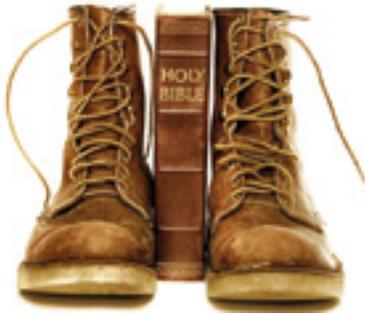


What are we waiting for?



bring Jesus

Making sense of mission

by Rev Dr Steen Olsen



Steen also blogs at LCA eNews. To sign up to his newslist go to www.lca.org.au/enews, insert your email address and tick the box next to 'bring Jesus'. He would also love to hear your thoughts and stories about mission in your context.

You can email him at steen.olsen@lca.org.au with 'bring Jesus' as the subject line.

Let's partner with ten LCA congregations to start 30 new missional churches in the next decade! What's more, let's expect that each 'new start' congregation will plant another church within five years. Starting churches that start churches, that is the plan.

It is not often that someone writes in *The Lutheran* that sitting in a meeting for two days was an awesome experience. But it was. Really! I could also add 'inspiring', 'encouraging', 'exciting' and 'hope-filled'.

It was the second face-to-face meeting of the LCA's Board for Local Mission, held in Adelaide in May. The board's new mission facilitator and church planting mentor Dean Eaton explained his dream and unpacked the proposal. As he did so, many of those around the table were thinking, 'This is what I signed up for!'

The plan is not to follow Lutherans into new suburbs but to reach out to new parts of our society with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We don't want to clone our existing congregations but we do want to ensure that our essential DNA is transferred. We want to establish new congregations that look, smell, sound and feel different, but which are still Christ-centred, Spirit-led, grace-bringing, gospel-focused and faith-filled: Scripture-based expressions of the one holy catholic Christian church of all times and places.

Each new start needs an existing congregation that sends out the church-planting team and supports this new venture with prayer, encouragement, finance and the sort of oversight that is freeing and permission-giving, with a true Lutheran approach to unity and diversity.

We Lutherans are united by our common confession of faith. That keeps us

focused on the gospel of forgiveness and the grace of God. Within those parameters there is incredible freedom in being Lutheran. We want to keep the main thing as the main thing—and then give each local community of Christians the ability to shape their life of worship and discipleship as best suits their context. We Lutherans are firm at the centre and flexible at the edges. We don't insist on a particular way of saying things but we want the gospel to give shape to our worship, to our life and witness.

At the Board for Local Mission meeting, almost a whole day had been set aside to discuss this proposal. We agreed to seek ten congregations who would partner with the board in this venture. We will match these congregations dollar-for-dollar up to \$30,000 for set-up costs. The new starts will be established as 'tent-making' ministries, so there will initially be no salaries to pay. (To express an initial interest in being one of these ten congregations, contact Dean Eaton dean.eaton@sa.lca.org.au)

We will provide training support for our ten partner congregations to help them to prepare to become healthy sending churches. The board will also fund the equipping of evangelists and church planters/mission developers with two new training programs. Once these projects begin we will bring together their leaders for mutual support and learning from each other, as well as providing on-the-ground mentoring for each location.

All this is financially possible because of the LLL's permanent Mission Personnel Fund, which currently provides the board with yearly income of about a quarter of a million dollars. We thank and salute the LLL!

This means that we are changing our model for starting new congregations.



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In the past we first called a pastor to work in a new field. Now our pastors will be providing support for teams of lay people being sent as missionaries into our own neighbourhoods and networks. Our previous 'church planting' program could only support a small handful of projects at any one given time. We are still doing that in places like Newcastle in New South Wales, Hillcrest and Springfield in Queensland, and Pakenham in Victoria. As grants for these projects conclude over the next few years, we will redirect our resources into this new direction.

The first day of this Board for Local Mission meeting was drawing to

a close. Ideas had been discussed and decisions made. The members of the board, who come from each of the LCA's six districts, began to share their excitement. We are passionate about growing the LCA's mission culture so that it is also focused on our local communities in Australia and New Zealand. We want to see more and more people come to faith in Jesus Christ. This is why we agreed to serve. This is why General Synod created the Board for Local Mission.

Steen Olsen serves as the SA/NT Director for Mission and as a member of the LCA Board for Local Mission.



As a church where love comes to life we continue to build and resource church-planting activity, supported by ongoing mission-focused training for leaders.

LCA Strategic Direction 2013-2018, p15.
www.lca.org.au/sd

