most people were congratulating him on his fine clothes without the slightest hint of irony. Turning to my Christian companion, while pointing at this spectacle, I inquired incredulously: “Are you seeing what I’m seeing?” To which my colleague simply replied, “Yes! What magnificent new clothes, wouldn’t you agree?” before applauding the Emperor and his entourage as they passed by.

I don’t know which was most astonishing: the vision of a stark-naked Emperor; or the apparent blindness of my fellow Christian. Sadly, it seems that a substantial portion of the church is now so much in thrall of the Emperor that it has become as sycophantic as any other sector of our society. Much of the church’s descent into blind acceptance of Western values has been rapidly accelerating in recent decades, but this development is actually the result of a gradual process stretched out over the past four hundred years. Somewhere in that history I believe we missed an important turn and maybe it’s time to retrace our steps and reset our compass.

## A match not made in heaven

Western culture and the church have been dancing around one another for centuries, mutually affecting one another; both for good and for ill. Certainly, without the church there would be no such thing as Western culture; and without

the West, the church would have been vastly different. Universities, hospitals and modern democracy – to name a few – are all children of this unlikely coupling. But this pairing, sometimes called Christendom, was not necessarily a match made in heaven, and ever since the Age of Enlightenment (1620-1860), there has been a gradual estrangement between the West and the church.

Theology – once regarded as the Queen of sciences – has been pushed to the background of the culture. In its place, Western philosophy/science was crowned the new monarch. Advances in science called in question some of the never-before-doubted dogmas of the church and even cast aspersions on the authenticity of the Bible. Consequently, the centre of knowledge gradually shifted away from church and priest, to the university and professor. And the church was not exactly helping to counteract this shift either; with unwholesome connections between the church and state, clerical corruption, religious wars and doctrinaire close-mindedness aiding the decline.

Naturally, the church has not taken this cultural dismissal at all well, and ever since she has desperately wanted to reclaim the admiration of the culture and her position at the ‘table of ideas,’ with the cultural elites. Enter the enlightenment theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), and his famous apologetic, “On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.” In it Schleiermacher attempted to bridge the ever-widening chasm between the church and the enlightenment thinkers. He forged an amalgamation of the religious piety of his youth with the enlightenment philosophy of his academic life, (most especially of Immanuel Kant), to posit an aesthetically appealing and rationally defensible knowledge of God built on a spirituality of personal experience. While this is an over simplification of Schleiermacher’s position, it can be said with accuracy that he had initiated an entirely new pedigree of theological thought that appealed to the mind shaped by rationalism and Western philosophy.

Schleiermacher’s inventiveness has since given rise to modern liberalism and its offshoots. I believe that it was at this point in history that the Western Church missed an important turn.

## A new light

The Apostles and early church Fathers were keen to let the world know that God had stepped into human history in the person of Jesus Christ, and that this extraordinary advent was the truest and unsurpassed basis of all true theology and the best hermeneutic for every aspect of life. When Jesus declared: “I am the light of the world” (John 8: 12), this is what he meant. He was effectively saying that everything and every thought are relative to him. As far as the first believers were concerned, all forms of knowledge were a subheading under knowing Jesus Christ. To them he was the ‘picture on the jigsaw box,’ so to speak, by which the purpose and place of all the pieces of the jigsaw of life were to be understood. Relationships, vocation, the scriptures, theology, parenting, marriage, authority, government, health, education and any and every piece of the jigsaw, only make sense in the light of the light of the world.

However, much of the post-enlightenment church, apparently blinded by the dazzling new “light” of Western philosophy/science, gave up the assertion that Jesus Christ is the true light of the world. The enlightenment had, after all, delivered on some of its promises by providing unprecedented healthcare, cheap mechanised labour, classical music, discovery of distant planets and huge advances in technology. Who, in their right mind, would stand in the way of such obviously good and wonderful progress? Consequently many theologians lost confidence in the gospel, and capitulated to Western philosophy/science, and effectively dimmed “the light of the world” to a lower setting of: “a light in the world.”

## A new darkness

Nevertheless, truth is truth and gradually the influence of the false



light of Western thought began to inevitably disintegrate and lose its sense of purpose and meaning. While science may have gifted us with GPS tracking systems and LED lights, our culture has, nonetheless, managed to lose its way in the dark. Science has helped to explain many of the “How?” questions, but the “Why?” questions remained hauntingly unanswered. Even while scientific discovery continued to advance unimpeded, Western philosophers—ironically—began to draw attention to the futility of life and the absence of meaning that Western thinking had given us. Almost prophetically philosophers such as Nietzsche (1844-1900) cast a long nihilistic shadow over the otherwise heady days of the post-enlightenment Romantic era. This, and the devastation of two World Wars, bore terrible testimony to the moral hollowness of Western culture. As I heard someone quip once, “Ah the West; so many possibilities; so little reason.”

Amazingly however the West stubbornly refused to be daunted by the obvious vanity and moral bankruptcy that its philosophy and science had bequeathed it. Instead the West got busy with individualism expressed in narcissistic self-indulgence as a way of ignoring the meaninglessness. “Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” being the axiomatic upshot. Certainly the words of the American Declaration of Independence, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” (1776) underscore this adage. These words have been venerated and ultimately raised to the status of sacred text in Western culture.

Unsurprisingly all this has given rise to the ‘cult of self’ with self-actualisation, self-fulfilment, self-esteem, self-help and selfies serving

as altars of the new religion. “You only live once,” so live the dream, follow your desires and believe in yourself—the theme song of popular culture. After all, there is no life-after-death, no heaven or hell, no consequences or judgement because no one is watching us. You owe it to yourself to get out there and tick the boxes in your bucket list before it’s too late.

## A new morality

This ‘brave new world’ of enlightened self-determination has become the supreme virtue of Western culture and arbiter of a new morality. Meanwhile the wisdom of the ages, expressed in natural and divine law, has been unceremoniously cast aside—even repudiated as dark and evil. This new morality is measured by the freedom to pursue personal happiness rather than answering to any higher call of either divine or human authority. This is particularly true of sexual ethics as romantic/sexual fulfilment became emblematic, and even central, to the ‘pursuit of happiness.’

Naturally, the cultural, political and legal environment has morphed to match this new morality. In the wake of the 1960s and 70s sexual revolution we have witnessed the introduction of no-fault-divorce, the legalisation of abortion on demand, the normalisation of pre-marriage sex, the endorsement of same-sex marriage and the deconstruction of gender. All these serve to expedite the ‘inalienable right’ for each individual to pursue whatever libidinous predilection happens to take their fancy. Even now there is serious discussion around the normalisation and acceptance into law of polygamy, polyamory and even paedophilia. Yet those who have the temerity to speak against this new ‘morality’ are instantly labelled as bigots, bullies and haters.

Astonishingly, this new morality

is not only being championed by the self-interested secular culture; it is also being supported by significant sectors of the Western church. I find it inconceivable that same-sex-marriage is being touted as a virtue and pursued as a matter of justice, even though the overwhelming majority of the church—culturally, geographically and chronologically—has never once begun to even entertain the notion of SSM as a plausible possibility. The fact that SSM is a uniquely Western phenomenon ought to at least make us a little suspicious that SSM has more to do with our Western value systems than it does with any kind of biblical or serious-minded Christological reflection.

## Getting back to basics

All this reveals just how much the church has been steadily syncretising with Western culture. It’s not only the so-called progressive liberal end of the church that has caved in to the pressure; even those claiming to be part of the reformed orthodox tradition have been caught up in the zeitgeist as well. I have talked with church leaders from a variety of denominations in many non-Western cultures who literally shake their heads with incredulity at how Western churches even entertain the notion of SSM, let alone how they form a theology to support it.

However the acceptance of SSM within the church is a symptom of a far more serious problem. The real issue is a faulty epistemology. After cosying up with the culture through the centuries of Christendom, much of the church has gradually lost its discrete identity. The Western Church has allowed the astounding otherness, i.e. – holiness of the gospel to be diluted. Even after the enlightenment schism, the church

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## The Emperor is Naked...

has remained reluctant to differentiate itself from the culture and, if anything, seems even more determined to give away her birthright in an effort to be accepted and liked. This is certainly what appears to be happening in relation to SSM.

All this poses the question: "Is same-sex marriage the inevitable outcome of a Christ-centred theological reflection; or is it merely the progeny of syncretising with Western philosophy?" Sadly, I believe the latter of these options is what we are currently witnessing. The purportedly theological reasoning of those advocating SSM within the church, is little more than Western philosophy thinly veneered with Christian respectability. It may look vaguely Christian but get past the veneer and it is purely Western.

At the very least, it should be disquieting that the church has never once in all its history been leading a push for SSM against the grain of the culture. On the contrary, it seems more accurate to say that the church has been slavishly chasing the culture in thrall to the zeitgeist of the enlightenment. What makes this all the more maddening is that we are missing a wonderful opportunity to offer an alternative to the spiritual suicide that our Western culture seems so keen to commit. Even though our culture is metaphorically on fire and jumping off a cliff; half the church seems to be enthusiastically resolved to join them on the descent in order to remain 'relevant.'

Jesus warned his disciples about this kind of scenario when he urged them to keep their distinct flavour saying, "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." (Matthew 5: 13). If we look and taste the same as the world around us, then perhaps we too are in danger of being ultimately ignored and trampled underfoot. If we are saying and doing exactly what the world is saying and doing we may end up—paradoxically—becoming utterly irrelevant.

# Religious Freedom

In the months leading up to the same-sex marriage postal vote last year, much of the focus of online discussion amongst Christians revolved around religious freedom, as did most of the arguments from the 'No' campaign.

Many left-leaning Christians I know saw this as an annoying and unloving distraction from the real issue. For many 'Yes' voting Christians, the question of same-sex marriage was simply about whether or not we were prepared to start treating LGBT+ people as first class citizens. And so, for them, it was frustrating and disappointing to see conservative Christians 'hijack' the debate by making it about the potential persecution of Christians. The postal vote was supposed to be about improving the lives of LGBT+ people, and yet, they argue, we made ourselves out to be the victims.

