



# OIKOUMENE

## TASMANIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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### The 'Lund' Principle

*Should not the churches act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?*

#### *From the President*



“...whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and who ever would be first among you must be slave of all.”  
Mark 10:43

**Our country, our community and our churches all face significant challenges.**

Australia is a small player in the global economy. Despite economic data that shows we are in the top performing nations in the world there is a sense of fragility and vulnerability about our economy. The population expects more and better services, but balks at the cost. Political parties are reluctant to demand more tax from electors for fear of voter backlash. Facing difficult decisions, political leaders are criticised for spending too much and doing too little. In one of the richest countries in the world there is a poverty of spirit that does not want to open our wallets or our country so that others might benefit.

In Tasmania we have seen devastating bushfires, ‘acceptance’ of a revised Tasmanian Forestry Agreement, and the introduction of legislation relating to same-sex marriage, euthanasia and abortion. Statistics reveal that our great state continues to have some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the nation. Socially and economically conditions are difficult.

#### **How do we, as the church, respond?**

Each situation affects us in some way. It is not for me, or any one individual, to determine the response for the whole church. We recognise that the church is *not* the state. It does not make the laws that apply to every sector and segment of society. It is, however, the right and responsibility of each denomination and each believer, to respond to these situations on the basis of biblical principles and in a Christ-like manner.

The voice of the church needs to be heard. We must never abandon the task of presenting the gospel, proclaiming God’s ways, and being personally and corporately faithful in following Jesus.

I am reminded of the example of Jesus “*who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*”

We know the conclusion of this passage, and the ultimate price Jesus paid for each of us – because he was willing to become a servant.

As we offer ourselves to serve in a hurting community and share the hope of the gospel the outcomes may not be to our liking. We must still continue to serve, and raise our voice for the marginalised and the lost, as we work for a more compassionate, caring and Christ-like community.

May the love of God be heard in our words, and evidenced by our service - in every place and at all times.

Graham Roberts (Major), President, Tasmanian Council of Churches



#### **A reminder**

TCC Annual Meeting  
Saturday, 15th June  
9:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Kings Meadows  
Salvation Army  
Citadel

Kay Street,  
Kings Meadows

The next **Oikoumene** will be published in August, 2013. All material for publication should be received at

[tcctas@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tcctas@bigpond.net.au)  
or at  
PO Box 166, New Town 7008  
by the end of July.

## January 2013

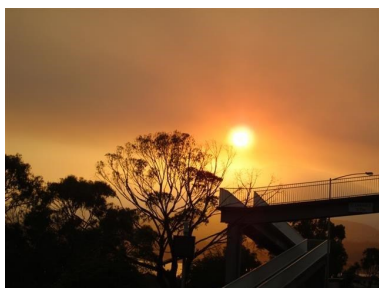
The temperature reached a record 41.8 degrees in Hobart on January 4, 2013. Fires that had commenced a day earlier at Forcett and Lake Repulse were fanned by catastrophic weather conditions, threatening people and property in southern Tasmania. Over the next few days emergency response agencies went into overdrive as many hundreds of people fled the Tasman peninsula, many of them tourists evacuated to Hobart by boat.



By Friday afternoon the Southern Region Social Recovery Committee (SRSRC) had met, and Paul Hueston, the TCC representative on the Committee, began the process of contacting and deploying personnel to the various recovery centres.

Over the next two weeks ninety pastoral care volunteers from 12 different churches and denominations attended recovery centres or assisted in community outreach. Pastoral support was provided in recovery centres at Sorell, City Hall, Nubeena, New Norfolk and Ouse. For almost a week members of the church were present to provide immediate comfort and support to individuals and families devastated by loss of homes, property and livestock, and others who left houses and homes not knowing when, or even if, they could return.

Providing pastoral support comes at a cost – and we are grateful for the willingness of so many to offer their time and make their experience and expertise



available to hurting communities. The SRSRC appreciated the immediate response of the TCC, and had received reports of the good work done in recovery centres and in outreach. Sorell Council staff acknowledged the fine work of Rev Jill McCoy, Rev Joel Kettleton and the team at the Sorell Recovery Centre, and Tasman Council immediately accepted Neil Nisbett onto the local Community Recovery Committee.



While the crisis has passed and the formal role concluded, pastoral support is still being provided in many different ways by members of churches in the Sorell and

Tasman Council areas. That support will be needed for many months, and even years.

