

AGENDA 14.4

Report: Constitution Review Working Group

ONE IN CHRIST THE FAITH AND PURPOSE OF THOSE WHO ARE GATHERED AS THE LCANZ

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where are we now?

Before asking the purposeful questions of who, why, and then what and how on the pathway to constitutional renewal we need to also ask where are we now? The psalmist ponders "How then do we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps 137:4).

The church is now in a foreign land. This unfamiliar environment is seen in the unstoppable changes we are confronting. Membership, pastoral supply and finances are declining at an alarming rate. We are getting older and more tired, while struggling with the burden of governing a multiplicity of entities with fewer volunteer resources while compliance demands steadily increase. The ordination debate is dividing us. Congregations are steadily closing, and members are becoming increasingly isolated from each other.

To worship and to receive the means of grace, isolated members need to join other Christian churches. They grieve the loss of the church they once knew. Younger generations do not hold to Lutheran identity, nor worship exclusively in Lutheran congregations like their forebears. Respect for traditions and authority is waning. We cannot assume that all Lutherans will in the future so obligingly accept rigid church structures and procedures or even theological pronouncements as their forebears. The avalanche of emotions of grief, anxiety, fear, depression and anger associated with great loss felt by many Lutherans are a new reality.

To Christians in this foreign land, this new and challenging reality of discord, grief and decline, God declares his fulfilled promise "See I am making all things new... it is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega." (Rev 21:5,6).

The brief

The General Church Board (GCB) acting on the resolution of General Synod 2021 commissioned a Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) to prepare a paper seeking to answer two questions:

1. Who are we now as LCANZ?
2. Why do we gather as LCANZ?

Subsequently, CRWG was given further guidance to pay particular attention to who we are from an ecclesial perspective, a small and large district perspective and a global perspective

Who we are now as LCANZ

Our acronym

Through recent usage and broad acceptance LCANZ has since 2018 used this inclusive acronym for the churchwide ecclesial community of faith across two countries. The acronym LCANZ is now nearly

always used whenever we are not referring specifically to the constituted and incorporated entities formed by the church. This acronym is used as an umbrella reference to the whole church fellowship and does not affect country or district specific entities or logos. Simply, LCANZ = LCA + LCNZ.

Our ecclesial perspective

Ecclesiology is the study of the church: its character (what it is), its make-up (who we are), and what it does (why we gather). This means that our Lutheran ecclesiology is fundamental to this report.

On the basis of Scripture, the Ecumenical Creeds, and Lutheran Confessions, with all Christians, we believe that we are called together by the Holy Spirit into the one holy catholic and apostolic church. United as the body of Christ, with all believers of every time and every place we enter into the spiritual fellowship of the “communion of saints”. Christ is head of the church, and in him all the rich variety of human life, experience and culture is drawn together into the blessed inclusivity of the people of God.

As God’s people, we rejoice in all the blessings of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Jesus brought salvation, peace, forgiveness and new life into this world; in Jesus’ name the Spirit sends us out to share God’s love in word and deed, working for peace and justice in God’s world until it reaches its ultimate fulfilment in Christ’s eternal kingdom.

It is through an ecclesial perspective that we able to fully know and understand the LCANZ as our church. This church – formed from its gathered congregations – is both synodical and episcopal, and it is from this understanding that we seek to organise and govern ourselves.

- Our congregations and parishes**

The church suffers from the tyranny of distance. Thinly spread over some 5346 km east to west and 3735 km north to south, remote and rural congregations, and widespread parishes are rapidly declining in number as families move to regional centres and capital cities. And then contrastingly in some regional areas such as the Barossa and Toowoomba there are too many congregations in very close proximity. More than half all LCANZ congregations have fewer than 50 attending an average weekly service, which is normally unsustainable for the support of a pastor unless part of a wider parish. The CRWG did not have the time, resources nor specific TOR to explore in depth the headwinds of change facing congregations and parishes. How are the members of a congregation coping as the congregation becomes unviable and closes? How are they continuing in worship and accessing the means of grace? What are we doing for them? More work needs to be undertaken to fully understand the plight of these small and diminishing congregations and how we can better support our people.

- Our pastoral supply crisis.**

There are 70 more parishes than there are general ministry pastors (GMPs). Some parishes have two GMPs which means that more than 70 parishes are without a pastor. Currently 32 parishes are actively calling. But even filling a call just moves the vacancy from one parish to another. Why are the other parishes not calling a pastor? About 30% of all parishes are currently without a pastor.

This year eight pastors have served at ALC, but only supplied three graduate pastors. Why are the men of the church not hearing a call to study for pastoral ministry? Half of all general ministry pastors will retire in the next 10 years. At the current rate of new ordinations and retirements, by 2032 the percentage of all parishes without a pastor could double to an alarming 60%. As the church is recognised through the congregations gathered around the means of grace, how do we understand the church so dramatically and increasingly deprived of pastors?

- **Our capacity to govern**

We rely heavily on an ever-diminishing pool of volunteers to govern, administer and manage our congregations, parishes, districts, councils, committees, auxiliaries, and boards. Churchwide there are 31 legal entities; across the districts another 86; our places of worship have another 505; and our agencies 258; a total of 880 entities. And that does not include the 266 parishes and six aboriginal communities. This large number of entities and diverse spread of their purposes, in many different contexts and in an increasingly complex legislative and compliance environment places a heavy burden on those volunteering for these governing responsibilities, especially as they age and in turn become dependent on care services.

WHY DO WE GATHER AS LCANZ?

As Lutherans within this diverse family of God, we believe that the Spirit unites us by God's word of promise proclaimed in the gospel and revealed in the Scriptures and celebrated in the sacraments of God's grace. As our spiritual mother, the church gives us birth through our baptism and nurtures us through God's word of forgiveness and peace, feeding us with the holy supper of Christ's saving body and blood. This is the church's ministry, by which we are served through God's word, and in which we all participate according to the Spirit's gifts of faith and love. It is always this understanding of the church and its spiritual purposes that drives and determines the structures that we adopt for the work of the church in the world.

Together, we gather as communities of faith in our local congregations and parishes. As the LCANZ, we also walk and serve together through the structures of our district and general synods. In keeping with local, national and churchwide needs, we choose and appoint pastors, leaders and other gifted persons to ensure that Christ's ministry continues among us. United as Christ's people we rejoice in God's word: worshipping, serving, and witnessing to God's love in our local communities, throughout Australia and New Zealand, and out into all the world.

Our large and small District perspectives

The LCANZ has two large, two medium and two small sized districts. The Vic/Tas district stated that they are "*A district of the LCANZ (the churchwide ecclesial community of faith). This is a faith partnership, not a legal/ownership relationship. We are synodical*". Other districts gave different answers, highlighting a significant lack of clarity over the constitutional division of the LCA Inc (the Church) into districts. This lack of clarity is apparent in some strategic and governance duplications, misunderstandings, tensions and discord.

The good news is that the districts and the church are finding new collaborative and synodical pathways which are church based and unconstrained by our legal structure. Communication, collaboration, good will, the Missio Dei, do not need any constitution.

Key issues for the districts include:

- pastoral supply and distribution
- synodality
- governance of their own entities without duplication and overlaps with churchwide entities
- avoidance of hierarchy
- meaningful participation and productive deliberation.
- sustainability
- creating the maximum of possibilities for congregations (Hermann Sasse).

Our global perspective

- **Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and International Lutheran Council (ILC)**
The LCANZ has maintained an associate membership of both the LWF and ILC for a long time preferring to remain a bridge between the two major Lutheran world church groupings.
- **LCA International Mission (LCA-IM) and Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS)**
LCA International Mission (LCA-IM) serves the LCANZ in overseas mission and evangelism. The Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) is a humanitarian aid agency which works closely with AusAid. Generally, LCA-IM and ALWS serve in different countries, with LCA-IM having an Asian focus and ALWS a wider aid focus. Sometimes mission and evangelism opportunities arise through the humanitarian aid services, and these are clearly separated via good informal relationships between the two agencies.

Our commissions

The LCANZ has three commissions, CTICR, CSBQ and CoW which provide theological, inter-church relations, social, bio-ethical and worship guidance to the church. The CTICR answers the two questions before us by reinforcing that "Who we are" is a confessional church, and "Why we gather" is to undertake "the church's instrumental purposes and functions; contemporary actions" - shaped, clarified, and applied in faithfulness to the Scriptures.

Our agencies

The main agencies of the church are ALC; Local Mission and Aboriginal Mission; Education; Youth/Young adult ministries; and Care Services. While in congregations and parishes we find the church in ministry, bringing the means of grace to the worshipping communities, in these agencies we find these worshipping communities coming together to do what they cannot do alone to enable and fulfil our chosen purposes of witness and service.

- **Theological education**
Pastoral education and formation and equipping the church and other agencies in theology
- **Local Mission**
Equipping and guiding the districts and congregations in missional endeavors.
- **Aboriginal Mission**
FRM in Central Australia is a separate entity. Other First Nations communities are found in Queensland and South Australia. The LCANZ has not yet addressed when or how to transition from treating our First Nations people as mission subjects to accepting them as members of the church.
- **Education - Formative years**
As a church we have excelled in providing quality Christian education for our children during their formative years. However with increasing fees many Lutheran families can no longer afford this private schooling which is becoming more elite and less Lutheran.
 - . **Youth and Young Adults**
Mainly camping ministry in some districts.
Youth groups and tertiary fellowships do not have the connection with youth they once did. These are challenging areas for relevance of the church to youth and young adults.
 - . **Productive years**
Lutherans have not been so good at caring for families during the mid-years of life. We struggle to connect and relate to families while they juggle work/life balance.

- **Dependent years**

As we age, Lutherans excel again. We have provided accommodation and services for the elderly. We have also provided some care services for those in need, but this is not widespread and is becoming a joint service with other care providers.

Wrestling with these two questions the CRWG finds the LCANZ struggling to “sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land” and to trust in God’s fulfilled promise “see I am making all things new.... It is done”.

AUTHORISATION OF THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

General Synod in 2021 authorised the General Church Board to form this Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) by the following resolution:

The General Synod:

1. *affirms the work of the Phase 1 of the Constitution Review and acknowledges the contributions made by church members to it;*
 2. *authorises the General Church Board to establish a Working Group that considers the issues raised in the review, in particular the questions, ‘who we are now as a LCANZ’ and ‘why do we gather as LCANZ’, noting that these are fundamental questions for the LCA’s constitutional arrangements, and ask the Working Group to:*
 - a. *prepare a position paper that responds to these issues and questions*
 - b. *have due regard to the principles and findings contained in the final report of the Phase 1 of the Constitution Review report; and*
 - c. *engage with key groups within the LCANZ, including the CTICR*
- and*
- for the General Church Board to submit the Working Group’s paper to the in-person sessions of the 2022 Convention to enable discussion by Synod delegates on the issues raised in it;*

The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) was commissioned by the General Church Board in accordance with this resolution to prepare a paper seeking to answer two questions:

1. Who are we now as LCANZ?
2. Why do we gather as LCANZ?

Why are these questions being asked?

