

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 5 | DECEMBER 2013

ACCatalyst

ASSEMBLY OF CONFESSING CONGREGATIONS WITHIN THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



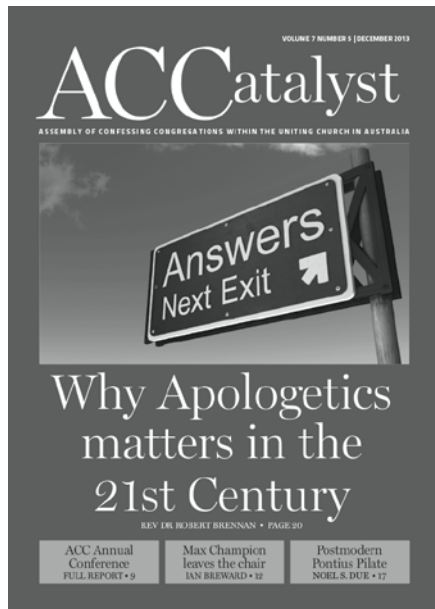
Why Apologetics matters in the 21st Century

REV DR ROBERT BRENNAN • PAGE 20

ACC Annual
Conference
FULL REPORT • 9

Max Champion
leaves the chair
IAN BREWARD • 12

Postmodern
Pontius Pilate
NOEL S. DUE • 17



Cover illustration edez/istockphoto.com

EDITORIAL

Not my problem

It was a weekend when I had a lot to worry about. Big problems at work, and concerns for my kids.

But I never got around to it. As it turned out that was the weekend I had promised to look after a bunch of special needs guys at a sporting event. Yes, me who has never played a game of sport in my life. But the little dramas of making sure everyone got fed, got to their games on

time, got their stories of triumph and defeat listened to—and then the inevitable emergency of a trip to hospital—took up all my brainspace and energy all weekend.

And from God's point of view the guys' issues are just as important as mine. I was tested on that. I had to leave my concerns behind and look after theirs. It turned out to be a blessing. *John Sandeman*

ACCCatalyst is published by the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc.
ABN 73 794 518 715 ARBN 128 001 785.
Incorporated in NSW. INC 9887628.
Liability of members is limited. Opinions expressed in ACCCatalyst do not necessarily reflect the official views of the assembly.

Executive Editor: Max Champion
Managing Editor: Peter Bentley
Editor: John Sandeman
Office: 2 Erskineville Rd, Newtown NSW
02 9550 5358
Website: confessingcongregations.com
accoffice@confessingcongregations.com

Email for ACCCatalyst:
catalysteditor@confessingcongregations.com

ACCCatalyst is provided with ACC Supporting Membership (\$70 pa full or \$40 pa concession). Printed by Brougham Press, Scoresby Rd, Bayswater Vic. ISSN 1835 2073

Silly me, and the broken toy

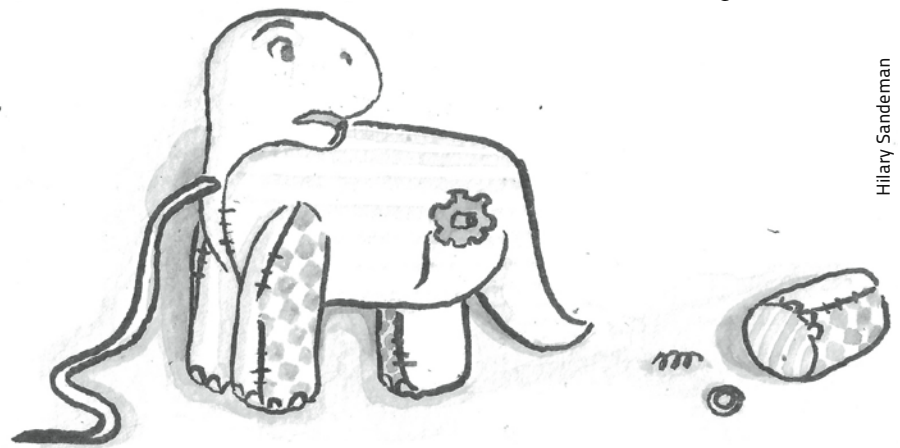
It was my fault. I did it. It was two mornings after Christmas and I was messing around with one of my nephew's new baby toys and I got it hopelessly jammed up. "Mummy says we're not supposed to do that," said my niece.

Feeling rather sheepish I went to the shed in search of a screwdriver to fix the thing. After undoing lots of screws and fiddling around I managed to un-jam it, but then the next trick was putting the thing back together.

Most of it was straightforward, but there was one spring that I couldn't figure out where it was supposed to go. I could see where one end went, but not the other. Without this screw, the toy wasn't going to work properly. Riley had not yet even had a chance to play with it.

I sat there trying to figure it out. I was tired and not feeling well, and I did not have much patience for doing that sort of thing. But what else could I do? I had broken my nephew's Christmas present! I had no choice. I had to figure it out.

In desperation I tried looking at the instructions. They just said: "DO



NOT TAKE THIS TOY APART." Big help THAT was!

I put down my screwdriver and had a break and a cup of tea. As I sat there I prayed, "God, I feel tired and irritated and I've got to get this toy fixed before I drive home. Please can you show me where this spring goes."

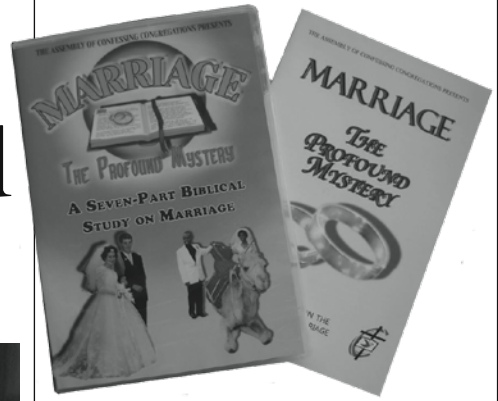
After my cuppa I returned to work. I looked in the toy again, and there was the groove where the spring went! It was immediately obvious, yet before I prayed I had looked and looked and not been able to see it. Without much difficulty I put the spring into place and put the toy

back together. It was as good as new again - at least until someone else jams it up again!

I learnt a lesson that day - that Fisher Price toys are not indestructible. But more importantly, it reminded me that God does hear prayer. If God heard my prayers about a broken toy, he hears my prayers about more important things. Maybe he doesn't answer them quite so quickly, but he hears, and he cares. That has encouraged me to keep praying, and inviting God to be part of all of my life. That's what he wants too!

Robyn

ACCatalyst is awarded gold and silver



Marriage—The Profound Mystery is now on DVD

A seven-part biblical study on marriage from the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Discipleship and Evangelism Commission is now available.

This new study series, *Marriage—The Profound Mystery*, was launched at the 2013 ACC Conference at Paradise Point Uniting Church in Queensland. It is suitable for all adults, and older youth. While couples or a couples group may find it personally helpful, the series also provides a broad overview of marriage within our society.

ACC is distributing the DVD to all our congregations and groups and many individual members have also taken copies to use in their home church or group.

If you would like a complimentary copy please contact the ACC office. You can also view the individual studies on Youtube (See the link on the ACC website: www.confessing-congregations.com/)

Study 1 – From the Beginning of Creation (Marriage in Genesis 1 and 2)
Study 2 – Paradise Lost (Marriage in Genesis 3)

Study 3 – God's Covenant Love (Marriage in the Prophets)

Study 4 – The Greatest Love Song Ever Written (Marriage in the Song of Songs)

Study 5 – The Bridegroom Arrives (Marriage in the Words of Jesus)

Study 6 – The Profound Mystery (Marriage in Paul's Letters)

Study 7 – The Marriage of the Lamb and His Bride (Marriage and the Consummation of All Things)

There is an accompanying study guide (included with the DVD) and that is also available to download and print from the ACC website.



ARPA President, Erroll Pike, presents Peter Bentley with the Silver award

ACCatalyst has won a Gold and a Silver award in the 2013 Mailcare Australasian Religious Press Association Awards.

The Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) awards celebrate excellence in writing; design and creativity; and publishing. The awards are given for work published during the preceding calendar year; that is during 2012. The awards receive entries from a broad base of Protestant and Catholic publications each year.

The award categories that *ACCatalyst* won in this year are among the ones that attract a number of entries and are consequently harder to win.

It is worth noting that the strong opinions expressed in one of *ACCatalyst's* winning pieces did not put off the ARPA judge, and perhaps ARPA deserves an award for that.

Here are the ARPA judge's comments for each of the awards that *ACCatalyst* won:

BEST FEATURE MULTIPLE AUTHORS SILVER *Special report*

on marriage Max Champion & Rod James *ACCatalyst*, April 2012

Judge's comment: This extensive dual feature on marriage includes a full feature by Dr Max Champion on "How Gnostics mimic marriage" and Rod James on "The Gospel mission to marriages and families". It is an intellectual debate and extensive in its referencing while clearly reflecting the views of the authors.

BEST HUMOROUS ITEM GOLD
Worshipping At The Altar Peter Bentley *ACCatalyst*, April 2012

Judge's Comment: Peter Bentley is a sharp analyst and a beautiful writer. He imagines a world of quirky web-based churches, with gentle digs at the new technology and where it might be leading us with a 'sting in the tail' that brings us back to reality. A gifted journalist with an unusual touch of whimsy and a delightful feel for the offbeat, his smile-inducing entry scored high points for originality. This is a nicely-structured fully articulated piece that also packs a punch.



PUBLIC SQUARE

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

The Omnipotence of Grace

A sermon preached by Rev Dr Max Champion at St John's UCA Mt Waverley, June 16 2013

Lessons – Psalm 51:1-17; John 7:53-8:11

This story in John goes to the heart of the Gospel.

Jesus is in the temple where Judaism was thought to be preserved in its purity. He is teaching 'all the people' (8:2) in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees who have already 'sought to kill him' (7:1).

The shadow of the Cross is cast over the scene as they 'bring a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery' (8:4).

