

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

Date: 30 May 2024

Dear Bishop Paul Smith, Assistant Bishop Neville Otto, Bishop Andrew Brook, Bishop Lester Priebbenow, Bishop Mark Vainikka, Bishop Peter Hage, Bishop Richard Schwedes; and members of the General Church Board Kim Baumeler, Paul Argyle, Charmaine Harch, Tim Wiebusch, Mel Zerner, Peter Zweck and Pastor Ben Hentschke,

Christ's grace and peace be with you.

It has been very encouraging to see you work together so intensely since the 2023 Melbourne General Synod, steering The Way Forward project and the collective work of the many people involved in its eight working groups. Thank you for also considering contributions from many other people of the LCANZ to the framework. We look forward to the finalised Way Forward Proposal coming to the Convention of General Synod in October this year.

Thank you for fostering, encouraging and nurturing pastoral care along the way and into the future, and for actively implementing a safer church culture where all opinions can be expressed and valued. Thank you for endorsing the 'Guidelines for respectful debate at General Synod on the issue of ordination'<sup>1</sup>.

As strong supporters of the ordination of women in our LCANZ, we value the respect and dignity with which our perspectives have been heard. This is a continual learning process for us too and as we advocate for a safe and respectful church culture for all people, we strive for all areas of the LCANZ to be safe for all people.

The purpose of this letter is to highlight:

- ➔ The progression of the role of women in the LCANZ since 1966, and its effects on church life and culture; and
- ➔ The link between domestic and family violence (DFV) and the role of women in the LCANZ

A range of our Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions (DSTOs) demonstrate the development of the understanding of the role of women in our LCANZ through the years. The same Scripture passages that are used in Theses of Agreement VI:11 (1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11–14) to prohibit women from serving in the office of the public ministry have historically been used to prohibit women from voting in congregational meetings, to prohibit women from serving on boards and committees of the church, and to prohibit women from serving as synod delegates. The interpretations of these Scripture passages

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lca.org.au/wayforward/principles-engagement/>

have been revised in the following DSTOs<sup>2</sup> and the application of these passages has now shifted to only being applied to the office of the public ministry.

- ‘Statement on rights of women to vote at meetings of the congregations’ 1966
- ‘The service of women on boards and committees of the church’ 1978
- ‘The role of women in the church’ 1978

There is no doubt that these changes in the role of women have resulted in a safer church culture for all women and men alike. We can see this by how many women have been able to serve in a multitude of ways such as chairpersons of congregations, chairpersons and members on boards, councils, commissions and committees at churchwide, district and local level; and as lay readers. Many women continue to serve the church in this way. Having the voices of both men and women represented in various parts of the LCANZ has enriched the culture of our church as a whole and has brought us to where we are today.

It seems incongruous that the application of the same two Scripture passages (1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11–14) has shifted its supposed meaning so much over time, and is now being applied only to women in the office of the public ministry.

We wonder how much safer our LCANZ would be if we could fully practise what the LCANZ teaches, namely that all women and men are equally (Galatians 3:28) made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and that they are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Former LCANZ Bishop John Henderson affirmed in his communication<sup>3</sup> to the LCANZ after the 2018 General Convention of Synod:

*“What we do teach is that in Christ there is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) in which all are equal in him (Galatians 3:28). We teach that God has given us the ministry so that we can hear the gospel and receive the sacraments. The Holy Spirit uses these means to work to [sic] faith in those who hear the gospel. ‘And the gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this’ (Augsburg Confession Article V. The Ministry)”*

He also wrote in the same communiqué:

*“Some of us who hold passionately to a male-only pastorate now believe that the LCA needs to learn how to think rightly. They are tempted to include things the LCA does not teach, such as male headship and subordination based on orders of creation. Some of us have personal views on these matters, but pastors and teachers must not burden consciences by giving the impression that our church teaches them.”*

Just as Bishop Henderson observed in 2018, still today some pastors and laypeople of the LCANZ embrace and actively teach ‘complementarianism’<sup>4</sup>, a teaching which is promoted by

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lca.org.au/commissions/ctcr/> Volume 1.F

<sup>3</sup> Heartland eNews – post-Convention message to the church, 14 November 2018

<sup>4</sup> <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/ctcr-report-the-order-of-creation-2022>

only a few Lutheran Churches worldwide, prominently by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in the USA.

