



Section 12

2019 Convention of Synod

Ministry & Mission Department Report

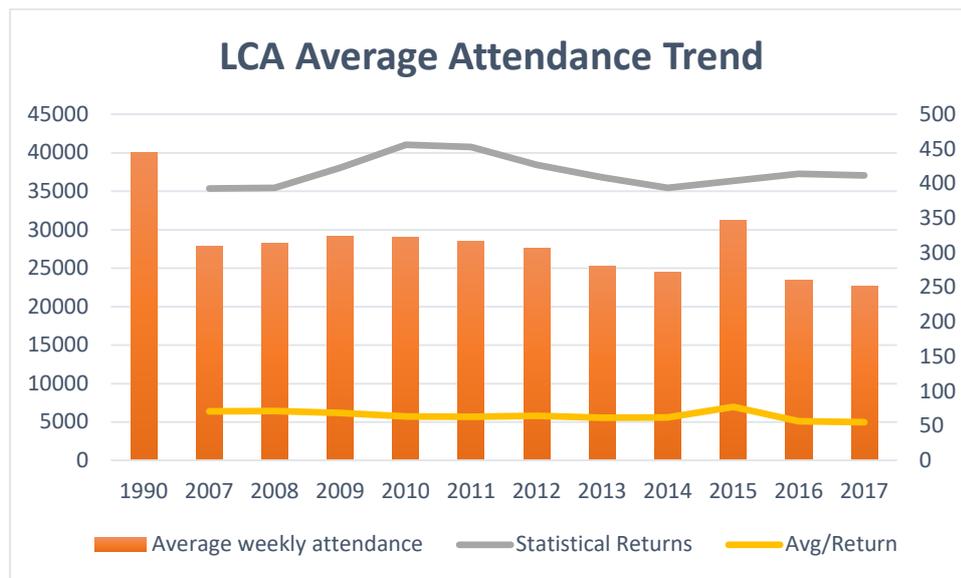
DEPARTMENT OF MINISTRY AND MISSION – 2019 DIRECTOR’S REPORT

*“Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.”*

— C.S. Lewis, [The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe](#)

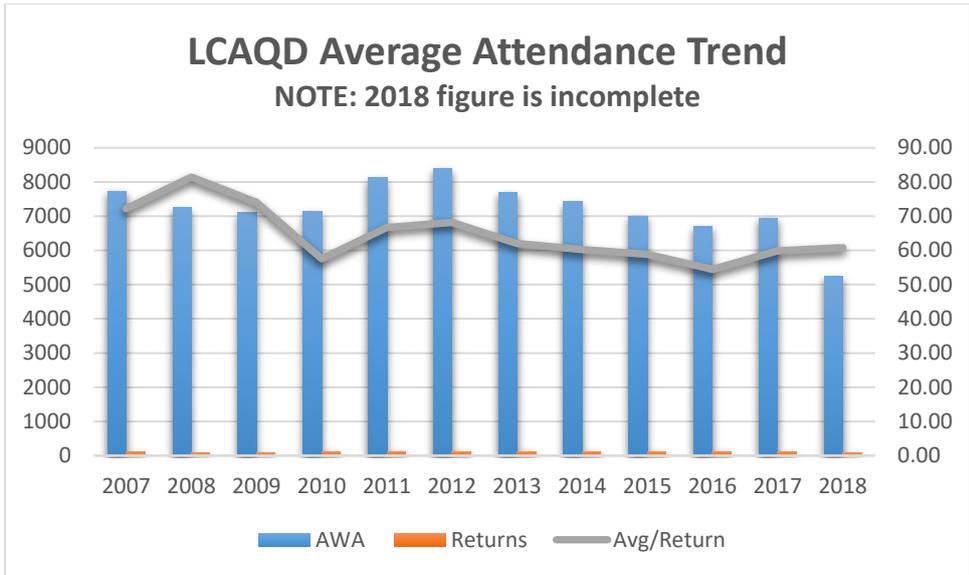
Travelling around Queensland, listening to the stories, the struggles and the questions of our Lutheran communities, it can seem as though the Narnian winter is casting a great shadow over Christendom. Evil and anxiety seems to be flourishing. There are natural disasters – droughts and floods. There are crises of faith. There is institutional complicity in violence against the vulnerable. There are questions over congregational viability.

The LCA, as a whole over the last decade, appears to be declining.



