

## EUTHANASIA IN THE VICTORIA/TASMANIA DISTRICT OF THE UNITING CHURCH

It has been recently reported that the Uniting Church of Victoria/Tasmania has voted in support of motions to allow euthanasia in their agencies. In a statement posted on their website<sup>1</sup> we read:

*“Key points from the resolution included:*

*There was a range of faithful Christian responses to voluntary assisted dying.*

*Exploring, accessing and conscientiously objecting to voluntary assisted dying were all within the range of faithful Christian responses to the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017.*

*To give permission within Victoria to UCA institutions (Uniting Vic.Tas and Uniting AgeWell) and the UCA-affiliated hospital group Epworth HealthCare to make voluntary assisted dying allowable within the context of their facilities and services for their patients, clients and residents.*

*Moderator Rev Denise Liersch said afterwards: “The decision was made after a long period of careful consideration, discussion, and prayer.*

*“As followers of Jesus, we affirm that all human life is precious and has God-given dignity.*

*“We believe allowing voluntary assisted dying in our agencies, under the constraints of the legislation, is consistent with this belief.*

*“The Synod will prepare pastoral responses and resources that reflect the Synod’s decision.*

*“The Synod acknowledged that exploring, accessing, and conscientiously objecting to voluntary assisted dying was within the range of faithful Christian responses to the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017.*

*“As outlined in the legislation, any individual in our agencies or Church members may act in accordance with their own conscience in this matter.*

*“I was impressed with the way in which the Synod members grappled with this issue openly, honestly and faithfully with its theological and practical implications.”*

Let’s get our heads around the moderator’s assertion, *“As followers of Jesus...voluntary assisted dying in our agencies, under the constraints of the legislation, is consistent with this belief”.*

*“As follower of Jesus,”* we support the killing of terminally ill human beings?! What a disgrace to attach Christ’s name to such an ignominious and evil practice!

The following is what our Statement of Faith says in regard to euthanasia:

*Euthanasia is contrary to God’s command, “You shall not murder.”<sup>2</sup> Suicide is self-murder, and assistance to suicide, as it occurs in euthanasia, is complicity in murder. Those who ignore this cannot escape a guilty conscience before God, the judge. For He will punish murderers and those who have complicity in murder.*

*God Himself has distinguished human life from animal life by creating human beings in His own image.<sup>3</sup> God has also distinguished human life from animal life by endowing human life with spirit.<sup>4</sup> Each human person bears the stamp of God’s original design. God pointed to the original image of Himself in human beings when He threatened His retribution on those who are guilty of taking human life.<sup>5</sup> Therefore how human beings put down animals when they are old and miserable cannot be the way in which they treat their fellow human beings. God alone knows whether disease or injury is incurable. Since our times are in God’s hands,<sup>6</sup> it is His prerogative alone to decide when and how an individual should move to the existence that continues beyond temporal death.*

*Christians have the special duty, for Jesus’ sake, to encourage, support, and suffer with, those who are weak or defenceless.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, even if there is legislation in favour of euthanasia, Christian people are bound to continue their determined opposition to it.<sup>8</sup>*

We reject arguments in favour of euthanasia that are based on so-called “quality of life” as fallacies. For human life does not have to be perfect in every respect to be worth living.

We reject arguments in favour of euthanasia based on the claim that each individual has the right to choose whether he or she wants to live on.

We reject every attempt to cheapen human life through sanctioning voluntary euthanasia. Once the principle is established that citizens’ lives may be ended with others’ help, all people who are incurably sick or physically defective are in principle put at risk.

We reject the assumption that one or more doctors may decide whether a person’s life should continue or not. For that is God’s prerogative.

No doubt there will be Christians within the Uniting Church of Victoria/Tasmania who are grieving this decision. We too, grieve at this decision and ask for God’s mercy upon those who have voted in favour of this godless and evil practice.

<sup>1</sup> <https://crosslight.org.au/2019/07/09/synod-day-four-recap/>

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; Romans 13:9.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26-27.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:7.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 9:6.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 31:15; Acts 17:26.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 31:8.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 5:29.