

# **LIFE** **NEWS**

## ***Promoting the sanctity of life***

**Vol.25 No.1 March 2009**

**The Newsletter of LUTHERANS FOR LIFE Inc.**

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## ***DEVOTION – Not wishful thinking, but reality: a Christian's death is sleep.***

**by Dr Christian Fandrich**

*But brothers we do not want you to be ignorant about those who are sleeping, so that you may not grieve as even the rest do who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in this way too, God, through Jesus, will bring those who have fallen asleep in him. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, authors translation)*

I remember an occasion when, as a junior doctor in a hospice, I informed my senior specialist that 'Mrs Smith' had 'passed on' the previous night. He looked at me and said "No Christian, she didn't pass on ... she died. We don't use euphemisms around here". My words tried to soften the blow, but what a waste of time. I was in a hospice, and of all places there truth should reign.

Other euphemisms of death include; *crossed over, passed away, fell off the perch, kicked the bucket, pushing up daisies*. All attempt to soften death's blow for one basic reason, the fear of death, but in doing so they also deny death's reality. Christians know death is very real, so too its cause, sin. As Paul says "the wages of sin is death". If we're honest about sin we need to be honest about death, and not sugar-coat the truth.

Is Paul sugar-coating the truth when he calls dead Christians "*those who are sleeping*"? No. Euphemisms of death are shallow comfort in the face of hopelessness. But Paul doesn't need the word 'sleep' to soften death's sting, because Christ himself has removed death's sting. Calling a Christian's death 'sleep' is not vain optimism, but the hope-filled reality.

All who die in the faith, are not dead but asleep and alive with Christ.

In death we rest, but Christ is active, he does all the work. Christ has already defeated the power of death, by his death, and in our death he heals and restores us to eternal life.

For us Christians death is no longer punishment for our sin, but rest for our body and soul. Death will not separate us from God but join us even closer with Christ in His rest. A Christian's grave is not a place for despair, but holy ground prepared by the burial of Jesus' own body into the earth. In the face of death we taunt death with St Paul: "*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)*

For us death is like the sleep we will enjoy tonight, and it's no harder for Jesus to raise the dead, than for us to awaken someone from a good night's sleep. We don't need to fear death any more than we do going to bed tonight!

Our culture has an unhealthy attitude to death. Either people are fascinated by it (just count all the murders on TV and computer games), or repulsed by it, avoiding it at all costs. I don't want to obsess over death, nor encourage its hastening, but I do want Christians to speak honestly about death. "Voluntary euthanasia" is the worst of euphemisms, literally meaning "a good death", and not "killing your patient".

Christians can fearlessly face death with hope in Christ. So don't hesitate to speak with your family, friends, doctor, or pastor about death, and to use the word 'death'. Death has no power over us because we have hope.

We also need to speak the plain truth that there is real hopelessness in the face of death without Christ, the world's only hope. Jesus is deadly serious when he says: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.*" (John 14:6)

Calling death "being recycled" (re-incarnation) is a wishful yet hopeless game. Apart from Christ no earthly or spiritual guide, as seen on TV, will help you "cross over" into the light after you've sorted out the things left undone in this life.

Your only hope is to sleep in Christ's care. These are not empty words of comfort, but the joyful reality of a Christian's death.

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## **An Apology & a Position Vacant**

It has been sometime since you have seen an edition of the *Life News*, and for that I extend to you my apologies. During the production the December '08 edition, personal circumstances arose for our Editor, Mrs Joanna Hensley, such that she felt it best to tender her resignation as editor. We extend to you our sincere thanks and appreciation, Joanna, for your energy, focus and unstinting efforts as editor of our newsletter, and we seek God's blessing for you, especially as motherhood responsibilities increase in the near future.

This edition of *Life News* has come a little later than anticipated, being squeezed in between getting over some illness and annual leave, as well as my regular pastoral commitments, while having not yet found an editor to replace Joanna. Hopefully this latter situation will be resolved in the near future.

