



**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**
OF AUSTRALIA

NSW and ACT DISTRICT



COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

LCA NSW and ACT District
40th Convention of Synod

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Wagga Wagga

Book of Reports - Appendix 2
LCA Bishop's Report Appendices

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LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND BISHOP'S REPORT TO THE NSW and ACT DISTRICT 2024

Bishop Paul's Four Papers

Can a Christian believe the Bible is the Word of God and support the ordination of women?

In recent times, there have been some who have argued that a person who believes that the Bible is the Word of God, cannot support the ordination of both women and men as pastors.

It is common for Christian people who support the ordination of both women and men, to base this teaching entirely on their study of the Bible.

At the end of the 20th century, Biblical scholars of our Lutheran Church in Australia and New Zealand gathered to consider the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the ordination of both women and men. Their conclusions, published in 1999, were that the Scriptures did not exclude women from being ordained as pastors.

A key matter in any study of the Scriptures on the ordination of both women and men, is the development of Christian teaching based on Bible passages such as 1st Timothy chapter 2 and 1st Corinthians chapter 14. These two particular Scriptures are used to argue that only men can be ordained as pastors and are quoted in the LCA NZ Theses of Agreement as the teaching of our Church regarding who can be ordained.

The use of these Scripture passages has changed throughout the history of Christianity. From the time of the early Church, these passages were used to teach that women cannot be involved in leadership and other public activity in the Church, such as voting at meetings. In the history of the Christian Church, these Bible passages have also been used to teach that women cannot speak, sing or pray out loud in Church or in home gatherings of Christians.

A Christian who believes that both women and men can be ordained as pastors, is saying that these Bible passages are not as clear as some claim them to be, and so the passages should not be used to exclude women from serving as pastors of the Church.

Bishop Paul Smith

On the Festival of the Epiphany, 2024

Am I a “Confessional Lutheran”?

In recent times, some Lutherans have used the word “confessional” to divide Christians of Lutheran Churches into different groups. One group is called the “Confessional Lutherans”. The word “Confessional” is used here to suggest that one particular group properly upholds the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. The intention is to suggest that other Lutherans do not properly uphold the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions.

Is this the way that we should use the word “Confessional” in our Lutheran Church in Australia and New Zealand?

In 1952, our New Zealand and Australian Lutheran Church theologians determined how we should describe ourselves as people of the Lutheran Confession. Their work became “Article Nine” of the Theses of Agreement which were adopted as our Church’s teaching at the foundation of the LCANZ in 1966. Article Nine gives some good basic principles for explaining what it means to be a “Lutheran” Christian.

1. Their fundamental principle taught that a person who is a Lutheran needs no “adjective” like “confessional” to describe their Christian witness. Either a person is a Lutheran Christian, or they are not.
2. Their next principle was to identify all the writings in the Book of Concord of 1580 as the “Lutheran Confessions”. Being a Lutheran means that you subscribe to the teachings of the Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord.
3. Their third principle was to discern how different Lutherans know and understand the various writings in the Book of Concord. Some Lutheran Churches do not have all the writings of the Book of Concord but they are still Lutheran Churches. Some Lutheran Christians have not studied all the books of the Book of Concord but these people are still Lutherans. For example, a young person might only know the Small Catechism from their confirmation but we still identify that person as a “confirmed Lutheran”.
4. Their final principle was to acknowledge that a Lutheran Church or a Lutheran person who did not know or understand the various writings in the Book of Concord should not deny any of the teachings of the Lutheran Church which are in the writings that they don’t know or understand. This is really the same as the first principle. As long as a person upholds the teachings of the Lutheran Church as contained in the Book of Concord, they are a Lutheran.

All the people of our Lutheran Church in New Zealand and Australia can therefore be described as “Confessional Lutherans” but it is better to simply describe them as “Lutheran”.

Bishop Paul Smith

On the Festival of the Epiphany, 2024

What does our Church mean when it teaches that the “Bible is the Word of God.”?

In our Lutheran Church, we teach that some things in the Scriptures are “hard to understand” or that they are not “clear”. At the same time, we believe and teach that the Bible is the “Word of God.” When our Church was founded in 1966, our theological teachers summarized what we mean when we say that the Bible is the “Word of God.”. They described two ways, called the “formal” principle and the “material” principle.

Firstly, the expression “formal principle” means that we believe that the Bible was inspired by God. 2nd Timothy 3:16 tells us, “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” As we read or hear the words of the Bible, we are receiving words from God.

