

AGENDA 4.12

Suomi Conference

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND KEY RESULTS AGAINST PLAN

Suomi Conference has supported the Finnish ministry of the LCA by holding the annual Summer Camps, by facilitating the cooperation of the Finnish ministry and by giving financial assistance to its member congregations.

SUCSESSES

Suomi Conference has successfully facilitated the Finnish speaking ministry within the LCA.

LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

Suomi Conference finds it challenging in securing Finnish speaking pastors within the LCA.

MEMBERS

Robert Bartholomeus (Chair), Ulla Charles, Anna da Silva Correia, Matti Hirvelä, John Knight, Tuula Kuusela, Janne Pekkarinen, Ian Vainikka, Russell Veerhuis, Tommi Vuorinen.

We acknowledge the appointment and the subsequent death of the Suomi Conference Chair, Bishop James Haak in 2018.

BACKGROUND

Suomi Conference was established in 1968 as the result of a meeting between Finnish pastors serving in the LCA, and the then LCA office holders. The main reason for its establishment was to assist the thousands of Finnish immigrants to Australia to assimilate into the life of the LCA, and specifically to: promote and support ministry among people who identify themselves as Finnish in Australia and New Zealand; and facilitate partnerships between Finnish and English-speaking congregations by which people of Finnish origin may be retained in the church and integrated into the wider ministry of the church.

ACHIEVEMENTS/RESULTS AGAINST PLAN

1. The annual Summer Camps were held in cooperation with the local Finnish congregations in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney.
2. Suomi Conference has supported the Finnish ministry by facilitating regular meetings of their pastorate.
3. Suomi Conference has financially been able to support congregations as planned. During the reporting period congregations have been able to become less reliant on the financial assistance from the Suomi Conference.

SUCSESSES

1. Continued acknowledgement of the need to address ministry to second- and third-generation of Finnish Australians
2. Greater recognition of the need to work together as the Finnish congregations, rather than compete with one another
3. Suomi Conference has encouraged its member congregations for ongoing engagement and cooperation with other local LCA congregations and the wider church
4. Utilisation of online technology for reaching out to various stakeholders

LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

1. As the global pandemic persists the member congregations face increasing challenges in reaching out to its members and the wider Finnish language communities.
2. Suomi Conference is faced with an increasing challenge in accessing Finnish speaking pastors.
3. Due to the closers between states, congregations without full-time pastors have been relying on lay led services for prolonged periods of time.

RISKS

Major risks

Excessive delays in obtaining a response from government home affairs department when a new employment agreement between the LCA and the government has been applied for. This means Finnish pastors are caught in this impasse and are unable to come into Australia and has resulted in congregations waiting regularly 12 -24 months for their called pastor to arrive.

Likelihood of identified risks occurring and potential impact

Seems to be happening with new frequency. The pandemic has not been helping.

Action taken to mitigate risk

We are unable to do anything about this risk, because once the application has been submitted we cannot control the time the government department takes to respond.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Member congregations in all districts of the LCA in facilitating Finnish speaking ministry.

FINANCE/BUDGET

SUOMI CONFERENCE FINANCE REPORT	2020	2019	2018
Growing as God's People	12,481	9,978	12,610
Going as God's People	91,072	88,651	9,2252
Enable us to Go & Grow	<u>53,116</u>	<u>70,271</u>	<u>13,3540</u>
Total	<u>156,669</u>	<u>168,900</u>	<u>238,402</u>