The religious leaders are not really interested in her but only in 'having a charge to bring against Jesus' (v6). So they set what they think is a clever trap by asking Jesus, 'What do you say about her?' (v5). If he upholds the severity of the Mosaic law, he can be charged by the Romans. If he does not, he can be accused of blasphemy. He is in a no-win situation!

But, as usual, Jesus turns the tables. They expose themselves by their question, 'What do you say about her?' It is impersonal, detached and judging. They do not care about her. They want to condemn her to eternal punishment and, in the process, condemn Jesus.

Instead of talking about what the woman has done, Jesus first turns to her accusers. He speaks directly to them. 'Let him who is without sin among you, throw the first stone' (v7).

The first sin to be named by Jesus is self-righteousness. These righteous men, so steeped in God's law, make no attempt at reconciliation. They do not welcome or accept her but aim to exclude her from the community of faith. In accusing her, they accuse themselves of loveless disdain for her.

Chastised but unrepentant, these self-appointed judges trudge off (v9a) leaving Jesus alone with the woman.

This man, who alone of all people is without sin, turns to this sinful woman. He proclaims the judgment of God as only God can do.

What Jesus says makes clear that she is not condemned to eternal punishment (v10) for what she has done. Yet, she is bid to 'sin no more' (v11). He does not say anything specifically about forgiveness and we are not told whether she repents. But he speaks directly to us about what the 4th Century hymn (Australian Hymn Book 1, v4) calls the 'omnipotence of grace'.

Twice, he 'writes with his finger on the ground' (vv 6,8) – once before admonishing the scribes for their lack of mercy and once before talking to the woman.

Here we see the great Gospel truth that, as serious as our self-righteous and immoral sins are, God does not keep a permanent record. As wind and rain surely erased what is written on the ground, so God erases our sins.

Here is a word of hope for self-styled 'evangelicals' and 'libertarians':

Jesus does not accuse the Pharisees of being sexually repressed, afraid of change, narrow minded or closed to diverse forms of sexuality. They are right. Adultery is a most serious breach of the exclusive physical social and spiritual union of a man and a

woman that is God's clear purpose for marriage.

But neither does he commend her for a liberated attitude to sex. In condemning her accusers for not seeking reconciliation, Jesus welcomes her as a daughter of grace with the clear instruction that she must not continue in her adulterous relationship. To receive the undeserved grace of God is to be set free from sin.

The passage makes it plain that self-righteous evangelicism and tolerant libertarianism are both excluded

In this encounter we see the pattern of the Gospel. As signs of God's inclusive grace, Jesus seeks the lost and eats and drinks with 'tax collectors and sinners'—without relaxing God's righteous demands.

Nowhere in his meeting with immoral people does Jesus begin with their sins! He does not speak to them in a detached or impersonal way. Neither does he affirm their behaviour as being 'right for them'. He reserves his harshest criticisms for the self-righteous who are disgusted by their immoral neighbours and not interested in them being reconciled to God or to the community of faith.

This passage speaks to our situation in the churches and the Australian community. How might it help us to address robust debates about the

propriety of diverse forms of same-sex sexual relationships and the push for so-called 'Marriage Equality'?

The key thing is to reject misguided compassion which approves of same-sex sexual relationships and to practise true love that empathises with fellow sinners, stands with them in their temptation, seeks their reconciliation to God, protests against violence done to them and offers pastoral care at times of harassment, illness and death.

The passage makes it plain that self-righteous evangelicalism and tolerant libertarianism are both excluded! We must not mistake the 'redemptive love of God in Christ' for 'righteous indignation' or 'affirmative tolerance'.

We should resist these attempts to shrink the Gospel of Christ. The Church is called to be truly 'welcoming', 'accepting' and 'inclusive' in the manner of Jesus with the adulterous woman.

We are summoned to declare, in words and deeds, the transforming grace of God who loves the ungodly (libertarian or evangelical) and calls us (self-righteous or self-indulgent) to repentance and a new life in Christ. All of us fall short of the glory of God! All of us are restored to life through God's grace in Christ!

In this dramatic and moving incident the good and the bad are united in hope. In Christ the dark motives of the most scrupulously religious and the dark deeds of the most immoral are unmasked to highlight the magnificence of grace.

Thus, Jesus' approach to the woman and the scribes holds out to us all a great hope. By what he says to them (about casting the first stone and about not sinning again) and by what he does (in writing with his finger on the ground) he shows that, as serious as our self-righteous and immoral sins are, God does not keep a permanent record. Though guilty, we are not condemned. Though unacceptable, we are accepted. Though judged, we are set free.

Good reason, indeed, to 'shout the omnipotence of grace'

IAN CLARKSON

Judge not that you be not judged ... really?

"Judge not that you be not judged" is one of the most used but abused texts. It is easily understood yet confused; frequently quoted mostly (and ironically) against others but rejected personally. All this with disastrous results for church ... and society.

The Master's meaning is plain: don't assume God's ultimate judgement and don't excuse yourselves from judgement.

God alone can pass sentence (judge against) we cannot and shall not. That requires divine knowledge and grace.

Many Scriptures urge Christians to take up the work of judgement. *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?* This life is preparation for *judging the angels*. Jesus followers are to judge each other where necessary. The apostles did it frequently.

We can't have high standards without judging. Impossible! We accept it in the world but reject it in the church and our private lives

Judging here is warning, not condemning, urging on, not dropping the curtain. It requires discernment and appreciation of the soul's value. But we have fallen in love with self and despised our souls

We cringe from judging because we don't want judgement upon our own lives. How we need it! Take one area, sexuality. Ministers, leaders with their mistresses, having affairs, divorcing so much so that we glibly ignore 'their private lives' even when its so public and repercussions so great.

Gossip is another. 'Oh I don't mean to sound nasty, but'. Or we might even nuance it in a prayer meeting!

And out flows a spiel of judging in the wrong way. Yes we may have been hurt by a sister but there is a right way to judge.

We can't have high standards without judging. Impossible!

We accept it in the world but reject it in the church and our private lives. How valuable those noble saints who from a heart that yearns the best for you will speak a word that exposes to your conscience an inner duplicity, and helps you hear at last the sweet convicting counsel of the Holy Spirit.

Os Guinness wrote in 2005 "Ours then is a world in which 'Thou shalt not judge' has become the new eleventh commandment, and tolerance the last undisputed virtue."

Basically we want to be a law unto ourselves. Its the new pharisaism. But we have denied ourselves the blessings of sanctification to allow the Spirit wind to take us out across the thrilling uncharted seas of moral righteousness, blowing direct from heaven yet breathed into otherwise helpless souls, redeemed by Christs blood for the purpose of knowing an undreamed of excellence.

Clarkson, Purdy, healing

Scriptural text and the Word of God

This is a response to "The Bible is not a story book by Ian Clarkson in the September *ACCatalyst*."

Ian Clarkson does well in directing us toward the text of Scripture. Few Christians realise what mammoth work is undertaken by technically-equipped scholars to bring them the text of Scripture. I refer to men like Nestle, Metzger and Aland. They sift through scraps and part manuscripts in papyrus and vellum. What they have left us with is the most possible text of Scripture there is, but even it, of course, is approximate.

The word 'story' is not found in Scripture, but it is found in theology.

It is used in the pastoral work of the church. Who of us have not arrived home at night to find his or her young'uns in the tub calling out for a story and we respond in like kind? This is an epitome of the whole of the church's pastoral work.

Or in the songs of the church.
*"Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear
things I would ask him to tell me if
he were here ..."*

Or
*"Tell me the old, old story of unseen
things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and
his love.
Tell me the story simply, as to a little
child,
for I am weak and weary, and help-
less and defiled."*

Chorus:
*Tell me the old, old story, tell me the
old, old story,
tell me the old, old story, of Jesus and
his love.*

There are four Gospels but I have never heard a fundamentalist decry the fact and want one. They are a magnificent resource for the Gospel ministry of the whole church.

Jesus taught in parables, from the Sower (which he explained) right through to the Prodigal Son, many of which he did not explain. These were beautiful stories, pithy and powerful, that Jesus used in his public minis-

try. So great an impact did they have that many modern theologians speak of Jesus as the Parable of God.

A preacher always approaches his or her text to exegete, and interprets what lies before him or her. Exegesis is the science of interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics starts with the following: "No-one has ever seen God. It is God the only son who is close to the father's heart who has made him known. (*exegasato*)" (John 1:18)

Recently a Christian journalist addressed a Christian organisation in Melbourne as such:

"All we have that is distinctive is the story we gather around, an ancient but ever-new story that starts with the Hebrew Scriptures and continues in the stories of Jesus and of the early church. It is a story of the Triune God who made us, who lived with us and who is still with us. It is the story of a human God who lived and died and defeated death. It is a story of a resurrection God from whom we draw, not optimism or cheeriness, but hope, hope that can withstand the storm. Hope that the last word in this universe is the same as the first word, and that word is Love."

The text of Scripture is God-breathed, God's Word to us.

So let us use it in our ministry with all the power of the Spirit.

Rowan Gill

'My desire is to help Don'

Re: Your article telling of Rev. Don Purdey's illness.

First of all, my desire is to help Don receive the health and healing which is God's will for him.

I, myself, am a 90-year-old United Church Minister and have been researching healing all my ministry and offer a few words which I trust will be helpful.

I make the following observations as I read the article. Faith is something that we can talk about as a noun and in this sense it can be defined, but the faith that is needed to

effect salvation must be a verb, a doing word. It must be demonstrated.

Don says, "From the moment I knew I was sick I have prayed that God will change things and heal me".

Our prayers do not move God, but praying helps us to respond to what God has already done.

The good news is that God is right ahead of us. Before we were born or ever got sick, God had already sent his son, Jesus, to meet that particular need and in fact every need we will ever have.

Isaiah prophesied, "With his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:5) and after Jesus came and died upon the cross, the Holy Ghost confirmed this was done. (1 Peter 2:24). Also Matt. 8:17 and in other scriptures.

