

- Inauguration on 13-14 October 2006 at Wesley Church, Sydney. 150+ attended. National Executive elected.
- New body supersedes both RA (which continues until legal matter finalised) and EMU (which has wound up State bodies).
- 'Assembly' has been deliberately chosen to highlight ACC strong opposition to what the UC National Assemblies in 2003 (R84) and 2006 (R108) have decided in relation to sexuality and leadership. 'Assembly' is also a fine translation of NT '*ekklesia*' meaning 'an assembly of people summoned to confess the Lordship of JC' (1 Cor12:28 and 14:4; Col 1:18).
- 'Confessing' has been deliberately chosen because it best describes what the Church must do at times when her classical beliefs/ practices are under attack (from within or outside). It is an honoured name for renewal movements throughout Church history, particularly since the 16<sup>th</sup> Reformation, which have protested against a heretical belief.
  1. Lutheran-Reformed Confessions protest against RCC
  2. German CC protest against Nazi ideology (1930s)
  3. South African CC protest against apartheid (1980s)
  4. North American protest against nihilism and relativism (1990s+)
- Confessing Movements arise because of the presence of a particular heresy which is also a sign of deeper/wider theological problems in the Church's life and witness.
- In Scripture 'confessing' faith in '*Jesus as Lord*' is a common feature of the Church's proclamation. This confession is always made in the face of other claims to power and truth. Confession always takes place in the battle between the Gospel and false gospels. A 'good confession' (RJ) is the public acknowledgment of God's unsurpassable saving grace for sinful humanity 'in Christ' (1Tim6:12f).
- Confessing is the act of '*acknowledging*' or '*declaring*' the Church's faith in JC as Lord. It is not principally about upholding correct 'doctrines' per se. Confessing language is used throughout the *Basis of Union* (BU). ... Para 3 says: '*The Church preaches Christ the risen crucified One and confesses him as Lord to the glory of God the Father*' and '*confesses Jesus as Lord over her own life and ... that he is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity.*' The Church thus confesses the truth of God in the Person of Christ. In para 11 (*Scholarly Interpreters*), which is often (mis)used to argue that 'new truth breaks forth from God's word' in modern views of sexuality, '*confession of the Lord in fresh words and deeds*' is inextricably linked to '*the continuing witness and service of evangelist, scholar, prophet and martyr.*'
- Confessing JC as Lord entails confessing our sin. The ACC is not exempt but must admit her complicity in the brokenness of the UCA. When Peter says to Jesus '*Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord*' (Lk 5:8) the two interrelated aspects of confessing our faith are clearly displayed (see also Is 6:5f).
- *The Charter* of the ACC speaks of '*adherence to the BU*' because it is a movement 'within the UCA' which is committed to re-calling the UCA to her foundation as a Church within the 'one holy catholic and apostolic Church.'
- 'Apostasy' has been deliberately chosen to describe the decisions of the 2003 and 2006 Assemblies of the UCA on matters of sexuality and leadership. It is an ugly word which, regrettably, is necessary to describe the betrayal of classical teaching and practice of the Ecumenical Church in relation to sexuality. The issue in dispute, and the beliefs which underlie Assembly's decisions, is a matter of the truth about our creation and redemption in God's image. It is not a matter of opinion or of secondary importance.

The use of 'apostasy' arouses strong emotions. In a letter to reps of talks between the Council of Synod and ACC – NSW Movement, the Rev Paul Swadling, General Secretary of the NSW Synod, said: 'However, such conversations are put at risk while the ACC continues to assert that I and others who wish to be part of such conversations have renounced our faith in Christ (2/03/07). He called for ACC 'to withdraw the accusation that the UCA is apostate.'

In reply the National Executive of ACC said (in part) 'The decision to use 'apostasy' was not taken lightly. It accurately describes what happens when, instead of correcting error, the Church enshrines it in her polity. ... The name JC is not a cipher for infinitely variable faith-perspectives but the name for the Lord of the Church and the Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity, as confessed in the BU.' (attached)

This ugly word must not be used carelessly. Footnote 1 to *The Charter* says: 'The word apostasy is derived from the Greek word *aphistemi*, and is used in the NT in the sense of 'to draw away from', 'to depart from' (Hebrews 3:12) {See also Acts 5:37f and 21:21,29; 2Thess2:3} Apostasy is used here to describe the failure of the Assembly to correct false teaching on sexuality and the decision to enshrine it in the Church's understanding of what is right and good. We reject any attempt to link apostasy with violent, hateful or bigoted behaviour which demeans other people, including those with whom we must disagree on this matter.'