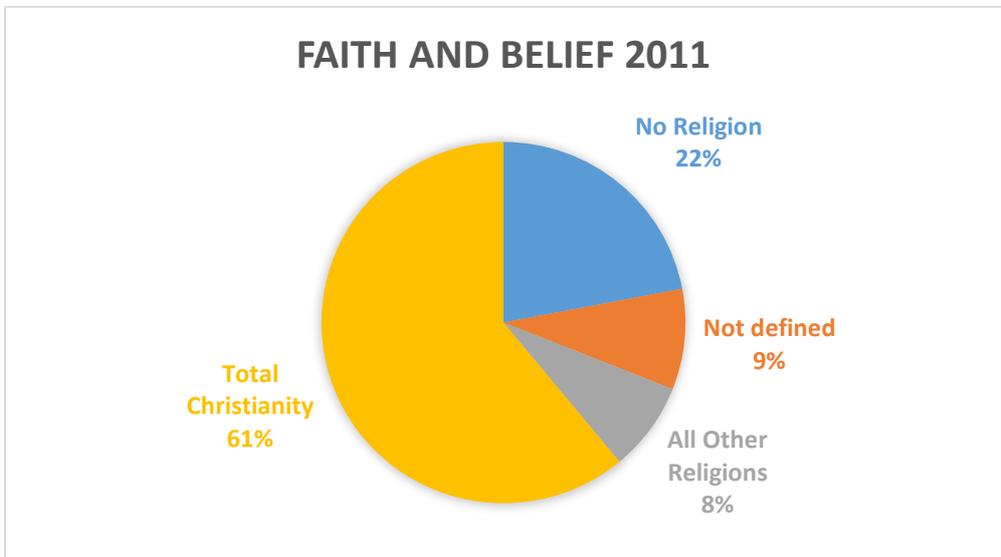
Source: LCA LAMP Statistics

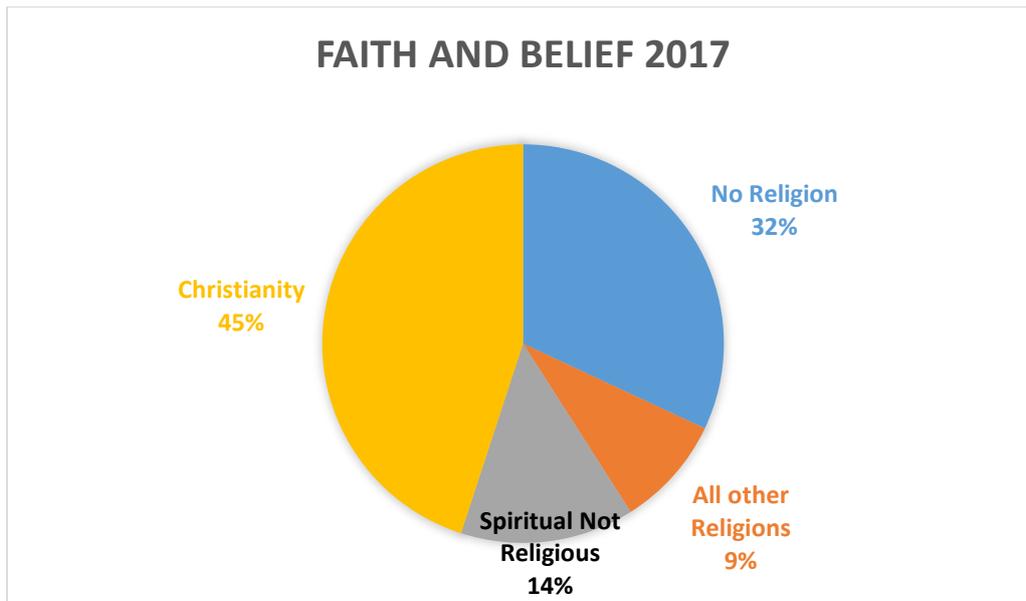
And LCAQD is similar, with a downward trend since 2012 in average weekly attendance.



The Lutheran Church is not alone in its wrestle with decline.

In the post-Christian cultures of Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Europe all mainline churches are declining. In a 2017 research project exploring the changing nature of faith and belief in Australia, Mark McCrindle notes that between 2011 and 2017, those who identified as Christian reduced by 16%.