God's salvation is always of his grace, that is we can never earn it or merit it in any way. The good news of the gospel is that it has already been provided, and there is nothing we need do or others need to do to cause God to act on our behalf. He has already acted. He sent his son to save and heal and redeem us from all our distresses. (Ps. 103:1-5). It is an accomplished fact. God does not need to do any more than he has done. The next move is ours. When we pray, it is not to move God. Our prayers do not move God, but praying helps us to respond to what God has already done. Scripture tells us clearly that God has moved by grace, but we must exercise our faith to receive of his grace. (Eph. 2:8 & 9) (Also Rom. 5:2).

In the N.T. Jesus always testified that healing was received by the faith of the recipient. Where the person was seeking healing, their faith was often manifested by their actions but there were times when Jesus had to help perfect their faith before healing could take place. When Jesus initiated healing he always gave the

and the Bible

person needing healing something to do to demonstrate their faith.

Remember, God wants us healed more than we do, but it can only happen where there is real genuine faith. For example, Jesus could not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief.

Rev. Don says, "I believe that I am healed." This is a good word, but I notice that he is not sure that it will come on this side of the grave. All Christians surely know that there will be no sickness in the next life, so that is really not an option when we are praying for healing. We need healing in the here and now, and God wants us healed. He wants us to live here as long as we can and bring glory to his name by being healed. However, scripture says it must be "faith without wavering or doubting." (James 1:6) and (Mark 11:23,24).

Finally, let me say that the faith needed for healing comes by believing the Word of God (Rom. 8:17) not by observing any of the circumstances favourable or unfavourable. It makes no difference when we believe what God has said nor does it matter much who prays for you, it all depends on whether you actually believe what God says. Consider the Story of Jairus in Mark 5 and the raising of Lazarus John 11, particularly verse 40.

Godfrey Williams, Paradise Point.

Medicine a business

I feel for Dr Michele Browne (*AC-Catalyst*, 7-4). I retired a decade ago

after 50 years in General Practice; & would make the following observations.

Since I graduated in 1950 Medicine has become more of a 'business' and less of a 'profession'. There have been two outstanding changes in that for some doctors Medicine is more contractual than covenantal and there is increasingly an interested third party—be it insurance or Government—between 'patient' & 'doctor'.

In my opinion neither adds up to the patient's benefit.

Arthur Hartwig

God is the creator

I do not necessarily disagree with Gary Ireland when he states "acknowledging the likelihood of evolution does not negate belief in God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe". I emphasise the phrase "acknowledging the likelihood of" which does not present evolution as fact. The points I made that evolution is unscientific were not exhaustive.

However, evolution is most often presented as starting accidentally and continuing haphazardly. Where that view is held, belief in God as creator is unsustainable. It was belief in God as creator, particularly creator of order that underpinned the beginning of modern science a few hundred years ago.

Genetics has opened up a whole new field of science and conjecture, for example, the proposition that all people in the world can be traced

back to six families in Africa.

I believe that God created human beings and the universe for a reason and a purpose. I am created and loved by God with a purpose to my life and a reason for living. Hence whatever one believes about the manner of creation, I repeat that faith and life begin with two words: God created.

Daphne Freeman

ACC National Council 2013-14

Chair

Rev Shane Kammermann

Deputy Chair

Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki

Secretary

Rev Dr Rod James

Treasurer

Dr Colin Adam

Council Members

Rev Walter Abetz

Rev Dr Ian Breward

Rev Dr Max Champion

Rev Anne Hibbard

Rev Derek Schiller

Rev Lulu Senituli

Rev Ian Weeks

ACC Board of Management

Convenor

Dr Colin Adam

National Director

Peter Bentley



CONFESSING MOVEMENT

A “United Miracle”: a seminary turns from liberalism to orthodoxy

Juicyecumenism.com blog reports: Not long ago, United Theological Seminary (UTS) in the Dayton, Ohio area was just another declining, has-been, mainline seminary, facing ominous financial hardships, dominated by Scripture-demoting theological liberalism, and reflective of so much of what was wrong with its shrinking sponsoring denomination, the United Methodist Church (UMC). The former seminary of the Evangelical United Brethren (which merged with the Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church in 1968) was founded by Bishop Milton Wright, father of the famed Wright brothers.

Today, the school is a very different place than what many alumni experienced. It is now explicitly committed to a high view of biblical authority, “the historic Christian faith,” “the cultivation of holiness,” and “the renewal of the church.”

Rev. Dr. Wendy Deichmann, UTS’s president since 2008, openly associates with the Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church. Applicants for faculty positions must be explicitly committed “to the historic Christian faith.”

God has clearly been blessing this new direction under the leadership of President Deichmann. A recent headline from the Dayton *Daily*



News summed up the seminary’s new situation: “Rebounding from Crisis, United is Among Fastest-Growing Theological Schools in U.S.”

United’s tripling of its enrolment in the last four years, with now over 600 students, along with the rapid expansion of its faculty, is all the more remarkable in light of the decline at other official United Methodist seminaries.

Earlier this year, United established a new, Spanish-language Hispanic Christian Academy (HCA) for training Hispanic church leaders. Also under Deichmann’s leadership, United has launched a pioneering new partnership with the UMC’s Sierra Leone Annual Conference and new programming in sports chaplaincy, distance-learning, and urban ministry.

The seminary is now arguably the most strongly aligned with the United Methodist theological

tradition of all of the thirteen U.S. United Methodist seminaries, and also has strong ties to the African-American church tradition and increasing ties to the Pentecostal/charismatic tradition.

Dr. Deichmann describes the turnaround

as “a miracle.”

But it is also important to note her own impressive administrative leadership of making tough financial decisions in the face of a budget crisis she inherited, guiding the school through a nearly complete turnover in faculty, and being a clear, articulate voice for the biblical, historic Christianity to which the seminary is now committed.

In a recent newspaper interview, she declared that “it’s time for a cultural shift in the life of the mainline denominations,” highlighted the failure of vaguely affirming, low-commitment, offense-avoiding ways of doing church, and commended the example of thriving congregations characterised by “dynamic, relevant worship services that are attractive to young people,” “sound biblical and theological preaching and teaching,” and active, self-sacrificial commitment to ministry with the poor.

Confessing Anglicans strengthened

John Sandeman reports

Confessing Anglicans have moved beyond emergency responses to gay bishops and clergy and are planning for the health of an orthodox presence in the Anglican Communion.

The Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) was held in Nairobi during October and drew 1300 delegates from 14 countries, including official delegates from the largest Anglican Provinces (national churches).

“We met with great joy in Nairobi” the conference statement said, and

“...reaffirmed our view that we are a global fellowship of confessing Anglicans, engaged in a movement of the Holy Spirit which is both personal and ecclesial.”

The movement committed itself to evangelising both the parts of the world where the gospel has become obscured and unreached people.

GAFCON promised to support biblically faithful Anglicans isolated in diocesan structures that marginalise them. The GAFCON Primates (national church leaders) Council will provide recognition, and a con-

fessing movement called the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans — rather like an international ACC.

There were about 80 Australians and New Zealanders at the conference. The Sydney Anglicans have provided support to GAFCON including its website. But at the latest GAFCON the Australian contribution was to push the importance of theological education.

Local delegates report being greatly encouraged by the conference and having their eyes open to the needs of the wider church.

A slice of Paradise as ACC meets

Miriam Imms shared her reflection of the ACC National Conference with the Southern Cluster of the ACC on arrival back in Hobart.

Just back at bedtime on Saturday, 14th September—was I on music? Checked the phone, no; not tomorrow. We seem to be the only two from the south of the state, although friends Deva Sugirtharaj and Walter and Katherine Abetz (from North Tasmania) were there too. A fairly costly trip with our airfares, so it was suggested that those of us who may feel a little dubious about the travelling may SEND someone else! Young and lively, if we can find one! There's a challenge – let's look around.

So I am sharing some of the highlights for me, at least. By no means a formal report – just some words and happenings that stay with me.

Going to Paradise is for later on, but Paradise Point, Queensland, was attainable and lovely. A smiling face at the airport, beautiful accommodation with Bruce and Daphne Harris (a number of members were billeted), and we arrived at the impressive contemporary church to find the music from the first worship under way – lead guitar, bass guitar, drums (nicely subdued foot-tapping rhythms), two strong lead singers, and an amazing young lady with an harmonica sweet and lilting overhead. *In Christ Alone*, *Father in heaven*, etc. familiar, but updated.

Old friend, Chair Max Champion and earnest secretary Walter Abetz busily kept us on track, the unobtrusive efficiency of Peter Bentley oiling



Max Champion thanking Paradise Point Uniting Church for hosting

the wheels, and then dinner at the Bowls Club, a short step along the road. (We were kept firmly off the gambling section!).

The theme, *Rediscovering Confidence in God's Word*, was introduced with enthusiasm by Rev Greg Pearce from Coromandel Valley Uniting Church. "You will know God is with you!" from Jeremiah 31, proclaiming The Prophetic Word.

Splendid speakers

Rev Dr Noel Due, from the Queensland Lutheran Church, experienced in media work, teaching and pastoral ministry, spoke on 'Word and Spirit in our post-modern world'. The ministry of Jesus Christ goes on, Due explained, he is not a

memory, he is present in our ministry. As we share the gospel of the resurrected Jesus we find the church is the people appropriated by his Word, which sustains us so we "...don't keep reducing our content to the lowest common denominator and letting our light shine in the darkness".

Rev Anne Hibbard held clay in her hand—we are not to mould Scripture to our wishes, but to be moulded ourselves in the ways of Christ. The magnificent prophetic modern hymn was introduced and sung- "Come to the Wedding" when the Church, the Bride of Christ, will come to fulfilment at the end of time. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come..."

Scripture Union sent Eric Swavley to present the *E100 Challenge*—all

about re-engaging with the Bible. Surveys reveal that 25% of active Christians do not actually read the Bible regularly! These flexible, achievable and group-friendly studies are now available, through 100 segments, well organised and supported with various add-ons.

To those of us with Methodist DNA in our veins it was a delight to sit at the feet of Rev Dr Glen O'Brien, Senior Lecturer in Church History at Sydney College of Divinity, and Head of Humanities at the Booth College. (Glen is employed by the Salvation Army, which expects serious study from its leaders in this day).

