

# THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2006

### EDITORIAL

#### RU READY FOR 486

On the subject of an abortion drug in a Christian Newsletter, let us state from the outset that the drug in question has far-reaching and deleterious effects on the future of the Christian Church and the world in which the Church operates.

In February we were subjected to a flood of reports covering the debate on the Bill before the Parliament which would remove from the Health Minister the veto power over the drug.

Let us be clear on one thing. Many politicians created a smoke screen by claiming that their vote was determined by parliamentary working arrangements and Ministerial procedures, and not on abortion. **Quite wrong, this is a moral issue about abortion.**

For control and administration purposes, drugs come under Section 25 of the Therapeutic Goods Act and are assessed for safety and quality control and approved for use. This is carried out by an appointed panel of experts in the appropriate fields. There is also a Section 23AA of the Act whereby certain drugs are "restricted goods" which may not be evaluated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, or registered or listed for sale without the approval of the Minister for Health. The drug RU 486 clearly comes under the latter category, as its use is essentially involved with ethical and moral issues.

In his speech to the Senate, Queensland Senator Brandis said, *"I believe that responsibility for the authorisation of this drug must be taken by a decision maker who is publicly accountable for his decision. It raises profound philosophical and ethical issues of the first magnitude; how readily available do we wish abortion to be in this country."*

For those who claim that suitable controls will limit the drug's use to needy cases, Senator Brandis said *"I have no doubt that were this drug generally available for prescription by GPs, its use would rapidly become extensive, and the circumstances and occasions upon which abortions occur in this country would significantly increase. It flies in the face of commonsense and the ordinary experience of mankind to imagine that, by providing an apparently easier, chemically induced method of termination, that procedure would not be readily recommended by doctors and resorted to by their patients."*

However, as we all now know, the majority of our Parliamentarians in both Houses voted to remove the Minister's former rights and authority. The issue is in the hands of faceless bureaucrats.

During the debates we heard the old, wearisome

and constant moan about women having the right to decide what they could do with their own bodies. Decide what? Do they mean the right to decide to take the life of the incipient human being, which is murder, and not just any murder, but the murder of one's closest relative, who is absolutely defenceless?

Some spoke of their own involvement in abortions, which leads the Christian to wonder about the morality of those we elect to govern us. Minister Tony Abbott and the Roman Catholic Church were sneered at by a Greens Party Senator who wore a T-shirt emblazoned in large print with the inscription "Mr Abbott, Get your rosaries off my ovaries." If that is the sort of mentality which drives a political party, a Christian would have to seriously think hard about giving them a vote.

With few exceptions, the debate was confined to personal and narrow interests, showing a serious lack of concern for the good of the nation.

So, at a time when we are told we need a large migration programme to populate the country, and the birth rate is at 1.76, well below the ability to sustain our numbers and culture, we can look forward to an increase in abortions to above 100,000 per annum.

From the point of view of both the Christian Churches and the nation we might well ask, where do we go from here? It is apparent that any Christian view about the sanctity of life and its origins was completely ignored, and in some cases scoffed at during the abortion debate.

Perhaps we should be giving more thought to some comments by Great Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair. In a memorable speech to the United States Congress in 2003 he surveyed the world scene with its complex problems and doubtful future. He asked the question, **"What do you leave behind?"** A very good and intriguing question.

The purpose of writing about RU486 is not so we can become experts on drugs, abortion, or parliamentary procedures. It is about the question asked by Prime Minister Tony Blair, - what will we leave behind?

There is no more important matter for the Christian Churches. In their present state they should all be devoting their time and energy to defining just what they will leave behind.

On the abortion issue our government is bequeathing to us a state of moral bankruptcy. But that is not necessarily a reason for despondency. As individuals we can pass on to our families, our neighbours, our congregations and Christian Church authorities the bright and glorious message of the Law and the Gospel. We have every reason to be confident

that, even as individuals in a small group of faithful Christians we have an important if not vital role to play.

