

2012 Geelong Conference Report

On November 3rd an enthusiastic group gathered in St Paul’s Lutheran church at Grovedale for the Lutherans for Life annual conference. The theme was ‘Stories of life’ which was inspired by Acts 3:15 where Jesus is described as the ‘Author of life’. The day was indeed full of wonderful and inspiring stories where the God’s gift of life is being defended, promoted and celebrated.

The conference began with the opening rite lead by local pastor (and Life News editor) Tom Pietsch. A rousing rendition of *Lift high the cross* is my abiding memory of LFL conference opening rites and this one was no exception.

Matt Huckel, a musical therapist from Adelaide, was our first speaker for the day and shared his personal experience as a music therapist in Adelaide caring for a man in a persistent vegetative state. Matt has written an article for this edition of Life News documenting his story so I wont steal his thunder here!

Anne Webster spoke to us of her studies in the area of adoption in Australian society and how it is really the ‘un-choice’ for couples today. Anne is pursuing this topic in academic circles often hostile to the pro-life perspective. She also spoke of the Zoe foundation of which Anne is the founding director.

Katrina Haywood shared her very personal story of

falling pregnant as a teenager and receiving pressure to abort her baby. By God’s grace she continued with the pregnancy and is now married with three children. Her honesty and courage in telling her story was a special gift for all those present.

Dan Flynn recounted his story of the transition from practicing law in the Victorian public service to becoming a full time political lobbyist for the Australian Christian Lobby. Dan was able to provide some valuable insight into the political pressures surrounding life-related issues in the Australian context and how we as Christians can be involved in the political process.

Pastor Stephen Van der Hoek rounded off the afternoon for us with a powerful exploration of the ‘Lutheran foundation for ethics’. His biblical insights and Christ-centred focus were stimulating for all and encouraged us as Lutherans in our own theological foundations.

Pastor Tim Kowald who resigned as LFL president during 2012 was publicly thanked on the day for his long service to LFL in various capacities.

Various members of the congregation worked hard behind the scenes to make the day a tremendous success and we thank the St Paul’s congregation for their hospitality.

Watch this space for information on the 2013 conference!



One-year Membership Fees

Individual.....	\$25
Concession/Unemployed.....	\$15
Family.....	\$30
Institutional.....	\$100+

Life Membership Fees

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

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

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Congregation: _____

☐ New Membership ☐ Membership renewal ☐ Donation

Type of credit card: _____ Amount: \$_____ Card number: _____ Expiry: ____/____

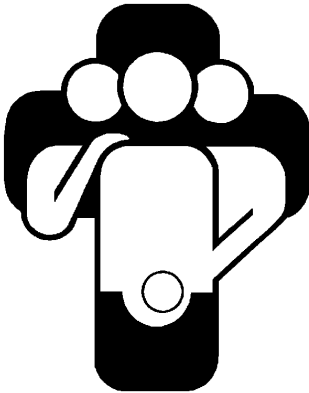
Name as it appears on card: _____ Signature: _____

Please send your completed form to: Pastor Christian Fandrich, 6 Cheviot Street, Harristown QLD, 4350.
(Privacy note: Membership information is used only for LFL membership.)

Life News


Inside this issue:

Editorial	2
40 Days for Life	2
New LFL President	3
Snippets	6
2012 Conference	8



Life News is the newsletter of Lutherans for Life Inc— Established in 1987 and sponsored by the Lutheran Church of Australia.

Print Post Approved
Periodical No.
PP442570/0006
ISSN 1033-7725

Editor: Thomas Pietsch
 LN.editor@gmail.com

I sound therefore I am

Matthew Huckel

‘Are you in any pain?’

This is *the* question that British Neuroscientist Professor Adrian Owen asks Scott Routley, a man in Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) who is being questioned in a MRI scanner recording his brain activity to questions it has not been possible to ask people in this condition until very recently.

