

## AGENDA 4.2

# College of Bishops

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## MEMBERS

Revs David Altus, Robert Bartholomaeus (from December 2018), Michael Fulwood, James Haak (until October 2018), John Henderson (Chair), Dr Andrew Pfeiffer, Lester Priebbenow, Paul Smith, Mark Whitfield

Consultants: Dr Nigel Long (from June 2019), Rev Neville Otto (until December 2018)

Rev Neville Otto accepted a call to parish ministry in late 2018 after nine and a half years as the Secretary of the Church (SoC) and five and a half years as International Mission Director (until January 2015) when it was a dual position with the role of SoC. The College of Bishops (CoB) acknowledges and thanks Neville for his faithful service to the LCA in both these capacities. In June 2019, Dr Nigel Long was appointed as the SoC.

The LCA Constitution and By-laws outline the duties for the College of Bishops at section 8.6. The CoB meets monthly from February through to December. This involves five face-to-face meetings with agenda items relevant to the duties in the constitution. The CoB also holds six meetings via video conference for matters particular to the care of pastors and oversight of their ministry. During the last synodical term, the CoB met 32 times.

## BACKGROUND

Additionally, each year the CoB:

- meets with graduate pastors and their wives who are in their second year of ministry, as part of the graduate pastor program;
- meets Australian Lutheran College (ALC) final year pastoral ministry students and their wives on two occasions;
- meets as the Committee on Assignments to formally interview and approve ALC graduate candidates for ordination and conduct initial assignments to called ministry positions;
- holds an annual retreat for mutual support and refreshment through Scripture, prayer and mutual conversation and consolation;
- meets occasionally for special purposes, such as following the General Pastors' Conference (GPC) to discuss matters emanating from the GPC; and
- arranges special workshops when it identifies the need.

This report highlights the major work of the CoB under its core duties during the last synodical term.

## ACHIEVEMENTS/RESULTS AGAINST PLAN

### 8.6.3.1 give special attention to the doctrine, worship and life of the Church

The CoB has oversight of the Commission for Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR). This term the focus of the CTICR has been:

- The Seal of the Confession
- LWF/ILC memberships
- Thesis of Agreement 1 (TA 1).

The CoB and GCB, at the invitation of GCB, met as a joint group on 3 occasions to consider the situation of the LCA regarding the ongoing disagreement in the church about whether the ordained ministry should be open to both women and men. Following the second meeting a joint report was presented to the church on the various directions people were seeking of the

LCANZ leadership. The third meeting reflected on the responses from the church to the joint report. A number of issues emerged, with the GCB and CoB agreeing on 3 things in preparation for the General Pastors Conference and Convention of General Synod. These were:

- The General Pastors Conference (GPC) is a theological advisor to the Synod and is scheduled to meet in July 2021. The GCB is formally asking the GPC to provide advice in advance of the General Convention on the relevance of Thesis of Agreement 1 Principles governing church fellowship to the ongoing discussion about the ordination of both men and women in the LCA which threatens to divide the LCA, with specific attention to the intent of TA 1.4 and the applicability or inapplicability of the process outlined in TA 1.4.e to the current debate.
- The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations will work (with the College of Bishops) on framing questions and providing background papers for the General Pastors Conference on the applicability/inapplicability of TA 1.
- The GCB and the CoB will work together to frame any questions and/or proposals on the ordination matter that might be useful for the 2021 General Convention and for the well-being of the Church.

#### **8.6.3.2 Support the Bishop in the Bishop's role as the spiritual leader of the Church**

#### **8.6.3.3 Encourage the Church to be active in Christ's mission and to strive for unity, harmony and good order in the Church**

The CoB has supported and worked with the various departments and agencies of the church to be active in Christ's mission. There was the development and establishment of the lay preacher training module with Australian Lutheran College. New and Renewing Churches in mission and ministry through church planting and other emerging church situations. Cross cultural ministry in reviewing grant funding for ministry sustainability and ministry in a diverse church. Supporting International Mission's partnerships in Asia and the calling of LCANZ pastors by GCB to serve International Mission as lecturers in Lutheran Seminaries in PNG and the Philippines. The CoB also supported and advised the Office of the Secretary and the GCB in the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan released in 2020.

#### **8.6.3.4 Study developments and trends in church and society and give guidance to the pastors and members of the Church accordingly**

The bishops and the College have been well served in public theology and ethical matters by the Assistant to the Bishop-Public Theology, Mr Nick Schwarz, and the Commission for Social and Bioethical Questions (CSBQ).

This has included Synodical resolutions and those matters referred to the GCB for action such as Lutheran Earth Care and the LCA's biblical position on abortion. There have also been those issues that newly arose during the synodical period. Of particular note were parliamentary inquiries and government legislation on voluntary assisted dying, late-term abortion, and sexual orientation and gender identity, including banning of conversation practices.

#### **8.6.3.5 Care for the pastors of the Church and have oversight of their ministry**

The care of pastors and oversight of their ministry is a significant proportion of the work of the CoB. While each bishop is individually responsible for the pastors in their District, collectively the CoB supports each other in that activity through considered decision-making and resolution.