### **DOWNNS PARISH TAKES UP CUDGELS**

Pastor Peter Ziebell composed a letter on the abortion issue, signed by members of the parish, and sent to the member for the Federal seat of Groom, The Hon. Ian Macfarlane, Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources. Newsletter prints the most important points of the letter which could be of value for others wishing to take appropriate action.

*"We wish to write to you expressing our concern over the abortion drug RU486, and appeal to you as our elected representative to act on our behalf in opposing the introduction of this drug."*

The letter then set out at some length statistics revealing the complications, some life-threatening, resulting from the use of RU486.

*"Although it is not the role of the church to be involved in politics, yet, in cases where God's commandments are being flagrantly flouted, as they are in abortion which is what RU486 is all about, it is the Church's duty to remind legislators: "God, the giver of human life, has commanded, 'You shall not murder,' and He will punish if you practise, promote, or permit it."*

*Human life begins at conception, and God the Creator shapes infants from the beginning. And God knows all individuals intimately while they are being wonderfully made (Job 10:8)*

*An unborn child has just as much right to life as we do, and our prayer is that as our elected leaders, such thoughts will be in all the MP's minds as they vote on this issue.*

A reply was forthcoming, in the form of a copy of the speech to the House by Mr Macfarlane. The speech is too long to reproduce all of it in Newsletter, but the following excerpts are worth noting.

*"There are those who have attempted to take the high moral ground in this debate by saying that this bill equates to support of abortion. That stance is not only wrong and misleading, it also overlooks the fact that there is no absolute right or wrong in this debate.*

*It overlooks the rights of Australian women, and it betrays the freedom of informed individual choice.*

*While it is certainly a major public ethical debate, it is before that an agonising personal decision. I am not convinced that public office bearers such as us should have a guaranteed place in the politics of the personal."*

To say the least, this is a disappointing response from a Member of Parliament, let alone a Minister of the Crown, charged with the future safety of the nation.

We suggest that readers write to their local federal Member and ask them a specific question, "Did you vote in favour of RU486?" with the implication that an affirmative answer could be taken into account when

voting at the next election.

### **CARTOONS - WHO OFFENDS WHOM?**

Some cities in the Middle East and Europe were turned upside down with rioting Muslims after the publication of cartoons featuring Mohammed.

The cartoons were not in good taste and, in fact, they were not even skilful examples of the cartoonist's art. However, they were enough to cause riots that did much damage to Embassies and Consul Offices.

Most Australian newspapers adopted a policy of not publishing the cartoons because of religious sensibilities, no doubt wishing to avoid offending Muslims.

However, and this must be hard for Christians to understand, the Melbourne Herald Sun published, of all days on Ash Wednesday, a cartoon that mocked and insulted the Christian faith.

It depicted Bill Shorten wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger, and a 'wise man' saying, 'Behold the new Labor Messiah is born. To the right of the cartoon Simon Crean is exiting carrying a cross; another 'wise man' says 'and there goes the old one.'

This appeared only days after the Herald Sun's editorial told readers of their refusal to publish the Danish cartoons.

Pastor Peter Kriewaldt promptly went into action on behalf of Christians and wrote to the Herald Sun as follows:- *"The hypocrisy of the Herald Sun is breathtaking. Editorially it condemns the publication of the Danish cartoons mocking Mohammed. Then it publishes a cartoon by Mark Knight on March 1 which trivialises the birth and death of Jesus Christ. To recreate these sacred events and apply them to Bill Shorten and Simon Crean is deeply offensive to Christians. Is it too much to hope for an apology?"*

Did this letter get printed? Of course not. No wonder the ethical state of the nation is in disarray when a powerful influence behaves in this inconsistent manner.

*Editor's note. Thanks to Pastor Peter Kriewaldt for kind permission to print his letter.*

### **LENT AND EASTER OBSERVANCE**

Congregations of the AELC all report the extra activities associated with Lent and Easter.

Pastor Peter Ziebell of the Downs Parish reports solid support by congregations at Oakey, Greenwood and Aubigny during the Lent period, during which time Divine Services were held at each place in rotation on Wednesday evenings.

