

# THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

## NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2005

### EDITORIAL

#### UNREST OR REST IN PEACE

The approaching decision to ordain women or not in the LCA will make for many unhappy people, regardless of whose side they are on. Whilst large numbers of people are focusing on this issue it is something of a smoke screen and by no means the important question. Women's Ordination is a product of an attitude to Scripture that is a long way from the attitudes taken by Luther and the Reformation. It is the new attempts to re-interpret Scripture that are the real cause of the problem.

There is much internal concern that decision time on Women's Ordination could lead to many changes. In a perceptive article under the heading "Sharp End of Ordination of Women", Barry Lindner of Confessional Lutherans Australia makes some enlightening observations. *"If WO becomes a reality in the LCA how could being in a 'state of confession' be shown to be a greater witness to the truth than to separate from falsehood?"*

After some further observation he writes, *"The experience of our AELC friends leave no doubts as to their perceptions of the blessings that have flowed for them after feeling compelled to separate from the LCA"*.

Too true. When AELC members were asked about the trauma of leaving after many years of close ties and loyal support, the answer was often that a great weight had been removed and they were confidently looking to a clear and secure future.

This raises the interesting question of people who belong to bodies that are similar but who, despite their similarities, nevertheless have different objectives, different ways of going about those objectives, and in fact have different beliefs. As Luther said to Zwingli at Marburg, despite their many similar objectives, "You are of a different spirit".

The ecumenical movement places great hopes in togetherness and joint operations. The belief is that similar groups with perceived common interests, common heritage, and similar names or titles to their respective organisations will set aside the factors which are seen to be different when they amalgamate officially. By welding together there will be an increase in strength, numerically, financially and increased potential to influence the community around them.

History teaches that this is usually false. It is often better to stand alone and face the consequences. The best modern example of this is what occurred in 1940. After the disastrous defeat of France and the evacuation at Dunkirk, the entire European continent was dominated by Nazi Germany. The exception was England, itself weakened and facing defeat. In one of his famous

speeches to the House of Commons, Prime Minister Churchill said that Britain would, with or without friends, fight on, *"If necessary for years and if necessary alone."* Because one man stood firm England rallied, and eventually the rest of the world followed. This contains an important lesson for all.

And so it is with the Christian Church. The ecumenical movement promotes the glittering idea that "all may be one", but this is said in the sense of external visible unity, whereas Jesus meant a unity that would always exist, like the unity between Himself and the Father, a unity that is real, but not visible to human eyes.

The ecumenical unity provides a comfort zone but does not provide drive or encourage vitality, or the burning desire to hold fast.

If this view had prevailed over man's history then there would be no Luther, Tyndale, Kavel, or Fritzsche.

In modern examples such as the Uniting Church or the LCA, the ecumenical philosophy has contributed to the decline in numbers, lack of firm Scriptural direction, loss of credibility, and confusion over Scriptural issues.

It is then a matter of bemused conjecture why the LCA would be imbued with the idea of becoming a full member of the Lutheran World Federation.

It is also a matter of conjecture whether the Union in 1966 to form the LCA was of any real benefit to God's Kingdom here on earth. This is a subject that has not seen the full light of day. Flaws in the Union process were raised at the time, but were brushed aside in the drive to achieve a union without adequate consideration of the long-term consequences.

That having been said however, the immediate problem is Women's Ordination, which has the potential to force people to make decisions regarding their relationship with the organisation they have loyally supported and sustained. Whatever the decision, the result will be difficult, sad and traumatic for many people.

Finally, in commenting on this problem we make it very clear that the AELC is not about to act like a flock of vultures waiting to swoop, capitalising on the problems of others. We will not seduce, persuade or entice anybody because of their misfortunes or vulnerability.

We learnt a long time ago that it is for each individual to make his or her decision, praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit. It is a very personal and private matter, with the decision entitled to respect without outside judgment. And it is largely because of this principle that the AELC is a happy and virile body, albeit a small one.

