

June 2026

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## God is alive and God is still giving life

Recently while on leave, I spent some time relaxing with my wife and discovering parts of the world unfamiliar to me. I also spent some time learning from the Lutheran Church in Estonia and participating in an Ecumenical Leadership tour and conference in London. **Throughout this time away, God kept reminding me that He is alive and still giving life to us and to His church.**

At times we don’t always feel this. At times life, ministry, or even faith can seem dry, stagnant, or almost dead. But Scripture reminds us that what looks lifeless is never beyond God’s renewing work. One powerful example is found in Ezekiel 37:1–14—the valley of dry bones.

In this story, God leads Ezekiel into a valley filled with bones—an image of complete hopelessness from a human perspective. Ezekiel had been preaching judgment with seemingly no effect, yet now the Lord encourages him with these words:

*“Prophesy to these bones and say to them,*



From the Bishop  
Richard Schwedes

*‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life... I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’* Ezekiel 37:4-6

Ezekiel does what he is asked, speaks God’s life-giving Word, and the bones are transformed into life.

This is a message for all of us. If you ever feel like you are in a dry or lifeless place, consider that God may not have placed you there to punish you. Instead, He may be calling you to be in this place to **speaK His life-giving Gospel**—the message that life and a future are possible because of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.

*“He may be calling  
you to speak  
His life-giving Gospel”*

## LCA NSW and ACT District is *Walking together* IN MISSION by:



- Supporting congregations and ministries in mission and ministry
- Supporting congregations in transition
- Developing and supporting alternative models for ministry
- Planting and renewing congregations
- Developing and supporting networking and connections
- Developing and supporting leadership – through the Bishop leading leadership teams

## DISTRICT NEWS for your prayer and care

### Calls

- Pr Munye Mtata (Canada) has accepted the call to Sydney and Narraweena, awaiting visa
- Pr Remo Ronkainen (Finland) accepted the call to Sydney Finnish, awaiting visa

### Appointment

- Michael Dobie has been appointed to the District as Strategic Directions Implementation Facilitator for two days a week

### Anniversary

- St Peters Port Macquarie will celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 2 August

### Farewell

- Pr Christian Hohl (German Lutheran Church, Sydney) was farewelled on 24 May

### Resignation

- Pr Christian Fandrich has resigned and is removed from LCA Roll of Pastors

What looks dead to us is never dead to God.

And during my leave, I saw this truth repeatedly:

- The Lutheran Church of Les Billettes in Paris had only 3 regular worshippers in 2023. Today, 45 people gather there regularly.
- St Peter's Church in Brighton, a building seating 2,000, once had only 7 worshippers and was close to closure. Today, 1,500 people worship there weekly.
- St John's Church, Hackney, once down to 150 members in a 3,000-seat building, surrounded by crime, decay and bullet holes in the doors, now welcomes over 2,000 worshippers each week.
- A congregation in Estonia whose building was occupied by Russians, is now an active worshipping and caring community, provide housing and food for homeless children.

### So, what changed?

Each community has its own story, yet several themes were consistent:

1. **They emphasised it began by focusing on Jesus and being Jesus' community.**

## "Focus on Jesus and being Jesus' community"

2. **They explored ways best to connect with people in their community.**
3. **They are praying regularly**, personally and together, about God's desires for their church.
4. **They engage deeply with God's Word**, watching for how He is at work.
5. **They prioritise worshipping God** with others.
6. **They share stories** of what God has done, is doing, and will do with each other and others in the community.
7. **They invite others** to encounter God through their church community.

One leader put it beautifully:

*"The activities we do are not burdensome—they bring life to our communities and to each person personally."*

If we want life—personally and as a church—it is critical that we remain focused on God, His Word, and His Spirit. Not looking for what we must do but on what **God has already done, is doing, and will do** in us and through us, because that is what gives us real life.

Adopting these practices will help us grow in God's love and help others discover the life He freely gives.

As Jesus says in John 6:63:

*"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life."*

My prayer is that we all have lives filled with God's spirit—and that you share that life generously with others, so others may have life from Jesus.

Bishop Richard Schwedes



## Shaping Mission in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia & New Zealand How do we fit into God's mission today?

Join our online workshop held over 8 weeks, led by Dr Steen Olsen  
*LCANZ retired pastor, former Bishop and Mission Director*

**Wednesdays July-August 2026**

9.00-11.00pm NZ / 7.00-9.00pm Eastern / 6.30-8.30pm Central / 5.00-7.00pm WA

For info and to register go to [frontier.lca.org.au](https://frontier.lca.org.au)

To find out more about the course content, contact [steen.olsen@lca.org.au](mailto:steen.olsen@lca.org.au)  
For details about costs, participating and how to register, contact [frontier@lca.org.au](mailto:frontier@lca.org.au)



**bring Jesus**  
being missional in culture, theology and practice



# Michael Dobie, Strategic Mission Implementation Facilitator



**Michael Dobie**

**Michael Dobie has recently been appointed to the position of Strategic Mission Implementation Facilitator for NSW and ACT. Here is a little of his story and his hopes for the role.**

Firstly, I would like to thank Ian Rentsch for the wonderful work he has done as Mission Facilitator, helping communities come together and ask the questions

about how they plan to Walk Together in Mission.

I am blessed to be married to the wonderful Karen; we celebrate our 40th anniversary this year. We are proud of our two sons, our daughters-in-law, and granddaughters, and we love to hang out with them at every opportunity.

I love surfing, Australian Rules Football and conversations about the big ideas of life. A good way to distract me is to start a conversation about philosophy, religion, politics, or actually anything controversial for that matter!

