



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**

**OF AUSTRALIA**

**VICTORIAN DISTRICT  
INCLUDING TASMANIA**

ARBN 44 055 123 692

755 Station Street, Box Hill Vic 3128

03 9236 1200

[administration@vic.lca.org.au](mailto:administration@vic.lca.org.au)

[www.vic.lca.org.au](http://www.vic.lca.org.au)

10 October 2024

Dear fellow members of God's flock,

I communicate briefly with you following the recent General Pastors' Conference and Convention in Adelaide, knowing that some of you attended General Convention as delegates or visitors, some followed it online, while others have had little connection with either.

I expect you know about the outcome of some business, especially the adoption of parts of the Way Forward Framework with the decision to remove Theses of Agreement 6;11 from the public doctrine of the LCANZ.

TA 6;11, as it is known, states:

*Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired.*

The Theses of Agreement has formed the basis for church unity since the two prior Lutheran synods combined in 1966 to form the LCA. Naturally, the removal of this clause of our common confession on the Office of the Ministry will affect the practice of the LCANZ, meaning that women as well as men will be able to be ordained as Pastors.

Pastors Conference advised and synod agreed that CTICR prepare a Pastoral and Theological statement to include a description of the exegetical difference among us as to 'who is to be ordained into the office of the public ministry', what this means for our common life as one church, and what will be the provision for conscience concerns. This is to be discussed at pastors' conferences in 2025 and thereafter presented to an interim online Convention.

Conversations at General Pastors Conference and Synod were robust but respectful. We thank the pastors and lay delegates who, like me, are probably feeling exhausted from an intense period of travel, concentration, interaction and debate that came after another intense 18-month 'Way Forward' journey for our church. I pray the delegates have found some time for rest in recent days.

*where love comes to life*

No doubt, some of you are joyful and hopeful about the outcome of the Way Forward resolution, while for others there is deep sadness, concern for the church, and for some, uncertainty about their place in this church.

My encouragement is this:

If you are happy with the outcome of the synod vote on ordination, please consider those for whom it causes grief or uncertainty.

If the outcome of the synod vote troubles you, I encourage you to let it sit with you and not to make hasty reactions or decisions. Reflect on it patiently and prayerfully, immersed in Scripture and the promises of your baptism. Seek the mutual conversation and consolation of the fellow members who journey with you.

Besides our processing of what this means for us, we should not forget that there are always considerations beyond our own. We are part of a wider church-family which includes people who could benefit from our support.

St Paul encourages us as he did the Christians in Galatia during their time of struggle, *'Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ'* (Gal. 6:2).

Some of you will have questions. Please speak to your pastor or church leadership if you do. They probably won't have all the answers but will be willing to help you as best they can.

In your conversations, emails and on social media, please be mindful of the Eighth Commandment. Yes, say how you are feeling if you need to, but be careful not to speak ill of others, either by what you say or imply. As St Paul's encouraged the Colossians, *'Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt'* (Col. 4:6a)

Finally, be gentle with yourselves, as God is gentle with you.

*The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress...  
He says, "Be still, and know that I am God"  
(Psalm 46).*

Yours in Christ,



Lester Priebbenow

Bishop, Victoria Tasmania District

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