Complementarianism and the accompanying theology of male headship and the subordination of women based on orders of creation is not only something the LCAANZ does not teach, it also has a real and detrimental effect on our church culture. This can have a serious flow-on effect in all areas of life. There is a proven<sup>5</sup> impact of domestic and family violence on the safety of women in society, which includes the church.

The increase in media attention and the serious impact of domestic and family violence (DFV) in 2024 has affected the whole Australian society. There is no doubt that DFV is gendered<sup>6</sup> and it is this situation that the LCAANZ can actively address and respond to. Thank you, the LCAANZ leaders on CoB and GCB, for actively addressing the role of women in the church through commissioning the recent research 'Religion and Domestic Violence: exploring men's perpetration'. This project was a collaboration of Flinders University, Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS), the University of Divinity and the Lutheran Church of Australia. In this<sup>7</sup> and other reports<sup>8</sup>, we read that DFV is present in all parts of our community, and DFV statistics in churches are even higher.

What can the LCAANZ do to safeguard a healthy church culture that reduces the risk of DFV?

- While most men within the LCAANZ do behave respectfully, the LCAANZ must encourage all men to act on their responsibility as bystanders to call out and name negative behaviour towards women whenever it occurs.
- Provide more and more opportunities where roles, responsibilities and decision-making is shared between men and women.
- Provide more and more opportunities for respectful conversations.
- Discourage and call out angry, judgmental behaviour in all communities, especially church communities.
- Discourage the practice of power-over and authoritarian behaviour.
- Discourage the teaching of complementarianism.
- Promote equality of opportunity in all its forms – true equality cannot have conditions or be bound by exceptions. For example, when meetings are held with a majority of (or exclusively with) male participants, that an environment is fostered where participating men feel safe to call out inappropriate, aggressive, judgemental, coercive and exclusive behaviour.
- Foster opportunities to reflect together how this behaviour can make women feel.

How can the LCAANZ make this happen?

- Continue and encourage the work of the Domestic Violence (DV) Taskforce.

---

<sup>5</sup> [The link between gender inequality and violence against women - Our Watch](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Quick facts | Our Watch | Preventing violence against women - Our Watch](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Religion and Domestic Violence Report - Lutheran Church of Australia \(lca.org.au\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [NAFVP-Top-Line-Results-Report-NCLS-Research.pdf \(anglican.org.au\)](#)

- Promote and provide mandatory DV Training annually for all pastors and layworkers.
- Provide bystander training and encourage men to actively call out disrespectful and aggressive behaviour in all its forms, and especially against women.
- Provide continued opportunities for learning and reflection in relation to the role and health and safety for all people within the church, especially women.
- Provide regular reflection opportunities for pastors, such as group supervision and mandatory professional supervision.
- Include in all church agendas a reflection on what a safe, respectful and healthy church culture looks like, feels like, and is; and how each group of people can take responsibility for this.

By continuing to intentionally respond to these initiatives, we can imagine an LCA NZ that will be a healthy, vibrant and growing community where all members are treated with respect and dignity, where equality is not conditional (stating 'we are all created equal, but' is contradictory), where differences are embraced and inappropriate behaviour is addressed through love and restoration. Together we can be a church community that models and lives out the transformative power of the gospel through the saving grace of Jesus.

**We call on you to be courageous, particularly the male pastors and bishops among you, and to boldly use your voice to support women and the voice of women, especially in places where currently no women's voices can be heard such as District and General Pastors Conferences.**

Thank you for taking the time to hear and consider our voices. We will publish this open letter on the public pages of 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.

All signatories are current members of the LCA NZ.