Prior to the engagements with key groups the Chair of CRWG discussed with Les Stahl, facilitator of the Phase 1 Review, why these two questions were not explored to his satisfaction. Why was more discernment required on these questions before GCB could frame any proposal regarding a possible Phase 2 Constitution Review.

*Les Stahl advised that these two questions are the first two of four questions which the LCANZ needs to answer on its constitutional journey. The LCANZ needs to agree **who** we are and **why** we gather before discerning **what** is LCANZ’s purpose, now and into the future. The purpose then informs LCANZ’s Objects. Only when the LCANZ has agreement on these three questions can it consider **how** to organize itself to fulfil its purpose. Finally, when all four questions are answered and agreed synodically will the LCANZ have a firm basis on which to decide whether to amend or rewrite its constitution.*

Les Stahl said that the constitution is the highest governance document of the church. He said the LCANZ has to decide whether it governs the church from an ecclesial or a legal perspective? Or as at present, attempt to do both?

Finally, Les Stahl recommended identifying all the areas of tension or disagreement in the church which are reported in the Phase 1 Final Report. (see PART 2 B. Appendices - The Principles and Findings of the Phase 1 Review). He advised that a revised constitution should be written so that any tensions or disagreements which arise have a constitutional pathway to agreement and resolution.

WHO ARE WE NOW AS LCANZ?

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) was formed by the union of two churches in 1966. The church was constituted as the Lutheran Church of Australia – an Association incorporated in South Australia and in the constitution this entity was named “the Church”. The headquarters were known as the “National Office”. Recently the term, “churchwide” was introduced by the church’s previous Bishop John Henderson to acknowledge the Lutheran Church of New Zealand as a district of the LCA.

Our acronym

The acronym LCANZ came into existence after the 2018 General Synod replacing LCA as the acronym for the church. For example, in 2018 the bishop reported as ‘LCA Bishop’ and in 2021 as ‘LCANZ Bishop’. The acronym LCANZ is yet to be defined in the constitution. For this paper the CRWG assumes that the inclusive LCANZ has, through common usage, become the umbrella reference to both the LCA and the LCNZ as the churchwide acronym. i.e. LCANZ = LCA + LCNZ. Who we are now as LCANZ refers to ‘we’ the people of the church, the ecclesial community of faith.

Our ecclesial perspective

Ecclesiology is the study of the church: its character (what it is), its make-up (who we are), and what it does (why we gather). This means that our Lutheran ecclesiology is fundamental to this report.

On the basis of Scripture, the Ecumenical Creeds, and Lutheran Confessions, with all Christians, we believe that we are called together by the Holy Spirit into the one holy catholic and apostolic church. United as the body of Christ, with all believers of every time and every place we enter into the spiritual fellowship of the “communion of saints”. Christ is head of the church, and in him all the rich variety of human life, experience and culture is drawn together into the blessed inclusivity of the people of God.

Members of the LCANZ acknowledge that the one holy catholic and apostolic church, with Christ as its head, is the hidden reality of the church, living and active through the many different Christian denominations spread across the earth. Each denomination has its own unique way of understanding and expressing their faith in Christ but are joined as one as they confess “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:5-6).

Members of the LCANZ proclaim the good news of God’s saving love for all people, teaching that we are saved only by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This, we believe, is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures, who has called and gathered us as God’s holy people in Christ’s body, the church. Together, these teachings - as understood and confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580 - inform our unique Lutheran expression of the faith - our teaching and our confession.

Engagements with key groups in the LCANZ

According to the Terms of Reference, the CRWG has engaged with key persons and groups within the LCANZ. These engagements have been carried out through conversations, correspondence, on-line and

face to face meetings. Most meetings and dialogues have been conducted with a questionnaire forming the discussion agenda. Notes from these meetings and formal responses where received, reports to General Synod, web-site information and other materials have all been collated to supplement the findings of the Phase 1 Report.

The CRWG had two engagements with CTICR. who had provided CRWG with two prior written submissions to the Phase 1 facilitator. These are found in the Appendices 'Key Group' submissions. Other arms of the LCAQD we engaged with included LLL, ALC, LEA, Local Mission, International Mission, LCA executives and GCB. Districts have engaged with us through zoom meetings and/or answered questionnaires.

Other engagements have been held with Dr Vic Pfitzner, emeritus President Queensland District Reinhardt Mayer, Assistant Bishop Mission SA Pr Stephen Schultz, Dr Chris Materne, Bishop Dr Mark Vainikka, Bishop Paul Smith, EOC Brett Hausler, SOC Nigel Long, Lutheran Archivist Angela Schilling, Historian Dr Dean Zweck, Executive Director Lutheran Services Qld Nick Ryan, Executive Director of LEQ Tanya Crooks, Marilyn Wall of Reconciliation Action Plan, Malcolm Willcocks of FRM, Assistant to the Bishop International Mission pr Matt Anker, and Pr Nathan Hett of Cross-cultural Ministry. Debbie Venz has assisted with LAMP records.

What are we hearing?

Much can be found on the LCA website and the District websites about the work of the various commissions, committees and departments. There are also comprehensive reports within the Book of Reports. The following are common threads from engagements with these entities, persons and other sources, either face-to-face, on-line, via questionnaire responses or other papers from which we highlight key themes.

The breadth, depth and diversity of the LCANZ

The acronym 'LCANZ' refers to the ecclesial community of faith, the 'one' Lutheran church of Australia and New Zealand, rich in its diversity. The LCANZ is a spiritual fellowship, God's people gathered by the Spirit through the gospel and the means of grace; as such, it is not a legal entity. However, the members of this spiritual fellowship have formed a multiplicity of temporal entities, (one body of many parts) to organise the church and fulfil its chosen purposes. These entities are separate legal bodies recognised through their incorporation and legal name. The LCA Governance Framework 2020 lists 31 church-wide entities and 86 district-wide entities. This does not include the far greater number of congregations, parishes, agencies, and other entities within the districts such as boards, commissions, councils, committees, conferences, assemblies, auxiliaries, guilds, clubs, groups, educational and care services, first nations communities, cross-cultural communities, church plants, camping ministries. All these entities operate variously as either legally incorporated companies or associations, or as unincorporated associations, standing or ad-hoc committees, working groups, communities, informal networks, and collaborations.

A summary spreadsheet sourced from the 2022 Yearbook shows 505 congregations and other places of worship, and 258 agency entities within the districts of the church. Adding to this the 31 churchwide overarching governing entities and the 86 districtwide governing entities there are 880 entities to weave together, to resource, to delegate to and require accountability from. This is a very challenging task. These 880 entities do not include 266 parishes which also have a parish council to manage parish work, nor does it include 6 listed aboriginal and language communities.

The LCANZ includes all the people who belong together in the spiritual fellowship and for the temporal purposes of the Lutheran church in Australia and New Zealand, and who share one faith and one

purpose. The LCANZ includes both an ecclesial fellowship and the organised structures and synods, and all the entities, establishments, networks, gatherings, ministries, and missions.

We are a culturally diverse church and serve in many different contexts, broadly spread across two countries. While our roots are traditional and European, we include first nations people and many ethnic cultures, including Chinese, Finnish, African, Tamil, Indonesian, Latvian, Hungarian, Slovak, and German. We have many multi-ethnic congregations.

The external environment - now

Much has changed in society during the 56 years since union. These changes have been technological, social, cultural, legal and moral. In 1966, the telegram was faster than a letter and televisions were still black and white. Society was also in the throes of the sexual revolution, and the church was trying to come to terms with what this meant for its own moral teaching. For the most part, community life in the church was rich. Congregations met in large numbers with booming youth and other social groups. Marriage and children were the norm of society, and divorce was rare. Christianity was still deemed relevant to society and continued to shape cultural expectations as well as the laws made by our parliaments and courts.

We now find ourselves in a digital age of instant global communications via clouds of satellites, telescopes and cameras which penetrate space, skies, seas and landscape. New technologies and communication webs bring many blessings but also carry risks and threats. We are able to attend meetings and communicate with our loved ones from a distance, but many of us have an unhealthy dependence on screens which affects our health and ability to cope with real-life situations. The knowledge of much of what we do online is also now commercialized - a valuable targeted marketing commodity. Even our identities can be stolen. Social norms and laws regarding gender, sex, marriage, family and attitudes towards children have changed drastically. Our laws and culture enable us to achieve inner psychological happiness through virtually any means, yet we are more anxious and depressed than ever.

In addition to this, the landscape with respect to Christian belief is changing. The latest census data reveals that the percentage of Australians that identify as Christians has fallen below 50%, and now stands at just below 44%, a drop of over 8% in 5 years. This is a sobering statistic, but not surprising. It confirms what many of us see in our workplaces, in community attitudes about the institution of the church and the place of religion in our secular culture. We must ask ourselves: *How then do we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Ps 137:4.*

Despite this challenging context, the faithful continue to gather to hear God's word proclaimed, to receive Jesus in bread and wine, and to be sent with his blessing – and with the encouragement of the Christian community – back into the world to love and serve those around them.

However, 'more than half of Australians (55%) say they believe in God, six in ten pray or meditate, and two in ten (21%) attend religious services at least monthly'.

And Dr Ruth Powell, Director of NCLS Research, observed: 'Many young Australians do not claim to affiliate with a particular religion as it is not part of their social or cultural identity....But it does not mean that they are hostile or closed to spiritual life. The evidence from our detailed research shows an openness to spirituality, including the Christian faith - perhaps more than people would expect.'

Today's environment is indeed a contested one in which to be a Christian. On the upside, the mission fields are enormous!