His assignment to us was to speak on the "Use and Misuse of John Wesley on the Authority of the Scripture".

This is a serious scholar of Wesley—I cannot do justice to all he opened to us, but this address will no doubt be in a future edition of the *ACCatalyst*.

He picked up pearls from John Wesley's *Preface to his Sermons* and with passionate, quiet intensity read to a rapt, still audience:-

"...To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts ... of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air.

"I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments more, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safely on that happy shore.

"God himself has condescended to teach the way. For that very end he came from Heaven. He has written it down in a book. O give me that book!

"At any price give me the book of God. I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. (A man of one book).

"Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone, only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to Heaven."

Note well: John was also a very scholastic Oxford-educated Fellow... "of finest classical taste, liberal and manly sentiments, with a turn for wit and humour." (a contemporary comment).



Paradise Point Uniting Church "reaching out with the the love, compassion and grace of Christ".

The reports

Some may find the reports tedious, but in these are strengths, as we appoint many people to consider important matters on our behalf. Most were already written and pre-read and a great deal of effort across the country is involved – Prayer Network, Doctrine and Theology, Social Responsibility, Care for the Creation, Youth ACC, and Emerging Leaders, Discipleship and Evangelism, Cross Cultural Commission, etc. It was good to see faces speaking to these topics and to bring questions. Thank you all.

State groups met under Poinciana trees like us, to discuss local affairs.

ACC National Chair Max Champion, of St John's Waverley, gave a comprehensive 'final' report outlining for us the role of EMU (Evangelical Members of Uniting Church), evolving to Reforming Alliance, and in 2006 to ACC. A standing ovation honoured his work as the National Chair. Max also addressed the conference on Scripture in the Basis of Union- Evangelical, Charismatic and Liberal Suspicions. (See the *ACCatalyst* in 2014).

Leadership

There were significant changes to the National Council leadership with Rev Dr Max Champion stepping out of the national director and national chair positions. Max will convene the Doctrine and Theology Commission and continue to be a member of the national council. Rev Shane Kammernmann was elected as the new national chair, Peter Bentley was appointed as the National Director, and Rev Rod James was elected the new secretary. The new leadership intends to function as a team in order to lead the movement into the next important period of time.

Most heart-wrenching of all was the report of Rev Lulu Senituli and Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki of the Cross Cultural Commission. These gracious men are dismayed at the lack of clarity and positive articulation of the position of the U.C.A. on some matters of doctrine that continue to have an impact on migrant-ethnic congregations. "We are brought into the confusion of the western world. Where does the UCA stand on matters of doctrine?" they asked. Our leaders are educated men and resent being pressured as if they are ignorant. We were asked to pray without ceasing for those holding to our declared faith according to the eternal scriptures.

Sharing in Holy Communion:

Always the most moving experience of all, as we come, "a sinful sort of saintly band", to leave our cares and fears at the Cross, and walk away in victory over the world and its devices.

We came away with copies of the excellent DVD *Marriage, The Pro-found Mystery* prepared by our keen younger group in the Discipleship and Evangelism Commission; seven half-hour presentations. Thanks be to God for time and talent freely given, so keep these people in your prayers, too.

Miriam Imms, Kettering, Tasmania and member of the Southern Cluster.

PS. Suggestions for the 2015 location included Western Australia and Tasmania! How about that!

Further information about the 2013 conference are available at www.confessingcongregations.com

The 2014 ACC AGM and Conference will be held at Naamaroo Conference Centre in Chatswood in Sydney: 11-13 September.

Meet the new national Chair Rev Shane Kammerrmann

It's a great privilege for me to have been elected national chair of the ACC at the recent AGM. I come to this position with mixed feelings, joy and anxiety about just what it will be like, but with a strong sense of call. It's a time of generational change, and I am really glad for the encouragement of those who have been around from before I was born! Please don't go away, we still need you!

Taking up this position has caused me to think back over the recent years in which I have come to be more involved in this very significant movement within the UCA, and I would like to share some of that reflection as a way to introduce myself to those who don't know me.

I was born in 1971 while my parents were wheat and sheep farmers near Wudinna in South Australia. They came to faith in Christ during a time of revival in the 1960's and then took up ministry in the Methodist and then Uniting Church from the mid 1970's. This is part of my rich heritage in faith.

A number of significant ministers and others have been part of my coming to maturity in faith and responding to the call of God to serve as minister of the Gospel. Many of them have been Uniting Church people soaked in the Scriptures and overflowing with the grace of Jesus Christ. The Uniting Church has been my Christian home for all my life.

My heritage of faith and my sense of call to ministry in the UCA have always been strong, despite the grass sometimes appearing greener over the fence. I have also had a long association with New Creation Teaching Ministries, which had been a most significant teaching ministry for me since my early teens. Many of the teachers there were Uniting Church people.

I left school after completing year 11 and entered an apprenticeship as a boilermaker/welder. After completing my trade I farmed for a year



Shane Kammerrmann addresses the 2012 ACC National conference

My heritage of faith and my sense of call to ministry in the UCA have always been strong

with one of my uncles, and then returned to a job based in Adelaide, which took me over much of Australia, installing industrial refrigeration equipment.

In 1997, dressed in my blue-collar work clothes, I hesitantly took a mature age entry examination in order to begin full time theological study. I passed and then completed a 4 yr B.Th at Luther Seminary in Adelaide as a private student. During my studies, I met and married Sarah, and we began a family together. We now have four beautiful daughters under 12.

After completing a B.Th I still had a strong sense of call to the UCA, and that was further tested during a period of discernment, and by continuing to be part of the church-planting group from Coromandel Valley UCA. I then undertook about two and a half years of study and formation at Parkin Wesley College. I was a student minister at Westbourne Park Uniting Church at Mitcham, and took up my first placement as a ministry intern based at Balaklava in 2005. There were half a dozen congregations in that parish, and I owe a tremendous deal of gratitude for the encouragement received during those early years of ministry.

During this time I was a member of the 2006 National Assembly in Brisbane, and attended the gathering at which the ACC began. Largely unaware and uninvolved in both

continued page 13

Max Champion retires as Chair of the ACC

Resolution and
Tribute passed by
standing ovation
at the 2013 AGM



Max Champion has been a well-informed and powerful voice for theological orthodoxy in the UCA and beyond for many years. He has succeeded in holding together a variety of groups with differing aims, but sharing commitment to Catholic, Reformed and Evangelical convictions.

He was a key person in the founding of the Reforming Alliance, after it was clear that the Assembly and Synod leaders intended to ignore the theologi-

cal concerns of several thousand members, many of whom left the UCA as a result. When the Assembly moved into further change in 2006, he contributed significantly to the formation of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. This organisation provided a context for congregations, as well as individuals, to uphold the doctrinal heritage embodied in the *Basis of Union* and the *Constitution*, while remaining within the UCA. If the Assembly's holding together oppos-

ing views later meant permanent departure from our theological heritage, the ACC provided a framework for congregations nationally to continue their confession of faith and proclamation of the Gospel, while at the same time doing effective local ministry.

Dr Champion has travelled and spoken widely in Australia and beyond on behalf of the ACC's confessional convictions, seeking always to uphold the Basis of Union. This work has helped to



SHANE *from page 11*

EMU and RA, I had a sense that something big was happening, I remember returning home feeling both shell-shocked from the Assembly, and somewhat unsure just what this new ACC would mean for me and the Church I was about to be ordained in. A member of the 2009 Assembly also, I had the opportunity to engage in this significant council of the Church—again, a memorable experience.

The early days of the ACC were also quite memorable for me with visits from Rod James and Max Champion as the ACC got off the ground and as congregations, including my own, worked through the process of becoming members. It was during this time I began to understand the nature of a confessing movement, and the confusion that some had and perhaps still have about what it is or is not. With great joy and sometimes deep concern, I witnessed the coming together of groups within the UCA who were quite different in many ways, but one in the Gospel.

The confessing movement, as we became more aware with time, is not a glorious and victorious group who are out to fix the church. Nor is it a political lobby group building and using power in order to win the day. Lord have mercy! We are those who in the joy and security of the faithfulness of God, made known clearly and consistently through the holy scriptures, willingly and boldly stand firm in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of the father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It's a staying, not a leaving movement. A movement that confesses the God of the scriptures, and his winning of us by his love and mercy alone.

In 2010 we moved to Ingham in North Qld, and have enjoyed being part of a very different presbytery than we had experienced before. We have now met many more wonderful Uniting Church people. I believe the Lord has brought us to this point in history, and from here trust that he will guide and lead the church into this next important period of time, for the sake of the Gospel.

Please pray for the ACC national council and the conveners of the various commissions as we seek to bear witness to the truth, sharing in the ministry of our Lord.

Blessings in Jesus' name, Shane.

create a national sense of confessional unity within the UCA and sister churches with similar concerns. Though this opportunity has led to major professional growth and wide recognition of his gifts for leadership, for which he is very grateful to God, the personal cost has also been heavy for him and Ruth.

Nearing retirement age has led Dr Champion to believe that the time is ripe to pass the Presidency over to someone from a young-

er generation, thereby ensuring continuation of our confessional convictions. He will continue to give theological leadership and share in the National Council.

We owe him a great debt of gratitude and pray that God will continue to bless his ministry and his family.

Prepared by Professor Ian Breward

Adopted 14 September 2013

Picture: Dr Champion chairing the ACC National Council

‘I continue to be humbled by my contact with many members’

- Peter Bentley reports to the ACC Annual General Meeting.

ACC Office and National Council

Peter Bentley reported on his overall duties, including co-ordinating the work of the ACC and the National Council, the *ACCatalyst* magazine, speaking engagements, and general administration, including the conference. Peter “acknowledged the extraordinary leadership of our Chair, the oversight of the Council officers and members, and Commission and Board convenors who have provided wonderful honorary service. I continue to be humbled by my contact with many members, either through meeting or via letters and forms including words of encouragement and advice of their prayers for the ACC.” Walter Abetz reported on the work of the Council in following up matters from the last AGM, highlighting the work on marriage and the work of the Commissions.