Understandable as these thoughts are, I want to present an alternative perspective on the motives of those who want to see religious freedom preserved. As one of these people, I can say that many concerns about religious freedom also arise from a desire for the wellbeing of others.

Traditional Christian sexual ethics (henceforth simply 'Christian sexual ethics') are good for us: good for believers, good for non-believers and good for society. In our current context, then, it is loving towards others to be concerned about the religious freedom to promote this kind of sexual ethic. It is also urgent, given the danger facing religious freedom.

## The fallout from the Sexual Revolution

Reserving sex for marriage - a life-long commitment of sacrificial love and faithfulness - is the essence of the Christian sexual ethic. The arguments in its favour will be familiar to most readers. Firstly, there are the arguments pertaining to emotional benefits. Reserving sex for marriage bestows on the act of sex ultimate meaningfulness (or, as some Christian philosophers

would argue, properly recognises the inherent meaningfulness of it[1]). Sex, along with the chemicals in our brains that are released during intercourse, is like glue, made to bond sexual partners together in the way that life-long mates are meant to be bonded. To use this glue outside a life-long relationship brings with it the potential for great pain.

I wish everyone in my generation could have been exposed to these ideas as effectively as I was while growing up. I watch men my age wonder why, after strings of short-term relationships, they can't muster the discipline to be monogamous, even when they are in a relationship with a truly amazing woman. I watch women of my age resign themselves to the acceptance of meaningless sex as an inevitable part of the trial-and-error process of looking for a man they hope will eventually commit. I watch people younger than me follow the social script of the hook-up culture, who then feel empty as a result, and who do not understand why, because no one has told them why.

How much happier we would all be if we followed the beautifully simple imperative of the Christian sexual ethic: reserve sex for marriage. If we did this, we would be incentivised to make early and purposeful decisions about marriage, and the world of courting would not be awash with uncertainty and mismatched expectations. We would stop sustaining a dating culture in which people use each other as means to ends. STDs would not be epidemic. And, to top it all off, we'd all have better, more fulfilling sex! The liberal ethic of the sexual revolution - the widespread worship of sexual autonomy and sexual self-expression - was supposed to bring us greater satisfaction, but we've come up empty.

The second kind of argument for the Christian sexual ethic used to be obvious before reliable contraception came onto the scene. One of the outcomes of sex is the creation of babies, and the fairest, most workable, and most beneficial way for those babies to be raised is by the two people who brought





# and Neighbourly Love

them into existence, in the context of a low-conflict marriage. (While we face increasing pressure to deny this traditional consensus, the evidence for it is robust, and research to the contrary is, on the whole, methodologically unsound[2]). It is good for society and for the next generation of children, then, for men and women to have sex only when they are in the kind of relationship that can best provide for the potential consequences of this activity: the creation of new life.

This argument should not be dismissed as irrelevant because of our technological advances. It is true that modern contraception is extremely reliable when used properly. But the tragically high rates of abortion, and of babies born to single mothers with little involvement from fathers, show that nothing can completely eliminate the socially destructive capacity of premarital sex that our grandparents understood well. Phrases like 'the socially destructive capacity of premarital sex' now sound quaint and embarrassing. But this is only because we have allowed ourselves to become comfortable with a status quo in which children's needs (and unborn babies' lives) are trampled on for the sake of sexual autonomy. Like other pagan religions before it, the worship of sexual autonomy requires child sacrifice.

Needless to say, the liberal sexual ethic not only interferes with the formation of families, but also breaks up families already formed. That there would be a link between the liberal sexual ethic and high divorce rates is intuitive: if sexual autonomy is all-important, the obligation to make a struggling marriage work is only as strong as the desire of the parties involved to do so.

The world's need to rediscover the Christian sexual ethic is obvious. Men and women are designed to pair-bond for life through the act of sex, both for their own emotional wellbeing and so that they may together raise any offspring created through their union. Thus the design has always been, and modern contraception and

IVF technology have not changed this. Children, in turn, are designed to crave and love their biological parents, who ought to strive to stay together for their children's sake. Much pain and societal instability is caused by the fact that we persist, as a society, in denying these realities in our persistent devotion to sexual autonomy.

## What about heteronormativity?

For some Christians, the controversial idea within our sexual ethic is not so much that sex should be reserved for marriage, but the idea of heteronormativity.

The heteronormative claim of the Christian sexual ethic, as I understand it, has two possible renderings; one harder, one softer. The hard heteronormative claim is that any homosexual relationship is by definition morally wrong. The soft heteronormative claim would be that, although there may be some circumstances in which homosexual relationships are morally permissible, the ideal human sex life excludes homosexual activity – in the same way that, though it may be morally permissible in some circumstances for people to divorce, God's ideal excludes divorce. Both Scripture, and insights from philosophy and psychology, have convinced me of the soft heteronormative claim,[3] though I have often struggled to accept the hard heteronormative claim.

If at least the soft heteronormative claim is true, then the normalisation of same sex relationships – the promotion of the view that we are just as well designed for same-sex relationships as for opposite sex relationships – ought to be seen as undesirable. It is hard to argue that the legislative extension of the term 'marriage' to same-sex relationships does not represent a normalisation – an increased public celebration – of same sex relationships. That Christians retain the freedom to encourage others to think about our sexual design, and whether homosexual love fits it, is an important good to protect in this new legal context.

But there are other ideas that deserve a hearing, even from those who disagree with them or find them offensive. Among such ideas is the following line of reasoning that motivated many to vote 'No' in the postal vote. Marriage has historically had the social function of wedding heterosexual couples together, so that they can raise the potential offspring created by their union. Marriage, then, has always been regarded as that setting in which the next generation of children ought to be reared. To extend the secular definition of 'marriage' to include same-sex couples, then, one must be implying one of two claims. The first possible claim is that marriage still involves this child-rearing social function, and that the rearing of children by same-sex couples ought to be systematically endorsed by the state institution of marriage. But suppose, on the other hand, you acknowledge that it is a bad idea to systematically endorse biological orphanhood because this is less than ideal for children, but are in favour of changing the definition of marriage nonetheless. In that case you are implying a second possible claim: that the institution of marriage no longer has to be, as one of its aspirations, that ideal rearing situation for children. Either implication is bad for children, according to this argument: the first, because biological relationship to both parents is indeed beneficial for children; and the second, because no other social institution can do for children what marriage can. If marriage is no longer viewed as the ideal rearing ground for children, there is no other social institution that can adequately take its place.[4]

Will Christian academics in our country who voice the argument I just summarised retain the freedom to do so without fear of discipline from their institutions? One would hope so. If, contrary to popular belief, the argument for traditional marriage is sound, then it would do society good for this to be brought to our attention. If the argument is not

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## Religious Freedom and Neighbourly Love

sound, then it will do society good to know exactly why it is not sound. Either way, the freedom to discuss arguments in favour of traditional marriage is an important good.

Will Christian educators at independent schools still be allowed to present to teenagers the view that men are not designed to relate sexually to each other, but only to women? What about the idea that sex is best enjoyed within a life-long exclusive relationship – an idea that some notable LGBT+ thought leaders find offensively heteronormative?[5] Will churches and religious organisations be able to retain the right to employ only those who subscribe to their sexual ethics? If Christian sexual ethics are good for us and for our neighbours – including our non-believing neighbours – then one would hope, for the sake of those we are seeking to love, that Christians retain the ability to promote our views.

### What is really going on?

There is a reason I began this piece with an exploration of the goodness of the Christian principle of reserving sex for marriage, as if it also has something to do with this topic of religious freedom. I do not believe Christians can separate the pressure we are facing to deny heteronormativity from the more general pressure we have faced ever since the birth of the sexual revolution (arguably, a pressure that has been slowly increasing ever since the Enlightenment): the pressure to stop making normative claims about sex altogether. We are not now suddenly facing just one piecemeal objection to one aspect of our sexual ethic. It is part of something bigger: a secular philosophy that views traditional or Christian sexual norms as part of a system of oppression and as the enemy of sexual self-determination and expression. Against such oppression, sexual minorities throughout history have rebelled. First were the famous libertines like Jean-Jacques Rousseau


who rebelled against the idea that sex should be confined to marriage (and who left many orphaned children in his wake). Second were the practitioners of ‘unconventional’ relationships like Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Third were the leaders of the gay and lesbian movements who invented the language of identity politics through the elevation of sexual orientation to a person’s entire identity. And now, trans-activists urge us to rebel even against the biological confines that either God or nature has ‘imposed’ on us. What we have seen since the sexual revolution – indeed, for over two centuries – is the normalisation of deviation from God’s design for sex and sexual relationships in the name of autonomy, sexual expression and sexual self-definition. This paradigm can’t help but render people increasingly deaf to the goodness of the Christian sexual ethic, which is premised on the belief that there are objectively good and not-so-good ways to channel our desires, and that our true sexual identity and freedom are to be found in living in accordance with a design that has been bestowed upon us – created for us – without any self-invention on our part.

If the push for the legalisation of same-sex marriage is a symptom of this larger phenomenon, it would explain a great deal. It would explain why so many seemingly unrelated consequences have followed the legalisation of same-sex marriage in so many other countries. Why, since same-sex marriage was legalised in New Zealand, teenage girls have had to campaign to retain the right to use their change rooms without the fear of female-identifying biological boys being present. Why university campus speech codes in the US now are just as viciously opposed to ‘slut-shaming’ (read: critique of promiscuity) as to ‘homophobia’ (read: presentations of traditional Christian views on homosexual relationships). And why many sex-ed programs in vogue since the legalisation of same-sex marriage question the goodness not only of heteronormativity but also of

monogamy. (Indeed, what is often most notable about new sex-ed programs is not the anti-bullying messages but the normalisation of hook-up culture.) Perhaps what explains all of this is that the legalisation of same-sex marriage is, at least in the eyes of some of its powerful advocates, just one step further in our rejection of and liberation from traditional Christian sexual ethics. Most of those who voted ‘Yes’ were only thinking about affirming the love between our same-sex-attracted friends. But the main driving force behind the twenty or thirty year-long campaigns for same-sex marriage is arguably something more sinister.