The Tasmanian Council of Churches is one of a number of NGO's who share in the response and recovery efforts in the event of disasters. Pastoral support cannot be provided without qualified, capable and willing people able to be present when needed. TCC maintains a database of people nominated by their denominations as having the skills to provide pastoral support. After the January bushfires two training sessions were conducted by Victorian Council of Churches Emergency ministries, and 57 people are now formally accredited with VCC/TCC to engage in this ministry. Later this year we plan to provide training in the North and North West, and increase the number of people trained to assist in this ministry.

We express our thanks to all were able to offer pastoral support through the worst days of the January bushfires, and especially acknowledge the tireless efforts of Paul Hueston, as TCC representative on the SRSRC, who coordinated the response.



Graham Roberts, TCC President

## Constructing an Effective Children's Ministry (Tabor College Tasmania)



tabortasmania

Tabor College Tasmania is offering a five day intensive course in Hobart on "Constructing an Effective Children's Ministry" during the week of Monday, 29 July – Friday, 2 August.

The intensive will be led by David Goodwin, the director of Kidsreach, and will consider reasons why children and young people leave churches. The unit is intended for all leaders of local congregations, and for all who work with children or young people.

The intensive can either be audited or taken for academic credit.

For more information, please contact Tabor College Tasmania on 6231-5889 ASAP.

# Praying and Learning Together

## Renewal of Vows in Hobart

Late on the morning of Trinity Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> May, the Hobart Ministers' Fellowship (which has resumed meeting after a few years' recess) is planning a community celebration of Renewal of Baptismal Vows. It will involve a walk between three of the centre-city churches, as we reaffirm our vows at each worship centre.

The service will begin at around 11:40 a.m. at St. Mary's Cathedral, Harrington Street, (following Mass). After the brief section of the service which takes place at St. Mary's, we will walk to Wesley Uniting Church, Melville Street, arriving at around 11:55. After a brief section of the service at Wesley, we will walk to St. David's Cathedral, Murray Street, arriving at around 12:10, where the service will conclude.

The Hobart Ministers' Fellowship also asks you to note their annual Ecumenical Service for Advent in your diaries. This year, the service will take place on the First Sunday of Advent, 1<sup>st</sup> December, at 7:00 p.m., at St. Mary's Cathedral. (Even during the period when the Ministers' Fellowship was in recess, this service has remained an annual event, thanks to the efforts of the clergy of St. Mary's and St. David's Cathedrals.)

## A visitor from Taizé (advance notice):



Brother Matthew, from the Taizé Community, will visit Tasmania from 30th September until 3rd October.

At present, plans for Brother Matthew's visit include:

- Monday evening, 30 September, a "Pints of Faith" gathering in Hobart along with a brief prayer service,
- Tuesday evening, 1 October, a "Pints of Faith" gathering in Launceston along with a brief prayer service,
- Wednesday evening, 2 October, prayers at All Saints' Anglican Church, South Hobart.

More information will be available as the programme is developed



**Uniting in Faith:** An ecumenical group of young adults (18-30ish) is meeting fortnightly discussing faith, life and everything! Run by two young adults of the UCA, they are using a DVD series called "*Dream, Think, Be, Do*", designed for young adults and put together by "Living the Questions".

The group will meet on Sunday evenings at 7.00 p.m. for about 1-1½ hours at St. Andrews Hall (at the rear of Scots-Memorial Uniting Church, 29 Bathurst Street).

More information from Tanita Wierenga 0448 373 526 or e-mail [tanitaw@utas.edu.au](mailto:tanitaw@utas.edu.au) or Heath Cowled e-mail [hhcowled@bigpond.net.au](mailto:hhcowled@bigpond.net.au)

**Monthly Labyrinth Prayer in Launceston:** On the last Sunday of the month, a Labyrinth Walk is held at the Emmanuel Centre, 123 Abbott Street, Newstead, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Come and discover this ancient form of Christian prayer and reflection.



## Pints of Faith

**Pints of Faith** continues as a gathering for young adults offered by Catholic Youth Ministry Tasmania.

In Hobart, **Pints of Faith** will continue at the Soho Hotel on the first Thursday evening of the month, from 6:30 until 9:00.

