

18 April 2023

Dear Members of the LCA:

The LCA stands at a crossroads. Delegates to the recent General Convention of Synod in Melbourne approved a motion from the Queensland district directing the General Church Board and the College of Bishops to work through the requirements “to operate as one church with two different practices of ordination” and to establish a framework for accomplishing this. The resolution foresees one or more districts of the LCA that “teach and practice the ordination of both women and men to the office of public ministry.” The resolution includes the expectation “that both women and men will be ordained in a District of the LCANZ during the 2024-2027 synodical period.” This vision of an LCA with two, not just different, but mutually contradictory teachings and practices on the office of the ministry will result in the breaking of fellowship around altar and pulpit, striking at the very heart of the church’s true unity.

With this letter, the undersigned LCA pastors, supported by LCA laypeople, announce our intention to abide by the LCA’s existing confession of faith and its doctrinal position. We reject any attempt to bring about a false sense of “church unity” by imposing upon the LCA two mutually contradictory doctrines and practices of ministry by political and procedural means, when we are called by God and our own confessions to judge all teachings in the church by the standard of the Scriptures. To those who already share our view, we write to encourage you to persevere. To those who do not share our view, we call on you to return to the LCA’s stated doctrine and practice according to the Word of God. With this letter, we also declare our goal of preserving for the future a confessional Lutheran synod in Australia and New Zealand.

Members of the LCA need to be aware of the radical departure from synodical processes that the recent decision constitutes. The debate over the ordination of women has been going on for more than two decades. Previous motions at synod to introduce the ordination of women have understood that a Scriptural basis was needed to make this change. By contrast, the motion approved in Melbourne does not appeal to any Scriptural argument. The difference signals a disturbing shift in the way that synod debates and resolves doctrine and practice. The results of the shift to political and procedural means and away from Scripture were there for all present in Melbourne to see: the General Church Board using questionable constitutional manoeuvres to override the advice of General Pastors Conference; relevant amendments to the Queensland proposal, which might have provided alternative solutions that honoured both sides in the debate, being ruled out of order and so not allowed to come to the floor; and the like.

We have been told, including in the final report of the immediate past LCA bishop, that synod is now in a position where Scripture is no longer able to decide the question of ordination. If that were the case, then the LCA would cease to be a church of the Lutheran confession. Such a position is irreconcilable with the LCA’s confession that Scripture is the “only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life” (Article 2 of the constitution). Accordingly, all doctrine and practice in the church, including ordination, is to

be decided on the basis of Scripture. Lutherans continue to look to Scripture, even (or especially) on disputed matters, in the conviction that Scripture is the sufficient, clear, and ultimate authority for all matters of doctrine, faith, and life. The question of who is permitted to fill the office of public ministry is a doctrinal matter according to the Lutheran confessions. Those in the LCA who have been promoting the ordination of women have not been able to offer a clear and convincing Scriptural argument for the practice that would override the biblical foundations (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–14) for a male-only pastorate in the LCA, as is shown by the failure of the Draft Doctrinal Statement on the ordination of both women and men (2018) to receive the support of even a majority of LCA pastors, let alone endorsement at general synod. There is no God-given basis for abandoning the LCA's stated doctrine and practice.

We do not know what the general convention of synod in 2024 will bring. However, should delegates to synod depart from the LCA's stated doctrine and practice, we shall have no choice but to stay with that doctrine and practice. Political and procedural motions alone cannot solve the conflict. A church with two mutually contradictory teachings and practices on the office of the ministry cannot endure. As Jesus taught us, a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25).

Institutions, even particular denominations, may rise and fall, but the Word of God endures forever. We pledge our commitment to that Word. Further, Jesus Christ has promised that his church will endure forever. Only God who sees the heart knows where true faith in Christ exists, and thus where the true church exists. But according to our confession, we know the external marks of the true church, which include the gospel preached harmoniously according to a right understanding and the right administration of the sacraments according to the divine Word, by a properly called ministry as instituted by God. With hope in this promise, and with steadfast and joyful commitment to this confession, we invite you to join us as we seek to ensure an orthodox Lutheranism in Australia and New Zealand for the future. God grant you faith, courage, and wisdom.

We, the undersigned pastors, make this confession for the sake of the gospel and in defence of God's clear word.