If my hypothesis is correct, it would also explain the fervour with which the state has been used to silence religious organisations in the wake of the legalisation of same-sex marriage. If, as the language of identity politics assumes, sexual minorities are ethically equivalent to racial minorities, then they need state protection from oppressors. This would explain why, since the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Canada, public servants in that country have gained the discretion to bar Christian couples who hold to traditional sexual ethics from adopting children. Why, meanwhile, Canadian churches face being dragged before human rights commissions for discussing traditional sexual ethics in their services. It would also explain why UK politicians have been able to so brazenly voice their desires that religious organisations lose their right to hire and fire on the basis of employees’ beliefs. And why, in Ireland, the amendment of section 37 of the Employment Equality Act has rendered Christian schools unable, in practice, to demand support for a Christian sexual ethic from their employees.

While none of this is actually happening in Australia yet, the early warning signs are with us. If my hypothesis is correct – if the worldwide marriage equality movement is a symptom of the liberal ethic of the sexual revolution (no less



real in Australia than anywhere else) and its totalising tendencies – then there is no reason not to expect such restrictions of religious freedom here. At the very least, we ought to expect some very determined attempts at such restrictions. This is not needless scaremongering: what is so different about Australia that we are immune to phenomena happening everywhere else in the West?

We ought to be grateful for the fact that, in our country, we can still expose young people to the Christian sexual ethic who would otherwise not learn it. Such exposure spares many young people much heartache and sets them on a course of good decision-making for life. We should passionately, and jealously, guard the ability to participate in these ministries. We should be alarmed at the possibility that this arm of God's providence could be forced underground in the future.

We should be grateful that we enjoy the right to hire people in ministry roles based on faith-based criteria, including on beliefs about sexual ethics. (I hope the fairness of this needs no explanation: I would not

expect an LGBT+ lobby group to give me a job if I did not agree with their sexual ethics and if such agreement was core to my role in their organisation as an employee.) If these rights are eroded, our effectiveness at promoting the badly needed Christian sexual ethic will be blunted.

It is important that we retain the freedom to present the Christian sexual ethic as organisations, and not merely as individuals. If we are coerced into only ever discussing the Christian sexual ethic in hushed voices with close and trusted friends, there will be far fewer people reached with it. And the fewer people reached with it, the more ingrained opposition to it will become, and the more the damage of the sexual revolution will continue.

Furthermore, the belief that the Christian sexual ethic is implausible, restrictive or inimical to human flourishing is a barrier to relationships with God. If believing the gospel involves following Jesus, and following Jesus involves living by the Christian sexual ethic, then we must all participate in the task of showing people that the Christian

sexual ethic is as good and plausible as the rest of the gospel. In the early years of our history, Christians had to work hard against Gnosticism's negative view of the body and denial of the Incarnation. In the 19th and 20th centuries, we had to work hard against philosophical naturalism. In the 21st century, we have to work hard to promote our sexual ethic – our world's ignorance of its goodness is arguably the greatest barrier to faith that people now face.

Not all of us who are concerned about religious freedom are concerned only for our own sakes, or for the cleanliness of our consciences. Many of us are looking around with sadness at a world that has been scarred through widespread ignorance of God's good design for sex. We want to lead hurting people back to joy. For the sake of those we are trying to help, we do not want this task to become more difficult than it already is. This is why we care about religious freedom.

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## References

[1] See John Budziszewski's *On the Meaning of Sex* (2013) and Alexander Pruss' *One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics* (2013) for explorations of this idea.

[2] See Loren Marks' metastudy on alleged evidence to the contrary, and the APA's 'No differences' claim: 'Same-Sex Parenting and Children's Outcomes: A Closer Examination of the American Psychological Association's Brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting', in *Social Science Research* 41 (July 2012): 735-751. For a methodologically sound source on outcomes for children with same-sex parents, see D. Sullins, 'Emotional Problems among children with Same Sex Parents: Difference by Definition', *British Journal of Education, Society, and Behavioural Science* 7 no. 2 (2015): 99-120. For a collection of summaries of other research paper on the data, see Ana Samuel (ed.), *No Differences?* (2012), published by the Witherspoon Institute.

[3] For those interested in exploring a range of well-articulated views on all sides of these debates, I recommend the anthology by John Corvino (ed.), *Same Sex: Debating the Ethics, Science, and Culture of Homosexuality* (1999).

[4] For the best defence of this kind of argument, see Sherif Girgis, Robert George and Ryan Anderson, *What is*

*Marriage? Man and Woman: a Defence* (2012).

[5] Louise Richardson-Self's *Justifying Same-Sex Marriage: A Philosophical Investigation* (2015) provides an interesting insight into this stream of philosophy. Among gay male academics working in the field of psychology, the idea that non-monogamy is definitional to gay male identity is common as well. This was the conclusion of McWhirter and Mattison's landmark 1984 study *The Male Couple*, who found long-term monogamous relationships were comparatively rare amongst gay male couples and, accordingly, called for a redefinition of 'faithfulness' amongst gay couples as 'emotional dependability' rather than 'monogamy'. More recent work seems to be resigned to the same idea. See Lanz Lowen and Blake Spears' *Beyond Monogamy: Lessons from Long-Term Male Couples in Non-Monogamous Relationships* (2010), in which the authors quote a participant in their study: 'Having an open relationship feels like a funny way of being in the closet again. Family and friends expect that we're monogamous, and we don't tell them we're not. It's like a secret.... In our community and society, it feels like something huge isn't being talked about or studied or understood'.

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# Two contrasting and irreconcilable

## Rod James

Minister of the Word - South Australia



### Part A

In recent days the Uniting Church in Australia has voted to allow same gender marriages to be conducted in its churches and by its ministers. Reflecting on this decision, Rev. Dr Andrew Dutney has said:

*...without disputing the biblical and theological validity of the traditional understanding of marriage – in fact the resolution reaffirms the Church's policy statement originally adopted in 1997 – the Assembly has approved an additional statement on marriage for the Uniting Church, also biblically and theologically valid.*

*...Two doctrines of Christian marriage? Two expressions of that in "the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia"? How does that work?*

*Well, that's the kind of thing that the Uniting Church was always supposed to be able to manage: unity in diversity... Holding together two doctrines and practices of marriage within the one diverse Church is the kind of thing that the UCA was built for.*

Dr Dutney equates this 'diversity' of theology and biblical interpretation with the kinds of differences that existed between the prior denominations coming into union. But is that true? In section B of this paper I have laid out two views of humanity, one taken from the Scriptures and the other from the humanist philosophy overtaking Australian society. It attempts to show that the Assembly is, in fact, departing from the biblical view of humanity and embracing more and more of the secular humanist view. But these two views are not two 'integrities' that can be happily held as an expression of 'unity in diversity'. They are, in fact, contrasting and irreconcilable doctrines of humanity which lead to vastly different outcomes.

*Turn now to Part B over the page, and then return to Part C below for some observations.*

### Part C Observations:

1. These two views of humanity are contrasting and irreconcilable. Ultimately, in the life of the individual person, in the life of a Christian congregation, and in the ordering of the state, one or other of these views will prevail and the other will be rejected and excluded.
2. 'Same-sex' marriage is not an end-point decision, but rather a step along the way to completely reimagining humanity. There is more to come.
3. The kingdom of God is child-centred, and adults are accountable to our heavenly Father should we cause one of his little ones to stumble. In a humanist society the rights and needs of children are always subsumed under the 'rights' and wishes of adults.
4. In the cases of abortion, 'same-sex' marriage, sperm donation and surrogacy, it is adults who make these innovations to fulfil their wishes, and it is the children who pay for them. For example, around 25% of all babies conceived in Australia are killed in the womb.
5. Wherever the authority of God is denied, the authority of the state assumes divine proportions leading to a totalitarian society. E.g. when the sharing of personal convictions makes other people feel 'unsafe', those convictions will be silenced by human authorities.
6. Nations are built upon the children they raise up. A godly nation which raises children who are physically, mentally, spiritually and relationally healthy will be strong, and will fend off the attempts of other nations to overthrow it. A nation which mars the development of its children with inadequate child/parent bonding, family breakdown, gender uncertainty, narcissistic outlooks, and individualistic lifestyles, will raise children who are despondent, rebellious, selfish, and untrained. Such a nation will eventually be overthrown by other nations keen to exploit its wealth and take its land.



# views of Humanity

## Part B

### The Biblical View

Human beings are created by God, male and female. Gender is part of the *imago dei* (image of God) and is a given for each person.

Humanity is binary (male-female), therefore a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Sexual intercourse with another person is reserved for married couples as the expression of their union as husband and wife.

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained by God. "Those whom God has joined together let not man separate."

The glory of the man-woman union in marriage is revealed in, and is a reflection of, the marriage of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and his bride, the Church. As such it reflects God's relational nature, and His familial purpose to bring many sons and daughters to share in His eternal glory.

The life of the child in the womb is that of a sacred human person, created in the image of God. Even in the womb that child is seen and known by God.

Every child has a biological mother and father with whom they are deeply connected. Though not always possible, God's good plan is that each child might grow up living with their mother and father who make their children secure in the life-long covenant love of their marriage union.

This family of father, mother and children reflects the nature and image of God. The purpose of God is that those created in His image might become part of the eternal family of God.

It is the divine right and responsibility of parents to raise their children in good conscience and in the best interests of the children. In this they reflect the parental love of God our heavenly Father.

The authority to define humanity, gender, marriage and family rests with its author and creator, God, and is revealed to us in His word.

The love of God is revealed in the goodness of His creation and His laws which govern it. It is also revealed in His abundant grace in Jesus Christ who, in his life, death and resurrection, reconciles to God those who have fallen short of the glory of God.

### The Humanist View

A human being is what each person says they are. Gender is fluid and gender identity is self-defined.

Humanity is individualistic, and the individual can have whatever associations or relationships they may choose.

