

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1 C. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

# A covenant of relationship between the German Lutheran congregations in Australia and the Lutheran Church of Australia

*July 2000.*

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## OUR UNITY IN CHRIST

In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself. Through Baptism, we have been reconciled to God in one body through the cross. Together we participate already now in the unity of the Spirit.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, we desire to grow into and maintain this unity which is ours in Christ, in the bond of peace.

## OUR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Lutherans are identified by their adherence to the Book of Concord of 1580, which includes the Augsburg Confession, 'because they contain the truth of Scripture'. Both the German Lutheran congregations in Australia and the Lutheran Church of Australia subscribe to these Confessions.

We also acknowledge our different histories. German Lutheran congregations in Sydney and Melbourne were founded during the middle of the nineteenth century. Until the 1930s, when they formed a special relationship with the DEK (Deutsche Evangelische Kirche), they were an integral part of the Lutheran Church in Australia. In 1960 the Springvale German Lutheran congregation was founded. All three congregations are in a contractual relationship with the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland). They receive some of their pastors and some financial assistance from the EKD.

The Lutheran Church of Australia is an autonomous Lutheran Church which in various forms has been in existence in Australia for over 150 years. It trains its own pastors and funds its own ministries.

## A COVENANT OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GERMAN LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

In 1972 the German Lutheran congregations in Australia and the Lutheran Church of Australia signed a Document of Agreement. This Agreement established fraternal relationships between the two groups expressed in the practice of altar and pulpit fellowship and in terms of the kind of pastors called to serve in the German Lutheran congregations in Australia. It also facilitated some working together, for example, in aged care.

Cooperation and fraternal relationships between the German Lutheran congregations and the respective Districts of the Lutheran Church of Australia (NSW and Victoria) have continued to develop. It is now time to revise the original agreement.

### OUR COVENANT

We recognise the German Lutheran Congregations in Australia and the Lutheran Church of Australia as churches that, despite their failings, stand in the continuity of apostolic faith and ministry. We acknowledge and respect each other's ordained ministries as real and effective expressions of evangelical oversight, proclamation of the Word, and administration of the sacraments. We pledge to continue to work together in mission and witness, in community service and in ecumenical affairs. We also pledge to continue to seek ways of manifesting the unity that is ours in Christ.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that male or female pastors may serve the German Lutheran churches in Australia. In the Lutheran Church of Australia only males may serve as pastors. The German congregations acknowledge and accept the pastoral care of the relevant District President. **The Lutheran Church of Australia acknowledges that the EKD exercises the supervision of official duties (Dienstaufsicht) over the Pastors sent from Germany.**

### GROWING TOGETHER IN GOD'S MISSION

#### A. We undertake to continue to work together in the following ways:

- participation by the German congregations in the Synods and Conferences of the LCA through sending their pastors and delegates who shall have the right to be heard
- Pulpit and altar exchange in keeping with the practice of the respective churches
- Sharing information in regard to local and synodical ministries and encouraging participation as possible, e.g. aged care ministries, community care, choral activities, schools, Australian Lutheran World Service, emergencies, camps, etc.
- Respecting each other's cultures and traditions
- Mutual acceptance of members

#### B. We undertake to work towards the following goals:

- Membership of the German Lutheran congregations in the Lutheran Church of Australia
- Mutual acceptance of ordained ministries

And together we make our prayer that, being rooted and grounded in love, we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:17–19)