

A statement from the LCA College of Bishops

Lutheran Church of Australia changes the designation of its presidents to 'bishop'

At the 17th General Convention of Synod, held 21-24 April 2013, LCA delegates voted strongly to change the designation of our presidents to 'bishop'.

The change is to take effect immediately. There are no changes to the responsibilities of our presidents/bishops, the way they are elected or their term of service.

The decision to change the name was made in order to better convey the actual nature of the role, especially to sister churches and to the wider community locally and abroad.

The designation 'bishop' has its origins in the New Testament and the early church. It continues to be used by many churches around the world, including Lutheran churches. The designation of 'bishop' was not questioned during the 16th century Reformation, when the role of bishop, properly carried out, was affirmed.

Using the designation 'bishop' picks up two key aspects of a president's responsibility:

- **overseeing** the church, including its teaching and practice and its peace and good order; and
- a **specific geographic area** comprising all the congregations, pastors and agencies within it.

Using the name 'bishop' does not change the LCA's teaching that there is a single office of the public ministry responsible for the preaching and teaching of God's word and for proper administration of the sacraments, exercised corporately in public worship and personally in pastoral care. It does however recognise that there is a difference in the **scope** of these responsibilities according to different calls/positions.

The position of President of the Lutheran Church of Australia will now be named Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Australia. District president positions will be named Bishop of [District name], and vice-president positions will be called Assistant Bishop.

The College of Presidents will now be called the College of Bishops.

LCA bishops may be addressed as 'Bishop' or 'Pastor' according to the situation. Written designations are 'Rev (name), Bishop, Lutheran Church of Australia' or 'Rev (name), Bishop, (District name), Lutheran Church of Australia'.

In all this, the focus remains on our Lord Jesus Christ who himself is the pastor and bishop of the church, and whose ministry all pastors serve: 'For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd (pastor) and Overseer (bishop) of your souls ... Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must but because you are willing, as God wants you to be' (1 Peter 2:25; 5:2).

LCA College of Bishops, May 2013