#### REFORMATION SUNDAY

A crowd estimated at well over 250 people descended on St. John's church at Aubigny, Queensland to celebrate what must still be regarded as the most

important event in the Christian calendar since the formation of the Christian church in the early centuries.

Worshippers travelled from as far a field as Hivesville, Marburg, Clifton and Toowoomba.

The liturgist was Pastor C.R. Priebbenow and Pastor Peter Ziebell preached the sermon based on Matthew 11, v 12-15.

Pastor Ziebell used these texts to view Luther in the light of the activities of John the Baptist, and made relevant comparisons between the call of John Baptist to the people of his day, and Luther, who worked in a climate with many similarities to that of the time of John.

The Service has been recorded and is available on C.D. for \$5.00. Readers can obtain copies by ordering direct to Pastor P. Ziebell, 140 Brookvale Park Rd., Oakey 4401, Queensland.

### **WEIGHTY TOMES**

If you think that at times the Book of Concord can be heavy going, spare a thought for Pastor Mark Hampel's 4WD Land Cruiser.

The response to the new popular "Readers Edition of the Book of Concord" was so great that his vehicle was over loaded with over 200 copies on board. On the way with this heavy load to Aubigny for Reformation Sunday, his vehicle over heated on the long steep climb up the Toowoomba Range.

But all's well that ends well. The crowd of people at Aubigny were delighted with their purchase of a very fine edition, which will be of great benefit to not only Lutherans, but also all Christians desirous of strengthening their faith and knowledge.

Pastor Mark observed, "Now we can look forward to drinking deeply from the clear unambiguous and certain witness to the Christian faith contained in these confessions, knowing that they will help us extend and defend vigorously the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These confessions unite us in common conviction about God's Word, and help us enjoy 'Concordia' as we live together with a common heartbeat, declaring to the world and to one another, 'This is what we believe, teach and confess'."

Dozens of "Luther Rose" pins were also distributed on this day for members to wear as a witness and symbol of our faith.

### **IT'S CHRISTMAS**

The joy of Christmas is upon us again. From all of us who contribute to the production of Newsletter we extend to all our readers our Christmas greetings, best wishes for a safe, happy and holy Christmas, and our appreciation of the support so many have given to us over the year.

Christmas in 2005 has two messages. The first is the one dear to us all, the birth of Jesus the Saviour. God's Son come to earth, born of a Virgin, in preparation for His mission which will end in His death, paying the price we should have paid, ensuring all believers in Him

a place with Him in eternity. What a promise, what a joyful prize!

But this Christmas, and we mean the real Christmas, is increasingly becoming a battleground, a battleground over which we must fight. This is the second message of Christmas.

There are a growing number of reports from around the world which tell of subtle attacks on Christmas. Schools in the USA in some areas are being pressurised to use the term "winter break" instead of Christmas holidays, a large postal delivery service refused to let drivers adorn their vans with Christmas wreaths. The Borough of Lambeth in London will not use the word Christmas in street decorations, substituting "winter lights" and "celebrity lights." In areas in Australia kindergartens and play centres are pressurised to cease telling Christmas stories, and not to use carols or Santa's at end of the year celebrations.

Channel 9 News reports that Westfield has banned Christmas trees at two of their shopping centres.

The most common reason given is that we must not offend people or children who have different cultures or backgrounds.

So it is certain that Christians have a fight on their hands, but they need not sit idly by. We should be telling our City and Shire Councillors that we support the erection and display of Christmas decorations. We can tell our shop owners and shopping centre managers that we like and encourage the playing of the traditional Christmas carols over their broadcasting systems. You can tell the local kindergarten or child minding centre that your children or grand children need the proper Christmas story.

We realise that Christmas trees, decorations and Santa's are not the real Christmas; they are only symbols of something far more important. But they do remind an apostate world of the birth of the Christ, and if these are lost from public display the Christian cause has suffered another damaging defeat.

### **RESPONSE TO MISSION WORK CALL**

Journey out of London and head northeast for the spectacular and beautiful Lakes District in the County of Cumbria. Here is the famous Lake Windermere where Wordsworth saw 10,000 daffodils in sprightly dance. Drive a little further on and before reaching Carlisle and Hadrian's Wall you come to the town of Workington.

