

Standing firm together in the public square

Presentation by Wendy Francis to the 2016 Conference of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church held at Poatina, Tasmania: 9 November 2016

It's not that long ago in Australia's history when the Cross and the Australian flag were synonymous with Australia. We were known as the great southland of the Holy Spirit. Our nation's children went to Sunday school and we were comforted by the fact that our laws were based on Christian principles. We were proud of our Christian heritage.

But Christians no longer have that luxury. We can feel like strangers in our society, often ridiculed or even despised in the media, as Christian values and beliefs are pushed to the margin. The shameful sexual abuse carried out, and at times covered up, by some who call themselves religious understandably contributed to this abandonment of any nominal adherence to faith.

The people of God have been in this position before. The prophet Jeremiah wrote to the Jews when they had been taken against their will to Babylon, by King Nebuchadnezzar. By the rivers of Babylon, as the song goes, they sat and wept when they remembered the "good old days". They bemoaned their fate and the feeling of isolation from the people they lived amongst. Many Christians today feel the same - "oh if only we could go back to how it used to be."

But the message the prophet Jeremiah gives to God's people does not pander to that feeling. Far from commiserating with them about their plight, he tells them, "this is what the Lord Almighty says: Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage. Seek the peace and prosperity of the city, and pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." *Jeremiah 29*

Jeremiah tells God's people, don't fret about what you miss, get on with living now! Live! Marry and build houses. Settle down and have children. And not only that, God says you are to work for the good of the city where you are. Yes, that godless city. Work for its good. And, pray for the city. Because God's plans are for your good and not your harm. And not just your good, but the peace and prosperity of the city you now live in. The hope and future I have planned for you includes you being in this city for its good and God's glory.

In the New Testament, Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5:13-16 that they are to be salt and light. Salt and light never go unnoticed. Salt purifies, it flavours and it preserves goodness. And light illuminates and guides and brings great comfort.

One of my heroes is a man by the name of William Carey. Inspired to missions by reading the *Last Voyage of Captain Cook* he was committed to taking the good news of the gospel to India. But he believed the bringing of the Good News of the Gospel meant the delivery of the whole Truth, which brings freedom. He was committed to being salt and light and to the redemption of souls and of culture.

His famous essay 'The Enquiry' posed the question, "Are Christians under an obligation to help transform societies that live in intellectual, moral, social, political, and spiritual darkness?" William Carey's name is still honoured in India long after he has gone. His legacy included major advances in health, education and literacy. At a time when women and children had very little status, he was largely responsible for stopping practices such as widow burning and infanticide.

But salt and light are not always welcomed. Because salt stings if it comes into contact with an open wound, and the recipient recoils from it. And when light exposes evil there is immediate resistance.

WILLIAM CAREY



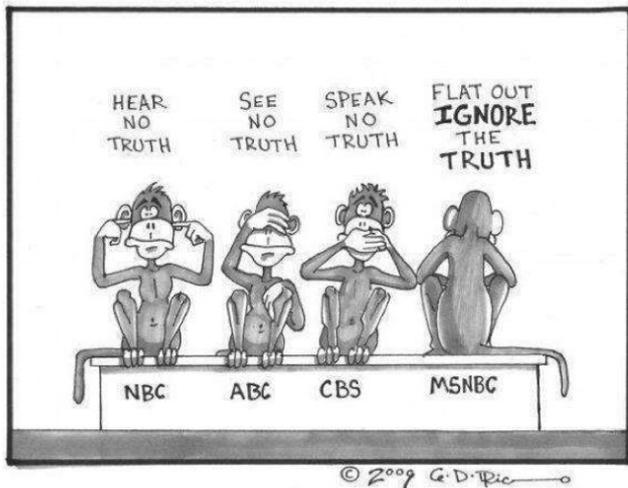
The Enquiry:
Are Christians under an obligation to help transform societies that live in intellectual, moral, social, political, and spiritual darkness?

