



# CHURCH PLANTING IN THE LCANZ

*Information for sending churches and partner churches*

*'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it,  
but God has been making it grow'  
(1 Corinthians 3:6).*



**LOCAL MISSION**  
NEW & RENEWING CHURCHES





# *Why partner* WITH CHURCH PLANTING IN THE LCANZ?

The risen Jesus sent his followers into the world as he had been sent. We believe that the words of Jesus in John 20:21,22 resonate deep in the hearts of all God's people: 'Receive the Holy Spirit ... as the Father sent me, so I am sending you.' Church planting is one of the ways that we can step more intentionally into this promise and commission of Jesus. Working together with the Holy Spirit, we engage in gospel partnerships that bring the beauty of the gospel to a growing number of people through new churches and new faith communities.

**The Lutheran Church has a beautiful gift that it brings to the world, and to the body of Christ. The heart of that gift is the focus on the gospel of God's grace in Jesus. Church planting brings that gift to more people, reaching new people with hope and good news.**



## INTRODUCTION: STEPPING OUT WITH JESUS

The New Testament immerses us in the world of new Christian communities participating in God's mission, sharing the good news of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Another way to put it is that the New Testament immerses us in the world of church planting! The Book of Acts describes the growth of the Christian church through the witness of ordinary Christians and the planting of new churches. St Paul was a church planter, and many of the Epistles were written to relatively new churches. The New Testament is the story of God growing his church through ordinary people. And one of the key features of the growth of the church was deep, wholehearted partnerships in the gospel.

The New and Renewing Churches ministry of the LCANZ's Local Mission exists to serve the kingdom of God by facilitating church planting and church renewal. We believe God still does amazing things through ordinary people and local churches. We invite you to step out with Jesus to see an expanding movement of thriving, multiplying local churches. This includes both established churches revitalised in their Christian witness and mission and the planting of new churches.

Local Mission, therefore, invites every congregation in the LCANZ to prayerfully consider becoming either a sending church (which intentionally sets out to plant a new expression of church, or faith community, within a few years) or a partner church (which partners in various ways with a new church plant or with a sending congregation).

We thank God for your partnership in the gospel!

## PARTNERS WITH JESUS

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). It was always his intention that the church would grow and be fruitful. And he chose to use ordinary people and local churches as the means by which he would build up his body, the church.

When we step into mission, we do so in partnership with Jesus himself. He promised to send us a Helper (John 14:16). Every baptised Lutheran in Australia and New Zealand is a recipient of Jesus' promise. We're part of the church he grew. And every one of us has received his promised Helper, the Holy Spirit, so we can partner with Jesus and keep the church growing.

Local Mission is taking Jesus' promise and sending seriously. We invite you and your congregation to join us on the journey to renew congregations in mission and plant many new churches.





# The plan:

## MOBILISE THE WHOLE CHURCH

In Mark 14:35, Jesus said to his followers, 'Whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it'.

We believe this saying applies as much to congregations as to individuals. When we keep our resources to ourselves, trying to save our own congregation, we are actually losing our life as people Jesus called. When we generously give away what Jesus has given us, we find new life in Jesus. So it is with churches that step out intentionally in mission. It's costly and difficult at times, but it's lifegiving, for this is who we are as God's people.

It's true that not every Lutheran congregation can plant a new church. However, every congregation can give its life away to the world in mission, including through the sacrificial support of church planting. Every congregation can partner with the growth of the church by partnering with a church planting team or sending church – through prayer, encouragement, financial support or commissioning a team member. As they give their life away for the sake of the gospel, they will find it!

Are you willing to explore your congregation becoming a partner church?

On the other hand, there are many Lutheran congregations that have the capacity to plant a new church. They are not always the biggest or most outwardly successful congregations! We are seeing small-to-medium-sized congregations going on the journey of church planting. God is doing surprising things in this way in the LCANZ! We are also seeing geographical cohorts of congregations work to plant a new church together. Could your congregation become a sending church or part of a church planting cohort?

We currently have a number of sending churches in Australia and New Zealand, with more in the wings. The churches they are planting will have church planting in their DNA; each new church aims to plant another church within five to eight years. These new churches will not look exactly like your congregation, but they will be real churches, local expressions of the body of Christ. Partner churches support the sending churches and church plants.

## WHY PLANT NEW CHURCHES?

The local congregation is the key instrument that God uses to build his church. The National Church Life Survey reports that in Australia, people who come to faith in Christ do so primarily through attending a local church. The research also indicates that new congregations are more effective than established ones in reaching people with the gospel and growing the church through new converts. The facts are compelling.

- New congregations attract more newcomers than older churches do. At church plants of mainstream denominations, around a third of people are newcomers. Conversely, in established LCANZ churches, newcomers represent only three per cent. In some cases, new church plants have three-quarters newcomer attendance.
- Church plants reach younger people. Not only are new churches better than others at reaching newcomers generally, but they are also attracting a younger demographic. In new churches, around 70% of people are between 15 and 49 years old, compared with less than half in churches generally. There is also a slightly higher proportion of males than females in church plants, the opposite of the trend in established churches.

