

Called to transformative action

THE ETHOS UNDERPINNING **LUTHERAN AGED CARE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

FOREWORD

God grows us as his people to a mature faith in Christ – a faith that comes to life through effective witness and ministry, so that people everywhere may know Christ and his love.

This is the mission statement of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA).

Lutheran aged care and community services are an integral part of the LCA. They are part of the LCA's mission and ministry and are concrete evidence of love coming to life.

This ethos document has been developed following a request that was made during the consultations surrounding the Governance Review of Aged Care and Community Services in 2017–2018. It draws on the LCA's Strategic Direction 2018–2024, which can be found in summary form on page 7, and God's love – our care, the theology underpinning the practice of Lutheran care which is referred to throughout. The ethos of Lutheran aged care and community services is also available in one-page summary form. Additional copies can be ordered from cma@lca.org.au

1. THE LUTHERAN ETHOS EXPRESSED – IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE¹

Our vision is to see God's love in Christ joyfully coming to life through Lutheran aged care and community services. This is central to the LCA's vision and priorities as set out in the LCA Strategic Direction document.

Our purpose is to serve individuals, families and communities as a natural expression of our Christian faith. Through this we show God's love publicly as we care for those who use our services. This is an outworking of the Christian faith that inspired the establishment of these services.

It does not mean that individual members of the church are exempt from loving and caring for people too. One of the values of the LCA is that we are ***inspired by compassion ... favouring people who are poor and those who are marginalised.*** This compassion is to be shown in actions and words.

To find out more about what the LCA has to say about God's love and our care see **God's love – our care.**

2. A CULTURE OF SERVICE²

The New Testament contains many references to Jesus' caring as he moved among people feeding the crowds, healing people and visiting their homes.

One such time was when Jesus was together with his disciples, and he took a towel, wrapped it around his waist and washed the feet of his disciples (John 13:3–17). This typifies the service that we want to share with others. Within the church, such caring is sometimes known as *diakonia* – a Greek word for service. Aged care and community services are known as the church's diaconal ministries, and as we use that term, we are reminded of Jesus' servant heart and servant acts. He provides us with a role model – an ideal.

Throughout history, the church has been responsible for providing many such ministries, and they have been an important part of the character of the church.

A priority of the LCA is to protect and uphold the dignity of people, especially children and the vulnerable. Aged care and community services are places where this happens. It is important to us that these services conform to, and where possible exceed, the requirements of the government and those who contribute funding.

¹ *God's love – our care* 1 God is love

² *God's love – our care* 6 Living in Christ through faith and in our neighbour through love

3. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF HOW AND WHY WE SERVE

Our values are the underlying principles of how and why we serve. Lutheran aged care and community services are: shaped by the good news of grace; blessed by relationships; united by Christ; inspired by compassion; marked by integrity; and filled with hope.

Shaped by the good news of grace³

We believe that God's love transforms us. This shapes our mission and ministry.

We believe that:

- Everybody is created in the image of God – all have equal worth and dignity.
- Although God is perfect, our humanness means that we are not.
- God is known through Jesus and shown to us through the Holy Spirit and the Bible.
- Because God loves us, God sent Jesus to rescue us, and we want to share this good news with others.
- And because God loves us, and sent Jesus to rescue us, we love one another – including the vulnerable, the poor and the oppressed. In doing this we provide opportunities for fulfilling God's ultimate wish, which is to restore people to relationship with God. This happens as people encounter Jesus.
- God always remembers us, even when we don't remember God and our care is not perfect. No matter what challenges we face, we can be sure that God's love is always there for us – and that fills us with confidence and hope.

When we think of God's transforming love, we see that there are two aspects. It is as if God uses two hands to care for us.

On the one hand, we know that because God loves the world that God has created, God will work with people in the world to sustain the creation, curb evil (through the law) and give more people the chance to flourish and receive care when needed. We can see God's care of the world through the law as it is administered by our governments, our quality standards, the funding that we receive, the boards that provide governance for our aged care and community organisations and other institutions that contribute to good order in our community.

