

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1

#### D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

## Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia

*Adopted by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, November 1977.*

*Not edited.*

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1. In order that a person may obtain and continue in faith which justifies, God has instituted the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (Augsburg Confession, Articles IV and V).
2. Consequently, the Church formed by God through this ministry is simultaneous with it, and the Church is bound to it from the beginning to the end of time (Augsburg Confession, Article VIII.)
3. The Church has the command to appoint suitable people to the pastoral office for this ministry since God has instituted the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, and is present in this ministry (Apology, Article XIII, 12: Theses of Agreement, VI, 7).
4. While the pastoral office is the office ordained by Christ for the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, yet the Christian congregation as Church has the authority to establish auxiliary offices in fulfilling its mission in the face of local needs (Theses of Agreement VI, 9).
5. There is no divine command that necessitates the creation invariably of an office of elder as it tends to exist currently in the Lutheran Church of Australia.
6. When a congregation appoints elders, it does so not under compulsion, but within its authority and freedom to create auxiliary positions to fulfil its mission.
7. Where elders are appointed, the congregation should outline clearly the relationship of the elder to other auxiliary offices and to the pastor or pastors. The model Constitution for Congregations, By-laws VIII.6, provides a role description of elders.

8. Since the word 'elder' occurs in the Old Testament and the New Testament writings, but without specific application to the use of 'elder' by the Lutheran Church of Australia, and since 'elder' and 'bishop' are used interchangeably at times in the New Testament to refer to the person filling the pastoral office, it may be helpful to use another word in place of 'elder' in Lutheran congregations in Australia.

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**NOTE:** The Convention of General Synod in July 2000 resolved several matters concerning 'the auxiliary office'. See paragraphs 82–84 of the Minutes for Synod 2000 for the resolutions. The revised wording for Section VIII. THE COMMITTEE of ELDERS/LAY ASSISTANTS of the LCA Constitution & Bylaws was resolved – see page 33 of the Minutes for the full wording.