

## An open letter to the College of Bishops and the General Church Board of the LCANZ

Date: 16 January 2023

Dear Bishop Paul Smith, Assistant Bishop Neville Otto, Bishop David Altus, Bishop Lester Priebbenow, Bishop Mark Vainikka, Bishop Mark Whitfield, Bishop Mike Fulwood, Bishop Robert Bartholomaeus, and members of the General Church Board: Pastor Tim Stringer, Kim Baumeler, Paul Argyle, Charmaine Harch, Tim Wiebusch, Mel Zerner and Peter Zweck,

Christ's grace and peace be with you.

Our LCANZ General Convention of Synod is fast approaching. With that comes a sense of hope and optimism for much needed healing to occur in our Church. The majority of the LCANZ continue to be hopeful for the implementation of the ordination of both women and men. This will enable us as a whole Church to move forward into rejuvenation and regrowth as the whole body of Christ. At the same time there is no doubt that fear of change, mistrust, anxiety and uncertainty are also present in the leadup to Synod. We pray for faith, hope and love amidst the challenges and messiness as we come together with our imperfections on the floor of Synod.

The purpose of this letter is to identify three areas in relation to women's ordination for your consideration, discussion, and response.

1. There has been much discussion in relation to hearing from women who are called to the ordained ministry and giving them a time slot designated for sharing their voice from the floor of Synod. The signatories of this letter implore the GCB and CoB to allocate intentional time for two or three women who are called to the ordained ministry to share their story of call with the Church.

**From our knowledge and experience, throughout this debate over many decades, no woman has ever been asked or allowed to share her story in relation to being called to the ordained ministry. It is time for delegates voting on the ordination of women to hear the voices of these women in an especially allocated time slot.**

2. While public discussion is always fraught with risk, collectively we can work on intentionally providing an environment of mutual respect, non-judgementalism, encouragement and Christian love; while at the same time discouraging conduct and behaviour that deliberately derails, undermines and deflects attention away from the focus of discussion. While we can all model healthy and safe behaviour personally, GCB and CoB have an even more crucial role in both modelling and holding people accountable for their behaviour on the floor of Synod. Thank you for leading strongly in this area during the recent town hall sessions and in the communication to delegates. We encourage you to actively continue to foster healthy, respectful engagement on the Synod floor in February 2023.

3. There seems to be a lack of clarity as to how the absentee votes and abstentions are counted on the floor of Synod. Are these votes automatically counted as 'no' votes on any voting matter? And if so, on what basis does this occur? Understanding this process is crucial for all delegates and for respectful and good order during the Synod. Furthermore, if the voting result is close, please clarify the procedure for when and how a decision for a recount would be made.

In thinking about responding to these three points, perhaps the GCB and CoB could:

- Provide a designated timeslot for women in the Synod agenda to present their call to ordained ministry for consideration by the delegates;
- actively nurture Christian unity as a way of reducing divisive behaviour during Synod, and working more closely together, in an environment of shared learning and shared responsibility, where differences of opinion are accepted and even encouraged; and
- be transparent in explaining the details of the voting system, thus reducing ambiguity and fostering clarity.

**In conclusion, we long for the ordination of both women and men in the LCANZ to be implemented at Synod in February so that continued debate that leaves us divided can finally cease. Our already divided and dwindling Church can receive healing as we all step out together with the Gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in the manifold ways each woman and man has been called, gifted, and equipped to serve God through our Church. Instead of holding our women back, we look forward to welcoming many more labourers in the harvest field to share the faith, hope and love of Jesus with the world.**

Thank you for taking the time to hear and consider our voices. It would be very helpful if you could address our questions either in a direct response or publicly. We will publish this open letter on Streams in the Desert (<https://www.streamsinthedesert.com.au>) and Women at the Well (<https://www.watw.com.au>) and would like to publish your response on these platforms with your permission.