This is where Owen Ohlson was born on 14th November 1953. Like many names in Cumbria, the Ohlson name can be traced back to the era when the Vikings plundered the country before settling down permanently.

In 1963 the Ohlson family of solid northern English country stock migrated to Queensland.

One night in Brisbane while Owen was out celebrating his 21<sup>st</sup> with a friend he was introduced to Jesus as his Lord and Saviour over pizza. That friend

was Stan Rudowski, who is now the LCA pastor at Oakey.

Visiting Pastor Rudowski at the Christian Community Centre in the suburb of Coorparoo, Owen met Dot Wedding, who had come from Loxton, South Australia, to settle in Queensland. Dot's father was at that time manager of the Luther Heights Campsite at Coolum Beach. Dot had worked at various jobs in Brisbane, but gave her heart and soul to the care of young mothers as nurse assistant at Boothville Maternity Hospital.

Meeting Owen brought her career to a halt as she now devoted her time to her husband, home, and children. She now is a full time supporter for Owen as he devotes all his spare time to the promotion of God's Word through the AELC.

Owen is a full time professional carer, working for Multicap, caring for the physically and intellectually disabled.

For eight years he was President of the Queensland Tai Kwon Do Association, and a second Dan Instructor. He is also a very competent and keen pistol shooter.

Owen jumped at the chance to complete the course in Dogmatics under Pastor Vern Grieger, as this will greatly assist in his voluntary mission work in Brisbane. Although living in Brisbane, Owen and Dot are members of Marburg congregation, but they see their role as a vital and necessary one in the suburbs.

Pray for Owen and Dot as they go about the great challenge they have set themselves.

### WHAT THE KIDS BELIEVE

A newspaper survey asked for their thoughts on Christmas. The answers of nine kids are featured in a published report. All the answers were centred on presents and parties. "Christmas means presents," "Christmas means celebrating and getting cookies and milk ready for Santa," "Christmas means happy times with my family," "Christmas is like a party," "Christmas means you have to go to bed early so Santa will come."

Not one mention of the birth of Jesus from nine well dressed, nice intelligent-looking kids, who are the future of our society. Here lies possibly the greatest challenge for the Christian church and its survival.

### BIBLES FOR NIGERIA

Lutherans in Nigeria need Bibles and the following story explains why.

This remarkable story from a reliable source shows the mighty power of God's Holy Word, but also how Satan is always on the counter attack to prevent the spread of that Word.

The Orthodox Lutheran Church of Nigeria lists 11 congregations in various States of the Nigeria. In May 2005 Evangelist Obinna worked in the State of Katsina where, teaching from Luther's Small Catechism he

gathered together a congregation of 316 people, of which 296 were then baptised. Many of these people were former Muslims.

On Sunday 3rd July some Muslims reacted and attacked the congregation, killing 4 people and hospitalising 41.

There were two remarkable reactions to this violence. Obinna managed an interview with the local Governor, who became protective and supportive. After being told the message of the Gospel he began taking instruction in the catechism.

The Muslim assailants who witnessed the funeral, apparently out of curiosity, were stricken with remorse. They gave themselves up to the police and are now in prison. They are asking forgiveness from the Christians they attacked and request Christian instruction.

These Nigerian Christians are virtually without worldly resources. They are making a plea for Bibles which can be provided to them for as little as \$3 Aus. Readers are encouraged to act generously. Donations may be sent to Pastor A.D. Grieger, 5 Richmond Lane, Maryborough, QLD 4650 or phone John Grieger (07) 54762504 or email at [jgrieger@mfac.edu.au](mailto:jgrieger@mfac.edu.au)

### NO ANSWER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

In our September issue we advised that our July editorial headed "National Dilemma," regarding the drastic changes occurring in Australia due to the penetration of Islam had been sent to the Prime Minister. It was considered a duty to inform him of the views of a Christian Church.

To date no reply has been received. This is rather unusual because it is invariably the practice to acknowledge all correspondence to a Minister of the Crown, even if the reply only says, "Thank you for your letter and views."