Source: *Faith and Belief in Australia (McCrindle 2017)*

Admittedly, these statistics are from two different data sources (ABS Census (2011) and McCrindle Survey (2017)). However, McCrindle’s research confirms the changing nature of spirituality within Australia is a movement AWAY from Christianity and towards ‘spirituality’ and/or no religion.

In McCrindle’s research, when asked ‘what do the spiritual but not religious believe?’ the top three responses were:

1. There is an ultimate purpose and meaning – 36%
2. Inward journey of self-discovery – 26%
3. Mixture of religious beliefs – 22%

And when asked ‘why no religion?’ the top three reasons were:

1. Prefer science and evidence based – 49%
2. ‘Religion is a crutch for the weak’ – 18%
3. ‘Religion is outdated and traditional’ – 14%

Of those who self-identified as Christian, 60% attended church less than once a month. Of interest however, was that nearly 25% of people who identified themselves as non-Christians were still open to Christianity!

Yet the Narnian winter is not closing in on us.

“They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps he has already landed.”
 — **C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**

McCrindle points out that the greatest influences on shaping opinions (both positive and negative opinions) are parents and family (57%) and friends and networks (25%). In other words, we still have the capacity to influence change.

Perhaps the key question that we need to ask within the LCAQD, is not to simply consider hard statistics, but to ask the deeper question, ‘how do we measure and monitor the missional health of our communities?’ What criteria can be used to assess?

The church is about PEOPLE. As God became human for us, we embody Jesus' love for those who do not yet know him. As we respond to Jesus' call to take up our cross (Matthew 16:24), his invitation to deny ourselves in order to live (John 12:24-25), Paul's call to imitate Jesus (Philippians 2:5-8), and John's instruction to lay our lives down for others (1 John 3:16), we find ourselves and know God's love more deeply (Matthew 16:25). In this space we are being invited to embrace an outward, mission-hearted mindset over an inward, survivalist mindset. This outward, mission-hearted mindset moves us beyond our comfort zones, and into the lives of the people who live outside of our communities. It knows God's grace with such certainty, that it is always ready to give a reason for the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15).

This outward mission-hearted mindset is the way of the cross. As faith energises us, as our hope and confidence in what Jesus has done on the cross grows within us, the radical nature of the gospel enables us to 'engage people with God's love in everyday life'. It is how others taste God's grace.

At times it may seem as though the Narnian winter is driving its chilly winds through our tired, achy bones... but by faith we know that the Holy Spirit is on the move – that the Holy Spirit has already landed.

As Martin Luther said (and this was quoted in last year's report)

"Faith is a living, bold trust in God's grace, so certain of God's favour that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God's grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith."

Look around. Where do you see the Holy Spirit's movement?

Some of the places I have noticed is through...

- a pastor encouraging his rural community to contribute to a devotional booklet that will encourage, not just themselves, but also the wider community;
- five congregations and leaders engaging with the process of clarifying their guiding principles to help them keep on task for the sake of the gospel;
- a number of congregations earnestly seeking to learn how best to share the good news – not just in actions, but also in words;
- a willingness by numerous communities to try different styles of worship services and service to help those who have grown up in a post-Christian culture engage with Jesus;
- the growth of some of our church plants, and a desire by other congregations to explore what it means to be a Sending or a Partnering Church with the LCA New and Renewing Church department;
- individuals seeking to learn how to connect relationally with people in their community;
- young adult communities gathering together to share God's love;
- the impact of the LCAQD Departments and Agencies: in our early childhood services, our schools, youth ministry and aged and community care;
- these various LCAQD Departments and Agencies working with their local congregations to engage people with the gospel;
- a growing awareness of how to engage in cross-cultural ministry; and
- there are so many more!

Assistant Director

In June 2019, we were delighted to have Mrs Kathy Matuschka join the Ministry and Mission Department in her capacity as Assistant Director. This is a different role to what we previously had in an Administrative Assistant. Kathy's gifts, her heart for connecting and listening to people, as well as her depth in Lutheran theology, have created a complementary team so that as a department we can provide greater support to the congregations, departments and agencies of the LCAQD.

Looking Ahead

The Department of Ministry and Mission connects with many aspects of the LCAQD, from collaborating with other departments and agencies in their mission, to supporting congregations with planning and calling processes, to communications, drought and disaster relief, support of cross-cultural ministry and administration of LLL mission grants. The office is never dull.

