

# *Implementation of Domestic Abuse Policy*

*Speech to Sydney Synod, October 2017*

*by Lyn Bannerman, Lay representative, Christ Church St Laurence, Sydney*

Thank you *Canon Grant* and *Archdeacon Hartley* for all this hard work. I **am** supporting this implementation motion. But there is a serious implementation matter that goes to the acceptance of our sincerity by the broader community, and within our Church.

One word gets in the way of our credibility. "Submit". And, **no**, I am not here to debate Complementarianism although I do not agree with that the theology. I am NOT arguing about that. It is the **one** word "submit" that lands us into trouble, making us fair game in the media. Stop blaming the media – examine ourselves.

I have studied complementarian theology. It seems to me that the pivotal point in the relationship between husband and wife in this theology is "love". Working out the complementary relationships, blessed by mutual love. The Archbishop's introduction to this Policy is beautifully worded. Love. No mention of "submit". He says that "misuse of power to control or exploit others" is to be condemned. *Bishop Robert Forsyth*, in his wisdom, when he brought to Synod the book: "Common Prayer: Resources for Gospel – shaped Gatherings", included two marriage services; one does not use the word submit. Synod accepted both forms. I take this to mean that Synod, within our framework of complementarianism, accepts that the promises of love, before God, are sufficient. In the light of this domestic abuse policy, I contend the version containing "Submit" is now an inappropriate option.

Indeed this policy includes a warning to clergy at page 477 on Marriage Preparation. It reads "Care must be taken if the biblical themes of a wife's submission ...." Some real reservations are coming through? – excellent.

I personally know a few lovely intelligent young women, confirmed in the Anglican Church, who are sadly alienated from our Church because of one too many "submission" sermons at friends' weddings, including on one occasion, the words "I submit" being engraved in the bride's wedding band. We have lost them – to our Anglican Church; angry, deeply offended. We agreed, with sadness, yesterday that some people, abused in the Church, when children, are angry with God. But we know God is not angry with them, as He is all loving. So God also loves these beautiful young women whose warm hearts we have abused so harshly. They are not abandoned by our God.

"Submit", whatever it meant once, now means, according to the Cambridge English dictionary, to "allow another person or group to have power or authority over you, or to accept something unwillingly." Put that beside the definitions of "emotional abuse" and you have complete incongruence. We cannot assert with any credibility that we oppose all forms of abuse, including emotional, and continue to use that word "submit". Ask anyone in the street what submitting means and the answers are ugly - emotional and physical. I am no linguist but I know enough that words change their meanings over time. The current meaning relates to behaviour that this policy rejects completely. But we continue to assert "submit" is a Biblical truth for marriage? Something has to give and if we want to be credible, then on which one will we give? Abandon this policy or abandon that one word? Let's delete the words "submission"/"submit" from all Diocesan language, and our documents, relating to marriage.

Can I suggest that we re-read the Gospels, in those parts where our Lord interacted with the Pharisees? Ponder our Lord's sayings and attitudes in those readings. What might our Lord be saying to us, modern day Pharisees, on this?

I ask all Synod members who share this concern to write to Standing Committee before 30 April next year, expressing your concerns, in your own words, and telling stories you may have about the damage this one word has done in the lives of others and its incongruity with this policy.