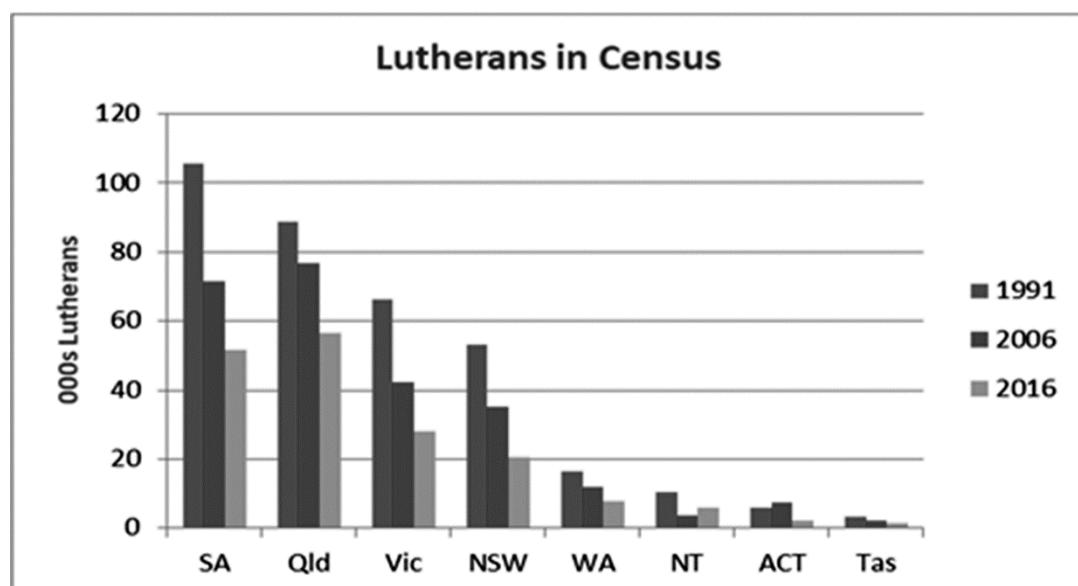
LCANZ District Entities (data sourced from the 2022 LCA Yearbook)

Entity	SA/NT	QLD	VIC/TAS	NSW/ACT	WA	NZ	TOTAL
Congregations	168	109	70	45	13	13	418
Worship Centres	23	26	16	13	3	1	82
Preaching Places	2	1	0	0	1	0	4
Fellowships	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Places of Worship	193	136	86	58	18	14	505
Schools/Colleges	33	26	16	4	1	0	80
Early Childhood	19	32	3	3	1	0	58
Community/Service	24	14	0	1	0	0	39
Res. Aged Care	6	12	3	5	0	0	26
Ret. Living	13	13	5	1	0	1	33
Camps	3	4	2	1	0	0	10
Book Stores	5	2	2	3	0	0	12
Agencies	103	103	31	18	2	1	258
Total entities	296	239	117	76	20	15	763
Other							
Parishes	94	72	43	33	12	12	266
Aboriginal Comm's	6	0	0	0	0	0	6

these entities do not include the churchwide (31) or district (86) governance entities (*Governance Framework pp 28 – 31*) adding 31 churchwide entities and 86 districtwide entities there are 880 entities. (On average there are 46 baptised members (based on an assumed 41,000 baptised members) to support each entity.

Congregations

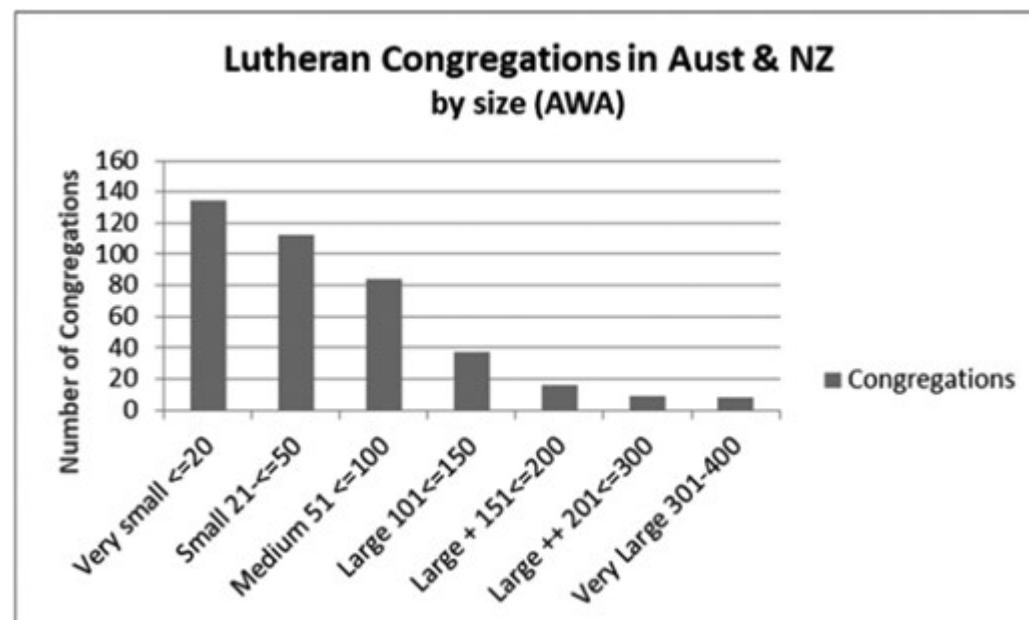
The Census figures show a constant decline in the number of persons identifying as Lutheran. In 1991, 346,000 people identified as Lutheran in the Census; in 2016, 174,000 identified as Lutheran in the Census.



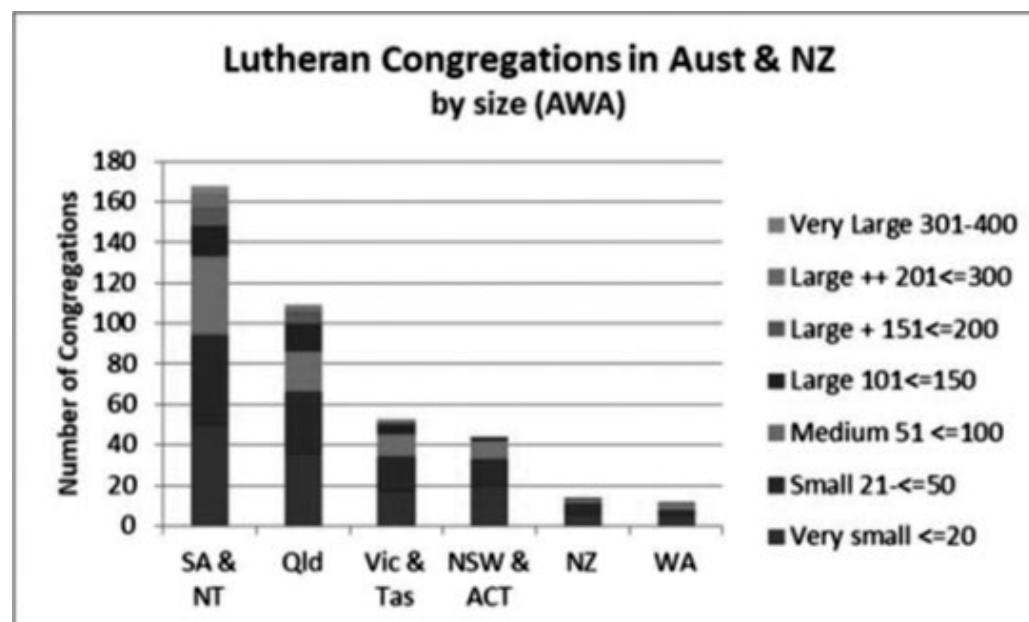
The following data concerning church attendances in LCANZ and commentary is extracted from a NSW District report from 2018.

The LCANZ is a small, aging and numerically declining church, with a majority of small congregations with a proportionally large number of agencies providing services to its community.

The data in this section is based on the most recent statistical returns in LAMP at **December 2017**. The congregations vary enormously in size based on average weekly attendance (AWA). 134 of the 400 congregations (34%) have an AWA of 20 or less. 8 of the 400 congregations (2%) have an AWA of 300 or more. While over half the congregations have average weekly attendances of 50 or less, most Lutherans attend Congregations with an AWA of 100 or more.



The mix of congregation sizes varies greatly by District. For example, SA & NT have 20 Congregations with an AWA of 150 or more. NSW & ACT have no Congregations with an AWA of 150 or more.



While over half the congregations in Australian and NZ have average weekly attendances of 50 or less, most Lutherans attend Congregations with AWA of 100 or more. This table shows the AWA for Australia and NZ by congregation size.

Pastors (*sourced from the 2022 LCA Yearbook and Dr Chris Materne – latest update 27.09.2022*)

Pastors in General Ministry

Congregation/Parish 196

Pastors in other Active ministry

Schools	13
Aged/Community	8
Defence chaplains	4
PNG	2
ALWS	1
SMPs	15

Total - other active ministry 43

Total (general + active) 239

Bishops, Assistants, ALC

ALC	8
Churchwide Office	4
District Offices	13

Total 25

Pastors not in active ministry

Leave of absence	15
Without a call	4

Total 19

Total other pastors 87

Total pastors 283

(not incl. 17 aboriginal SMP's)

Pastors emeriti 226

Parishes without a pastor **80**
**some parishes have 2 pastors*

"However, if the number of active pastors are compared to the number of baptised members in the LCA the question can be raised about whether there is a shortage at all. There were 363 baptised members for every active LCA pastor in 1966. In 2017 there were only 136 baptised members for every active LCA pastor". (Stephen Schultz – Ministry Structure in the LCA 2019).

Based on the 239 pastors in general/active ministry, and 41,000 baptised members, this ratio would now be 171 baptised members for every "general/active" LCA pastor. For pastors serving in general congregational ministry the ratio is 1:209. This means that on average each general ministry pastor is serving 60% fewer baptised members than at the time of union. What does this mean? There are many emeriti pastors providing locum services to help congregations with vacancies. During the recent financial year 75 (31%) emeriti pastors have provided locum services at least one time.

Local Mission – changes in LCANZ in the 21st century and expected changes in the next decade: (an opinion piece by Dr Tania Nelson for the recent and initial meeting of the College of Bishops on the issue of **pastoral supply and the ordering of ministry**).

"Generally, in traditional Christian denominations, regular worship attendance is on a marked decline, which is expected to continue, due in part to our ageing demographic. We are becoming less of a rural church and our larger congregations are predominantly in urban or in larger regional areas. There is a growing movement towards church planting in the LCANZ but there are more churches and schools keen to plant churches than suitable personnel. The harvest is still plentiful, and the labourers still are few. If we fail to adequately resource this potential growth area it may not take root and flourish.

We are still predominantly an Anglo church but with a few notable exceptions such as Alice Springs and surrounds, the Hope Vale communities, and congregations like Glynde, Queensland Asian Lutheran, Sydney Indonesian, Mountainside Auckland and the Chinese Lutheran Church of Vic. Some congregations want to become more multiethnic to match their local demographic. Demographic trends indicate that nearly half the general population will be of non-European background by the end of the century. Light house type congregations could demonstrate the changes required in this mission endeavour. More of these multiethnic congregations will have leaders with English as a second language.