And on the other hand, there is another aspect of God's love – that God sent Jesus to save us. It is because of God's love that we care.

As Christians, our spirituality is based on these beliefs and embraces both aspects of God's care. We recognise spirituality as an integral part of each person – an aspect of life and being. Our Christian chaplains will recognise, foster and celebrate this aspect of people's lives as we try to give witness to God who saves and cares. We want to celebrate everything that gives people life, while also praying that people will find what we believe is the ultimate experience of life that Jesus promises.

Blessed by relationships⁴

Lutheran aged care and community services value and are blessed by relationships. We value internal relationships between us and those providing governance, management, day-to-day services and particularly with those who use the services and their families. We value external relationships with other Lutheran services, fellow service providers, government and other funders and with the wider church.

³ God's love – our care 4 God's two hands – saving and caring

⁴ God's love – our care 2 God partners with people

The contribution of each person working in Lutheran aged care and community services is precious. The church teaches that God has called us to serve – no matter whether we are providing professional services or cooking, cleaning or fulfilling a role such as a gardener, handyman or chief executive officer. Each person has gifts and talents, and each person's service is important to those receiving care.

The Christian community can overlook differences as they work together for justice and peace and as they respond to crises and emergencies locally and globally. There are worldwide Christian organisations, for example Lutheran World Service, that provide support to refugees, assist with development projects and work with organisations such as the United Nations and the Red Cross.⁵

United by Christ⁶

People join together for worship. It is in worship that God's word is spoken. God's mercy is experienced as the people confess that they have sinned and are assured of God's forgiveness. The people respond with praise.

It is also in worship that people receive the sacraments. The Lutheran church has two sacraments – holy baptism and holy communion. Baptism is conducted once. Holy communion is a central and regular part of worship. After receiving holy communion, thanks is given to God, and the people pray that their faith in God would be strengthened as well as their love for one another. The expression of this love for one another is the service that is given to others – the service that comes after the worship service.

In providing diaconal services, Christians show the attractiveness of being part of the Christian community and experiencing Christ's love. Jesus encouraged people to share the good news of what he has done for them. He wanted everyone to know about God and to know God's love. As individuals, Christians talk about their faith and churches engage in mission, that is sharing what they believe. The love is unconditional; the mission is invitational – an open invitation to all who want to learn more about God's love.

An important part of the church experience is being with other people who believe in God. Just as people like to be together to support their football team and to experience shared emotions, so it is that Christians desire to be together to share the experience of God's mercy and to praise God

Inspired by compassion⁷

Through its diaconal services, the church has sought to express its witness to the community by the provision of practical help to individuals and families that acknowledge the whole person – meeting physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs. People's spiritual needs are acknowledged, and chaplains are an integral and valued part of the delivery of many services.

As people become less independent, their dependence on God may increase. It is important that they have the opportunity to continue to attend worship and to receive holy communion. Those who have drifted away from their church may have a renewed interest in God, and those who have not claimed to be Christians in the past may wish to explore their spirituality when they are in our care.

⁵ *God's love – our care* 8 Working together with other churches

⁶ *God's love – our care* 5 The essence of the church – worship, witness and service. The term 'diaconal' is used in the worldwide Lutheran church. It comes from the Greek word *diakonos* which means servant or waiter.

⁷ *God's love – our care* 3 Inspired by compassion

Marked by integrity⁸

The hallmark of our ethos is to do the best we can to serve people and to honour God. We believe that services that are marked by integrity are effective, efficient, excellent and equitable.

We welcome feedback, listen to it and respond. It is important that we hear the quietest voice among all the others. We will speak in to government to advocate for a positive future for aged care and community services and the vulnerable people that they serve.

We are accountable to those who provide funding for our services as well as to those who receive our care, and we will look outside of our services to find better ways of doing things. We know that we are accountable to future generations, and we are committed to considering the environment. We will strive to minimise the negative impact that we have on God's creation and to be responsible stewards of the gifts that we have been given.