My journey in the Lutheran Church started when we walked into the church hall in Wollongong over 30 years ago. During that time I have been transformed and shaped on a journey from sceptical attendee to being the current local ministry leader for the Illawarra, working under the supervision of Pastor Nich Kitchen for 3 days per week.

So, what is a Strategic Mission Implementation Facilitator and what will I do?

In the John Mark Comer's book 'Practicing the Way' he says, *"The modern church is facing a crisis of discipleship. It's not that people don't want to become like Jesus, or that people aren't trying to become like Jesus. It's that we don't know how to become like Jesus"*. Similarly in an article in the March Contact Bishop Richard says, *"We are called to live in ways that help others connect with Jesus"*. These thoughts sum up my intention for this role. I hope to assist you in Walking Together in Mission by helping provide clear pathways and implementation tools specific to your context.

How can I help you? I've always enjoyed being a team player, helping people work together and realise their potential. Whether in industry, helping multiple disciplines see each other's perspective as they work together on a project, or whether in sport, helping players of different skills with different roles, play together in the team, or as an administrator, helping people see a common vision.

From my work with MOVE Mission, who study the common factors in disciple multiplication across the world, I can share that effective Walking Together in Mission is relational and starts with abiding in Christ. In John 15:3-4 Jesus says, *'You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.'*

So, I encourage you to participate in the four common practices that disciples do that precede growth - in maturity and in number:

- Daily Prayer
- Daily reading the Word
- Gathering together regularly

Not only on Sundays, but also during the week. To build community, encourage one another and remind each other of God's promises.

- Share what you learn each week.

Sharing the love of God with those far from God in your community.

I encourage you to contact me. I look forward to meeting with you, praying with you and eating with you as we learn how to put our Walking Together in Mission strategies into practice.

Please pray that we all get to know Jesus even more and that we can see our brothers and sisters as living stones being built up in maturity together for God's purposes.

Michael Dobie  
michael.dobie@lifeway.net.au



## THE GREAT CO-MISSION MATT 28:19-20

*"As you go, make disciples, baptize them, teach them, and know I am with you always."*

### LCA NSW and ACT District Mission and Ministry

5-7 August 2026

District Convention of Synod  
7-9 August 2026

Warrambui, Murrumbateman

Reports, Proposals, and Nominations due to  
[office.nsw@lca.org.au](mailto:office.nsw@lca.org.au) by 29 June 2026 for inclusion  
in the Book of Reports.

Pastors, delegates and visitors, please register online  
at [www.nswact.lca.org.au](http://www.nswact.lca.org.au) by 10 July 2026.

Enquiries to District Office phone 02 8660 1200  
email [admin.nsw@lca.org.au](mailto:admin.nsw@lca.org.au)



LUTHERAN CHURCH  
OF AUSTRALIA  
NSW and ACT DISTRICT

# District Administrator

## Financial Update

We have provided the budgeted annual figures and the year to date, first quarter actual cashflow for 2026, as underpinned by an Asset Base of approximately \$27.9m and Liabilities of \$0.55m.



The year-to-date cashflow appears to be tracking proportionately similar to previous years, however, the congregation donations have exceeded previous years first quarter results.

Mission continues to be a high priority for the District with over \$100k being approved by the Mission and Ministry, Finance Advisory and District Church Committees. This reflects the priority of the Bishop to Walk Together in Mission, manifesting the Gospel in Word and Action.

We have been working closely with LLL, particularly under the new stewardship of Karen Pienaar. Through the development of this relationship, we are seeing an improved service from the LLL which will lead to better returns on our cash investments. Also, they have agreed to sponsor our Synod in August 2026. In addition, we are working with LLL to potentially develop opportunities that serve all parts of the District more directly.

The investment portfolio continues to weather the instability in the global markets. As expected, the global portfolio has outperformed the domestic product with the total portfolio capital value remaining significantly above entry price while maintaining a sustainable yield to further fund Mission.

In the second half of the year we will be preparing the 2027 budget on a monthly basis. This approach provides a tool to execute a robust active cashflow management strategy to continue to serve the District with the highest level of service

 <b>2026 NSW ACT District Budget</b> 		
	2026 Budget	2026 Jan - Mar
<b>Revenue</b>		
Congregations Contributions	\$128,750	\$41,103
Contributions from Individuals	\$5,000	-
Turning Point Ministry	\$57,000	\$2,318
Frontier School of Mission	\$116,500	\$24,900
Other District Revenue	\$113,558	\$475
Earmarked Grants and Donations	\$47,000	\$27,800
Investment Income	\$625,500	\$139,617
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,093,308</b>	<b>\$236,212</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
LCA Budget	\$200,000	\$50,000
Employee Benefits Expense	\$556,364	\$132,814
TPM Camp Expenses	\$57,000	\$16
Frontier Expenses	\$107,000	\$17,604
Depreciation Expense	\$178,216	\$45,683
Other Expenses	\$322,850	\$107,258
Mission and Ministry	\$664,144	\$102,501
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,085,574</b>	<b>\$455,878</b>
<b>Net Profit/Loss</b>	<b>-\$992,266</b>	<b>-\$219,666</b>

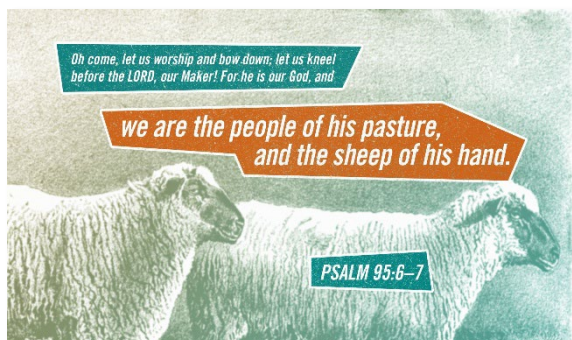
by creating efficiencies for benchmarking expenses and working the income harder to generate higher returns. This resolve will ensure the District remains steadfast for generations to Walk Together in Mission.