– Pastor Tim Kowald (President)

## **Treasurer needed!**

Lutherans For Life is still in a re-building phase and has been well served by those who have taken up roles on the LFL Council. One of these valued people has been our Treasurer, Mrs Christine Lockwood. After a number of years of faithful work, Chris has decided to stand down from the role of Treasurer and as a member of the LFL Council. We are thankful to God and grateful to you, Chris, for the energy, commitment, wisdom and Christian heart that you brought to your role on Council. God bless you with all that you need as you step now in new directions, and may He make of you His blessing among others. (*In the short term – that is, until Council can arrange for an interim treasurer; hopefully only through to the end of March? – Chris will ensure moneys are received and accounts are paid*). Should you wish to volunteer, or know of anyone who might be interested in volunteering, to fill this vacancy, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss the matter. I can be contacted by phone on 0410 097 724 or by email at [tim.kowald@lca.org.au](mailto:tim.kowald@lca.org.au)

– Pastor Tim Kowald  
President

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## LFL-ALC DINNER 2008

Last October, on a lovely barmy evening, Lutherans For Life Council hosted a dinner for the 2008 pastoral graduates of Australian Lutheran College. As well as a delicious Indian meal and general chit-chat there was interesting discussion about various life issues and the pastoral placements for 2008.

After dinner our guestspeaker, Mrs Julie Hahn, gave a moving talk about her experiences working with a pro-life group in the USA. Her talk was personal, filled with compassion and grace. Discussion followed about the challenges of approaching the controversial, sensitive issue of abortion in a loving way. There were many positive comments about the evening and speaker.

The LFL Council feels this dinner remains a great opportunity to connect with our future pastors so that they become more aware of LFL as an organisation and the importance of life issues in their ministry.

– Cheryl Ziegeler (LFL Council)

# Rally for Life 09!

On a very warm Saturday afternoon ten Lutherans from the Redeemer Lutheran congregation in Laidley joined an estimated 1000 people gathered at Queen's Park in Brisbane's CBD at the Rally for Life 09. The purpose of the rally was to present a united pro-life front against the push for the complete decriminalization of abortion in Queensland. Such a push in Victoria led to the Victorian Parliament passing such legislation in October last year titled *Abortion Law Reform Bill 2008*.

The Rally began with upbeat music by Roby Curtis and band singing songs with a pro-life message, and was followed by three inspirational speakers; Christine Campbell (Victorian MP), Dr Eamonn Mathieson (an obstetric anaesthetist and member of *Doctors in Conscience*), and Dr Belinda Goodwin (a Queensland doctor). Each of these pro-life speakers presented their perspective on the recent Victorian *Abortion Law Reform Bill 2008*.

The speakers highlighted that the most disturbing consequences of such legislation are:

- that an abortion would be allowed up until birth for any and no reason,
- the removal of the *freedom and duty* of doctors, nurses and other health care workers who conscientiously object to abortion to refuse to be involved in the abortion process.
- that pregnant women will increasingly have no *real* choices if they have a complicated pregnancy, and that the decision to continue such a pregnancy until the birth of the child will be marginalised.

*Lutherans For Life* members Pastor Norman Wurst and his wife Joy (Darling Downs branch), and Norm Auricht (Sunshine Coast branch) were also supporting the Rally manning the *Lutherans For Life* display stand along with many other pro-life organisations at the rally.

Christian Fandrich  
*Vicar to the Lockyer Valley Lutheran Parish*  
*Secretary, Lutherans For Life.*



(L) Pastor Norm & Joy Wurst, with Norm Auricht – (R) Lockyer Valley Lutherans at the Rally