In God's grace and peace

- |                     |                    |                      |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Maria Rudolph    | 14. Robert Voigt   | 26. Marg             |
| 2. Libby Jewson     | 15. Jeff Silcock   | Simpfendorfer        |
| 3. Cathryn Hamilton | 16. Dean Zweck     | 27. Jo Freckelton    |
| 4. Liz Winderlich   | 17. Vic Pfitzner   | 28. David Freckelton |
| 5. Margaret Modra   | 18. Shelley Koch   | 29. Monica Christian |
| 6. John Zeppel      | 19. Stephen Haar   | 30. Ivan Christian   |
| 7. Kathy Matuschka  | 20. Maurice Schild | 31. Deborah Myers    |
| 8. Sue Westhorp     | 21. Peter Lockwood | 32. Ian Graue        |
| 9. Helen Lockwood   | 22. Louis A Moss   | 33. Greg Bensted     |
| 10. Joy Christian   | 23. Jordan Moore   | 34. Peter Bean       |
| 11. David Christian | 24. Dania Ahern    | 35. Anna Watson      |
| 12. Geoff Burger    | 25. Brian Ahern    | 36. Jennie Jones     |
| 13. Steen Olsen     |                    | 37. James Jones      |

- |                        |                          |                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 38. Margaret Mickan    | 81. Shiron Dixon         | 121. Monica Hueppauff      |
| 39. Tim Castle-Schmidt | 82. Jan Baker            | 122. Kaye Pfeiffer         |
| 40. Iris Gladigau      | 83. Lester Dreckow       | 123. Amanda Garrett        |
| 41. Gary Jewson        | 84. Debbie Dreckow       | 124. Irene Faith Joppich   |
| 42. Paul Meyer         | 85. Merrilyn Beaumont    | 125. Karen Peters          |
| 43. Betty Meyer        | 86. Mark Christian       | 126. Gary Peters           |
| 44. Denise Grieshaber  | 87. Patricia Walker      | 127. Geraldine Avent       |
| 45. Mark Lieschke      | 88. Gus Schutz           | 128. Gladys Koch           |
| 46. Helen Burger       | 89. Steve Liersch        | 129. Edwin Koch            |
| 47. Kenneth Stringer   | 90. Ben Hentschke        | 130. Joy van der Hoek      |
| 48. Yvonne Claus       | 91. Robin Mann           | 131. Kay Buckland          |
| 49. Helene Schulz      | 92. Dorothy Mann         | 132. Peter Buckland        |
| 50. Sharryn Cook       | 93. Juanita Kleinig      | 133. Rod Schubert          |
| 51. John Schubert      | 94. Ian Rentsch          | 134. Melinda Zavalis       |
| 52. Cathy Brown        | 95. Lyn Marshall         | 135. Mike Vitale           |
| 53. Ruth Olsen         | 96. Ray Schulz           | 136. Val Vitale            |
| 54. Joyce Graue        | 97. Nerida Schulz        | 137. Nicky Bricknell       |
| 55. Ruth Rathjen       | 98. Heidi Joy            | 138. Gloria Harch          |
| 56. Alan Collyer       | 99. Ronda Rohrlach       | 139. Michael Rudolph       |
| 57. Coral Collyer      | 100. Rob Rohrlach        | 140. Mark Butler           |
| 58. Bruce Lockwood     | 101. Brian Wandel        | 141. Judy Bartels          |
| 59. Wendy Begg         | 102. Diane Wandel        | 142. Armin Bartels         |
| 60. Allen Kloeden      | 103. David Schuller      | 143. Hannah Pietsch        |
| 61. Martin Albrecht    | 104. Geoffrey Crooks     | 144. Anna Nürnberger       |
| 62. Tick Zweck         | 105. Peter Hudson        | 145. Helen Middelmann      |
| 63. Chris Mann         | 106. Susanne Hudson      | 146. Tony von Brandenstein |
| 64. Lynette Williams   | 107. John Juers          | 147. Peter Westhorp        |
| 65. Jim Strelan        | 108. Miriam Juers        | 148. Marion Schubert       |
| 66. Joy Strelan        | 109. Jeff Wood           | 149. Mark Schubert         |
| 67. Alison Jarick      | 110. Chris Bartholomaeus | 150. Junette Schoell       |
| 68. Emily Hunt         | 111. Pamela Richardson   | 151. Edwin Schoell         |
| 69. Alison Short       | 112. Clive Richardson    | 152. Shirley Schubert      |
| 70. Anita Short        | 113. Ray Meharg          | 153. Tania Nelson          |
| 71. Roger Hunter       | 114. Karel Tepper        | 154. Graeme Lienert        |
| 72. Marie Miegel       | 115. Vibeke Hopley       | 155. Christine Cunningham  |
| 73. Rick Strelan       | 116. Paul Schulz         | 156. Elaine Schultz        |
| 74. Inari Thiel        | 117. David Filsell       | 157. Kate Beaumont         |
| 75. Sue Kloeden        | 118. Dawn Ehrke          | 158. Jordana Wilson        |
| 76. Karen Dymke        | 119. Ron Ehrke           | 159. John Pumpa            |
| 77. Nathan Hedt        | 120. Narelle Shallard    |                            |
| 78. Julie Hahn         |                          |                            |
| 79. Lynne Schmidt      |                          |                            |
| 80. Steven Cramer      |                          |                            |