I am the state director for the Australian Christian lobby. I come up against resistance. But I believe God would have me "Keep calm and speak truth to power".



I love this famous photo of the 'Tank man' who stopped a cavalcade of tanks threatening to run down protestors in Tiananmen Square. His stand stopped a potential massacre. One man made a statement and made a difference. I want to do the same.

And the way I believe God is calling me to do this is by speaking Truth in love into the public square and into hearts and minds that He prepares. We find the injunction for us to speak truth in love in Ephesians 4:15 and 1 Corinthians 13:1. Truth matters. Tone also matters.



Unfortunately, our media can, too often, refuse to let truth get in the way of a good story. This American cartoon could just as easily refer to some of our media outlet's acronyms.

Truth. One of the most profound questions in the Bible must surely be Pilate's question to Jesus when he spoke to The Truth and asked, "what is truth?"

He didn't realise that he was standing before the one who had the answers to every single question he could ever have.

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.

And it is through his word that we will find his truth and that truth will set us free. Freedom. It is the deep cry of every human heart.

This word that is truth sets us free from bondage to everything that would trap us. And that same word calls us who know freedom to speak Truth into culture. Truth into every area of life that you can think of -

- Abortion
- Education
- Pornography
- Marriage
- Asylum seekers/Refugees
- Persecuted Christians
- Indigenous communities
- Homeless/ poverty
- Mentally ill
- Prostitution
- Trafficking
- Children in foster care

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray speaks to this need to bring the values of God's kingdom into our earthly lives and struggles. He said to pray, "your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". I don't believe we can pray that sincerely without being prepared to be involved in extolling His kingdom values here and now.

The opposite of the freedom-giving life of the kingdom of God is exemplified in the current culture of death being promoted throughout Australia. Euthanasia is currently being discussed in all State Parliaments apart from NSW.

The culture of death is perhaps most starkly represented by abortion. My home state of Qld has two abortion bills currently being considered in Parliament. Psalm 127:3 tells us that children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of

the womb, a reward. But, contrary to nature, women fight for the right to kill their unborn children. Women have been sold a lie. The slogan, "my body, my choice" is convenient for society because it then makes it "my problem".

Some statistics to consider -

- Australia has around 100,000 abortions each year.
- 1 in 4 Australian women will have an abortion.
- In Qld last year 27 babies survived abortion but were denied life saving care, despite babies of the same gestation being cared for in the same hospital - the only difference was if they were wanted or not.
- Recent late term abortion statistics released in Victoria include the terrible statistic of a baby aborted at 37 weeks for psychosocial reasons.

So we march. We sign petitions and we speak to our parliamentarians and we write letters. Because God implores us to choose life. Prolife MPS bravely stand with the marchers and also speak out on this issue of life and death.



Other MPs right just as hard for abortion on demand. Minister for child services, Shannon Fentiman, supports abortion on demand. I appreciated that she still respectfully accepted our abortion petition of over 23,000 signatures.

Ms Fentiman is one of the mps who has supported our fight against adult entertainment moving into the suburbs. For over 2 years we have been fighting against the Acacia Ridge hotel application to allow degrading acts in their hotel in the name of entertainment.

An encouraging speech was made in Federal Parliament on 13 October 2016 by the federal member for Moreton, Mr Graham Perrett on this issue. This is an excerpt from Hansard:

I rise to speak about a meeting I had on 7 October with Wendy Francis from the Australian Christian Lobby to discuss an application by the Acacia Ridge Hotel to turn that area into an adult entertainment area. Its attempt to change this area, is an attack on the community. Putting an adult entertainment precinct here would completely change the character of this area and have an impact on families. We have already had the Brisbane City Council sign off in terms of the planning. I am disappointed that took place. It would be a complete departure from what goes on in the suburbs of Brisbane. It would be like moving Kings Cross, or a similar entertainment area, to the suburbs of Sydney. I would hope that there would never be a need for such entertainment; but I understand it does take place. I am giving my word to Wendy Francis and to the other residents of Moreton that I will do what I can to make sure that the voices of the good families and people who go about their business are heard. We have day care centres. We have a Police-Citizens Youth Club across the road. This is a family area. We will do what we can to make sure Acacia Ridge stays safe.