Stephen Fogerty, District Administrator

## A season of change for Lutheran Women of NSW & ACT

On May 23rd the Lutheran Women of NSW & ACT met for their 59th annual Convention at Bethlehem Church in Wagga Wagga. Women from all over the district joined for a wonderful day of community, and heard from some amazing speakers under the theme of Psalm 95:7 "Under his Care".

The LW NSW & ACT is facing a time of change like many of us, and have decided to take a recess break over the next 12



months. Individual and regional fellowships are encouraged to continue meeting and prayerfully consider ideas of what the future may look like.

Bishop Richard spoke to the women about living with change from a faith perspective and encouraged everyone to lean into what changes may come and not pull away. The future may look different than the past, but just as the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 had life breathed into them, God will breathe life into his people!

Next year will bring the 60th anniversary of LW NSW & ACT and will be a year of celebration! LW NSW & ACT will meet again to embrace what the future looks like. Please keep an eye on the future issues of Contact for more information on regional fellowships as well as information on the 60th anniversary celebration in May 2027.

Nikki Spaans

# Praying God's Heart – Not Just Petitions

When you pray to God, do you bring your petition or your stethoscope? Many prayer requests include praying what the people around us want. But how much do we pray for what God wants? How much do we act as advocate for the people, and how much are we an ambassador for the king?

You may have noticed that our prayer requests are often called petitions (eg *Luther's Small Catechism*). Petitions are usually about advocating for or against a particular change. In a petition, we want a particular issue or need addressed. In our prayer requests, we are often calling on God to make or prevent some change.

Therefore, when we are praying about things that concern other people, we are acting as an advocate for them. Perhaps we are advocating for rain for the farmers. Perhaps we are petitioning God to guide our congregation. We might ask that conflict between certain parties doesn't turn into war.

So, one aspect of prayer is acting as an advocate. We petition God about the needs we see in the people we live among.

Recently, I've been focussing on another aspect of intercessory prayer. Instead of just coming to God with petitions, I've also been bringing my stethoscope.

What are stethoscopes used for? Listening to someone's heart.

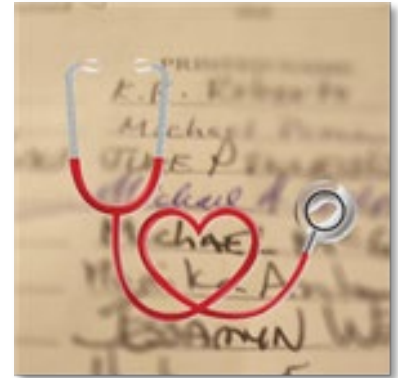
Instead of just listening to the needs around me, I've been trying to listen more to the Father's heart. What is on his heart? What is he wanting to do in me, my congregation, my community and the people I live among?

What changes would he like to make to our world, church or neighbourhood?

How can I help to pray, declare, or proclaim those things into being? When we pray the Father's heart, we are not so much an advocate for the people, but an ambassador for the king. I suspect that praying our Father's heart has greater power to transform our world. This means, it may also be a greater threat to the enemy.

Whichever way we pray, it's critical that we regularly ask for protection from the enemy. As part of your prayer life, ask God to protect you, your family/loved ones, your home/workplace/congregation, and everything that is important to you (including the health and wealth of the above). Luther suggests doing this as part of our morning and nighttime routines in his *Small Catechism*.

So next time you pray, don't just bring your thanks, praise, and requests. Consider bringing a (metaphorical) stethoscope. Take time to be still and listen to your Heavenly Father's heart. As you read a passage of scripture, listen for what he desires. What does he want to tell us and what does he want us to pray into? And don't forget to ask for God's protection over you, your congregation and the people who are important to you.



Pastor Darren Kupke

## Is God calling you to be a missionary in NSW, ACT or NZ?

A number of communities in NSW, ACT and NZ are needing people to assist them in being God's church in their local community and help them revitalise their community.

**Have you had a prompting to serve in God's mission?**

**If so contact Bishop Richard Schwedes to begin a discussion and time of discernment**  
02 8660 1200  
richard.schwedes@lca.org.au



## Join us in prayer with and for our District Online Prayer Meetings first Tuesday of each month from 7pm

For details contact:

**Darren Kupke**  
darren.kupke@lca.org.au  
**Cheryl Turek**  
communitydev@  
mygoodshepherd.org.au



# District Church Council News

## **Supporting Congregations and Ministries in Mission and Ministry: St Paul's Sydney**

Bridgitte Willshire, the Mission and Ministry facilitator shared with DCC about her work at St Paul's Sydney over the past five years. A key part of her work is helping the congregation connect well with the community. This has included opening the church to be a refuge for the crowds attending the during the Sydney Mardi Gras, and running activities for children as part of the street party in Stanley St. St Pauls is awaiting the arrival of their new pastor, and are praying that the immigration procedures will run smoothly.

## **Constitutions**

The DCC approved the new constitutions of St John the Baptist Queanbeyan, St Peter's Canberra, Canberra Queanbeyan Parish and Dubbo Lutheran Church. We continue to support congregations to get their constitutions updated to the current requirements. All congregations are encouraged to have updated constitutions that reflect and serve their ministry well, and meet current legislative requirements.

## **Alternative Models of Ministry that best serve the District: Regional Ministry Model**

The Regional Ministry Model continues to evolve as the congregations involved continue to consider their involvement.

Both the Bishop and Ian Rentsch continue to work with the Central West and Southern Riverina communities.

