

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

Date: 13 March 2023

Dear Bishop Paul Smith, Assistant Bishop Neville Otto, Bishop David Altus, Bishop Lester Priebbenow, Bishop Mark Vainikka, Bishop Mark Whitfield, Bishop Peter Hage, 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.

The 20th Convention of General Synod has come and gone. Here we stand together, finding ourselves in a new space of journeying toward the ordination of women and men with an expectation that this will become a reality for the LCANZ during the 21st Convention of General Synod in 2024, with the intention to find a practical way forward to allow communities with different convictions on this matter to co-exist and to find and celebrate continued unity in Christ.

Thank you for your fruitful efforts to foster respect and safe discussion during the Melbourne Synod, especially with the use of the video shown at the beginning of the Synod sessions, as well as the printed material on Respectful Dialogue sent to delegates prior to Synod. Thank you also for the dignified way you modelled inclusive and safe interaction during Synod, and especially to Bishop Paul Smith for chairing Synod sessions with such grace and Christian love.

Immediately after the conclusion of Synod, you began proactive work on the proposal that was passed with a 73.5% majority in relation to the ordination of both women and men. You are now meeting to discuss and decide on how this work will be progressed and carried out in detail and we would like to add our voice to the conversation. Thank you for specifying, as a guiding principle in this important work, that voices involved in this matter must be equitably heard.

Therefore, the purpose of this letter is to suggest ways to include the voices of people longing for the ordination of both women and men in the LCANZ in an equitable way.

There is no doubt that safety, respect, integrity and equity are absolutely crucial in this space, particularly for the women of our church, including those who are called into pastoral ministry, and the many pastors and laypeople who support, endorse and encourage women in ministry.

We seek a way forward that does not leave the church in an ongoing adversarial state on the matter of the ordination of women and men, which has become debilitating in so many ways for our relationships and in carrying out the mission of the church.

We invite you, the members of the College of Bishops and the members of the General Church Board, to communicate clearly and consistently to members of the LCANZ about the expectation of Synod that the ordination of women and men is to become a reality in parts of the church during the next Convention of General Synod.

We also invite you, the members of the College of Bishops and the members of the General Church Board, to consider the following points in relation to the multiple working groups that are being created and tasked to work on this matter:

1. It is crucial that the voices of women, including those who are theologically qualified and willing to be ordained, are included in these working groups,
2. One working group could be a combination of CSBQ and CTICR members, who would develop a shared report that has credibility and is taken seriously by the church leadership. It is crucial that taken into consideration by this working group would be TA 1, in particular TA 1.4(e)¹ which is to be applied to this ongoing debate so the matter of ordination gender does not constitute a doctrinal issue that requires a two thirds majority Synod vote from this point forward
3. Another working group could be representations from the Domestic Violence Taskforce (subgroup of CSBQ) highlighting the serious implications of the lack of women's voices in the decision-making of the church
4. Each one of those working groups should have the clear and practised intention of a safe and diverse discussion space that honours and values each member and their contribution. This should be included in the brief of each working group and verbally reinforced at the beginning of each meeting.

We also commend to you letters from the St Stephen's Adelaide congregation and from various individuals of the LCANZ in recent weeks, which also point to TA 1.4(e) and its subpoints² and their application to the impasse we have reached.

Imagine if through this process, the whole Lutheran community in Australia and New Zealand could learn together and formulate a framework that will be easily adopted at the next General Synod. We look forward to journeying with you on these processes and pray

¹ Theses of Agreement (TA) 1.4(e) states: In case of differences in exegesis that affect doctrine, agreement on the basis of

God's Word must be sought by combined, prayerful examination of the passage or passages in question.

² TA1.4(e) continued: If this does not lead to agreement, because no unanimity has been reached on the clarity of the passage or passages in question and hence on the stringency and adequacy of the Scriptural proof, divergent views arising from such differences of interpretation are not divisive of church fellowship, providing that

- i. there be the readiness in principle to submit to the authority of the Word of God;
- ii. thereby no clear Word of Scripture is denied, contradicted or ignored;
- iii. such divergent views in no wise impair, infringe upon, or violate the central doctrine of Holy Scripture, justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;
- iv. nothing be taught contrary to the publica doctrina of the Lutheran Church as laid down in its Confessions;
- v. such divergent views are not propagated as the publica doctrina of the Church and in no wise impair the doctrine of Holy Writ.

