

# OIKOUMENE

Tasmanian Council of Churches

December 2016

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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?*



## The Contrast of Christmas

Our modern age is dominated by prophecies of doom and gloom. We live in fear of personal loss, attack, burglary and death. On a national and international level, we are dominated by fears of terrorism, wars, the effects of global warming and the destruction of the environment, and we are told to expect a gloomy future for our children and grandchildren. So our celebration of Christmas looks like a crazy act of self-delusion – an act of defiance in the face of overwhelming odds, made out of the Judaeo-Christian belief that, contrary to appearances, God is active in his creation and intends to, and *will*, provide for his beloved people.

The familiar Christmas story in Luke chapter 2 speaks of a great contrast: the contrast between the mighty Roman Empire under Augustus, and the redeemer of the world born in abject poverty. The empire was won and held together by military might. It had a geographical spread encompassing the Mediterranean and stretching up to the

Rhine and Danube. The emperor wanted an accurate picture of the world and its population. The census saw thousands travelling to their cities of origin. It was a world in which the weak were pushed around by the mighty; the rule of empire was maintained by naked aggression. It is likely that Luke wrote his Gospel during the reign of Domitian (AD 80-96), a man increasingly paranoid and fearful of assassination, who killed close relatives and others he saw as threats to his throne. Domitian had fought six wars on the northern borders, and his coin displayed his titles: Lord and Saviour.

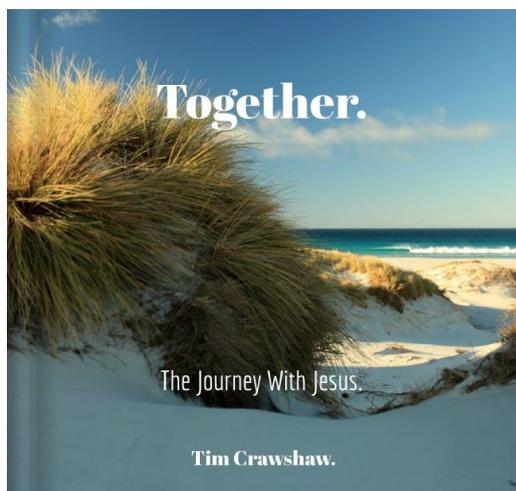
This was the world into which Jesus, a very different Lord and Saviour, was born. The contrast with the power and might of the empire and its rulers could hardly be greater. Jesus was born of a woman betrothed to, but not pregnant by, her husband; born far from home in a dirty, unhygienic stable, since all the accommodation had been taken. Like all newly born babies, he was defenceless and weak; deaths of newborn babies were frequent, and over a third of children would die before their fifth birthday. Luke tells us that the first hearers of the news of this infant Saviour's birth were shepherds out in the hills, dodgy, unkempt and marginalised men, so not much of a witness to the great event. He tells us that they were "terrified" by the angelic appearance and the "glory of the Lord" which "shone round them". Yet the angels' message would have been clearly recognised by those who knew Luke's Gospel for the threat that it was, since their message was a close match to the

inscription on Domitian's coin, "a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord". The angels' message glorified not an emperor, but the one true God. It promised a peace that the greatest emperor in the world could not give, and one not maintained by terror.

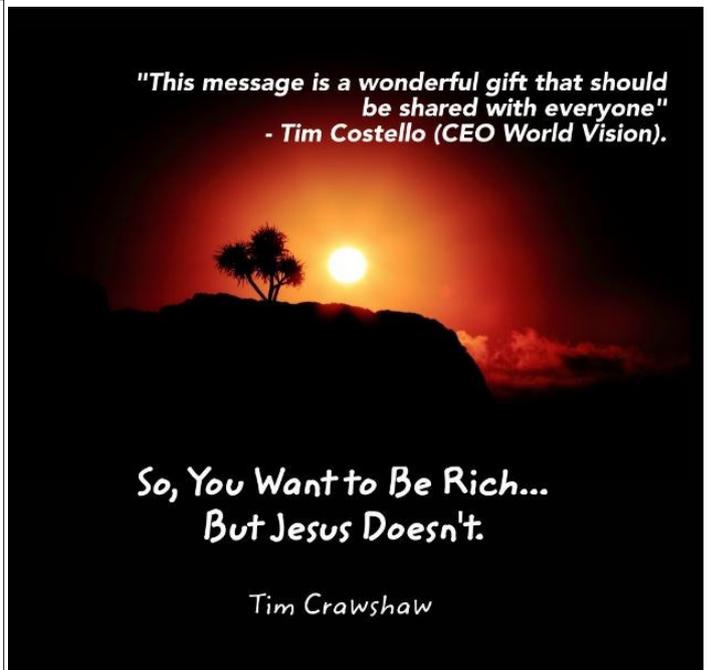
I believe that a miracle of transformation is being wrought in you and me. We, unworthy and unpromising men and women, are even now being drawn into the glory of God, every time we proclaim our faith. Our claim, our defiant claim this Christmas, is that Jesus has conquered against all the odds and not just for us only, but that he "has made salvation possible for the whole human race".