## **Planting and Renewing Congregations: Western Sydney Church Plant**

Oversight of the Westside Church plant has passed from Lifeway to St Paul's St Marys congregation. The DCC thanks Lifeway for their efforts in initiating and maintaining this project, and looks forward to hearing from Pastor Mark Simpfendorfer and Danny Brock about the future of this church plant.

## **District Leadership through the Bishop leading teams:**

### **Warrambui Easter Camp**

Unfortunately, the Easter camp did not proceed, however there are plans for this camp to take place in 2027. DCC agreed to extend the period for assisting with the funding of the camp until Easter 2027.

## **Governance of Specific Ministries: Warrambui Retreat and Conference Centre**

Neal Mason as board Chair reported to the DCC on the latest updates from Warrambui.

- Ongoing costs continue to be a challenge, but bookings for 2026 are looking positive, especially in the second half of the year.
- The new website will be available at the end of March with refreshed content
- The new interns have started, and have been requested to visit other churches this year
- The old access bridge has been replaced, alleviating concerns about flooding and becoming isolated
- The Warrambui Board will be meeting for Strategic Planning in June 2026.

Leigh Caldwell,  
on behalf of District Church Council



## Share the good news confidently!

Do you ever feel awkward, ill-equipped, unqualified or unprepared to share the gospel? Do you know someone who is curious about the gospel, Jesus or the Christian faith, but you just aren't sure of the next steps? Do you wish you could more freely share the gospel in a natural way with your friends, family, workmates or neighbours?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, the Gospel Fluency resources might be a great blessing for you and your congregation!



Ready to learn more?

[www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency](http://www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency)



# Farewell from Ian Rentsch, as Strategic Directions Facilitator



**Pr Ian Rentsch**

This will be my last contribution to Contact as Strategic Directions Facilitator (the title bestowed on me) for Walking Together in Mission, the blueprint for the NSW and ACT District over the past seven or eight years. It has been an unusual position title for a church role. Other LCA NZ Districts have Mission Directors, but the NSW and ACT District chose to have a “Facilitator”. So, what is a Facilitator? According to Wikipedia:

*A **facilitator** is a person who helps a group of people to work together better, understand their common objectives, and plan how to achieve these objectives, during meetings or discussions.*

Over the past several years, I have worked with groups of people – congregations, actually – to help them discern their vision for their particular mission and ministry, understand their common objectives, and plan “how to achieve these objectives”. I used a Search Conference process to enable congregations to understand where God might be leading them in their localities. That entailed understanding where they’ve come from, the current situation, discerning the future they believe God might have in store for them as faithful disciples, and planning how to reach that vision.

Some of the Vision Statements were just that – visionary:

- **Burrumbuttock Parish:** Our Vision

*With our eyes fixed on Jesus and the Holy Spirit moving us, we go into each day to bless our community and each other.*

- **Canberra Lutheran Leaders:** Our Vision

*That as Canberra (region) Lutherans we support and encourage one another to be vibrant and cooperative communities where people encounter the risen Jesus, living Lord.*

- **Holy Cross Belconnen:** Our Vision

*Sharing Jesus Christ so all may celebrate life in Him*

- **Narraweena:** Our Vision

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Narraweena, will be a community that welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with Jesus and trust his unconditional love

- **Temora/Trungley Hall:** Our Vision

Growing in God’s grace and reaching out to bless our community with his love

The job of a facilitator usually ends when the group/congregation has formulated its vision and plan. Articulating a vision, plans and actions, however, is just the beginning. Putting plans and actions into operation is the hard work. Bringing the whole congregation into the picture, praying, reviewing at each church council meeting and setting new actions every few months is hard work. Unfortunately, not every congregation is able to muster the leadership and energy to do the “hard yards”.

To help a congregation embark on this journey, another form of support is required. Enter the coach/mentor. Again, Wikipedia says:

***Coaching** is a form of development in which an experienced person, called a coach, supports a learner or client in achieving a specific personal or professional goal by providing training and guidance*

The coach helps transport the learner or client from where they are to where they want to be. The coach stays with the learner or client, instructing, encouraging, and even cajoling until the objective is realised.

As a facilitator, I have not really taken on the coaching role in the work I have been called to do. But as I leave my role, the District will employ Michael Dobie, an experienced coach from Wollongong. He is prepared to do some hard coaching with congregations across the District, including those who have written good visions, plans, and strategies but have struggled to put them into effect. I pray that God will bless Michael as he instructs, encourages and even cajoles congregations into active discipleship and mission.

Facilitation is not all that I have done in my time with the NSW and ACT District. I have led worship in vacant parishes and written for Bishop Richard and the District on alternative forms of church structure, church consultancy, conflict management in congregations, and even the closure of congregations. Together with the Mission Directors from other Districts, we planned and organised a Collaborative Mission Retreat in 2024. I am still working on a project, called the Regional Mission Partnership, that will explore a different form of church structure to support a network of congregations across rural and regional NSW.

I thank God that I have been allowed to undertake this ministry in the final years of my working life. I will still be available in a limited capacity to work as a facilitator and interim pastor, but I will leave the coaching to Michael!

I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire new visions of mission in our congregations and empower our people to active discipleship for the sake of Jesus Christ and the Good News of reconciliation that he has given the world.

Pr Ian Rentsch

# Together in Christ - Young Adults Camp

The Together in Christ Young Adults Camp was a joyful time of fellowship, faith, and fun at Warrambui Retreat and Conference Centre Dome on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May.