In Launceston, **Pints of Faith** will happen as announced. The next Launceston Pints of Faith, on Tuesday, 28th May, will involve an ecumenical discussion on the role of Mary in the life of faith.

Please ring Catholic Youth Ministry on 62086274 or 62086270 for more information about **Pints of Faith**, and other CYM programmes.

## Monthly Taizé Prayer in Hobart:

On the third Sunday of each month, a service of prayer using the music of the ecumenical Taizé Community is held at All Saints' Anglican Church, Macquarie Street, South Hobart, beginning at 5:00 p.m. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.



# Praying and Learning Together

## ***Pints of Faith: The Mary Code:***

May has special connection to Mary, the mother of God, and we also celebrate all mothers with Mother's Day on the second Sunday.

On May 2 Catholic Youth Ministry ran a special Pints of Faith dedicated to Mary at Hobart's SO-HO, with representatives of five different faith traditions talking about the beliefs and practices of Mary in their tradition. Each faith tradition presented Mary beautifully and respectfully, although Rev Bob Faser noted it was an instance of 'five blokes talking about a lady'. Each one spoke of Mary as 'The Mother' and as a holy woman who points us to God and is an example in living our lives.

Pints of Faith events have been an outstanding success and this month's was no exception, pulling a crowd of over 60 young people, including 20 young adults from the Muslim community and a few from other Churches as well! The young organisers were overwhelmed by the number of people and the presence and participation of friends from other faiths this was a truly special occasion.

There was a panel of five sensational, knowledgeable and passionate speakers representing the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Uniting Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Islam. Rachelle Smith, who chaired the event, was full of gratitude to Fr Chris Hope, Fr David O'Neill, Rev Bob Faser, President Tim Jack and Imam Sabri Samson for their thoughtful input and time.

There were some really interesting and intriguing distinctions between the different faiths in terms of some of the other beliefs and practices around Mary.



### **ATTENTION NORTHERNERS!**

Pints of Faith: The Mary Code! will also be held in Launceston. Don't miss the opportunity to participate in a truly unique and special evening and be blown away by some fabulous speakers in a shared evening of faith talking about Mary. Come along

**Date:** Tuesday May 28

**Time:** 6.30pm for a meal/drink/chat; panel will begin at 7.30pm

**Place:** Upstairs Cock N Bull British Pub, 50 Wellington Street, Launceston

*We appreciate booking your place for this evening*  
[rachelle.smith@aohtas.org.au](mailto:rachelle.smith@aohtas.org.au)

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# Opportunities for Service

## Chaplains wanted!

Dream jobs are available in schools all over Tasmania for people with a passion for God and a heart for children. Your main role is to offer friendship and be a caring adult presence to the students.

Is God calling you to follow this satisfying road?

God has called Debbie Woolard who is now happily working at Zeehan and Smithton Primary Schools and both school communities have welcomed her enthusiastically.

Debbie is a 29 year old who grew up in Brisbane and has lived in Tassie for the last two years. She originally was working for the Anglican Church in Smithton when she applied for the newly created position of chaplain at Smithton Primary School in August last year. This year she

added Zeehan Primary to her work week. She doesn't identify closely with any particular denomination, but is a very committed Christian; however, her work as a school chaplain is not about 'Bible Bashing', but rather of living out her faith in love.

Debbie works two days at each school and spends much of her time in classrooms building relationships, just going with the flow, helping where she can and letting the children get to know her and become comfortable in her company. She's out in the playground at lunch and recess to chat and help students in any way she can. She sees every class at each school at least once a week and is really impressed by the dedication of the teachers and teacher aides. She says she doesn't want the pressure of being a teacher herself and is happy with being the encourager, listener, supporter and 'big buddy'. She says she has "the best job ever"! She just spends her days 'hanging out with kids'.



It's not a time to preach, but to show love in practical ways. Debbie tries to build up children who may be suffering from family problems, bullying or self esteem issues. The best solution is just to spend time with the children, helping them understand who they are, how they fit into society and why they are behaving in the way they are. Sometimes, Debbie refers students to social workers or counsellors, but she is the face they see every week and the one they are more likely to open up to.

Debbie is also a friend and encourager to the rest of the staff at the school.