Professor Owen has pioneered research into PVS using a MRI scanner which measures real time activity of the brain by tracking the flow of blood. The patients in this study were asked to imagine playing tennis or walking around their home when answering Yes or No respectively. This allowed a series of questions to be put to these patients and a few were able to answer through the power of thought.

In answer to Professor Owen’s question, Scott answered ‘No’ and this opened up hugely fundamental issues about quality of life in general. If some of these patients could communicate using thought alone, they may be able to tell us about their experience, or how they feel about their condition. People in PVS do not appear to respond to their environment, they are tube fed, unable to react or move purposefully, and cycle between sleep and wakefulness. They are not on a machine being kept alive and they are not in a coma as often is the misunderstanding.

In Adelaide this year, a patient named Mark Leigep who had been in PVS for 6 years was not able to access this technology and if he had been given the opportunity it might have saved his life. We will never know if Mark was in any pain at all in his condition, but the pain his life caused his family and those around him was in the extreme.

In August 2012, Australia witnessed a new turn in the euthanasia debate.



Matthew presented a version of this paper at the 2012 Lutherans for Life Conference. He is pictured following that talk with his daughter Philippa.

Continued on page 4

Editorial

Montaigne tells the story of a friend who was suffering with gout. His physician had told him to abstain from salty meats, but his friend protested at the advice. He told his doctor that when he was in acute pain he longed for somebody or something to quarrel with. By crying and cursing against the sausages and bacon he'd eaten that day, he found himself strangely relieved of some of his pain.

Our frustration and pain often demand of us an outlet, whether it be aimed at God, another human being, or cured, salty meats. But how we express our anger and frustration is not morally neutral. God tells us in St Paul's letter to the Ephesians: 'Be angry, but do not sin'. And so God gives us great ways to express our irritation and grief in the book of Psalms, that collection of sung prayers which show one way we can promote life in our communities.

There is great pain and frustration in the slow dying of a loved one, especially when they are in significant pain or depression themselves. There is real sadness

in some unexpected pregnancies, as many of you know from your own life experiences. And so there is a temptation to demand an outlet, to seek a scapegoat on which we can cast all of our grief, imagining that only then will our pain be relieved. Only with the termination of the young one, only with the euthanizing of the one in pain, we tell ourselves, will our frustration and anger be sated and cooled. But life doesn't go that way.

The Psalms give us a better way. They show the way that we can show others, crying out to God 'How long?' in our frustration and pain, while resisting the temptation to answer the question ourselves. '*Cast your burden on the LORD*', the psalmist consoles, '*and he will sustain you.*'

This issue of 'Life News' contains much that came out of our very successful 2012 Conference. May God bless you as you read and digest its contents.

Thomas Pietsch

Snippets

Dr Rob Pollnitz

checkout lady says "Happy Holidays" to me I can reply "And a Merry Christmas to you" without causing mortal offence. A Catholic website reports that in the first week of December in northeastern Nigeria, Islamic terrorists of Boko Haram attacked a Christian area, killing ten people, and torching three churches and many houses.

See catholicculture.org/news.

In the same week I visited a private hospital where the midwives were placing a Nativity scene in the ward foyer. A Muslim colleague arrived and the head nurse quietly asked "Does this offend you?" He smiled and replied "No, certainly not. Your Jesus is an important prophet in my faith. I want you to celebrate his birth." Thank you, Lord Jesus, for placing me and mine in Australia.

Kate and Prince William's embryo recognised as a baby

When Kate was admitted to the King Edward VII Hospital in London with severe morning sickness, several secular anti-church websites competed to announce that Kate and Will are expecting a baby. At 8-10 weeks gestation, this is celebrated as a baby that is third in line to the royal throne. Previously pro-abortion sites have refused to recognise the humanity of the unborn child. On 3 December one such site, Gawker, tweeted "CONFIRMED: THERE IS A HUMAN BEING GROWING INSIDE KATE MIDDLETON #baby #baby #baby". Steven Ertelt comments – "For once, Gawker is right .. at 4 weeks, the baby's heart has begun to beat and, by 6 weeks, brain waves will be present." It seems to need the magic of monarchy to teach some of us that a baby is a human being right from conception. See lifenews.com.

