

AGENDA 2.2.4

Remove Article 6.11 from Theses of Agreement

PROPOSED MOTION

Submitted by Box Hill St Pauls Congregation

PROPOSED THAT, given that the report of the General Church Board (GCB) and the College of Bishops (CoB) stated;

“After many years of research, study of God’s word, respectful engagement, dialogue and debate with each other in healthy, scriptural, Christ-centred ways and after several synods have debated and voted on the subject, we have not reached consensus”³;

1. Synod accepts there is ongoing division and no consensus in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) on the matter of whether both men and women can be ordained according to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. AND
2. For the sake of the gospel and the mission of God that we share in the LCANZ, that Theses of Agreement (T.A.) 6.11 be removed from the Theses of Agreement. ¹

REASONS FOR PROPOSAL

1. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) came together as one Church in 1966. When it came together it brought two church bodies together as one for the sake of the gospel and the mission of God through the witness of God’s people to the world.
2. At that time, the LCA (now LCANZ) held a consensus view that Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions allowed for a male only ordained pastorate. The teaching of the LCA on the office of the public ministry was outlined in Thesis 6 of the Theses of Agreement. T.A. 6.11 outlines the specific teaching that men only may be called as pastors²
3. This specific teaching in T.A. 6.11 has since been placed under the scrutiny of Holy Scripture and the Confessions over many years now.³
4. Some hold to this teaching and others contend that Scripture provides for both women and men to be ordained as pastors.

¹ Theses of Agreement 6.11 reads: Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor. 14:34,35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired. “Theses on the Office of the Ministry”, paragraph 6.11; Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions, LCANZ, page A17 and see <https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/>

² Ibid

³ The document: The permanent status of Theses of Agreement adopted by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, May 1976 and which is a document in the LCANZ’s Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions (<https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/>) states that “Like all confessional statements, the Theses of Agreement are always under the authority of the Word of God, and therefore there must always be a readiness to submit them to the critical scrutiny of God’s Word and accordingly confirm them, or amend or repudiate them when further study of God’s Word shows them to be inadequate or in error.

In that sense their permanent status and authority are entirely determined by the faithfulness and accuracy with which they reflect the teaching of God’s Word, in particular the doctrine of the Gospel.”

5. Both views are earnestly and prayerfully held as being the witness of Scripture.
6. Neither those who support the ordination of both women and men and those who support the Church's teaching have been able to persuade the whole Church that their position alone has clear scriptural support, even though both make such a claim.
7. Neither group has persuaded the whole Church that their position alone upholds the central Lutheran teaching of justification by God's grace through faith in Christ, even though both make the claim.
8. Neither position has persuaded the whole Church that their stance alone is faithful to the Lutheran Confessions' teaching on the public ministry, even though both make the claim. The LCANZ no longer has a consensus view of this matter.
9. We have consensus that the office of the public ministry is instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace; and we have consensus that Thesis of Agreement 6.1-10 articulates clearly the witness of Scripture concerning this public office.
10. There is no consensus concerning Thesis of Agreement 6.11 and this has been debated over many years now. Conventions of Synod have voted on the question of whether Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions allow that both women and men can be ordained⁴ with no consensus able to be achieved.
11. The joint report of the CoB and GCB of its February 2020 meeting included the words of Bishop John Henderson: "Repeating the practices of past Conventions of Synod will not solve this matter. So, what new approaches do we need?"⁵ The removal of T.A. 6.11 provides a new way forward.
12. Thesis 1 of Theses of Agreement, "Principles governing church fellowship" speaks to us today concerning differences of exegesis which are not necessarily church divisive. For example, differences in exegesis are cited as not being church divisive if they do not affect church doctrine (see TA 1.4. b, c., d., and e. in the appendix to this proposal). The longstanding lack of consensus on TA 6.11 in the LCA begs the question as to whether it is the understanding and teaching of the LCANZ any longer.
13. Thesis 1 clearly points the Church to the centre and core of Scripture (TA 1.4. b. and TA 1.4.e.ii) which is the article of justification by grace through faith in Christ.

*"1.4.b. We believe that all doctrines of Holy Writ are equally binding; nevertheless, not all things in Scripture are of the same importance, when viewed from **the centre and core of the Scriptures, Christ and justification by Him through faith.**"*

"1.4.e. In case of differences in exegesis that affect doctrine, agreement on the basis of God's Word must be sought by combined, prayerful examination of the passage or passages in question.

⁴ Synod has voted on this question in 2003, 2006, 2015 and 2018. In each case, more than 50 pc of delegates have voted in favour of the proposal that both women and men may be ordained. The most recent Synods of 2015 and 2018 revealed approximately 60 pc of delegates were in favour of the proposal that both women and men may be ordained according to God's Word. However, the 2/3 required to change the official teaching of the LCANZ was not reached. The LCANZ now faces the lack of consensus as our reality in approaching the 2021 Convention of Synod.

⁵ Joint Report of the College of Bishops and General Church Council February 2020 meeting distributed to the LCANZ August 2020.

If this does not lead to agreement, because no unanimity has been reached on the clarity of the passage or passages in question and hence on the stringency and adequacy of the Scriptural proof, divergent views arising from such differences of interpretation are not divisive of church fellowship, providing that there be the readiness in principle to submit to the authority of the Word of God;

*ii. Such divergent views in no wise impair, infringe upon, or violate **the central doctrine of Holy Scripture, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;***”

14. The removal of T.A. 6.11 does not negatively impact in any way, the central doctrine of Holy Scripture, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ or our proclamation of it. However, the resolution to remove T.A. 6.11 can provide the LCA NZ with fresh impetus to focus to proclaim this central doctrine in the call to God’s mission which we all share as members of the LCA NZ.

APPENDIX

‘PRINCIPLES GOVERNING CHURCH FELLOWSHIP’, DSTO, VOL 1A. TA 1.4

4. (a) We believe that where differences in teaching and practice exist or arise between Churches uniting, these differences are to be removed by willingly submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Where a difference in teaching or practice is a departure from the doctrine of the Bible, such difference cannot be tolerated, but must be pointed out as an error, on the basis of clear passages of Holy Writ; and if the error is persisted in, in spite of instruction, warning, and earnest witness, it must at last lead to a separation.

(b) We believe that all doctrines of Holy Writ are equally binding; nevertheless, not all things in Scripture are of the same importance, when viewed from the centre and core of the Scriptures, Christ and justification by Him through faith.

(c) We admit that there are some things hard to understand in Holy Writ, 2 Peter 3:16; but no doctrine can be based on Scripture passages that are not clear, especially if no light is thrown upon them by clear passages

(d) Differences in exegesis that do not affect doctrine are not church divisive.

(e) In case of differences in exegesis that affect doctrine, agreement on the basis of God’s word must be sought by combined, prayerful examination of the passage or passages in question.

If this does not lead to agreement, because no unanimity has been reached on the clarity of the passage or passages in question and hence on the stringency and adequacy of the Scriptural proof, divergent views arising from such differences of interpretation are not divisive of church fellowship, providing that there be the readiness in principle to submit to the authority of the Word of God, and providing that

- i Thereby no clear Word of Scripture is denied, contradicted or ignored;
- ii Such divergent views in no wise impair, infringe upon, or violate the central doctrine of Holy Scripture, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;
- iii Nothing is taught contrary to the *publica doctrina* of the Lutheran Church as laid out in its Confessions;
- iv Such divergent views are not propagated as the *publica doctrina* of the Church and in no wise impair the doctrine of Holy Writ.