In providing excellent services, we encourage our staff to do their best so that those who we serve are able to fulfil their potential. In doing this, we value diversity and are committed to learning from each other.

Filled with hope

Throughout our lifetime, we may face many challenges – ageing, being short of money, having a disability, grieving the death of a close family member or friend, finding out that you or someone close to you has dementia or a life-threatening illness.

One sure place to find hope is through faith in God. Christians know that God is always there and that they are in the palm of God's caring and supportive hand. All God wants is for people to receive and trust God's unfailing love and presence in their lives. God gives us the Holy Spirit who is always with us and points us to the eternal love of Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate us from Jesus' love – not a forgetful mind, chronic poverty, illness or even death. God always remembers us, even when we can't remember God.

Lutheran aged care and community services provide the opportunity to bring that hope to those who come to them for help.

⁸ *God's love – our care* 7 Marked by integrity

OUR DIRECTION 2018–2024

We work together in bringing to life the Objects of the Church



Our Mission

God grows us as his people to a mature faith in Christ — a faith that comes to life through effective witness and ministry, so that people everywhere may know Christ and his love.

Our Values

Through faith in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit we are:

Shaped by the gospel of grace

- as an undeserved gift from God
- as a life-changing and life-giving word
- in equipping us for action

Blessed by relationships

- in service to each other
- in respect for each others' gifts
- in witness to our communities and the world

United by Christ

- in our confession of faith
- in working together and sharing resources

Inspired by compassion

- in actions and words
- favouring people who are poor and those who are marginalised

Marked with integrity

- for effective witness
- for excellence in service
- for stewardship of God's gifts

Our Vision

Our vision is to see God's love in Christ coming to life in people everywhere through a Lutheran Church that joyfully receives, lives and shares the gospel (cf 1 John 4:9-12).

Our priorities

1. Grow as God's People

- 1.1** Support a passionate faith in individuals, families and communities shaped by a growing understanding of God's word, nurtured and sustained in prayer and worship
- 1.2** Encourage worship that recognises people receive and respond to God's grace in different ways
- 1.3** Equip people for mission and ministry in the church, local communities and the wider world
- 1.4** Raise the awareness in our communities of issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and grow their meaningful participation in the life and mission of the church
- 1.5** Protect and uphold the dignity of people, especially children and the vulnerable, to lead lives in peace and safety

2. Go as God's people

- 2.1 Strengthen a missional culture where individuals, families and communities are inspired, passionate and active in sharing the gospel
- 2.2 Encourage strong missional-oriented leadership by supporting pastors, lay workers and other leaders to be effective ministers of Christ in a changing world
- 2.3 Support collaborative, missional-oriented approaches in changed and changing mission fields
- 2.4 Seek and grow new mission fields, working in partnership across the church and others that share our values
- 2.5 Support existing communities to be active in mission
- 2.6 Encourage continued support for overseas ministries carried out through effective church-to-church partnerships

3. Enable us to Go and Grow

3.1 Governance

- 3.1.1 Strengthen governance at all levels, clarify accountabilities and ensure appropriate support
- 3.1.2 Improve governance structures and the relationships between all parts of the church, including districts, schools, aged-care and community-service organisations

3.2 Engagement and Communications

- 3.2.1 Support greater engagement with local communities to assist churchwide services to be responsive to their needs
- 3.2.2 Support church ministries to effectively use diverse media to inspire and equip individuals, families and communities to grow and go
- 3.2.3 Encourage local communities so that they feel valued, united and hopeful within their wider church family
- 3.2.4 Deepen collaboration between the ministries of the church to achieve integrated and effective communications and engagement across the church

3.3 Assets and Resources

- 3.3.1 Enhance care of our people, especially church workers and their families
- 3.3.2 Improve the use of our assets and resources that releases support to mission and ministry
- 3.3.3 Enhance stewardship of our assets and resources
- 3.3.4 Encourage greater support for the work of the church using innovative approaches

I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love – not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 5:38–39)



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BECAUSE GOD
LOVES US
We care