Acacia Ridge Hotel pursues application for adult entertainment licence

Graham Perrett has also supported my campaign to make outdoor advertising G rated which has been running for 6 years now. The innocence of our children should be non negotiable. Around Australia we are seeing encouraging movement to remove inappropriate advertising from our public spaces. Qld is introducing legislation which will allow the State government to deregister vehicles with offensive messages such as wicked campers. Victoria and Tasmania



have followed this move and have added more comprehensive wording to include other forms of objectifying advertising.

But these changes don't come without opposition. Because of my stand for advertising in public spaces to be acceptable for children's viewing, I have become a target for hate and ridiculed. A spoof play was performed in Canberra and I was one of the characters. I didn't attend.

One of the wonderful attributes of being Australian has been our ability to have an opinion and to discuss it openly, with respect. This freedom is rapidly vanishing. Tolerance is demanded, but you are not tolerated if you disagree with the popular, media driven, agenda. This sin against popularism will most likely see you be vilified publicly.

I have come to understand well, that those who oppose my right to express my views look at life from a very different world view to my own.

One example of this was a time when a young man in Brisbane made some very derogatory comments about my character on social media. They were unsolicited and unfair. I had never met him before but was made aware of his rant, and so I contacted him, and we met up for coffee. It was a great opportunity for both of us to understand the other's viewpoint. This young man later wrote an article about our meeting. Whilst he still disagreed with my position, it was a respectful article and his final sentence read, "I won't deny it was one of the most surprising coffee dates I've had in a long time".



Other attempts at civil conversation don't always go so well, such as the time I campaigned against condom ads in school bus shelters. The photoshopped image that was circulated on social media of me with a red condom stuffed in my mouth was an obvious attempt to shut me up.

Following on from that attack, I was delighted by my hairdresser's approach to the Brisbane Times which they published on June 3, 2011 "I went on to the (*Wendy Francis is homophobic*) website and said I am actually Wendy's hair stylist and I can let you know that if she was homophobic she definitely would not be coming to me," Mr Vaessen says. "I have known her for about seven years and we have great conversations about things. I am also a gay dad. I have a child with a gay girlfriend of mine. We talk about all these things and she would be one of the most open-minded people that I know. She and her husband - who is the pastor at the big Baptist church on Wickham Terrace - I mean they really are quite amazing people."

Some of my most impactful conversations have been with survivors of prostitution. These brave women speak out on behalf of others about the evils of this trade so that others can be saved. When Amnesty International supported the legalisation of prostitution worldwide this year, I stood with survivors outside the Amnesty headquarters in Brisbane to protest against their support of the practice of prostitution, not the oldest profession, but rather the oldest oppression.

We are surrounded by people in vulnerable situations and unless we listen we will not hear and we will be powerless to help. As a child, my family prayed that people all around the world would come to hear and understand the freedom of the gospel. It is a privilege then, to visit with people who are here in our land after fleeing some of the very countries that we prayed for.

But it is the children who are caught up in an adult world that affects my heart most of all. My husband and I have 10 grandchildren and I would do anything to protect them. Likewise I believe that as a society and particularly as a child of God, we have a responsibility to each and every child. News such as that of the pornography ring targeting



Australian school girls which surfaced recently are an indictment on us as a society. In the area of Internet safety, we are letting our children down in spectacular fashion.

This is why the Australian Christian Lobby continues to advocate for clean feed technology such as the UK have adopted. We will not give up on this.