## A Weekend of Community and Connection

The camp opened with registration, a warm welcome, and time for everyone to reconnect. The foggy morning added a touch of adventure to the first activities—frisbee golf and board games. With frisbees disappearing into trees and bushes, the group quickly invented a lively game of “retrieve the frisbee.” Before lunch, everyone gathered back in the Dome for a spirited round of Nine Square.

We were blessed to share the space with Immanuel Woden Valley Lutheran Church, who were holding their Congregational Camp in the Village. Joining us for meals created a wonderful opportunity for fellowship between the two groups, and several of their young adults joined in our activities.

## Afternoon Activities and Fellowship

After lunch, the group enjoyed a session of archery. The afternoon continued with relaxed fellowship, board games, and a peaceful sunset walk for those who wanted to take in the beauty of Warrambui.

As the sun set, the energy picked up again with a lively game of musical spots, a creative blend of musical chairs and Twister that encouraged much laughing.

Dinner provided more time for conversation, and the kitchen staff once again excelled in hospitality, offering excellent meals and thoughtful accommodation of dietary needs.

## Campfire Worship and Music

At 7:30pm, the group gathered at the Dome campfire. Pastor Tim Muller and Mary joined the young adults for a meaningful evening of worship singing. Open the Eyes of My Heart, I Lay Them Down, How Deep the Father’s Love, In Christ Alone, Lead Me to the Cross, 10,000 Reasons, and How Great Is Our God, accompanied by Tricia and Anita.

The night concluded with toasted marshmallows, warm conversation, and a round of the game Blank Slate, which encouraged even more laughter.



## Sunday Morning and Farewell

Those who stayed overnight enjoyed a restful sleep and woke to gentle morning music and breakfast. After more conversation and packing, Florence led the group in closing prayer and a time of farewell.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive—many expressed eagerness to attend again and appreciated the opportunity to connect with Better Blokes and Sisterhood Camp. Some who were unable to attend noted that a longer camp would make travel more worthwhile, and others had prior commitments on the weekend.

With this in mind, plans are underway for a full weekend camp in January 2027, offering more time for connection and growth. If you are interested contact the District office who will connect you with the organisers.

## Gratitude and Blessings

We extend heartfelt thanks to Holy Cross Lutheran Church for their generous donation, which helped reduce costs for attendees. We are also deeply grateful to the Warrambui staff for their support, hospitality, and service throughout the weekend.

The camp was a blessing—new friendships were formed, others reconnected, faith was strengthened, and the young adults left encouraged and connected.

Tricia Williams, Camp Coordinator



# WARRAMBUI NEWS

June 2026

## Prayer Points

- Upcoming Camps in June, To be blessed and enriched.
- For growth in bookings and blessing of our marketing activities
- For the formation of new partnerships with Christian schools, Churches and community Groups to foster spiritual growth in young people.

## Praise Points

- For a strong team that builds community through love
- For the regular rain to bring life and fill up our water tanks.
- For increased booking and exposure in June-July.

## Centre Director's Update

### Building Something Greater Together at Warrambui

At Warrambui, community isn't something we just talk about—it's something we experience together. We try to be open and real with one another, doing things in the light so that trust can grow naturally. At the same time, we make it a priority to truly value each person we encounter. Every individual matters here, and we want people to feel seen, heard, and genuinely welcomed into a place where they belong.

As we walk this journey together, we're committed to growing alongside one another—learning, supporting, and encouraging each step of the way. That growth is shaped by a servant-hearted attitude, where small, everyday acts of care make a big difference. And when challenges come, we face them together with a solutions-

focused mindset, choosing hope, creativity, and forward movement as a community.

### Warrambui Update

It's been encouraging to see steady movement and growing connection across Warrambui this year. While bookings started slower, they have continued to build and are now on track to reach around 102 for the year, with 95 already confirmed and new enquiries coming in daily.

Even more exciting is the momentum looking ahead—enquiries and bookings for 2027 have already increased by 10–15%, positioning us to surpass 2026.

Alongside this, our refreshed marketing strategy is gaining traction. With a new website set to launch in June 2026 and clearly identified target markets now in place, we are seeing positive signs that our goal of a 10%+ increase in bookings is well within reach.

At the heart of everything we do is our focus on **Together in Mission**. We are continuing to strengthen relationships with schools, churches,



“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.—Ephesians 4:15-16

## Building people that create community

and community groups, especially within the LCA, creating meaningful opportunities for outreach. A growing focus has also been on building new relationships and fostering mentorship between the wider church and the increasing hunger we are seeing in our young adults. In May, we partnered with Woden Immanuel Church to run a young adults camp, which proved to be a real highlight—creating space for connection, encouragement, and faith growth.

The success of this gathering points toward exciting opportunities for expansion in 2027 and beyond as we engage a broader audience. through intern programs, tailored experiences, and accessible initiatives supported such as Sisterhood and Better Blokes, we are intentionally working to support ministries, reach new people, and build the Church.

It's been especially rewarding to see our interns settle in so well—serving faithfully in practical areas like hospitality, catering, and activities, while also growing through studies in theology, personal development, and communication. Watching their confidence and skills develop as they serve both here and in local churches has been a real highlight and a reminder of the long-term impact of investing in people.

We are now inviting applications for the **Warrambui Arise Internship Program** for 2027.

At a personal level, these developments are more than just progress—they reflect the kind of Christian community we are seeking to build together.

As we grow, connect, and serve, we are creating a space where people encounter not just a place, but a living expression of faith in action.

My prayer is that Warrambui continues to be a place where relationships deepen, lives are shaped, and the mission of Christ is lived out—reaching those who don't yet know Him and strengthening those who do.

Together in his service.

Bernd Hahnert  
Centre Director

### WARRAMBUI VOLUNTEER INTERNSHIP 2027



**ARISE** is a program designed for young adults to experience practical ministry, and undertake ministry and theology studies, as they learn to serve Jesus and each other while assisting in the operations of a Lutheran Retreat and Conference Centre.

