

Life News

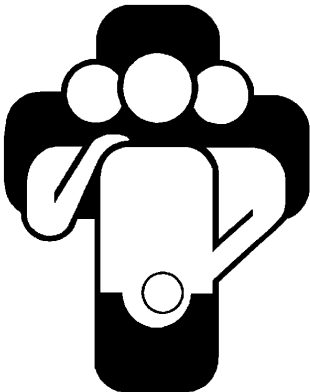
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Promoting the Sanctity of Life

December 2013

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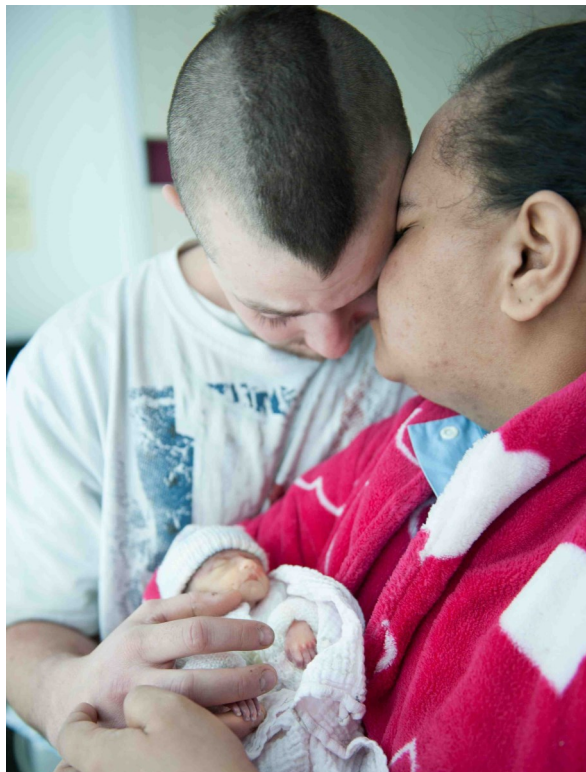
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Blessings of the Baby

Bryce Clark



Phillip and Jenna with their baby Kiera

Pastor Bryce Clark gave this devotion at a funeral for a little baby born to members of his congregation. Kiera died at four hours old.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139: 13-18).

Infants are of great importance to God and this appreciation, this love, that the Father has for infants begins at conception, long before the child's birth. The words of Psalm 139 are not about the mechanics of the

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Editorial

Since the last edition of *Life News* Australians have elected a new government, following a lengthy election campaign. One of the legislative proposals to receive attention during the campaign was the paid parental leave scheme championed by the Liberal party and specifically by the now Prime Minister Tony Abbott. The scheme, which will be implemented in this term of government, was not without its critics – including critics within the Coalition. Pro-family groups criticized the policy as it rewarded only working women, and provided nothing for women who were caring for their children full-time at home. The more economically liberal wing of the Liberal party raised question marks over the generosity of the scheme, and the growth of ‘middle-class welfare’. In the face of opposition not only from the Labor party, but also from many within his own party, I wasn’t sure why Tony Abbott had staked so much on this scheme. Why spend so much political capital? What was his driving motivation? But then I read a fascinating article by Angela Shanahan that was printed in *The Weekend Australian* on 10 August.

Shanahan recalled a conversation that she had had with Abbott some year ago, before he had become a minister in the Howard government. The topic was Australia’s 100,000 abortions a year. ‘Who is having abortions?’ Abbott asked. ‘Why are there so many?’ Shanahan reports that she drew his attention to the relatively low teenage pregnancy and abortion rate. Most abortions were not performed on teenagers but on women in their 20s, including a number on married women in their 30s, who cite financial expense as the main reason for their abortions. Shanahan wrote:

I was and still am sceptical about this reasoning, as a mother in the world's best and richest country. But it was part of a totality of a picture that interested Abbott. Not only are we having too many abortions and not enough children; but we don't seem to support women when they most need it: when they are young mothers saddled with a mortgage.