- |                             |                       |                              |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 160. Lucy Pumpa             | 197. Doris Groth      | 241. Timothy Muller          |
| 161. Mark<br>Simpfendorfer  | 198. Klaus Groth      | 242. Mary Muller             |
| 162. Elsbeth Ampt           | 199. Jürgen Kahlfeld  | 243. Cheryl Wilson           |
| 163. Owen Dixon             | 200. Niels Kroyer     | 244. Graham Wilson           |
| 164. Bryce Walker           | 201. Teresa Kroyer    | 245. Hermann Scriba          |
| 165. Klaus Schulz           | 202. Marlene Crone    | 246. Frauke Scriba           |
| 166. Heather Mithen         | 203. Alyssa Leach     | 247. Gudrun<br>MacDonald     |
| 167. Anna Kroehn            | 204. Brad Leach       | 248. Hans Hornscheidt        |
| 168. Lee Kroehn             | 205. Adam Kramer      | 249. Helga van Rooyen        |
| 169. Karyn Cullen           | 206. Karlea Kramer    | 250. Volney Klintworth       |
| 170. Irma Dymke             | 207. Barbara Mattiske | 251. Rosemarie<br>Klintworth |
| 171. Teresa<br>Goldsbrough  | 208. Grant Mattiske   | 252. Sigrid Kramp            |
| 172. Leena Vuorinen         | 209. Jan Haar         | 253. Monika Reif             |
| 173. Trudi Doblin           | 210. Marcia Lohe      | 254. Stefanie Strunk         |
| 174. Maryanne<br>Molenaar   | 211. Peter Hoffmann   | 255. Joy Wundersitz          |
| 175. Stephen Nuske          | 212. Jan Hoffmann     | 256. Geoff Wundersitz        |
| 176. Julie Nuske            | 213. Mariany Crone    | 257. Robin Braunack          |
| 177. Kathy Thompson         | 214. Michael Crone    | 258. Heiko Plange            |
| 178. Sarah Thompson         | 215. Jason Sander     | 259. Kirsten Zweck           |
| 179. Carmen Ost             | 216. Jennifer Sander  | 260. Darren Trentepohl       |
| 180. John Beaumont          | 217. Arianah Sander   | 261. Kate Traeger            |
| 181. David Miles            | 218. Valerie Volk     | 262. Jacob Traeger           |
| 182. Isabel Mason           | 219. Ingrid Synwoldt  | 263. Stephen Miegel          |
| 183. John Hoffmann          | 220. Margaret Hunt    | 264. Colleen Fitzpatrick     |
| 184. Erika Hoffmann         | 221. John Hunt        | 265. Heather Schuller        |
| 185. Margaret<br>Hammerer   | 222. Gerhard Rüdiger  | 266. Colleen Ball            |
| 186. Rainer Hammerer        | 223. Liz Mibus        | 267. Janny Thomas            |
| 187. Anna Zweck             | 224. Lois Hage        | 268. James Wilson            |
| 188. Gordon Wegener         | 225. Jennie Edwards   | 269. Beverley Wilson         |
| 189. Marie Wilson           | 226. Bill Edwards     | 270. Norma Sellner           |
| 190. Lara Messom            | 227. Wayne Zweck      | 271. Grace Schache           |
| 191. Christopher<br>Messom  | 228. Wendy Zweck      | 272. Jill Ottens             |
| 192. Lily Messom            | 229. Sherry Fairbairn | 273. Graham Ottens           |
| 193. Graham<br>Greenberger  | 230. Stuart Fairbairn | 274. John Held               |
| 194. Rosalie<br>Greenberger | 231. Shirley Linke    | 275. Jacqui Liu              |
| 195. Grace Tink             | 232. Ronda Held       | 276. Stephen Wang            |
| 196. Kay Robinson           | 233. Elva Mutton      | 277. Sue Schubert            |
|                             | 234. Geoff Mutton     | 278. Gemma Girke             |
|                             | 235. Timothy Pietsch  | 279. Skye Newton             |
|                             | 236. Ann Pietsch      | 280. Kym Ritchie             |
|                             | 237. Lisa Miles       | 281. Bronwyn Ritchie         |
|                             | 238. Max Kanowski     | 282. Elizabeth Miller        |
|                             | 239. Freda Kanowski   |                              |
|                             | 240. Rachel Crooks    |                              |