Secondly, the expression “material principle” means that the Bible teaches us the Gospel of Christ as our Saviour and Lord. Martin Luther explained that the Bible was a manger in which Christ is laid. In John’s Gospel we hear our Lord Jesus saying, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” (John 5:39)

So, the Bible in my hands is God’s word to me, speaking “Christ” to me.

Sometimes people play these two principles off against one another saying one is more important, or that a proper Christian would be in favour of one more than the other.

The founding teachers of our Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand gave clear teaching on this matter, when they wrote, “We believe that the formal and the material principles must not be brought into opposition to each other, for the Scriptures are the Word of Christ and they testify of Him. Loyalty to Christ requires loyalty to His Word, and loyalty to the Scriptures requires loyalty to Christ, His person, His work, His means of grace.” (Theses of Agreement 1:5)

At the opening of our Church conventions, either for a District of the Church or of the General Synod, the delegates make their confession of faith, regarding the Scriptures. The Bishop asks the delegates, “Do you accept the holy Scriptures as the word of God?” and everyone replies, “*We accept, without reservation, the holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written, and inerrant word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life.*”

Bishop Paul Smith

On the Festival of the Epiphany, 2024

Don't Churches that allow the ordination of women also practice same-sex marriage?

It is true that some Churches around the world that ordain women also conduct same sex marriages. It is not right, however, to then make the general statement that the ordination of women and same sex marriage are always linked. Examples from Lutheran Churches around the world show that the two matters should not be linked by such a general statement.

Lutheran Churches in neighbouring Indonesia allow the ordination of both women and men but do not allow same sex marriage. This is not simply a "cultural" matter for the Indonesian Christians. In the United States of America, the North American Lutheran Church allows the ordination of both women and men but does not conduct same-sex marriages. These Lutheran Churches have studied the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions to teach these things.

Our Convention of General Synod asked the Church to consider the matter of ordination of both women and men amongst us. The Convention did not ask the Church to address the matter of sexuality and same-sex marriage.

It is not correct or helpful to make general statements to suggest that a Church which allows the ordination of women is therefore going to promote same sex issues.

Bishop Paul Smith
On the Festival of the Epiphany, 2024

Bishop Paul's Report on the Lutheran World Federation General Assembly 2023

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION: General Assembly Krakow, Poland. September 13-19, 2023:

Our Lutheran Church in New Zealand and Australia has benefited richly by the variety of participants that we send to the LWF General Assembly. I was greatly encouraged and inspired by my participation as Bishop of our Church, although on the third day of the Assembly, I became ill with a kind of flu which also impacted on a significant number of delegates.

Those attending from the LCANZ included:

Delegates: Anita Synott and myself as LCANZ Bishop.

Guests: Michael Stolz from ALWS; Associate Professor Lisa Schmidt from LEA; Pastor Matt Anker from International Mission; Elsa Matthias from LWF Youth Forum and LCA International Mission. Heidi Smith (Bishop's wife).

The Assembly included the 150 member churches, (and two associate member churches which includes the LCANZ) as well as ten recognized churches and congregations, and two recognized councils. This represents over 77 million Christians in the Lutheran tradition in 99 countries across the globe.

The Assembly met in Krakow, Poland, from the 13th to the 19th of September in a programme which included worship and study, plenum discussion and presentations. The wider programme included "Pre-Assemblies" in the regions of the world, as well as women's, men's and youth pre-assembly events. The programme of the Assembly also included a day visit to the nearby Auschwitz Concentration camp historic precinct.

By the conclusion of business, the Assembly had issued Public Statements on:

Christian Presence and Life in the Holy Land

Religious and Ethnic Minorities in Asia

Tax Justice

The War Against Ukraine

The Assembly made **resolutions** as follows:

Affirming the continuation of work interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic

Strengthening theological education

Study processes in theology

Inclusivity and participation

Intergenerational Justice Policy

Gender justice in polarised times

Gender Based Violence

Reaffirming the youth quota

Reaffirming the lay quota

The rights of persons with disabilities

Indigenous peoples

Jewish-Christian Relations

Affirming humanitarian response on behalf of those affected by disasters in Libya, Morocco and other humanitarian crises

Climate emergency

Serving with people on the move

The Church in the public space

Strengthening ecumenical commitment and ecumenical commemoration of 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession

On the last day of the Assembly, the LCA NZ Australians attending, met identified some key elements for the future of the LCA NZ and our associate membership in the LWF. (*less BLEA Director Associate Professor Lisa Schmidt who had to leave to join her next group in Germany*). These key elements were:

- + Lutherans need to connect globally – including Australian Lutherans connecting outwards and other Lutherans connecting with us.
- + We should not treat participation in the LWF Assembly as a “once off” connection but as an expression of ongoing deepening partnerships around the world, especially in our region.
- + It is difficult to fully and properly participate as an “Associate Member” although most Churches relate to us as if we were full members. (we were not able to be involved in some sessions on account of being only associate members)
- + We must move from good internal connections to stronger global connections.
- + LCA NZ and LWF must engage in better “two way” comms. The LCA NZ needs to make LWF comms in the LCA NZ better.