Covid has enabled a powerful pivot toward the world of digital worship. Some congregations are exploring digital mission and ministry which is here to stay, complementing and enhancing face-to-face relationships. The digital space is a gift of the Spirit that the LCANZ can utilise. The LCANZ needs to grow and develop its capability in this space. Some have experienced worship at home and have not found their way back to face-to-face church worship. Other priorities compete with the Sunday morning timeslot. How do we connect with a wired world?

The old model of Sunday school and youth ministry no longer works for many families and young people. Congregational life has changed dramatically over time and especially in the past two years. Perhaps the most noticeable shift has been with the families and young people that once were a part of the community are who are now much less regular in their attendance, if present at all. Many congregations have difficulty thinking differently about how they can support children, youth, and families. For example, confirmation used to be offered to young people who were regular worship attenders and now it is a missional opportunity. We are beginning to realise that life-long discipleship is

both a priority and is a way that we join in with God's mission. Relationships are always the key and lead to deeper connection. We need to continue to build the bridge to be with our families and our communities.

Putting most of our eggs in the Sunday morning 'event' basket has contributed to the continuation of a pastor-centric model of ministry to the detriment of mission and discipleship. We must shift our focus outwards. For many this shift is seismic in proportion. To what extent is the LCANZ ready to embrace the new reality that Christians are no longer in the majority (as evidenced by the fact that we are often portrayed negatively in the media)? Are we prepared to become 'a bold minority'?

*The LCANZ is in a **liminal space** which has come about through a number of converging factors – such as declining membership, diminishing finances, being over-governed for our size, the debate over women's ordination, a pandemic and its uncertainties, a constitutional review and an ecclesiastical discipline review - creating anxiety in some sectors and some people. Let's refocus on the primary task of proclaiming the good news of Christ in our neighbourhoods".*

Governance capacity

The summary spreadsheet sourced from the 2022 LCA Yearbook shows 763 church and agency entities within the districts of the church (see table above). Adding to this the 31 churchwide overarching governing entities and the 86 districtwide governing entities there are 880 entities to weave together, to resource, to delegate to and require accountability from (not including the 266 parish entities and 6 listed aboriginal communities). This spreadsheet reveals that there are actually two large, two medium and two small districts. The two largest districts together have 70% of district entities, the two middle sized districts have 25% and the two smallest districts have 5%.

The congregations/worship centres; parishes; and other worshipping communities, totals 505 entities which is 57% of all entities, overarching governing entities comprise 13%, and the remaining 30% of entities are agencies.

This means that on average there are only 46 baptised members to resource and support each entity. Recognising that probably less than half the baptised members are regular church attenders who participate in and support the work of the church this would mean that the church has on average less than 23 regular contributors to support the governance work of the church. Not all church members have the gifts for, nor interest in, church governance. This is clearly unsustainable.

While our formal church governance systems struggle to adapt and benefit from these changes, we already see the green shoots of adaption through partnerships, collaborations, and networks of mutual support. Silos are being emptied and fences are breaking down as we support each other. This is most evident in the work of Local Mission. Originally five distinct departments requiring 60 members in their governing councils, they are now five purposeful ministries working together as teams, collaborating, sharing, and supporting each other under one overarching governing council. Even better, Local Mission initially had the mission directors of the two largest districts and the congregational supporter for one medium sized district 'at the table' and is now also including the other three districts. This is distinctly synodical, providing a direct link and understanding of the needs of congregations, supporting their incarnational mission in time and place. Local mission is doing for congregations what congregations cannot do alone.

We are a diverse church. While our roots are traditional and European, we as a church in Australia and New Zealand now welcome first nations people and cultures, African, Asian, and American. We have changed from predominantly rural presence to a more urban and large regional presence. We are also a church which has grown with the post-war generation of baby boomers, the builders, who are now retired or retiring, greying, dying and are now passing on their inheritance to the ‘inheritance generation’.

The LCANZ is diverse

- **Culturally:** While its roots are traditional and European, in Australia and New Zealand the church includes first nations people, African, Asian and American and their cultures.
- **Generationally:** families, young adults, school students, baby boomers, the elderly (2021 LAMP shows 5 specialist aged care facility congregations)
- **Attitudinally:** social values, socio-economic circumstances, upbringing, sexual orientation, gender, age, education, urban/rural location

This diversity is both healthy and challenging for ‘one’ church. There are differences in worship formats, expressions of faith, approaches to mission, priorities, opinions and strategies for a sustainable church in today’s environment.

These differences surface in the LCANZ as we search for answers to questions such as: a shortage of pastors and other resources, women’s ordination, loss of youth membership, debate about the role of pastors, and more broadly in addressing social issues being explored by the Commission for Social and Biological Questions.

The perspective of large, medium and small districts

The CRWG was asked to specifically examine the large and small districts of the LCANZ.

The summary spreadsheet reveals that there are actually two large, two medium and two small districts. The two largest districts together have 70% of district entities, the two middle sized districts have 25% and the two smallest districts have 5%.

The LCA Inc constitution states in Article 9.1 that “For the promotion of its Objects by its members in prescribed geographical areas, the Church shall be **divided** into Districts”. This means that the church recognises that the promotion of the ministry and missional purpose of the church (Objects) by its members is fulfilled in geographical areas called ‘districts’. This is incarnational theology – ‘where’ the church is at work.

Each of the uniting churches, the ELCA and UELCA had formed a district synod in SA; VIC; NSW and QLD prior to union. Western Australia was not recognised as a separate district but was loosely associated with SA. NZ was a separately constituted, ELCA church named the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Zealand. New Zealand was welcomed into the fold as a district while remaining a church in New Zealand.

Following ‘union’ to form the LCA in 1966, the LCA Inc constitution states it ‘divided’ the LCA into districts. The pre-existing districts concluded/closed, united and re-constituted following the LCA union. The districts followed the same pathway as the churchwide synods with closing conventions followed immediately afterwards with uniting constituting conventions. For more details refer to the Part 2 Appendices.

The church is now changing the language used to describe itself. The LCA has become known as the inclusive LCANZ. The division of the church into districts is now described as having been **separately established** to carry out specific functions and tasks." And then "The church has **organized** itself into: Districts". Archive records talk of congregations '**amalgamating**' (The Lutheran April 2016).

A reflection on the district responses to the engagement questionnaire

Comprehensive responses have been received to the CRWG's questionnaire and face-to-face engagements (where possible) with district representatives. Although the challenges facing each district vary considerably there are some common themes which have emerged. One presenting issue is the question whether the church, the ecclesial community of faith, the LCANZ, should be oriented ecclesiastically or constitutionally? Bishop Mark Vainikka contends that the constitution is inconsistent with our ecclesiology.

Are we: 'The Church' LCA Inc., an incorporated, State-based, legal entity within which 'the church' exists or are we: 'the church' the LCANZ, the ecclesial community of faith which, when required by governments and legislation, incorporate entities for the legal and compliance aspects of our purposes?

Do we as a church of faith, really need to be bound and 'mysteriously hidden' in the law? What purpose does that fulfil? Or do we treat the law as a gift of God which is limited to only those matters, and within those legislatures, which are applicable and necessary to undertake our ministry, mission and service in the world?

Did our forebears "divide" the church into districts in 1966 simply because 'The Church' as an Association Incorporated in South Australia, was not legally permitted to operate in any district other than South Australia? This would have been quite valid at that time when our legal frameworks were far less complex than now.

Now, in a time of ever-increasing state, federal and international legislative changes, legal constraints, and compliance obligations, the CRWG engagements with the districts of the church has highlighted to us that the single state-based incorporation of an association for the LCA is proving unsuitable for our broadly dispersed churchwide church. Different understandings and interpretations of cross border legal rights and obligations, particularly since the year 2000 when the LCA Inc. registered in each State creating duplicate incorporations, with the good intention of fixing a perceived problem, has only exacerbated confusion about our corporate structures.

The districts report significant areas of division, disharmony, discord, disunity, and other tensions in the church. Ecclesiastically the districts understand that we are 'one' church. But they also experience breakdowns in fellowship, collaboration, and mutual support, particularly at the district – churchwide interface.

The reasons present as being twofold:

1. Centralized solutions to complex churchwide issues.
2. Churchwide entities trying to govern some aspects of district entities (especially where they are currently duplicated) where the district entities have reporting and compliance obligations.

Districts and congregations and church agencies have local legislation and compliance obligations. There are many commonalities, but a single one-size fits-all approach is not a good fit-for-purpose.

Churchwide agencies are best placed to provide churchwide strategic, governance and even policy advice to district agencies but should refrain from actual district level strategy, governance and policy for which the churchwide agencies are not accountable.

The good news is that the districts and the church are finding new collaborative and synodical pathways which are church based and unconstrained by our legislative structure. Good communication, collaboration, good will, and the *missio Dei*, do not need any constitution.

In answer to the question “Does your District consider itself to be a district of the LCA Inc (“constitutionally the Church”); a district of the LCANZ (the churchwide community of faith); or a combination of both? the Vic/Tas district replied ***A district of the LCANZ (the churchwide ecclesial community of faith). This is a faith partnership, not a legal/ownership relationship. We are synodical***” Other districts gave different answers, highlighting a significant lack of clarity over the constitutional division of the LCA Inc (the Church) into districts. This lack of clarity has led to strategic and governance duplications and misunderstandings, tensions and discord.

What are the main issues for the districts:

- pastoral supply and distribution
- synodality
- governance of their own entities without duplication and overlaps with churchwide entities
- avoidance of hierarchy
- meaningful participation and productive deliberation.
- viability, Sustainability
- creating the maximum of possibilities for congregations .

The perspective of our global networks?

The Constitution Article 1.2.3 defines the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

‘Evangelical Lutheran Church’ is a generic reference to churches throughout the world which proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as understood and confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580;’

International Lutheran organisations

The LCANZ is an associate member of both LWF and ILC.

The LCANZ also has two distinct areas of service: LCAIM and ALWS.

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and International Lutheran Council (ILC)

The LCANZ has maintained an associate membership of both the LWF and ILC for a long time preferring to remain a bridge between the two major Lutheran world church groupings. As associate members of both LWF and ILC the LCANZ participates in assemblies at which they can speak but cannot influence decision making as it is excluded from voting or holding elected office. There is a proposal before the General Synod to apply for full membership of both LWF and ILC. The different emphases of LWF and ILC member churches can be seen within the LCANZ. The Book of Reports Agenda item 2.2.6 on pages 48, 49 provides background briefing on the Federation and the Council.