Australia approves RU-486 and Misopristol as "therapeutic goods"

In late November the Gillard government announced that RU-486 (mifepristone) and misoprostol will be fully approved as therapeutic goods for the medical termination of pregnancy. There were 5,437 reports of

child abuse in 2010-2011, enough to trigger a royal commission. In the same year there were about 100,000 induced abortions in Australia (exact number not known, due to imprecise reporting). That makes an average of 274 babies a day, or 1,096 over the four days of our coming synod. Today the most dangerous place for a child is the womb, with one out of four pregnancies in Australia being terminated. See canberradeclaration.org.au.

We Lutherans are good at celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. We pay much less attention to his conception, to the fact that our Lord Jesus made a deliberate choice to come into this human world as an embryo. Nine months before Christmas, March 25th, is the Annunciation of our Lord. In the New Year, please consider asking your pastor to celebrate the arrival of Jesus The Embryo at a March service (read Luke chapter 1).

Euthanasia bills will continue in 2013

The federal and state efforts in 2012 to pass a law to permit lethal doses on request all failed, and the right -to-die forces are turning their attention to 2013. In the federal arena, Green senator Dr Richard Di Natale has a bill to overturn the 1997 ban on the Australian territories passing laws to allow euthanasia (mature readers may recall that former Greens leader Bob Brown tried twice to repeal the 1997 law but his bills were never put to a vote). Both the NT and the ACT have one-house parliaments, and the ACT has a Labor/Green coalition in power, with the sole Green MP holding the balance of power.

See noeuthanasia.org.au

In SA Health Minister John Hill failed with a lethal dose bill last year, and has now tabled

a variation that will allow euthanasia by omission of reasonable ordinary care, as when a substitute decision maker chooses to refuse oral food or fluids or simple antibiotics for a patient, where the patient has "impaired decision-making capacity". In the absence of family the bill allows a doctor or a director of nursing to make such end-of-life decisions. Labor has already pushed this Advanced Care Directives Bill 2012 through the lower house, and it progresses to the upper house from February onwards.

Ethicist Dr Greg Pike comments that this bill is both a Trojan Horse for euthanasia by neglect of reasonable care, and that it damages the patient-doctor relationship, with family knowing that the doctor has the power to kill their loved one by such neglect. Concerned SA readers are urged to write to their MLCs. See noeuthanasia.org.au

HELP SAVE LIVES

Join the worldwide movement
to protect mothers and babies
February 13th – March 24th

Recognizing that with God, all things are possible, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney are joining with hundreds of other cities for **40 Days for Life** – the largest coordinated pro-life mobilization in history!

40 Days for Life is a peaceful, prayerful – *and proven effective* – pro-life campaign that has already been embraced by more than half a million people worldwide, saved **6,794** lives from abortion, led to the conversion of **75** abortion workers and seen **25** abortion facilities close.

40 Days for Life features three components:

- 1. PRAYER AND FASTING:** Join together with other believers for 40 days of fervent prayer and fasting for an end to abortion.
- 2. PEACEFUL VIGIL:** Stand for life during a 40-day peaceful public witness in the public right-of-way outside the abortion facility 'Dr Marie' at 8 Campbell St Bowen Hills
- 3. COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Bring a positive pro-life message to every corner of our city through media efforts, advocacy and public visibility

- www.40daysforlife.com/brisbane/
- www.40daysforlife.com/perthwa/
- www.40daysforlife.com/adelaide/
- www.40daysforlife.com/melbourne/
- www.40daysforlife.com/sydney/



40DAYS FOR LIFE.

Snippets

Dr Rob Pollnitz

Federal government proposes more discrimination laws

The Labor/Green coalition has announced that they plan to change federal anti-discrimination laws, with two new attributes being added to the law, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Attorney-General Nicola Roxon has presented the draft Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012 to parliament, with a key change being that the complainant will no longer have to prove that they were discriminated against; rather, the person accused will be required to prove that this did not happen. This seems likely to have a chilling effect on what media (including church media) feel free to say.