You can review the Assembly content further at: <https://2023.lwfassembly.org/>

The LWF Assembly Message 2023

Preamble

As delegates to the Thirteenth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), we gathered in Kraków, Poland, from 13 to 19 September 2023, to worship, reflect, discuss, and discern the way forward for our global communion of churches, inspired by the theme of “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope” (Ephesians 4:4).

Before we came here, we gathered in our regions and we gathered in Poland, as youth, women, and for the first time as men, for our Pre-Assemblies.

We are deeply grateful to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, its leaders, congregations, and volunteers, for their generous hospitality. A minority church in the country, witnessing in an often-challenging context, the Polish Lutheran church has truly shown us that every church has gifts to share with the rest of the communion.

Together we affirm that we are One in the Body of Christ, empowered by the One Spirit and called to proclaim the One Hope of the Risen Christ.

During this Assembly, we were reminded of the urgency of providing a coherent, credible, and united witness to the gospel amid the many crises which afflict our polarized and fragmented world today.

Looking ahead to the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 2030, we remember the call of the reformers of the sixteenth century, recalled by our keynote speaker, to be “an ever-reforming church,” working for Christian unity, but also striving to unite into One Body all of humanity, together with all of creation, as we witness to the gospel in words and actions.

One Body

In worship, we reflected on the incarnation, when God became a baby in a manger, a vulnerable body of flesh and blood. The incarnation challenges us to recognize God in every person and in all of creation, acknowledging our deep-down unity.

But we live in a divided world, where bodies are hurting, rejected, excluded, and the earth, our shared home, is suffering from the effects of growing environmental and climate emergencies.

The relentless rise in global temperatures, with this year, already now ranking as the hottest on record, has meant loss of biodiversity, lives, livelihoods, and whole communities. We hear and acknowledge the urgent call to action. We are a part of God’s creation. Led by young people, we pledge to be more effective

tive advocates for economic and climate justice, safeguarding the planet and its resources for future generations. Together we reaffirm that creation is not for sale.

We gathered in a region where Russia's war against Ukraine has left hundreds of thousands dead and injured, with millions more displaced by the fighting. Across the globe, we hear the cries of bodies maimed, killed or displaced by war and conflict. We remember Ethiopia, Haiti, Manipur, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, Sudan, Venezuela, Yemen, and many other places where violence claims lives and disrupts whole communities. Our faith calls us to be messengers of justice, peace and reconciliation, standing alongside those who are most vulnerable.

This year has seen the highest number of **refugees** and internally displaced people, with official figures surpassing 108 million. Our faith calls us to welcome the stranger and we are grateful to those who offer shelter and support, recalling Christ's words, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

We reject all forms of **violence and discrimination** based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, disability, xenophobia, caste, or social background. All people are created in the image of God, with equal dignity that cannot be compromised.

On the tenth anniversary of the LWF **Gender Justice** Policy, we celebrate the progress we have made and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the empowerment of women and to an end to sexual and gender-based violence, which saw a sharp increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. We call for stronger partnerships between women and men to combat patriarchy and we affirm an understanding of masculinity that is characterized by caring, nurturing, and serving.

We reiterate the call of the LWF, first made almost four decades ago, to affirm the full participation of women in the ordained ministry. There should be no distinction between the ordained ministry of women and men.

We are crying with **women** who are still denied their equal dignity and suffer oppression on racial, cultural or religious pretexts. We call for theological reflection and education around gender justice and the continuous empowerment of women and girls, ensuring that they can enjoy a future that is fair and just and full of opportunities.

We are stronger because of diverse participation in the life of the communion. We commit ourselves to working for increased **intergenerational justice**. While some progress has been made, we do not take this for granted. We must do better to ensure meaningful participation of youth in all areas of church life, including governance and decision-making.

