

AGENDA 2.7.1

Suomi Conference

MEMBERS

Matti Hirvela, Paivi Hargreaves, Janne Pekkarinen, Tuula Kuusela, Ian Vainikka and Russell Veerhuis

We acknowledge the retirement of the Suomi Conference Chair of many years, Bishop Emeritus Rev Mark Lieschke.

PURPOSE

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 IN SYNODICAL PERIOD AGAINST PLAN

Assimilation into the LCA Key outcome

Few activities with LCA congregations:

- Becoming financially self-supporting key outcome
- Congregations challenged to take greater responsibility for finances. Melbourne congregation has leveraged its assets with a view of long term viability

SUCSESSES

- Continued acknowledgement of the need to address ministry to second- and third-generation of Finnish Australians
- Greater recognition of the need to work together as congregations, rather than compete with one another
- Pastors ongoing participation and engagement with other LCA pastors
- Annual Suomi Conference Summer Camps

CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNT

1. Future viability of some congregations due to financial restraints
2. Pastors based on the Eastern seaboard needing to serve Adelaide and Perth congregations
3. Ongoing reluctance of congregations to assimilate with English-speaking congregations

RISKS

- Suomi Conference congregations' unrealistic reliance on Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland for ongoing financial support; congregations continually being challenged to

take greater responsibility for the future, especially in the light of the recent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's announcement to phase out funding with the next 10 years

- Ageing first generation immigrants; ongoing reminders to congregations of their need for support and participation in services.

ALIGNMENT TO LCA STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2018-2021

1. Regular worship opportunities in Finnish to encourage and challenge people to grow as God's people.
2. Suomi Conference Executive identifying ways of supporting congregations in their ministry. Increased awareness of the Finnish services and gatherings through media, i.e. Finnish Newspaper, websites and Facebook.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Alignment to LCA Strategic Priorities Expenditure	2017	2016	2015
1. Growing as God's people	14,984	23,878	16,427
2. Going as God's people	97,575	76,919	78,942
3. Enable us to Go & Grow	117,546	105,250	103,280
Total:	230,105	206,047	198,649