

President's Statement

Dear Christian Counsellors around Australia,

2017 is proving to be an eventful year with many significant developments internationally, as well as closer to home in Australia. We live in a world of rapid technological change, cultural change, climate change with regular record breaking weather events, and increasing geopolitical instability and uncertainty. All these events throw up challenges as to how are we to live as Christians and how do we respond.

Jesus asserted in the Sermon on the Mount that, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men." (Mt. 5:13). We are accustomed to having sea salt. Jesus, however, was referring to the rock salt that the Israelites harvested from the Dead Sea. If the rock salt is concentrated it is a of good quality and salty. If it has become too mixed with soil, it is simply salty dirt – completely useless. Too dirty for using as salt, and too salty for anything to grow in.

As I was reflecting on what this metaphor means for us, it came down to three things. We need to be engaged, we need to have integrity, and we need to be distinctive. Salt is meant to be sprinkled in small amounts throughout food. It functions as a preservative and it provides flavour.

Engagement is the social equivalent of being sprinkled in small amounts throughout society. That we have chosen to be counsellors reflects our personal commitment to engagement. We are committed to being involved with people and exercising our influence as counsellors to help our clients achieve better lives. On a person by person level, it reflects our engagement to make a positive contribution to the functioning of our society. I also see Christians doing engagement through their involvement in other associations and organizations in our country. There are Christians throughout PACFA and other professional bodies, as well as in every political party in Australia. As an association CCAA is following through on this commitment to engagement through our active involvement as a Member Association with PACFA.

Saltiness is not just about engagement; it is also about being salty. Saltiness is concerned with the quality of who we are. How sharp is our thinking? Are we exercising a Christian mind in the way we think through issues and act? Is our perspective based on biblical truth and the revelation of God, or we slipping into an unreflective conformity to the norms and practices of our postmodern capitalist culture?

More importantly, how sharp is our integrity and godliness. Our

integrity matters much more than our opinions. The integrity failures of the church with respect to its tolerance of sexual abuse has caused incalculable damage to the reputation and standing of the gospel. We have all been exposed to the damage caused by failures in integrity on the part of Christian leaders. If our witness to Jesus Christ is to have any credibility, then our personal integrity MUST be above reproach.

Christians have influence. The way we exercise influence can really matter. A dramatic example of this is that the enthusiastic way in which the Christian leaders of the conservative evangelical right in the United States proved to be the decisive element in Trump's successful campaign to become president.

Christians are becoming increasingly distinctive. We are living in a significant time where we are seeing our society in Australia moving away from Christian values and ethical norms. The Judeo-Christian ethic no longer provides the basis for commonly held social ethical values. This drift away from Christian values to a new postmodern ethic whose primary value is tolerance of diversity is most apparent in the current debate over the amendment of the Marriage Act to recognize same-sex marriage. We are witnessing an increasing diversity of lifestyles, where what was once unacceptable and unheard of, is now being accepted as simply a chosen lifestyle. The appropriate social response increasingly is "live and let live" (unless it is illegal, of course). We are all disturbed by this drift from a Judeo-Christian ethic that we are witnessing around us in many ways, and the implications that this has for our society.

This social drift into postmodern lifestyle diversity means that Christians who are committed to living godly lives and exercising integrity in respect to Christian values are going to be increasingly distinctive in our lifestyle, and the fruits of that lifestyle with respect to personal well-being, peace and happiness. We are increasingly seeing that a Christian way of life that is enlivened by the Spirit and guided by following Christ is distinctive in the fruit that it brings. This distinctiveness both puts us at odds with our culture and ironically, increases our influence.

This year, I want to take the opportunity to encourage us as Christians to be engaged, walk with integrity, and live distinctively.

God bless you,



John Andersen
CCAA National President