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LFL Treasurer, Christine Lockwood
15 Memorial Drive
Mt Barker SA 5251

Thank you for updating your details

Following a note in our last *Life News* we have received a number of updated membership addresses. If your details remain incorrect, please write to Lutherans for Life, c/- 14 Wellington Square, North Adelaide, SA, 5006.

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(Privacy note: Membership information is used only for LFL membership.)

Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Rev/Dr _____

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(please tick) New Membership _____ OR Membership renewal _____

Please charge my Bankcard _____ Card number _____

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Life News

Volume 25, Number 2

Promoting the Sanctity of Life

September 2009

Inside this issue:

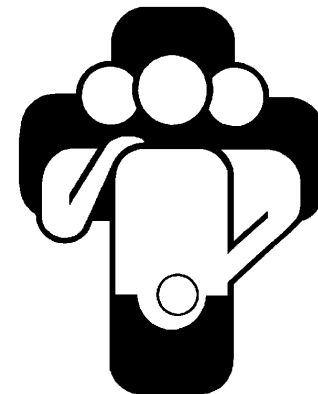
Life News Changes 2

Lutherans for Life
2009 Conference 3

P&A Points 4

World Snippets 6

Become a member 8



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On Death and Dumbness

Watching the news last week, a story came up that caught my eye. A Perth man was pictured being wheeled out from a court house, surrounded by lawyers and reports. Despite the crowd, he appeared to be alone. There was no sight of family or friends.

His name was Christian Rossiter. He had been an able bodied man – a mountain climber and a bush walker. However in 2004 he was hit by a car and following two further accidents became quadriplegic. Since 2008 he has been confined to a wheelchair in a nursing home. At 49 years old, he spends his days in front of a television. With the prospect of several decades of this life in front of him, it is perhaps understandable that Rossiter might want to die. After Job had suffered his own series of crippling calamities, he cried out in despair, lamenting the day he was born: *Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave?* Such strong despair, such desperate despondency is a not uncommon experience this side of glory.

Hungering for answers

But while Job took up his complaint with God, Rossiter began to take up his own complaint with his nurses. In his desperation he began asking the staff at his nursing home to stop feeding him so that he could starve to death. At first the nurses refused his request, but after some time the management decided to seek legal help – could they keep forcing a client to do something against his will? Shouldn't they respect his autonomy? The case found its way to the Supreme Court of Western Australia. What I was watching on the news was the occasion of the final verdict. Chief Justice Wayne Martin ruled that the operators of the nursing home could indeed go along with Rossiter's request. In ruling thus, Martin stressed that the case was simply about what the legal obligations of the nursing home are, and that it should not set a precedent for the 'right to die'. There are, however, a number of commentators that dispute this, and only time will tell what kind of precedent this ruling sets. But I don't think the legal ruling is necessarily the most startling aspect to this case.

As I watched Mr Rossiter being wheeled out of the court, swamped by lawyers and reporters, I was struck by his sheer loneliness. The man had just revealed to the court the depths of his depression. In a statement read out by his lawyer,

Continued on page 7

Changes to *Life News*

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1.9)

While we must certainly pay heed to the writer of Ecclesiastes, the new way in which old wrongs are promoted remains shocking to many of us. The gift of life has always been challenged, but the modern methods which promote what John Paul II called ‘the culture of death’ loom large in our visions. Today there is a need, as much as there ever has been, to promote the sanctity of life. That is, to affirm God’s gift of life as a great blessing and not as a curse. You see as Christians, we are not ultimately in the business of saying ‘no’. For as our Lord tells us through that beautiful phrase of St Paul, in Christ Jesus all things are ‘yes’ for all the promises of God find their ‘yes’ in Him (2 Cor 1.19-20).

But make no mistake, the business of saying ‘yes’ from time to time involves saying ‘no’. God does not sanction evil. To what is evil, to what does not accord to the promises of God, He says ‘no’. But he says this ‘no’ only so that He can proclaim His ‘yes’.

