



WEEKLY NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
DAPTO ANGLICAN CHURCH

MARGARET COURT AND AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

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Frustratingly, Christianity is in the headlines again, and it's anything but a good news story. Margaret Court is awarded Australia's highest medal (AC) for her services to tennis. She still holds the record for winning the most Grand Slams in tennis, more than any other male or female.

In response, a Doctor (who has herself undergone gender transition) returned her medal. Prominent ABC journalist Kerry O'Brien rejected his medal. Two state premiers also objected. They believe that awarding Margaret Court condones her hurtful views, and divides the community.

What exactly has Margaret Court said?

It is useful to highlight three statements. This past week, in response to the award and commentary, she said "I teach the Bible, what God says in the Bible, and I think that is my right and privilege.... the bible has been around for thousands of years.... it's very important for freedom of speech that we can say our beliefs...."

In 2017 Margaret Court called homosexuality "an abominable sexual practice". In 2013, regarding fellow tennis player Casey Dellacqua's child born within a lesbian relationship, she said "It is with sadness that I see that this baby has seemingly been deprived of a father".

At the centre of this fracas is the question of how, and on what topics, Christians participate in social debates in the public domain. Simply put, there are three responses.

1. The Bible is God's Truth that we announce

The Bible is God's truth, it is good for any society (whether or not they believe it), and it is our task to proclaim it – be the message in or out of fashion.



Of course I agree that the bible is God's eternal word, instructive for life and doctrine. When our culture was broadly speaking Christian (from about 400 – 1970AD, often called Christendom) the Bible was widely accepted as the authoritative moral text. In that context it was appropriate to share biblical principles within 'Christian' nations like Australia, England, and the USA.

But Australia has, or is becoming, very recently and quickly, post-Christian in many of its values. The Bible is no longer esteemed as a shared authority. While the Bible remains true for everyone and every situation, is it prudent to suggest a post-Christian nation ought to follow Christian values?

2. Christians ought to bring biblical wisdom to the public debate

Some will say – to require non-Christians to follow Christian ethics is moralism, or legalism. We do not wish to be legalistic. Having said that, Biblical principles are sound, and we have a right and responsibility within a democracy to participate in the public discourse. To bless our culture by bringing God's wisdom to bear. To stand up for the rights of not just individuals to make choices, but of children to be raised, where possible, with a mother and a father.

Personally, I find this view compelling. We have an amazing history of contributions to celebrate. Mass education, public health care, opposing slavery etc. But this approach is fraught with a complexity. The public discourse presently focuses on many topics. Our culture is most concerned by domestic abuse, by human trafficking and slavery, and racial discrimination. Biblically informed Christians will be opposed to all of these. And when we speak up, we will be heard (as but one voice in a chorus), received and applauded.

But our culture is also concerned about other causes – such as the right of those with gender dysphoria to access gender reassignment; or the rights of same sex couples to have or adopt children. When Christians join the public debate on these topics we are inevitably criticised. Social progressives like Daniel Andrews and Kerry O'Brien believe it is their place to shut us down. They do so, deeming our views to be hurtful, divisive, and discriminatory.

Ironically, social progressives are contending for an 'inclusive' society that 'excludes' people who do not think like they do. That this position is obviously inconsistent appears not to matter.

This leads us to the third position. If Christians are only permitted to comment on causes that everyone else is already passionate about, what difference are we making? At best, only a little. Is it strategic to try participate in a debate where the rules are stacked against us? Where we can only speak on certain topics? Where we are lampooned when we stray into other topics?

3. Christians as an alternative

Instead, a third approach suggests Christians step back from the public debate, and focus our efforts into being counter cultural. Into being a vibrant viable alternative. Into being a sub-culture who is salt and light by the fact that we are different. Internally, we are a people who stand up for the abused, or those discriminated against, for those with additional needs, for the poor, AND for the rights of children within our community to have both a mother and father figure in their life.



This approach also has its detractors. Some will say, are you not withdrawing from the public space? Are we not abrogating our responsibility to contribute, in debate and action, to the common good?

Margaret Court is clearly not of this last view. She has elements of the middle view, but primarily the first view. In the present climate, Margaret Courts ventures into public debate do not play out well.

My own conclusions

When Jesus sends his disciples out on mission, he says “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) In my view, while Margaret Court’s statements might reflect biblical morals, they lack shrewdness.

As our culture increasingly abandons its Christian heritage – as “they exchange the truth about God [and life in his creation] for a lie” – is it occasion for us to increasingly hand “them over” to “the sinful desires of their hearts”? (Romans 1:24-25) To use a sailing analogy, while our destination may not have changed, the winds have changed, and so we ought to, I suggest, change tact.

I see truth and biblical support for each of the above three positions. When Christians are in Jerusalem (that is, in a place where we are aligned with the dominant views) the first response fits best. When Christians are in Athens (where there is open debate in the market place about beliefs and values), majoring on the second approach suits the context. When Christians are in Babylon (as is say Daniel, or 1 Peter, where the dominant views persecute Christian views), the third response is shrewd.