Arise focuses on building a faith foundation that is grown by living and serving in Christian Community. Whilst volunteering, interns will build their character, further discover their identity in Christ, and explore questions of faith in a supportive Christian environment that will give them a solid foundation for whatever lies ahead.

**APPLICATIONS OPEN! APPLY NOW!**

If you would like for information please contact  
Florence Siba the  
Ministry Development Manager for an information pack:  
**Phone:** (02) 6220 1000  
**Email:** [ministry@warrambui.com.au](mailto:ministry@warrambui.com.au)





Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

- Colossians 2:7



**ST PAUL'S  
COLLEGE**  
WALLA WALLA, NSW

**RIVERINA RETREAT—INSPIRED DAY & COLLABORATION** | To begin the Term, staff from St Paul's Henty, St John's Jindera, Lutheran Primary School Wagga Wagga, and our College came together for the Riverina Retreat – Inspired Day. This professional learning opportunity focused on contemporary and innovative teaching practices. We were privileged to hear from LEVNT Director Colin Minke, Dr Shannon Hood, and Suzanne Jessen, who led sessions on personal wellbeing and navigating challenging conversations—equipping staff with practical strategies for both professional and personal growth.

Part of our vision at St Paul's College is to strengthen community partnerships through collaboration and support. Each year, we host St Paul's Primary School, Henty for their Athletics Carnival, providing a valuable opportunity for connection. Our students take on leadership roles, guiding and supporting younger students while building confidence and sharing skills. The day highlights strong relationships between our schools and the development of teamwork, communication, and leadership beyond the classroom.

**NATIONAL BOARDING WEEK** | Our boarding community recently celebrated National Boarding Week, embracing the theme *"Echoes of Home."* Students reflected on the small yet meaningful ways St Paul's Boarding helps them feel connected to home — from bringing their horses to the support of peers and boarding parents. The week highlighted a strong sense of community and personal growth, with activities including card-making for Ronald McDonald House Charities and our Year 12 students prepared for their Trial HSC exams, an "Amazing Race," a virtual Kahoot with families in their homes, and a community dinner with staff, honouring them for creating a safe and supportive home away from home.



**VINEYARD ESTABLISHMENT** | Agriculture students recently travelled to Rawson's Vineyard in Indigo Valley to collect foundation vine stock for the College Vineyard. Working together, they demonstrated teamwork, strength, and problem-solving skills in sourcing the vines. With the vines now planted and rain received, we are excited to begin this new chapter in agriculture at the College. We thank Graham and Toni Rawson for their generous support. Beyond the vineyard, St Paul's holds a broader vision for our wide open spaces—creating meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities and continuing to grow our agricultural program for the future.



ST PAUL'S  
COLLEGE  
WALLA WALLA, NSW

# EXPLORE AND SEE THE DIFFERENCE

## DISCOVERY DAY

FRIDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY

An open day for families and students of all year levels. Information session and tours of our learning facilities, boarding, agriculture and equine begin 9am.



**Scan here**  
Bookings essential  
for Year 5 students!

**Year 5 students  
experience  
"Student for a Day"**



[www.stpaulscollege.nsw.edu.au](http://www.stpaulscollege.nsw.edu.au)

Offering day & weekly boarding

0260 292 220

## *Being Lutheran... means we need and rely on God's Holy Spirit everyday*

The ancient Christian prayer "Come, Holy Spirit, come" has echoed through the Church for centuries. It appears in our liturgies, in hymns—such as LHS 121 by Martin Luther—and in the personal devotions of countless believers. We pray this prayer not because the Holy Spirit is absent today, but because it expresses our daily need to recognise, receive, and welcome the Spirit's work in our lives.

Jesus Himself promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples—and to us—so that God's mission would continue on earth (see Acts 1–2).

In both the Small and Large Catechisms, Luther teaches it is impossible for us to have faith and be holy, without the Holy Spirit. We depend on Him entirely.

Luther writes in the Large Catechism (Third Article):

Just as the Son obtains dominion by purchasing us through His birth, death, and resurrection, so the Holy Spirit makes us holy through the community of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. He leads us into His holy community, placing us in the Church's lap, where He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

### **How We Receive the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit comes to us primarily through the means of grace:

- **Engaging with God's Gospel Word** regularly (see Ephesians 6:17)
- **Being part of God's community** consistently (see 1 Corinthians 12)
- **Receiving the Sacraments** frequently (see 1 Corinthians 10:16; Titus 3:5–6)

As God's Holy Spirit makes us holy, we see more clearly the depth of God's love and forgiveness shown in Jesus.

And, as Galatians 5:22–23 reminds us, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control—will grow in us and in our communities.

### **A Simple Prayer for a Spirit Filled Life**

So I invite you to join with Christians across time and place in praying this ancient, simple prayer:

#### **Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

Pray it first thing in the morning, as you engage with God's Word, as you gather with others, and as you live out your faith each day.

To explore more about the Lutheran understanding of the Holy Spirit, begin by reading the explanations of the **Third Article of the Creed** in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms.

Bishop Richard Schwedes

## **First Communion Preparation**

Do you have children or adults connected with your community who would like to receive Holy Communion or be renewed in their understanding of Holy Communion?

Are you in a congregation without a pastor?

We are looking to provide First Communion preparation for children and adults who currently do not have a pastor.

This will involve mainly online preparation, with at least one in person meeting with a pastor and then a formal rite of welcoming into First Communion.

The preparation time will also bless those who are looking to be renewed in their understand of Holy Communion.