So *Life News* exists in order to say ‘yes’ with

Jesus. ‘Yes’ to children in the womb, and out of the womb, ‘yes’ to those suffering illness or dying, ‘yes’ to the elderly, ‘yes’ to the weak, ‘yes’ to God’s Word that His creation is ‘very good’. Of course we cannot refrain from saying ‘no’ from time to time. But we do so in order that our ‘yes’ might ring true and loud, proclaiming that love of Christ which has been, is now, and will be.

With a change of editor, *Life News* has undergone a few changes. You will notice the new layout which we hope you like. We have revised the content structure too, and over the coming issues hope to include some new items. In particular, we hope to include pieces that help you care for all people in truth and love, promoting the sanctity of life. One immediate way that you can be engaged is by attending the Lutherans for Life conference on 26 September – in a few weeks. This week it’s being held in Adelaide and will be a wonderful occasion. See the opposite page for more information.

We would love to hear from you. Whether it is about the changes to layout (do you miss the green?), articles you would like to see, issues you would like to be tackled, or anything else. Please contact the editor at LN.editor@gmail.com. So together we may all say ‘yes’ to the gift of life.

‘I’ve noticed that everyone who is for abortion is already born.’ Ronald Reagan

Prolife Profile: Eunice Kennedy

The recent media coverage of the death of US Senator Edward Kennedy, brother to the late John F. Kennedy, has been extensive. Less extensive, however, has been the reporting of his older sister who died only two weeks earlier on 11 August. Eunice Kennedy was a remarkable woman who worked tirelessly for the disadvantaged. One of her great achievements was the founding and popularizing of the Special Olympics. While her Senator



brother became a supporter of abortion, she remained a pro-life campaigner all her life and was a prominent member of Feminists for Life. In her address at the opening of the Special Olympics she proclaimed: ‘The world said that people with intellectual problems should not be seen in public. Tonight, you are part of the year’s largest sporting event, and the world is watching.’ May she rest in peace.

On Death and Dumbness (continued from page 1)

Rossiter said that he hoped to starve to death while taking painkillers and watching Foxtel to pass the time. While one might hope that the humane response would be to comfort the man, in this sterile setting there was no one at Rossiter’s side to love him, or tell him that his life was precious. People were only interested in him because he wanted to be killed. It was even reported that a foreign television channel hoped to install a webcam to film Rossiter die, should he take that path.



On being dumb *news.com.au*

It reminded me of a story I read about a few years ago. Police near an Ivy League university in America were called on campus one day following the discovery of a suicide. The young man who took his life had been one of the brightest of the bright and his intelligence had given him a place at one of the most exclusive colleges on campus. It was a place reserved for only the best students. Wasn’t this suicide a shock? What the police found when they began to investigate was that the young man had made known his plans to kill himself some weeks earlier. Talking to a number of friends in his college, he coolly informed them of his intentions to end his life – he had been finding life too stressful. When the police asked how these friends had responded, they were shocked to hear that they had said nothing. If that was what their friend wanted to do, who were they to get in the road of his plans? Surrounded by people who couldn’t offer even one reason why he should stay alive, it must have been a depressing end for this sorry student.

Commenting on Rossiter’s case, that tireless campaigner for euthanasia Philip Nitschke said that by

keeping euthanasia illegal, Australia was languishing in the Dark Ages. But I think we are much more in the dark for having nothing to say to Rossiter. When a culture or society cannot even say to one of its own that his life is worthwhile – that it is good that he is alive – we are languishing in the Dark Ages. When we can muster up no words of reassurance or love, but remain dumb in response to a cry for help, then we are dying too.