LCA International Mission (LCAIM) and Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS)

LCA International Mission (LCAIM) serves the LCANZ in overseas mission and evangelism and is led by the Assistant to the Bishop Pr Matt Anker. LCAIM has only three staff. Its focus on overseas mission means that LCA-IM does not receive any government funding and is fully dependent on church budgetary allocations and funding priorities. LCAIM is accountable to the church.

The Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) on the other hand is a humanitarian aid agency which works closely with AusAid. ALWS raises funds through churchwide appeals and also receives AusAid funding as a trusted agent for the efficient delivery of humanitarian aid. Because ALWS receives funding from its own fundraising, and the government, it is accountable to both.

Generally, LCA-IM and ALWS serve in different countries, with LCAIM having an Asian focus and ALWS a wider aid focus. Sometimes mission and evangelism opportunities arise through the humanitarian aid services, and these are clearly separated via good informal relationships between the two agencies. The government does not fund any LCAIM missional work.

LCA International Mission

A comprehensive report from LCAIM is found as Agenda item 3.2 pgs. 69-79 of the Book of Reports.

LCAIM has built on the missionary work of Australian Lutherans beyond our borders since 1886. As we work together with churches in Papua New Guinea and South-east Asia, sharing the gifts the Lord has granted to our church for the sake of his mission, we seek to promote an awareness of this work among our local congregations that they may be encouraged, inspired, and engaged in God's mission.

LCAIM is currently serving in Burundi (African and very small); Myanmar (4 churches working together as a Federation; Cambodia; Thailand; Malaysia (4 churches working together as a Federation); Singapore (great mission focus although small); Indonesia (13 churches working together as a Federation; 6 million people); and Papua New Guinea. LCA-IM is currently exploring the possibility of a partnership with the Lutheran Church in the Philippines; and Dr Michael Lockwood has been called to serve on the faculty of a seminary in Taiwan.

LCAIM is part of the Office of the Bishop and reports to GCB both via the Bishop and at times, via the AB-IM's attendance at GCB meetings.

LCAIM seeks to have strong and informal relationships with Ministry and Mission Directors of the districts. Pr. Anker advised that these relationships potentially provide opportunities to help connect overseas pastors and members with pastors and congregations within districts. There are also some early developments of collaborative sharing between Local Mission's Cross-Cultural Ministry, which has a domestic focus, and International Mission which has an international focus. There are opportunities here for better cultural understandings and networking to develop.

Pr. Anker further advises that:

- when he is not overseas, he is invited to preach to congregations almost every Sunday; some congregations have an advocate who help with information sharing, and prayer support. In addition, other LCAIM staff members take up invitations to share with congregations wherever possible.
- the work of LCAIM is published on the LCA website, a monthly eNewsletter, and Border Crossings (in *The Lutheran*). LCAIM also provides a monthly prayer calendar.
- now fewer and fewer people relate to what the church is doing overseas

Australian Lutheran World Service

A comprehensive report from ALWS is found as Agenda item 6.1 pgs. 186 - 210 of the Book of Reports.

ALWS is the overseas aid & development agency of the LCA which has commissioned ALWS to “translate the spirit of Christian love and faith of the Church into effective services with and for those most in need.” (ALWS Constitution). For 70 years now, ALWS has reached out to bring love to life for people struggling to recover from humanitarian disasters, threatened by displacement, marginalized by poverty and injustice.

ALWS, through community development programs has empowered people in 10 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and proclaimed their preciousness in God’s eyes.

Nine (9) LCA schools have partnerships with schools in Indonesia via LCAIM and a number of congregations have partnerships which are also supported by the LCAIM team also. In addition, some congregations sponsor scholarship holders to ALC and develop close personal relationships with these pastors which extend beyond their time of study. LCA-IM also facilitates the Volunteers in Mission program which assists LCA members to volunteer according to their gifts throughout our mission partners.

Other groups doing the same work out of Australian Lutherans

Informal relationships with groups and congregations such as these

- Asia Focus – Queensland group which is supported by individuals and some congregations started by a retired pastor who travelled in Asia and made connections – in Vietnam, Indonesia, Mongolia, Kenya, Myanmar, and Philippines
- Lutheran congregations – it is not known how many congregations have established informal relations with churches overseas. Often these are based on personal relationships, and even sometimes in competition with LCA-IM which can take time to work through.

Theology

The biggest challenge among partner churches is developing and sustaining a distinctly Lutheran theology due to limited training opportunities and the recruitment of pastors from other theological traditions. For this reason, a key focus of LCA-IM is on theological training. This provides an increasing opportunity for ALC to play a key role in the Asia-Pacific however funding challenges have hampered this opportunity in recent years.

Commissions

Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations. (CTICR)

On its website, the LCANZ describes the role and responsibility of CTICR in these words. *The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) advises the Church on matters of theology and doctrine, and studies the theological implications of the LCANZ's relationships with other churches, at home and overseas; as such, the Commission participates in the ministry of oversight exercised by the College of Bishops in the LCANZ. CTICR also sponsors our formal bilateral dialogues, currently with the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Uniting churches in Australia. At the request of the Church, the CTICR also studies current theological issues and trends, and provides advice to the Church in the form of papers and statements.*

Through its ecumenical dialogues, it has an ongoing program of theological discussion with the major church bodies in Australia. It hears reports from the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and the NCCA's theological body, the Faith and Unity Commission, and it monitors developments within Lutheran World Federation and the International Lutheran Council.

In its submission to the CRWG, members of the Commission provide the following comments about how CTICR plays a vital part in the formation of the LCANZ's identity and self-understanding ("Who we are") and in shaping the church's instrumental purposes and functions ("Why we are gathered"):

- The LCANZ entrusts the Commission with the task of connecting the church's confessional heritage ("Who we are") and its faithfulness to the Scriptures, by clarifying them, and applying them, in ways that are appropriate to the contemporary actions of the church ("Why we are gathered").
- The LCANZ defines the purpose of the Commission in its 'Terms of Reference (3.1)'; namely, (a) to engage in the study of theological matters and inter-church relations; (b) to provide the Church with an informed position on issues and developments on theological matters and inter-church relations; and (c) to give guidance to members of the Church on current theological and inter-church questions.
- The Commission provides such theological and doctrinal advice by (a) reporting its findings to the General Church Board through the College of Bishops; (b) providing a triennium report to General Convention of Synod; (c) giving advice, on request, on theological matters in the Church according to its public teaching; and (d) by engaging in consultations and dialogue with other Lutheran bodies and organisations within the Christian church.

A comprehensive report from CTICR is found as Agenda item 4.2.1 pgs. 107-110 of the Book of Reports.

Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions (CSBQ)

CSBQ is commissioned to:

- study and evaluate current social and bioethical questions in the light of the Scriptures and Confessions;
- obtain reports of any social and bioethical questions, from boards, councils, commissions and committees of the Church directly involved in such questions, and to liaise with such bodies; and
- develop statements, opinions and other resources for the Church with the approval of the College of Bishops and, as necessary, to forward submissions to appropriate secular bodies.

The CSBQ undertakes much of its work through working groups, each having its own Terms of Reference approved by the Commission and/or GCB.

- Lutherans for Life;
- Working Group for Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence; and
- Lutheran Earth Care Australia and New Zealand (LECANZ).

A comprehensive report from CSBQ is found as Agenda item 4.2.2 pgs. 111-117 of the Book of Reports.

Commission on Worship (CoW)

The Commission's purpose is to prepare materials for worship and give guidance in the theology and practice of Lutheran worship. A comprehensive report from CoW is found as Agenda item 4.2.1 pgs. 118-123 of the Book of Reports.

Australian Lutheran College (ALC)

On its website, ALC describes itself as *a diverse and welcoming learning community, committed to delivering quality theological education and training that prepares tomorrow's leaders -*

pastors, teachers, church workers and volunteers of all kinds – to serve and lead with confident Christian faith, integrity, competence and compassion in a changing world.

In his submission to the CRWG, Principal James Winderlich makes the following points about how ALC plays a vital part in the formation of the LCANZ's identity and self-understanding ("Who we are") and also in shaping the church's instrumental purposes and functions ("Why we are gathered"):

1. As a teaching, learning and research institution, ALC is aligned confessionally with the LCANZ.
2. Thus the college has a critical role as "culture-carrier, communicator, and co-constructer" in relation to the church's confession and identity.
3. As people are equipped for their diverse service in a diverse church, ALC acts as "a point of confessional and cultural convergence" even as the church negotiates the "lively tensions" that such diversity brings.
4. The LCANZ trusts ALC to act faithfully, as ALC connects the church's confessional heritage ("Who we are") to its contemporary actions ("Why we are gathered"). This is a unique responsibility, given by the church to ALC alone.
5. Therefore ALC is working with and for the congregations and agencies of the LCANZ as they "fulfill their own unique callings as Christ's witnesses and servants". ALC exists to model for the church "who it is in Christ, and who it is called to be for the sake of its neighbours".
6. In all of this, ALC is "a deep and profound symbol of the LCANZ's unity", and serves that unity through its diverse programs.

In conclusion, Pastor Winderlich states,

"In reviewing the LCA constitution ALC is eager to understand its identity and function within the LCA's life ... ALC is entrusted with the vital role of engaging deep and expert theological and confessional understanding with the Church's daily practices through its congregations, schools, and aged and community care agencies. All of which is surely a critical matter of identity and culture".

A comprehensive report from ALC is found as Agenda item 5.1 pgs. 168 -185 of the Book of Reports.

Local Mission

Local Mission collaborates with all aspects of the LCANZ and every department and agency because mission is at the heart of what we do (it is the Church's – the church catholic's - reason for being). 'It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world', is often quoted. The theological term is the *missio Dei* (the mission of God).

Our current constitution says, firstly, "The Objects of the Church are to 3.1.1 fulfil the mission of the Christian Church in the world by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments..." Mission has been intentionally mentioned first, and Local Mission sees itself as supporting (serving) all congregations and agencies (and other departments) in their missional activity.

- Our work (as our work is to support God's mission, as expressed across the depth and breadth of LCANZ, in Australia and New Zealand);

- Our collaborations (as we collaborate across every congregation, District and agency of the LCANZ (and with other Christian faith traditions too); and
- Our challenges (our challenges are the same challenges as the whole of the LCANZ and its individuals parts).

Who are we now as LCANZ?