Today there are worthy campaigns seeking to provide legislative protection to children in the womb. It’s a real and valid pathway to promoting the sanctity of life in Australia. And yet legislation is not the only avenue in the pro-life movement. We need also to look at the root causes. Why are women getting abortions? Who are they? These are valid questions, and Shanahan suggests an answer: working women in their 20s and 30s who fear the financial costs of raising a child – the very women targeted by Abbott in his paid parental leave scheme. Shanahan continues:

So the reasoning behind Abbott's PPL scheme is more complex than most of his critics will acknowledge. It is a long-term aim, part of cultural change. The scheme is ultimately part of encouraging fertility and that is why Abbott will not back down.

Shanahan is not wholly uncritical of the scheme, and yet her comments give some insight into Abbott’s possible motivations. As recent reports declare that first home buyers are taking up a smaller and smaller percentage of the housing market, we should not be ignorant of the financial anxieties and stresses that young people face. As much as we may believe that no value can be placed on the value of a human life, we can also grow in understanding of the real motivations behind abortion. Cost pressures will never be the only factor, and yet a scheme that provides income protection to pregnant, working women may go some way in addressing the tragedy that qualifies every achievement of modern Australia.

This issue of *Life News* does not include our usual ‘Snippets’, however the news stream remains strong. The good news is that the NSW lower house has passed a bill which recognizes a 20 week old foetus as a living person. Dubbed ‘Zoe’s Law’, the bill will go to the NSW upper house sometime next year. The troubling news is that the Tasmanian Parliament has passed a bill under which even silent protests within 150 metres of an abortion clinic will be illegal. Further, doctors who refuse to recommend an abortion will now be required to provide patients with material outlining where they can obtain information about terminations.

On the euthanasia front, good news is that the NZ Labor MP Maryan Street has withdrawn her ‘End of Life Choices’ Bill following widely publicized weaknesses and pressure from fellow Labor MPs to withdraw the bill in preparation for an election next year.

‘Snippets’ will return next issue, which will be published by a new yet-to-be-announced editor. My heartfelt thanks to the LFL Council and members for their support over the past five years. Happy reading!

Thomas Pietsch



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Blessings of the Baby

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development of the embryo but about the tender intimacy of the Creator as he carries his creation through zygote, to embryo to fetus and birth. This whole process is one of sanctifying love and we have the deepest revelation of it, when the angel of God first spoke to Mary. She conceived and in his love God sanctified the embryonic form of humanity forever.



In becoming the embryonic flesh in Mary's womb Jesus took upon himself all embryonic flesh inside every human womb. He shows us how much he values, how much he loves, a person, even at the very beginning of human life. It's no wonder that when the, as yet, unborn John the Baptist first heard Mary's greeting that he leapt inside his mother's womb (Luke 1:41).

If God holds infants, even unborn ones, as so precious then how we relate to them and especially at this time to baby Kiera, tells us a lot about how we relate to God; how tender we are towards him, how comforted we are by him, and how willing we are to entrust ourselves to him.

Baby Kiera was born out of love between Phillip and Jenna. Although she was with them for a very short time she had already been given 24 weeks of life since she was conceived. That's 24 weeks of being knit together, lovingly formed and watched over by the creator himself. 24 weeks of history cocooned as she was in her mother's womb. 24 weeks to hear music, respond to voices, begin to appreciate some foods and dislike others. If she could have spoken she would have said; "This is living, I am alive". And if there had been enough room inside her little haven for a few friends she would have already begun to exert her will and demand her way (Hosea 12:3). In fact, even then, even while still in the womb, she would have given ample evidence of the truth of the Psalmist's words, *I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5)*. This is why from the very beginning, little Kiera was overwhelmed by God's grace. Isaiah says, *Listen to me..... Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name (Isaiah 49:1)*.