So we Christians are people called to live in the mystery of this great contrast between the brokenness of our daily lives and the promise of the Gospel. It is a challenge that we are called to respond to this Christmas and every day of our lives.

*Rev. Jeff Gray, President of the TCC*



**Also Available from Tim Crawshaw**



**"So, You Want to Be Rich... But Jesus Doesn't"** is a short picture book for adults and teenagers. It combines beautiful landscape photography and words that challenge mainstream materialistic and consumerist success as the meaning of life in the Western secular world. It exposes the deceptive common belief that material wealth guarantees happiness and fulfilment. It offers a spiritual alternative to life as taught by Jesus Christ in a way that is easy to understand for people with no prior knowledge of his teachings. These teachings promise a more purposeful and meaningful life than acquiring wealth for the sake of it and just pleasing ourselves – what our egos crave and what we are constantly conditioned by the world to pursue. If you don't think Jesus is relevant in our social context read this book and think again ...

Tim is very happy to give a personal reading of his book at your local church if you have a projector screen and Internet connection. Tim is available for Sunday services, Bible studies, breakfast groups, youth groups and any other church-affiliated group. **For more information visit: [www.timcrawshawfoto.com](http://www.timcrawshawfoto.com) or you can email him on: [timcrawshawpeople@gmail.com](mailto:timcrawshawpeople@gmail.com)**



Dear friends,

As I write this last message for 2016, the words of Dag Hammarskjold come to my mind: "For all that has been, Thanks, for all that will be, Yes!" There is so much for which to be thankful. 2016 has been a very significant year in the life of the National Council of Churches in Australia. Our forum took place giving us a new President, a new constitution, a new Board of Directors, and a new Assembly. Our commissions and networks continue to commit to ensuring our churches work together and grow in understanding of each other. The NCCA staff is beavering along – with generosity and commitment. Act for Peace are completing the requirements for accreditation. These few sentences completely understate what we are doing together. To each person who is involved, who has gone the extra mile, Thank you.

As I look back on the life of NCCA, I think of our member churches. I'm guessing that many churches when they look back on the past year, thoughts may be less positive. I appreciate that churches have faced a number of troubling issues. Perhaps the issue that continues to distress us most is the situation of people suffering persecution for their faith, people seeking refuge and asylum. Our hearts ache for them. Our hearts grieve for our nation. I give thanks for the many people who are giving voice to many people whose voices are not heard who are striving to enable people be at home.

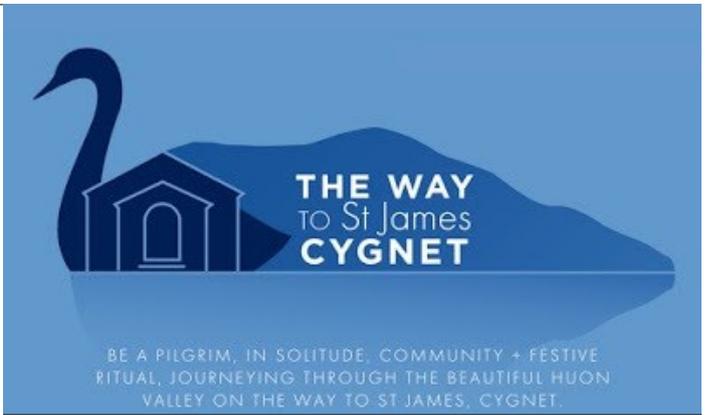
People seeking asylum and refuge especially speak to me of hope. As the situation of so many comes to mind, I think of the hope that must enable each to leave all they know, to leave home, to move into the unknown, facing innumerable difficulties, so that they may have a home that is safe.

As God's people we are called to make Christ's message of hope real for them. WE are God's hands, feet, heart. May we have the courage to be a reason for hope for many.

As we live Christ's message each day – living it in the reality of our homes and communities, saying "Yes" to God in the ordinary and the extraordinary – may we know Christ in our lives in ever new ways. May we be at home in Christ as he makes his home in us.

Sr Elizabeth Delaney, SGS

General Secretary  
National Council of Churches in Australia



After a successful inaugural pilgrimage in 2016, we are pleased to announce the pilgrimage will be on again in 2017.

Inspired by the famous Spanish El Camino of St James this two-day pilgrim walk will take you through the scenic and peaceful Huon Valley to a celebration at the Spanish mission styled Church of St James, nestled in the heart of Cygnet. Through fellowship, reflection, rejoicing and ritual you will find an opportunity to reconnect with the spiritual dimensions of your life.