Sexual intercourse with other people is at the discretion of the individual as an expression of their feelings at the time.

Marriage is a human and societal construct which has taken many forms in different times and cultures.

The good in marriage is simply that it expresses the desire of two people who love each other to be committed to each other for as long as they choose to be.

Prior to birth, the foetus is simply developing tissue in the woman's womb, and she has the right to allow it to continue developing, or to remove that tissue if she wishes.

The essential need of children is to be brought up by parenting adults who love them. Who the child lives with is the responsibility of the state which also has the power to determine parentage.

Family is simply a household of human beings who choose to identify as a family. This arrangement may take many forms.

The right and responsibility for the upbringing of children rests with the state, which has power not only to determine who the child lives with, but also what they are taught about the nature of their humanity.

The authority to define humanity, gender, marriage and family rests with human individuals and the state.

Good is determined by 'what is right for you'. Failure and any resulting guilt are only in relation to humanly-devised boundaries. The best way to reduce feelings of guilt is to declare all opinions to be equal, and to ensure a 'safe place'.

# GAME OF CHURCHES

Peter  
Bentley

ACC National Director



I was going to use the title *Game of Thrones*\* for this reflection. This TV show is apparently the most popular legally and illegally downloaded program in the world. From what I have read the program is really about politics, with an interesting debate going on at present as to the outcome (who will win the battle and sit on the Iron Throne). There is a growing idea that there will be two equal and distinct rulers. I think anyone who understands politics knows that this is of course a fantasy, and achievable only in a fantasy world.

The 15th Assembly was a game in the sense of a political game. Yes, there is worship and many features of a Christian meeting, but if you believe that politics is not at the centre of a major decision like the one on marriage then you are clearly with the group at the centre of power. Numbers are very important, and any keen person would have known basic numbers 'for and against' revising marriage, as most members would have been reasonably identifiable. The community working groups would have also provided an ongoing running tabulation to help see where the lay of the land was, particularly to know if there was enough overall support (75%) for a move to go to formal decision-making. The examination of support for key proposals is a normal process in the meeting and the group reporting back (through the facilitation committee) enables further consideration to amalgamate or tweak proposals that may have more of a chance of success. Another way of gauging support is by members showing cards, and in the initial presentation of all the proposals on marriage, the President noted the warmth toward Proposal 8 (the ASC proposal to revise marriage). This comment was not made after any of the proposals seeking to retain the orthodox position on marriage.

It was always going to be difficult to hold up the revision of marriage when the Assembly base is oriented to liberal members being elected. I know some people start to have convulsions when this is mentioned, but please take a reality check for once and just admit that is the case – after all, even liberal members I have

discussed this with privately agree and had concerns about the Assembly making a decision at this time, at least when the wider church membership was not 'fully prepared'. The Assembly is simply more representative of the small group of liberals in the Uniting Church, than the overall conservative and orthodox membership.

Many of you will know that I did not provide a blog, or Facebook updates during the 15th Assembly. I had been given an ultimatum by the Manager for the Assembly Media and Communications regarding communication arrangements. For myself, this meant that I was welcome to be present as a member of the church (as a visitor), but not in any 'reporting' capacity as this would be deemed 'media' and I would then be excluded. Visitors were kept in a separate room and watched proceedings (as available) on a video link.

The reason given for the communication arrangements was to protect the discernment process of the Assembly by ensuring that there was no 'parallel reporting'. I understand this arrangement applied to anyone seeking to 'report' and so I chose to not 'report', but to observe.

I am not sure of the arrangements for the oversight of social media, but from my casual observation, this did tend to be a bit of a free-for all, and in my view, any experienced journalist following this and the material available could have had a reasonable idea of what was going on during this time in any case.

Even the new version of Proposal 8; Proposal 61, was available publicly on the Assembly App until it disappeared. No further proposals on marriage appeared publicly until the final (and very similar) Proposal 64 (and ultimate resolution) was officially released well after the decision.

In hindsight, if isolation from 'outside influence' was the Assembly base, it may have been better to have a sequestered jury approach, or even a conclave.

After the 15th Assembly meeting I decided that it would not be as helpful to provide an overall report as such, but to consider the major matter of the meeting (marriage) in the light of questions that I have been receiving since the decision. While the latter sessions on marriage were in private sitting (closed session of members only), the initial introduction of the proposals (and a reporting back from community groups) and one discussion night, provided quite a good context to understand the dynamics of the meeting. I believe that most went into the meeting with one outcome in mind. There are liberal fundamentalists who would disagree that Mary had a little lamb if it was proposed as an orthodox statement!



I could not see any evangelical orthodox members voting for change. There would have been a small group of moderates, probably genuinely perplexed about how to vote until they saw the final proposal, but they would have leant toward the personal dynamics of change and the idea that a proposal having two equal and valid statements could help the church stay together in the context of diversity.

## **Why did we get to where we are in terms of marriage?**

My now slightly older articles on the Uniting Views website provide an overview of the liberalisation of the church and sexuality matters. There are historical factors here including the liberal dominance in Victoria and this is where the direction for change has come from. For this 15th Assembly, the immediate catalyst was the change in the Marriage Act in Australia. If this change has not been made the focus at the 15th Assembly may have been on a service of blessing?

Another critical reason for a focus on revising marriage is the elevation of personal experience within the Uniting Church, culminating in the enshrinement of personal story as the contemporary story on which decisions are based.

## **Why did the 15th Assembly decided to push the decision through by formal procedures instead of consensus?**

The simple answer is, the 15th Assembly would never have been able to achieve consensus or consensus by agreement with this matter. The bottom line is that the 15th Assembly wanted a decision and outcome and the only way was the formal decision-making process. That was the end game.

## **Why did the 15th Assembly want a decision at this 15th Assembly meeting?**

Bearing in mind it was only seven months after the marriage plebiscite, and no other major denomination in Australia was moving toward a change, it is worth considering why there was no deferral to the 16th Assembly and to have a period of broader consultation and discussion. While sexuality issues have been on the agenda for many years, the specific issue of marriage and a recommendation to change has only been within the wider church for a comparatively short time.

The specific report that outlined change (Report on Marriage and same-gender relationships) had only been out since the end of April, and from anecdotal reports, and the limited coverage in Synod newspapers and preparing of congregations, probably a good number of members (especially without social media connections) would not have even been aware of the matter for discussion, or at least the issues.

There has been in liberal circles a conflation of the whole sexuality debate. For many liberals, there was no need for further discussion because the next logical step was marriage if the Assembly was to continue down the path it was on. There was simply no reason to wait another three years.

## **Why did the 15th Assembly not refer the decision for concurrence?**

Well basically the 15th Assembly can make up its own mind as to what is vital to the life of the church. There is no automatic referral for concurrence so essentially the power is in the hands of the 15th Assembly. Other members on the ACC website have commented about how this matter is vital, and certainly I think most liberal members thought

**[cont over...]**



# THE BENTLEY REPORT

## GAME OF CHURCHES



it was a vital matter otherwise it would not have been acted upon with such passion and urgency, so why did the 15th Assembly not consider this matter vital after the decision had been made? As a long observer of church meetings, one theme is prominent: **Never make a major decision unless you know the outcome, and once you have made the decision, don't unmake it at the same meeting.**

Some thoughts about why the move for concurrence failed are below:

- Overall, there was the dominant mantra abounding that highlighted the Assembly as its own council/counsel. Did this unwittingly lead to an arrogant position that simply thought it did not need the opinions of other councils of the church?
- There was an undeniable sense of urgency to make the decision now. People wanted to get on with being married and marrying their friends and members in a Uniting Church.
- Some people wanted the Uniting Church to claim the mantle of first (major) church to introduce same-gender marriage. They believe the Uniting Church had to lead the way (and not only on this matter).
- There was no mood for what would be considered compromise, namely referral.
- Any referral to other council raises issues and questions, including;
  - a delay in the implementation of a decision;
  - Unpredictability of the outcome, especially if congregations were included (NCLS statistics on same-sex marriage seem to indicate that it would be unlikely that the needed concurrence of congregations would have been achieved)

One could say the Assembly was at least consistent in its approach. In 2003, Resolution 84 was not considered vital and yet we know what the impact on the wider church was. Déjà vu?

### Summary

Overall, the numbers for an orthodox no-decision (to prevent a decision being made to revise marriage) were simply not there. It is very difficult for evangelical members to present a positive case in a church meeting when they are perceived as the pharisees of today. I know there are some members of the Assembly who have genuine and tolerant attitudes to those who are orthodox on the matter of marriage and would not think this, but there are other members who would probably throw up if the church had really maintained its orthodox position on marriage.

I had wondered at the start whether some of the moderate members may have swung to 'no-decision'. However, even the practical issue of the catastrophic impact on the wider church, especially in CALD and indigenous communities, did not carry as much weight as the focus on helping people achieve their personal goals of marrying and helping others marry in the church. The personal focus coupled with the idea that diversity is the cornerstone of the Uniting Church produced a winner.

Winter may have come, but evangelical and orthodox congregations will not simply live with the decision to revise marriage. The 15th Assembly will however have to live with the practical consequences of not declaring marriage to be a matter vital to the life of the church, as they were the ones that initiated the divorce.