Phillip and Jenna, you were instrumental in giving Kiera birth but it was God who gave her life. Then, in his infinite love, he flooded her heart with his grace and took her home to glory. It is as though he saw the pain and anguish, the anger and animosity and alienation all around her and said, "I've got something better for you, come on home straight away". And God took her. How can I be so sure? Because if he commands us to welcome infants in his name how much more surely must he so welcome them. Jesus said, *"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."* (Luke 9:48).

To welcome little Kiera in the Father's name is to have the Father himself welcome her through our greeting.

So, what can we say, but to know that the God of great grace will wipe away her tears from now on, he will enfold her in his everlasting arms, and be her comfort, her shield and her exceeding great reward.

Lutherans for Life Branches:

Riverland Branch (Serving the Riverland area of South Australia; established in September 1989)
Contact Person : Mrs Lois Rathjen 08 8584 5706

New Zealand Branch (Established in June 1991)
Contact Person : Dr Petrus Simons 04 476 9398

Sunshine Coast Branch (Serving the Sunshine Coast area of QLD; established in Aug 1992)
Contact Person : Mr Norm Auricht 07 5443 6849

Darling Downs Branch (Serving the Darling Downs area of Queensland; re-established in Oct 2005)
Contact Person : Mrs Joy Wurst 07 4613 4189

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Faith Perspectives on Same-Sex Marriage

Chelsea Pietsch

LFL Secretary Chelsea Pietsch was invited to be a panellist at a recent interfaith symposium on marriage hosted by the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. The panellists, who also included a Muslim and Orthodox Jew, were invited to discuss the topic 'Faith Perspectives on the Proposal to Legislate for Same Sex Marriage'. Below are Chelsea's opening remarks.

Challenging the belief that love = marriage

The desire to love and to be loved is a powerful emotion. We are, after all, made in the image of God, who is Love Himself. Therefore it makes sense that we seek love in our lives, even if we do so unconsciously or imperfectly.

Many people today equate marriage with love, claiming that that any two people who are deeply committed to each other or "in love" ought to be able to marry. However this, at least in my mind, is to misunderstand what marriage actually is. Marriage is not merely a union of love between two people. If it were, it would be bigotry to insist that marriage must necessarily be heterosexual. It would also be bigotry to suggest that marriage must only be between two people. So, if marriage cannot be defined as a loving, caring union between two people, what is it?

Teaching in Sacred Scripture

According to the Scriptures, marriage is the life-long and exclusive union of one man and one woman. The Book of Genesis says:

"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him... So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said: 'This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.'" (Genesis 2: 18, 21-23)

This passage describes a union that is certainly one of companionship and friendship. It describes woman as "a helper" so that man might not be alone. This isn't to suggest that woman is lesser than man, for she was formed out of his side, not his foot, and is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

What Genesis describes is not just an emotional or intellectual connection, but a comprehensive union of the self: heart, mind and body. Of course it is possible for same sex couples to experience bodily union in some sense. However, this falls short of the "one flesh" union that occurs when male and female are joined together despite or perhaps because of their difference.

There is something deeply profound about this one flesh union between man and woman. It's so unique that it is capable of bearing the fruit of life itself. In fact, nothing is more life-giving than heterosexual sex. While there are many gifts in marriage, one of the most obvious, distinctive, and natural gifts is that of a new child, who is in every sense the "one flesh" of his or her parents. This is something that is unique to heterosexual unions, and that no same-sex partnership is capable of attaining, as they are not intrinsically capable of conceiving children.

Of course there are also heterosexual couples who are unable to conceive, although this represents an entirely different problem. Infertility – whether temporary or permanent – does not prevent heterosexual couples from becoming "one-flesh". Their union is still distinctively unique and is still intrinsically geared towards procreation, even if conception never takes place. While infertility can be a huge source of grief, such couples can still enjoy meaningful marriages, often bearing fruits in ways that parents with children cannot.