- |                       |                         |                        |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 283. Nathan Wessling  | 325. Andrew Pietsch     | 366. Sharon Geue       |
| 284. Erik Tikoft      | 326. Chey Mattner       | 367. Robyn Oatey       |
| 285. Suanne Tikoft    | 327. Libby Mattner      | 368. Ronda Hahn        |
| 286. Graeme Tepper    | 328. Kathy Wilson       | 369. Lesley Johnson    |
| 287. Tommi Vuorinen   | 329. David Wilson       | 370. Judy Butler       |
| 288. Fred Veerhuis    | 330. Lauren Grieger     | 371. Micaela Romiti    |
| 289. Minna Vainikka   | 331. Dan Bricknell      | 372. Liz Bartholomaeus |
| 290. Samuel Vainikka  | 332. Cathy Beaton       | 373. Rosemary Cramer   |
| 291. Miriam Vainikka  | 333. Dan Mueller        | 374. Jonathan          |
| 292. Sam Vainikka     | 334. Monica             | Westhorp               |
| 293. Eva Pailas       | Bodenstaff              | 375. Andrew Collyer    |
| 294. Harry Mithen     | 335. Rob Bodenstaff     | 376. Thilo Troschke    |
| 295. Maureen          | 336. Margaret Ames      | 377. Julie Troschke    |
| Walkemeyer            | 337. Colin Ames         | 378. Jan Collyer       |
| 296. Andrew Graebner  | 338. Mike Cunningham    | 379. Kirsten Zweck     |
| 297. Mike Graebner    | 339. Ingrid Phyn        | 380. Darren Trentepohl |
| 298. Diane Graebner   | 340. Peter Fleig        | 381. Colin Reuter      |
| 299. John Pepper      | 341. Sue Otto           | 382. Doris Reuter      |
| 300. Fiona Pepper     | 342. Martin Ellgar      | 383. Jill Hobden       |
| 301. Roslyn Schulz    | 343. Robyn Masters      | 384. Sabine Slade      |
| 302. Peter Schulz     | 344. Renee              | 385. Arja Nurkka       |
| 303. Liz Wieland      | Simpfendorfer           | 386. Erik Rohde        |
| 304. Lois Whittal     | 345. Craig Heidenreich  | 387. Josie Rohde       |
| 305. Roger Whittal    | 346. Glenn Schultz      | 388. Phoebe Pilli      |
| 306. Linda Leibbrandt | 347. Wendy Schultz      | 389. Claudia Kerley    |
| 307. Christine Sindt  | 348. Karen Weier        | 390. Ted Bromwich      |
| 308. John Gerlach     | 349. Dennis Canute      | 391. Bethy McKinnon    |
| 309. Peter Maley      | 350. Ian Lutze          | 392. Tracy Adams       |
| 310. Jenny Maley      | 351. Joel Cramer        | 393. John Walkenhorst  |
| 311. Ashlee Jewson    | 352. Mark Whitfield     | 394. Marg              |
| 312. David            | 353. Leanne Whitfield   | Walkenhorst            |
| Walkenhorst           | 354. Chelsea Whitfield  | 395. Jill Walkenhorst  |
| 313. Janet Evans      | 355. Brittany Whitfield | 396. Keith Braendlar   |
| 314. Murray Evans     | 356. Charlotte          | 397. Kay Braendlar     |
| 315. Karen Crouch     | Whitfield               | 398. Fay Modra         |
| 316. Glenn Crouch     | 357. Maurice Materne    | 399. Erica Walker      |
| 317. Robin Hueppauff  | 358. Myra Materne       | 400. Pauline Simonsen  |
| 318. Andre Jewson     | 359. Peter Gerhardy     | 401. Lynda Truss       |
| 319. Hilde Grey       | 360. Eric Hedt          | 402. Rowan Truss       |
| 320. Ruth Brisbane    | 361. Leanore Hedt       | 403. Ian Pfeiffer      |
| 321. Dean Solmundson  | 362. Cheryl Kuhne       | 404. Peter Neville     |
| 322. Colin Hentschke  | 363. Robert Kuhne       | 405. Vivienne Lutze    |
| 323. Carolyn Carson   | 364. Pamela Mikan       | 406. Glenis Kupke      |
| 324. Tiffany Turner   | 365. Audrey Burger      | 407. Stephen Rudolph   |