*\* Note: I am not suggesting readers watch this TV show, though one could not be unaware of the impact of TV on culture today, and there is an increasing amount of academic study about this show, and other significant cultural leaders like The Walking Dead. I am interested in how moral decision-making is made in a world where these shows and reality TV dominate and provide the immediate context for many people making decisions today, and their personal and situational ethics.*

## CONFESSING MOVEMENT

### The Basis of Union as a Confessional Statement

1. Ramsay. A.M. *Lambeth Essays On Unity* London 1969. p.4.
2. *Particular note should be taken of the detailed discussion of the nature of confession in the church which informed the thinking of the documents of the Joint Commission on Church Union which preceded the production of the Basis of Union. See The Faith of the Church 1959., pp.22ff; 27ff. Cf. Barth. K. Church Dogmatics Vol.1.2., pp659.ff. and The Church: Its Nature Functioning and Ordering 1963 pp.12.ff.*
3. *On the following see Neglected Factors Influencing Unity Metropolitan Emilianos of Calabria. Eastern Churches Review. Vol 11. No.4. 1969. pp386.ff.*
4. *See Pannenberg. W. Basic Questions in Theology Vol.1. London. 1970. p233.*
5. *St. Basil De Spiritu Sancto Chp. xxvii, 66. Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. Grand Rapids. 1894*
6. *Bonhoeffer. D. Christology London 1966. p27.*
7. *Rahner. K. The Church and the Sacraments London. 1963. p202.*
8. *See Chps. I & v. Schaff. P. ed. The Creeds of Christendom Vol 3. New York 1877. pp600.ff.*
9. *See Schlink. E. The Coming Christ and the Coming Church Edinburgh. 1967. pp41ff; 83,85. Cf. the instructive analysis of the same problem in the field of epistemology of science in Palanyi. M. Personal Knowledge London 1959, and Knowing and Being London 1969. In relation to theological questions see Ebeling. G. Word and Faith London 1960 pp.407ff; Torrance. T.F. Theological Science Oxford 1969. p.203ff.*

## Unconfirmed Minute

### Resolution of the Fifteenth Assembly

#### Marriage and same-gender relationships

The Assembly resolved:

(a) To acknowledge:

- (i) that within the Uniting Church there is a diversity of religious beliefs and ethical understandings, developed through continuing faithful discernment and held with integrity on matters relating to sexuality and marriage; and
- (ii) that marriage is a gift God has given to humankind for the well-being of the whole human family.

(b) To determine that the Church is able to accept this diversity within its life and make the decisions necessary to enable its ministry and members to act with integrity in accordance with their beliefs.

(c) To vary its policy on marriage by recognising two statements of belief:

- (i) the belief expressed in the 1997 statement on marriage as follows:

“Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and a woman to live together for life. It is intended to be the faithful lifelong union of a woman and a man expressed in every part of their life together. In marriage, the man and the woman seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.

In the marriage service:

- The woman and man make a public covenant with each other and with God, in the company of family and friends;
- The couple affirm their trust in each other and in God;
- The Church affirms the sanctity of marriage and nurtures those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage and calls upon all people to support, uphold and nurture those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage.

Where sexual union takes place the partners seek to express mutual delight, pleasure and tenderness, thus strengthening the union of their lives together.

In marriage, children may be born and are to be brought up in love and security thus providing a firm foundation for society”.

- (ii) the belief expressed in the following statement on marriage:

*“Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life. It is intended to be the faithful lifelong union of two people expressed in every part of their life together. In marriage, the two people seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.*

In the marriage service:

- The two people make a public covenant with each other and with God, in the company of family and friends;
- The couple affirm their trust in each other and in God;
- The Church affirms the sanctity of marriage and nurtures those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage and calls upon all people to support, uphold and nurture those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage.

Where sexual union takes place the partners seek to express mutual delight, pleasure and tenderness, thus strengthening the union of their lives together.

In marriage, children may be born and are to be brought up in love and security thus providing a firm foundation for society”.

(d) To affirm that Ministers and celebrants authorised by the Uniting Church in Australia may exercise freedom to decide whether the minister's or celebrant's religious beliefs allow the minister or celebrant to accept requests to celebrate marriages, as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.

(e) To request the Assembly Officers to arrange for the preparation of an additional authorised marriage liturgy which reflects the understanding of marriage as outlined in the marriage statement contained in (c)(ii) above for approval by the Standing Committee at its August 2018 meeting, for use according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.

(f) To note that Church Councils:

- (i) have the authority under Regulation 4.4.1 to permit or refuse the use of any property held for the use of the Congregation for the celebration of marriages, as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- (ii) do not have the authority to require a Minister in placement in their Congregation or to prevent a Minister in their Congregation from celebrating marriages as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.

(g) To request the Standing Committee, taking account of advice from the Assembly Legal Reference Committee, to consider and take such action as it considers appropriate, including (if necessary) the making of additional Regulations, to enable Church Councils acting under Regulation 4.4.1 to make decisions regarding use of property for celebrating marriages, in conformity with one of the statements of belief mentioned in (c)(i) and (ii).

# The Gospel in the Uniting Church

Robert  
Griffith

Minister of the Word  
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In his inflammatory address to the 1979 Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev. Davis McCaughey issued a passionate warning against what he identified as a tendency to adopt a form of incestuous Church patriotism, which would obscure and ultimately destroy the Church's only vocation, which is to carry on the mission of Christ. Look carefully at what our first President and the architect of much of The Basis of Union declared only two years after union:

*"At all events the cry for a sense of identity in the Uniting Church cannot be answered by the offer of a new kind of Church patriotism. In an important sense, we in the Uniting Church in Australia have no identity, no distinctive marks - other than belonging with the people of God brought into being by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on their way to the consummation of all things in Him. We have embarked on a course in which we ask men and women to forget who they are, and chiefly to remember Whose they are."*

Throughout this prophetic address, McCaughey pleaded for a return to The Basis of Union as a source of correction and renewal of the already deteriorating Church - a renewal, he emphasized, that must begin with the congregations themselves. Hence, for McCaughey, any suggestion that The Basis of Union is merely an aspirational document or some transitional text that brought the uniting churches together, must be rejected out of hand.

Forty years later, I believe McCaughey's prophetic warning should be the most important item on all our leadership agendas. In so many ways I believe we have traded our sacred birthright for a sloppy mixture of quasi-pagan sentimentality, soft-left political correctness and social acceptability. For decades now there has been this insatiable search for our 'identity' as the Uniting Church - the very thing McCaughey warned against. The term 'ethos' has been tossed around a lot in recent years and we are even asked to affirm the 'ethos of the Uniting Church' before being inducted as Ministers, Pastors or leaders.

This passion for a distinctive UCA identity or 'ethos' has become the focus for too many of our leaders. Some are

even bold enough to now refer to it as 'the gospel' of the Uniting Church, like there is more than one Gospel. Let's be clear: There is only one mission - the Mission of Christ and that mission has only one Church - the Church which Jesus promised to build. There is only one Gospel - the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That Gospel is Christ and so the Gospel for the Uniting Church is Christ in our midst just as we affirmed in Paragraph 3 of The Basis of Union, when we declared boldly that UCA is, "... an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself."

When God dragged me out of a comfortable sabbatical a number of years ago, He very clearly led me back to the church of my youth and back to The Basis of Union which so powerfully impacted my early Christian years. I responded to that call in spite of the fact that the Uniting Church I was part of in 1977 no longer exists. Tens of thousands of people with whom I celebrated in June 1977 are no longer with us. They walked away from the very church I walked back into six years ago. They could no longer embrace what the Uniting Church has become and I completely understand why. But I really wish they hadn't left. I believe you can't change the game from the grandstand, no matter how loud you shout. You have to be on the field of play, as part of the team. Only there, can you make a difference. That's why I am still here today. So what do I think God is saying to us at this critical juncture in our shared journey? Pardon me for appearing simplistic, but God's call to us as disciples has not changed since the Church was born.

As Karl Vaters reminds us in his article entitled '*Becoming a Great Church*,' we simply need to "... do the basics, wholeheartedly and consistently for a long time." For some reason many modern, 'enlightened' believers want to find some 'new' expression of Church and in so doing, we depart from the foundation of our faith. You know the basics: worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible teaching, discipleship, evangelism and bringing people into the presence of Christ. How we do the basics can certainly be packaged to suit the 21st century and our particular community, but the content of that package must never change!

Vaters says, "*However you break it down, it's all about the Great Commandment and the Great Commission: Love God, love others and make disciples.*" Unhealthy churches put a lot of resources into the 'extras'. Healthy churches drill down to the basics and never, ever depart from them. The Uniting Church in Australia enshrined those 'basics' in The Basis of Union, but then began moving away from them almost immediately in pursuit of some separate identity other than just living in Christ, through Christ and for Christ. Why was that not enough? Too many of our decisions and regulation changes over time have pushed us further and further away from The Basis of Union, the New Testament Church and the basics of all God-initiated,





Christ-centred, Spirit-led ministry.

In my opinion the only relevant 'distinctive' of the Uniting Church in terms of the mission of Christ is that three previously separate parts of the Body of Christ decided to come together as one over 40 years ago. Whilst the importance of that historic event should never be understated, the mission of Christ the day after Church Union was no different to the mission of Christ the day before! It is arrogant to imply that the formation of the Uniting Church somehow redefined or reshaped the only mission we have: the mission of Christ. When the Uniting Church was born, we simply created a wonderful opportunity to consolidate our resources and our hearts for that mission and the Uniting Church in Australia should have then exploded with life, growth and vibrant ministry.

However, as Davis McCaughey lamented, as soon as this new 'pilgrim people' found their feet, we began to intentionally walk away from the basics of our faith in this relentless pursuit of an 'identity' other than just being disciples committed to making more disciples – in Christ, through Christ and for Christ. I ask again: Why was that not enough? Why is that still not enough forty years later?

Do we no longer believe what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 – that the power of God to change lives and the whole world is already embodied in the gospel itself? Do we no longer understand why Paul's calling was so simple: "*We preach Christ crucified ...*" and how his entire ministry and all his missionary journeys were nothing more or less than doing the basics, wholeheartedly and consistently for a long time? And it worked! The early church had a huge growth rate for decades and that was not some cultural phenomenon which is irrelevant today – it was the natural outcome of a healthy church which refused to depart from the foundations of their faith and never dreamed of taking the reins of the Church away from the Holy Spirit Who directed their every move.

We have wandered far from our roots, and yet God's promise to redeem our lost years, grant us the gift of repentance and renew our passion for the mission of Christ is as strong as ever. I believe 2018 may well be the most important year for the Uniting Church since our inception. It will be the year when we must make some hard choices and return to the basics of our faith and stop ignoring or apologizing for Whose we are. If we don't turn back now, then I believe this will be the year when we pass the point of return and set the final chapter of UCA in motion. I am ready to fight for what God birthed 40 years ago and not see it disappear. Are you?

