



Rev. Dave Clancey

Editorial

We thank the Rev. Andy Carley for his last few years serving as Chair of the Latimer Fellowship. Due to increasing parish demands Andy has stepped back as Chair, and the Rev. Dave Clancey has been elected as Chair of the Executive.

The Ma Whea Commission was established by the Standing Committee of General Synod in late 2011 to report back to the Synod on issues surrounding the blessing and ordination of people in same sex relationships. Its terms of reference require it to consider (among other things) biblical, theological, missional, pastoral and ecclesial issues, as well to address what care and protection there might be for those 'marginalised' by any decisions made by General Synod.

While recent events in New Zealand, such as the legal redefinition of marriage and the Bishop of Auckland appearing before the Human Rights Review Tribunal, might lead some to fear a *fait accompli*, there is strong and compelling evidence that our church not only *should not*, but *can not*, proceed along the path of legitimising same-sex relationships through either blessing or ordination. Such evidence is grounded upon the truth of Scripture, the constitution of our church, and the tradition of our communion. Fine minds amongst Latimer members, along with our partners in AFFIRM, have set forth cogent, graceful, and compelling reasons for our church to maintain the status quo. However it is a pastoral issue that provides what many would consider the strongest argument in the whole discussion. It is the issue of love.

It is profoundly and fundamentally unloving to legitimise same-sex relationships. Jesus declared that the kingdom of heaven was near. He said that he came to seek and save. To preach good news and proclaim freedom. And in each of those missional proclamations there was a requirement on the hearer. To repent and believe. To acknowledge that you were lost and needed seeking and saving. To admit that you were the poor and the prisoner who needed good news

and freedom. For "it is not the healthy who need a doctor", said Jesus, "but the sick" (Luke 5:31). Indeed, if you considered yourself healthy you wouldn't go near the doctor - you would have no need for them. However, for those who know their sickness and their need, the arrival of the doctor is sweet news indeed.

Jesus declared that the kingdom of heaven was near. He said that he came to seek and save. To preach good news and proclaim freedom. And in each of those missional proclamations there was a requirement on the hearer. To repent and believe. To acknowledge that you were lost and needed seeking and saving. To admit that you were the poor and the prisoner who needed good news and freedom.

Jesus continued "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). By very definition, the righteous have no need of a saviour. There is nothing that they need saving from. The sinner, on the other hand - they know their need. They know they need to repent, and for them the news of a saviour is wonderful, glorious, liberating joy. It is love of the highest order: that the creator would come in the form of his creature, to rescue and save those who admit and acknowledge and lament their rebellion and sin, those who call out to him for freedom and release from their bondage and guilt. That is why it is profoundly and fundamentally unloving to legitimise same-sex relationships. For Scripture repeatedly identifies same-sex activity as sin, irrespective of whether it is within a monogamous

loving relationship or not; irrespective of the orientation of those involved. It is sin to the point where the apostle is clear that those involved in it will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9). And because it is sin, it needs to be repented of.

If the church blesses same-sex relationships or ordains those in same-sex relationships it is saying that such relationships, and the sex that occurs within them, is not sin. If it is not sin then there is no need for repentance. If it's not sin then you don't need saving from it. If it's not sin then you are (in this area) righteous and healthy. And therefore you don't need the doctor.

Those who undertake it need saving, just as all of us who sin in so many myriad and varied ways need saving. And Jesus does and will save people who experience same-sex attraction. He does and will save those who have lived a life of sin when they respond to his call that they need saving, and repent and believe, and seek his forgiveness. He will forgive and restore them when they fail, and come to him again in repentance

and strengthen them by his Spirit to say no to ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives for his glory, even if that means not satisfying their desires, be they for sex, greed, power or glory.

This is the heart of the issue. If the church blesses same-sex relationships or ordains those in same-sex relationships it is saying that such relationships, and the sex that occurs within them, is not sin. If it is not sin then there is no need for repentance. If it's not sin then you don't need saving from it. If it's not sin then you are (in this area) righteous and healthy. And therefore you don't need the doctor. It is stating that something God says will keep a person out of his kingdom is, in fact, good. It is telling a lie about the most important issue a person can ever address, that is, their eternal future. It is unloving. Profoundly and fundamentally unloving.

So please pray. Pray that God would strengthen Christians who experience same-sex attraction to live godly lives in Christ. Pray for those in same sex relationships that they would hear and respond to the glorious gospel of Christ. And pray that God would protect and preserve his church to be grounded upon, and boldly proclaiming his great and glorious love in Christ.