The need for caution is underlined by the fact that, in many places, Apostasy from Islam is punishable by death or life imprisonment. (eg 2006 Apostasy Act, Pakistan. Source: Religious Liberty Network).

- Despite this strong language the ACC is not schismatic! The UCA has caused the split! WP: 'Here lies the boundary of a Christian church that knows itself to be bound by the authority of Scripture. Those who urge the church to change the norm of its teaching on this matter must know that they are promoting schism. If a church were to let itself be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step could cease to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church' (Q in B. Edgar, in *The OS of 84*, p43; ref to *Christianity Today*, Nov. 11, 1996. Vol 40, No 13, p35)
- By her decisions the UCA Assembly has presided over the *Collapse of Orthodoxy* (MC). 'Orthodox' faith, far from being '*heavy, humdrum and safe*' (as popularly portrayed), is vibrant, exhilarating and counter-cultural. It is the practice of mind and heart which strains to witness to the truth in the face of attractive alternatives.

Some speak of '*adventures in orthodoxy*'; others of '*subversive orthodoxy*.' D. Sayers said: 'there was never anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy, nothing so sane and so thrilling.' GK Chesterton spoke of the '*romance of orthodoxy*' because it was full of surprises, joy and fascination when experienced from within (AD). A. Dulles also described orthodoxy 'at its best' as being 'warm, genial and beneficent ... a loving adherence to the word of God in its fullness, with all its complexities, paradoxes and mysteries' (Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. '*The Orthodox Imperative*' in FT 165 Aug/Sept 2006, pp12-15).

- Heresy/Apostasy: Heresy, says Bp CF Allison is a 'cruel deception' which 'panders to the most unworthy tendencies of the human heart.' ... 'Heresy' always exists in the liturgies, prayers, hymns, beliefs of the Church. Indeed, because the presence of heresy is a spur to clarifying and preaching the truth, it may be said to exist by the providence of God. It is known as such, however, only when the Church, in fidelity to God's revelation in Christ and with pastoral love for fellow Christians, takes steps to correct particular errors.

'Heresy' becomes 'apostasy' when, instead of correcting error, the Church ignores or endorses beliefs or practices which, in fact, contradict the Gospel of the incarnation.

Naturally, there are disputes about how to discern truth and error. But when a matter which is at odds with the grace and righteousness of God, as attested by the unified witness of Scripture, is approved or permitted by decision of a national Church body that Church has become 'apostate.' It no longer adheres to the splendour of truth revealed in Scripture and developed in the tradition of the Ecumenical Church. It lives by 'another Gospel;' in this case, by a message about 'acceptance'/'love' which approves of diverse forms of genuine consensual sexual behaviour.

- Is there an affinity between this CM and the CM in 1930s Germany?

1. Sixty years on from Barmen (1934) North American confessors saw similarities and differences ... 'the analogies with Barmen should not be exaggerated, nor should they be ignored.' They asked themselves whether they had a right to use 'confessing' when it had been used in much more dangerous and dramatic circumstances than they now seemed to be facing. They concluded that it came closest to their situation and purpose than any other term. They needed the same steadfast courage and fidelity to Scriptural authority and a *status confessionis* to name present idolatrous world-views. Silence is no longer morally possible in a Church 'so fixated on friendly sentiment, hyper-toleration and superficial unity that it has tended to brush under the rug all norms except egalitarian political correctness' (p71).