Marburg had a similar arrangement for the congregations of Marburg, Minden and Lowood. Pastor Mark Hampel was pleased with attendances and the keenness with which members responded to the message of Lent and Easter.

A similar report from Toowoomba where a noted

feature was that because of the large area to be serviced, Pastor Phil Mueller arranged for Divine Services each fortnight, Toowoomba on Wednesday, Clifton Thursday, and Hivesville on a Friday. Hivesville is nearly 3 hours' travel from Toowoomba, a fine example of dedication.

Hivesville's small congregation based in Melbourne is travelling to Hivesville for the Easter season, causing much joy as they will be able to worship with friends and relatives during this most important season for Christians.

### **LENT AND BAPTISM**

In the Lenten devotions by Pastor Tim Pauls of Boise Idaho, there is one titled "The Baptism of Jesus." ([www.scholia.net/Pauls%20Writings/PaulsWritings.htm](http://www.scholia.net/Pauls%20Writings/PaulsWritings.htm))

This at first sight may not appear to be a Lenten theme, but perhaps we are inclined to not emphasise enough the important connection between Baptism and Salvation. Pastor Pauls' devotion is both a reminder and a great comfort.

#### **The Baptism of Jesus**

*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mt.3:1.2)*

When Malachi prophesied that the Lord would come, he also declared that Elijah would come first (Mal. 3:1; 4:5) to prepare the way. This Elijah was John the Baptist, who even dressed like Elijah (2 Kings. 1:8) as he preached to the crowds in the wilderness. John's entire preaching can be summed up in one sentence: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

"Repent," said John, calling upon the people to turn from their sin and misconceptions of a messiah, so they would be ready when the Messiah appeared. And then, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he proclaimed. Why? The kingdom of heaven was at hand because the King was at hand. God in flesh was coming to the Jordan River.

So Jesus came to be baptized by John, over John's objections. After all, why would the sinless Son of God need to be baptized like all those sinners? Because the Son of God had become flesh to take their place, so he was baptized just like them on the way to the cross. To confirm that the King was there, His father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and declared from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Where is He? There he is, coming out of the Jordan.

In St. John's Gospel, there's little attention given to Jesus' actual baptism, instead, John highlights another facet of the day. John the Baptist, who has been preaching that the King is coming, now directs the attention of all to a man in the crowd and cries out, "Behold **the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!**" (Jn.1:29). Once again, there He is, standing

among the people He has come to save - so ordinary looking that John the Baptist has to point Him out. Immanuel is living up to His name.

But John has added another name, the Lamb of God. Strange name for a King and Conqueror. Lambs aren't good for much, except for sacrificing... or dinner... which is exactly what John is getting at. Way back in Egypt, as the Lord sought to free His people from Pharaoh, the tenth plague was the death of the firstborn. The Israelites were spared that night because they slaughtered the Passover Lamb, spread its blood on parts of the door, and then ate the rest of it as a meal. When the Lord Himself came through to carry out the judgement, He passed over the houses of Israel.

As John points out the Saviour, he also declares how Jesus will save. Like the Passover Lamb, He will be sacrificed. Like that Lamb, His blood will be shed to save the lives of the people. And, as the eternal Passover Lamb, His body and blood will be given as a meal to His people, to strengthen and preserve them in the one true faith. It won't look like much to the world, but then again, a lot of Egyptians thought the Israelites were crazy for spreading blood on their doors. Until next day.

Look at the Jordan: there He is, the Lamb of God, baptized for you...on His way to the cross for you.

### **ARCHBISHOP AND CREATION**

The influential British newspaper The Guardian of Tuesday March 21 printed an interesting series of comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, which read as follows:-

"The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has stepped into the controversy between religious fundamentalists and scientists by saying that he does not believe that creationism - the Bible-based account of the origins of the world - should be taught in schools. Giving his first, wide-ranging, interview at Lambeth Palace, the archbishop was emphatic in his criticism of creationism being taught in the classroom, as is happening in two city academies founded by the evangelical Christian businessman Sir Peter Vardy, and in several other schools.