We are called to recognize Christ in one another, and to combat **dehumanizing hate speech** that leads to harmful actions against individuals or communities. We are all united in the body of Christ and we know that when one part of the body hurts, the whole body suffers. As the Apostle Paul reminds us: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28).

Just as our faith compels us to care for the physical well-being of others, so we must also prioritize mental, spiritual, and emotional health. As a global faith community, we are called to combat stigma and isolation, creating spaces of acceptance, accessibility and inclusion to which people can turn in times of need. We have observed an increase in mental health concerns, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing climate emergency, as well as violence, discrimination, and polarization. This requires urgent practical action, alongside theological reflection. The LWF is a communion of churches proclaiming the gospel in different ways, across all seasons, cultures, economies, and political contexts, as we seek to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We celebrate the gift of unity in diversity, knowing that the center is always Christ.

Our member churches differ significantly between countries and regions. **Mutual accountability** is a mark of the church as we seek to share one another's burdens. Through conversation we discern what it means to be the One Body of Christ in 99 countries and be enriched by our diversity. We need each other's experiences, insights, and critique. We are reminded and encouraged by Christ who holds all things together (Colossians 1:17).

The LWF is confessional communion, but it is not an inward-looking confessionalist body. Since its foundation, working for Christian unity has been one of LWF's core tasks. We see ourselves as part of the broad ecumenical movement, with close connections to our partners and a shared commitment to heed

Christ's call "that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical. The Lord calls us to recognize that the church is One Body in Christ in humility. We have been engaged in fruitful ecumenical dialogues for decades and we seek for deeper and wider understanding among all Christians.

We are well aware of the disagreements and divisions that have torn Christian churches apart over the centuries and continue to cause tensions in our own churches, within our global Lutheran communion and among Christians worldwide. But we also know that there is more that unites us than separates us, and we pledge to walk forward together.

One Spirit

In worship we confessed our broken hearts and prayed that God create in us a clean heart. We heard the promise that God's Spirit has renewed and reconciled us, moving and inspiring us to live the closeness to God already present, and closer to one another.

We live in a world of increasing polarization **where misleading theologies** create exclusive or escapist communities, accumulating power and wealth in the hands of a few, while sowing fear and fragmentation within churches and communities. We acknowledged that to overcome this, we need to ground our teaching and preaching on responsible theologies, as a global communion and in the member churches.

Responsible theology is grounded in the Bible. It heals wounds, creates unity, and strengthens communion. Responsible theology is holistic, uses inclusive language and diverse and accessible means of communication. Responsible theology builds inclusive communities, daring to renew its language and ways of reaching out to people on the margins. Responsible theology gives space for the renewing and reforming power of the One Spirit.

We underline the importance **of stronger theological education** and leadership formation for the sustainability of our churches, equipping people to engage with complex issues without resorting to simplistic answers.

Constructive interfaith engagement should be a special focus of theological education, both through high-level **dialogue**, as well as emphasizing the importance of harmonious daily life encounters with people of other faiths. We are committed to being good neighbors in religiously diverse societies.

At the 1984 Assembly in Budapest, the LWF repudiated Martin Luther's anti-Judaic diatribes and the violent recommendations of his later writings against the Jews, declaring antisemitism a contradiction and affront to the Gospel. We reaffirm that and express our continued commitment to live out our Lutheran heritage in the Christian faith with love and respect for the Jewish people.

As a communion of churches, we are called to discern the One Spirit from the many spirits of our time (1 Cor 12:10) in order to explore what the Triune God is calling us to do in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages. As we unite in prayer and common worship, in joint studies of Scripture and the Lutheran confessional writings, we discern and act upon God's divine calling in our world today.

We walked through the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
They were transported as cattle and sent to die.
We went there to face the truth.
They were lied to, humiliated and murdered.
We lamented.

Walking through Auschwitz-Birkenau.
We remembered also other places of unspeakable evil.
We remember that there is one humanity.
That all have the same dignity given by God.
We pledge never to be indifferent.
We pledge to stand against hate speech, lies, atrocities.
We pray, never again.

The Assembly theme reminds us that Body and Spirit belong together, urging us to speak out against all forms of oppression, spiritual and physical. We are called to combat the racism, violence, abuse, inequality and exploitation that are still found in both church and society today.

In some parts of the world, churches suffer from restrictive laws or government policies, limiting their freedom of speech and even subjecting them to persecution if they raise their voices on behalf of justice and human rights. We deplore the discrimination and oppression of our Christian sisters and brothers, wherever it takes place and regardless of their faith or denomination. We ask member churches to pray for them and urge the communion to address this problem.