Unfortunately, and to Australia's great shame, sexualisation occurs not only in our advertising and on our devices, but also in our classrooms in a deliberate fashion. The Building Respectful Relationships course, originating in Victoria and now in other States, asks children as young as 12 to write their own 'personal ad'. Examples are given of other ads they might find in the classifieds such as these –

Lustful, sexually generous funny and (sometimes shy) Tigerb1962 seeking sexy freak out with similarly intentioned woman

30-year-old blonde bombshell, wild and sexy, living in the fast lane. Can you keep up? 25-35 years apply

Some of the personal ads in the curriculum for 12 and 13 year olds

In this same program, 12 year old children participate in a role playing exercise. A small group of children are chosen from the class to sit on chairs in front of the class and adopt a character, wearing a hat with that character's name etc. They are given time to 'get into character'. The following are some of the characters they enact.

GRACE	<p>Grace is 16 and in Year 10. She has had four boyfriends and has been sexually active since she was 13. The boy was 15 at the time, and although she was willing to have sex, she feels he took advantage of her. This has influenced her beliefs about sex.</p> <p>She believes that relationships should be equal.</p> <p>She is comfortable with herself and her decision to be sexually active; she thinks that it is nobody else's business but her own.</p> <p>She is able to talk about relationships and negotiate for what both partners want.</p> <p>She is very committed to talking and not just relying on non-verbal communication in sexual encounters.</p> <p><i>'I like people who you can be in a relationship with and talk and be honest. You should have the right to say what you want and how you feel, you know, and not let them sort of decide what they want and then just go from there, like you know there has to be sort of an equal companionship sort of thing, you need to both speak, not just one. Especially</i></p>	<p><i>if they want to do things like what they've seen or heard about and it doesn't feel good to you. They just can't assume you are into it. You need to talk about it together and only do what you really want.'</i></p> <p>Your character is arguing that sex is a joint responsibility. She is stating the importance of verbal communication between partners. She feels that both people's needs have to be considered, not just one partner's. She is comfortable that she has been sexually active from a young age, as she feels it is no one else's business if she likes sex. Refer to the information in the quote to help you.</p>
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JESSE

Jesse is 18 and an apprentice carpenter. He lives in a country town and has been captain of the football team for the past three years.

Like many of his friends, Jesse has watched quite a bit of pornography and learnt sex from what he has seen in it. He has had five sexual partners, including casual sex and sex with two of his girlfriends.

He talks about how you pick up someone for casual sex and how there is very little direct communication about what is going to happen.

'I don't think it's even talked about at that stage, it's more like maybe standing outside the pub or the footy club, or unless something's happened inside the pub, you know, the dance floor and start dancing with a girl and then it starts there, unless that's happened it's more like you've left the pub and you're out in the taxi rank or buying a pie to munch on or something and they'll come and say, or you'll go to them and say you know, where are you going now, what's going on? Um...and if you happened to end up in a taxi

together and end up in the same place it goes from there. Once again I don't know if there's too much communication involved, well there might be communication but not about what's actually going to happen.'

Your character needs to describe this typical situation and use the example above. You need to stress the line that there is very little verbal communication about what is going to happen – this is just the way it is. You might be asked how you know they are willing to have sex. Your response needs to include comments such as: 'Well, she came home with me, didn't she? Talking about it would kill the mood and anyway, there isn't any need; we both know why she came home with me!'. Refer to the information in the quote to help you.

KELLY

Kelly is 14, in Year 9 and is very interested in girls. She is not sure but thinks she might be a lesbian. She has had one relationship with a girl but she has also been attracted to boys. Her parents are Catholic, and when she told her parents she thought she might be a lesbian they were unhappy as this is against their religious views. But they are very loving and try to understand.

She is confident.

She really likes a girl at her dancing school but knows she would never say or do anything.

She finds it hard to say what she wants in a relationship. She is not very good at communicating what she would like in a relationship.

In her last relationship she could say what she didn't want to do sexually but she finds it too hard to say what she would like to do sexually.

She believes that she could hurt someone's feelings by telling them she didn't like what they were doing.