Lastly, we would like to advise that excerpts from our previous open letters to you have been published as part of the recent book 'Unless they are sent – affirming the ordination of women and men in the LCANZ' (edited by Tanya Wittwer). Most Synod delegates have already received a copy in the mail and the book will be available on the Australian Christian Resources (ACR) table during Synod. It is also available on <https://mediacomeducation.org.au/shop/unless-they-are-sent/>

In God's grace and peace

#### Signatories

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|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Maria Rudolph    | 6. John Zeppel     |
| 2. Libby Jewson     | 7. Helen Lockwood  |
| 3. Cathryn Hamilton | 8. Tanya Wittwer   |
| 4. Liz Winderlich   | 9. Kathy Matuschka |
| 5. Margaret Modra   | 10. Sue Westhorp   |

11. Joy Christian
12. David Christian
13. Geoff Burger
14. Steen Olsen
15. Robert Voigt
16. Jeff Silcock
17. Dean Zweck
18. Bob Kempe
19. Vic Pfitzner
20. Shelley Koch
21. Stephen Haar
22. Maurice Schild
23. Peter Lockwood
24. Louis A Moss
25. Jordan Moore
26. Dania Ahern
27. Brian Ahern
28. Marg Simpfendorfer
29. Jo Freckelton
30. David Freckelton
31. Monica Christian
32. Ivan Christian
33. Deborah Myers
34. Peter Pfitzner
35. Ian Graue
36. Greg Bensted
37. Peter Bean
38. Anna Watson
39. Jennie Jones
40. James Jones
41. Margaret Mickan
42. Susan Wood
43. Tim Castle-Schmidt
44. Iris Gladigau
45. Gary Jewson
46. Paul Meyer
47. Betty Meyer
48. Denise Grieshaber
49. Mark Lieschke
50. Peter Hage
51. Helen Burger
52. Kenneth Stringer
53. Yvonne Claus
54. Helene Schulz
55. Sharryn Cook
56. John Schubert
57. Cathy Brown
58. Ruth Olsen
59. Joyce Graue
60. Ruth Rathjen
61. Alan Collyer
62. Coral Collyer
63. Bruce Lockwood
64. Michelle Eastwood
65. Wendy Begg
66. Allen Kloeden
67. Martin Albrecht
68. Tick Zweck
69. Chris Mann
70. Lynette Williams
71. Jim Strelan
72. Joy Strelan
73. Alison Jarick
74. Emily Hunt
75. Alison Short
76. Anita Short
77. Roger Hunter
78. Marie Miegel
79. Rick Strelan
80. Inari Thiel
81. Sue Kloeden
82. Karen Dymke
83. Nathan Hedt
84. Julie Hahn
85. Lynne Schmidt
86. Steven Cramer
87. Shiron Dixon
88. Jan Baker
89. Lester Dreckow
90. Debbie Dreckow
91. Merrilyn Beaumont
92. Mark Christian
93. Patricia Walker
94. Gus Schutz
95. Steve Liersch
96. Ben Hentschke
97. Dylan Miegel
98. Robin Mann

99. Dorothy Mann
100. Juanita Kleinig
101. Ian Rentsch
102. Lyn Marshall
103. Ray Schulz
104. Nerida Schulz
105. Heidi Joy
106. Ronda Rohrlach
107. Rob Rohrlach
108. Brian Wandel
109. Diane Wandel
110. David Schuller
111. Geoff Crooks
112. Peter Hudson
113. Susanne Hudson
114. John Juers
115. Miriam Juers
116. Jeff Wood
117. Chris Bartholomaeus
118. Pamela Richardson
119. Clive Richardson
120. Ray Meharg
121. Karel Tepper
122. Vibeke Hopley
123. Paul Schulz
124. David Filsell
125. Dawn Ehrke
126. Ron Ehrke
127. Narelle Shallard
128. Monica Hueppauff
129. Kaye Pfeiffer
130. Amanda Garrett
131. Irene Faith Joppich
132. Karen Peters
133. Gary Peters
134. Geraldine Avent
135. Gladys Koch
136. Edwin Koch
137. Joy van der Hoek
138. Kay Buckland
139. Peter Buckland
140. Rod Schubert
141. Melinda Zavalis
142. Mike Vitale
143. Val Vitale
144. Nicky Bricknell
145. Gloria Harch
146. Michael Rudolph
147. Mark Butler
148. Judy Bartels
149. Armin
150. Hannah Pietsch
151. Anna Nürnberger
152. Helen Middelman
153. Tony von Brandenstein
154. Peter Westhorp
155. Marion Schubert
156. Mark Schubert
157. Junette Schoell
158. Edwin Schoell
159. Shirley Schubert
160. Tania Nelson
161. Graeme Lienert
162. Christine Cunningham
163. Elaine Schultz
164. Kate Beaumont
165. Jordana Wilson
166. John Pumpa
167. Lucy Pumpa
168. Mark Simpfendorfer
169. Elsbeth Ampt
170. Owen Dixon
171. Bryce Walker
172. Klaus Schulz
173. Heather Mithen
174. Anna Kroehn
175. Lee Kroehn
176. Karyn Cullen
177. Irma Dymke
178. Teresa Goldsbrough
179. Leena Vuorinen
180. Trudi Doblin
181. Maryanne Molenaar
182. Stephen Nuske
183. Julie Nuske
184. Kathy Thompson
185. Sarah Thompson
186. Carmen Ost