One Hope

In worship, we remembered that we are one human family and though the storms are rough, Christ is in the boat with us.

Faced with intersecting crises and a push-back on hard-won human rights, we may feel that the challenges ahead of us are overwhelming and insurmountable. During this assembly, we have heard the Risen Christ telling us, "Do not be afraid!"

The One Spirit shows us that another world is possible. The gospel invites us to hope, learning to read the signs of God's promise everywhere in the world because our hope is built upon Jesus Christ.

As Lutherans, we participate in God's holistic mission: proclamation, advocacy, diakonia, at international level, as well as locally in our individual churches. We are called through baptism and sent out to proclaim the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. The Spirit calls us to be instruments of justice, peace and reconciliation, healing wounds within our churches and in our common world. Equipped by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to build communities of hope wherever the gospel is shared and lived across the globe.

When we speak about hope, we must not be confused by worldly prospects, by false hopes and desires, but must remain focused on a concrete hope for this world and the next. We affirm that it is hope that holds the LWF together as a communion. It inspires us to stand in solidarity with each other, while addressing together the rapid changes and challenges our world is facing.

Hope reminds us that we are one humanity, with no distinction between us. In the waters of baptism, we become aware of the vast communion of saints with us and around us. It is a place of hope, and we give thanks to God for all those who have walked the road of reconciliation before us.

As we reflect on our work as churches in communion, we must find new ways of offering hope to all people. Not an empty hope, but bold hope that is inspired by our faith in God and followed by our actions to serve people who are poor, in need, migrants, refugees and those affected by crises. Hope empowers us to speak out in the public space for justice and human rights. This hope must manifest itself in more tangible ways in the church through its work, worship, and mission.

As Lutherans we are churches in ongoing reformation. In Christ, we experience the joys and sufferings in this world and we are called to name and respond to the challenges within the LWF communion and the world around us. We commit ourselves to learn from our past.

Diakonia is hope in action. We affirm the LWF's humanitarian and development work, its global engagement, its work with member churches, and partners, offering people in need hope and a future. Working together with people of all faiths, we seek to promote a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

Growing awareness of the **human-made climate emergency** and actions to tackle it within our member churches are signs of hope. The LWF must continue to play a crucial role, connecting the work of local churches and communities to global advocacy.

Hope is the lens through which we look at the world, as followers of Christ, journeying together into the future.

Sent into the world

We return to our home countries with a deeper sense of what it means to be churches in communion and with a stronger commitment to strengthen the bonds between us. We walk together as churches in an ecclesial and confessing communion, witnessing to our faith, in God's holistic mission. We heed the call to live into the gift of reconciliation and unity with all neighbors.

As we journey towards 2030 and the 500th Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, we rejoice in the ecumenical potential of our confession, which is a plea for unity, intended to hold the Body of Christ, the

church, together.

As churches in ongoing reformation, we are called to work for peace in the world, between people, countries, and with the whole of creation.

As One Body, called by the One Spirit, in One Hope, we go from Kraków to all corners of the world, to proclaim the gospel that we are liberated by God's grace and sent to serve our neighbor.

Anniversary Statement from the International Lutheran Council, 2023

Confessing the Faith with Intrepid Hearts

A Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the International Lutheran Council

Wittenberg, Germany
October 14, 2023

The International Lutheran Council (ILC) is a worldwide association of 58 confessional Lutheran churches in 52 countries which proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord as the true and faithful exposition of the Word of God (*ILC Bylaws II, A, B*).

The modern origins of the International Lutheran Council can be traced back to delegates of confessional church bodies from Europe, North and South America, and Australia meeting in Uelzen, Germany in 1952, not long after World War II. Over the next forty years the 'International Lutheran Theological Conference,' as it was then called, organized many international gatherings of the heads of confessional Lutheran churches. The ILC as such came into existence on September 9, 1993, when 23 Lutheran church leaders from around the world adopted a constitution while gathered in Antigua, Guatemala. The theological origins of the ILC, however, are rooted in the confession of Martin Luther and the Lutheran fathers of the 16th century Reformation, including the courageous authors who concluded the Formula of Concord (XII:40) by stating:

In the sight of God and all Christendom, the entire Church of Christ, we want to testify to those now living and those who will come after us. This declaration...is our faith, doctrine, and confession. By God's grace, with intrepid hearts, we are willing to appear before the judgment seat of Christ with this Confession and give an account of it.