'I think I'm a lesbian but I'm not sure because I have also been attracted to a boy. I guess this gives me more options than most. Being gay, straight or bi doesn't really bother me – what I find hard is expressing my romantic and sexual likes. Don't get me wrong, I can say no to sex but I cannot ask for what I would like in a relationship.'

Your character is a bit confused about how to make things better. She needs to talk confidently about not being sure who she is attracted to or rather being attracted to both girls and boys. She is aware that she is able to negotiate to say no to sex, but she is unclear why she can't find her voice to ask for what she wants and needs to talk about this. Refer to the quote for some help.

MEGAN

Megan is 17, lives in the city and works in a local cafe. She has had 15 sexual partners and describes herself as bisexual. She has had casual sex and some short-term partners, including two women.

She rarely practises safe sex. She forgets to protect herself because she is often drunk when she has sex.

'I'm really bad with that, like you know as much as you know or what you learnt in high school. You know, um, safe sex, use condoms and all the precautions and AIDS and all that, and sometimes well when you're drunk you just don't really think about it. I've scared myself many times like I've probably had three pregnancy scares cause I wasn't careful but in the end luckily I wasn't pregnant. I try and be careful like maybe what I learnt hasn't really fully absorbed, it isn't until something bad happens that I actually fully learn from it and yeah it hasn't really happened.'

Your character is aware of the risks but rarely anything to protect herself or her partners. Y to play this up during the role play and just la questions that suggest she is not being wise: with the flow and anyway it really is about pl them, not me. You just want to know they lik Refer to the information in the quote to help

Can someone please tell me, how does a 12 year old girl 'get into character' of Megan, who 'has had 15 sexual partners and describes herself as Bisexual? Megan has had casual sex and some short term partners, including two women. She rarely practices safe sex. She forgets to protect herself because she is often drunk when she has sex'.

Introducing adult concepts to children is usually considered to be child abuse. But our governments promote the introduction of adult concepts to children as essential education. Shame on us. Shame.

IN DEPTH | RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

A win for Religious Instruction in Queensland

RI will stay in public schools after a formal review



KALEY PAYNE | AUGUST 18TH, 2016 02:49 PM

Religious Instruction (RI) will remain in Queensland's public schools after an Education Department review, with the decision heralded as a win by supporters of the programme.

RI came under review in QLD in June this year after one Brisbane school principal axed RI over concerns teaching materials were evangelising students. The materials used in the school were from the 'Connect' programme, published by Youthworks Media (a Sydney

Earlier this year in Qld, one school principal made a complaint about Religious Instruction. A full inquiry was held. Religious Instruction won. Thank God.

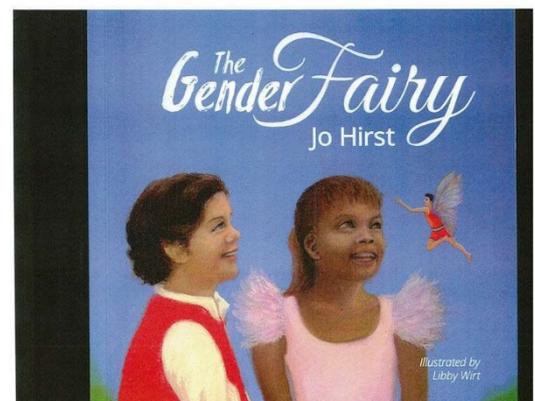
Also this year, over 13,000 Queenslanders signed a petition calling for an inquiry into the deceptively named 'Safe Schools' program. But the 13,000 have been ignored.