For what it’s worth, I interpret Australian culture as becoming increasingly post-Christian – more Babylon than Athens, let alone Jerusalem. In this setting, I find myself in transition. I see insight in each of the three views. But I am shifting to regarding the third approach as most shrewd for this season.

COMING UP

30th Jan Connect Training

4th Feb DNA Groups Info Night

5th Feb Prayer Launch

6th Feb Youth Leader Training

7th Feb GG Leaders Lunch

1st Mar Annual General Meeting



NEW STAFF FOR 2021

Next week we welcome four new staff members to the DAC Team. Leigh, Kim, Amy and Tom will commence Monday February the 1st.



ST LUKE'S CHAPLAIN

Leigh Roberts

Leigh Roberts is joining the DAC staff, and will be our chaplain to St Lukes village. Leigh will be working with residents who live independently, in the retirement section of St Lukes village. It is our plan to start a service on the St Luke's site



OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Kimberley Bailey

Kim will be joining the Staff as a part time administrator. She will be employed 2 days per week. Her duties will include general administration and ministry support. Kim will also be studying the Advanced Diploma of Ministry at Youthworks College.



YOUTH MINISTRY TRAINEE

Amy Marra

Having finished Year 13 in 2020, Amy has chosen to go on to Youthworks College to study the Advanced Diploma of Ministry. Amy will be employed as the Youth Ministry Intern for 2 days per week. She will assist Youth Ministry in overseeing the 5pm Service as well as Youth Leading.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY INTERN

Tom David

As Tom continues his Bachelor of Education at Wollongong University, he will also come on staff as a Children's Ministry Intern for 1 day per week. Tom will assist the Children's Minister in overseeing Connect Kids Unleashed.



LiT CAMP

On Wednesday 20th of Jan, Matt Stanley, Kimberley Bailey, Sarah Chandler and Isaac Keenan took 15 youth to a camp called LiT. LiT stands for "Leaders in Training", and is a Youthworks camp for youth in Years 10 to 12 which is aimed at teaching them how to prepare and write a bible talk or bible study. The youth were challenged to dig deep into God's Word - here is what Charlotte Hare had to say about it:

LiT has been such an amazing opportunity for me to grow in my faith and spend time with people who share the same morals and beliefs. Watching my friends grow in their relationships with God at camp is always so encouraging, and it is still a highlight for me.

This year we looked at the book of Ruth and explored the concept of redemption. Something that stuck out to me was that no matter what life throws at us and what challenging situations we are put through, God will always provide His love, and He will never fail. God kindly provides for us in seen and unseen ways, and He puts people, events, places and things in our lives, and none of them are coincidences.

Learning to turn to God when I am hurting or feel like I want to give up has always been a hurdle for me. Still, LiT has helped me see that His love for me is endless and that I should be the most reliant on Him when I am in pain or walking away because He has a plan for me and everything will fall into place. LiT is truly the best experience I have ever had, and I am so grateful to the people that have made it possible again for me this year.

Throughout the year ahead, we will continue to develop the skills learnt and continue their training on writing good biblical talks. Please join with us in praying for these 15 youth as well as those who will continue to train them.



PRAYER FOR TODAY

Lord, you have taught us that whatever we do without love is worth nothing: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts the gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you; grant this, for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY

PREGNANT WOMEN

Loren A (7pm), and Kasey D (10am).

VILLAGES/NURSING HOMES

Helen S; Diana M; Kath H; Ella H; Jean D; Glenys N; Barbara B; Barbara L; Reg B.

HOSPITAL

Mildred A (8am) - having surgery. Elizabeth L (10am) - back surgery. Hilda S (10am) - pacemaker fitted. Grahame S (10am).

8AM/2PM

Shirley S; Pat W & Antony & Sue - all struggling with health issues; Maureen (Op Shop Customer) - Cancer; Daphne C's daughter, Joanne - surgeon consultation today, 28th); Daphne C's neighbour - Lukemia.

9:30AM

Robin B - ongoing pain..

10am

Hilary B - bad arthritis in hand; Susan S - torn ligament in knee caused by fall; Sharon S - waiting for vision to fully return; Jeanette B - praying for a date soon for back surgery; Ruth D; Alexis L; Sylvia McG; Genie C; Phillippa S; Wendy E; Ronnie VK; Michael E; Janelle S; Michele S - all ongoing conditions and treatments; Dave S - recovering at home after surgery.

7PM

Shaina J's son, Roman - more tests soon, pray for more answers and good health while monitoring and waiting; Billy H - chemo treatment; Gary M - ongoing health problems; David G - unwell and awaiting surgery.

SAFE MINISTRY



Dapto Anglican Church is committed to Safe Ministry Practices.

If you have a question or concern, we are here to help.

Please contact:

- Julie Houghton, Parish Safe Ministry Representative, by confidential email safeministry@daptoanglican.org.au or through our church office on 42611001
- Anglican Abuse Report line on 1800 774945