The 21st century members of the International Lutheran Council continue to be inspired by the *intrepid hearts*—the *fearless hearts*—of those 16th century confessors who signed the Formula of Concord. The same spirit is alive today as the ILC celebrates its 30th anniversary under the theme "Confessing the Faith with Intrepid Hearts."

The ILC remains committed in word and action to the confessional basis and purpose articulated in its Constitution (*Articles II and III*) and Bylaws (*Article II*). We expect churches of the ILC, and exhort churches not of the ILC, to retain, confess, and put into action the godly, wise, and beautiful way of life revealed in Holy Scripture. During these dark and later days, the world is being overwhelmed by a culture of ugliness and death which is increasingly promoted and enforced by civil authorities, even in opposition to freedom of religion and religious speech. Therefore, the ILC must continue to embrace and fearlessly proclaim God the Father's biblical pattern of holiness, truth, and beauty which is enlivened by the atoning forgiveness of Jesus Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word, and the administration of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood.

Thus, at this anniversary we re-affirm: "The Holy Scriptures not only guide doctrine but the life and morals of the Church" (*Bylaws II, D*). As a result, we assert the following truths:

- The Fifth Commandment against murder prohibits any deliberate harm of innocent human life, including abortion and euthanasia (cf. *Bylaws II, D, 1, a*).
- The Sixth Commandment against adultery affirms that marriage was created by God from the beginning as the life-long union of one man and one woman and for the procreation and nurture of children. Only within marriage are conjugal relations pleasing to God (cf. *Bylaws II, D, 1, b*). In recent years the so-called "Culture Wars" have seen attempts to re-define marriage and what it means to be human as male and female. Holy Scripture teaches that "God created man in His own image... male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Natural law concurs.
- "Altar and pulpit fellowship between church bodies is only possible where there is a common confession of faith based on the Word of God. Where there are disagreements between church bodies regarding the Word of God, we shall not pretend that these divisions are unimportant or give a false witness of unity by practicing altar or pulpit fellowship" (cf. *Bylaws II, D, 2, a*).

- Concerning the Office of the Ministry, we believe that while “all Christians—men and women—are redeemed and able to serve the Church in many ways, Holy Scripture requires that only men who are spiritually qualified in life and doctrine are to be called and ordained as pastors to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments” (*Bylaws II, D, 2, b*).

These certainly are not the only teachings of Holy Scripture, but these are particularly misunderstood, challenged, and rejected in our day, and so must be all the more boldly confessed by those who hold fast the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions.

There is, indeed, an even greater and more blessed teaching of the Bible, which we cling to above all things. This 30th anniversary celebration is taking place at St. Mary’s City Church in Wittenberg where Martin Luther preached. Luther was not only a professor at the University of Wittenberg, he was also called as a preacher to St. Mary’s parish. His reform of the mass drew upon his brilliant linguistic, musical, and liturgical skill. However, it was motivated primarily by the biblical doctrine of justification by grace. Whether in the church or the classroom, Luther proclaimed Jesus and the Gospel of forgiveness of sins by God’s grace alone, through faith in the atoning life, death, and resurrection of Christ alone.

This is the chief doctrine of the Bible by which the Church stands or falls. In this teaching each Christian lives as he or she receives forgiveness in word, water, bread, and wine. It is fitting that the celebration of this 30th anniversary begins where this Chief Article of Justification was re-discovered, clearly preached, confessed, and sung with intrepid hearts. The ILC therefore supports its member churches in preaching the Gospel to the entire world and at the same time furthers “united diaconal action through intentional acts and programs of mercy in response to human need and suffering” (*Bylaws II.2*).

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

- 2 Timothy 4:1-2 -

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL BY ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland

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International Lutheran Council

Resolution from the Convention of General Synod 2023 on Ordination

RESOLVED

That General Synod direct the LCANZ General Church Board and the College of Bishops to:

- a) Work through the theological, constitutional, and governance requirements to operate as one church with two different practices of ordination and establish a detailed framework through which this could be accomplished, such as one or more existing LCANZ Districts becoming Districts that teach and practice the ordination of both women and men to the office of the public ministry or by establishing a non-geographical LCANZ 'District' that does so, and
- b) Submit the fruit of this work in the form of a proposal that should be discussed by the LCANZ General Pastors Conference for Convention of General Synod 2024.
- c) It is the expectation of this General Convention of Synod that both women and men will be ordained in a District of the LCANZ during the 2024-2027 synodical period.