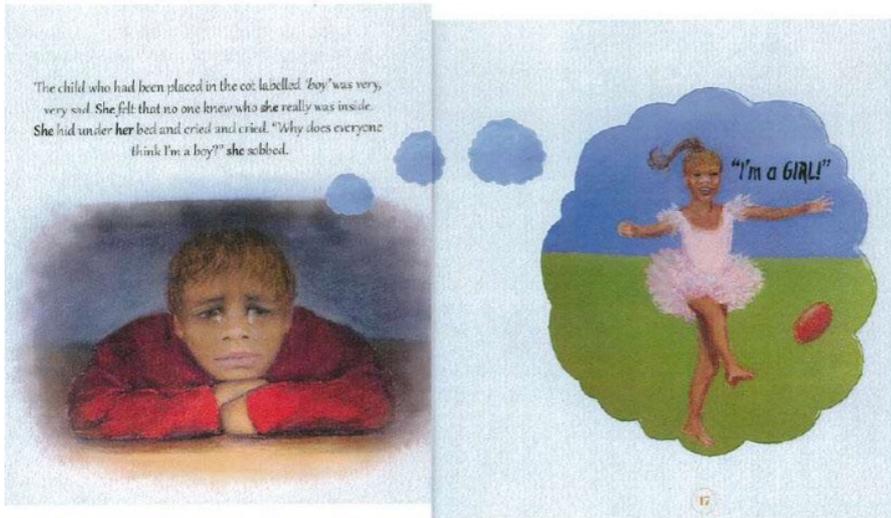
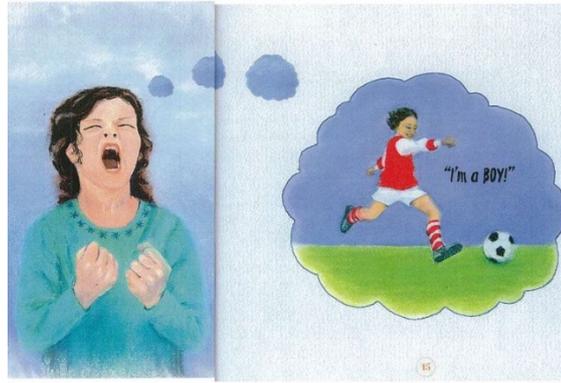
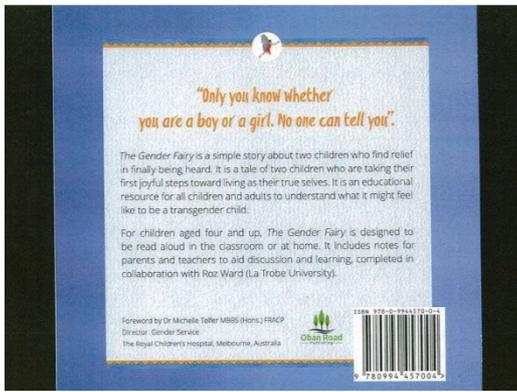
The Safe Schools program for 11-14 year old children addresses questions such as "What does it mean to be bisexual?" And the very confusing answer that is given is, "Not worrying about who I want to like and so forth. It's just meeting a person and being able to say, you're really nice to me and I like you." Source: Safe Schools "All of Us" video for 11-14 year olds.

Safe Schools promote a resource for children 4+ years old called 'The Gender Fairy'. In this picture book, 4 year old children are told, "Only you know if you are a boy or a girl. Noone can tell you".

The child in the book born biologically female is depicted as being angry because she wishes she could get out and play soccer.

The child born biologically female is crying because he wants to be a girl and dance.





The stereotyping in this book is outrageous. As is the confusing message to infants. Is it any wonder, that all around our country we find children as young as 3 thinking they might want to change their gender?

The Daily Telegraph

Karl says gender transition 'should be private'

NSW

Preschooler begins transition aged four: Children as young as three claiming gender dysphoria

EXCLUSIVE Ashleigh Gleeson and Bruce McDougall, The Daily Telegraph
 September 1, 2016 12:00am

Subscriber only

- [INSIDE AUSTRALIA'S TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY](#)
- [I AM TRANSGENDER AND I OPPOSE SAFE SCHOOLS'](#)

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD preschooler in NSW has begun "transitioning" their gender before attending their first day of kindergarten, amid a wave of young children across Australia who are seeking to change sex.