187. John Beaumont
188. David Miles
189. Isabel Mason
190. John Hoffmann
191. Erika Hoffmann
192. Margaret Hammerer
193. Rainer Hammerer
194. Anna Zweck
195. Gordon Wegener
196. Marie Wilson
197. Lara Messom
198. Christopher Messom
199. Lily Messom
200. Graham Greenberger
201. Rosalie Greenberger
202. Grace Tink
203. Kay Robinson
204. Doris Groth
205. Klaus Groth
206. Jürgen Kahlfeld
207. Niels Kroyer
208. Teresa Kroyer
209. Marlene Crone
210. Alyssa Leach
211. Brad Leach
212. Adam Kramer
213. Karlea Kramer
214. Barbara Mattiske
215. Grant Mattiske
216. Jan Haar
217. Marcia Lohe
218. Peter Hoffmann
219. Jan Hoffmann
220. Mariany Crone
221. Michael Crone
222. Jason Sander
223. Jennifer Sander
224. Arianah Sander
225. Valerie Volk
226. Ingrid Synwoldt
227. Margaret Hunt
228. John Hunt
229. Gerhard Rüdiger
230. Liz Mibus
231. Lois Hage
232. Jennie Edwards
233. Bill Edwards
234. Wayne Zweck
235. Wendy Zweck
236. Sherry Fairbairn
237. Stuart Fairbairn
238. Shirley Linke
239. Ronda Held
240. Elva Mutton
241. Geoff Mutton
242. Timothy Pietsch
243. Ann Pietsch
244. Lisa Miles
245. Max Kanowski
246. Freda Kanowski
247. Rachel Crooks
248. Timothy Muller
249. Mary Muller
250. Cheryl Wilson
251. Graham Wilson
252. Hermann Scriba
253. Frauke Scriba
254. Gudrun MacDonald
255. Hans Hornscheidt
256. Helga van Rooyen
257. Volney Klintworth
258. Rosemarie Klintworth
259. Sigrid Kramp
260. Monika Reif
261. Stefanie Strunk
262. Joy Wundersitz
263. Geoff Wundersitz
264. Robin Braunack
265. Heiko Plange
266. Kirsten Zweck
267. Darren Trentepohl
268. Kate Traeger
269. Jacob Traeger
270. Stephen Miegel
271. Colleen Fitzpatrick
272. Heather Schuller
273. Colleen Ball
274. Janny Thomas

275. James Wilson
276. Beverley Wilson
277. Norma Sellner
278. Grace Schache
279. Jill Ottens
280. Graham Ottens
281. John Held
282. Jacqui Liu
283. Stephen Wang
284. Sue Schubert
285. Gemma Girke
286. Skye Newton
287. Chris Guntner
288. Kym Ritchie
289. Bronwyn Ritchie
290. Elizabeth Miller
291. Nathan Wessling
292. Erik Tikoft
293. Susanne Tikoft
294. Graeme Tepper
295. Tommi Vuorinen
296. Fred Veerhuis
297. Mark Vainikka
298. Minna Vainikka
299. Samuel Vainikka
300. Miriam Vainikka
301. Sam Vainikka
302. Eva Pailas
303. Harry Mithen
304. Maureen Walkemeyer
305. Stuart Heinrich
306. Andrew Graebner
307. Mike Graebner
308. Diane Graebner
309. John Peffer
310. Fiona Peffer
311. Roslyn Schulz
312. Peter Schulz
313. Liz Wieland
314. Lois Whittal
315. Roger Whittal
316. Linda Leibbrandt
317. Christine Sindt
318. John Gerlach
319. Peter Maley
320. Jenny Maley
321. Ashlee Jewson
322. David Walkenhorst
323. Janet Evans
324. Murray Evans
325. Yvonne Claus
326. Karen Crouch
327. Glenn Crouch
328. Robin Hueppauff
329. Andre Jewson
330. Hilde Grey
331. Ruth Brisbane
332. Dean Solmundson
333. Colin Hentschke
334. Carolyn Carson
335. Tiffany Turner
336. Andrew Pietsch
337. Chey Mattner
338. Libby Mattner
339. Kathy Wilson
340. David Wilson
341. Lauren Grieger