What is also revealed from the Scriptures is God's intention for marriage to be exclusive and permanent. Man leaves his father and mother to form his own family for they 'are no longer two, but one.' Again, this is true irrespective of whether or not a couple are able to conceive for Christ says: '[w]hat God has joined together, let man not sepa-

rate' (Matthew 19:86). The exclusivity and permanency of marriage benefits any children born as a result of marital union. It provides them with knowledge of their biological identity, and a place in which they can grow and be nurtured by both sexes.

The beauty and significance of marriage also has a deeper reality because it reflects the relationship between Christ and his Church. Just as Christ laid down his life for the Church, Christian men are called to show a sacrificial love towards their wives as wives are called to submit to their husbands. Thus we are called to serve one another in love and mutual submission.



Teaching in Sacred Scripture Reflected in the Order of Creation

I have just described what I understand to be a Christian view of marriage. However it is the State, which is the lawmaking institution for all Australians, that is receiving appeals to legalise same-sex marriage. Thus, while the State might be interested in my 'faith perspective' on marriage – as it may be yours – it must ultimately assess the merit of our arguments on the basis of what can be received by all Australians as promoting the common good, and not just Christians or adherents of any other faith.

But as it so happens, the State has generally understood marriage in terms similar to the Church i.e. 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'. This is no coincidence, but reveals that God's law with respect to marriage is evident in nature itself. Even without biblical references, it is possible to have an understanding that, in marriage, the two sexes join to make a one flesh union. Even without biblical references, it is also still the case that the union between a man and woman is inherently procreative.

While same-sex couples may find avenues through which to have children, the reality is that these chil-

dren are not an intrinsic product of their union. The danger of pursuing procreation as an extrinsic good is that children are easily commodified: they can become a thing to be had rather than a gift to be bestowed.

As we have already discussed, some may argue that marriage is merely a contract between two consensual adults who wish to make a public commitment of love for each other. And to restate, if marriage were defined that way, it would be discriminatory not to recognise other unions. But when such an argument is raised, we need to ask ourselves: what interest does the State have in regulating private relationships? In my mind, the State does not have an interest in regulating relationships merely on the basis of love, no matter how committed. The State does, however, have an interest in encouraging and protecting the relationship that binds together the most basic unit of society: father, mother, and child.

Religious Freedom

While I think there are rational grounds for retaining a traditional definition of marriage, it is of course not inconceivable that this definition may change over time. If this is the case, families may be hurt or fail to form. One of my personal concerns would also be the effect on the Church and other religious groups. Would the Church be forced to conduct or bless marriages, contrary to its public teaching?

We hear time and time again from legislators that this isn't the case. However, this reassurance isn't really sustainable when we consider that the whole basis for redefining marriage is the view that traditional marriage lacks a rational basis and therefore is nothing but mere bigotry. We would have to work hard to ensure that the freedoms of the Church are maintained. Without these freedoms, the State exceeds its rightful jurisdiction and risks becoming a secular theocracy.

Conclusion

I believe that marriage is the free, total, mutual, exclusive and permanent bond between a man and a woman, who together represent a reproductive whole. This is not, in my understanding, a question of unjust discrimination nor an attempt to exclude those who identify as same-sex from entering into meaningful relationships. Rather, it is a matter of treating like cases alike, and different cases differently, and proposing a definition of marriage that is grounded in truth, and accessible to all.

ALC Graduate Dinner

Christian Fandrich

On the eve of the 2013 National Conference, three members of LFL council, the ALC Pastoral Ministry Graduates, and their wives, gathered at the Daniel O'Connell in North Adelaide for dinner. It was an opportunity for the soon-to-be pastors to engage with the work of *Lutherans for Life*, and to hear Dr Greg Pike speak about mental health outcomes in relationship to abortion.

I was impressed by Dr Pike's matter of fact presentation of the current research available. What stood out for me was the relatively little statistical information there is available regarding abortion (SA has the 'best') and the relative dearth of research done on mental health outcomes in relation to the surgical procedure. From available evidence, it is estimated that in South Australia some five thousand abortions are performed every year. Ninety seven percent (97%) are performed for what one might call 'social reasons'.