Maximising care not minimizing suffering

When John Barich of the Australian Family Association was asked about Rossiter, he responded: ‘Really, what we should be doing is looking after each other rather than facilitating an escape’. It reminded me of something that the Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender once wrote:

‘The principle that governs Christian compassion, however, is not “minimize suffering.” It is “maximise care.” Were our goal only to minimize suffering, no doubt we could sometimes achieve it most effectively by eliminating *sufferers*. But then we refuse to understand suffering as a significant part of human life that can have meaning or purpose. We should not, of course, pretend that suffering in itself is a good thing, nor should we put forward claims about the benefits others can reap from their suffering. Jesus in Gethsemane – who shrinks from the suffering to come but accepts it as part of his calling and obedience – should be our model here. The suffering that comes is an evil, but the God who in Jesus has not abandoned us in that suffering can bring good from it for us as for Jesus... Our task, therefore, is not to abandon those who suffer but to “maximise care” for them as they life out their own life’s story.’

When Rossiter was asked whether following the court ruling he would now starve himself, he responded: ‘I want to end my life, but after I speak to a medical professional... He could dissuade me. I have to seek advice. There’s a possibility I could still be dissuaded.’ While we are not near to Christian Rossiter, we can love him by praying for him, that he may indeed be dissuaded and that he may continue to live out his own life’s story.

- Thomas Pietsch

Snippets from around the world

Indian husband and in-laws arrested for forcing five sex-selection abortions

Vastrapur police are reported to have arrested Priyavadan Bhatt and his parents after his 32-year-old wife, Amisha Yagnik, complained to police that in 8 years of marriage they had forced her to have five abortions (when ultrasound scans showed the fetus to be female) plus demanding dowry and subjecting her to physical and emotional abuse. Yagnik has left the Bhatt family home and returned to her own family in Sakal. She was pregnant again when she left the Bhatts and says that her daughter, Kamya, would not have been born had she remained with her husband. (Lifenews.com)

In the USA, census data reveals that many Asian-American families similarly have a strong cultural preference for male children. Overall more boys are born in the USA by a ratio of 1.05 to 1 (as in Australia). But among US families of Indian, Chinese and Korean descent, if the first two children are girls then the ratio for a third child is 1.51 to 1 – or about 50 per cent greater – in favour of boys. These families are believed to use sperm sorting, in vitro fertilisation or abortion to achieve a male child. Foreign-born couples report that the pressure for a male child often comes from the husband’s parents. IVF Dr Jeffrey Steinberg comments – “It’s a real touchy thing. Sex selection is illegal in Asia, and culturally (here), it’s private.” In the USA the various forms of sex selection can cost US\$15,000. The census data does not show a similar preference for males among Japanese-Americans. (NYTimes)

Anglicans split after US vote to ordain practicing homosexual men and women as bishops

The unity of the world-wide Anglican Communion was reported to be in tatters in mid July after the Episcopal Church in America voted in favour of ordaining openly gay men and lesbian women as bishops. The American convention also voted to “collect and develop theological resources and liturgies for same-sex holy unions”. The decisions oppose a moratorium put in place 3 years ago at the last General Convention, and can be seen as a snub to world leader the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who had pleaded with the Americans to avoid schism. Forty-five American bishops voted against the resolution, and it seems likely they will combine to form a breakaway conservative Anglican church in America. (TheTablet.com)

Switzerland may close assisted suicide clinics

The Swiss government is considering banning the

Zurich clinics that provide lethal doses to patients on request. So far 117 Britons are reported to have ended their lives with the help of the pro-euthanasia group Dignitas, and more than 800 are currently registered with the controversial group. A former worker for Dignitas, Soraya Wernli, says that after two years of working at the suicide clinic she came to see it not as a compassionate place but as a money-making killing machine taking advantage of the sick and depressed and disabled. Dignitas is reported to charge about \$A8,000 for each death it assists. Under current Swiss law assisted suicide is legal only for those with a terminal illness. (Austrian Times)

