

Appendix G: Review of Strategic Direction 2013– 2018

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION – A CATALYST FOR ACTION

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the General Convention of Synod adopted a Strategic Direction 2013–2018.

In the ‘reason for the proposal’ it was highlighted that:

- We are a fellowship in the Faith, bound together by Scripture and our Lutheran confessions. We share a common identity. We support each other to accomplish those things we can’t effectively do alone.
- We are blessed with the skills, talents and creativity of people across the church.
- God has provided us with substantial and diverse resources to support our ministry; and
- By working together as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12), we can effectively bring the good news of God’s love to a world that needs hope as much as it ever has. We can be a church where love comes to life.

It was in this spirit of unity that the Strategic Direction was approved.

The Strategic Direction involved a great deal of thinking, sharing and dreaming about our future direction, which crystallised into two core priorities for the church, consistent with the Objects of the Church:

GROWING AS GOD’S PEOPLE

As a church where love comes to life, it was acknowledged that we must take seriously Christ’s call to follow him as his disciples. This priority sought to nurture in each other a passion for God’s word, the sacraments and worship. Together we grow in faith and service, and follow Christ as his lifelong disciples.

GOING AS GOD’S PEOPLE

As a church where love comes to life, it was affirmed that we must be active in mission. Going as God’s people means we seek to identify and initiate new opportunities to reach out with Christ’s love, in word and action, in our local communities and beyond.

ENABLE US TO GROW AND GO

Enable us to Grow and Go is the third, supporting priority.

It was recognised that God has blessed us with the skills, talents and resources to achieve our Strategic Priorities.

The challenge is to use them wisely and effectively.

The Strategic Direction identified areas where we can do things better, which will help achieve our two core Strategic Priorities.

FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

In 2013, it was made clear that the Strategic Direction is only a starting point: a catalyst for congregations, districts and agencies to respond to the opportunities which God has placed before them...

... supported by the LCA

... and supporting the LCA to pick up responsibilities that can better be accomplished as Synod.

It was to help guide a focus on exciting initiatives to help us ‘grow and go’.

We recognised there were limited resources, and not everything can be, or necessarily should be, done at once. That is why the Strategic Direction covered a period of six years.

It was not designed to be a blueprint. Mission isn't a straightforward process. New opportunities will come before us and challenges will emerge which can't be easily anticipated.

It acknowledged that church operates in different places and contexts. There is a no 'one size fits all' approach.

SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER, WITH GOD'S HELP

The Strategic Direction was based firmly on an understanding that we walk together as Synod: respecting our diversity, but as one united church building each other up to face the challenges and embrace the possibilities in an ever changing context.

We recognised we are the ones who only water and sow, and that it is God that does the growing. We prayerfully sought God's guidance, and the equipping of the Holy Spirit who empowers and transforms, as we sought to bring love to life the strategic direction.

OUR PROGRESS

We sometimes worry, and even despair, when congregations close, there are fewer people in the pews on a Sunday, and our society becomes less trusting of religious communities. It is true these things are happening, however, as participants in God's mission, we can be confident that there is never any reason to abandon our hope.

Over the past six years, we can see glimpses of how God has worked through us to grow people in their faith and go in inviting people into a relationship with Jesus.

The following is offered as a brief snapshot of key achievements against "Our Strategic Direction":

GROW AS GOD'S PEOPLE

We have together:

- provided numerous training activities and events (e.g. Sent conferences and events, Missional Masterclasses, Grow Coaching, African ministry summit)
- further resourced the Commission on Worship website
- increased the live streaming of worship services, and the distribution of worship service DVDs to people unable to attend worship
- broadened service opportunities through volunteering via International Mission)
- helped to equip hundreds of people to provide and support child, youth and family ministry in their local contexts
- developed print and media resources (e.g. texts such as 'Sent: seeking the orphans of God' and 'New Life New Love' and media activity such as the series on Dementia)
- provided discussion papers on ageing issues

GO AS GOD'S PEOPLE

We have together:

- trained and equipped 11 sending churches
- supported three church plants (Pakenham, Arise and Beyond)
- expanded radio outreach in New Zealand and Australia, especially Queensland
- expanded reach of the gospel through social media (through vehicles such as Facebook, YouTube), the increased use of video production (some of which are shown on Australian and NZ television) and availability of resources (eg on Pain and another on the issue of Parenting)
- resourced cross-cultural projects and opportunities

- strengthened the partnerships with overseas churches, including PNG, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar and Cambodia.

ENABLE US TO GO AND GROW

We have together:

- implemented a churchwide governance and administration review, which led to a trial of a new Churchwide functions structure that has had the aim of integrating mission work to be more effective and better serve the church
- completed a review of our aged care and community service organisations that has affirmed they are all about mission and ministry through their provision of care; and entered into agreements that will lead to better governance
- undertaken a review of Lutheran Education which has led to recommendations that aim to develop greater collaboration that will build on the already excellent education provided to over 40,000 students
- supported districts and congregations to develop new or better websites to improve communication with their local communities
- improved church ministries' communication and engagement with individuals, families and communities through, for example, enews and various publications and through an improved web presence
- helped to develop greater collaboration and coordination of communications, with the 'where love comes to life' tagline a consistent message across the church
- increased capacity through the Church Worker Support Department to support congregations in the support of their pastors, lay workers and volunteers
- reduced siloing through the integration of, and collaboration between, local mission activities and departments.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

We give thanks to God for blessing all that has been done in his name over the past six years.

We recognise that we have also fallen short of expectations and plans; and there is a continual need for improvement in the implementation of projects and activities that commenced during the period of the Strategic Direction. It is also the case that many of the initiatives we have started need more time to bear their full fruit.

Overall, though, we believe the current priorities are still relevant. We are therefore not proposing any major changes to "Our Direction" for the period 2018–2024.

Rather we are recommending that are some changes in emphasis, as we continue to build on what has been achieved between 2013 and 2018, and to address those areas that have been identified as requiring a particular focus.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Alignment to LCA Strategic Priorities	2017	2016	2015
Total Expenditure (for all LCA agencies)			
1 Growing as God's People	6,056,642	5,946,554	5,933,210
2 Going as God's People	8,553,917	8,398,438	8,379,592
3 Enable us to Go & Grow	46,528,241	45,682,523	45,580,015
Total	\$61,138,800	\$60,027,515	\$59,892,817