

COMMISSION ON SOCIAL AND BIOETHICAL QUESTIONS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. NAME

The Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions, referred to as “the Commission”.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH

The Commission is accountable to the College of Bishops and shall fulfil its responsibilities in keeping with the Constitution and the policies of the Church.

3. PURPOSE

3.1 The purpose of the Commission is to

3.1.1 give guidance to the members of the Church on current social and bioethical questions; and

3.1.2 assist the Church in responding publicly to questions, concerns and impacts arising from social and bioethical questions.

4. AUTHORITY

4.1 The Commission has no decision-making authority.

4.2 The Commission may speak for the Church on issues of social and bioethical matters and/or publish statements and documents on these matters, following approval by the College of Bishops or the General Church Board.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The Commission shall consist of seven [7] members appointed by the General Church Board on recommendations from the Standing Committee on Nominations, in consultation with the College of Bishops:

5.1.1 the Bishop of the Church or his representative;

5.1.2 two [2] parish pastors; and

5.1.3 four [4] lay members.

5.2 The Commission shall consist of members with a passion for mission and ministry and with relevant skills, qualifications and experience in one or more of the following areas:

5.2.1 a good understanding of Lutheran theology;

5.2.2 a knowledge of social, bioethical, economic and/or political issues;

and

5.2.3 experience in research and analysis.

5.3 The membership shall include a suitable mix of backgrounds and perspectives which, together with the skills, qualifications and experience, will enable the Commission to fulfil its role.

5.4 The Chairperson shall be appointed by the College of Bishops.

5.5 Up to two [2] consultants may be appointed by the College of Bishops to contribute specialised knowledge that is not available among the membership when addressing specific issues.

5.6 A nominated member of the teaching staff of Australian Lutheran College may also be a consultant to the Commission.

6.0 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS AND REPORTING

6.1 Meetings shall be convened by the Chairperson.

- 6.2 It is at the discretion of the Commission to meet face-to-face, by electronic means, or by other means of communication.
- 6.3 Email correspondence may be used for the distribution of minutes, advisory information or approval of documentation.
- 6.4 The minutes of the meetings of the Commission shall be submitted to the College of Bishops.
- 6.5 An annual report of the activities of the Commission and any subsidiary bodies shall be submitted to the College of Bishops, and as otherwise requested by the College of Bishops.

7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 The Commission shall fulfil its responsibilities in keeping with a commitment to the confessional basis of the Church, its objects and its policies and procedures.
- 7.1 The Commission is responsible for, but not limited to
 - 7.1.1 studying and evaluating current social and bioethical questions in the light of the Scriptures and the Confessions of the Church;
 - 7.1.2 obtaining reports of any social and bioethical questions, if deemed desirable, from boards, councils, commissions and committees of the Church directly involved in such questions, and in general to maintain liaison with such bodies; and
 - 7.1.3 developing statements, opinions and other suitable resources for dissemination in the Church with the approval of the College of Bishops and, as necessary, to forward submissions to appropriate secular bodies.

8. REVIEW

- 8.1 The Terms of Reference for the Commission shall be reviewed during each Synodical term.
- 8.2 Any changes to the Terms of Reference shall be approved by the General Church Board on recommendation of the College of Bishops, upon review by the Standing Committee on Constitutions.