Of course, the greatest battles we will face in our journey back to our roots will occur within our own ranks. I am afraid we have taken 'diversity' and 'tolerance' to such an extreme now that even the most basic of Christian truths have

become negotiable or have already been replaced by a new 'gospel,' which is really no gospel at all. (See Galatians 1:6-8).

I thank God for our College and for the blessing it has been to my journey and ministry and I hope we see it thrive for years to come. However, what is taught within the walls of this great institution must not be quarantined in our commitment to get back to the basics and see the Gospel of Jesus Christ re-emerge as the heart and soul of all that we do in Jesus' name. We must examine afresh what is taught and what is no longer taught in our College and be brave enough to make some changes so as to ensure we do not stray from our basic calling as Jesus' disciples.

This battle will not be easy friends – we have lost a lot of ground and we may have left our run too late to recover from our current free-fall – but I ask you this question: what alternative do we have? If the current trajectory is not altered soon, the Uniting Church in Australia will fade into history far sooner than most of us want to accept.

What saddens me most as I ponder the road ahead is when I hear those among us who are boldly and loudly declaring our distinctives and proclaiming that UCA is leading the way for the other Churches to follow. In some areas that may be true but I would never declare that. However, we have to face the facts: Some of the decisions which have led to the departure of many thousands of people from our ranks, are still being celebrated as the Uniting Church 'ethos' and some brave souls refer to these distinctives as 'the Gospel of the Uniting Church.'

Was it God's plan to bring about this miracle in 1977, only to see it diminish and implode? That doesn't sound like the God I worship and I will continue to do all I can within the limitations I face to see the Church which is embodied in The Basis of Union and anchored in the New Testament, brought back to life as the presence and authority of the living, reigning Christ once again explodes within our congregations and communities.

May it be so, Lord.

*Rev. Robert Griffith is a Minister of the Word serving in the Far North Coast Presbytery of NSW.*

# Korean Honour

## Rev Sang Duk Choi

Korean Presbytery Chairperson

**Presentation by Rev. Sang Duk Choi,  
15th Triennial Assembly, 9/7/2018**

하나님께 모든 영광과 찬양을 올려 드립니다.  
All the glory and praise to God.

존경하는 총회장님과 총대 여러분, 안녕하십니까?  
Honourable President and distinguished representatives,  
Good afternoon.

저는 한인노회 노회장 최상덕 목사입니다.  
I am Pastor San Duk Choi, Korean Presbytery  
Chairperson.

제가 이 자리에서 동성애 반대의 건을 제안하는 것이 하나님 앞에  
부끄럽고, 눈물이 앞을 가리고 있습니다.  
I am ashamed and very sorry to stand here in front of  
God and all the members of Assembly to make proposal  
against the same-gender marriage.

주후 1889년 10월 2일 호주장로교회 (지금은 호주연합교회)가 조셉  
헨리 데이비드 (Joseph H. Davies) 목사님을 조선 (지금은 대한민  
국)에 선교사로 파송했습니다. 그는 조선선교 183일 만에 풍토병으  
로 순교하셨습니다.

Around 130 years ago, on 2nd of October, 1889, the  
Australia Presbyterian Church (now Uniting Church in  
Australia) sent Joseph Henry Davies to Chosun (now  
Korea) as a missionary. He was martyred with endemic  
disease just after 183 days of his Korea mission.

조셉 헨리 데이비드 선교사를 시작으로 많은 호주 선교사들이 흑  
암의 땅 조선에 오셔서 복음의 씨앗을 뿌렸습니다. 그들이 복음의  
씨앗을 뿌린 지역이 부산과 경남지방입니다. 지금까지도 가장 보수  
적이고, 성경 말씀대로 사는 지역입니다.

Following the steps of Joseph Henry Davies, many  
Australian missionaries came to Chosun, the land of  
darkness, and sprayed the seeds of the gospel. The areas  
where they sowed the gospel were Pusan and Gyeongnam  
provinces. It is the most conservative area living by the  
word of God.

저와 한인노회 2300명 성도들은 늘 우리에게 복음을 전해준 호주  
연합교회에 감사를 드리고 있습니다.

Myself and 2300 Saints in Korean Presbytery are  
always grateful to Uniting Church in Australia who sent  
missionaries and preached the gospel to us.

교회는 세 가지 법이 있다고 생각합니다.

첫째 성경은 하나님의 말씀입니다.  
I think there are three laws in church.  
First, the Bible which is Word of God.

둘째 교단의 헌법입니다.

Second is the constitution or regulation of the denomination.

셋째 지교회 교회 정관입니다.

Third is the by-law of local congregation.

교단의 헌법과 지교회 교회 정관은 변경이 될 수가 있습니다.

그러나 성경인 하나님의 말씀은 절대적으로 변할 수 없습니다.  
The constitution or regulation of the denomination and  
by-law of local congregations may change and can be  
changed. But the Bible which is the Word of God, never  
changes and cannot be changed at all.

그러므로 성경은 하나님의 말씀으로서 신학, 학문, 법률, 교단법, 관  
습, 문화 등 그 무엇으로도 가감하거나 변경 할 수 없으며, 그대로  
지키고

행하여야 하는 절대적 진리와 권위입니다.

Therefore, the Bible is an absolute truth and authority  
that cannot be added or changed by anything, such as  
theology, scholarship, law, denominational regulation,  
customs, culture, etc.

이와 관련하여 성경은 분명히 밝히고 있습니다. 요한계시록 22장18  
절과 19절에 “내가 이 두루마리의 예언의 말씀을 듣는 모든 사람에  
게 증언 하노니 만일 누구든지 이것들 외에 더하면 하나님이 이 두  
루마리에 기록된 재앙들을 그에게 더하실 것이요, 만일 누구든지  
이 두루마리의 예언의 말씀 에서 제하여 버리면 하나님이 이 두루  
마리에 기록된 생명나무와 및 거룩한

성에 참여함을 제하여 버리시리라” 라고 경고하고 있습니다.

In this regard, the Bible clearly states. Revelation 22:18 to 19  
says “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy  
of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add  
to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone  
takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take  
away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy  
city, which are described in this book.”

동성애는 하나님의 말씀을 부정하는 무서운 행동입니다. 성경은 동  
성 관계를 죄악이라고 밝히고 있습니다. (레위기 18:22, 24-29)  
Homosexuality is a terrible act that denies God's Word.  
The Bible says that same-sex relationships are sinful.  
(Leviticus 18:22, 24-29)

복음의 사람 사도 바울은 “로마서 1장26절과 27절에 “이 때문에 하  
나님께서 그들을 부끄러운 욕심에 내버려 두셨으니 곧 그들의 여  
자들도 순리 대로 쓸 것을 바꾸어 역리로 쓰며, 그와 같이 남자들도  
순리대로 여자 쓰기를 버리고 서로 향하여 음욕이 불 일듯 하며 남  
자가 남자와 더불어 부끄러운 일을 행하여 그들의 그릇됨에 상당한  
보응을 그들 자신이 받았 느니라”라고 말했습니다.

Apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 1 verses 26 and  
27 “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful  
lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for  
unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned  
natural relations with women and were inflamed with  
lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with  
other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for  
their perversion.”



따라서 동성결혼에 대하여 혼인예식을 집전하고 축복하는 것은 하나님의 말씀을 정면으로 부정하고 대적하는 행위이며, 또한 명백한 죄입니다.

**Therefore, offering the marriage rites and blessing to same-gender relationships is to deny and oppose the Word of God and also sinful act obviously.**

동성 관계에 관한 한인노회의 입장은, “동성애자는 전도와 권원의 대상 이지, 결코 권장하거나 축복할 대상은 아니며, 궁극적으로 구원 받아야 할 존재”라는 것입니다.

**Thus, the position of the Korean Presbytery is manifest that the same-gender relationships are the subject of evangelism, and not of blessings or encouraging, but ultimately of deliverance.**

이에 한인노회의 입장을 밝히면서 다음과 같이 결의하며, 이를 만천하에 공표했습니다.

**The Korean Presbytery hereby resolves and declares that:**

첫째 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 사람을 남자와 여자로 창조하시고 결혼제도를 주신 하나님의 창조섭리와 질서에 반대하는 것입니다.

**Firstly, the same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is to stand against the providence and will of God, who created man and woman and allow them the marriage rites;**

둘째 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 신앙과 삶의 절대적 진리가 되는

하나님의 영원한 진리 말씀인 신구약 성경의 정신에 반대하는 것입니다.

**Secondly, the same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is to oppose the spirit and intention of the old and new testaments, which are the absolutely truthful words of God;**

셋째 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 교회를 거룩한 공동체로 부르시고 성령으로 거듭나 새롭게 하신 성도의 양심에 반대하는 것입니다.

**Thirdly, the same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is an opposition to the conscience of the saints, who were called to the holy community of the church and made born again by the Holy Spirit.**

넷째로 동성결혼과 그 축복은 학문적과 과학적 해석의 문제가 아닌 성경적, 영적인 해석의 문제로 위의 모든 사항을 받아들일 수 없음을 분명하게 입장을 밝히고, 호주연합교회 한인노회 제56차 정기회의에서 (주후 2018년 5월 17일) 만장일치로 결의했습니다.

**Fourth and lastly, the same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is a matter of biblical and spiritual interpretation, and not of scientific or scholastic understanding, and accordingly cannot be agreed to.**

**We unanimously resolved this statement at the 56th regular meeting of Korean Presbytery on 17th of May, 2018.**

그러므로 한인노회는 호주연합교회가 지금 까지 건지 (Uniting Sexuality and Faith 1997)해 왔던 결혼의 적격 당사자를 남자와 여자로 유지할 것을 촉구합니다.

**Therefore, the Korean Presbytery strongly request that the definition of marriage (Uniting Sexuality and Faith 1997) as has been respected and maintained up until today's date, be kept as it is and adhered to.**

존경하는 총회장님과 총대 여러분들이여!