In this busy-ness, we constantly challenge ourselves to consider how we embody a 'kingdom culture' that transcends the things we do and achieve, and communicates God's timeless truths in ways that are relevant to the generations that follow. By the time we reach District Synod we will have run a mission workshop and participated in an LCAQD-wide ministry summit with the departments and agencies of the LCAQD. Each conversation opportunity leads to the next, as together we discover what it means to be a healthy church, working side-by-side in God's mission.

Disaster Relief and Recovery

During the last Synodical term, responsibility for overseeing LCAQD Disaster Relief and Recovery was transferred to the Department for Ministry and Mission.

Dorothea Mackellar's wonderful poem 'My Country' is a powerful expression of the diverse array of natural conditions that occur within Australia. Our country is impacted by floods and droughts, storms and cyclones, and all manner of weather in-between. However, when nature hits, not all is deemed a disaster – at least not from the perspective of the government. But all can have profound impact on the lives of mums and dads and children and grandparents. When lives are impacted, it provides an opportunity for the church to come together to support, love and help. Most recently, in response to the devastating Townsville floods, LCAQD schools and congregations along with the wider LCA, provided finance so that the members of St Paul's Lutheran Church, Townsville could provide additional financial resources and counselling to those profoundly affected through the floods.

For those events (such as drought) that are not declared disasters, we also seek to respond in caring and wise ways, through a Queensland Lutheran Giving (QLG) 'necessitous circumstances' fund. Tax-deductible donations towards 'disaster relief' or responses to 'necessitous circumstances' may be deposited into the appropriate QLG fund.

We pray for all those affected, and all providing assistance and care, in a year that has stretched many in Queensland.

Council for Ministry and Mission

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and thank the members of the Council for Ministry and Mission whose constant questioning, and whose breadth of experience, mix of age and gender, and

understanding of the differences in rural, regional and urban communities, provides wisdom and insight to both the Ministry and Mission Department and the LCAQD:

Rob Braunack
Pastor Noel Burton
Carl Eckermann
Robert Knock
Ben Lyons
Pastor David Schuppan
Vickie Schuurs
Anita Short

In His Service
Pastor David Schmidt
Director, Department for Ministry and Mission, LCAQD

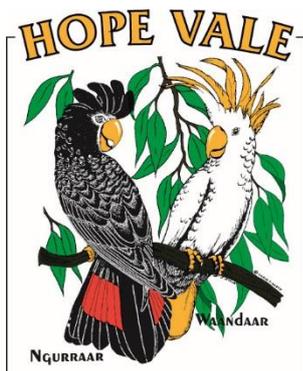
Kathy Matuschka
Assistant Director, Department for Ministry and Mission, LCAQD



Section 12.1

2019 Convention of Synod

North Queensland Report



2019 Report to LCAQD

Convention of Synod

Celebrate

This year we celebrate the 70th anniversary since the first people returned from Woorabinda to



begin building the town of Hope Vale we have today. We pause to remember them and what they have handed on to us. Only one of the original people to return remains with us today and that is Rev. George Rosendale. Special remembrance activities have been held with the specific intent of teaching our young people what their parents and grandparents endured to give us the life we have today. Some of the hardships were almost unbearable but for the Grace of God and the rock solid faith in God that these people had. We give thanks to Him as we honour them this year.

It is significant that the ministry of the Lutheran Church has remained for a period of 133 unbroken years. God is faithful to the end.



Generational Change

One of the most significant challenges in our ministry is keeping abreast of the changing expectations of the next generations. Baptism and Confirmation remain important to the majority, but where to after these events in the lives of our young people. More than 50% attend schools across Queensland for their secondary education which means they have encountered many

mainstream experiences, then to re engage where they were when they left their town is challenging and has not been happening.

Where people are not seeking the Gospel themselves we take the Gospel to them, everyday street walks, home and family Baptisms, pre funeral fellowship evenings, actively engaging in town events and one on one sharing the word are all ways we are reaching people. We are always welcomed where we take the message.

This is not an image of the past but a template for the future. God is always good and provides endless opportunities.