Depending on demand we are looking to offer First Communion Preparation in 3<sup>rd</sup> term of 2026.

If you are interested or there are people in your congregation, please register with Kaye at the District Office [kaye.simpfendorfer@lca.org.au](mailto:kaye.simpfendorfer@lca.org.au) (02) 8660 1200

If you would like more information, contact Bishop Richard [richard.schwedes@lca.org.au](mailto:richard.schwedes@lca.org.au)



# Mission and Ministry Conference

Pastors, lay workers, and congregational leaders were blessed to spend three days together in May for our Mission and Ministry Conference. These gatherings remain an essential part of how we grow and develop as a District—strengthening our shared identity, supporting one another in our local callings, and creating space to see ministry with fresh eyes. They offer times to retreat, be refreshed, and both encourage and be encouraged by others.

## Deepening our understanding of God

Anthony Price, a Lutheran pastor and Spiritual Director, guided us into a deeper awareness of who God is for us and how our understanding of God shapes our lives and ministries. Many participants left feeling renewed and equipped with new tools to reflect on God's image as they engage with Scripture.

## Strengthening mission across the District

Strategic Direction Facilitators Ian Rentsch and Michael Dobie shared practical ways congregations can be supported in their mission. Ian highlighted the developing Regional Ministry Partnership in country NSW—an encouraging example of the potential collaboration so our local communities can be served.

## Insights from Bishop Richard

Bishop Richard's report offered a clearer picture of what is happening across our District and the wider LCA, the good and not so good. He also shared reflections from his recent period of leave, which combined holiday and study. A particularly uplifting part of his report included stories of congregations who were once looking at closing experiencing growth and renewal. This is an excellent reminder for us to stay hopeful, stay prayerful, remain attentive to what God is doing in us and through us and to be responsive to God's leading.

## Building relationships that sustain ministry

A vital aspect of our conferences is the opportunity to build relationships. Mealtimes, evening gatherings, and



informal conversations created moments of connection. These relationships become the support network that strengthens us not only during the conference but throughout our ongoing service to God and others.

## Worship at the heart

Worship and devotion are the centre of our time together. We began and ended the conference gathered around God's Word and Holy Communion. One of the remarkable blessings was how seamlessly the messages connected—even though none of the preachers or devotion leaders coordinated their themes.

- Opening Service: Assistant Bishop John and Jacob Traeger focused on Ephesians 1:18–19, seeing things with new eyes.
- Closing Service: Bishop Richard and Matthew von Stanke centred their message on Ezekiel 37:1–14, seeing God giving life even when it appears hopeless.
- Throughout the conference we were also uplifted by devotions and stories from Michael Dobie, Nich Kitchen, Cheryl Turek, and Bridgitte Willshire.
- Thanks also to our musicians Peter Reed, Mat von Stanke, Nich Kitchen, led by Mark Simpfordorfer. It is a blessing to have musicians who are able and willing to play a range of music from traditional hymns, Altogether songs and current contemporary songs.

## A time of blessing

Our three days together at Warrambui were a gift. God opened our eyes, minds, and hearts to who He is and what it means to participate in His mission. We return to our congregations renewed, encouraged, and ready to continue serving in hope and with a focus on God.

If you are a congregational leader interested in mission, why not join our pastors and lay workers at our next conference August 5-7. Register your interest with Kaye Simpfordorfer at the District Office.

Bishop Richard Schwedes

# Consider or Re-consider ALPHA



Many congregations and Christians are discovering how **Alpha** is a useful tool to help people connect with Jesus and for congregations to connect with their communities. Over 2 million people around the world attended an Alpha course in 2025.

A considerable number of congregations running Alpha have seen an increase in adult baptisms and growth—both spiritually and numerically. In many Roman Catholic Church dioceses, there have been record numbers of adult baptisms, with many of these individuals first participating in Alpha and then continuing with a catechetical course in their local parish.

Alpha is therefore worth considering as part of your congregation's mission and ministry—not just as a course, but as a mission-shaped, culture-shaping tool that helps people connect with Jesus and with one another.

Alpha is more than information about Christianity. It is designed so that people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, no matter where they are on their faith journey, can come together. Every Alpha course offers the opportunity to spend time with others, listen to engaging presentations on Jesus and Christianity, and explore questions about life, meaning, and faith—often over a shared meal.

Alpha is now available in a variety of formats, including the Alpha Film Series (Global or Australian editions), the Alpha Youth Series, the Chinese Alpha Series, and notes for congregations who prefer to present the sessions themselves. Congregations are running Alpha in various locations: church buildings, homes, prisons, schools, workplaces, community venues, and online.

Alpha is a fantastic way for you and others in your congregation to invite people to explore what Christianity truly is and how it remains deeply relevant for our lives. In many Roman Catholic and Lutheran contexts, Alpha is followed by a catechetical course as people prepare for baptism and/or admission as communing members.

So, consider—or reconsider—Alpha for your congregation by:

- **Exploring Alpha resources**, including current materials and training at [www.alpha.org.au](http://www.alpha.org.au)
- **Praying about potential team members** and who to invite to Alpha
- **Planning to begin an Alpha course**

If you would like coaching or guidance in running Alpha, Jarmo Roenneberg, a member of Redeemer Narrabeena Lutheran Church and Southern Cross Finnish Lutheran Church, has extensive experience running Alpha in Lutheran contexts and is available to assist.



Contact Jarmo at [jarmo@roenneberg.com](mailto:jarmo@roenneberg.com)  
or 0466 999 062.

Running Alpha is all about helping people join us in  
Walking together in God's Mission.

# LIFE TO THE *Full*

2026 National  
**ChurchLife**  
Survey

National Church Life Survey is an important ecumenical initiative that helps congregations and denominations across Australia understand themselves and the wider church better. Congregations will be undertaking the survey in September and October this year.