하나님의 말씀은 살아 있고, 변함이 없습니다.

하나님은 현재 우리를 보고 계십니다.

우리는 동성애 결혼을 전적으로 반대합니다.

**Honourable President and fellow representatives!**

**The word of God is living and not changing.**

**Our Lord is watching over us now.**

**We are totally against the same-gender marriage.**

감사합니다. 사랑합니다. 존경합니다.

**Thank you. I love you and honour you.**

제안자 최 상 덕 목사

**Proposer Rev. Sang Duk Choi**



# Our Declaration

*Among the eight proposals on marriage at the 15th Proposal, the (Declaration) Proposal from the Korean Presbytery (Number 53) most strikingly illustrated the profound distance of our different communities from the liberal path of the Assembly. The proposal and the courageous and strong stand of the Korean Chair, Rev Sang Duk Choi and Secretary Kap Yong Lee is recognised by the ACC and the proposal and presentation of the Chair is provided here so all UCA members are aware of their firm stand at these times. (Editor)*

With respect to the 'Working Group on Doctrine (WGD) Report on Marriage and Same-gender Relationships' prepared, and made public, by the WGD to be presented to the 15th Assembly of the Uniting Church of Australia for its approval of offering the marriage rites to the same-gender relationships The Korean Presbytery makes known its intention and position as follows:

### 1. **The Premise**

Bible, the words of God, is 'the absolute truth and authority' that is not to be added to, nor subtracted from, nor altered in any way and by way of scholastic studies such as theology, law, constitution and regulations of the Church, customs, cultures, or whatsoever, but to be upheld and followed.

In this regard, the Bible makes known clearly that "If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." (Revelations 22:18-19)

The Bible manifestly states that same-gender relationships are a sin. (Lev. 18:22, 24-29; Rom. 1:26-27)

Therefore, offering the marriage rites to, and blessing, the same-gender relationships is to deny and oppose the words of God.

Thus, the position of the Korean Presbytery is manifest that the same-gender relationships are the subject of evangelism, and not of blessings, but ultimately of deliverance.

### 2. **The Korean Presbytery hereby resolves and declares that:**

- 1) The same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is to stand against the providence and will of God, who created man and woman and allow them the marriage rites;
- 2) The same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is to oppose the spirit and intention of the old and new testaments, which are the absolutely truthful words of God;
- 3) The same-gender marriage, and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is in opposition to the conscience of the saints, who were called to the holy community of the church and made born again by the Holy Spirit.
- 4) The same-gender marriage and the blessing and marriage rites thereof, is a matter of biblical and spiritual interpretation, and not of scientific or scholastic understanding, and accordingly cannot be agreed to.
- 5) Therefore, the Korean Presbytery strongly request that the definition of marriage (Uniting Sexuality and Faith 1997) as has been respected and maintained up until today's date, be kept as it is, and adhered to.

# Encouraging Bible Verses

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## 한인 노회 성명서

호주 연합 교단 ( The Uniting Church of Australia ) 한인 노회는, 동성혼 주례 집전 허용 여부에 관하여 교단의 교리 위원회 ( The Working Group on Doctrine: WGD )가 제 15차 교단 총회에 제출하여 그 승인을 받기 위해 준비, 공개한 보고서 (Working Group on Doctrine Report on Marriage and Same-Gender Relationships)에 대하여, 다음과 같이 그 입장을 천명한다:

### 1. 대 전제:

성경은 하나님의 말씀으로서, 신학 등의 학문, 법률, 교단 법, 관습, 문화 등 그 무엇으로도 가감, 변경 할 수 없으며, 그대로 지키고 행하여야 하는 '절대적 진리 및 권위'이다.

이와 관련하여 성경은 분명히 밝히고 있는바, 누구든지 이 성경 말씀을 더하거나 빼면 "하나님이 이 두루마기 책에 기록된 재앙들을 그에게 더하실 것이요, 생명나무와 거룩한 성에 참여함을 제하여 버리시리라."

경고하고 있다. (요한 계시록 22:18-19)

성경은 동성 관계를 죄악이라고 밝히고 있다. (레위기 18:22, 24-29, 로마서1:26-27)

따라서, 동성혼에 대하여 혼인예식을 집전하고 축복하는 것은, 하나님의 말씀을 정면으로 부정하며 대적하는 행위이며, 이 또한 명백한 죄이다.

동성 관계에 관한 한인 노회의 입장은, "동성애자는 전도와 권면의 대상이지, 결코 권장하거나 축복할 대상은 아니며, 궁극적으로 구원 받아야 할 존재"라는 것이다.

### 2. 이에 한인 노회는 아래와 같이 결의 하며, 이를 만 천하에 공표한다:

1) 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 사람을 남자와 여자로 창조하시고 결혼제도를 주신 하나님의 창조섭리와 질서에 반하는 것이다.

2) 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 신앙과 삶의 절대적 진리가 되는 하나님의 영원한 진리 말씀인 신 구약 성경의 정신에 반하는 것이다.

3) 동성결혼과 그 주례의 축복은 교회를 거룩한 공동체로 부르시고 성령으로 거듭나 새롭게 하신 성도의 양심에 반하는 것이다.

4) 동성결혼과 그 축복은 학문적, 과학적 해석의 문제가 아닌 성경적, 영적인 해석의 문제로 위의 모든 사항에 따라 받아들일 수 없음을 분명히 결의한다.

5) 그러므로 한인노회는, 호주 연합교단이 지금 까지 견지 ( Uniting Sexuality and Faith 1997 )해 왔던 결혼의 적격 당사자를 남자와 여자로 유지할 것을 촉구한다.

**1 Corinthians 14: 8** Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

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

**James 1: 5-8** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**Mark 7: 7** They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.

**Ephesians 5: 31-32** For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

**John 16: 33** "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

**Jeremiah 6: 16** This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

**Galatians 1: 6-9** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

**Revelation 3: 2-3** Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

**1 Corinthians 16: 13-14** Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.

**John 11: 35** Jesus wept.

**Ephesians 3: 20-21** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

**Matthew 19: 5-6** For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will live with his wife. The two will become one.' So they are no longer two but one. Let no man divide what God has put together."

**Mark 7: 21-22** For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

**2 Peter 2: 1** But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.

**Psalms 119: 113** I hate double-minded people, but I love your law.

# Uniting Sin & Farce

Rev Dr  
Tim Patrick

Principal - Bible College of SA



**F**or the sake of full disclosure, I should be up front in saying that I am writing this piece as an ordained Anglican minister who currently attends an evangelical Uniting Church, and who teaches in a non-denominational theological college.

In July, the Uniting Church in Australia held its triennial general assembly; its once-in-three-years parliament. Although there were many matters discussed and decided upon, the most significant and controversial was a change to the denomination's marriage ordinance. The proposal was to change the wording such that marriage was no longer between 'a man and a woman' but between 'two people'. Obviously, this was the Uniting Church deciding on whether or not it would follow the culture and allow—bless—gay marriage.

## Foregone and Farcical

Even before the Assembly, it was widely expected that the motion would succeed—people count the numbers for these kinds of votes. And while that proved to be the case, there was an odd twist. The Uniting Church did not change its existing marriage liturgy to allow for same-sex marriage, but agreed to add a second liturgy that did so. That is, by the end of the meeting, the Uniting Church had decided to approve two different liturgies for marriage; one traditional, one revisionist. There was some good intent in this. The idea was that conservative congregations could continue with the existing definition of marriage, while progressives could change. Each local church community would thereby have the liberty to follow its own conscience. It sounds good at one level, but it is actually quite farcical.

Imagine if the Australian Medical Association gathered to discuss whether or not it was safe to prescribe the controversial and powerful new 'Medication X'. After a long meeting that considered hard datasets as well as personal stories about individuals' experiences with Med X, the meeting concluded that they would let each doctor advise whether Med X was good or bad, according to their own opinion about it. The public would then also be free to choose a doctor who would either warn them against the dangers of Med X, if that is what they wanted to hear, or else one who would talk up the benefits of Med X and hand it out if that was what they preferred. Win win. Everyone is happy. Neat work AMA. Except, of course, that it is completely ridiculous. This would be a decision

for the AMA to deliberately speak out of both sides of its mouth, and it would lead not to a celebration of choice, but to great confusion as to what was right about Med X and about whether Med X actually made any significant difference to human health one way or the other—if it did, surely the AMA would have been clearer. It would also give rise to questions about whether the AMA continued to be any sort of reliable guide on such matters.

The Uniting Church ... has not only failed to stand for clear biblical standards, it has also entered into farce.

All of this is what the Uniting Church has done with marriage. It has not only failed to stand for clear biblical standards, it has also entered into this farce. But despite the double-talk (contra Matthew 5:37), the plain fact is this: the National Assembly has decided that it will modify the moral position of the part of Christ's church over which it has care and responsibility such that it reflects the post-Christian culture's values as much as the Bible. To pretend that this can mean nothing has changed for those who did not support that development is either naive or disingenuous.

## A Core Issue?

I have heard one lecturer from a Uniting Church ministry training college make the argument that since it is not necessary to be married in order to be Christian, the church ought not make beliefs about marriage determinative in questions of Christian unity. But this is not a sound argument. It does not follow that because the faith does not enjoin something for all, what we believe about that thing cannot be of critical importance. Our views on marriage reflect our convictions about the authority and clarity of the Bible, about the necessity of faithful obedience, about what is healthy for human flourishing and about what brings glory to Jesus, and these are all core issues for Christians.

And of course marriage is an especially significant institution for Christians because, theologically speaking, we know that the ultimate marriage is between Christ and the church; the coming together of Creator and creation in the union of same-but-different is the great story of the Bible. Human marriages are meant to image and point to this meta-truth as two people who are male-and-female-different, yet flesh-of-my-flesh-same, come together in life-long union (eg. Genesis 1:27; 2:23; Ephesians 5:31–32; Revelation 21:9–14). When we change our view of marriage to allow for the union of same-and-same, it not only affects marriage, it also pulls at one of the golden threads that so neatly binds our Christology, our soteriology, our ecclesiology, our biblical theology and our eschatology.