We are:

- members of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand, as well as self-identified Lutherans. We are gathered in congregations as well as in faith communities (which includes church plants, home groups, and school and aged care worshipping communities that may not be constituted congregations).
- an increasingly urban and regional church, and we value our rural roots.
- a church seeing green shoots of growth through an emerging church planting movement and other missional activity.
- a predominantly Anglo church and we are excited about our growing multi-ethnicity.
- a church in which many worshipping communities, Covid has been the impetus for us to pivot to online worship and some congregations are now exploring what digital mission and ministry looks like.
- a church which increasingly is finding that former ways of doing ministry do not necessarily meet the needs of Australian and New Zealanders (for example, a traditional confirmation format may not meet the needs of contemporary young people and their families). We are discovering how to meet the needs of those with whom we minister (for example, by viewing discipleship as life-long faith formation).
- a church in which for many congregations are still relatively pastor-centric in nature, and we are seeking ways to develop the resources of our common priesthood of all believers as we come to terms with a diminishing pastoral supply.
- a church in a liminal space discerning – as each generation needs to do - how to proclaim the gospel (to be God's hands and feet in His mission) in our neighbourhoods.

Why do we gather as LCANZ?

We gather:

- as congregations which form the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand
- as congregational delegates at synod, both at District and at Churchwide levels
- to worship
- with the saints of all times
- in fellowship
- to serve our communities
- to grow (discipleship) and to go (to be sent in mission)
- as Christ-centred communities
- As Christians who proclaim the gospel, holding Scripture to be the divinely inspired Word of God and as people who accept the Book of Concord as a true exposition of the Word of God.

The Council for Local Mission brings together five departments (now committees) of the LCANZ. These committees are:

- Care Ministries (incorporating the Ageing)
- Child, Youth & Family Ministry (Grow Ministries)
- Cross-Cultural Ministry
- New and Renewing Churches
- Lutheran Media

As an example of the breadth and depth of the services provided by the LCANZ we can reflect on the vision and scope of just one of these committees:

Care Ministries' vision is to support and encourage Christian care in all its forms, in our congregations and in Lutheran aged care and community services. The Committee for Care Ministries acts as an advisory body that:

- Provides advice on ageing-related matters and ministry with the ageing
- Provides advice on community care related matters and ministry with vulnerable members of our community
- Promotes the Lutheran ethos of aged care and community services
- Facilitates the development and promotes the use of relevant resources
- Consults and facilitates communication with Lutheran agencies engaged in this ministry

Care Ministries, under the banner of '**Lutheran Aged Care and Community Services**' has churchwide:

- 23 aged care and community service organisations
- in over 90 locations
- employing over 3700 staff
- with over 1100 volunteers
- serving 18,000 community members.

These groups come together annually as a forum for Lutheran Aged Care and Community Service governance enhancement.

A comprehensive report from Local Mission is found as Agenda item 8.1 pgs. 219-234 of the Book of Reports.

Lutheran Education Australia

Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) is the research, policy development, publishing, pedagogical, programming and educational leadership entity of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand. LEA's work and engagement is broad, developing programs and materials for schools, teachers, pastors and the laity.

For the LEA engagement with CRWG, Executive Director Lisa Schmidt used the Objects of the LCA to fully detail how the LEA fulfils each of the objects which apply to the work of LEA, noting the strong collaboration with the ALC.

LEA provided CRWG with the recent MOU between LEA and LEQ and the LEA Constitution explaining that all that we needed to know for our report would be contained within these two documents.

The MOU uses the LEA constitutional objects (which align with the LCA Constitutional Objects) verbatim in 2.2.1 to 2.2.15 while enfolding and book-ending these objects in new clauses 1.6, 1.7 and 2.1, 2.3.

These new clauses talk of "work in partnership to enhance, grow and develop a consistency of understanding and expression of Lutheran education within diverse local contexts". (1.6) and acknowledging the need for collaboration, communication and understanding to facilitate each party's responsibilities in relation to the advancement of education within the church and its agencies." (1.7)

Introducing the objects of LEA clause 2.1 states that "...the principal object of LEA, is to set strategic direction and establish the overall policy environment for all Lutheran schools..." These three clauses are bookended by clause 2.3 which says "LEA fulfils this commitment to all Lutheran schools and early childhood services through the provision of resources, training and development programs, curricula, research projects, events, consultancy, advocacy, advice and guidance...."

These aspects of the LEA and its partnership with the three school regions in support of the schools and early childhood services in their diverse local contexts, together with the educational partnership with ALC provide an insight into the LEA is an educational entity for the whole church.

In summary, current LCA objects are highly relevant to what LEA believe and their practice and service. A comprehensive report from LEA is found as Agenda item 9.1 pgs. 234-245 of the Book of Reports.

First Nations

A personal submission from Malcolm Willcocks - FRM Pitjantjatjara Support Worker to the LCANZ Constitutional Review Working Group.

Some important background information

Aboriginal people, whether in remote communities or urban settings, growing up with any form of traditional law and lore will have a good understanding of the following:

- Family is the most important thing;
- The worst thing a person can do is bring shame on their family;
- Family includes many, many people, well beyond those who are biologically related;
- Aboriginal society is held together through an incredible complex, "hidden" network of reciprocal relationships. (For further information please refer to the "Reciprocal Relationships" document.)
- Living under a law with harsh penalties;
- The constant threat from malevolent spirits and those who use the powers of those spirits.

In my interactions with different Language groups, traditionally leadership within a clan was always shared between the elder men and women. Decision-making was always done by consensus not popular opinion. This could mean matters could "lie on the table", as it were, for very long periods of time. They would be talked through, and talked through and talked through again until all elders were in agreement.

Where are we now?

We Lutherans are blessed with the number of Aboriginal Pastors and that we have many strong women Church Workers. Many have very good literacy and numeracy and speak a number of languages. Many are leaders within their communities and beyond in a number of civic roles.

We thank God for their dedication and faithfulness. Like the rest of the LCANZ, we struggle to find enough Support Workers to help encourage, teach and grow the Aboriginal leadership base in quality and quantity.

For the most part, communities that grew under the Lutheran Mission system remain connected to the Lutheran identity even if church attendance dwindle from time to time. It is not unusual

for 25% - 30% of a community's population to attend the Sunday Divine Service. Hundreds will attend for a funeral.

Why do we gather?

The Lutheran Church with its liturgy filled with the means of grace is life, food, succour and hope for Aboriginal people. Whether or not they are legally members of the LCANZ, Aboriginal Lutherans are Lutheran through and through. There is a strong core in most communities that are extremely committed to their Lutheran congregation. They gather for comfort, consolation and mutual encouragement, and to be strengthened for the challenges of caring for family. They gather for the peace of God to guard their hearts and minds so they can be peacemakers in the midst of dysfunction.

To achieve this we need more Support Workers being deliberatively developed through the LCANZ. Not just for FRM but across all the Aboriginal Lutheran communities. Perhaps, something similar to the New and Renewing Churches model of planned and deliberative funding, support, training and mentoring of potential Church planters.

Note: Current FRM workers are all over the age of 60. Two are likely to retire in 2023, and we are already one Support Worker short.

Youth and Young Adults

Responding to the Growing need for Communities of Connection and Discipleship for Young Adults in Queensland - study which typifies challenges facing the church in connecting with young adults.

Background

The LCAQD Young Adult Ministry Report (March 2022) references 'recent research by Barna Group and World Vision....in Australia, only 29% of young adults who grew up in the church are still regularly involved. This represents a 71% dropout rate. (The Connected Generation - Australia / New Zealand report – Barna & World Vision, 2019, p22)' While the LCA has no measure for this within its own churches, anecdotal evidence would suggest an even higher dropout rate.

For many years, Lutheran churches have experienced a decline in the number of young people remaining involved in their local church. This represents both a significant challenge for our church, and a significant missional and discipleship opportunity. In response to this, a representative committee was formed to hear the voices of young adults, and to discover how our church can best respond to this challenge and grow its ministry effectiveness in ministry with young adults and young people.

Key Themes

- Faith in ordinary life – engaging in the 167 hours Outside Sunday
- Meaningful connection matters
- Empowering the next generation to reach the next generation
- A desire to see the difference Jesus makes

Young adults need to see and have conversations about how to apply the bible to their lived lives. Young adults are looking for a clear pathway for discipleship (Spiritual growth)

This is both a time of great challenge and great opportunity for our church. We must grapple with the reality that we find ourselves in. We must be honest about the effectiveness of our churches in ministry with young people. Even more so, we are invited to look to our saviour

Jesus Christ who boldly leads us into the places that he is preparing for us to bring his Gospel. Our communities are open to the Gospel, our young people are looking for meaning and belonging in their lives. There is ample opportunity. Let us be bold in the choices we make next!

Why do we gather as LCANZ?

We acknowledge that it is the triune God who creates, **gathers**, and builds the church. It is in this church **we are gathered** for worship, praise, witness, ministry, mission, and service to others.

Why do we gather as the LCANZ, from an ecclesiological perspective?

Ecclesiology is the study of the church: its character (what it is), its make-up (who we are), and what it does (why we gather). This means that our Lutheran ecclesiology is fundamental to this report

The founding documents of the LCA[NZ] presented the theological basis for the new church's self-understanding, from Scripture and our confessional writings. From this basis, the LCANZ was organized and grew as a church from its existing congregational and synodical roots. A strong emphasis on the church's unity as the fellowship of believers, gathered around the ministry of word and sacraments, ensured that the church's Lutheran identity was maintained as it worked to establish itself as a significant and faithful presence in Australia and New Zealand. These documents also explored the importance of recognising that the Christian congregation represents a full expression of the *one holy catholic and apostolic church* on a particular, local level.

Now, we are being challenged to lay claim to a renewed awareness of the church in our current situation, an awareness that can bring about our growth as a living Christian community in 21st century Australia and New Zealand. This fresh understanding will reflect our biblical and confessional foundations, at the same time as we explore a vision of the church that embraces its character as an inclusive body, ecumenical and catholic in its outlook and practice, and committed to the work of the gospel in all of its diverse operations.

The ecclesiology that makes it possible to develop this vision includes themes that were also prominent in the original statements about the church. Today we still need to acknowledge the biblical, trinitarian foundations of the teaching that the church is the whole people of God, all those who are called together into God's family to fulfil the Father's grace-filled purposes. We confess that we become God's children only through faith in the Son of God, believers united as one body in Christ, who alone is head of the church. And we believe that in our present-day Christian communities we belong to the communion of saints, people called by the Spirit through the gospel and made holy by Christ's sacrificial love and forgiveness. As God's people, gathered in Christ and sent out by the Spirit, we are to share these same gifts as God's blessings for all creation.