This year we have found that referrals to The Children's Hospital at Westmead for gender services have tripled, with one doctor saying they had "escalated rapidly" across every State. In another major children's hospital in NSW, 250 children, some as young as three, are being assisted by the gender dysphoria unit. Eminent Psychologists question and warn but appear to be ignored.

In a recent interview, NSW Education Department Deputy Secretary of School Operations, Gregory Prior, told how a school in that State used Safe Schools resources to help teachers assist a 4 year old to transition genders.

A young 15 year old Australian girl recently had irreversible surgery to remove her breasts because she wants to be male. We have done this young person a terrible disservice. And at 15 she needed love, support and guidance. Not surgery.

The current debate over the meaning of marriage in our nation is part of this gender confusion. The de-gendering of marriage goes hand in hand with the de-gendering of our education, of our birth certificates,



LIFE

Australian Family Court allows 15-year-old girl to have breasts removed as part of gender reassignment journey

By Vittorio Hernandez @vittthernandez on August 09 2016 6:09 AM



of adoption, of our toilets and to reject this push makes one a target of the political correct media and the Marxists and the elites who want to decide what is best for us all.

But marriage matters. This is why the Australian Christian Lobby, along with many other groups - Christian, other faiths and secular - continue to call for a people's vote on this most basic societal building block.

For a Christian, marriage is a picture of Christ and his bride, the church. For secular commentators the threat to freedom of belief and conscience, one of our most basic freedoms, is very real and very concerning. We have already seen serious repercussions from the push for same-sex marriage on the right to freedom of speech, both here in Australia and around the world. For outlining in a booklet the Catholic position on marriage, which coincidentally mirrors our current laws in Australia, to parents of children at Catholic schools in Tasmania, Bishop Julian Porteous was taken before the anti-discrimination tribunal.

If a business dares to support organisations which publicly support marriage as being between one man and one woman, they can expect their business to be targeted by hate and an attempt to bring them down. Or lose a position.

A meeting organised for church and community leaders to discuss the campaign for retaining the current definition of marriage in the lead up to a plebiscite on marriage was targeted with such venom that the hotel where the meeting was being held, felt compelled to cancel the booking because of fears for the safety of their staff.

This is the new tolerant Australia.

We have already seen the consequences in Education. The most precious and honoured roles of fatherhood and motherhood are being made redundant, unnecessary and irrelevant in the push for the acceptance of same sex parenting.

Those who want to change the definition of marriage are calling for a Parliamentary vote to decide the issue. This is despite more than 20 parliamentary votes already being held and lost, and despite bipartisan unanimous acceptance of the current definition of marriage just a decade ago, and despite the Greens party promoting a bill for a national plebiscite just a year ago.

In the book of Judges, there is an awful, horrible, story of abuse towards a woman from one who was meant to be her protector. It ends with a scene that belongs in the worst horror movie you can imagine. I avoid reading this story. It's just too awful. But I am currently reading through the Bible using a phone app to track my progress. And this chapter came up. So I read it, and was once again horrified by the capacity of humanity to commit evil against their fellow human beings. But what struck me powerfully as I read it this time was the call to action and response in *Judges 19:30*. God's people, stunned by the horror of what had occurred, said to each other - "Think about it! What are we going to do? Who's going to speak up?"

The question burned in my own heart. My response with God's enabling is, "here am I Lord, send me".

This is not just a reactive fight against evil, it is a proactive fight for our children's right to their innocence. God highly values children. He tells us that unless we come to him as children we will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Is it any wonder that Satan would want to destroy childhood?

Wanting to equip my own grandchildren and the children of our nation I developed this resource to help children know what to do when they are confronted by images or messages or speech that they instinctively know is not good.