# SNIPPETS



- A woman in Florida has been imprisoned after a child who was due to be aborted was born alive and she hid it in a bag in which it died. Although Ms Belkis Gonzalez worked at an abortion clinic, she did not have a licence. She is also being punished for interfering with evidence. LifeSiteNews, 3 March]
- Abortion increases the likelihood of subsequent premature birth by nearly two thirds, according to a survey of 21 studies on the subject published in the Journal of Reproductive Medicine. [LifeSiteNews, 4 March]
- Washington state will today (March 3, 2009) begin to allow assisted suicide. Voters in November's election approved a measure which allows doctors to prescribe poison for people with less than six months to live. [AFP on Yahoo!, 3 March]
- Doctors in Britain could be prevented from practising if they disobey patients' living wills, according to predictions about draft guidelines to be published by the General Medical Council. Care Not Killing said: "A doctor who treats their patient can now be actively breaking the law." Mr Julian Brazier MP called the Mental Capacity Act pernicious. Living wills can include requests for the withdrawal of food and drink. Ms Nadine Dorries MP said vulnerable and elderly people would be worried by the proposed rule. [Daily Mail, 7 March] Ms Melanie Phillips, the commentator, describes this aspect of the guidelines as potentially forcing medical staff to do harm. People's wants, not necessarily written down, were to be prioritised over their needs. Patients' wishes could change with time and circumstances. [Mail on Sunday, 8 March]
- After President Obama lifted his predecessor's ban on federal funding for research on new human embryonic cell lines, the Catholic bishops' pro-life committee has called the move a sad victory of politics over science and ethics. Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia and committee chairman, added that the measure ignored the existence of ethical sources of stem cells. Bishop Elio Sgreccia, former president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, also criticised the move, saying it was based on utilitarian logic. Episcopalian, Jewish and Methodist representatives attended the signing of the executive order at the White House on Monday. Democrats for Life of America said they were surprised. [Catholic News Service, 9 March] Anthony Ozimic of SPUC said: "President Obama ... reveals himself as a willing tool of a powerful lobby of vested interests among research companies and eugenicist academics. He promised a new approach to policy but embryonic stem cell research is yesterday's bad idea, not tomorrow's future." [SPUC, 9 March] Shares in stem cell companies rose after the announcement. [Reuters on Yahoo!, 10 March] Mr Michael J

Fox, the American actor who has Parkinson's disease, praised the president and Mr Obama spoke highly of the late Mr Christopher Reeve, another performer who campaigned for embryo research. [Daily Express, 9 March, and Telegraph, 10 March]

- Australia has followed the US by lifting a 1996 ban on funding abortion services overseas. The government says it hopes the annual worldwide number of abortions will be reduced from its present estimated 42 million. [Reuters, 10 March]
- A professor at Oxford University, England, wants aborted children's kidneys and livers to be used for transplantation. Professor Sir Richard Gardner advises the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. The Christian Medical Fellowship said the procedure would be immoral. Comment on Reproductive Ethics said it was horrifying. Professor Stuart Campbell who has developed prenatal scanning techniques said it would be a shame to waste aborted children's body parts. [Daily Mail, 11 March]
- A woman in north-west England refused cancer treatment for the sake of her unborn twins. Mrs Rachel Crossland said: "there was no way I could deal with getting rid

of my babies and having to then fight cancer." She received therapy after the babies were delivered by caesarean. [Daily Mail, 2 March]

- Arkansas has banned partial birth abortion. Ms Dawn Creekmore, a Democrat, sponsored the bill which was decisively approved by both legislative houses and signed by Mr Mike Beebe, state governor. Planned Parenthood wanted the measure to allow the procedure if a mother's health was threatened. The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons said it could not envisage such circumstances. [LifeSiteNews, 23 February]

- A man in eastern England whose neck was broken is experiencing less paralysis after being treated with his own marrow-cells. Mr Michael Flounders, 52, received stem cell therapy in Ecuador in 2007 and can now move muscles he could not move before. The cells were injected in the part of his neck where he was injured 21 years ago. [EADT, 24 February] Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and similar diseases could be treated using nerve cells created from skin. University of California Los Angeles scientists write in the Stem Cells journal that they converted skin tissue into motor neurons. [Reuters, 24 February]

## **Lutherans For Life Blog**

Check out the new Lutherans for Life weblog at <http://lutheransforlife.blogspot.com/> for up-to-date posts on the latest life news, written by members of the Lutherans For Life Council. The blog format is designed to invite comments from the readers. Visit the site and join the conversation!