"I think creationism is a kind of category mistake, as if the Bible were a theory like other theories, if creationism is presented as a stark alternative theory alongside other theories. I think there's just been a jarring of categories. My worry is creationism can end up reducing the doctrine of creation rather than enhancing it," he said.

Dr Williams spoke of his determination to hold the third-largest Christian denomination together in its row over the place of gay clergy.

He was also highly critical of parts of the church in Africa and said he did not wish to be seen as "comic vicar to the nation," speaking out on issues where he can make no difference.

Speaking of the gay debate, which threatens to split the church, Dr Williams insisted he would continue to try to hold the communion together. "I can only say that I think I have got to try. For us to break apart in an atmosphere of deep mistrust, fierce recrimination and mutual misunderstanding is really not going to be in anybody's good in the long run." But he accepted there might come a moment where the Anglican Communion says "we can't continue, we can't continue with this."

This report comes via John McKay, Director of Creation Research. His comments to the above are well worth reading.

"When will church leaders recognize that the two subjects confronting the archbishop above are linked? Christ's teaching on human marriage and his teaching that homosexuality is an utter abomination to God are based on the historic fact of His creating male and female specifically for marriage of male and female only (see Matthew 19:1-7, and its cross ref to Gen 1:27 and 2:24) You let the schools not teach creation and only teach evolution and student sexual mores will evolve in any direction that their sinful nature takes them, till they reach what the True Creator God has the right to label as the perverted position of thinking that homosexuality is OK, even clergy can be gay because their evolved god accepts it.

#### **MINDEN - A PLACE IN HISTORY**

About 50 kilometres west south west of the metropolis of Hanover in north Germany and nestled in a valley on the banks of the Weser River, is the town of Minden. There is also a Minden in Louisiana, one in Nevada, and west of Ipswich in Queensland is another place called Minden.

It comes as a surprise to learn that the name Minden has a most important connection to the growth and supremacy of the British Empire. A recently published book by author Frank McGlynn is titled "1759. The Year Great Britain Became the Master of the World."

In 1759 Great Britain fought a number of campaigns on a global basis, aiming to establish supremacy in India and North America. They all resulted in victories, at Madras, Pondichery and Quebec, mainly because of the strategy of keeping the might of the French army bogged down in Europe.

King George II was largely responsible for the policy of creating an army of British and German Divisions commanded by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick and Luneburg. The superior French army under the Marquis of Contades forced its way north, captured and occupied Minden. Ferdinand had little option but to go on the offensive and recapture a vital position so close to Hanover.

The ensuing battle was both a brilliant and bloody affair. Many famous British Regiments distinguished themselves, the Royal Welch Fusiliers in

particular, who still bear Minden amongst their most prized Battle Honours.

The victory ensured that Hanover was out of danger, British strategy was vindicated, and French influence on the Continent was greatly diminished.

King George awarded Prince Ferdinand 20,000 pounds and bestowed on him the Order of the Garter.

Over a hundred years later German settlers arrived in Queensland and settled in the area known as the Rosewood Scrub. So far we have been unable to trace who named the settlement Minden and why. It is known that people came from the provinces of Brandenburg, Pomerania and Ubermerk. Perhaps some of them came from the area around Hanover and could have in mind the name of the town from which they came, or perhaps they knew the significance the name had in British history.

The descendants have become an important part of the region, involving themselves in the growth, development and prosperity that gradually took place after the trials and hardships of the pioneering days.

The original families in the region have produced some famous members of the sporting world, such as Andy Bichel of cricket fame, the Lindrums, who dominated the billiards and snooker world from 1930s to the 1950s, and Kelvin Kerkow, a familiar sight often seen on ABC TV, in the sport of grass bowls.

Minden is also, and most importantly, the home of St. John's Lutheran Church. Throughout the changing times, the ups and downs caused by economic depression, or prosperity, the social revolution that has often had a devastating effect on rural communities, the congregation has remained true to its faith and principles. The Battle of Minden in Germany played a most important role in the growth of the British Empire, and now the faithful people of St John's Minden Australia, have been instrumental in preserving the Word.

We appreciate receiving Letters to the Editor. If you would like to comment on anything, please let us know.

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