Nearly all secondary schools and about half the primary schools in the Tasmanian State Education system have a chaplain, there being around 105 in all. There are also chaplains working in Catholic and independent schools. School love having chaplains to keep a caring eye over their students and find it brings a real stability to the school environment to have a significant adult available whose sole responsibility is to listen to the kids and keep a watch on their emotional and spiritual health.

You will need at least a Certificate IV in Youth Work or equivalent and have personal gifts in pastoral care. Continued professional development is expected and lots of positive energy is vital. You must be willing to serve others and flexible enough to work in whatever way your school requires. It doesn't have the highest pay in the world and is often reliant on the level of Federal Government funding, which is determined every three years, but the rewards are huge.

If pastoral care of youth or children appeals to you, perhaps this could truly be your dream job too!

For further information, contact Scripture Union: [Peter.swift@sutas.org.au](mailto:Peter.swift@sutas.org.au) or phone (03) 6244 8422.

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## Pentecost and Babel

When we hear the story of the Tower of Babel, some of us may know that most cultures have old stories a bit like that. Whether they are the Dreaming stories of Aboriginal Australians, similar stories told by Pacific, or African, or Native American peoples, the old Norse or Celtic myths, the myths of ancient Greece and Rome, or these old stories of the Jewish Dreaming in Genesis; these stories all have this feel to them of the adults trying to explain the realities of the world around them to their children in a way the children can grasp.

"Daddy, Why is the sky blue?"

"Er ... um ... ask your mother."

"Mummy, why is the sky blue?"

"Have you asked your father?"

"Yes, Mummy, he told me to ask you."

And the eventually the question gets referred to the ultimate source of knowledge of such things: Grandma, Gran, Granny, Nan, Nonna if your family is Italian, Oma if your family is Dutch, or whatever she was called in your family. (Or whatever you are called if you happen to be an Oma yourself.)

And a wise Oma often answered the question with a story, the sort of story only an Oma can tell. We have a lot of these Oma stories in the book of Genesis, found in the front end of the Bible, these early stories of the Jewish Dreaming. And one of these Oma stories is the story of the Tower of Babel.

"Oma, why do people speak different languages?"

"Nonna, why are some people nasty to people who look – or who speak - differently from themselves?"

And so, back in the ancient days of the early Hebrews, one Oma told a story. And this Oma story was so good, we still have it today, and we find it in our Bible.

There was a time when everybody spoke the same language. And, as well, people were, to use a good Australian expression, getting a bit full of themselves. They had the idea, "Hey, let's build a tower ... I mean a big tower ... a huge tower ... a gigantic tower ... a *gy-normous* tower ... a tower where we could touch the sky ... a tower that could put us at the same level as God." The people all liked this idea but, obviously, God didn't.

God had a different idea, and said to Godself, "I'll confuse their language. I'll get them speaking all sorts of different languages so they can't understand each other. This will be their punishment for trying to play God." The confusion that resulted meant that the idea of the big tower was abandoned, as all anyone had time to do was to find a few others who could speak the same language.

And the moral of the story depended on whether the Oma telling the story was a wise Oma or a silly Oma. A wise Oma would say something like, "But of course people are people, and deep down inside we're all the same, however we look, however we sound, or whatever we believe." That's what a wise Oma would say, but (unfortunately) not every Oma is wise. A silly Oma would say something like "And, of course, this story tells you to stick with your own kind, so that bad things don't happen to you."

The important thing to remember about the old Oma story from deep in the Hebrew Dreaming is that this division into racial, national and language groups was because people were getting a bit full of themselves. It was never part of God's original intention.

And, when the story of Pentecost was first told by the early Christians, it was told by – and it was told to – people who knew the story of the Tower of Babel very well. The presence of God's Spirit that the first group of Christians experienced soon after the first Easter was explained in terms of a reversal of that old Oma story from the Hebrew Dreaming, the one about the big tower. In the Babel story, God confused people's speech so that people who could once understand each other could no longer do so. In the Pentecost story, God "un-confused" people's speech so that people who once could not understand each other could now do so.

And if the Babel story tells us how racial and national divisions among people are a result of people being far too full of themselves, the Pentecost story tells us that being full of God's Spirit, being God-intoxicated, can lead us to the realisation that, as far as God is concerned, all humanity is a single family.

Bob Faser, TCC Liaison Officer

(You may also want to read Bob's blog "A funny thing happened on the way ...", which can be found at <http://revdocbob.blogspot.com.au>.)