There is a common 'selling out' to powerful ideological biases. The current situation 'is not so different from that faced by Niemoller, KB and DB. We do not face Fascist power 'but an even more subtle ideological conceit;' namely, 'a massive secular cultural totalitarianism that intends to engulf all believers, all vestiges of classical Christianity, and especially the church's institutions, schools and mission endowments.' (T. Oden, *Turning around the Mainline*, p198f)

2. Meet the objection that it is immoral to call a homophobic group a 'Confessing Movement' when the earlier CM (and its close equivalent in South Africa) opposed the mistreatment of people (inc gays) on the grounds of biological identity.
  - a. There is no excuse for killing people on basis of ethnicity or immoral/disordered behaviour. See fn 1 in The Charter (above) Unconscionable!
  - b. Reasoned opposition to homosexuality is not necessarily (and rarely) 'homophobic'
  - c. A CM must challenge the deification of individual choice (// to community will) which trumps Christ-centred theological anthropology. The connection is found in the neo-pagan world-view of both *Nazism* and *Libertarianism*. In the 1930s the world suffered because of the deification of *natural* community, race, blood and people; in the latter, Western societies experience the deification of the individual's *natural reason*, feelings or desires. Both are based on the claim to have a special (natural) biological dignity which is distinct from humanity per se.

- Confessing the Truth

'If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not professing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. ... Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved. To be steady on all the battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at this point.' (M. Luther)

'In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act' (G. Orwell).

Context is post-modernity. 'Truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are' (FN). (Wesley/Tusmore sermons)

Refer to 'Why Confessors are necessary' for conclusion.

#### ***Developments since 13-14 October 06***

1. There are now 115 congnos/clusters and 1,000 individual memberships of ACC (c 42 / 200 in SA).
2. National Executive ('Council') has met on many occasions.

(Explain change to 'National Council.')

3. 6 Commissions and 2 Boards have been established. Excellent leaders appointed. (Speak to particulars on *Organizational Chart*)
4. ACC State bodies have been set up in all States except WA where a group of fellow travellers (PNEUMA) has formed. MC (and RJ) have visited every State. N Qld. Southern Tasmanian Group has reps from 7 congregations and av. attendance of 30.
5. DThC is writing a Confessing Statement for contemporary times. It will have a strong ORE focus which addresses issues of spirituality, individualism, nihilism, relativism ...
6. Publication of *Galatians Study Booklet* (Phil Marshall).
7. SRC is preparing a paper which will help ACC members think about the bases on which we make ethical decisions. BE has just been appointed as Prof Theological Studies at Asbury College, USA ...
8. EC is planning to hold seminars etc with reform groups in other churches. ACC has a lot of support behind the scenes, eg GOrth
9. ACC congregations are the ACC in their particular places. Must think about ways of supporting one another in clusters through prayer and action. Importance of NDC (RJ) to foster evangelical unity. Eg STas
10. 'ACC Catalyst' (24 pages) is about to be launched as quarterly journal at a cost of \$10,000 per issue. Editor is Paul Gray (H-S opinion writer with extensive experience in Church publications and media). Rev WC and BOC members (Vic Malham, Anne Weeks, Ross Carter, Steve E, Ivan Kirk, MC, NE, graphic designers etc) have done splendid job.
11. Website is being redesigned in line with new CCC website at [www.ccc.confessingcongregations.com.au](http://www.ccc.confessingcongregations.com.au).
12. ACC Prayer Network (successor of RA) is constant in prayer support.
13. BOFA: Office ACC-RA, staff, treasurer
14. National Conference is being held in mid-November. 'Living in Truth'
15. *Constitution* has been approved for Inc by Office Fair Trading. (IB)
16. Choice of Logo. (Kyabram)
17. Budget set at \$125, 000. Rev Stuart Brooking (Sydney Anglican and Director of Overseas Council, which raises money for post-graduate students in poor countries, said that ACC should be bold and shoot for \$200,000. The initial impact is critical.
18. Unapologetic Appeal for Finance
  - a. 2,000 individual members would give us \$100,000 pa
  - b. Congregational membership is \$10 by membership
  - c. Fund-raising: Focus on special projects giving eg ACC Catalyst; Conference, Visiting speakers; Overseas speaking engagements, State missionaries ...
19. Future of RA and EMU? RA continues until legal matters are finalised. Detailed legal opinion to March ASC – await July ASC. Summary of Theological grounds for legal advice!