

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 1 C. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Relationships with overseas churches

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We note that large sections of world Lutheranism appear to be in a state of flux. Mindful of the apostle's words: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (1 Cor 10:12), we must state with sorrow that in our view the boundary lines between the genuine Lutheran Church and nominal Lutheranism are today not everywhere so clear as to allow for clear-cut unambiguous choices. It appears that many churches are experiencing a weakening of that joyful doctrinal certitude with which Christ wants His people to confess His Gospel.

In the present complex situation it is therefore not easy for us to arrive at responsible decisions with regard to overseas fellowships. While we reaffirm with our Document of Union that 'we acknowledge ourselves to be in church fellowship with all Lutheran Churches which subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions in their constitutions and adhere to them in their public teaching and practice' (par. 9), we fraternally ask these Churches to bear with us patiently if in view of the problematical situation we cannot arrive at official fellowship declarations as promptly as we had hoped or would like. We earnestly appeal to all who sincerely love Christ in His pure Word and Sacrament to pray and work toward a clear and unambiguous world-wide Lutheran settlement.

Meanwhile we ask all responsible officials and bodies of the Lutheran Church of Australia to direct our members travelling abroad to the pastoral care of such congregations and churches as with us adhere sincerely and seriously to Scripture and Confessions.

NOTE: The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations prepared a document prepared called 'Membership in the Lutheran World Federation' (2002) for the Convention of Synod 2003, when the proposal concerning the LCA's membership in the LWF was debated. That proposal was defeated. The document is printed in the Book of Reports for the Regular Convention 2003.