Peter Bentley

ACC Treasurer’s Report and Board of Management update

The Treasurer highlighted the wonderful giving of members during the last financial year (general donations provide over 50% of the income for the ACC). An expenditure budget at \$180,000 was set for 2013/2014, and all reporting arrangements were finalised. The Treasurer particularly thanked the Management Board – Ron Clough and the late Kevin Fielke, and more recently Shirley James (ACC SA Treasurer), for their wise guidance and commitment to the ACC during this past year.

Colin Adam
ACC Treasurer

ACC Board of Communication

The Review Committee continues

proofing and oversight of material and publications.

The helpful and dedicated work of Anne Weeks and Pat Noller in this area is especially acknowledged. *Media and Public Relations:* Peter Bentley and Max Champion, with the help of Owen Davis with his email service have kept track of church issues and reporting and Max has often commented on significant areas of concern in the ACC magazine.

ACCatalyst: The Magazine was published in August 2012, November 2012, February 2013, April 2013 and July 2013. We are indebted to our editor John Sandeman for his continued work along with his other significant responsibilities.

Websites: *ACC Confessing Site and Uniting Views site.* The main ACC website (confessingcongregations.com) has been slightly revised to hopefully make it easier for people to find and access the resources produced by the ACC, especially those produced by the Discipleship and Evangelism Commission. The Uniting Views site has also been revised to focus on current issues.

There has been limited use of our Facebook page, though the annual conference provided a key time for sharing, especially of photos.

ACC Discipleship and Evangelism Commission

The conference viewed a part of the new Marriage DVD and Derek Schiller outlined the background of the DVD highlighting that the presentation was primarily proclamational and not apologetic. “There will not be bullet-proof arguments but rather saying what is! It will not

seek to justify our position but state it in the power of the Holy Spirit. A question is: Will this DVD reflect the theology of the ACC? The problem will be that people will express their theology in their own words. There can be no guarantee that every word will be in ‘perfect order’! The DVD cannot be edited by the national council!” Those contributing include the members of the D & E Commission: Derek Schiller (narrator), Deane Meatheringham, Simon Dent and Jonathan Button. There are testimonies from married couples of 7, 12, 24, 50 years, as well as unmarried people and youth (from Waikerie Uniting Church, SA).

Rev Derek Schiller, Convenor

ACC Ecumenical Commission

The Commission (through the officers) has continued informal contact with a number of heads of churches and groups following the UnitingJustice submissions to the same-sex marriage inquiry and the aged care bill. Heads of churches receive the ACC magazine as well as selected other ecumenical and interdenominational groups.

ACC Prayer Network

Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus Christ.

It continues to be an honour to serve our heavenly father in this capacity as National Prayer Coordinator.

Though I have not been able to develop the prayer network team in the form it has been in the past, in many ways, I believe, it has been a blessing in disguise in that the National Council has become the National Prayer Network.



Paradise Point Uniting Church worship. The letters spell "In Christ all things are held together".

Peter Bentley

This is important as the 'business' of the church cannot be understood or done independently of our understanding of prayer. Our biblical and theological engagement within the church and with the wider community "starts in the worship of God". (Zizioulas p.1 *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*). As St. Paul says, "in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil 4: 6).

The monthly Prayer Diary is made up of prayers from and by the national council members from the various states. I thank members of the National Council for their regular contribution to our Prayer Diary. If you would like something included in the monthly prayer diary, please feel free to email me at any time.

Our terms of reference as stated on our website are:

- To pray for the work and mission of the ACC within the UCA
- To encourage congregations to be a people of prayer and fasting so that together we may discern God's will for the ACC
- To establish prayer as a central activity of the ACC

Please continue to uphold the ACC in your prayers at home and in your various congregations.

Grace and peace
Hedley Fihaki

ACC State Movements

New South Wales Movement Chairperson's Annual Report 2013

The NSW committee has sought to facilitate meetings for its members across NSW that will encourage them in ministry and in confessing their faith. To this end a well-at-

Stories of ... Congregations getting on with ministry: evangelism, discipling, and caring—what a great encouragement.

tended NSW members' meeting was held in October 2012 at Bexley UC. We were grateful for the generous hospitality of the Bexley Congregation. National ACC Chair Rev Dr Max Champion gave two addresses: "Marriage—The Heart of Creation, The Heart of Redemption" and, "A Confessing Voice—Good for Society; Good for the Church". We thank Max for his willingness to travel and speak, and the excellent content of his talks.

National Executive Officer Peter Bentley has spoken a number of times at NSW regional gatherings, most notably in the Hunter at events organised by the Hunter Cluster.

The Synod of NSW/ACT met in April 2013. Much of the business of the Synod was taken up with determining how to do ministry within the Synod with dwindling resources amidst major Synod re-structuring. Nevertheless there were some highlights, including video stories of congregations getting on with ministry: evangelism, discipling,

and caring—what a great encouragement! It was hoped that there might be an ACC NSW AGM and seminar to be held during the Synod, to cater for non-metropolitan ACC members and other interested persons attending Synod. Unfortunately, the Synod timetable prevented any opportunity for a protracted meeting, but about a dozen people from across NSW met together for a short time of fellowship & prayer.

In partnership with members of the EL250 Network, Evergreen will be launched on 19th October 2013 offering congregation leaders an opportunity for refreshment and encouragement through a day-workshop focusing on renewal, evangelism and church planting. Evergreen 1 will feature a keynote speaker with expertise in these fields, along with times of worship, Bible-teaching input, and a Q&A Panel. It is anticipated that Evergreen will become an annual event.

Evergreen, along with the Oxygen (KCC) conference in August 2014, and the hosting of the 2014 ACC national conference in Sept. 2014, will hopefully provide substantial opportunities for NSW ACC members to be strengthened in the faith we confess.

My appreciation goes to the other members of the Committee: Peter Chapman (Secretary), Ngan Ha Le, Fatai Slender, Alton Bowen, Mele Fakahua-Ratcliffe, Grahame Abrahams, Bruce Fairhall & Colin Seymour for their fellowship and service. We are indebted to Peter Bentley for his attendance, insight and input at our state meetings.

Ian Weeks
Chairperson ACC NSW

ANNUAL REPORTS

Queensland ACC State Committee Annual Report

We were delighted to have Peter Bentley with us in April this year. Peter delivered a well-received address on the importance of the Confessing Movement for the church today. Attendance at these talks was encouraging on the Sunshine Coast and also in Bayside Brisbane.

We are indebted to Lloyd Williams and Lu Senituli for their energy in convening these events. Col Shenfield co-ordinated Peter's visit to Paradise Point on the Gold Coast and Peter was able to liaise further with the Paradise Point Church leadership about our forthcoming ACC Annual conference.

Col Shenfield and the leadership at Paradise Point have provided strong support and leadership in making arrangements for our National Conference and we are grateful for the resources they have put at our disposal for this conference.

At the local level the Brisbane Southside ACC fellowship group continues to meet on a monthly basis and Denis Conomos co-ordinates the group. Denis keeps the group informed about ACC activities and we always pray for the work of our confessing movement. This year we have been studying a collection of essays under the title *These Last Days* and are discussing the challenge of witnessing in our culture, resurrection and other eschatological themes.

Our group on the Sunshine Coast recognises that in Haggai's day the people were only a small remnant, and their temple work was "like nothing" (Haggai 2.3). Still the word of the Lord from the prophet was not to give up but stay on task for God who was with them and would give them both short term successes and ultimate, glorious victory. That message gives us encouragement on the Sunshine Coast. "Be strong you people...", declares the Lord, "and work. For I am with you" (Haggai 2.4).

The State committee has made renewed contact with the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC). Allan Moore visited our committee and we are interested to explore whether we can collaborate with EFAC in Queensland or the emerging movement of Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

Ivan Kirk

Chairperson, ACC State Committee.

South Australian Movement ACC Annual Report

2013 has been a year of highs and lows for the SA movement. Following the death of our SA Convenor Les Knowing last year, our faithful SA Treasurer, Kevin Fielke, died earlier this year after a battle with cancer. Kevin had been treasurer of EMU SA and then of ACC SA since its inception. We give thanks for his tireless work, both in SA and also for the National Conferences.

These losses, together with the illness of our Secretary, Rev Don Purdey, have resulted in a shortage of leadership in SA. Shirley James has enthusiastically taken up the role of Treasurer and has also joined the ACC Board of Management.

The Emerging Leaders' Award weekend was held again in February and 17 young people attended, 14 from SA and 3 from NSW. Once again this weekend proved valuable in the lives of these young people, a fact to which some of them enthusiastically testified at the ELA Reunion held in August.

Don Purdey has written a detailed manual for ELA which is available to future planning groups both in SA and in other states. SA is planning to hold the third ELA in early 2015

The word of the Lord from the prophet was not to give up but stay on task for God.

Once again the Robert Iles Memorial Lecture was held in July and attended by over 200 people. Rev. Prof. David Wilkinson from Durham University who spoke on "Apologetics in a Media Dominated World".

The ACC Discipleship and Evangelism Commission has been working hard this year producing a Study DVD on Marriage. This project involved a significant number of SA ministers, couples and young people, and was ably produced by Derek and Jodie Schiller.

Rod James (acting Convenor)

ACC Tasmanian Movement Annual Report

The Tasmanian movement has functioned to the point of someone from the state executive visiting each of

Tribute to Robyn Painter

The National Council would especially like to acknowledge the service and commitment of Robyn Painter (nee McKay) who retired from the National Council of the ACC after many years as a strong advocate in the evangelical movement in the UCA.

From the early days of the Reforming Alliance, through to the foundation of the ACC Robyn has made a lasting contribution through her forthright, courageous and good-humoured manner. Council members will especially miss her being at the annual face-to-face meeting.

Her marriage to Graeme Painter was a special highlight, and Robyn and Graeme provide an excellent testimony and contribution on the new ACC DVD on Marriage. Robyn continues to support ACC through her writing in ACCatalyst and ministry in South Australia.