Since this report Dignitas has achieved added notoriety by providing lethal doses for famous British orchestra conductor Sir Edward Downes (85) and his wife Joan (74). The British media report that Sir Edward was not terminally ill but wanted to die alongside his ailing wife of 54 years, and the couple were supported in their decision and accompanied to Zurich by their son Caractacus (41) and their daughter Boudicca (39). Under British law assisting others to commit suicide is a criminal offence, but no-one travelling to Zurich with a family member has yet been charged. In July the British Medical Association voted against legalising assisted suicide or lifting the threat of prosecution from “friends and relatives who accompany loved ones to die abroad”, and the House of Lords defeated a bill that would have made such suicide tourism lawful. (NYTimes)

World’s oldest IVF mother at age 66 dies at age 69

Maria Carmen del Bousada, a single woman who became the world’s oldest mother through anonymous egg and sperm donations in 2006, has died from breast cancer 30 months after giving birth to twin sons in Barcelona. The retired shop worker had sold her house in Cadiz to raise the \$70,000 she needed for the IVF treatment in America. Later she admitted to telling the Los Angeles IVF doctors that she was 55 and to faking documents to get around their age limits. Ms Bousada sold her story to the News of the World for an undisclosed sum, saying that her mother lived to age 101, and she expected to see her sons grow into adulthood. Her brother said that the family will care for the orphaned boys. It seems likely that the high-dose hormones used over multiple IVF cycles may have contributed to the rapid advance of her breast cancer. (TimesOnline)



▶▶ free to *live*



Lutherans For Life

2009 annual conference: Promoting a culture of life

▶▶ **featuring contemporary life issues presented by leading keynote speakers:**

- ▶ stem-cell update ▶ abortion — the Victorian story
- ▶ should Australia adopt a bill of rights ▶ flash point — euthanasia
- ▶ date: Saturday, 26 September, 9.00am — 3.00pm
- venue: Bethlehem House, 170 Flinders Street, Adelaide
- cost: \$20 adults / \$10 concession (includes lunch)
- rsvp and information: lutheransforlife@gmail.com or **08 7225 0369**

LFL Conference Next Week

Do you wonder about how our society values life? Do you want to hear more about some of the unspoken trends in society? Do you need encouragement as you live out the love of Christ? You’ll find no better place than the 2009 Lutherans for Life Conference.

Each year, Lutherans for Life holds a conference. It’s a chance for people to gather together to hear about some of the most pressing issues of the day. Perhaps because of their sensitive nature, we don’t always talk about issues like abortion or euthanasia. Or perhaps we think issues like embryonic stem cells or a bill of rights won’t really affect us much. But these issues are becoming of greater and fundamental importance in our society. The statistics speak for themselves. However on top of this, many of us are confronted with life issues as we love and care for people around us. And while, except in the sorry case of abortion, our laws still protect many of the weak and vulnerable, they are under threat. The LFL Conference is a rare opportunity to hear keynote speakers address these very core issues in the Christian context.

In the past years conferences have been held in regional areas, but this year we are in the centre of Adelaide. It is an ideal time for all Christians, and especially those in positions of authority, to come and receive an update on these core issues, and encouragement to live out God’s love.

‘To say a child is unwanted says nothing about the child, but it says much about the person who does not want his or her child.’ Jean Staker Garton, president of LFL USA.

Prayer and

WA court allows withdrawal of medical tube feeding

Quadruplegic Christian Rossiter has won a landmark legal case in the WA (Perth) Supreme Court, ruling that as a competent adult he has the right to request that his medical tube feedings can be withdrawn if he so chooses, provided he is fully informed of the consequences of ceasing food and fluids. If Mr Rossiter makes this choice he can request palliative care medications to minimise any distress in the process of dying. AMA president Dr Andrew Pesce dismissed media comment that this was a legalisation of euthanasia – “This is a withdrawal of treatment, not a decision to administer a lethal dose to end a patient’s life, so I don’t accept this as a form of euthanasia.” (watoday.com)

