

## **AGENDA 4.9**

# **Communications Department**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND KEY RESULTS AGAINST PLAN**

1. COVID-19 response – not part of the communications plan, but a significant aspect of our work in this synodical term
2. *The Lutheran* digital – meeting the needs of the ‘mobile market’
3. Emerging Media Review – reviewing our current use of emerging media and planning for the future
4. Communications workshop – aiming for a coordinated approach across LCA NZ agencies and districts and reducing duplication of resources
5. District, agency and project websites – built or building 14
6. Congregation websites – built or building 37
7. Social media – increased use of social media and implementation of management systems
8. Policy development – a coordinated approach to public responses to incidents

### **SUCCESES**

1. COVID response
2. Growing reputation as a skilled and reliable designer and builder of websites
3. Expansion of eNews services, particularly Daily Devotion

### **LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES**

#### Lessons Learned

1. COVID – the speedy adoption of recorded worship, live-streaming, video-conferencing, Zoom/Team meetings etc
2. Resources required to maintain and continuously improve and secure our services are more than anticipated.

#### Challenges

1. Growing disconnection between congregations and wider church
2. As noted above, maintaining and improving our services are costing more than anticipated
3. Congregation and agency expectations versus capacity and best practice for the wider church
4. Gatekeepers preventing messages being passed on
5. The under-use of LCA email accounts
6. Security against cyber attack

### **MAJOR IDENTIFIED RISKS**

1. Diminished financial resources and resulting loss of service capacity
2. Loss of *The Lutheran*
3. Cyber attack
4. Social media

## **BACKGROUND**

The LCA Communications Department was established in 2014 as part of the LCA national restructure and confirmed as part of changes to the churchwide structure supported by the

2018 Convention of General Synod. The primary objective of the department is to coordinate and support communications and engagement activities of Churchwide departments and agencies. The Communications Department provides support for the Office of the Bishop, Churchwide departments and agencies, Districts and congregations, as well as resourcing special projects and campaigns approved by General Synod or the General Church Board. Primary areas of communication overseen by the department are: *The Lutheran*, e-communications (eNews), social media and websites. Services are delivered by way of writing and editing, design and branding, emerging media development and support, website building and support, policy development and general advice.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS/RESULTS AGAINST PLAN**

### **MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS**

- COVID-19 – swift coordinated response to provide support to congregations, Districts and agencies, especially Commission on Worship, to meet the needs for worship at home; establishment of Church@Home resource hub; timely churchwide updates on rapidly changing situations in the various jurisdictions across the LCA NZ
- *The Lutheran* digital – developed and launched a cost-effective online version to meet the needs of the ‘mobile market’
- Emerging Media Review – commissioned an investigation into the scope and effectiveness of Communications Department’s current use of social media and other emerging media, and recommendations for best practice and future development
- Communications workshop – convened and hosted a churchwide two-day workshop for communications from Churchwide agencies and Districts with the aim of working together in a coordinated manner and to minimise duplication of resources
- District and agency websites – built (or to be completed in 2021): 3 District websites; 8 agency websites; and 3 project websites
- Congregation websites – built 20 websites, with another 17 ‘on the books’ at the time of this report
- Social media – implemented most of the recommendations from the Emerging Media Review, including more focus on prayer/devotional content, use of scheduling software, introduction of LCA Instagram account, and development of more video content
- Policy development – developed policy and procedures for Public Responses to Incidents, which, following consultation across the LCA NZ, was endorsed by GCB in February 2021; rollout, including training, will commence shortly.

### **PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN/OBJECTIVES**

#### **LCA ‘Our Direction’ 2018-2024 Engagement and Communications**

##### **3.2.1 Support greater engagement with local communities to assist churchwide services to be responsive to their needs**

1. In 2020, LCA Communications supported the emergency response to COVID lockdowns and quickly established the Church@Home website hub to provide ongoing information, resources and encouragement to congregations.
2. As a ‘ministry support’ department, LCA Communications has assisted churchwide agencies (eg New & Renewing Churches, Grow Ministries, Cross-Cultural Ministry, International Mission, ALC and ALWS) to provide connect with, build relationships and support local communities, via e-communications, social media and websites.

