

An open letter to the College of Bishops

Date: 03/03/2022

Dear Bishop Paul Smith, Bishop Neville Otto, Bishop David Altus, Bishop Lester Priebbenow, Bishop Mark Vainikka, Bishop Mark Whitfield, Bishop Mike Fulwood and Bishop Robert Bartholomaeus,

Grace and peace in Christ to you.

The purpose of this letter is twofold. Firstly, it is to clearly inform the College of Bishops about what people in the LCANZ who are actively working for the ordination of women in our Church, have established in order to continue to progress this pressing issue. This includes outlined opportunities for our Church as we transition into this new chapter. Secondly, it seeks a response with regard to the College of Bishops' role of nurture and spiritual support for these people.

Currently:

1. The Streams in the Desert community, an open online platform with a weekly newsletter (SDC NEWS) that connects and informs about information and progress in relation to women's ordination and gender equity in the LCANZ. People from all districts of the LCANZ contribute to this platform. Here is the link: <https://www.streamsinthedesert.com.au>
2. The Women at the Well website, a collection of articles/stories and testimonies of LCANZ members and friends that explores their journey and passion for the ordination of women in the LCANZ. This includes women who are called into the pastoral ministry, pastors of the LCANZ, and many other voices longing for women's ordination in the LCANZ. Here is the link: <https://www.watw.com.au>
3. The monthly online worship service for those who long for the ordination of women in the LCANZ. This zoom worship service is facilitated and attended by people from all over the LCANZ and occurs on the second Sunday evening of the month.
4. The weekly prayer sessions on zoom, where people from all over the LCANZ come together in prayer to uphold the LCANZ, the Church-wide Synod, the College of Bishops, the ALC (Australian Lutheran College), women currently in ministry in the LCANZ and all those impacted by the delay of women's ordination in the LCANZ.
5. The private Facebook group called 'Support for Women's Ordination in the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA)', a forum where members share respectful and dignified posts to encourage and inform each other about the progress of women's ordination throughout the world and in particular the LCANZ. This includes; articles from LWF (Lutheran World Federation) and other sources, personal stories, notifications of women preaching in the LCANZ and general links to other happenings in relation to the ordination of women throughout the LCANZ.

Opportunities:

1. For more than 20 years, the consistent vote in relation to women's ordination in the Church-wide Synod has been well over 50%, and the platforms listed above help to nourish and give voice to the majority of people in the LCANZ.
2. All activity is geared towards ushering in an era for our Church where all people can use their God-given gifts, callings and abilities to further the work of our Church for the Gospel.
3. We can strengthen the Church in supporting women to also unfold their potential within the LCANZ alongside men to be equally encouraged and nurtured into all ministry roles.

What next?

1. We invite you to engage with the aforementioned platforms to be informed and understand the urgency of the ordination of women in the LCANZ.
2. We invite you to express clearly in response to this letter how you view your role as the College of Bishops to nurture and spiritually support this large component of the LCANZ.
3. We will publish this open letter on the 19/03/2022 on the public pages of Streams in the Desert and Women at the Well, with links to these pages on the above-mentioned Facebook group and would like to publish your response on these platforms with your permission.

Signatories

1. Maria Rudolph, called to ordained ministry in the LCANZ, women's ordination prayer group facilitator
2. Libby Jewson, Co-moderator of the Women at the Well website
3. Cathryn Hamilton, management team and editor for Streams in the Desert Community
4. Liz Winderlich, management team and editor for Streams in the Desert Community
5. Margaret Modra, management team and editor for Streams in the Desert Community
6. John Zeppel, management team and editor for Streams in the Desert Community
7. Helen Lockwood, facilitator of monthly women's ordination zoom worship services
8. Tanya Wittwer, called to ordained ministry, facilitator of monthly women's ordination zoom worship services
9. Kathy Matuschka, called to ordained ministry; co-administrator of the Facebook group