Marriage is an especially significant institution for Christians because, theologically speaking, we know that the ultimate marriage is between Christ and the church; the coming together of Creator and creation in the union of same-but-different is the great story of the Bible

Of course, how we feel about the Uniting Church's decision depends a lot on our view of denominations.



If a denomination is little more than an administrative accrediting body—an office that signs off on celebrants' licences, enables tax breaks, manages insurance registers, and so on—then it might not matter too much. (I actually have some sympathy with this view, believing that the local church and the church universal are biblically grounded entities, whereas denominations are human constructs.) But if we think a denomination represents a fellowship of like-minded believers worshipping God in unity, co-labouring in a joint mission with a single message and sharing plans and resources with trust and confidence as we seek common outcomes, the proposed position looks quite untenable for evangelical members.

## Where to Now?

So where to from here? I am incredibly encouraged by the evangelical Uniting Church ministers who have called their congregations to forty days of prayer as they discuss next steps. I have no privileged inside knowledge, but I know they are talking together about the best group action that can be taken. There could perhaps be a fellowship established within the Uniting Church that parallels the GAFCON movement in the Anglican Communion. Or maybe a mass exodus to another denomination or accrediting body. Or something else. This is not my decision to make, but I do think that a coordinated approach will best serve the evangelical churches and congregation members far better than if each just independently started heading off in different directions.

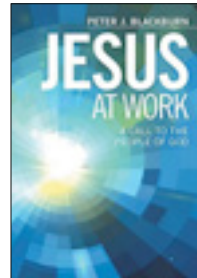
There are, however, two possibilities that I would particularly love to see explored. The Uniting Church as a whole could turn back to its historic doctrine and thus abandon the sinful and absurd outcome of the recent Assembly. This would bring real joy to so many as the great desire of our hearts is to experience that unity for which the church is named with those whom we dearly love as our sisters and brothers. However, if this cannot happen, perhaps those who are so keen for the change should consider leaving the denomination. They could then start clean with their own new institution that could have whatever morality they choose, and in so doing they could allow the Uniting Church to continue in the line of the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists who sacrificed so much to establish the denomination in the first place, and who would never have altered its doctrine as the Assembly has. These things are above my pay grade, but not above God's, so I will now heed my pastor's call, and continue in prayer.

*Rev. Dr Tim Patrick is Principal of the Bible College of South Australia where he lectures in theology and practical ministry.*

*This article is reprinted with permission and first appeared on The Gospel Coalition Website 7/8/2018: [au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/uniting-sin-farce](http://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/uniting-sin-farce)*

## BOOK REVIEW

# Jesus at Work



**Jesus at Work**  
*A Call to the People of God*  
Xlibris 2015

Written by  
Peter J Blackburn

**T**here are a plethora of books available today which set out to call the people of God to action. The danger is that such a call can so focus on 'us' and what 'we are to do', that the reader may be left with an overwhelming sense of the magnitude of the task and the

paralysing guilt of failure.

But here is a book that draws our full attention back to the core of the Gospel, to the present, active work of the risen Lord Jesus. And Peter does so without reducing in any way the vital significance of our place as Christ's people living in the world today. Orthodox Christian theology brings doxology, genuine assurance and hope and joyful service. This book is a wonderful example of such theology.

Peter takes us back to the Scriptures to see the truth of Jesus' continuing work in four parts: Building His Church; Growing His Body; Gathering His Harvest; and Coming Again. The book is Christological throughout, biblically trinitarian, and very readable. It holds together the truth of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, his work now in this penultimate age, and the age yet to come, all according to the Scriptures.

The book is written in a straightforward and practical manner. Peter is a storyteller, and this work is illustrated well with events from life's experiences of the profound grace of God.

It has been of double encouragement for me to read this book having served alongside of Peter in my time as Minister of the Word in the Ingham and Districts Uniting Churches for four years. His website is: [peterjblackburn.net/](http://peterjblackburn.net/)

Jesus is at work, and he has promised to complete what he has begun, preparing his Church as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband, to share forever in the new creation. Come Lord Jesus!

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**The book is written in a straightforward and practical manner.**

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# Bella Easterbrook

ACC Member / Southern Sydney



**A**t the beginning of the year, I found out I was pregnant. Back then, the reality of a baby seemed so far away. Now, my due date is rapidly approaching. I'm learning to wrap my head around the scary and exciting fact that soon I'll be a mother. One of the things I've been most apprehensive about is the pain that comes from actually giving birth.

*Hebrews 4:15* says that we have a high priest who is able to empathise with our weaknesses. Jesus is able to comfort us in our fears and suffering because he knows what it's like. But Jesus is a man. He was never pregnant and he never gave birth. Surely, he wouldn't be able to identify with the struggle of women during labour, would he?

But Jesus went to the cross. He dealt with the rising fear of the pain he knew was to come, as he sweated blood and cried out to his Father in Gethsemane. He felt the intense agony of crucifixion and the humiliation of being exposed and on display. Jesus might not have gone through the exact experience I'll soon face, but he knows what it means to go through pain.

There's another reason why Jesus can identify with the woman in labour. The pain in childbirth, intense as may be, brings forth new life. Talking with other mums at church, they tell me the only thing that got them through was the hope of holding their baby. This baby I prayed for and now carry within me; at the end of all that pain, I'll get to meet them face to face.

Jesus didn't go to the cross for nought. The people he created had turned against him and were now facing eternal separation. The cross was God's way of dealing with the punishment we deserved, so we could be reconciled with him once again. As it says in *Hebrews 12:2*, 'for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame'. Jesus willingly endured physical and spiritual suffering even worse than childbirth, to gain those that he loved. The sufferings of the cross brought about new life, as Jesus shares his resurrection life with all who believe.

The example of Jesus is helping me prepare for giving birth. When that dreaded but anticipated moment comes, I pray that I will keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. He has already suffered, endured and triumphed, and he will strengthen me by his Spirit to run the race before me with perseverance.



*Bella  
Easterbrook  
blogs Words of  
encouragement,  
truth and beauty  
at 'Over the  
Teacups'.*



## REFLECTION

# A Word for Today

*Esau said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!"*

*Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."*

*"Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"*

*But Jacob said, "Swear to me first."*

*So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. (Genesis 25:30-33).*

**E**sau gave up his birthright - his inheritance - for a pot of stew. This might seem crazy, but we know that we are often tempted in the same way by the foolish and empty things of this world.

We have before us today every spiritual blessing in the



heavenly realm through Jesus. We have full forgiveness of sins, eternal life, joy and peace, a relationship with the Father, etc. Will we exchange these for the pot of stew that the world, the devil, and our flesh offer us?

Fix your eyes on Jesus the Author and Perfecter of your faith and receive His blessing.

*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

**Save the date:**

## ACC National Conference

Add these dates to your diary now and plan now to join other ACC members as together we encourage one another to maintain the faith today.

**Theme: Living and working within the faith and unity of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

Assembly of Confessing Congregations  
within the Uniting Church in Australia

### 2018 ACC National Conference and Annual General Meeting

(1.30 pm) Monday 17 September –  
(12.30 pm) Wednesday 19 September

Venue: Wesley Church | Wesley Mission | Pitt Street, Sydney



## 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:

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

of doctrine and ethics according to the teaching of the Scriptures and the faith as understood by the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;

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

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



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


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

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


## How to join us

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



FILM



# Soldiers of the Cross



## Soldiers of the Cross (1900)

**Starring:** Beatrice Day, Harold Graham

**Directed by:** Herbert Booth, Joseph Perry

At the start of the twentieth century the Christian religion dominated the religious statistics in the census returns. In 1901, about 97% of the population identified with a Christian denomination or Christian cause. The new century ushered in a new parliament and a new identity and saw the consolidation/and or coming together of the established denominations and traditions and the continued development of newer religious bodies. One of the newer groups was the Salvation Army and while Australia had a Christian heritage and high nominal Christian identification, the Salvation Army viewed the country as a mission field and they embarked on new ways of reaching people with the Gospel.

Salvation Army work started in Australia in 1880, fifteen years after the movement had begun in England under the leadership of William and Catherine Booth.

Since it was a new mission focussed organisation it was perhaps, more open to experimenting with new forms of technology. Before film, the Army used the medium of magic

## Herbert Booth



lanterns, which projected images on glass slides, including optical special effects. These productions were often used with music and lectures or sermons to provide a sense of cohesion and illustrate the message that was presented. The Salvation Army viewed these new technologies as a gift from God, and the step from magic lanterns to film was a natural one for the Salvation Army.

The leading person behind the Army's venture into film production was Major Joseph Perry, an Englishman, who came to Australia from New Zealand in 1885. Perry was an early user of photography and magic lanterns and was a logical choice to take charge of the Limelight Department in 1892. The Limelight name came from the light source in the projectors - gas-heated lime blocks. Perry was encouraged in his cinematography work by the new Australasian Commandant

Herbert Booth.

At first the Department projected films made by other organisations, but Booth and Perry saw a need to expand the range of subjects and show the work of the Salvation Army, and consequently the Department moved into its own production work.

Their early success of short scenery-based films soon prompted plans for a large-scale epic production that would establish the Army's reputation and focus people's attention not only on individual salvation, but the work they believed that Christians needed to do to save the world. This epic, written and presented by Herbert Booth was *Soldiers of the Cross*, premiering at Melbourne Town Hall on 13 September 1900.

*Soldiers of the Cross* is sometimes referred to as the first Australian feature film, though it was more an early form of PowerPoint, being a dramatic lecture, combining stills and illustrations, film, music and commentary. The production concentrated on the heroic stories of Christian martyrdom, including the deaths of Stephen and Peter, and countless other Christians who would rather face an earthly death than recant their faith or worship a false God. One purpose of the film was as a recruitment tool for the Salvation Army. I wonder how a new film version of *Soldiers of the Cross* would fare in Australia today?

*Peter Bentley*