Call to extend x-rated pornography ban to all of Australia

The United Nations has expressed concern that the ban of x-rated pornography in Northern Territory indigenous communities might be discriminatory. While some have called for these bans to be lifted, Australian Christian Lobby Managing Director Jim Wallace has called for the bans to be applied to all Australian communities. “The Little Children Are Sacred report released by the NT Government in June 2007, identified pornography as one of the main drivers of an epidemic of sexual abuse which included the rape of babies and a case of a 17-year-old forcing younger children to watch pornography and then act it out,” Mr Wallace said. “Given the way pornography helped fuel documented cases of sexual abuse in NT indigenous communities it would be irresponsible in the extreme to put more children at risk by lifting the pornography bans there. However, there is certainly a case to be made that the bans are discriminatory when this situation wouldn’t be confined to indigenous communities.” Mr Wallace went on: “There would be many other communities in Australia - even some in our major cities - which are isolated by lack of opportunity and social disadvantage and would be as badly affected by pornography. Surely all children need protecting.” Mr Wallace called on the Federal Government to begin by

Former PM John Howard says a Bill of Rights would restrict debate on life issues

In the 2009 Menzies Lecture, recently delivered in WA, former PM John Howard has warned that a Bill of Rights would mean that frank and open Parliamentary debates on life issues would be ‘a thing of the past’. Praising the manner in which elected representatives had carried out such debates, Howard said that the many of these deliberations would be handed over to the judiciary under a Bill of Rights: ‘If the American and Canadian experience is any guide, issues such as abortion and gay marriage would not be resolved by our elected representatives. They will have surrendered that right to the courts’. Mr Howard stressed that these important issues should be resolved by the peoples’ representatives, not by judges. (theaustralian.com.au)

Action Points

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh opts to keep abortion in the criminal code, despite her personal support

Queensland’s abortion providers are in disarray following a warning by the Solicitor-General that their legal protection may be in doubt, following comments by a judge in a recent case. Many abortion providers have ceased performing some abortions, causing some women to travel interstate. While abortion is a widespread practice in clinics and hospitals, it remains an offence in the criminal code. In an effort to protect doctors, the Labor Government has introduced legislation aimed at restoring a doctor's legal defence against the possibility of criminal charges arising from an abortion. While Victoria and the ACT have decriminalized abortion, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has refused to introduce legislation that would take abortion out of the criminal code. Ms Bligh has reiterated her own position in favour of decriminalising abortion, however feels that there is not sufficient support in parliament or in the wider community. (theaustralian.com)

Tasmanian Green attempts to legalize euthanasia

The leader of the Tasmanian Greens Party, Nick McKim, has introduced a private members bill to legalize euthanasia in the Tasmanian Parliament. The *Dying with Dignity Bill 2009* has been referred to a joint Parliamentary Committee which is currently hearing public submissions. Prominent euthanasia campaigner Philip Nitschke has already presented to the committee but the Australian Christian Lobby has said that Nitschke failed to reassure the committee that the legislation wouldn’t be abused. “Dr Nitschke continues to trumpet his desire for euthanasia to be legalised throughout Australia and internationally, leaving a cloud of unanswered questions behind him about the role depression has played in people’s deaths and whether some who have been killed have not even been terminally ill,” AGL Tasmanian Director Nick Overton said today. Liberal member Mr Rene Hidding has stated, “We want people to come to Tasmania because it’s a beautiful place to live, not an easy place to die.” The submissions continue. (au.christiantoday.com)

Win for Pro-Lifers in New Zealand

A High Court ruling has reminded the federal agency responsible for overseeing abortions that it needs to abide by national law. In reponse to a court case launched by NZ Right to Life accusing the abortion watchdog committee of allowing illegal abortions, High Court Judge Forrest Miller said: ‘I found that the Committee has failed over many years to exercise some of its statutory powers at all... it is not possible to say how many unlawful abortions have been performed’. NZ Right to Life had been arguing that the Abortion Supervisory Committee had been allowing abortions on alleged mental health grounds that are not necessary for women’s health. (lifeneews.com)