



Streams in the desert Community

AIM: The Streams in the Desert Community is a growing network of every-day Lutherans who seek to create a community of people who have the time, heart, and energy to actively work to honour, support and enhance the contributions which women bring to the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This community aims to bring about gender-inclusive doctrine and practice, including that of ordination, at all levels within the LCA/NZ. We also recognise the need to be working to facilitate the healing of our church as a critical part of this journey.

KEY RATIONALE: If those of us in support of women's ordination are to see a positive outcome at Synod 2021, there needs to be an increase in the number of 'the people in the pews' actively engaging around the issue and its contributing factors. In practical terms, this means growing a wide, strong network of laity, pastors, office holders, and those now on the fringes of the church, and the sharing of actions, proposals, and stories about what is happening across the church to move things forward.

HOW DID IT START & WHO STARTED IT? We began as a small group of church members and pastors after Convention of Synod 2018, and there are now over 240 members/subscribers across the LCA/NZ. Amos Hedt, Pastor Ian Lutze, Julie Hahn, Liz Winderlich, Pastor Matt Thiele, Natasha Eliola, Brenda Jericho and others volunteered their time to form the initial core group, established along the lines of an advisory committee with Brenda in a voluntary coordinator/project worker role. Others who have walked this journey for longer were also consulted, as well as AIM. The current SDC workgroup meets regularly online, frequently connecting with other laity and pastors for input and feedback. Day-to-day running of SDC, the Website, Prayermail, Newsletter, the ever-growing mailing lists and other projects are looked after by different members of the Workgroup as they are able.

KEY GOALS: SDC has 3 key goals:

1. Create, support and encourage a network of supporters of WO across Australia and the NZ (prayermail, Newsletter & Updates, website, specific projects) with representation in as many congregations as possible
2. At a local level, encourage individuals/congregations/regions to establish workgroups and/or
 - Make a congregational presentation around the issue of women's ordination
 - Hold a (formal or informal) congregational vote around support for women's ordination
 - Distribute resources and information as appropriate
3. At a national level, support, encourage and inform individuals and congregations to generate and /or support the circulation of Synod and congregational proposals and other appropriate actions

HOW WE DO THIS: Our emphasis is on the formation of community and outcome-based activities - working together we develop community; in community, we work together on achieving outcomes. Outcomes include the following:

- **The Streams in the Desert Community website has been established** as distinct from the Women's Ordination in the LCA (WOLCA) Facebook page which has a small number of members who are against women's ordination – it is nonetheless a great space for support and sharing of thoughts and materials, and we encourage all supporters to join. However, our premise is that a separate secure space is needed to allow for planning and development of resources and strategies for change. The SDC website is open to any validated individual in agreement with the Aim and Statement of Intent and the guidelines documented.
- **The Streams in the Desert Community Newsletter and SDC Updates** are the key tools to both provide a point of contact and inform and connect all those who share our goals. Both seek to provide a 'clearing house' for resources, ideas, actions, and events, enabling co-ordination between groups, congregations, and individuals with the same goals.

- **Let's Connect and What Next Workshops** have been held both face-to-face and now online with regional or local groups and congregations to strengthen connections and work together to find ways to move forward.
- **The For Such a Time as This Prayermail** has evolved into a key tool for encouragement and connection between many supporters of the ordination of women. In order maintain confidentiality, you are welcome to join on providing agreement with its membership requirements.
- **Ordaining Women in the Lutheran Church of Australia** is a convenient postcard-sized summary of the key reasons for ordaining women in the Lutheran Church., based on the statement 'The Case for Ordaining Women' by CTICR, 2016
- **PowerPoint Presentations:** two presentations are available, one in video format, outlining both the story so far and the issues around the ordination of women. Each one has been copyrighted to avoid misuse.

SDC ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS:

- 1. We will work alongside the LCA, to build our church and not to undermine it or its leaders.** With the love, compassion and guidance that our God makes available to us, we seek to work on the continual renewal and reformation of our earthly church, the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand, and maintain timely and contact with regular LCA leadership.
- 2. Structure and Leadership:** Currently an SDC Workgroup and several other individuals with specific skills, expertise, and a long history of involvement in promoting WO contribute to the oversight of the Streams in the Desert Community (SDC). This includes lay people, pastors, and an SDC 'team' who manage the day-to-day activities. All contributions are voluntary: there are no paid staff, rather a committed group of people giving up a substantial amount of their 'spare' time.
- 3. Funding:** Initially minimal costs were involved, and members met these out of their own pockets. With the upcoming launch of the postcard and new website, we have now registered as a business and would welcome donations to cover the cost of these and other incidentals. If needed, we may also establish a subsidy fund for delegates from to Convention of Synod 2021.
- 4. Membership Guidelines:**
 - a. to seek always to follow Jesus through the guidance of God's word and the Holy Spirit, and bring glory to God in all that we say and do
 - b. to be respectful and supportive in conversation and actions, and to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'
 - c. to always be mindful that this is a private group, and to employ appropriate confidentiality and discretion in discussing members, activities and materials with anyone outside of the group
 - d. to act and speak in a manner consistent with the Aims and Statement of Intent
- 5. Foundational scripture: Isaiah 43: 19-21**

***"Behold, I am about to do something new;
even now it is coming. Do you not see it?
Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.
The animals of the field will honour Me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert,
to give drink to My chosen people.
The people I formed for Myself
will declare My praise."***