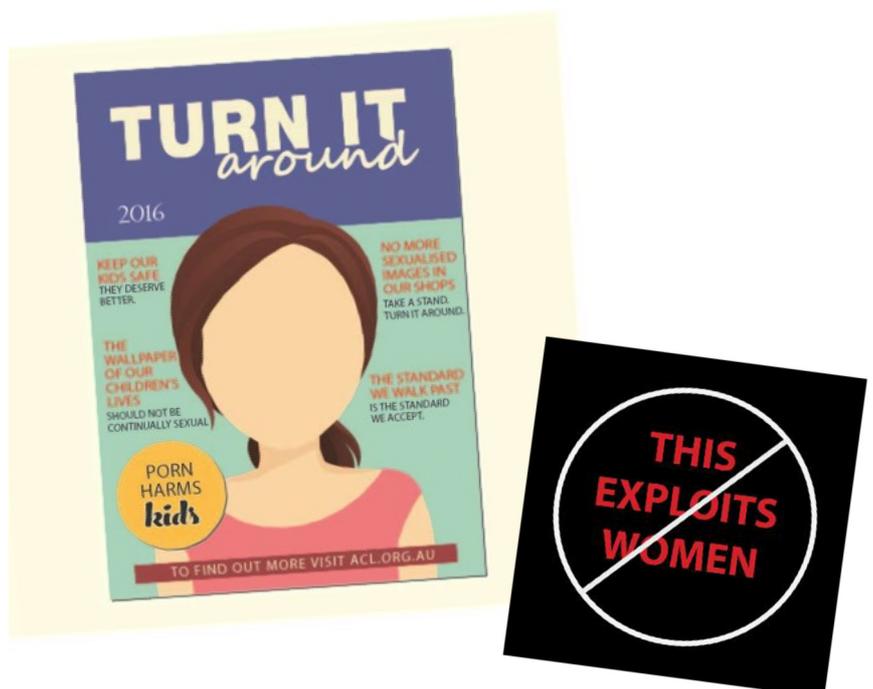


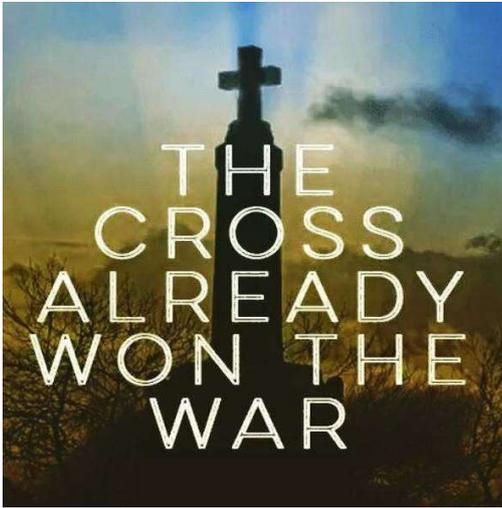
I would propose that it's a good and important message for each one of us, no matter our age. God tells us where he wants our minds to linger in *Philippians 4:8* - "Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things."

As children of God, we are called to be salt and light in this world. Both good things that sometimes cause aggravation. But we are called to be salt and light regardless. Always remembering that God says truth without love is like a sounding gong. Hard to hear. You want to block your ears from this sort of sound.

What God requires is Truth. In love. And His truth requires action.

We can be part of God's plan of redemption. Of souls and of culture. Girls, if you see an offending magazine or advertisement in newsagents, shopping centres or service stations, pick it up, and turn it around. You are making a small but significant two-fold statement - you are sick of being objectified and you want to protect children. Then there are some t-shirts with messages of violence and disrespect towards women that deserve this sticker to be placed on them.





In conclusion, there is much to occupy our prayers and our activity. But I remind us all, especially myself, that while we are engaged in battles for what is true and right and good, and sometimes those battles are won and sometimes, in God's wisdom and plan, battles are lost, God has already won the war.

What he calls us to is boldness in the calling and the purpose that he has for your life. May God help us all to be faithful to that calling.

Standing firm together in the public square

Presentation by Wendy Francis to the 2016 Conference of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church held at Poatina, Tasmania: 9 November 2016