##### **3.2.2 Support church ministries to effectively use diverse media to inspire and equip individuals, families and communities to grow and go**

1. In 2019 a consultant was engaged to conduct an Emerging Media Review and to make recommendations for improving LCA Communications social media and other e-communications. Most of the recommendations have been implemented.
2. The use of videos, live-streaming and online 'how-tos' is a rapidly advancing trend (pushed along at rocket speed during the COVID shutdowns). Procedural documents for use by agencies and congregations have been prepared, and LCA Communications will be paying particular attention to these areas during the next synodical term.
3. LCA Communications has provided advice and guidance to Churchwide agencies and Districts in the safe and effective use of social media.
4. *The Lutheran* is now available in digital format, as a way of meeting the needs of an increasingly mobile readership.

### **3.2.3 Encourage local communities so that they feel valued, united and hopeful within their wider church family**

1. Social media is being used to promote daily prayer, by name, for congregations, schools, agencies and events. We are also promoting local significant events on LCA Facebook as a way of building community and connection and to communicate the value of each person and congregation.
2. *The Lutheran* features a tear-out prayer page to encourage prayer for the above groups. It also features stories aimed at encouraging members and communities as they see what God is doing across the LCA NZ.
3. The Daily Devotion eNews service was significantly improved and revamped as a way of supporting individuals and communities during COVID. This has been so successful in terms of uptake and feedback that we will be continuing this service indefinitely.

### **3.2.4 Deepen collaboration between the ministries of the church to achieve integrated and effective communications and engagement across the church**

1. A churchwide Communications Workshop was held in 2019 with the aim of improving collaboration across Churchwide agencies and Districts.
2. Overall, among the Churchwide agencies, there is collaboration with respect to e-communications, cross-promotion of events and campaigns, and compliance and best practice in relation to social media. All Churchwide agencies, projects and campaigns with websites and all Districts have engaged LCA Communications to build their websites.
3. LCA Communications has expanded its services to the aged care and community services sector. A branding guide has been developed, and websites have been built or are being built for five organisations in this sector.

## **SUCCESSSES**

1. COVID response – Refer to Achievements/Results above
2. Websites: Among LCA agencies (including in the aged care, community care and camping sectors) we are developing a reputation as a skilled and reliable designer and builder of websites. Two builds have been won through competitive commercial tender. While we are not intending to become a 'business', our website-building service is providing a modest additional income stream.
3. eNews: Our eNews service continues to expand, which augurs well for our capacity to reach a wide audience into the future. Of particular note is the rapid and enthusiastic uptake of the Daily Devotion eNews service, introduced during COVID lockdowns. This is evidence of our people's thirst for spiritual growth resources from the LCA NZ.

## **LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES**

1. COVID: Through necessity, the lockdowns rocketed congregations and agencies across the LCA NZ into learning how to record worship, live-stream, video-conference, conduct

Zoom/Teams study groups and meetings, which otherwise would have taken years or decades to achieve. Across the entire church, much of what we learnt and the new technologies we adopted during the lockdowns have continued to be implemented, providing not only additional ways of connecting but also cost-saving measures. COVID lockdowns also provided a clear picture of those people and congregations who were able to move quickly and nimbly in the communications space, and the reasons why they were able to do that.

2. Maintaining our investment: Less positive has been the learning experience that maintaining what we have built requires more investment of resources than we had anticipated, and that working with congregations (especially on websites) takes more time than we would like (see also Challenges below).

## **Challenges**

1. Like most other Churchwide departments and agencies, the Communications Department suffers from a growing disconnection between congregations and the wider church. There are a number of reasons for this trend, but it is increasingly difficult to reach into congregations when they are (a) exhausted, (b) despondent and (c) focused primarily on their local church community; and also (d) information about the wider church does not reach them (see #4 and #5 below), thus increasing the sense of isolation.
2. As mentioned above, maintaining the website and e-communications services we have built is a significant challenge, as we work simultaneously to continually improve services, implement security measures, and innovate.
3. We also juggle congregation and agency expectations (eg wanting the latest technology) over against our capacity to deliver and what is in the best interests of the church overall.
4. Gatekeepers in some places prevent Churchwide and District messages from reaching the broader membership of the church and even congregation leaders.
5. The under-use (and in some case, refusal to use) LCA email accounts means that many of our messages to pastors, other church workers, employees and volunteers are not received, let alone read and actioned.
6. Security against cyber attack will continue to be a significant challenge in terms of vigilance and resources. We are grateful for the support and expertise of LCA IT in this area.

