

Snippets continued...

tried, using 352 precious human eggs to make 27 embryos, none of which survived long enough to yield a single stem cell. This year the cloning act came up for review, and observers were not surprised when the pro-science panel recommended that the current legislation need not be amended. Fortunately in 2011 no laboratory wants to do cloning, as all the advances are being made with adult stem cells. (David van Gend) See www.quadrant.org.au/magazine/issue/2011/11/cloning-the-blighted-science

Internet addiction – not just a Japanese disease

For an older generation of Japanese the defining work hazard was Karoshi, the salaryman’s death from overwork. For the post-1970 generation it is Hikikomori – severe social withdrawal, often linked with addiction to the internet and video games and marked by a strong aversion to work.

In The Lancet journal this is described as “modern-type depression, characterised by a shift in values from collectivism to individualism; distress and reluctance to accept prevailing social norms; a vague sense of omnipotence; and avoidance of effort and strenuous work. It seems to mainly affect those who were born after 1970 – ie, the generation growing up with home video games in the era of Japan’s high economic growth. Young people with modern-type depression tend to feel depressed only when they are at work; at other times, they enjoy the virtual world of the internet, video games, and pachinko (similar to pinball). There fore, people with modern-type

depression have difficulties in adapting to work or school and participating in the labour market, similar to those with hikikomori.”

The authors of The Lancet article say doctors in other countries report similar cases, mainly in urban areas, which “might be indicators of a pandemic of psychological problems that the global internet-connected society will have to face in the near future.” (Mercatornet)

US court stops hospital from forcing nurses to assist in abortions

A federal judge has issued a restraining order prohibiting a New Jersey hospital from forcing any of the 12 nurses who objected to take part in abortions. Both federal and state laws prevent employees from being required to perform or assist in abortions. However, in October the hospital sought to enforce a new policy, and when the nurses objected, one reports being told by her supervisor – “We have no regard for your religious beliefs. You will perform the duties assigned to you or your employment will be terminated.” The hospital received nearly \$60 million in federal funding in 2011, funding that is threatened if they are found to be breaching federal law. (lifeneews.com)

The Victorian abortion law that allows abortions right up until the time of birth (with the nod of two abortion clinic doctors) and denies doctors the right to choose not to be involved is reported to be under review.

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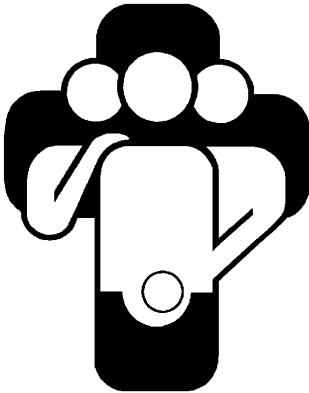
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Life News

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'Unproductive burdens' still have a right to live

David van Gend



Dr David van Gend delivering a version of this article at the 2011 Lutherans for Life Conference, held at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Toowoomba.

There was a moment during the last national debate on euthanasia that deserves to be revisited by a new generation of legislators, a moment that crystallised fears that the so-called right to die would come to be felt by the frailest among us more as a "duty to die".

It was 1995 and our then governor-general, Bill Hayden, was addressing the College of Physicians during debate on the Northern Territory's euthanasia laws. The scene was significant, since the dual concern with euthanasia is the corruption of the relationship between the state and its most vulnerable citizens, and between doctors and their most vulnerable patients.

Our head of state urged doctors to support euthanasia not only as a right, but also as a positive duty towards society. He reflected on past cultures where the elderly would take their lives when their usefulness had passed, and declared of our own culture: "There is a point when the succeeding generations deserve to be disencumbered of some unproductive burdens."

The next day a retired state governor, Mark Oliphant, publicly supported

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Editorial

It’s hard to escape the fact that the free exercise of religion is being challenged in the West. While liberalism has traditionally sought to accommodate different ideas about the human good, it seems that everywhere you look there is a more illiberal force at play, especially when it comes to the pro-life sphere of the church. Examples abound. The Catholic University of America recently decided to go back to single-sex dorms in an effort to help students and reduce the nastiness of the ‘hook-up’ culture on campus. But a law professor from a different university has taken the Catholic University of America to court, insisting that their recent decision is an example of discrimination based on sexual stereotypes.