The following article is reprinted with the verbal permission (13/3/09) of Dr Rob Pollnitz, Chairman, LCA's Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions. The Editor of *The Lutheran* had sought an LCA response to current matters.

## **IS OUR FREEDOM OF RELIGION A SECOND-CLASS RIGHT?**

9<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Lutherans can claim to have a special interest in religious freedom, since many of our ancestors migrated to Australia in the 1850s for exactly that reason. Until now Australia would have to be one of the most free nations in the world for the holding and expressing of religious beliefs.

Dr Rob Pollnitz, chair of the Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions, is concerned at current moves to set in politically correct legislative concrete a materialist vision of society and of the place of religion within it. He writes –

“The March issue of *The Lutheran* noted the Freedom of Religion and Belief in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century report from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Canberra. They support ‘non-theistic and atheistic’ beliefs (including witchcraft) and wish to require ‘faith communities’ to be ‘inclusive of people of diverse sexualities’. While HREOC are inviting responses to their paper, my cynical half believes that they have already written their final report to Parliament.

Our Federal Government has also announced a ‘consultation committee’ to examine whether Australia should enact a statutory bill (or charter) of rights. That proposal has been put to us voters before in referenda and has been soundly rejected each time. Choosing a committee who favour a charter of rights and who will invite submissions from bodies like HREOC aims to ensure that Australia gets a bill of rights. To quote Prof James Allan in the March issue of *Quadrant* – “A bill of rights hands the power to declare what are and aren’t your fundamental rights to judges, to committees of ex-lawyers who, when they disagree among themselves, get a vote. Just them. No one else.” So moral issues like abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia, and the limits on free speech, will be decided by non-elected judges, maybe on a 4-3 vote. In theory Parliament remains in charge. But when you look at New Zealand and Britain and Canada, parliaments have chosen never to intervene in ‘rights’ decisions by their judges.

The same wind of change is being felt in other areas. There is a move for national registration of doctors, and the Australian Medical Council’s new Good Medical Practice Guidelines sees doctors as mere service providers, obliged to refer a patient for an abortion on request. Legally obliged, on penalty of deregistration. The putative right to abortion is considered to trump the right to medical judgement and to conscientious objection. “This left-wing secular agenda sees our rights of religion and conscience as being of a second order”, comments Pastor Tim Kowald, secretary of CSBQ.

In South Australia the 2009 version of the Equal Opportunity bill shows some improvement – the religious vilification clause has been removed. But church schools and other church agencies could still be required to employ people whose overt sexual practices are fundamentally opposed to the teaching of that religion. Also the Equal Opportunity Commissioner will have the power to initiate an investigation even when no one has complained. It is not difficult to imagine an activist spending our tax money pursuing her own agenda, unanswerable to Parliament, with the target of her efforts having no redress for costs incurred. ⇒

What can we do? While I suspect that both HREOC and the committee on the bill of rights will not listen to us, we should still deluge them with submissions. They do record numbers for and against. More important, we can write to our Members of Parliament, both Federal and State. MPs want to be re-elected, and they believe that each letter represents the views of 100 voters, with the other 99 being too lazy to write. All persons engaged in open social

discussion (including Lutherans) need to be free to debate the issues that confront us without fear. Discrimination is not an evil word – it can imply wisdom or discernment. We discriminate both when we choose what food we wish to eat and what God we wish to follow. Genuine freedom of speech and religion are principles long established in Australia and deserve our support.”

### THE 2009 LFL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**Theme:** "Free to Live" **Venue:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide  
**Date:** 26 September 2009. Further details/advertising in the next *Life News*.

### LUTHERANS FOR LIFE MEMBERSHIP

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

#### One-year Membership Fees

Family	\$30
Individual,	\$25
Students	\$15
Pensioner	\$15
Unemployed	\$15
Associate	\$20 (for non-LCA members)
Institutional	\$100+ (depending on membership numbers)



#### Life membership

Family	\$300
Individual	\$200
Pensioner	\$50

Send credit card details (see form below) or cheque or money order to:

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15 Memorial Drive  
Mt Barker SA 5251

Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Rev/Dr \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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