

church's task of teaching her people the whole counsel of God. If anything, she should see such a moment as a time to examine whether that's what she's doing and make any necessary changes in her teaching strategy. She needs to make sure Christians are being intentionally grounded in the truth.

As with community, the strategy for doing this might look different in different places and congregations, but I'd suggest the use of a good historical confession or catechism is a helpful place to start. Time is a great solvent of irrelevance. If a creed or confession or catechism has been in existence and proved useful for centuries, then one can be reasonably confident it doesn't contain a lot of irrelevant or peripheral fluff but rather things that are of perennial importance to Christians.

In my own tradition (Presbyterianism), the Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms were composed in the 1640s as sweeping statements of the essentials of the Christian faith. They have in the years since been subject to some revisions. For example, the American version has been revised to eliminate the positive link between state and church, known as the Establishment Principle, in order to bring the documents into line with the American view of the matter. But the vast majority of the text of the Westminster Standards remains unchanged. Any church using them as a guide to the whole counsel of God will find a very helpful resource for seeing what is of key importance.

Some might respond and say that such historic documents are of limited usefulness today, when wider society presses matters such as gay marriage or transgenderism upon us. There's truth in this: the Westminster Confession doesn't address such issues directly in the way that pastors might have to, but it does contain positive teaching about what it means to be human and what are the nature and purposes of marriage. These provide solid, general conceptual foundations by which the church can approach contemporary challenges, and they do so in a way that sets the immediate problems of our day in the context of the broader framework of perennial Christian truth.

In short, such confessions help us not only to see that certain things are wrong but also to see why they are so in terms of God's truth as a whole. A teaching strategy based on these as guides would seem to be a highly desirable part of any church's life in our present circumstances.

Collect

Everlasting God in whom we live and move and have our being, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you: give us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, no weakness prevent us from doing it; that in your light we may see light, and in your service find perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



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The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life

[John 3:14-15]

Lent 4

10th March

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

Lent 5

17th March

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalms 119:9-16 1

Hebrews 5:5-10

John 12:20-33

Teaching the Whole Counsel of God in a Strange New World

Carl Trueman, TGC July 2022

One of the temptations at a time of tremendous change is to fixate upon the immediate challenges to the Christian faith. Now, it's surely not a bad thing to prioritize the most pressing problems the church faces and to address them with a degree of urgency. The sale of indulgences, for example, was a major problem in 1517, and it was right for Luther to focus on that rather than spend his time writing on the issue of same-sex marriage, a matter of no import whatsoever in the early 16th century. Yet there's a danger here: we can become so preoccupied with specific threats that we neglect the important fact that Christian truth is not a set of isolated and unconnected claims but rather stands as a coherent whole.

The church's teaching on gender, marriage, and sex is a function of her teaching on what it means to be human. The doctrines of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation are important foundations for addressing the specific challenges of our time. If, as I contend, modern sexual and identity politics are functions of deeper notions of selfhood, then we need first to know what the Christian view of the self is in order to address them. And as the Bible teaches that the human self is made in the image of God, we need a good grasp of the doctrine of God. In short, we can stand strong at this cultural moment and address the specific challenges we face only if our foundations in God's truth are broad and deep.

This means the chaotic nature of our times is no excuse for abandoning the

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors

Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council
- Rev Daniel and Jenni

Dates to Remember

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| 10 March (today) | AGM Service at 4 pm in hall Food for body & soul at 5.30 |
| 14 March | Bible study at 5.30 pm |
| 17 March | Blackwater at 3 pm |
| 29 March | Good Friday |
| 31 March | Easter Sunday |

| | 10 March | 17 March |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Service Leader | | |
| Welcome | Alan | Alan |
| Power Point | | |
| Read | Larry, Nancy | Jenni |
| Prayers | | Larry |
| Sunday School | Cate & Noah | Cate & Noah |
| Morning Tea | Donna | |
| Shop | | Jenni |
| Mowing | | Nuku (Friday) |

The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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