God's abundant wisdom and strength on each one of you as you lead our LCAZ at such a time as this.

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.

In God's grace and peace

Signatories

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|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Maria Rudolph | 34. Peter Bean |
| 2. Libby Jewson | 35. Anna Watson |
| 3. Cathryn Hamilton | 36. Jennie Jones |
| 4. Liz Winderlich | 37. James Jones |
| 5. Margaret Modra | 38. Margaret Mickan |
| 6. John Zeppel | 39. Tim Castle-Schmidt |
| 7. Kathy Matuschka | 40. Iris Gladigau |
| 8. Sue Westhorp | 41. Gary Jewson |
| 9. Joy Christian | 42. Paul Meyer |
| 10. David Christian | 43. Betty Meyer |
| 11. Geoff Burger | 44. Denise Grieshaber |
| 12. Steen Olsen | 45. Mark Lieschke |
| 13. Robert Voigt | 46. Helen Burger |
| 14. Jeff Silcock | 47. Kenneth Stringer |
| 15. Dean Zweck | 48. Yvonne Claus |
| 16. Vic Pfitzner | 49. Helene Schulz |
| 17. Shelley Koch | 50. Sharryn Cook |
| 18. Stephen Haar | 51. John Schubert |
| 19. Maurice Schild | 52. Cathy Brown |
| 20. Peter Lockwood | 53. Ruth Olsen |
| 21. Louis A Moss | 54. Joyce Graue |
| 22. Jordan Moore | 55. Ruth Rathjen |
| 23. Dania Ahern | 56. Alan Collyer |
| 24. Brian Ahern | 57. Coral Collyer |
| 25. Marg Simpfendorfer | 58. Bruce Lockwood |
| 26. Jo Freckelton | 59. Michelle Eastwood |
| 27. David Freckelton | 60. Wendy Begg |
| 28. Monica Christian | 61. Allen Kloeden |
| 29. Ivan Christian | 62. Martin Albrecht |
| 30. Deborah Myers | 63. Tick Zweck |
| 31. Peter Pfitzner | 64. Chris Mann |
| 32. Ian Graue | 65. Lynette Williams |
| 33. Greg Bensted | 66. Jim Strelan |

67. Joy Strelan
68. Alison Jarick
69. Emily Hunt
70. Alison Short
71. Anita Short
72. Roger Hunter
73. Marie Miegel
74. Rick Strelan
75. Inari Thiel
76. Sue Kloeden
77. Karen Dymke
78. Nathan Hedt
79. Julie Hahn
80. Lynne Schmidt
81. Steven Cramer
82. Shiron Dixon
83. Jan Baker
84. Lester Dreckow
85. Debbie Dreckow
86. Merrilyn Beaumont
87. Mark Christian
88. Patricia Walker
89. Gus Schutz
90. Steve Liersch
91. Ben Hentschke
92. Dylan Miegel
93. Robin Mann
94. Dorothy Mann
95. Juanita Kleinig
96. Ian Rentsch
97. Lyn Marshall
98. Ray Schulz
99. Nerida Schulz
100. Heidi Joy
101. Ronda Rohrlach
102. Rob Rohrlach
103. Brian Wandel
104. Diane Wandel
105. David Schuller
106. Geoff Crooks
107. Peter Hudson
108. Susanne Hudson
109. John Juers
110. Miriam Juers
111. Jeff Wood
112. Chris Bartholomaeus
113. Pamela Richardson
114. Clive Richardson
115. Ray Meharg
116. Karel Tepper
117. Vibeke Hopley
118. Paul Schulz
119. David Filsell
120. Dawn Ehrke
121. Ron Ehrke
122. Narelle Shallard
123. Monica Hueppauff
124. Kaye Pfeiffer
125. Amanda Garrett
126. Irene Faith Joppich
127. Karen Peters
128. Gary Peters
129. Geraldine Avent
130. Gladys Koch
131. Edwin Koch
132. Joy van der Hoek
133. Kay Buckland
134. Peter Buckland
135. Rod Schubert
136. Melinda Zavalis
137. Mike Vitale
138. Val Vitale
139. Nicky Bricknell
140. Gloria Harch
141. Michael Rudolph
142. Mark Butler
143. Judy Bartels
144. Armin Bartels
145. Hannah Pietsch
146. Anna Nürnberger
147. Helen Middelmann
148. Tony von Brandenstein
149. Peter Westhorp
150. Marion Schubert
151. Mark Schubert
152. Junette Schoell
153. Edwin Schoell
154. Shirley Schubert