- |                           |                            |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 408. Janelle Rudolph      | 432. Margaret Kowald       | 456. Karen Gosling         |
| 409. Valdis Andersons     | 433. Jennifer Danslow      | 457. Christine Wilksch     |
| 410. Andrew<br>Vanderwal  | 434. David Danslow         | 458. Philip Wilksch        |
| 411. Marg Bremner         | 435. Tanya Crooks          | 459. Peter Heyn            |
| 412. Judy Hembrow         | 436. Kathy Stock           | 460. Suzanne Fysh          |
| 413. Elizabeth Huckel     | 437. Cecilie Koch          | 461. Judy Bowman           |
| 414. Wayne Huckel         | 438. Errol Koch            | 462. Kate Ashdown          |
| 415. Sandra Schultz       | 439. Helen Schubert        | 463. Karin Brown           |
| 416. Mike Neldner         | 440. Alf Johnson           | 464. Mary Walkenhorst      |
| 417. Anne-Marie<br>Doecke | 441. Susanne Smith         | 465. Lester<br>Walkenhorst |
| 418. Suzanne Hall         | 442. David Nelson          | 466. Jim Pietsch           |
| 419. Felicia Neldner      | 443. Marianne<br>Hammerton | 467. Judi Bell             |
| 420. Raelene Falland      | 444. Jan Bean              | 468. Kevin Bell            |
| 421. Derm Ottens          | 445. Jeff Pocknee          | 469. Nina Fudala           |
| 422. Margaret Noske       | 446. Doreen Pocknee        | 470. Denise Muschamp       |
| 423. Daisy Rentsch        | 447. Elaine Ziersch        | 471. John Gerhardy         |
| 424. Jane Rentsch         | 448. Geoff Ziersch         | 472. Angela Gerhardy       |
| 425. Lisa Enever          | 449. Patricia Buchanan     | 473. Alison Eggers         |
| 426. Andy Enever          | 450. Marianne Caruana      | 474. Dana Eggers           |
| 427. Paul Ridley          | 451. Maria Flutsch         | 475. Katherine<br>Thornton |
| 428. Bryce Walker         | 452. Graeme Payne          | 476. Will Thornton         |
| 429. Marjorie Ridenour    | 453. Shona Levingston      |                            |
| 430. John Ridenour        | 454. Wayne R<br>Muschamp   |                            |
| 431. James Winderlich     | 455. Mike Gosling          |                            |