

## AGENDA 2.3.8

# Membership of Lutheran World Federation

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(See also Agenda 2.2.5 and 2.3.7)

## PROPOSED MOTION

*Submitted by Holy Cross Congregation, Belconnen ACT*

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Lutheran Church of Australia applies for full membership of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

## REASONS FOR THE MOTION

1. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) is a relatively small church in Australia, but with a long history and a heritage of global connections. Over many years congregations – and particularly inner-city congregations – have been surprised and enriched by the stories of people from the Lutheran communion around the world who have participated in the Liturgy with us, sung with us, wept with us, laughed with us, and received the holy sacraments on their journey. Some have been university students, some itinerant workers, some backpackers, some professional people, tourists and musicians. For these people, often isolated and without family support, our congregations are a stable liturgical family for them. If this happens on a congregational level, then why not on an organised national and international level with full membership in the LWF?
2. We support the Australian Lutheran World Service which works with the LWF in service projects overseas. This is diaconia.
3. We annually observe the Commemoration of the Augsburg Confession at St. Andrew's. With full membership in the LWF, the LCA would witness to what the Augsburg Confession states, namely that nothing more is required for unity beyond the pure doctrine of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments according to the gospel.
4. Full membership will strengthen the voice of the LCA within the LWF. We are predominantly an English-speaking church but also multicultural in a multicultural country. The voice of an English-speaking Lutheran Church, different to those in the USA will enrich the Federation.
5. Full membership will give our representatives the right to vote and hold administrative office.
6. Full membership will provide support to those member churches within the Federation, who wish to hold to a strongly confessional line.
7. Ties with fellow Lutheran churches, especially in the SE Asian region, will be strengthened and avenues of service enhanced. Some of the Nordic/Scandinavian churches have pastors in SE Asia serving with mission to seafarers. This is an important part of the network.
8. Full membership would not change the present protocol requiring visiting pastors and church leaders to receive an official invitation before preaching in the pulpits of the LCA.

9. Full membership would not prevent us from entering into or maintaining relationships with churches which are not members of the LWF.
10. The LCA would have greater opportunity to inform the larger Lutheran movement of the platforms with which it agrees and those with which it disagrees, so as to contribute to maintaining that which is considered confessionally Lutheran in the world.
11. In the 1995 'Communion and Mission' Report from the *Australian Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue on the Theology of the Church*, paragraph 89 stated: "*It is our conviction, however, that the time has come for us to give visible and practical expression to the considerably convergence we have discovered and arrived at in our dialogue. We believe that the communion we share ought to be expressed in greater co-operation in areas such as social concerns, shared witness, theological education at various levels, and joint study programs. Such co-operation would give concrete expression to the common confession we have made, and reinforce our commitment to strive for greater expressions of unity.*" If we can say this with Roman Catholics, then surely we can share communion as full members of the Lutheran World Federation.
12. Over 50 years ago, there were two main Lutheran traditions (churches) in Australia with a nineteenth century heritage predominantly in Prussia where there was a forced union of Lutheran and Reformed churches. These traditions united into the Lutheran Church of Australia in 1966. One of these traditions, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (UELCA) had been full members of the LWF and were involved since its inception in 1947. When the churches united, it was a prerequisite that membership of the LWF be relinquished. The LCA became associate members in 1993. Other Lutheran congregations without this Prussian heritage, most of whom are not part of the LCA, have been in Australia since the nineteenth century, namely the Nordic Lutheran churches, and since World War II, Baltic and other European congregations. Full membership in the LWF would also honour the formal Partnership Agreement on joint ministry among Finns in Australia that exists between the LCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF), which was signed by the two churches in 1991. ELCF is a founding member of the LWF. The LCA has been partnering with ELCF in ministry among Finns in Australia since the union of 1966.

***Also submitted by the following congregations, using identical text:***

1. *St Andrew's Lutheran Congregation, Brisbane Qld*
2. *The Finnish Lutheran Church of Brisbane, Mt Gravatt Qld*
3. *Mikael Agricola Finnish Lutheran Congregation of Melbourne, Vic*
4. *St Paul's Lutheran Congregation, Sydney NSW*
5. *Church of the Good Shepherd Tuggeranong Lutheran Parish, ACT*