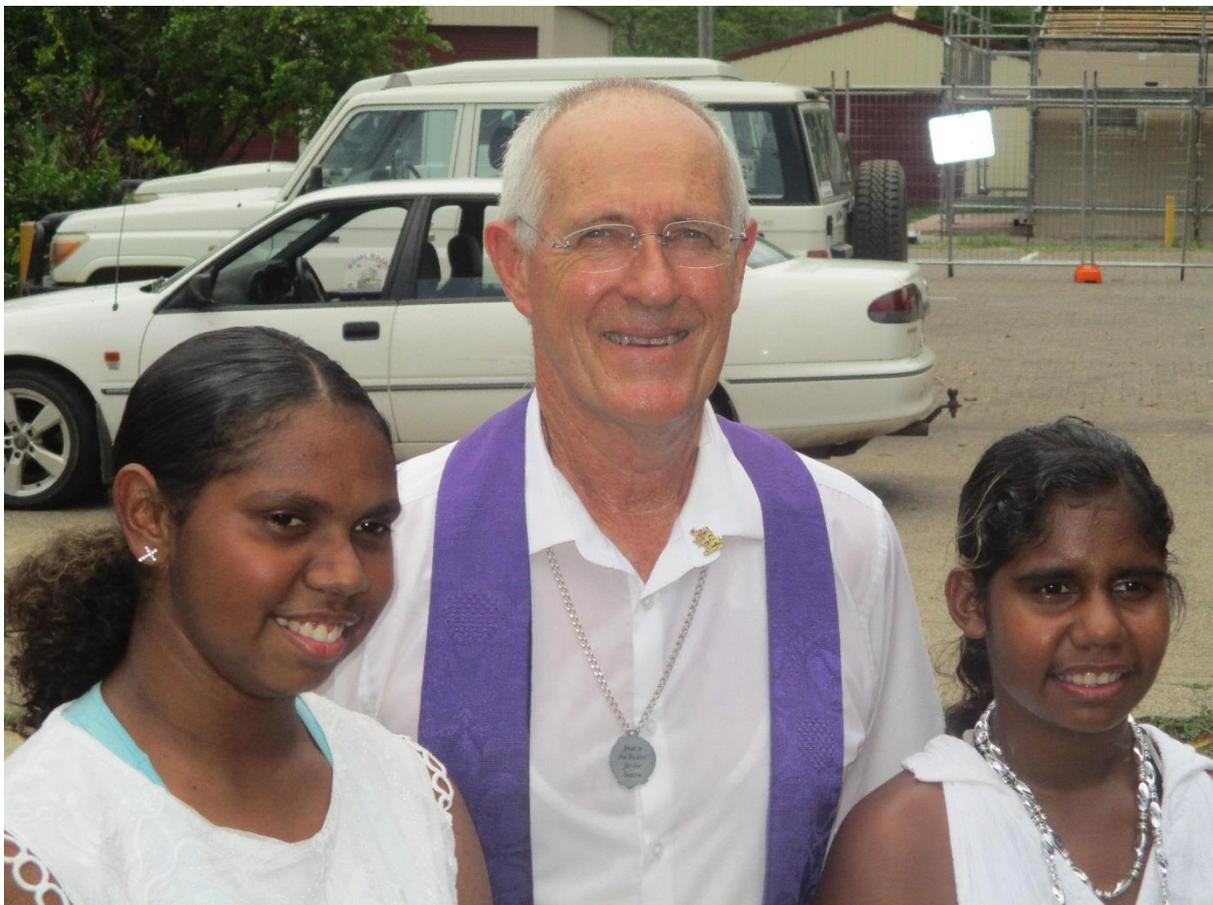


2020 and Beyond

In truth we really don't know? We do however, know that it is in God's hands and that He has always delivered on His promises. Following 10 very challenging years in ministry and finances during which we prayed that we would be in a position where we could have a transition to the next Pastor. This way we would have a time of sharing some of the complexities of this ministry. Only by the grace of God and His help in building some networks we

find ourselves in a position where this seems like a realistic possibility through prayer, savings, hard work, donations and bequests. A truly combined effort right across the LCA.

With this transition in mind we seek the endorsement of this synod to *transfer the funds remaining from the Far North Queensland Lutheran Mission Committee into the bank account of the Hope Vale Lutheran Church.* The Hope Vale congregation has consolidated the funds previously held by Wujal Wujal and Coen and now has financial and ministry oversight of these places. It is another transition that has had numerous benefits for all concerned especially the continuation of sharing the Gospel message and simplifying what was a reasonably complex financial arrangement.



We look forward to continuing the rewarding ministry in which we are involved, new opportunities everyday and walking beside God's people in the places we serve.

My new 'best friend'



May God Bless our beloved church forever and ever.

Respectfully Submitted David Spanagel



Family of 5 Baptised on the same day.