Also in the USA, in the state of Illinois, a gay advocacy group recently sent a planted couple to a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) agency. This came after the Illinois state legislature had passed a law that any agency which received state funding for adoption and foster care must certify gay couples and place children in gay and lesbian homes. Commenting on this case, LCMS President Matthew Harrison noted that ‘unfortunately our agency chose to capitulate rather than lose \$15 million of funding which it relied on for three quarters of its budget... It’s a tragedy, it’s a denial of first amendment rights, but it’s just the tip of the iceberg... What they will go for next, of course, is the retirement facility and there will be a day in certain states, and probably eventually all states, where church retirement facilities will have to house gay and lesbian couples or lose all state and/or federal funding. That is a multi-billion dollar industry. That’s where it’s going.’ Of course it can be argued that state funding always comes with strings attached. But when new strings appear which are inimical with what the church has always taught and, moreover, are given a sharp tug, Christians can’t help but feel increasingly unwelcome.

Threats to religious freedoms are not foreign to our shores either. Dr David van Gend, whose presentation at the recent 2011 Lutherans for Life Conference is the feature article for this issue of *Life News*, recently found himself the subject of conciliation action taken by the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland. At issue were Dr van Gend’s remarks in an article for Brisbane’s *The Courier-Mail* concerning same-sex marriage. A gay activist from NSW had made a

complaint to the Commission and while the Commission assured van Gend that their decision to accept the complaint ‘does not indicate that the complaint has merit’, he was nevertheless required to attend a compulsory hearing. As Angela Shanahan reported in *The Weekend Australian* (‘Discrimination police indulging in gay abandon’ 15/10/2011), ‘The mere fact the onus was on van Gend to prove his innocence of something that amounts to a person being offended by his point of view should be a warning against this law [the Racial Discrimination Act].’ Shanahan goes on to quote van Gend: ‘I had nothing to ‘conciliate’. I resent being compelled to allocate patient consultation time to converse with this Sydney homosexual activist, as I consider that to be rewarding political harassment... at the personal cost of some thousands in legal advice and time off work, and the wearing of a defamatory accusation of being a hate-speaker and vilifier. [What of] the next complaint that any activist cares to lodge with the commission? I have to go through the same disgusting process.’ Readers may want to look up Angela Shanahan’s original article to see the precise nature of the complaint. It is not inconceivable that statements of church teaching or even proclamations of the Scriptures themselves might attract similar attention under the current legislation.

But it’s not all doom and gloom. All around the country Christians are crying out this Advent ‘O Come, O Come Immanuel and ransom captive Israel’ only to change their song at Christmas to ‘Joy to the World, the Lord is come!’ May the earth always receive her King.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Life News* and consider passing it on to a friend, updating your membership, and praying for the work of Lutherans for Life.

Thomas Pietsch

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Contact Person : Mrs Lois Rathjen 08 8584 5706

[New Zealand Branch](#) (Established in June 1991)
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Snippets

Euthanasia in Federal Parliament - update

Greens leader Senator Bob Brown had his bill to remove the executive power of veto over territory law pass the lower house on 1 November 2011. Now that the Greens hold the balance of power in the Senate the bill will pass there also. This means that any law passed in any territory will need to be denied by both houses of federal parliament before that law can be removed. Mature readers may recall that this is how the Andrews bill of 1997 removed the NT euthanasia law. Dr Philip Nitschke is already pushing for the NT to make another euthanasia law. However, the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 stands in the way of any territory passing a law to allow lethal doses on request. Senator Brown has another bill, the Restoring Territory Rights (Voluntary Euthanasia Legislation) Bill 2010, before the Senate.

This bill would strike down the Andrews law and enable any territory to legislate in favour of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Can concerned readers please write now to all of the Senators in your state or territory urging them to reject this Brown bill. Again, for the latest information, go to www.no euthanasia.org.au

Welcome Baby Seven Billion

Population researchers estimate that on 31 October 2011 our planet became home to seven billion human beings. Some alarmists seek to convince us that this “population explosion” will lead to catastrophe (remember 1968 when Paul Ehrlich published The Population Bomb). However, it seems likely that improvements in health and longevity are driving the population increase. World grain production figures show that we make enough food for every person on earth to consume 3,500 calories daily. World food and resource production have never been higher – it is largely war and greed that prevent equitable distribution of food. As the developing countries improve their prosperity and education their fertility rates are declining. Current best estimates are that the world population will peak at about eight billion in 2040 and then decline. In the developed nations underpopulation is the trend, with over 80 nations showing below replacement fertility (2.1 children per woman). (www.pop.org)

