

the Good Confession



WINTER 2021

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Rev Dr Max Champion 1947-2021

The Champion. Our Champion!

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Tribute to the Rev. Dr. Max Champion The Champion. Our Champion!

☪ David said to the Philistine,
“You come against me with
sword and spear and javelin,
but I come against you in the
name of the Lord Almighty,
the God of the armies of
Israel, whom you have defied”

(1 Samuel 17: 45)

Max was born a Champion! But he was not just a Champion by name. He was called to be ‘The Champion’ of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations of the Uniting Church in Australia.

He is a champion because he fought on our behalf and unflinchingly killed the ideological giant of ‘religious and ethical diversity’ exalted and adopted as the new orthodoxy by the UCA Assembly.

Max exposed this false ideology masquerading as ‘gospel’ with the clear and unambiguous Word of God that is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating even soul and spirit, joints, and marrow, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4: 12).

With his sound baptised mind not conformed to the pattern of the world, using the Word of God as his sword, coupled with the fruit of his doctoral study from Princeton Theologically Seminary, Dr. Champion methodically and meticulously dismantled the head of the giant and the roots that sought to sustain this false ideology.¹

Max did not have to get involved in this battle. He could have as many continue to do today simply fight from behind the battle lines or from the safety of the grandstand situated on the ‘moral high ground’.

But, like David, the sound of the name of the living God being defied did not sit well with Max. He could not just sit and watch the battle. He was compelled to

get involved. And so, when the giant approached, he did not run away like many. Instead, he ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. He was not intimidated by the size of the giant and the sword and spear and javelin he wielded. For Max knew and believed that he was not coming against the giant on his own strength, but in the name of the Lord Almighty, the one whom the giant had defied.

Some may mistakenly think that the death of our Champion will mean the weakening of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. However, from the beginning of the ACC at its inauguration on the 13th of October 2006 at Wesley Mission, Sydney, Max had already prepared us for the battle ahead:

“It is not important, therefore, whether the Confessing Movement is small or large. What matters is that we don’t retreat to a safe harbour but, despite apprehensions, continue to sail in waters which threaten to engulf our enterprise in the knowledge that, despite appearances, Christ is Lord of heaven and earth. In faith, therefore, we go forward praying that we may ‘be of good courage and hold fast to that which is good.’²

Our Champion has passed away, but his ministry, writings and sermons continue to embolden us to be champions of the gospel ourselves. *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”* (2 Tim. 1: 7).

Our deep appreciation is recorded to Max for his ministry and all that he did in the name of Christ!

Thank you, Ruth Champion, and to the Champion family for your graciousness in allowing Max to share much of his precious time, energy, and special gifts with us.

*May the Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace!*

Grace and peace

Rev. Dr. Hedley Fihaki *National Council Chair*

1. See “Marriage and Gnosticism” <http://www.confessingcongregations.com/news-views/item/marriage-and-gnosticism/> and “Response to ‘Appealing to Scripture, Moral Formation, and Re-imagining Homosexuality’”, by Geoff Thompson” available at ZADOK Papers S223 Spring 2017.

2. <http://www.confessingcongregations.com/resources/item/sermon-at-the-inauguration-of-the-acc-13-october-2006/>

A VOTE OF THANKS

by Ian Breward

Minute of appreciation and vote of thanks recorded at the Annual General Meeting of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc.

12-14 September 2013 | Paradise Point Uniting Church, QLD

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 theological concerns of several thousand members, many of whom left the UCA as a result. When the Assembly moved into further change in R84, he contributed significantly to the formation of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. This 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 opposing 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 has helped to create a national sense of confessional unity within the UCA and sister churches with similar concerns. Though this 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 younger 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.

Carried with a standing ovation.

A Reflection

with Peter Bentley

I would like to start with appreciations.

Thank you to Max for inviting me to speak on behalf of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. This is an honour; a privilege and I am simply delighted to share in this significant time today.

Thank you to St Johns Mt Waverley for providing the opportunity to share Max's ministry placement through the arrangement that allowed Max to travel on many weekends to speak and preach at congregations throughout Australia on behalf of the ACC. This helped Max to serve the Uniting Church and the wider church.

Max has had a long-term involvement in culture analysis and reform movements in the Uniting Church. In our context, he was vitally involved, first as Chair of the Reforming Alliance and then as Chair of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations; in total for nearly 10 years and continues to serve in our Theology and Ecumenical Commission.

Max has had a significant ministry, of writing, sermon publication and speaking, but it is not widely known that he has also received appreciation and recognition from leaders in other denominations and Christian groups for his theological work, particularly through his paper on 'Same-Sex Marriage and Gnosticism' which was widely disseminated in a variety of electronic formats, with the published version receiving a Silver Prize for Theological writing at the 2012 Australasian Religious Press Association awards.

This article was typical of Max's fine attention to detail and ability to communicate to a wide variety of people on a very nuanced theological topic. The article reflects a primary ministry and focus for Max; that has been to help Christians

continued over

A DEEPENED FAITH

with Max Champion

Despite setbacks and disappointments, ACC and RA have provided, and ACC continues to provide strong theological leadership and Christian witness within and beyond the UCA. It is a miracle that ACC and RA have survived such a testing period. We were wise, from the outset, to speak of ourselves as an 'evangelical, reformed and orthodox' movement. It encouraged us to embrace the classical faith and theology of the ecumenical church, as confessed in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, and discouraged us from prematurely rejecting beliefs and practices among us that were strange to some of us. Our relative success in holding together different streams of theology and practice is a sign of 'unity in Christ' that allows 'diversity' in matters that do not belong to the substance of the faith. The ACC is not judged by whether she is successful politically or numerically. We simply do what we are summoned to be by the God of righteousness-and-grace in anticipation of the new heaven and new earth promised to Israel and embodied in Jesus Christ as the one sign of hope for all people. At the same time, we may have hard decisions to make if the Fourteenth Assembly (2015) decides to approve of same-sex unions as valid expressions of the church's doctrine of marriage. It has been a privilege to serve as the National Chair of RA and ACC for almost 10 years. I have been greatly blessed to be part of a team, committed to upholding the faith of the Church. And my faith, theology and leadership have been deepened by having to exercise such public duties. (Full Report Published in ACCatalyst March 2014)

Extract from his final report as the National Director and Chair of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations (2014).

A Reflection

from page three

think about their faith in relation to the growing number of issues that challenge the Christian understanding of our creation in the image of God as male and female.

About a month ago I came across a new place in Sydney that from the front entrance one may have thought it was a type of spiritual temple, but I found it was a bread shop. My point of this story is that I found they had named a bread after Max: The Champion Toast. This was a little surprising, particularly as the shop was called The Dough Collective, and some people in the Uniting Church may have thought that a more suitable name would have been the Champion Roast.

Still, it is very suitable for Max, as he has been a champion of the faith. He has not wavered in his testimony of, and appeal to the faith delivered, even if this has meant significant opposition.

I also acknowledge Ruth's support and hospitality provided to myself and to so many of our members, and the enjoyable and stimulating discussions when I have stayed with you.

On behalf of ACC, I send our blessings and peace to you Max and Ruth, as you move into your home and as you continue your ministry of service and love in the name of Christ.

A reflection on the occasion of the final service and formal retirement from ministry of Rev. Dr Max Champion at St. John's Mt Waverley on May 3rd, 2015.



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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, social media and local newsletters.

JOIN US

Membership rates for supporting members:

 Concession (single or couple):
\$10.00 pa. (financial year basis)

 Full (single or couples):
\$20.00 p.a (see website)

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