



Editor's mailbox

Dear Editor

I read with interest Graham Pickhaver's letter, and Rupert Kaye's reply, in the Spring 2009 issue of *ACT Now*. It seems to me that this correspondence raises issues which go beyond the current debate on theories of the Atonement. In fact, they impinge on the nature of ACT itself.

The Association's full, doctrinal 'Statement of Faith' clearly reflects its Evangelical origins. While less detailed than, say, the Anglican '39 Articles' it is far more specific than the Baptist Union's 'Declaration of Principle' or the statement of faith to be found on the United Reformed Church's website. The question then arises as to the place of Christians who, although broadly orthodox in their beliefs, take different approaches to some areas of doctrine or who, indeed, would not dare to trammel God within such restricting detail and prefer to remain agnostic on some niceties of their faith.

I doubt if many readers of *ACT Now* would refuse to welcome these people as Christians – although they might well wish to engage with them in vigorous debate! However, this then raises the question of whether an organisation which includes the unqualified word 'Christian' in its name should really maintain such a restrictive Statement of Faith. If the Association wishes to retain its doctrinal basis – which, of course, it has every right to do – then perhaps its name should also include the word 'Evangelical'.

I appreciate that writing in this way immediately exposes me to accusations of 'diluting the historic faith' or of 'departing from traditional Evangelical orthodoxy'. But one must remember that every Creed or Statement of Faith, even one as apparently objective as the Association's, is written within a particular cultural and ecclesiastical context and will always emphasise the particular theological concerns of its day. Perhaps we should be bold

enough to ask if the Association's Statement of Faith is still fit for purpose as we approach the second decade of the 21st century, or whether today's concerns merit a rewrite.

Revd Andrew Kleissner, Christ Church, Ipswich

PS: I am not a member of ACT, but my wife has been for many years. I read her copy of ACT Now and it provoked this response which, I suspect, may well 'set the cat among the pigeons'!

Dear Editor

I am pleased to report that following your publication of my article, 'Emmaus: a tale of two trailers', in the Autumn 2008 edition of *ACT Now*, a number of teachers made enquiries. Actual bookings, however, were very few. This was largely because of the prohibitive cost of transporting the trailers to distant venues.

I am writing now to inform *ACT Now* readers that recently Emmaus Trustees successfully negotiated with Urban Saints (formerly Crusaders) for the road show vehicles and the educational resources they contain to be on a two year loan to their residential centre at Westbrook, near Ryde, on the Isle of Wight.

Teachers living on the island (or taking a class on a field trip there) might like to make contact with Westbrook if they wish to avail themselves of this excellent educational resource. Contact details are as follows:

Urban Saints' Centre, Westbrook, Oakhill Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 1PU

T: 01983 811118

W: www.westbrookcentre.org.uk

Urban Saints are confident that the Emmaus Road Show will be in frequent use with the many groups of school and church parties that visit Westbrook, and so we are delighted to know that the exhibition will be busy again. Praise God!

David Edgington

Subject: ACT's 'Statement of Faith'
ACT Now issue: Spring 2009
 Item responded to: Graham Pickhaver's letter

Dear Editor

In my 32 years as a teacher I have, among other things, always aimed to ensure all children reach their potential. However, what that statement means and how I put it into practice has changed over the years. This I see as being both positive and a sign of maturity. In a similar way, what I take some of the various propositional statements of faith to actually mean are not the same as what I took them to mean when I joined ACT 32 years ago.

Both Graham Pickhaver and I can say we agree with the various statements, but what the words actually mean to us can be radically different.

Furthermore, we may both use the Bible, or cite our favourite theologian, to back up our respective stances.

So, short of an inquisition, I hope that Graham and I will both continue to be full (voting) members of ACT even though our interpretations of some of the words may differ. It is surely a sign of a healthy and vibrant Christian community that seeks to include rather than exclude.

Duncan Ferguson