The pilgrimage commences on Friday 6th January 2017 at 10.30 am from the Mountain River Community Hall and finishes on the 7th January 2017 at about 5.00 pm at St James Church, Cygnet in the midst of the wonderful Cygnet Folk Festival.

The route covers rural roads in southern Tasmania and is best described as needing low to medium level fitness levels. Pilgrims are advised to attain reasonable bushwalking levels of fitness. Pilgrims must be a minimum age of 10.

**Day one** is from Mountain River to Ranelagh and is 14 km, approximately 4.5 hours.

**Day two** will take us from Ranelagh Church, with a bus trip to Cradoc to avoid narrow sections of the Channel Highway and then along the Cradoc Coast Road next to the Huon River and over the Silver Hill Road and Missing Link Road to Cygnet.





## Pray for our politicians

### Churches working together

The Christmas Bowl appeal is a much-loved tradition where 1,800 churches from 19 denominations come together in a powerful demonstration of solidarity as well as an act of faith and love to help some of the world's most vulnerable people.

### Over 67 years of the [Christmas Bowl](#)

It began on Christmas Day 1949, when a minister named the Reverend Frank Byatt in Victoria placed a simple empty bowl on the table before him. He humbly asked his friends and family to contribute what they felt the cost of the meal had been. Mr Byatt asked that they consider their own good fortune in being able to share a Christmas meal together in comfort and safety. And he invited them to share God's blessings of love and friendship in the form of a gift to help people who had fled the horrors of World War Two and were suffering as refugees.

This invitation to Australian Christians to stand by men, women and children living through conflict and displacement is, sadly, more important than ever. For the first time in history, there are nearly 60 million displaced people in the world who need our help.

The Christmas Bowl appeal is our way of forging a loving connection between our Christian community here in Australia and people around the world who are experiencing dreadful hardship and suffering.

[www.actforpeace.org.au/Christmas-bowl](http://www.actforpeace.org.au/Christmas-bowl)



Please join us as we come to Parliament House to pray with and for our government leaders. For the last two years Christian leaders from all over Tasmania have been gathering in Parliament House, not only to offer our prayerful support for our government leaders but also as a witness of a unified Christian presence in Tasmania.

Starting in February 2017, we will gather every second Wednesday of the month at 1.30 pm in the Long Room at Parliament House in Hobart. You are warmly invited to join in prayer.



The Nativity window above the main entrance of St. David's Cathedral



The Tasmanian Council of Churches' Emergencies Ministry (TCC EM) is part of the State Government's Tasmanian Emergency Management Plan, with the activation of the regional social recovery committee in the event of a disaster or emergency. The TCC is the primary agency whose sole purpose is to deliver accredited pastoral care in times of crisis. "Tasmanian Council of Churches – Emergencies Ministry" is now incorporated. The founding members are Jeff Gray, Gordon Yearsley, Paul Hueston, Margaret Savage, and Bradley Taylor. This allows TCC EM to apply for funding in its own

The Tasmanian Council of Churches' Emergencies Ministry (TCC EM) seeks to provide compassionate care in times of crisis. We provide emotional and spiritual care, personal support, and psychological first aid, and contribute to outreach in the event of a disaster or emergency. As part of the Tasmanian Social Recovery Plan, through the activation of a regional social recovery committee, the TCC EM is the primary agency whose sole purpose is to deliver pastoral care in times of crisis. Deployment can also come through local councils or other government departments.

We hope to continue building on our network by training and accrediting volunteers from various Tasmanian faith communities who can provide Pastoral & Spiritual care in disaster settings and the emergency context.

For more information: [www.tccem.org.au](http://www.tccem.org.au)

Or e-mail [emprojects@tcctas.org.au](mailto:emprojects@tcctas.org.au)



### IN AN EMERGENCY:

If an emergency (either fire-related or otherwise) occurs, please listen for advice on **ABC Local Radio**, our emergency broadcaster in Tasmania. ABC Local Radio is found at 936 AM in Southern Tasmania and at 91.7 FM\* in Northern Tasmania (\*see table below for regional frequencies).

ABC Local Radio	Frequency	ABC Local Radio	Frequency
Bicheno TAS	89.7 FM	Queenstown TAS	90.5 FM
Burnie TAS	102.5 FM	Rosebery TAS	106.3 FM
East Devonport TAS	100.5 FM	Savage River/Waratah	104.1 FM
Fingal TAS	1161 AM	St Helens TAS	1584 AM
Hobart TAS	936 AM	St Marys TAS	102.7 FM
King Island TAS	88.5 FM	Strahan TAS	107.5 FM
Launceston City TAS	102.7 FM	Swansea TAS	106.1 FM
Launceston TAS	91.7 FM	Waratah TAS	103.3 FM
Lileah TAS	91.3 FM	Weldborough TAS	97.3 FM
NE Tasmania TAS	91.7 FM	Zeehan TAS	90.5 FM