

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 2

I. DOCTRINAL ISSUES

A statement on mission

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1. AFFIRMATIONS ON MISSION

1.1 Introduction

The word 'mission' can be used in a variety of contexts and with different meanings. Because of this, we in the Lutheran Church of Australia [LCA] want to say clearly what we mean by 'mission'. We hope that this statement will help us to act as one, and will enable us as a Lutheran church to cooperate, without ambiguity, in mission with others in the body of Christ.

We identify numerous facets in our understanding of mission:

1.2 The need for mission

All people need to hear the good news of salvation, the 'message of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:19). This is because through sin all people have broken their relationship with God as Father, and are unable to re-establish it (Rom 3:9–12; see also Augsburg Confession, Article 2).

1.3 The origin of mission

The need for mission arises from the sinful condition of all people. But the initiative for mission, and its continuation as a saving activity, comes from God. God wants all to be rescued and all to have a future as his people (1 Tim 2:4). God's will is that the original relationship between himself and all people be re-established.

1.4 Christ in mission

Central to God's saving activity is the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16–18; Gal 1:4). Christ was in mission. Through his life, suffering, and death he won new life for

all people (Rom 5:6–11). By faith in Christ an harmonious relationship is re-established between God and people (Augsburg Confession, Article 4). No-one but Jesus Christ gives new life (1 Tim 2:5,6).

1.5 Christ comes through the means of grace

What Christ in mission has won is available to all people through the means of grace, that is, through the preached word and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion (Matt 28:18–20; 24:14; Mark 13:10; Rom 10:14,15). The Holy Spirit is active through these means, working faith in Christ in the hearts of people (Matt 16:16,17; Rom 8:14; 1 Cor 12:3). Consequently, where the word is taught and the sacraments administered, there are people whose relationship with God has been re-established. These people are the church of God (see Augsburg Confession, Articles 5 and 7).

1.6 The Church as Christ's mission

Christ was in mission. Now his church is in mission as it proclaims the word and administers the sacraments (Matt 28:19; 24:14; John 15:16; 1 Cor 9:16,16). Through these means people receive new life and are nurtured in new life. The church in mission is involved in both outreach and nurture.

1.7 Every Christian a witness for Christ

Every person in the Christian church is a witness for Christ in their life. All Christians, individually and collectively in congregations and other church structures, are to be 'letters of recommendation ...' from Christ, 'known and read by everybody' (2 Cor 3:2,3). They will therefore be concerned about the nurture of each other, about outreach to those in their communities, and about spreading the gospel in other parts of the world.

1.8 Witness by a Christian life

Christians witness not only by their words but also by their lives of faith active in love for their fellow human beings. Reunited with God through Christ, Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead a new kind of life (Rom 12:1–3). Christians love other people because God has first loved them and all humankind (John 3:16; 1 John 4:19–21). This love for others is expressed in care and concern for the welfare of other people as spiritual, physical, and emotional beings (Matt 25:35,36).

1.9 Christ and culture

The content of the message about Christ is determined solely by the Holy Scriptures. To bring the message to people it is necessary to take into account their particular culture and to present the gospel in language and other forms of communication that clearly convey to them the word of God (1 Cor 9:19–23) [see 'Culture and Mission' in LCA Handbook F28].

1.10 Urgency in Mission

A sense of urgency pervades the church in all that it is called to do. The bringing of word and sacraments to all people is an unfinished task. The worship life of the church, and the nurturing of the people in the church through word and sacraments, remains in process.

The church is always living in the last time. The kingdom of God is near (Luke 21:29–31). The end of the world is certain, and it will come unexpectedly (1 Thess 5:10; Augsburg

Confession, Article 17). This sense of urgency is fitting and in perspective, as the church remembers also the constant and enabling presence of Christ and the Spirit, particularly in bringing the gospel to those who have not heard it or have not yet accepted it.

1.11 Summary

The church's task is to preach God's word to all people everywhere, to administer the sacraments, to nurture the faith, to help the needy, and to reach out to the unbelievers and to those who have not heard the call of the gospel. Wherever, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's followers fulfil this commission, there the church is in God's mission in the full sense of the term.

2. MISSION AT HOME

2.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs concern themselves with certain aspects of the LCA's mission activity in Australia and New Zealand. In particular the paragraphs express (a) a basic principle for the LCA's understanding of mission at home; (b) some implications of this principle.

2.2 Understanding mission at home

- 2.2.1 Every congregation is a congregation in mission. All pastors and all members are missionaries. Mission work, therefore, is not an optional activity for any congregation, nor may it ever be considered incidental to a congregation's ministry to its own members.

Mission work belongs to the essential task of every congregation. The great commission (Matt 28:18–20) is directed to every congregation and to every individual follower of Christ. Every Christian is commissioned a missionary through baptism. Every Christian is placed in a mission congregation.

- 2.2.2 The mission field of a congregation includes its local community as well as distant communities and foreign lands. Every congregation and preaching place should see mission to people in the local area as belonging to its essential task (Acts 1:8).
- 2.2.3 If terms such as 'home missions' and 'home mission fields' are used, they should be applied to every congregation.
- 2.2.4 Congregations (rather than Districts) are the primary agencies for mission at home and its development.

2.3 Some implications for the congregation

- 2.3.1 Every congregation or preaching place needs to define the nature and scope of its mission, and to develop and implement strategies for outreach into the local community and further afield as appropriate.
- 2.3.2 The aim and purpose in founding a new congregation or preaching place should be to bring the gospel to the unchurched in the community, as well as to serve Lutherans.