Dutch priest refuses to conduct euthanasia funeral

A Catholic priest in the small town of Liempde in the Netherlands has sparked debate by refusing to say a funeral mass for a man who had opted to die by requesting a lethal dose. Father Norbert van der Sluis also refused to refer the funeral service to another priest so the family of the man had to arrange for the service to be held in another parish. While it seems likely that hundreds of Dutch Catholics have chosen euthanasia in the last decade, this appears to be the

first time a priest has refused a funeral since 2002. Some members of the parish council are reported to be angered by the refusal. The priest says that he is only heeding the rules set down by the Dutch Catholic Bishops. (Bioedge)

UK making adult stem cell synthetic blood for transfusions

Professor Marc Turner of Edinburgh is leading a team making synthetic human blood from stem cells derived from adult bone marrow. Blood from Group O Rhesus Negative donors (the “universal donor” group) can be given to around 99 per cent of people without specific matching. The stem cells can be multiplied indefinitely in the laboratory to produce a large supply of blood. The team will also research using adult skin cells, rewound to their stem cell state, known as induced pluripotent stem cells. Synthetic blood could save crucial time in ambulances and on the battlefield given there would be no need to know the patient’s blood type. Regular recipients of transfusions such as thalassaemia patients may also benefit.

(theaustralian.com.au)

China’s one-child policy costs 400 million lives

Now that China’s one-child policy has been in place of 31 years, Party Secretary Gao Qiang has informed the US Congress that the population of China is 400 million less than it would have been has that policy not been adopted. He went on to say that China had prevented more births than the population of the United States, currently 312 million. Senior Chinese officials speak with pride of the success of their population control policy. Human rights observers are concerned that these numbers are achieved by enforced abortions, some in the final months of pregnancy. There are also reports of infanticide of female babies. Steven Mosher writes – “China is a country where unborn baby girls are selectively aborted, where young men cannot find brides and where young women are trafficked across borders to meet this demand.” Reggie Littlejohn estimates that China continues to have an average of 35,000 abortions every day, compared with 4,000 in the USA and 250 in Australia. (LifeNews)

Australian review clings to cloning human embryos

In 2006 our Federal Senate approved the cloning of human embryos, overturning a ban on creating embryos to be destroyed in research, misled by the scientific lobby to expect major advances in embryonic stem cell cures. Within 12 months of that vote, Yamanaka and colleagues learned to develop induced pluripotent stem cells from adult skin cells, and cloning became unnecessary. Cloning has been a scientific failure worldwide, with no-one making even a single stem cell. In Australia only Sydney IVF have

The Pro-Life Preacher

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opposite. Surely this call includes unborn children, the disabled, those suffering terminal medical conditions and the elderly. It is one thing to oppose abortion and euthanasia, it is another to do all we can to support those who are disabled or those families who struggle to raise their children. This is about keeping the *pro* in pro-life.

TEXT	LECTIONARY
Isaiah 1:1-20 (v 17)	Proper 14 Year C; Proper 26 Year C
Matthew 25:31-40	Proper 29 Year A; New Year's Day Years ABC
Luke 14:1, 7-14 (v 13,14)	Proper 17 Year C
James 1:27	Proper 27 Year B
James 2:5-9	Proper 18 Year B

Texts which refer to the gift of children, and human life in general

Children are seen in many different ways in our culture. For many people a child is still the greatest gift one can be given. However, increasingly children can be seen as a commodity for us to do with as we please, and even worse an inconvenience in the way of our preferred lifestyle. The Bible constantly challenges this worldview, proclaiming that children are a heritage and a blessing from the Lord. New life is a gift from God to be received with thanksgiving.

TEXT	LECTIONARY
Genesis 1:1-2:4 (v 28)	Trinity Year A
Psalms 113 (v 9)	Proper 20 Year C; Visitation Years ABC
Psalms 127 (v 3)	Proper 27 Year B
Psalms 128 (v 3)	Proper 12 Year A
Mark 10:2-16 (v 13-16)	Proper 22 Year B



Texts which speak against the taking of innocent human life

There was a time when the command against the taking of innocent life would have been assumed as a moral absolute. However there is now a tendency to relativise this moral law in many and varied ways. Are we in danger of becoming complicit in these trends if we do not stand up for life? Can we be challenged with Luther's comments that 'you shall not murder' also means to 'help our neighbour to preserve his life'? In regard to those vulnerable people in our society how have we failed in preserving and upholding life?

TEXT	LECTIONARY
Exodus 20:1-20 (v 13)	Transfiguration Year A; Proper 22 Year A; 3 rd Sunday after Lent Year B
Matthew 15:10-28 (v 19)	Proper 15 Year A
Mark 7: 1-23 (v 21)	Proper 17 Year B
Romans 13:8-14	Proper 18 Year A

Joshua Pfeiffer is the pastor of St Paul's Nundah, and a member of the Lutherans for Life council.