When accused many businesses may opt to reach for their cheque-book and settle with an accuser so as to avoid costly court proceedings.

The mainstream churches and their schools and agencies may be granted an exception from the law for “conduct that conforms to the doctrines, tenets or beliefs of that religion; or is necessary to avoid injury to the religious sensitivities of adherents of that religion”.

Those who remember the cases of the NSW Wesley Mission and the CYC camp at Phillip Island may consider it is both very difficult and very costly to make an effective case in court on doctrine and sensitivities. And small independent Christian churches may find it difficult to define their beliefs with total clarity.

The LCA Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations is to report on human sexuality to general pastors conference in 2013, as we seek to find a balance between showing a warm and pastoral approach to members battling with a homosexual orientation, and respecting God’s creation design of us as male and female, intended for marriage and children if so blessed.

Ms Roxon notes that “aged care services become a person’s home” and so the law will NOT allow church aged care homes to discriminate against residents/potential residents on the basis of orientation or identity as above. This appears to overlook the fact

that the aged care facility is also the home of all the other residents and their “sensitivities”.

A major concern is that the Roxon bill says that the exceptions provisions are to be reviewed in three years. The inquiry that led to this bill received over 30 submissions calling for no exceptions for churches and their agencies. We would be foolish to believe that this government will not continue to carve away at our freedom of religion.

See saltshakers.org.au for more detail. The committee inquiring into the bill is to report to the Senate by 18 February 2013. Concerned readers are urged to look into the detail and make a submission by email to legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Royal commission into child sexual abuse

Our PM Julia Gillard has announced plans to establish a royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse in Australia. Her department has established a secretariat which is considering the terms of the reference for the inquiry. Perpetrators of child sexual abuse must be brought to justice. However, the dangers of such an inquiry would appear to be – 1) it will treat allegations as

proof, 2) it risks becoming an anti-church (especially anti-Catholic) priest-hunt, and 3) it may not include the most dangerous situation for children, in some remote Aboriginal communities.

Present indications are that the terms of reference will be drawn widely to cover both government and non-government bodies dealing with children, including churches and community groups such as sporting clubs and scouts and guides. Previous experience would suggest the royal commission will take years and cost perhaps \$100 million or more. The Australian Family Association adds – “Pornography, the sexualisation of children in advertising, family breakdown and the number of children in out of home care – all are factors that have been identified as creating a society in which children are more vulnerable to abuse.” See newsweekly.com.au for more detail.

Thank God we live in Australia

While our religious freedom may be under threat, at least we are not in daily fear of our lives. When the



From the new LFL President

It is a great privilege to be elected President of Lutherans for Life for 2012-2013.

I am currently the pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Toowoomba, and before pastoral ministry I was a city and rural General Practitioner. My wife Sarah Joy and I have 5 children (pictured), and I continue to work one day a week in a general practice in Toowoomba. I know that the Church has a vital and positive contribution to make to the public debate on many life issues. I also believe that the body of Christ needs to be better informed on life issues, and the Church is richly blessed with many of God’s people currently working in these fields.

At the Geelong conference *Stories of Life* we were blessed to hear from engaging speakers on various topics, and on behalf of the LFL council I’d like to thank the St Paul’s congregation in Grovedale for hosting the event. The conference was especially significant as we also recognized and thanked Tim Kowald for his many years of service on Lutherans for Life Council and particularly as President.

The council has worked hard to make use of the resources at its disposal, focusing on:

1. Producing and distributing our quarterly magazine *Life News* (by print and email).
2. Holding an annual national conference: *Image of God* (Adelaide, 2010), *Love Abounding* (Toowoomba, 2011), *Stories of Life* (Geelong, 2012).
3. Hosting a dinner with a guest speaker for pastoral ministry graduates and their wives.
4. Providing financial support to local LFL branches. LFL branches include; Darling Downs (QLD), Sunshine Coast (QLD), Riverland (SA), and Wellington (New Zealand).