# *The principle:*

MATURE CHURCHES  
PLANT NEW CHURCHES

Just as it's natural for a generation of mature, healthy adults to give birth to a new generation of children, so it is with churches. Church planting is an expression of a mature and healthy congregation that instinctively wants to create a new generation of believers in Christ. And just like it is with a human family, new churches may not look the same as the 'parent' church – they will reflect their own unique cultural context. Nevertheless, all church plants will bear a family resemblance – they will be shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the Christian church.

**We invite every Lutheran church in Australia and New Zealand to prayerfully commit to missional renewal and become either a sending church or a partner church.**

*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.*

(LCA Our Direction 2018-2024)



# The approach:

## TEAMWORK, PARTNERSHIP, TRAINING AND SENDING

We want to help you to see what the Holy Spirit is up to in your neighbourhood. Local Mission has a team approach to mentor the pastors, leaders and members of sending churches in preparation for church planting over a number of years. We support sending churches to grow in their own health and participation in God's mission – through evangelism, service and incarnational mission.

Local Mission will journey with each sending church and its pastor through a three-to-five-year church planting formation process. Specific and tailored training and equipping happens for each sending church rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

As part of this journey, we work with sending churches to form church planting teams and provide coaching in planting a church for people who are not yet Christians. This process involves learning how to listen, serve and make disciples. The church planting teams become communities learning together around their participation in God's mission.

This growth will not occur overnight. Sending churches make a big commitment. They know they will be sending some of their best leaders to start something new. But as Jesus said, when we give our lives away for the sake of the gospel, we find them again.

In addition to providing training support, sending churches will be encouraged to raise funds for church planting and put in place practical measures to support a church planter.

When a lead church planter is called by a sending church, the church planter will receive regular coaching, peer learning, theological training and missional formation.





## LOCAL MISSION'S COMMITMENT TO SENDING CHURCHES

Local Mission will provide the church planter or planting team with training and resources, regular church planter coaching, peer learning through a church planters' network, liaison with district bishops and mission directors, and pathways and conversations to help develop the new church.

## RENEWING YOUR CHURCH

This bold church planting plan is a critical piece of the Local Mission's vision under the LCA NZ churchwide mission strategy, but it's not the whole picture. A supporting element is the development of the mission capacity of LCA NZ congregations, including yours. So Local Mission can also assist you with local missional renewal.

## WHAT IS A PARTNER CHURCH?

Not all congregations have the capacity to be a sending church (a church that is planting new churches). Surprisingly, though, it's not the biggest and best-resourced congregations that always make the best sending churches!

But all congregations have the capacity to be partners in the mission of God and church planting.

That partnership is expressed in prayer, practical support, personal relationships and participating in ministry support of the new churches that are planted.

One of our aims is to see every congregation in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand renewed in its local mission and foster a culture where each congregation acts and understands itself as either a sending church or a partner church.

We invite you and your congregation to join this church-planting journey as a partner church.

# THE PARTNER CHURCH COMMITMENT

Partner churches support sending churches in these ways:

- **Prayer:** Church planting is hard work – the teams will need much prayer support. Partner churches will receive regular updates and prayer points from church planting teams.
- **Encouragement:** Church planting teams and their families need encouragement. Partner churches can do this by visiting the teams in their new congregations or writing to them to let them know they are being prayed for.
- **Finances:** Most church planting team members will be lay people. Many church planters will need financial help to keep themselves and their families afloat.
- **People:** Individuals or families may be commissioned by a partner church to be part of a church planting team, even if only for a short time or to serve a specific purpose.

Partner churches commit to standing alongside church plants for the long haul. Church plants can often take five years or more to become viable and self-sustaining in finances, volunteer base, and governance and leadership.

# HOW TO BECOME A PARTNER CHURCH OR A SENDING CHURCH

Engage your congregation in this invitation. Discuss how you might be able to support a church plant, and pray about it whenever your leadership team meets. You might like to propose that your congregation gives a proportion of its offering budget to church planting.

Then engage with Local Mission to work to revitalise your own mission, explore options for planting or partnership, pray or volunteer.

Contact Local Mission by phone or email. We are always joyful to explore possibilities for church planting and missional renewal and always happy to encourage mission-minded people!

# Support

## CHURCH PLANTING IN THE LCA NZ

This church planting venture is financially possible because of the ministry of New and Renewing Churches and the generosity of God's people. You and your congregation can support the LCA NZ's church planting ventures by donating via [www.lca.org.au/local-mission](http://www.lca.org.au/local-mission)

# Get in touch

Contact us if you would like to explore becoming a sending church or partner church or revitalising your established congregation in local mission.

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