Euthanasia in our States—an update

At the time of writing, in SA the Steph Key bill is about to be debated again in the lower house. This is the Criminal Law Consolidation (Medical Defences – End of Life Arrangements) Amendment Bill 2011, that seeks to create a window in our homicide law to allow a treating doctor to give a deliberate lethal dose to a patient aged 18 years or more where the patient claims to have a medical condition that makes life intolerable for them.

There are no safeguards, not even a consent form. It is a protect-the-doctor bill that has absolutely no protection for the patient. Christian MP Leesa Vlahos is moving amendments that remove the permission to provide lethal doses with intent, and also add a

saving clause that nothing in the bill is to allow euthanasia or assisted suicide. If these amendments pass, the bill may be withdrawn.

For the latest information please go to www.no euthanasia.org.au

If the debate continues, please consider writing to MPs to urge them to oppose this bill, which would endanger the lives of the weak and vulnerable members of our community.

In Tasmania, Premier Lara Giddings appears likely to release a discussion paper favouring euthanasia (lethal doses on request) later in November.

2011 Lutherans for Life Conference

On Saturday, 1 October, around 55 people gathered at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Toowoomba, for the 2011 LFL Conference. By all accounts the presentations were of an excellent standard – something that will not surprise seasoned participants of LFL conferences. Speakers included Dr David van Gend, Madeleine Wiedemann, Aidan McLindon MP, Dr Luke McLindon, Noelene Baldry

LFL Council elections were held at the Conference and the Council was re-elected in full. These are the members: Pastor Tim Kowald (President), Chelsea Pietsch (Secretary), Pastor Christian Fandrich (Treasurer), Pastor Joshua Pfeiffer, Amy Mann, Moira Ganner, Roslyn Zadow, Joy Wurst, Jason Pokela and Therese Martens.

Please pray for these council members and for all members of the LFL branches. Those who missed out this year will have another chance with the 2012 LFL Conference. Watch this space for more details!



Madeleine Wiedemann addresses the participants

and Pastor Mark Henderson. One of the papers is presented in this issue of *Life News* and we hope that more will follow. Special thanks goes out to the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church members and Pastor Brenton Fiedler for hosting us so well.



Pastor Mark Henderson giving the final paper

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'Unproductive burdens' still have a right to live

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Hayden's astonishing message to "unproductive burdens" that they should do the right thing by society. This is the callousing of social attitudes, the insidious pressure on the frail and demoralised, that we could expect within a culture of mercy-killing.

A year earlier in Britain, a House of Lords select committee on medical ethics completed the most thorough enquiry into euthanasia ever undertaken, and concluded in stark contrast to Hayden: "The message which society sends to vulnerable and disadvantaged people should not, however obliquely, encourage them to seek death, but should assure them of our care and support in life."

This committee began with a majority in favour of euthanasia, but ended by rejecting it as unsafe and corrupting public policy:

"It would be next to impossible to ensure that every act of euthanasia was truly voluntary. We are concerned that vulnerable people - the elderly, lonely, sick or distressed - would feel pressure, whether real or imagined, to seek early death."

Doctors have no illusions about the pressures that can be felt by vulnerable people.

One patient of mine, a woman with disabilities and minimal self-confidence, received a cruel letter from a close relative effectively telling her she should be dead, and demanding certain arrangements in her will. She then developed cancer.

Consider such family dynamics in a setting of legalised euthanasia, and ask what the "right to die" would mean to a cancer patient so isolated and intimidated.

And the public should have no illusions about the corruptibility of doctors if they are given authority to take life.

According to the Dutch government's own data, doctors in The Netherlands put to death several hundred patients a year without any explicit request, even where the patient is competent to give or withhold consent.

The Dutch officially legalised voluntary euthanasia in 2002 and some claimed that bringing euthanasia "out into the open" in this way would reduce such abuses. Not at all. The Netherlands' 2007 report on euthanasia states that the rate of patients killed "without explicit request" since legalisation in 2002 is "not significantly different from those in previous years".

And why would we expect a reduction?

Doctors who treated the law with contempt when euthanasia was illegal would be even more

comfortable and relaxed about abusing the practice once it was socially approved.

Professors of psychiatry in Brisbane, Frank Varghese and Brian Kelly, warned of the impossibility of protecting patients from "the doctor's unconscious and indeed sometimes conscious wishes for the patient to die" once doctors run the state machinery of mercy-killing.