- 2.3.3. As a general rule, new fields should be established and supported by 'parent' congregations. The act of 'parenting' here means taking responsibility — either alone or with others — for organising and financing a new congregation to the point where it is able to assume these responsibilities for itself.
- 2.3.4 In cases where mission development might affect a neighbouring congregation, a congregation has the responsibility of consulting with the neighbouring congregation and working in harmony with it.
- 2.3.5 In seeking to establish a new field, a parent congregation should consult with its District, seek advice and draw on the experience and expertise of the District or LCA, and receive the approval of the District.
- 2.3.6 Mission to the local community should have high priority in the allocation of a congregation's financial resources. However, at the same time the congregation has a responsibility to support the program of the church at large.

2.4 Some implications for the District

- 2.4.1 The District's role in mission at home is to help and encourage all congregations to carry out mission work in their local communities and in ever-widening circles.
- 2.4.2 The District serves as consultant on mission strategy and as coordinator of mission development. It provides prospective parenting congregations with advice and expertise, including suitable models for the establishment of new fields. It also gives the final approval for proposed new mission development.

2.5 Some implications for the LCA

- 2.5.1 The national church may establish new congregations or preaching places in strategic areas where it is not possible or practicable for an individual congregation or a cluster of congregations to do so. The LCA is responsible for financial assistance to such fields. The respective Districts are responsible for nominating such fields and for administering fields which receive LCA support.
- 2.5.2 The LCA and its Districts should regularly review the development of the church's worker resources to ensure that the cause of missions is well served. Such a review could include
 - a. realignment possibilities;
 - b. the formation of team ministries for intensified outreach activity;
 - c. new forms of specialist ministries (mission developers, lay workers, and so forth)
 - d. strengthening the nurture of members so that they are better equipped to reach out to others.

2.6 Mission to Australian Aborigines

- 2.6.1 Mission to Australian Aborigines is an integral part of the church's mission at home. The aim is to have Aboriginal Christians as active members of local congregations, as articulated in 2.2.1 above.
- 2.6.2 Because of cultural differences, the shape and structure of the local congregation and its mission will vary. The position of the church is stated in

two synodically-adopted documents: 'Culture and Mission: Some Theological Aspects', and 'Guidelines on the Relationship of Aboriginal Pastors and Aboriginal Congregations to the Lutheran Church of Australia' (LCA Handbook, F26–F36).

- 2.6.3 The LCA through its appointed boards will continue to provide spiritual and organisational support, leadership training, and linguistic services to the relevant Aboriginal missions and congregations for as long as necessary.

3. MISSION ABROAD

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following paragraphs set out a vision for mission and ministry abroad in those areas where the LCA has undertaken mission involvement both in Papua New Guinea and South-East Asia. They seek to emphasise that overseas mission is an intrinsic part of the total mission of the congregation. They want to outline how the church can be stimulated to greater mission consciousness and action.
- 3.1.2 The way of doing overseas mission has changed. It used to be one-sided. Now it is done primarily in cooperation with churches overseas.

3.2 Papua New Guinea

- 3.2.1 In response to the open door for mission the LCA will continue to send people to Papua New Guinea, as determined in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea.
- 3.2.2 The LCA will keep its members informed about opportunities for Christian service in Papua New Guinea.
- 3.2.3 The LCA will continue to provide *scholarships* at Luther Campus for suitable students from Papua New Guinea and, where feasible, will give opportunities to Papua New Guinean Lutherans for specific leadership and professional training for church service.
- 3.2.4 Resources will be made available to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea for *the production of appropriate Christian literature*.

3.3 South-East Asia

- 3.3.1 The LCA will seek to send more people to work with churches in South-East Asia.
- 3.3.2 The LCA will endeavour to identify opportunities for cooperation in mission with the Lutheran churches in South-East Asia, for example, work among the Subus in South Sumatra with the Gereja Kristen Protestan Indonesia.
- 3.3.3 *Scholarships* for students from South East Asian Lutheran churches will be offered and promoted in conjunction with Luther Campus.
- 3.3.4 The existing program of *making available Lutheran theological books and periodicals* to South-East Asian churches, seminaries, and pastors, and of providing assistance in the production of their own theological literature, will

be expanded as practicable.

- 3.3.5 A review of the LCA's involvement in the *radio and cassette ministry* in Indonesia (LKS) will be undertaken with a view to offering greater support.
- 3.3.6 Opportunities for members to take up jobs in South-East Asia in government and private sectors are to be explored as avenues of Christian witness and service.
- 3.3.7 Efforts will be made to *strengthen relations with the churches* in Asia including the fostering of exchange visits between church leaders and members of Lutheran churches in South East Asia and the LCA.
- 3.3.8 Arrangements will be made to *equip several people to become experts in Islam* and possibly also other world religions.

3.4 Overseas mission within the context of the LCA

The LCA will endeavour to

- 3.4.1 enrich the life and growth of its members through a thoroughgoing and balanced promotion program on overseas mission in congregations;
- 3.4.2 make congregations aware of opportunities for personal involvement in mission overseas;
- 3.4.3 promote Lutheran Bible Translators Australia as a potential for opening doors in mission; and, in cooperation with Lutheran Bible Translators Australia, recruit and equip workers and solicit their financial support;
- 3.4.4 develop group-to-group relationships;
- 3.4.5 increase dissemination of information on overseas mission and Lutheran Bible Translators Australia;
- 3.4.6 encourage prayer support for overseas workers.