Surveys coming September & October

2026ncls.org.au

## District Prayer Calendar

To join the District Intercessors prayer list, email [office.nsw@lca.org.au](mailto:office.nsw@lca.org.au)

	<b>Parishes/ Congregations</b>	<b>Pastors and Church Workers (and family)</b>	<b>Locations</b>
June	7 Springwood	<b>Pr Mark Simpfendorfer</b> (Kaye)	Our Saviour Springwood
	14 St Marys	<b>Pr Mark Simpfendorfer</b> (Kaye)	St Paul's St Marys
	21 Sutherland	<b>Pr Bruce Flanagan</b> (Cuc, Elijah, Benny)	Good Shepherd Sutherland
	28 Sydney	<b>Pr Munye Mtata</b> (Gladys-Linda, Kilmora, Samara) awaiting visa <b>Bridgitte Willshire</b> Ministry and Mission Facilitator (Paul)	St Paul's Sydney
July	5 Belconnen	<b>Pr Darren Jaensch</b> (Julie, Isaac, Lachlan)	Holy Cross Belconnen
	12 Canberra/ Queanbeyan	<b>Pr Gabor Szabo</b> (Annamaria, Domonkos)	St Peter's Canberra St John the Baptist Queanbeyan
	19 Cooma	<b>Pr Melvin Salzke</b> (Ruth)	Trinity Cooma
	26 Canberra Finnish	<b>Pr Janne Pekkarinen</b> (Helena, Simeon, Hildamari, Liinakaisa) vacant	Trinity Finnish Canberra
August	2 Tuggeranong	<b>Zakary Huggett-Wright</b> , SMP Intern <b>Cheryl Turek</b> Community Development Coordinator	Good Shepherd Tuggeranong
	9 Woden Valley	<b>Pr Tim Muller</b> (Mary) <b>Helen McLean</b> Pastoral Care	Immanuel Woden Valley
	16 Molonglo Valley	<b>Pr Jacob Traeger</b> (Kate)	Molonglo Valley Gospel Community
	23 Warrambui R&CC	<b>Bernd Hahnert</b> Centre Director (Fiona)	
	30 Albury	<b>Pr Will Frost</b> (Keegan, Lenya)	Albury
September	6 Albury Aged Care	<b>Pr David Jarman</b> (Nicole)	Trinity Bethel Holy Cross Burrumbuttock St Peter's Gerogery Bethlehem Jindera St Stephen's Culcairn St Paul's Henty St John's Pleasant Hills
	13 Burrumbuttock	vacant	
	20 Henty	<b>Pr Darryl Shoemsmith</b> (Shirley)	
	27 Henty Lutheran School	<b>Anna-Marie Bothe</b> Principal	St Paul's Lutheran School



**LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**NSW and ACT DISTRICT**

# THE GREAT CO-MISSION

MATT 28:19-20

*"As you go, make disciples, baptize them, teach them, and know I am with you always."*

**LCA NSW AND ACT DISTRICT SYNOD  
7-9 AUGUST 2026 WARRAMBUI**

## Upcoming Events

- June 5 - 8 Better Blokes**  
for men of all ages, Warrambui
- Aug 5 - 7 Mission and Ministry Conference**  
District pastors and lay workers, Warrambui
- Aug 7 - 9 LCA NSW and ACT District Synod**  
Warrambui
- Aug 21 - 23 Sisterhood Camp**  
for women of all ages, Warrambui
- September & October NCLS - National Church Life Survey**  
check the survey dates for your local area

### Contact Newsletter

Published 4 times each year by the NSW and ACT District of the Lutheran Church of Australia

LCA and NSW District Office  
215/20B Lexington Dr  
Bella Vista NSW 2153

Phone (02) 8660 1200

Email:  
kaye.simpfendorfer@lca.org.au

[www.nswact.lca.org.au](http://www.nswact.lca.org.au)

Sign up to the new **District eNews** sent to your inbox each month, email [nikki.spaans@lca.org.au](mailto:nikki.spaans@lca.org.au)

*Like and Follow the District Facebook Page to keep up to date with news and events. Search Facebook for LCANSWACT, or go to [www.facebook.com/LCANSWACT](http://www.facebook.com/LCANSWACT)*

If you have an event you would like advertised online through the District channels please contact our Communications Officer Nikki Spaans, email [nikki.spaans@lca.org.au](mailto:nikki.spaans@lca.org.au)



### FOR COMPLAINTS & TO REPORT ABUSE IN LCA

If you have experienced abuse or have witnessed poor behaviour from someone working for, or connected with, the Lutheran Church in Australia or New Zealand, or if you believe that someone else in the church is at risk, it is important that you let us know.

**Phone** 1800 644 628 (Australia)  
0800 356 887 (New Zealand)

**Email** [complaints@lca.org.au](mailto:complaints@lca.org.au)

**Post** PO Box 519, Marden SA  
5070 Australia

**Mobile** phone text message  
+61 (0) 438 320 218



### Assisting regional people coming to Sydney or Canberra

If you are coming to Sydney or Canberra for hospital treatment and require pastoral care, or if you know someone moving to Sydney or Canberra for work or study, please let your pastor know.

You can also contact District Office and we will endeavor to put you in touch with a pastor who may be able to visit. District Office 02 8660 1200



### SISTERHOOD 21-23 AUGUST 2026

## CHOSEN & DEARLY LOVED

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **COLOSSIANS 3:12**

**JOIN US FOR A RETREAT FOR WOMEN AT WARRAMBUI**  
[www.tpmsisterhood.com](http://www.tpmsisterhood.com)