Also concluding his service as a Council member this year is Rev Dr Peter Davis. Peter provided an excellent help and link, especially with NSW ACC events through Wesley Institute. Peter will continue to contribute to ACC through the Caring for Creation Working Group.

the congregations or cluster groups that make up the ACC activity in this state. There is a cluster group based in Hobart (mainly south of Hobart) and a group based in the Launceston Scottsdale area, and with the congregations of Ulverstone, Shalom-Sprent, Wilmot, Sheffield and St Helens make up the Tasmanian movement.

We have encouraged our members to lobby Government against the same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia legislation. This legislation has stalled at the moment.

Many of our members are aged and find it difficult to come to state-wide gatherings. However the commitment to pray for each other and for change in the wider UCA is real.

Let us always remember that 'all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us'.

Yours in Christ

Keeton Miles, Chairman

Word and Spirit

Authority and Interpretation in a Postmodern World

Part two of a resource paper for the ACC Annual Conference 2013

Rev Noel S. Due (D.Min.)

Regional Resourcing Pastor

The Lutheran Church of Australia

Pontius Pilate: A Very Ancient Model of a Postmodern Governor

In the light of [Due's commentary on Postmodernism in part one], Pilate's question, "What is truth?" sounds surprisingly contemporary.

His Greco-Roman pragmatism had no more tolerance for the truth than ours. Like us, he subjugated even his own conscience to the political, economic and philosophic demands of the hour.

The irony, not lost on the initial readers of John's gospel, was that the Truth stood in front him. Pilate—born of the flesh but not of the Spirit—couldn't recognise him; but unlike Nicodemus, he didn't linger to find out. His political agenda was too important; he stumbled over the Stumbling Stone.

The Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offence has a face and a name. It's not just that we didn't like Jesus' philosophy, we despised *him*. Surely, the Lord of heaven must be clothed with enormous might; cosmic truth must be elegant; kingship must be regal; sovereignty must have the clout to compel submission; and leadership must be Machiavellian.

Humility, especially in the Greco-Roman world, wasn't virtuous. Little wonder Pilate was perplexed by this bedraggled man before him.

Yet the glory (and the revelation) lies in the hiddenness. Jesus is eternal, the Truth of God, expressed in a person, not in a philosophical proposition. God so loved the world he gave us his Son—the way to God, the truth of God and the life of God in human flesh. God imparted *himself* to us, in the Word, born of the Spirit through

the womb of Mary. The Bible, and all the doctrines that arise from it, don't save us. The man under the crown of thorns was God; the man crucified between two thieves was God; and the man interceding for us now in heaven is God. He is the Truth, to which we simply point, like John the Baptist, in the midst of our generation, as we preach Jesus in all the scriptures.

But there's more. We don't worship a dead hero. Through the incarnate word, by whom the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, God *continues* to impart himself to us. He does so through the means of grace. There is no other truth than the truth as it is in Jesus, and as he comes to us in the word and sacraments he keeps renewing us in the spirit of our minds, cupping our face in his hands to look at his, turning us away from the idols which blind us. He washes our ears with the water of the Spirit, bends down to feed us with bread of heaven and carries us in his son's arms as our shepherd.

We know him in his actions, of which we are the blessed beneficiaries. He speaks. Jesus' words to dead and decaying Lazarus are but the speech-act prefiguring his subsequent post-ascension ministry. The voice of the Lord of life still raises the dead, so that a resurrected humanity might share in his glory.

As the truth of God, Jesus is the only faithful and true witness in the cosmos. God is his own true witness. The idols bear false witness to God, in a hostile courtroom. The accuser stands ready, filling the world with adversarial chatter and slandering the creator with every sulphurous breath. Aligned with him and captive in sin, we cannot bear true witness to God or to our own situation. Professing to be wise, we've become fools. God alone is true, while all men and women are liars.

In a universe of deceitful and corrupt witnesses, Christ alone is the faithful and true witness to his father. Whereas God's chosen servants, Israel and the church, are partial and faulty witnesses, the True Israel and the Chosen One bears full and faultless testimony. He speaks to us and to the world, communicating solely what he has

The direct and constant experience of the miraculous serves as a means of experiential proof texting. But when the signs cease and the adrenalin levels drop to normal, the church becomes depressed.

heard from his father. So if his gospel is to be preached, *he* must preach it—and though he does so with the language and accents of countless heralds, *his* sheep hear *his* voice. This is a constant miracle. In the gospel, Christ declares and prolongs his present grace to each generation, as a *preached* word. The aural nature of it is irreducible, and our silence in preaching inexcusable.

In the Bible, the author is not dead, truth isn't a category error and the gospel is not subject to spin of any sort. We are not self-defining creatures and we can't reshape the world to our own wills. That way, madness lies. We are owned. The proclamation of the gospel is the means by which that ownership is affirmed, and the usurper's claims denied. Little wonder it is hotly contested.

Authority: Word and Spirit in Inseparable Union

The sands of postmodern relativism have been encroaching against the parapets for a long time. Where the church hasn't succumbed in an act of total cultural capitulation, it has fled for refuge to bastions of certainty. These have trended along two lines: the philosophical and the phenomenological. Each serves as an apologetic, but neither fully satisfies—we still hear the wind whistling through the palisade.

For example, on the one hand authority has become vested in the text itself. In reaction to classical liberalism's denuding the scriptures of divine authorship, we've sought certainty in doctrines connected to the text on the page. These have also served to define the parameters of evangelicalism—theological blood has been spilled over words such as inerrancy, infallibility, verbal and plenary inspiration. At its worst, different types of biblical literature (poetry, narrative, prophetic oracle, apocalyptic, hortatory, etc.) have been trimmed to fit literalism's Procrustean bed. Or, we have placed excessive faith in evidential apologetics, as though the reluctance for people to believe in Jesus is primarily a rational one. Mustering enough logic, with enough force, to counteract the critique of secularism, makes us feel more secure.

At the other extreme, authority has been vested in subjective experience. The direct and constant experience of the miraculous serves as a means of experiential proof-texting. But when the signs cease and the adrenalin levels drop to normal, the church becomes depressed.

Something in all this reverberates with Paul's words

about Jews seeking signs and Greeks searching for wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22), all the while ignoring the sign of Jonah and the wisdom from above.

Christianity has never failed to recognise the interdependence of Word and Spirit. Historic formulations of the doctrine of holy scripture were always forged with reference to the Spirit, who not only inspired the human authors, but also continues his work by enlightening the readers. The Author (no apology to Barthes) of scripture is present on both sides of the equation. Only in this way is the Bible self-authenticating. To those who have the Spirit, the Word speaks, but apart from that it remains a dead letter.

The doctrine of scripture is but an analogy of the organic union between Word and Spirit. In the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Word and Spirit are inseparable in their operations. While they're distinct they're never disparate, a point that had to be hotly defended during the Reformation on more than one front. We neglect that fact at our peril.

What's of critical importance is that the gospel can only be preached in Word-Spirit unity. This is so, not simply because of the gospel's origins (Who is the subject of the proclamation?) but its effects (what God accomplishes in the gospel). What God does in the gospel he can do in no other way.

God's Authoritative Metanarrative

With no king in Israel each person did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6).

In a world full of mini-narratives (my personal, self-constructed reality) in which pragmatism holds the floor, we find ourselves in familiar territory. The prophets were God's pastoral response, since through their ministry God rooted all the mini-narratives of Israel (including its idolatry) in the metanarrative of his salvation-history.

On a pastoral level we are called to serve as interpretive guides for wanderers in the land of Nod; as they've been thrown off the merry-go-round we're given the healing gifts of Word and Spirit (especially in the gospel, preached both aurally and in the sacraments) to bind up the broken hearted. But the Word is also the light of the world, and the darkness cannot overcome it. It shows a path the world cannot see. The lamp of Israel (i.e. the Messiah-King) is the light unto our feet.

The apostolic calling is that of the gospel alone—Paul, for example, knew his authority lay not in his office or his person, but in his gospel (Galatians 1:8). We're called to participate in that same apostolic ministry, "...to open their eyes so that they can turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, and receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are made holy by faith in me." (Act 26:18, CEB) God's metanarrative dispels the darkness and our pastoral ministry is both prophetic and apostolic to the degree it is gospel centred.

Just as in the first century, the twenty-first century needs more gospel not less. Through the apostolic preaching of the cross, God's salvific metanarrative revealed the king, not just in Israel but for the nations. His claims of lordship—preached by a little flock of no worldly power and having no institutional status—overthrew

POST POST MODERN

kingdoms, recast cultures, and created a new community. Everything the apostles said was counter-intuitive and every manifestation of the Spirit's life counter-cultural. The gospel re-shaped the whole world. Do we believe that this is still the case? Or have our hope and expectancy sunk to such low levels that we've become mere functionaries in our office, more cynical than prophetic? Have we lost hope in the gospel, and have we turned to something else that "works" more effectively? Perhaps the bludgeoning force of church politics has reduced gospel confidence to feeble vestiges of courage? Do we despise our weakness—either in our propensity to despair or our proclivity to run to quick-fix solutions—and thereby deny God's power?

The apostolic preaching of the cross was (and is) God's declaration to the world of his metanarrative. Through it, he defines us, human history and the cosmos by revealing himself. This revelation is transformative encounter, which comes with certain markers of its authority. Let me suggest six:

- First, it is counter-intuitive. It denies what the Flesh affirms and affirms what the Flesh denies. It is not faithless reason, nor unreasoning faith, but faith-transformed reason. Of itself, human reason stands as much in need of redemption as the rest of our faculties. Mind, emotion, will, conscience, and the body all need a resurrection.

Only the Spirit can do this, through the Word. Until such happens, the gospel remains foolishness. Even in the regenerate the battle is strong, which is why the church always needs the means of grace, *in their fullness*.

- Second, it is counter-cultural. The culture of the gospel is that of the trinity. Its citizenship is in heaven and the City of God is its homeland. The gospel alone allows the fruit of the divine life to be expressed in human society. How? Through participation in the persons of the Godhead. By contrast, the dominant culture will always be informed by Babylon (in the theological sense)—the expression of the unholy trinity of the dragon, beast and false prophet. For this reason all cultures will manifest hostility to the gospel, to a greater or lesser degree. As at Antioch or Ephesus, the grace of God is seen in the cultural meltdown that takes place as the gospel puts to death that which doesn't belong to the triune life and raises up that which does.