5. Offering guest speakers and publishing articles on life issues.

The new council is already actively planning for next year and has begun to review how Lutherans for Life can continue to improve its service to its members, the Church, and the world.

Thank you for your ongoing support of LFL.

Yours in Christ’s service, Christian Fandrich.

email: christian.fandrich@lca.org.au

www.lca.org.au/lutherans-for-life

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

Would you like more copies of *Life News*? To have the latest edition emailed to you in a PDF format that is ready to print, write to LN.editor@gmail.com.

I sound therefore I am

continued from page 1

Euthanasia was championed by some as the right alternative for the life of Mark Leigep, a man who had been in a PVS for 6 years following severe brain injury from a motor vehicle accident. Since the very early beginnings of his care following his accident his mother has campaigned for his life to end, as she believed that Mark would never wish to be a ‘vegetable’. She has pushed endlessly for euthanasia to be made legal and with support from Dr Philip Nitschke had her son on the list of those whom who may urgently require euthanasia. The only other option available to the family was to campaign for fluids and nutrition to be removed, but due to disagreements in the family this was not finally decided on until August of this year.

The role of music therapy: ‘I sound therefore I am’ ‘I sound therefore I am’ is a phrase coined from the latin ‘Sono Ergo Sum’ which Music therapist Ansgar Herkenrath created when he published his research on the effects of music therapy with people in PVS. (Herkenrath,2005). The phrase bases itself on the idea that a human life is more than just about consciousness, thinking and usefulness in the world, and states that for human life to be sounded is also to say ‘I exist, because I am heard’.

Mark Leigep had not been able to be heard at all in the last 6 years nor had he been given a voice to say that his life was valuable. No one knew for sure what abilities Mark possessed to communicate nor did anyone know how aware Mark was of others and his environment.

In 2011 Mark was referred for music therapy to see if music could elicit some form of contact with Mark and assess his levels of awareness and communication. Music therapy is a clinical profession in neurology where music is used as a therapeutic tool to establish non-verbal forms of communication and also to help elicit emotional expression in patients with severe disability.

In 11 months of regular weekly therapy, video evidence collected over that period showed clearly that Mark could track objects and people, look towards sources of sounds, raise his thumb to verbal commands, and make changes in respiration to musical stimuli. The exciting findings from his therapy were to be presented to staff and family where it was hoped that further therapies could be applied to assess his communication.

However in August 2012, news arrived that Mark’s family had been successful in arranging a meeting with doctors to discuss the option of removing of fluids and nutrition to end his life. Frantically the evidence from

music therapy and a detailed report was prepared for that meeting, in the hope that the findings would persuade the family and doctors from going ahead with their plans and re-examining Mark’s awareness and communication.

The findings in the report created huge anxiety for professional staff involved in Mark’s care. No one at all liked the idea of starving a patient, but also no one wanted to think about that being applied to someone who may have potential to communicate and show evidence of awareness. Numerous media articles in the newspapers talked about the case, and labels such as ‘brain dead’, ‘coma’, and Mark ‘wasting away’ were used interchangeably; deceiving the public into thinking that Mark was a man kept alive by a machine and that the personhood of Mark had long disappeared. Strong media support for the family’s cause would have made any about turn on their decision unlikely, and so despite the evidence the family were granted their wish to remove fluids and nutrition to allow Mark to slowly die.

This decision had enormous emotional effects on the music therapist who then had to arrange an appropriate ending of music therapy with Mark before fluids and nutrition began to be removed.



A music therapist in action

Mark’s final music therapy session

At the end of August 2012 Mark received his final music therapy session, where the reasons for ending were explained to him and final episodes of music making were conducted. One of the key pieces of equipment used in Mark’s therapy was the Soundbeam device. This device makes music in real time in response to a person’s body movements. In Mark’s case the sensor was placed above Mark’s chest where the rise and fall of his breathing made changes in musical pitch. In the first improvisation the music therapist provided interactive harmonic support on piano and the sounds intertwined together very effectively. In a final conversation near the end of the

session, faith and end of life issues were discussed with Mark and we finished the session with an aptly appropriate song called the ‘Fathers Song’ by Matt Redman.

