

## AGENDA 2.2.8

# Amend clause 3.2 in Model Constitution for Congregations

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### PROPOSED MOTION

*Submitted by SA-NT District*

**PROPOSED THAT** General Synod replace Clause 3.2 in the model constitution for a congregation with the following:

The congregation accepts the pastoral guidelines for responsible communion practice in the LCA. The pastor and congregation agree to seek the district bishop's approval for any proposal for the public proclamation of the Word in the divine service by others than those normally authorised to do so in the LCA.

*(The current Clause 3.2 is:*

*Article 3 "Relationship to the Church", Clause 3.2 of the LCA Model Constitution for Congregations:*

*3.2 In common with the Church, the Congregation regards unity in and the application in practice of doctrine as the necessary prerequisite for church fellowship, and rejects all forms of religious syncretism or unionism which are not in accord with the confessional position of the Church. The Congregation therefore adheres to the following principles:*

*3.2.1 Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran pastors only and in determining any exception the consent of the Bishop of the Church must be obtained; and*

*3.2.2 Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only and in determining any exceptions the Pastor shall exercise conscientious judgment consistent with the confession of the Church and its pastoral guidelines.)*

### REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

- 1. It better reflects the current policy of the LCA on Responsible Communion Practice.**  
The policy of the LCA on communion participation is now defined in the policy on *Responsible Communion Practice* (adopted by General Pastors Conference in 1990). This takes a more nuanced approach than the clause in the model constitution.
- 2. It states the current process for authorising other preachers in LCA worship services.**  
The current clause suggests that any Lutheran pastor is welcome to preach at our services. This is not the case. Our current policy requires approval from the district bishop.
- 3. We are ecumenical but not syncretistic.**  
We are not abandoning our confession in favour of another but engaging with other Christians as Lutherans whose confession is clearly defined, also in our constitutions. The current clause muddies these waters by its narrow focus and dated language.
- 4. What the clause communicates is not what we want to say.**  
The wording in the model constitution needs to be clear so that what a detached reader understands is what we actually want to say. That is not the case with the present wording.
- 5. It is therefore a hindrance to the mission of the Church in our context.**  
The impact of this clause on the mission of the Church makes it an urgent issue. The current wording sends the wrong message that our main focus is on being exclusive rather than welcoming others. While it is no doubt true that few members read their constitution, when a new one is adopted or alterations are made it becomes an issue.
- 6. The SA-NT District pastors proposed this same change to General Synod in June 2012.**

After discussing this over three conferences our District Pastors resolved to propose this amended wording to the LCA General Synod. It was on the agenda for the 2013 Synod, but was never discussed because of a shortage of time. Synod therefore referred it as 'unfinished business' to General Church Council, and nothing more was done about it.