This inclusive view of the church's origins and purposes offers us a greater awareness that ministry and mission are the task of the whole church, one in which every member participates according to her God-given gifts and abilities. The LCANZ from its beginning emphasized that the called pastoral office is a significant gift of God, providing ordained pastors to teach, lead and serve in congregations and in the wider church. Now, our radically changing circumstances have led us to discover that alongside its full-time public ministry the LCANZ is being blessed with the ministry of those who variously serve the church in particular local situations and contexts. We also have the opportunity to extend and enhance the reach of our ministry by developing the gifts and abilities of all God's people to work alongside their pastors in their teaching and preaching, worship and service. In the places where this is already happening, the

church experiences a renewed sense of community and purpose and rejoices with Paul and all the saints because of “our partnership in the gospel” (Phil.1:5).

When in these ways we recognise the importance and significance of the church’s ecclesiological core, and its consistency with our central teachings on Christ and salvation, the word and faith, it becomes for us a vital and transformative aspect of our common life in Christ, and the foundation for the ecclesial structures that support and underpin the essential work of the gospel among us.

Why do we gather and journey together synodically?

Who we are and why we gather as LCANZ can be understood foundationally through our faith - our teachings, and confessions. We gather and “witness to Christ Jesus and serve in contextually varied, culturally diverse and geographically scattered life settings through the LCA’s congregations, schools, and aged and community care agencies” (*ALC Principal Pr James Winderlich*). We gather in our neighbourhoods, ‘where love comes to life’. We gather synodically to do that which cannot be done alone or is best done together, walking the journey of faith together, supporting and encouraging each other.

What cannot be done alone is to unite in our wider fellowship of faith and purpose. What is best done together is determined by the way we organise ourselves to “participate in the work of the church and to promote its objects, especially those that congregations by themselves cannot effectively do alone” (*LCA Governance Framework 6.1*) to “witness to Christ Jesus and serve in contextually varied, culturally diverse and geographically scattered life settings” (*Pr James Winderlich*).

“The church, for the sake of good order and effective operation has established the General Synod as the highest decision-making body of the church” (*LCA Governance Framework 3*). Between General Synods the General Church Board appointed by the General Synod governs the church and ensures that synodical decisions are implemented in an effective and consistent manner across the church.

However, our synodality is not just discerned in the Convention of General Synod. The church is one united body of believers, consisting of many parts. These many parts walk together on their journey of faith in a spirit of unity through synodical fellowship. This synodical fellowship is found in every worship service, every council meeting, every committee, auxiliary, assembly, forum, commission, or convention – wherever one or two gather in Christ’s name. This is the grassroots of our synodical unity – where love comes to life.

Why do we gather for ministry, mission and service?

It is this understanding of the church’s true nature and purpose (our ecclesiology) that informs and then shapes the LCANZ’s ministry, mission and service.

The CRWG has sought to discern “who we are now and why we gather” through our engagements across the church. These engagements have demonstrated, consistently with the Phase 1 Report (p 342 Book of Reports), a great desire of members to simplify our structures to achieve more efficiency, effectiveness and mutual support. The members plead that the church reduce the burden of the time and energy required to sustain our multiplicity of entities so that they can focus more on ministry, mission and service and less on governance and administration. Two quotations illustrate how these desires can be aligned with our view of the church:

"The Holy Spirit and we have agreed not to put any other burden on you besides these necessary rules". (Acts 15:28)

"The church is correctly ordered in the sense of Lutheran teaching when it is so constituted as to offer the office of the ministry a maximum of possibilities to accomplish its service of proclamation of the pure gospel and of the proper administration of the sacraments in the name and according to the commission of the church, and when it preserves a maximum of possibilities for the congregation which Jesus Christ himself has called through the Word and sacraments to live in the world and to carry out its service for human creatures. (Hermann Sasse)."

Broadly understood, the Acts passage encapsulates the principle that where religious or cultural regulations impede the progress of the gospel, they should be laid aside. More pointedly, Dr Sasse (a founding theologian of the LCANZ) prioritises the preaching of the gospel and the use of the sacraments as the fundamental ministry of service in the church and suggests that any church "order" must be oriented to promote these gospel purposes.

When we consider what this "maximum of (gospel) possibilities" looks like for the LCANZ now and into the future, it is apparent that we need pastors and leaders who will challenge and equip the people of the church to fully participate in the gospel. This begins in worship where the believing community gathers around the means of grace. It feeds into the daily life of God's people in all their relationships, in families, workplaces and in schools, and it becomes the driving force within every agency of mission and service that the church undertakes.

'Nothing so attaches people to the church as good preaching' – and 'practical and clear sermons' are the true adornment of the churches' (Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Ap 24, paragraphs 50,51)

In summary, this means that as the LCANZ now governs and administers itself, regulating the work of its employees and pastors, and guiding the life of its people and parishes and agencies, it is always the divine purposes of ministry, mission and service that must come first. It also suggests that we best fulfill God's purposes for us as "church" when we maximise the possibilities for co-operation and communication between our congregations, parishes, districts, and synods as we work with and support the service agencies of the church. It also benefits these purposes for the LCANZ to work ecumenically in Australia and New Zealand with other like-minded church bodies, and internationally with other Lutheran churches especially in the areas of mission and humanitarian service

United and organised for ministry, mission and service

(a precied summary of a paper by Bishop Dr Mark Vainikka to the GCB Forum Tanunda SA
19 Feb 2022)

Do we fully understand, celebrate, and confess who we are as a church in mission, with a purpose connected to our environment? Are we too insular? Article 2 of our constitution states what we believe. How does this faith engage purposefully with the world in which we live? Do we focus so much on what we believe that the environment in which we exist becomes secondary? And are the demands of the operating environment so great for the church's agencies, that they often forget what we believe. We need an on-going interaction between what we believe and our environment, to form our purpose and our aims. Clarity is essential so that our governance entities are enabled to be purposefully efficient and effective. If a house is divided; the house is at cross-purposes with itself. And as Jesus said in Mark 3:25: 'A house divided against itself, cannot stand.'

Mostly we begin with structure and then try and fit our mission to that structure. This creates barriers. For example, some new emerging church plant communities feel pressure to conform to a structure that does not support their mission. This should not be so.

By Human Right, By Divine Right

The church's governance architecture must enable the gathering of the faithful, preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments whatever the geographical and historical place and time. The Lutheran confessions acknowledge that the church's external organisational governance and structures are by human right, while the authority of the office of the ministry is by divine right. The former can be changed from time to time and from place to place, but the latter cannot. Lutheran governance is informed by ecclesiology and must be responsive incarnationally to the church's context, realities and environment. Governance gives ecclesiology purchase and efficacy as it interprets theology for a specific context through church order.

How are we structured?

The word 'synod' originates from Greek and means 'walking together' or 'journeying together'. The LCA consists of congregations that have voluntarily joined together to form a wider fellowship of believers, submitting themselves to making decisions together, through synodical processes and structures. The LCA is not a hierarchical church, nor a congregationalist church. Since congregations form the LCA and not the other way around, congregations are the foundational entity of the LCA and have a level of constitutional autonomy.

*The defining sacrament for membership into the Christian church, the community of the faithful, is baptism. A district's membership consists of baptised members of congregations within its assigned area. This relates back to our first Object of the Church, to 'Fulfil the mission of the Christian Church in the world, by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments in accordance with the Confession of the Church.' While church constitutions clarify the church's ordering, constitutional documents need to establish church order based on ecclesiology. **Ecclesiology is an important starting point for a church's constitutional documents since ecclesiology does not stem from church order, but church order stems from ecclesiology** (Koffeman, 2014).*

The Lutheran confessions define the church as the assembly of believers, gathered around the gospel and the sacraments (Kolb & Wengert, 2000). This is a congregational and not a synodical perspective. The gathering of people within a congregational context amongst sacramental ministry creates and defines the foundational entity of a synodical Lutheran church.

Does our Constitution Reflect our Ecclesiology?

*The LCA's constitution defines the church synodically. The first article states that: 'The name of this Church is Lutheran Church of Australia Inc., hereinafter called "the Church. The definition for the capitalised word 'church' in the LCA's constitution is the LCA. Article 6 of the LCA's constitution states that the church consists of 'congregations voluntarily joined together to establish a wider fellowship in the Faith and to promote and do work which congregations could not undertake and do effectively alone' This is a synodical orientation, describing the church **as a gathering of congregations**. However, the Lutheran confessions state that the church is the **gathering of believers** around the Word and the sacraments in a congregational context. (Augsburg Confession, article 7). Is the synodical, centralised orientation of the LCA constitution coherent and consistent with Lutheran ecclesiology? Or does it create confusion. Instead of our ecclesiology, the preamble to our constitution testifies to our history.*

The 'Synodical-Episcopate' Dynamic: The Essential Structure of Lutheran Governance

Our ecclesiology points to a governance structure which is 'synodical-episcopate' highlighting the relationship between the office of the holy ministry and the community of the faithful, gathered together. Synodical in this context acknowledges that congregations and parishes have voluntarily joined together, to work towards fulfilling the mission of the Christian church in the world. Episcopate refers to those who serve the people's spiritual needs through sacramental ministry.

In this synodical-episcopate dynamic, 'The power of bishops is that command given by Christ to proclaim the Gospel, to use the ministry of the keys to forgive or retain sins, and to administer the sacraments' and the congregation is called to judge the exercise of the office of bishop-pastor and if the bishop-pastors teach contrary to the Word, the people should not obey (AC XXVIII Kolb & Wengert, 2000). This juxtaposition of the office of the holy ministry and the community of the people of God, provides the essential structure of Lutheran governance.

Lutheran ecclesiology identifies the congregation as the church's foundational entity and the locus of sacramental ministry, where the church's missional work is primarily located (AC VII Kolb & Wengert, 2000). This foundational understanding of Lutheran ecclesiology means that all other structures are an extension of the congregation, whether districts, the national church, or church agencies. From the perspective of Lutheran ecclesiology, the congregation is at the centre of church life in a synodical Lutheran church.

As congregations unite for more effective work of the church, they come together as a district and ultimately as a national body. It is the congregations that form a national synodical body and not the other way around. Districts are established to do what congregations and parishes cannot do alone and the churchwide church is formed to do what congregation/parishes and districts cannot do alone or is best done together.

However, this is not how the LCA constitution is expressed. It is more centralised, hierarchical, top-down orientation. The LCA's constitution states that 'For the promotion of its Objects by its members in prescribed geographical areas, the church shall be divided into Districts'.

The orientation of the LCA's constitution and by-laws is LCA => district => congregation-parish, rather than ecclesiologically, congregation-parish => district => LCA.