I have heard so many songs,
Listened to a thousand tongues
But there is one, that sounds above them all

Heaven's perfect melody
The Creator's symphony
You are singing over me
The Father's song
Heaven's perfect mystery
The king of love has sent for me
And now you're singing over me
The Father's song

As the music began, Mark’s face changed and breathing increased, showing a heightened arousal. The sounds of Mark’s breathing integrated beautifully with the chords and melody of the song. Mark’s life, his breath was being sounded in music and this was woven into the sounds from the Father symbolically enacted through the song. It was a profound moment, and a celebration of Mark’s life, and acknowledgement of his personhood. Hopefully through music therapy Mark took up the invitation to accept Jesus into his heart before the unpleasant process that was about to unfold for him.

Fluids and nutrition were officially withdrawn at the beginning of September, and it took nearly 4 weeks for Mark to die. His mother undertook a near constant vigil near his bedside, anxious that she would be there to prevent him dying without her. It was a difficult time as family and staff struggled with the long period of time it took for Mark to die which medically is not unusual. Despite the numerous labels and expressions from his mother saying how ‘brain dead’ and unresponsive he was in the media, she laid claim that Mark was smiling when he finally died in her arms.

Euthanasia: ethical and theological implications

The case of Mark Leigep’s death is being considered as a precedent for others in a PVS to be considered for removal of nutrition and fluids. His mother claims that other parents have been inspired by her bravery and are considering the same action for their loved ones. Mark’s mother openly advocates for the legality of euthanasia and that it should be offered to avoid what she feels she has been forced to do to end her son’s life. The very unpleasant process of starvation in this way is being used as a way to promote a quick death via euthanasia rather than a deterrent to consider and

promote life. In 6 years Mark received little therapeutic intervention to explore his awareness and capacity to respond. Labelled as a man with no personhood, death was considered to be the only right choice. The process of having the clinical meeting and debate to save or terminate his life without Mark’s say in the matter has resonances with Christ’s trial before Pilate. Mark’s position can be likened to that of Christ, stripped of personhood and sacrificed in order for those around him to be relieved of their suffering because of his existence.

Unfortunately some theologians have shifted in their view of people in PVS, viewing them as non-persons, in that they are unable to image God or they are ‘dead’ theologically speaking.

"A body without neocortical functioning cannot image God . . . Neocortical destruction is both a necessary and sufficient condition for declaring an individual dead theologically." (Rakestraw, 1992)

“Mark’s position can be likened to that of Christ, stripped of personhood and sacrificed in order for those around him to be relieved of their suffering because of his existence.”

"The PVS patient has lost his personality, become totally dependant, cannot organize his own life. He is no longer a free human being. . . . He is socially dead . . . ' (Schotsmans, 2003)

Both these views in my opinion are erroneous, where the current neuro-scientific thinking has been successful in changing the goal posts in theology for some in

deciding whether a PVS person that can relate to and image God, still actually exists.

I believe PVS patients are able to image God, and we ought to image God ourselves by responding with grace to people that are not able to respond. God responds to us and sustains us unconditionally despite the fact that we do not respond to Him. In our daily lives we can enact the persistent vegetative state where our efforts to respond are so minimal compared to the enormous and un-relenting attempts from God to reach us and make contact with us.

‘Our God is in the business of protecting and nourishing broken, discarded lives which seem to have little meaning. He can use these tragedies to let his glory shine into a dark and painful world. His images should respond likewise’ (O’Mathuna, 1996)

Matthew Huckel is a music therapist based in Adelaide where he lives with his wife Sal and their five children. Matthew was recently accepted as a candidate for the pastoral ministry and in 2013 will begin studies at Australian Lutheran College. For a full copy of this paper, with references, please contact the editor at LN.editor@gmail.com.