- Third, it is of the Spirit, not the flesh. *Sarx* and *pneuma* represent two completely different worlds. The flesh is not the body, any more than the Spirit is to be reduced to the soul. The flesh loves religion, spirituality, the law and righteousness; just ask Saul the Pharisee. Never let the flesh seduce you into thinking dissipation is its worst work.

Its most deadly effort is striving for righteousness. By contrast, only the Spirit can produce *his* fruit. The flesh, straining to produce an approximation of them, ends up in the opposite extreme. Only the gospel can at one and the same time denude the flesh of its power and reproduce the Spirit's life in the believing community, which is why Galatians is such an important letter for our day.

- Fourth, the gospel alone secures us in the hope of God. Hope and promise, Word and Spirit—these are continually alive connections in the pastoral ministry of the apostles.

Covert deism and simple pragmatism steal hope from the church and replace it with a counterfeit gem. Only the gospel will allow us to seek a city whose maker and

The apostolic preaching of the cross was (and is) God's declaration to the world of his metanarrative.

Through it, he defines us, human history and the cosmos by revealing himself. This revelation is transformative encounter.

builder is God, to count but loss all that the flesh strives to gain, and to know who our true treasure is. In many senses the church is in a crisis of hope. We cannot allow it to be turned back onto its own resources to save itself.

- Fifth, the message of the cross—so foolish in the worlds' eyes—must again become the pole star of our preaching. The cross is not elegant, powerful, compelling, or sophisticated.

It's a bloody mess. The pressure to be ashamed of Christ and him crucified is as strong now as ever, and for this reason the apologetic of our good deeds (which our works of mercy have largely become) risks demagnetising our compass. Eventually we may be nothing more than a series of service organisations having no connection to our *raison d'être*. Let us preach Christ in all the scriptures without shame or fear. Our apostolic authority rests on his gospel alone.

- Sixth, it takes seriously the *solae* of the Reformation: *sola Scriptura*; *sola gratia*; *sola fide*; *solo Christo*; and *sola Deo gloria*. By Scripture alone; by grace alone; by faith alone; through Christ alone; glory to God alone. These are mutually interdependent and mutually interpretive. In every instance, the *alone* bit is critical. No one at the time of the Reformation rejected the need for faith, the prominence of grace, the importance of the Bible, or the significance of Christ. But let the *alone* ring out, and you'll discover where faith is really placed. The *solae* form the cutting edge of apostolic gospel proclamation.

In view of all these things, may I make some simple suggestions for pastoral ministry today? Preach the whole counsel of God in the scriptures i.e. traverse the range of biblical literature, deal with each according to its genre, and immerse ourselves and our congregations in the grand themes of the biblical narrative.

Be convinced of the value of proclamation, teaching and instruction and seek every opportunity for these to occur.

Devote ourselves to addressing problems of biblical illiteracy and the dumbing down of worship, so that we don't keep reducing our content to the lowest common denominator.

Act as interpretive guides for the wayfaring strangers in whom the Lord's Spirit is already at work. Rejoice in your weakness, and thank God he keeps raking the sandboxes we like to play in. Play better music than the fairground. Ride real horses. And let the light of Jesus shine in the darkness.

Why Apologetics matters in the 21st Century

Rev Dr Robert Brennan

The game mapcrunch.com

2. select "hide location"
3. Unselect whichever countries
4. Click go

As a game it is time consuming, frustrating and definitely not fun!

But consider, on finding yourself in a random location how do you find an airport?

My first attempt put me in Mexico—I couldn't read the street signs, got frustrated and gave up very quickly.

Second time around I was somewhere in Perth. I looked for a major intersection, followed the power lines, the bigger ones. I was near Perth so I headed west. There's an ocean I would have to find sometime. I came across a freeway, um head north, noticing the shadows were on the west sides of cars so it was morning. So I turn around and followed the heavy traffic back toward the centre of Perth. Woohoo, an airport sign. This meant that I back-tracked a fair bit—many clicks later I found the turn off.

I was going to add pictures but it doesn't improve the experience which is almost the same as being lost. It isn't much fun at all. But the point is: how do you choose which direction to go? The game was "find airport". I could have tried to find my sister-in-law's house as she lives in Perth.

Which signposts do you use and why would you use them. "Where are you going?" – said the Cheshire cat to Alice, "if you don't know where you are going then it doesn't really matter which way you go."

Asking which signposts do you use and why would you use them is what apologetics is actually like and Evangelism is closely related. Where is someone? Where are they going? What do they use to guide them on their way?

Apologetics—considering this landmark/signpost
Evangelism—leading them to choose this particular direction.

We try to convince people that Christianity and key elements of the faith should be considered as a person's

own maps and signposts. Evangelism is inviting people not merely to note the signposts but to make them their own goal. McGrath uses a medicine description, where apologetics is like convincing someone that a medicine exists and evangelism is like getting them to take it.

There is a dual role for apologetics to convince those not Christian to consider Christ seriously and to build confidence in the believer. (There is a danger in only doing the second that we end up only preaching to the choir)



Map Crunch screenshot

One of the books I read recently was Sire's *Naming the Elephant*. He talks about the different worldviews that people have in contemporary culture. In his introduction he made a comment which neatly summarised the first section of my doctoral thesis. So I shared it on Facebook. I got three responses that illustrate the need for apologetics and the state of knowledge that we are dealing with.

Sire: "Then I tried to show how deism arose as an erosion of certain key concepts of theism. Deism, as I see it, is not so much a new worldview as what is left of theism when the personality of God is abandoned. Naturalism, then, is a further erosion of deism, retaining its optimism with regard to the autonomy of human reason. Nihilism is what is left of naturalism when it is realized that



exdez/istockphoto.com

human reason, if autonomous, does not have the power to explain nearly so much as was first thought."

My Note: This is a good summary of where I was going with the first chapter of my thesis. There is no such thing as an impersonal all good, all-powerful divine being

I got three interesting responses to this quote on Facebook. One young woman who is doing a master's degree in theology soaked it up like a sponge looking for tools to build her own confidence in her faith and how she shares it. Another friend who is a former teacher and atheist had a very erudite and humorous response quoting an author we both enjoy. I was able to respond with humility and point out that this author operated at a deeper intellectual level than he had realised. The third a long-term congregational leader simply said "you lost me after the first sentence".

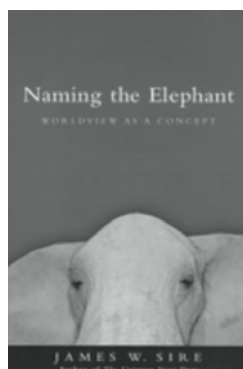
I use this example for a number of reasons. Firstly, the response is a reminder that we are dealing with real people. Ironically the atheist was most familiar with the philosophical terminology.

Secondly, Sire's statement on an intellectual level goes to the heart of where apologetics went in the 20th century and to some degree what had become its shortcomings.

In the 20th century apologetics generally sought to give a clear monolithic account of the rational, scientific account for firstly belief in God in general terms that God is actually a God in personal terms and finally that God is the God of Jesus Christ in specific terms. Its strengths included clear rational case-making, logical thought and disciplined attention to detail.

Its weaknesses included assuming that there exists a monolithic single intellectual template for intellectual discourse (predominantly western European discourse), that people will find themselves somewhere within the assumed belief structure described and most of all that coming to faith is merely a matter of intellectual assent.

There has been a bit of a change during the 20th cen-



ture. Apologetics started the century with the 19th century legacy. That is arguing for a choice between proving Christianity by reason or by grounding in religious emotion/feeling (religious sentiments). A wide-spread intellectual assumption was that reason was sufficient to solve any and all problems.

Apologetics at the start of the 20th century argued for the superiority of Christianity over the world religions (sic) Tomoko Masuzawa's book argues as titled *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (for universalism read also colonialism/racism.) There was a move to defensiveness in the face of modern scepticism as outlined in the more "traditional" approaches to apologetics that I will detail shortly. In recent decades there has been development in moving apologetics from being merely defensive and personal for believers' confidence to arguing a place for the serious consideration of the Christian faith in the public sphere, e.g. the political movement in the USA, development of multiple public theology centres. More recent developments have shown a spread of approaches, each of which has strengths and weaknesses.

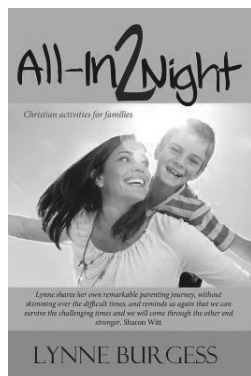
The great hope of the gospel is that no one comes from a starting point that is too far away to reach Jesus. Apologetics is about giving the invitation to seriously consider this faith. The key question is what tools move people to do this? I would argue that there are many of which intellectual argument is one albeit important means.

The foundation of apologetics is prayer. This truth is often overlooked by writers. If the Christian assertion is that the faith that is offered is grounded in the personal nature of the relationship between humanity and God, then they dare not overlook this important relational aspect of their faith without putting to the lie all they point to.

The first step in apologetics should always be to find out where someone is at. What are the things that matter to them, how does their culture/subculture work, how they understand how they ought to live and what is important to them and the people around them?

Part two of this paper will be published in the first ACCatalyst in 2014

Bringing your children to Jesus



Review of All-In2Night
Lynne Burgess
Published by Even Before Publishing/Wombat books
140 pages

This volume is a sequel to this author's earlier publication *All-In Night*, in which Lynne Burgess promotes a regular night each week where the whole family stays home and participates in a special activity with a treat (usually a dessert) to follow. The book

is based on a concept that the author has actually put into practice with her own family of five children. In the dedication, Lynne Burgess writes that the "book is for parents who want their children to experience a relationship with Jesus so they can live a bold and victorious life, no matter what the circumstances".