The oversight of pastoral ministry requires the CoB to pay ongoing attention to processes and guidelines that are of good order and fit for purpose. The CoB has developed and endorsed a number of documents to support its duty of ministry oversight under the Constitution. This work has included processes for return to ministry and guidelines for conducting colloquies for indigenous pastors of ordination to the Holy Ministry.

During the last synodical period, attention to matters of pastoral care for all our church workers and their families, and congregations were particularly significant for bishops and the CoB as a collective due to the fatigue and stress from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CoB continues to work with and provide advice to the Church Worker Support Department and GCB in the support and development of pastors in their ministry. Examples include the Pastoral Supervision Program and the development of an Annual Review of Ministry for pastors. The CoB also supported and advised the GCB in the response to the recommendation from the review of the LCA Call process which was approved by the General Synod in 2015.

The CoB has agreed to review the policy on pastors' working hours (pastors day off) and the Graduate Pastor Program. This work will occur in the next synodical period.

Your bishops, each of them pastors themselves, are grateful to God for every person who works in the Lord's church. This includes a variety of called positions, ordained and non-ordained, volunteer and remunerated, known and unknown. We strive to provide leadership and care that nurtures and develops pastors and all church workers, knowing that we are all under the care of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Refer to Pastor statistics in Appendix 1 for detailed information on ordinations and additions to the Roll of Pastors for this synodical period.

### **8.6.3.6 Give leadership in the resolution of conflict in the Church**

The Interim Pastor and Interim Pastor– Reconciliation position descriptions and terms of reference (ToR) were revised and consolidated into one ToR titled Interim Ministry Pastor (IMP). The ToR also allows for a pool of IMPs to be maintained to serve the church in this ministry. In 2019, the CoB called Pastor Stuart Kleinig as the LCA IMP under these new ToR. Pastor Kleinig accepted the call and commenced in June 2020. Oversight of the LCA Interim Ministry Pastor is the College of Bishops with the management of the administrative aspects of the role through the Secretary of the Church.

The CoB agreed to a review of the current set-up for Reconciliation Ministry (RM) by the Office of the Bishop. The terms of reference for the review were:

1. The review will investigate whether, and to what extent, RM has:
  - 1.1 Built a Biblical reconciliation culture in the LCA:
    - Has the ministry contributed to the development of healthy patterns of behaviour when conflict exists within the LCA?
    - Can this be demonstrated?
    - Has the ministry contributed to imbedding a lifestyle of reconciliation in the LCA?
  - 1.2 Been successful in providing training and equipping people to carry out biblical reconciliation in each district and local setting of the LCA.
2. The review will assess the need for RM in the LCA, and provide recommendations on the continuation or otherwise future structure, delivery, and resourcing of the ministry, and
3. The review will have regard to the findings and recommendations of the Ecclesiastical Discipline Review.

The review was conducted by Pastor Ian Rentsch. Consultation included the LCA Bishop, District Bishops, Assistant to the Bishop—Reconciliation Ministry, the Chair of the Ecclesiastical Discipline Review and others deemed necessary to complete the reviews terms of reference.

A final report on the review with recommendations had not been received at the time of writing this report.

In addition to the review, the CoB met with the Assistant to the Bishop-Reconciliation Ministry, Rev Paul Kerber, in relation to the departments ongoing role in case management and a new program to train and support local people to teach Biblical Reconciliation.

Professional Standards Department sought the counsel of the CoB in the development of a number of policies, especially those arising as a result of the Royal Commission.

### **8.6.3.7 Advise the General Church Board and any District Church Board on matters pertaining to the Church and its ministry**

#### **PASTOR SUPPLY**

The issue of pastor supply in the LCA NZ is one the CoB continues to give prominence. The pastor statistics illustrated in Appendix 1 reveals a challenging picture for the LCA NZ. While pastor numbers and demographic are a critical issue it is only one aspect of the pastor supply question. The CoB has also been reflecting on the changing landscape of LCA NZ congregations and parishes. The nature of this changing landscape and understanding it is essential to addressing pastoral ministry supply as it informs the ministry needs of the church.

Meeting the challenge will require intentional and coordinated collaboration that is proactively supported across the LCA NZ.

In serving the ministry needs of the LCA NZ, the CoB also has concern for word and sacrament ministry in congregations and worship places where there is no pastor to serve them and in emerging church situations (including church planting). The establishment of the lay preacher training module with Australian Lutheran College is one specific example. The LCA NZ has established mechanisms that are flexible in such situations, for example licencing lay people and the SMP pathway. However, the CoB recognises the ongoing need to reflect and review how the LCA NZ supports pastoral needs across different situations.

The CoB will continue to work through these issues in the next synodical period.