Even the assertion by euthanasia advocates that psychiatric assessment will protect patients by detecting any depression that might be marring the patient's judgment is shown to be a sham, on the available evidence from the US State of Oregon and the Northern Territory.

In Oregon, for instance, of the 49 patients who died by physician-assisted suicide in 2007 not a single



Some of the gathering at the 2011 LFL Conference

patient was referred for psychiatric assessment prior to taking their lethal drug. In the NT during the period of legal euthanasia (July 1996 to March 1997) there were four deaths, all presided over by euthanasia advocate Philip Nitschke.

Psychiatrist and palliative care specialist David Kissane reviewed Nitschke's cases and made this assessment of the so-called "safeguard" of compulsory psychiatric assessment:

"Nitschke reported that all patients saw this step as a hurdle to be overcome. Alarminglly, these patients went untreated by a system preoccupied with meeting the requirements of the act's schedules rather than delivering competent medical care to depressed patients."

More than once I have urged Nitschke to study palliative medicine, to broaden his awareness of what can be done for people with advanced disease. When we look after such patients well, thoughts of euthanasia often fade. Then, in the words of one hospice patient who had asked me for euthanasia only the day before, but was now pain-free, "It's a different world, doc."

However, I would not use the argument against euthanasia that "palliative care can ease all suffering". We cannot ease all suffering in dying any more than we can ease all suffering in childbirth, even though we have made enormous progress.

Rejection of euthanasia is not dependent on perfecting palliative care for all patients.

Its rejection is on the grounds of injustice to the weak, as Kevin Andrews made clear on presenting his Euthanasia Laws Bill 1996, which overturned the NT's legislation: "The people who are most at risk are the most vulnerable, and a law which fails to protect vulnerable people will always be a bad law."

We must reject euthanasia both as a corruption of

the doctor-patient relationship and as an insidious oppression of society's "unproductive burdens".

And parliament must reject the Greens' trivialisation of such a momentous issue, their proposal that five politicians on Norfolk Island or nine in the ACT assembly should have authority to transform national culture on a matter of life and death.

David van Gend is a Toowoomba GP and a senior lecturer in palliative medicine at the University of Queensland. (This article does not purport to represent the view, if any, of the university.) This article was first published in The Australian on 25 March 2011.

The Pro-Life Preacher

Joshua Pfeiffer

The Lutheran Church of Australia is pro-life according to our synodically accepted theological statements. But where is this official stance actually acted out? Where is this official teaching actually taught? This is partly the role of Lutherans for Life. We are a synodically sanctioned group whose charge is to promote the sanctity of human life in our circles.

But we also believe that all pastors and leaders in our church have a role in speaking God's truth about His gift of life in their context. Our people are bombarded daily by messages from the culture which tend toward devaluing life rather than promoting it. If these issues are not being spoken about in our congregations our people are likely to simply accept the prevailing opinions.

Because of this we believe it is appropriate that the pressing life-issues of our day are addressed from the pulpit from time to time. To this end we have produced a short list, by no means exhaustive, of some lectionary texts where it may be appropriate to make references to life issues. We assume that the preacher will always be careful to let the references arise out of the text rather than read them into the text. The texts are broken down into four thematic categories and their occasion in the lectionary is given.

Some texts which refer to the dignity of human life

What makes human life special? Is it that we have the ability to reason or feel pain? Is it that we have the ability to interact with others? If so, what are we to make of human life if these abilities slip away? In contrast to any view of human life based

on variable characteristics or abilities, the Bible testifies that human life is sacred because God had bestowed a special glory and honour on it. This is inherent in every human being and cannot be lost through circumstances. The *imago dei* is the foundation of this teaching, the Psalms then give poetic expression to this truth, and Jesus also affirms the special value of human life.

TEXT	LECTIONARY
Genesis 1:1-2:4 (v 26-27)	Trinity Sunday Year A; Easter Vigil Years ABC
Psalms 8	Trinity Sunday Years A, C; Proper 22 Year B; New Year's Day, Years ABC
Psalms 139	Proper 4 Year B; Proper 18, Year C
Matthew 6:26	Epiphany 8 Year A
Matthew 10:29-31	Proper 7 Year A

Texts which encourage Christians to care for the vulnerable members of the human family

The Scriptures show how God consistently looks out for those who are marginalised and vulnerable in society and calls his people to do the same. In a culture where the weaker members are often seen as less valuable, Christians are called to do just the