However, to be fair to the Prime Minister's office, it could well be that Australia is faced with a difficult, if not an impossible situation brought about by the erroneous migration policies of the past decades. In the realms of politics it is a subject that is being handled with kid gloves.

Not so Treasurer Peter Costello who has gone on record with a firm message. He is reported as saying that "If you are somebody who wants to live in an Islamic state governed by Sharia law you are not going to be happy in Australia, because Australia is not an Islamic state, will never be an Islamic state and will never be governed by Sharia law."

Mr Costello said, "There are Islamic states around the world that practice Sharia law, and if that's your object you may well be much more at home in such a country rather than trying to turn Australia into one of those countries, because it's not going to happen."

To all Australians a firm but not unkind statement. The situation for the Christian Church is not unlike that of our government. The Church has to find ways and

means of preserving itself; its message, and protecting itself in the face of a very formidable and aggressive opponent.

## PLANNING AHEAD

Carolyn Hoopert of Aubigny Queensland is looking well ahead into activities for the year 2006.

Plans are well under way for a family camp at Bunya Mountain.

The Bunya Mountain Family Camp will be held from Friday night 7th April until about lunch on Sunday 9th April.

Prices for accommodation are as follows: \$22 per adult per night, and \$15.50 per child per night.

A concession applies if numbers exceed 61. Prices are then \$17.60 per adult and \$11 per child.

Each chalet in the complex is double storied and can accommodate 23 people in 4 bedrooms. There is a well-equipped kitchen and a lounge area in each chalet. The complex games room has pool, table tennis and darts. Outside areas for hire are tennis, volleyball or badminton.

To date approx. 40 people have expressed interest. This will be a popular so it is not too early to make a booking.

Phone Mrs Carolyn Hoopert on (07) 46 922225, or email paucarpig@hotmail.com

## Letter to the Editor

In our time we are seeing a big decline in all the mainline churches, and the Lutheran Church of Australia is not excluded.

By attending District and General Synods for many decades I was made aware, by the statistician, of the continuous decline in membership. I could not understand why this was so, when considering all the Christian Colleges and schools all over the place. In 1945 when I was working in Downfall Creek near Miles in Queensland, there was only one Christian school in the State, namely at Downfall Creek. Shortly after St. Peter's was established in Brisbane, others followed and I believe there are more schools in Queensland than the other States combined.

One would think that there should have been a big growth in the Lutheran Church; but no, it did not happen **and why?**

I am convinced that the Lutheran Church's education thrust was misdirected. Christian education in the home seems to have been ignored. It is in the home where it all begins from babyhood right through to teenage life. Fathers have abrogated their role as head of the home in failing to give a lead in the Christian education of their children, with the wife as mother, just as Luther stated in the Small Catechism. It is the father's duty to instruct the children in the chief parts of the Catechism, as well as teaching them how to pray.

With feminism also entering the church, men are

being less involved as Elders, delegates and other leading positions in the congregations, but the worst situation for some decades has been in the homes where the church has virtually taken over the role of fathers. They learn it all in school. **Do they?** Many pastors bitterly complain that children don't know much of the catechism when they go to confirmation classes.

Another factor is that parents have a different agenda to what the children learn, or are supposed to learn and no Christian school can change that.

I have often heard the statement "Give us the children and there is a good chance to win the parents for Christ." This mostly does not happen, if ever.

It is a real tragedy when the Church spends hundreds of millions of dollars on schools and forgets the family responsibilities.

It is also a tragedy when congregations don't fill their synodical budgets. The Church should be in mission bringing the Gospel to our northern heathen neighbours in a much greater measure. These people, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists may one day come south, and God may take His Word from our nation when there is just a remnant of the true church left. It has happened many times before in man's history. May the Lord have mercy on our nation!

W. Stiller, Tanunda.

## THE EMAIL POST

Our email news service has been launched with a number of news items not normally seen in the press or on TV being emailed out to those people on our address list.

More subscribers are welcome. Write, phone, or email your wish to be included in this up to date service. The editor can be contacted at the address below.

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

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