#### **SYNOD DECISIONS**

The CoB supported and advised the General Church Board (GCB) on matters arising from decisions of Synod. These were:

- Actions to implement the recommendations of the Call process. (refer to the Secretary of the Church report)
- The development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan. (refer to the Secretary of the Church report)
- Investigating full membership of the Lutheran World Federation and the International Lutheran Council. (refer to the LCA Bishop's report)
- Development and implementation of the professional pastoral supervision program.

### **8.6.3.8 Have oversight of, and report to the General Church Board on the work of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, the Commission on Worship and the Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions**

The Commissions of the Church, along with the other boards and committees, are an important asset of the LCA NZ, supporting the CoB, GCB and the church wide on many matters of Church theology and doctrine, ecumenical relationships, the church being active in Christ's mission,

public theology and our worship life. Each Commission was assigned a Bishop to provide better support and line of sight between the commissions and the CoB; Rev David Altus and Rev Lester Priebbenow (CTICR), Rev Mark Whitfield (CoW) and Rev Paul Smith (CSBQ). Refer to the individual commission reports for details on their work during this last synodical term.

Each of the Commissions have been well and faithfully served by Libby Krahling (CoW), Kimberley Pfeiffer (CSBQ, CTICR), Larissa Helbig (CSBQ), Lyndal Fuller (CTICR, CSBQ) and Chelsea Bellamy (CSBQ).

The CoB express thanks to the dedicated individuals who serve on these commissions.

#### **8.6.3.9 Assign, in consultation with the teaching staff, the pastor graduates of Australian Lutheran College (ALC) and other pastors as the need arises**

The assignment of candidates for the Ministry are by the CoB serving as the Committee on Assignments. The primary source of candidates and ordination is graduates of the ALC. The CoB assesses and approves through colloquy, pastors from overseas Lutheran Churches and ministers of another denominations for service in the church, and pastors reinstated to the Roll. The CoB also has oversight of candidates in alternate training for the ordained ministry. This includes candidates entering the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program and Aboriginal ministry training, their colloquy and approval for ordination in specific ministry.

#### **8.6.3.10 Give pastoral support, care and counsel to each other**

The agenda for the 5 face-to-face meetings held each year is organised around the 10 duties detailed in the LCA Constitution and By-laws. Appropriate time is therefore given to supporting each other in their roles as the spiritual leaders of the church. The bishops also gather in retreat each year for mutual support and refreshment through Scripture, prayer and mutual conversation and consolation. During this last synodical period, there have been substantial challenges the bishops separately and as a college have needed to respond to. The first was the sudden death of Rev James Haak, NSW/ACT Bishop, in late 2018. Throughout 2020 and 2021 it was the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental fatigue, dislocation from worship life, spiritual wellbeing, and financial and social impact of the pastorate, church workers, members, and the community. As the spiritual leaders in navigating the impact on the worship life and pastoral care of the church, as the pastor to the pastors in supporting their well-being and in serving the community anxious to receive the Word and Sacrament in difficult times. There was also support for Bishop Mark Whitfield and the people of New Zealand following the Christchurch massacre as they struggled to comprehend and respond to what had happened.

## APPENDIX 1: PASTOR STATISTICS

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### 19TH SYNODICAL PERIOD (as at 30 April 2021)

|  |     |            |
|--|-----|------------|
| <b>ORDINATIONS</b>   |     | <b>21</b>  |
| Graduate pastors from Australian Lutheran College                          | 15  |            |
| Specific Ministry Pastors  | 3   |            |
| Aboriginal Specific Ministry Pastors                                       | 3   |            |
| <b>ADDITIONS TO ROLL (other than graduate pastors)</b>                     |     | <b>4</b>   |
| From overseas Lutheran churches  | 2   |            |
| From other Christian denominations (as pastor emeritus)                    | 1   |            |
| Reinstated to the Roll   | 1   |            |
| <b>ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE</b>   |     | <b>16</b>  |
| <b>WITHOUT A CALL</b>  |     | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>RETURNING TO ACTIVE SERVICE FROM LEAVE OF ABSENCE</b>                   |     | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>RETIREMENTS</b>   |     | <b>36</b>  |
| <b>REMOVALS FROM THE ROLL</b>  |     | <b>9</b>   |
| <b>DEATHS</b>  |     | <b>33</b>  |
| <b>PASTORS IN ACTIVE SERVICE</b>   |     | <b>282</b> |
| 'Active' General Ministry Pastors  | 249 |            |
| ADF chaplains (full-time and part-time)                                    | 5   |            |
| Specific Ministry Pastors  | 15  |            |
| Aboriginal Specific Ministry Pastors                                       | 18  |            |
| <b>EMERITI PASTORS</b>   |     | <b>227</b> |
| <b>PASTORS IN ACTIVE SERVICE BY AGE (GMPs and SMPs only)</b>               |     |            |
| - 50 and under   | 89  |            |
| - 51-60  | 97  |            |
| - Over 61  | 79  |            |
| <b>NET REDUCTION: Pastors in active service since last Convention</b>      |     | <b>43</b>  |
| <b>NET REDUCTION: Pastors on the Roll of Pastors since last Convention</b> |     | <b>16</b>  |