## **RISKS**

### ***Major risks***

1. Diminished financial resources  
At the time of writing, the department budget for 2022 and beyond is unknown but is likely to be less than in previous years.
2. Loss of *The Lutheran*  
*The Lutheran* continues to be the LCA's primary and most effective communication tool. Diminishing subscriptions (4850 at today's date, reduced from 5900 in 2018 and 7000 in 2015) present a serious risk with respect to financial sustainability.
3. Cyber attack  
So far, due to our implementation of security measures, the Communications Department assets (websites, e-communications) have not suffered damage due to cyber attack, but the threat is constant.
4. Social media

We constantly monitor and manage our LCA official social media sites for breaches of our LCA policy, but posts that can hurt or harm people or the LCA's reputation can never be fully prevented. The greater risk involves agency and congregation sites, where monitoring and management is limited, and on non-LCA Lutheran sites over which we have no control.

### **Likelihood of identified risks occurring and potential impact**

1. Diminished resources – unknown risk at the time of writing  
Impact: reduction in services to agencies and congregations; loss of ground won since establishment of the department in 2014; reputational damage due to inability to deliver services once offered (particularly relevant to website and e-communications support); staff burnout
2. Loss of *The Lutheran* – moderate to high risk over the next synodical term  
Impact: The loss of *The Lutheran* due to financial unsustainability would severely impact on Churchwide agencies' capacity to directly connect with members. E-communications, though reasonably effective in connecting with church leaders, would not come close to replacing the reach of *The Lutheran* into the church at large.
3. Cyber attack – moderate risk  
Impact: Financial; data theft; reputational - loss of trust from our 'clients' (agencies and congregations)
4. Social media – low to moderate risk on LCA official sites; moderate to high risk on non-LCA Lutheran sites  
Impact: Hurt or harm caused to persons or groups; financial (legal) or reputational risk to the LCA

### **Action taken to mitigate risk**

1. Financial sustainability is the greatest risk at the time of writing. Consideration is being given to reducing services that would have the least negative impact on agencies and congregations.
2. Regarding *The Lutheran*, all possible avenues to expand its subscription base are being explored, as well as other communication tools that could go some way to filling the void should it become financially unsustainable.
3. All reasonable security measures are being implemented to protect our websites and e-communications.
4. Our LCA social media sites are actively monitored and managed.

## **ALIGNMENT TO 'OUR DIRECTION 2018-2024'**

Refer to Progress Against Plan/Objectives

## **COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION**

1. Office of the Bishop – e-communications, advice
2. Churchwide departments and agencies – communications plans, promotion of events and campaigns, copywriting and editing, e-communications, social media, websites, branding and design, advice
3. Professional Standards Department – policy and procedures, especially relating to social media and privacy
4. ICT Advisory Committee - exploring new and emerging technologies, cooperating in projects and issues (including cyber security) where there is overlap between the Communications and IT departments
5. Districts – e-communications, social media, websites, advice
6. Aged care and community services sector – branding, websites
7. Congregations – websites, branding, design, advice

8. Synod-endorsed task groups, project and campaign teams – communications plans, copywriting and editing, e-communications, websites, design, advice
9. Synod Planning team – communications plans, e-communications, website, design

## **FINANCE/BUDGET**

We are grateful for the support provided by the LLL to support the work of the department.

### **COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT (INCLUDING *THE LUTHERAN*)**

<b>FINANCE REPORT</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Income	281,291	422,147	586,361
Expenditure	(604,923)	(547,573)	(717,464)
Grants allocated for year	247,246	175,000	110,000
Non cash transfers	53,287	3,530	(525)
Net result for year	(23,099)	53,104	(21,628)
Total available at beginning of year	235,312	182,208	203,836
Reserves available for the future	212,213	235,312	182,208