There are 40 activities involving an amazing array of what I would call psychological variables: self-esteem, courage, loneliness, patience, empathy, confidence, self-sabotaging, revenge, enthusiasm and so on. For each topic, the author provides a purpose so that the aim is clear to the parent who is leading the activity. These nights are not held in school holidays so that both the parents and the children have a break: hence, the 40 weeks. It is interesting to note that the author reports

that her adult children who have left home still come back on Monday nights for All-in night.

For the topic courage, the purpose is "to help your child to develop courage so that they have the ability to face difficulties"; for priorities in life, the purpose is "to teach your child to understand priorities in their life and that priorities can change through different phases of life"; for pride, the purpose is "to explain what unhealthy pride is and to teach your children how to deal with it". The purpose is generally followed by an explanation of the concept under consideration.

There is often a Scripture verse or verses to be shared with children to help them understand the biblical basis of the lesson. For self-esteem, the verses are Psalm 139: 13-14; for eating healthy food, the verse is 1 Cor 6: 19; for patience, the verses are James 1: 2-5; for fear, Joshua 1: 9; for worry, Proverbs 12: 25. I was surprised at some of the topics that didn't have a biblical verse, and was not sure why. Examples included 'unhealthy pride', 'humility', 'jealousy', 'guilt and shame', 'criticism' and 'God has a unique purpose for your life'.

I think this book could be very useful for families of primary-school children, combining as it does, fun and serious learning about oneself and others. It is important to remember that these characteristics are produced in young people over years of stable, loving parenting and not in a single session focusing on a particular characteristic.

Patricia Noller

PRAYER

Greetings all,

Members on e-mail receive the monthly prayer diary, and there are regular prayer items. We value your support of the prayer ministry. If you have prayer requests please send to the prayer network convenor, Rev Dr Hedley Fihaki: h.fihaki@confessingcongregations.com

For 2014

- Please pray for ACC Task Group that is facilitating the ACC work for the Assembly conversation on marriage Members: Max Champion, Ross Carter, Clive Skewes, Jonathan Button, Shane Kammermann, Lulu Senituli, Anne Hibbard, Katherine Abetz, Peter Bentley.
- Planning for the 2014 Conference in NSW

Each magazine we will list ACC congregations, groups and clusters

in a state for you to pray for

- This month pray for Tasmania—see their annual report

Each month Hedley also provides a devotional reflection and comment.

Loving people we don't know?

(from September 2013)

Conventional wisdom today says that we can only love someone once we get to 'know' them. This is what Thomas Aquinas meant when he said that "one can love only what one knows, since love comes from knowledge". Our Bible readings today [1 Sep], however, challenge this way of thinking. Jesus in effect is saying, what is the point of loving only your friends and brothers and sisters and your rich neighbours i.e. the ones you 'know'; anyone can do that. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you

will be blessed" (Luke 14: 13-14). The writer of Hebrews 13: 2 says, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers". What? Show love to someone I don't know? YES! "Once the possibility of knowledge arises as independent of and prior to the act of communion (love) with the other being, it becomes possible for man to dissociate his thought from his act and thus falsify the event of truth. Thus man can become a hypocrite" (p.427 Zizioulas). It is why Jesus himself called the religious leaders hypocrites. The lectionary readings for this week beginning the month of September challenge us to show love to all, not just the ones we 'know' and like. Our Father, by your Spirit, please enable us to love others in the same way you love us.

Grace and Peace – Hedley Fihaki

THIS IS THE ACC

Who we are

Within the Uniting Church context of a very broad range of theology and practice, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations is a nationwide body of congregations and individuals whose vision is confessing the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming the truth, renewing the church.

Our goals include

- Encouraging the confession of Christ according to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, as that faith is described in the UCA's Basis of Union.
- Providing resources, seminars and conferences to build up believers, develop their gifts, and equip them for life, mission and works of service.
- Encouraging Christian believers in earnest prayer through our Prayer Network.
- Encouraging younger members of the Uniting Church in their faith and participation.
- Communicating about current events and issues through our website, our national magazine *ACCatalyst* and local newsletters.

What does ACC do to help you?

The ACC conducts meetings, events and seminars to assist believers to

- grow in their faith and be active in prayer, worship and fellowship
- share their faith and respond to current issues in the church and the world

- develop their congregations as vibrant expressions of the Good News.

- experience God's Word in action through healing broken lives and reconciling relationships.

What we want to do

The objects of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations are:

- 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

Please consider joining the ACC.

Supporting Membership forms are available at: <http://www.confessingcongregations.com/assembly/members/individual-members/>

Membership rates for supporting members: Concession (single or couple): \$40.00 pa. (financial year basis) Full (single or couples): \$70.00 p.a. Contact (02) 9550 5358.

email: accoffice@confessingcongregations.com
mail:

PO Box 968 Newtown NSW 2042

What happens next

- March 18-19: National Council meeting in Sydney

- September 11-13: 2014 AGM and Conference: at Naamaroo Conference Centre, Chatswood NSW

ACC Resources List

All ACC resources (except the DVD resources) are available on the ACC Website: www.confessingcongregations.com

A selection of ACC DVD and video resources including the 2012 Conference presentations are available on vimeo; eg., Max Champion introducing the ACC: <http://vimeo.com/53983980> A limited range of earlier material is still published in Disc form, and all ACC Congregations have received ACC DVD resource material for their use.

Founding Documents

The Charter (2006)

Statement on Sexuality (2006)

Confessing Statement from the Executives of the Reforming Alliance and Evangelical Members within the Uniting Church (EMU) (2006)

ACC Brochures and Statements

ACC Vision and Goals 2007-2017 (2008)

Cross Cultural Commission Statement (2008)

The Church's Social Responsibility (2008)

Theological Declaration (2008)

Theological Declaration: Commentary and Study Guide (2009)

Abortion in the Australian Community (2010)

A Christian Response to Euthanasia and Medically Assisted Suicide (2011)

Marriage: An ACC Statement (2011)

Bible Studies

Bible Study: Mark ISBN 978-0-9804493-0-3

Bible Study: Galatians ISBN 978-0-9804493-1-0

Faith That Works: Studies in the Letter of James ACC Bible Study No. 3. Brian Edgar (2008) ISBN 978-0-9804493-2-7

DVD Resources

Conversations Series

No. 1 Conversations in Discipleship and Evangelism: A Study Guide with DVD (2010) ISBN 978-0-9804493-3-4

No. 2 The Hope of a New Heaven and New Earth: A Study Guide with DVD (2011) ISBN 978-0-9804493-6-5

No. 3 This is Love: A Study Guide with DVD (2012) ISBN 978-0-9804493-8-9

Devotional Booklets

Seeds For Harvesting Vol. 1 (2011)

– Rev Robert Imms ISBN 978-0-9804493-5-8

Seeds For Harvesting Vol. 2 (2012)

– Rev Robert Imms ISBN 978-0-9804493-7-2



Christlike? The Man of Steel

Summer viewing

A Parable on Film

Prodigal (2011, PG)

Levi Layton is 18 years old when he suddenly receives a 'windfall' inheritance and has the opportunity to go off on his own, away from his perceived restrictions of the town, church and especially his father, who is the local pastor.

This contemporary re-telling of The Prodigal Son is a helpful family drama. Adding the church dimension provides a new context and link especially to the Christian film industry in the USA. The film was part of the Faith on Film Sundays during 2013. Available on DVD from Heritage HM (<http://www.movieschangepeople.com>)

Christ Figures in film

Peter Malone in his book *Movie Christs and Anti-Christs* (1990) surveyed a range of symbolic figures as well as considering some historically-based films. It is not surprising that Hollywood uses Jesus imagery and ideas. A striking example is found in the latest Superman film, *Man of Steel* (2013, M), where Superman is profiled in a church and interacts with the priest. The Warner Brothers synopsis of the film is illuminating:

A young boy learns that he has extraordinary powers and is not of this Earth. As a young man, he journeys to discover where he came from and what he was sent here to do. But the hero in him must emerge if he is to save the world from annihilation

and become the symbol of hope for all mankind. Warner even provided notes for pastors and leaders to use in film discussions. A film that should provoke discussion.

In Malone's latest book *Screen Jesus: Portrayals of Christ in Television and Film* (2012) he provides an overview and comment on specific historical portrayals of Jesus that could be a helpful resource for youth leaders and pastors.

Intriguing and Challenging

Heaven with a Gun (1969, M)

The saying 'only in America' comes to mind with this film starring Glenn Ford as Pastor Jim who comes to small town Vinegarroon to set up a church. The idea that a former gun-slinger and felon could now be a preacher is not unique and the townspeople generally provide him with an element of grace when they find out his past.

However, he still carries a gun and in one dispute lets people know if anyone is going to use a gun in his church it will be him. In our culture the idea of the preacher wearing a pistol is difficult to comprehend, though of course this American setting is also in a different era. Another interesting aspect is that the 'moral' or wise figure in the film who gives advice to Pastor Jim is the local madam in the saloon. At one point she even tells him he has to choose his path: heaven (preacher) or hell (the gunman).

Leap of Faith (1992, PG)

Comedian and actor Steve Martin is Jonas Nightingale, a new and yet 'old-time evangelist' and basic charlatan who puts on 'shows' in the larger towns throughout rural America, drawing in people so they can give to the Lord, but ultimately it all goes to Jonas and his team. Due to a mechanical problem, the group are stranded in a smaller town, so he decides to give the town the full Jonas treatment. This is a well-constructed film that considers the faith of the ordinary town members, the nature of healing and God's healing, with a perhaps surprising twist. A secular film with a Christian message. The film's tagline is "Are you ready for a miracle?"

Lore (MA, 2012)

This film was awarded Film of the Year by the Australian Catholic Film Office. While made in Germany, the director is Australian Cate Shortland, known for her first film *Somersault*. This film considers the complexity of post-Nazi life as the five children of a Nazi couple, led by older daughter Lore attempt to find their own way to a new life. Confronting at times, it raises considerable ethical and moral issues in an era of post-war chaos and lawlessness, the film brings to the fore the depths to which human beings can sink (though it is not gratuitous), as well as showing occasional glimpses of common grace *Peter Bentley is National Director of ACC*