What I had not expected to hear was that there is no "smoking gun" that demonstrates a clear and strong causative connection between abortion and poor mental health outcomes. Dr Pike, an experienced researcher in human physiology (neurobiology and membrane biophysics) and in surgical clinical trials, said with candour that, "As a researcher you have to be honest about the facts that you have before you as unexpected or as un hoped for as they might be".

This does not mean to say though, that there is no evidence of abortion having a negative mental health impact. Research done by a respected New Zealand researcher asked the question the other way, "Does abortion lead to a positive mental health outcome?" The answer was a clear 'no', the evidence pointing in the direction that it does indeed have a negative impact. Some estimations state that abortion contributes somewhere from 10-20 percent of the mental disorder burden in women. That is still a significant amount, its impact likely being enmeshed in the complex myriad of other factors that also lead to poorer mental health.

However, theologically and pastorally, this lack of a "smoking gun" may well be revealing our society's increasing cognitive dissonance¹ on the



Dr Pike is former director of the Southern Cross Bioethics Institute, and founding director of the Adelaide Centre for Bioethics and Culture, established earlier this year. See www.bioethics.org.au for more information.

matters of life. In 2012 there were 94 road crash deaths in South Australia², and I am sure nearly all appeared in the news, and rightfully caused public concern and repeated calls from police to drive safely. However, some 5000 children were silently killed in the same year. And so our society deals with the unease caused by this cognitive dissonance by calling abortion a 'private matter' or simply a 'medical procedure', and the discarded children mere 'foetuses' and 'not human life yet'.

The students and their wives appreciated gathering with us, and also the generosity and hospitality of *Lutherans for Life* members (you). At the end of the dinner each student was presented with copy of Gilbert Meilaender's *Bioethics: a primer for Christians* to aid their future pastoral ministry.

¹ A psychological term to describe is the discomfort or unease experienced when one simultaneously holds two or more conflicting cognitions, i.e. ideas, beliefs, values.

² South Australian Police Statistics http://www.sapolice.sa.gov.au/sapol/road_safety/road_statistics.jsp

Photos from LFL Conference 2013



Clockwise from top left: Kimberley Pfeiffer; Dennis Hood MLC; Selena Ewing; Christian Fandrich; Jason Pokela and Matthew Huckel.

LFL Conference 2013

The 2013 Lutherans For Life conference was held on 5 October at St Peter's Lutheran Church, Elizabeth, SA. The title of the conference was 'For the Least of These', drawing on Matthew 25:40 where Christ says: *'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

The first speaker of the day was music therapist (and ALC student) Matthew Huckel, who presented a moving account of his work with a man in a persistent vegetative state.

Bioethicist Kimberly Pfeiffer took the audience on a journey through the beginning of life, and offered beautiful reflections on the unique bond between mother and child.

Mother of seven, Selena Ewing, talked about the inherently pro-life nature of sharing a meal with others, and encouraged conference attendees to open their hearts, homes and fridges to those in need.

Speaking of food, the St Peter's ladies guild put on a generous lunch over which friends, old and new, continued to discuss the days' events and goo and ga over all the babies present.

Despite their busy schedules, both Dennis Hood MLC and Dr Rob Pollnitz blessed the conference with their presence and gave insight into some of the legislation that had been considered in SA and around the nation.

At the AGM, the council discussed its plans to review



the governance of LFL in consultation with the LCA. More details to come on this in the coming months!

President of Lutherans for Life, Dr Christian Fandrich, closed the day with a pastoral reflection, reminding those present of what Christ has done for us.

Despite extensive advertising and a great line up of speakers, there was room for many more to attend. (Perhaps there are more effective ways of getting LFL's message "out there"?)

However, this did not dampen the spirits of those present. It was indeed a challenging, encouraging and uplifting day for all.

Thanks again to all involved!

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