Quality of our Connections

The church's ethos, identity, and interaction with its environment, all speak of its purpose. If the church's governance processes and structures do not reflect the church's purpose and mission at all levels, over time this will result in fragmentation of the entire entity. Mission drift happens stealthily and may only surface through significant unprecedented adverse events. Governance at all levels must be arranged to fit the purpose and mission of the church.

The dominant organisational map of the LCA, still struggles to find a place for districts. And worse, congregations/parishes are entirely absent.

The church's organisational map is very difficult to draw because our constitution is not consistent with our ecclesiology.

Where are the connections with productive deliberation and meaningful participation exist between the various DCBs and the GCB? The success of our mission depends on the quality of our connections.

LCANZ NOW

The homepage of the **LCA** website provides the **LCA**'s public depiction of 'who we are now as **LCA**'

and 'why we gather as **LCA**'. The website portrays who we are as a people, our faith in Christ, our justification, and our worship. The LCA website also provides insights into our history, our departments, and our missionary purpose and where we are found.

The CTICR answers GCB's two questions by reinforcing that "Who we are" is a confessional church, and "Why we gather" is to undertake "the church's instrumental purposes and functions; contemporary actions" - shaped, clarified, and applied in faithfulness to the Scriptures.

And **now, who** do we say we are to each other, and **why** do we say we are gathered as the **LCANZ?**

CRWG finds a focus on LCANZ's ecclesial core, its central teaching on Christ and salvation, the word and faith, and communal life in Christ. From this core we have explored the outflowing purpose of the church in ministry, mission, and service. We have reflected on how we have organised ourselves to work together in our congregational settings, and synodically as parishes, zones, districts regions and churchwide. The CRWG has framed these understandings in the context of the world in which we live, the world which God so loved that he gave his only son for us and sent his spirit to us.

This core is the foundation for the ecclesial structures that support and underpin the essential work of the gospel in our communities. This is who we are, now as LCANZ the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as understood and confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580. It is our one firm foundation, that God creates, gathers and builds his church. We are united as Christ's people rejoicing in God's word: worshipping, serving, and witnessing to God's love in local communities, throughout Australia and New Zealand, and out into all the world.

The LCANZ is formed of congregations where the word is preached, and the sacraments are administered. These congregation join as parishes, zones, districts, regions and churchwide to do what cannot be done alone or is best done together. These congregations have together ordered themselves into ecclesial structures that support and underpin the essential work of the gospel among us. The LCANZ has two overarching ecclesial structures:

- We are synodical at both District and Churchwide levels where we walk the journey of faith together and decide the direction of the church. The pastors and the lay delegates of congregations and parishes of the church meet together in synods to discern God's will for the church.
- We are also episcopal because we call the bishops and pastors of the LCANZ to serve and nurture the people through the ministry of word and sacrament.

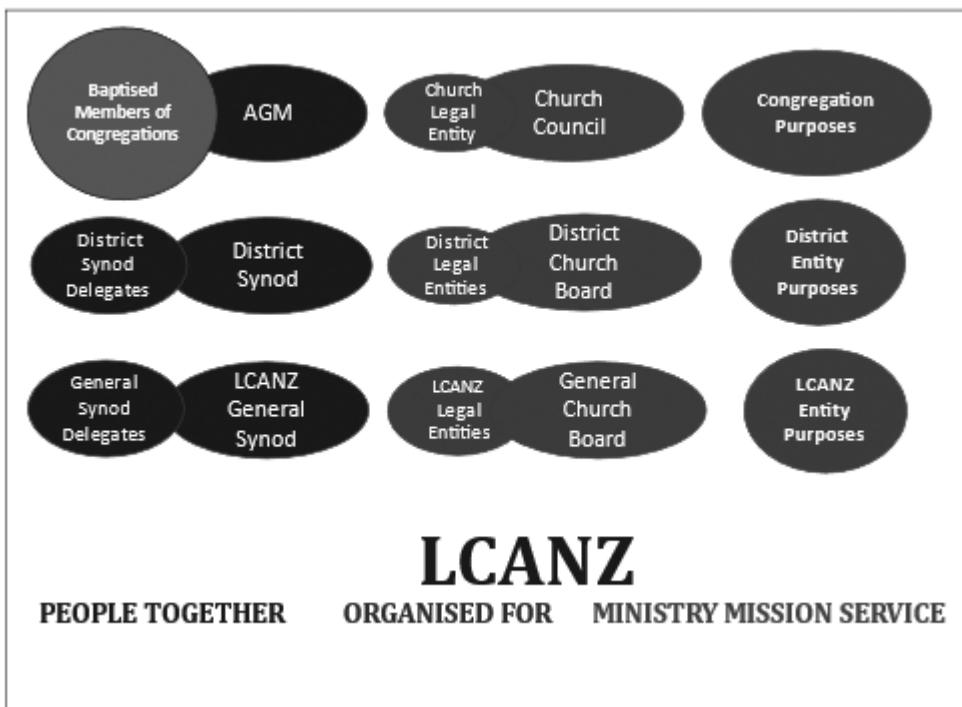
The LCANZ has many agencies which are variously structured to support the many purposes of the church in ministry, mission, and service. As a small church with a diminishing membership, we are facing considerable headwinds with limited human resources to support our purposes. LCANZ is positively adapting and pivoting to remain efficient and effective in its service. However, there is an urgent need to make some structural changes to achieve greater clarity in the way we work together, with a focus on more meaningful participation and more productive deliberations to create a maximum of possibilities for the congregations.

- The synodical relationship between the district and the churchwide synods is not formalized. The districts do not have an opportunity to share their journey at the General Synod even though synod is considered to be walking our faith journey together. The synodical structure is further constrained because at district level, not all congregations have a voice at synod. Not all agencies are represented. Some new and renewing churches, first nations people, and cross-cultural congregations have no voice.
- The episcopal structure is particularly conflicted over the exclusion of women from ordination. In the church where over 60% of delegates have voted at the last two General Synods in favour of the ordination of both men and women at churchwide conventions of synod there remains a win/lose paradigm. This paradigm challenges our tagline “where love comes to life”.

Themes include

- a deep sense of **commitment** to the work of the Gospel and to meaningful service within the key groups and in local communities.
- an **appreciation for Lutheran identity**, although often this is intuited rather than articulated.
- a recognition of the centrality of **Word and Sacrament** ministry, while also acknowledging the complex challenges in ensuring its delivery to all Lutheran communities that desire it. a desire to bridge cultural gaps and **reach the unchurched**, and those who have left the church.
- a desire to think creatively about how to **engage lay people** in the work of the Gospel.
- **significant fatigue** among committed lay people, pastors and bishops.
- a desire to **do things more efficiently and effectively**, and to share resources, so that the needs of the church can be met.
- an increasing willingness for communities to work **collaboratively** for the sake of the Gospel.
- the best work is often done, and obstacles overcome, where personal **relationships** exist.
- key groups are struggling to establish meaningful **communications** and the relationships needed to maximize the benefits of the work of the agencies of the church;
- there remain many challenges to find pathways for meaningful two-way participation and **connection** between the grass roots Lutheran Communities and the broader LCANZ and its work.
- there are examples of **networks developing organically** within and between some agencies of the church.
- the church is **broad and diverse**. contributing to tensions between ‘old’ and ‘new’, between different purposes, between the needs of different communities it serves, between interpretations of Scripture and between mature and new congregations.

The challenge for the LCANZ is to welcome and embrace this work of the Spirit in our communities. The LCANZ a missional church, and it is for God’s mission that **we are “gathered” together**.



This diagram shows the LCANZ as a synodical church which commences, top left, with our congregations, the baptised members that is, not the congregation as an entity. At an AGM the congregation agrees on a legal identity and a church council for its governance and all for the purpose of ministry mission and service. For those purposes which cannot be achieved alone or are better achieved with others, congregations unite as parishes or communities of witness and service, and sometimes zones. For those purposes best achieved at a state-wide level, we organise ourselves into districts and for purposes which are distinctly churchwide, we organise ourselves as the LCANZ of which we are all members.

For this synodical journey of faith and fellowship, we walk together through informal and formal networks and purposeful groupings and come together in synods to decide the direction of the church in unity. The LCANZ at churchwide, district and local levels agree on constitutions and create legal entities as required to fulfil purposes of the church. The LCANZ as a fellowship of faith in Christ, as a communion of saints, cannot be constituted, but it can create legal entities supported by constitutions for all and any purpose requiring such a legal identity.

Green Shoots – networking, partnering, collaborations

While formal church governance systems struggle to adapt to and benefit from these changes, the green shoots of adaption appear through formal and informal partnerships, collaborations and networks of mutual support. The church has accelerated the development of networked ways of communicating and collaborating over recent years. For example:

1. Directors of mission and ministry in the three larger districts meet regularly online to discuss, share, collaborate and encourage each other regarding the challenges they face.
2. District executives meet on a regular basis to collaborate on district matters.
3. Chairs of district boards/councils now meet regularly.
4. LEA and LEQ are resolving some difficult tensions over their respective roles in education with an emphasis on partnership, understanding of diverse local contexts, collaboration, and communication

5. ALC and LEA are collaborating on the development of courses for Lutheran Identity in schools.
6. ALC has developed online courses delivered through the LCANZ Learning Hub under the motto 'learning for life'. It is a practical refocus from training for pastors to now offering training for all who are in the church and those who work for agencies of the church.
7. Local Mission has brought together under one umbrella five departments so that they can work in partnership within their diverse local contexts with collaboration, communication and understanding.
8. International Mission are looking at ways of sharing cultural understandings and contacts gained with Local Mission's Cross-Cultural Ministry.
9. The church has become more agile, pivoting to meet intense pandemic challenges, quickly developing on-line communications and services.

We the LCANZ are a church:

- blessed with the gifts of grace
- blessed by the faithful work of our forebears
- facing headwinds of change in our context and environment
- of diverse people from many nations, dispersed over vast distances.
- struggling to find better pathways to being synodical
- in transition, ageing and in numerical decline
- with a significant pastoral shortage
- burdened with some contentious issues
- which is over governed and looking for greater efficiencies and effectiveness
- with significant challenges to address in governance conflicts at the interfaces between churchwide and district entities.
- adapting to the context of its current place and time
- gathering for worship and witness, for ministry and mission in an environment of numerically declining faith communities.
- recognising and trusting God's hand and the Spirit's presence within the communion of saints.

"How then do we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps 137:4)

"See I am making all things new... it is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega." (Rev 21:5,6)

Bruce Lockwood

Chair Constitution Review Working Group