Rev Matt Anker
Rev Roger Atze
Rev Guntars Baikovs
Rev Howard Beard
Rev David W Buck
Rev Paul Calnan
Rev Tony Castle
Rev Bryce Clark
Rev Avito da Costa
Rev John Davison
Rev David Eckermann
Rev Christian Fandrich
Rev Peter Fuhlbohm

Rev Chris Gallasch
Rev Peter Geyer
Rev Ben Graham
Rev Greg Graham
Rev Joseph Graham
Rev Neil Guthrig
Rev David Haak
Rev Paul Hage
Rev Robert Hamann
Rev Mark Hampel
Rev Michael Hauser
Rev Dr Adam Hensley
Rev Donald Heyne

Rev Steve Hibbard
Rev Robin Hoffmann
Rev Mal Huf
Rev Dr Stephen Hultgren
Rev Ken Jaworski
Rev Graham Jenke
Rev Christopher Johnson
Rev Mathew Ker
Rev Ernie Kiss
Rev Byron Klein
Rev Rhyall (Jim) Klein
Rev Dr John Kleinig
Rev Vernon Kleinig
Rev Evan Koch
Rev Peter Koehne
Rev Neville Kriewaldt
Rev Peter Kriewaldt
Rev Joe Kummerow
Rev Dr Greg Lockwood
Rev Dr Michael Lockwood
Rev Simon Mackenzie
Rev Shaun Manning
Rev Lucas Matuschka
Rev Richard Mau
Rev Keith McNicol
Rev Deane Meatheringham
Rev Rex Mickan
Rev Sam Modra
Rev Joshua Muller
Rev Andrew Neumann

Rev Peter Noble
Rev Ryan Norris
Rev Josh Pfeiffer
Rev Lou Pfeiffer
Rev Dr Stephen Pietsch
Rev Tom Pietsch
Rev Jason Pokela
Rev John Prenzler
Rev Michael Prenzler
Rev Heath Pukallus
Rev Christopher Raatz
Rev Frank Rasenberger
Rev Carl Richter
Rev Dr Andrew Ruddell
Rev Martin Scharnke
Rev Wally Schiller
Rev Jack Shepherd
Rev Murray Smith
Rev Michael Steicke
Rev Kees Sturm
Rev Richard Taylor
Rev Joseph Theodorsen
Rev Carl Thiele
Rev Robert Thiele
Rev Paul Traeger
Rev Tony Traeger
Rev Lee van Rossen
Rev Jim Westphal
Rev Robin Zadow

We, the undersigned lay members of the LCA, join these pastors and affirm their confession as our own.

Henry Alsop (St John's, Dernancourt SA)
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Emily Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Joshua Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Laura Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Mark Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Sam Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Sue Ariens (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
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Barney Bahnerth (St Peter's, Canberra ACT)
Betija Baikova (Glandore-Underdale Parish SA)
Jana Baikova (Glandore-Underdale Parish SA)
Daniels Baikovs (Glandore-Underdale Parish SA)
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Doris Barker (Good Shepherd, Ringwood VIC)
Sandra Becham (St Martin's, Mt Gambier SA)
Christine Beelitz (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
Keith Beelitz (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
Herbert Bolitho (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba QLD)
John Bolitho (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba QLD)
Lynette Bolitho (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba QLD)
Barbara Borgas (Trinity, Warrnambool VIC)
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David Bradtke (Concordia, Loxton SA)
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Deborah Brandon (Zion, Angaston SA)
Jadon Brandon (Zion, Angaston SA)
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Danielle Brown (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
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Matthew Buck (Bethlehem, Adelaide SA)
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James Campbell (RMLC, Mandurah WA)
Megan Castle (Trinity, Hope Valley SA)
Judy Clark (Strathalbyn Congregation, SA)
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Rosemary Crawford (St Martin's, Mt Gambier SA)
Anna da Costa (Bookpurnong Congregation, Loxton SA)
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Devon Dutschke (Calvary, Greensborough VIC)
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Erica Eckermann (St John's, Pella VIC)
Michael Eckermann (St John's, Pella VIC)
Norelle Eckermann (St John's, Pella VIC)
Russell Eckermann (St John's, Pella VIC)
Ruth Eckermann (St John's, Pella VIC)
Marj Eime (Our Saviour, Rochedale QLD)
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Tom Fowler (St Paul's, Townsville QLD)
Dylan Francis (Glandore-Underdale Parish SA)
John Francis (Pilgrim, Magill SA)
Patricia Francis (Pilgrim, Magill SA)
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Helen Fuhlbohm (Redeemer, Toowoomba QLD)
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Geoff Gellert (St Paul's, Ararat VIC)
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Lara Hepner (Holy Cross, Birdwood SA)
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Mel Hermann (St Peter's, Stawell VIC)
Rosemary Heyne (St John's, Geelong VIC)
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Meryl Hill (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Audrey Hillcrest-Geue (St Paul's, Ararat VIC)
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Ron Miller (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
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Ruth Morris (Our Saviour, Semaphore SA)
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Heather Neumann (St John's, Wilsonton QLD)
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Rosemary Noble (North Tasmania Parish)
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Naomi Nuske (St Michael's, Tarrington VIC)
Rebecca Nuske (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
Robert Nuske (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
Tim Nuske (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
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Molly Paech (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba QLD)
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Narelle Pietsch (Redeemer, Stanthorpe QLD)
Robert Pietsch (Redeemer, Stanthorpe QLD)
Scott Pietsch (Redeemer, Stanthorpe QLD)
Gabriel Prenzler (Pilgrim, Magill SA)
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Rebecca Prenzler (Pilgrim, Magill SA)
Lynette Priebbenow (Good News, Middle Park QLD)
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Lois Rathjen (Concordia, Loxton SA)
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Luke Reichenbach (St John's, Jeparit VIC)
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Ken Reid (Redeemer, Toowoomba QLD)
Ruth Reid (Redeemer, Toowoomba QLD)
Colin Rethus (St Peter's, Stawell VIC)
John Richardson (Zion, Gawler SA)
John Richardson (Grace, Tanunda SA)
Colin Rohde (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba QLD)
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Colin Schaefer (Holy Cross, Robertstown SA)
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Kym Schaefer (St Paul's, Glenelg SA)
Narelle Schaefer (St Paul's, Glenelg SA)
Symon Scheiwe (Bethesda, Beenleigh QLD)
Felix Schiller (St John's, Eudunda SA)
Helen Schiller (Eudunda Robertstown Parish, SA)
Joan Schiller (Immanuel, Light Pass SA)
Paul Schiller (Eudunda Robertstown Parish, SA)
Charmaine Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
Dexter Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
Graeme Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
Malcolm Schilling (St Stephen's, Rainbow VIC)
Pets Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
Robert Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
Shirley Schilling (Holy Trinity, Horsham VIC)
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Frank Scholz (St Paul's, Yaninee SA)
Hedley Scholz (Eudunda Robertstown Parish, SA)
Joy Scholz (Eudunda Robertstown Parish, SA)
Stella Scholz (St Paul's, Yaninee SA)
Trevor Scholz (St Paul's, Yaninee SA)
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Glen Schultz (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
John Schultz (St Peter's, Murrayville VIC)

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Shirley Schulze (St Paul's, Grovedale VIC)
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Shirley Schurmann (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Kathleen Schuster (Good News, Middle Park QLD)
Terry Schuster (Good News, Middle Park QLD)
Bruce Schutz (Immanuel, Point Pass SA)
Clare Schutz (St Stephen's, Nildottie SA)
Colin Schutz (St John's, Karlsruhe SA)
Ken Schutz (Bethlehem, Pinnaroo SA)
Lyn Schutz (Immanuel, Point Pass SA)
Neville Schutz (Immanuel, Kadina SA)
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Hayley Simons (Trinity, Warrayure VIC)
John Simpkin (St Peter's, Stawell VIC)
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Adeline Steel (St Paul's, Townsville QLD)
Cate Steel (St Paul's, Townsville QLD)
Corrie Steel (St Paul's, Townsville QLD)
Dianne Steel (St Paul's, Townsville QLD)
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Pam Thiele (Bethlehem, Adelaide SA)

Justin Thompson (St Paul's, Nundah QLD)
Millie Thompson (St Paul's, Nundah QLD)
Nadia Thompson (St Paul's, Nundah QLD)
Andrew Tonissen (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Beth Tonissen (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Mark Tonissen (St Michael's, Tarrington VIC)
Malcolm Twartz (Strathalbyn Congregation, SA)
Roslyn Twartz (Strathalbyn Congregation, SA)
Joylene Uebergang (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Beryl Underwood (Concordia, Loxton SA)
Dale Underwood (Concordia, Loxton SA)
Sonja van Rossen (St James, Whyalla SA)
Mervyn Wagner (St John's, Dernancourt SA)
Alison Walter (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Doreen Walter (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Peter Walter (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Richard Walter (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Cherie Wandel (St Paul's, Balaklava SA)
Timothy Wandel (St Paul's, Balaklava SA)
Dean Wedding (Calvary, Greensborough VIC)
Lester Wedding (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Rex Wedding (Good Shepherd, Hamilton VIC)
Ann Marie Werner (St John's, Jeparit VIC)
Wayne Werner (St John's, Jeparit VIC)
Lynette Wicks (St John's, Perth WA)
Elfriede Wilksch (St Paul's, Ararat VIC)
Aileen Will (Cowell Lutheran, Cowell SA)
David Wittwer (Holy Cross, Robertstown SA)
Helen Wittwer (Holy Cross, Robertstown SA)
Howard Wittwer (Grace, Tanunda SA)
Melanie Wittwer (Bethlehem, Adelaide SA)
Peter Wittwer (Bethlehem, Adelaide SA)
Robin Wittwer (Grace, Tanunda SA)
Cathryn Zarnke (Bethlehem, Glencoe QLD)
Keith Ziebell (Redeemer, Toowoomba QLD)
Noel Ziebell (Trinity, Southport QLD)