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| 155. Tania Nelson | 199. Doris Groth |
| 156. Graeme Lienert | 200. Klaus Groth |
| 157. Christine Cunningham | 201. Jürgen Kahlfeld |
| 158. Elaine Schultz | 202. Niels Kroyer |
| 159. Kate Beaumont | 203. Teresa Kroyer |
| 160. Jordana Wilson | 204. Marlene Crone |
| 161. John Pumpa | 205. Alyssa Leach |
| 162. Lucy Pumpa | 206. Brad Leach |
| 163. Mark Simpfendorfer | 207. Adam Kramer |
| 164. Elsbeth Ampt | 208. Karlea Kramer |
| 165. Owen Dixon | 209. Barbara Mattiske |
| 166. Bryce Walker | 210. Grant Mattiske |
| 167. Klaus Schulz | 211. Jan Haar |
| 168. Heather Mithen | 212. Marcia Lohe |
| 169. Anna Kroehn | 213. Peter Hoffmann |
| 170. Lee Kroehn | 214. Jan Hoffmann |
| 171. Karyn Cullen | 215. Mariany Crone |
| 172. Irma Dymke | 216. Michael Crone |
| 173. Teresa Goldsbrough | 217. Jason Sander |
| 174. Leena Vuorinen | 218. Jennifer Sander |
| 175. Trudi Doblin | 219. Arianah Sander |
| 176. Maryanne Molenaar | 220. Valerie Volk |
| 177. Stephen Nuske | 221. Ingrid Synwoldt |
| 178. Julie Nuske | 222. Margaret Hunt |
| 179. Kathy Thompson | 223. John Hunt |
| 180. Sarah Thompson | 224. Gerhard Rüdiger |
| 181. Carmen Ost | 225. Liz Mibus |
| 182. John Beaumont | 226. Lois Hage |
| 183. David Miles | 227. Jennie Edwards |
| 184. Isabel Mason | 228. Bill Edwards |
| 185. John Hoffmann | 229. Wayne Zweck |
| 186. Erika Hoffmann | 230. Wendy Zweck |
| 187. Margaret Hammerer | 231. Sherry Fairbairn |
| 188. Rainer Hammerer | 232. Stuart Fairbairn |
| 189. Anna Zweck | 233. Shirley Linke |
| 190. Gordon Wegener | 234. Ronda Held |
| 191. Marie Wilson | 235. Elva Mutton |
| 192. Lara Messom | 236. Geoff Mutton |
| 193. Christopher Messom | 237. Timothy Pietsch |
| 194. Lily Messom | 238. Ann Pietsch |
| 195. Graham Greenberger | 239. Lisa Miles |
| 196. Rosalie Greenberger | 240. Max Kanowski |
| 197. Grace Tink | 241. Freda Kanowski |
| 198. Kay Robinson | 242. Rachel Crooks |

243. Timothy Muller
244. Mary Muller
245. Cheryl Wilson
246. Graham Wilson
247. Hermann Scriba
248. Frauke Scriba
249. Gudrun MacDonald
250. Hans Hornscheidt
251. Helga van Rooyen
252. Volney Klintworth
253. Rosemarie Klintworth
254. Sigrid Kramp
255. Monika Reif
256. Stefanie Strunk
257. Joy Wundersitz
258. Geoff Wundersitz
259. Robin Braunack
260. Heiko Plange
261. Kirsten Zweck
262. Darren Trentepohl
263. Kate Traeger
264. Jacob Traeger
265. Stephen Miegel
266. Colleen Fitzpatrick
267. Heather Schuller
268. Colleen Ball
269. Janny Thomas
270. James Wilson
271. Beverley Wilson
272. Norma Sellner
273. Grace Schache
274. Jill Ottens
275. Graham Ottens
276. John Held
277. Jacqui Liu
278. Stephen Wang
279. Sue Schubert
280. Gemma Girke
281. Skye Newton
282. Kym Ritchie
283. Bronwyn Ritchie
284. Elizabeth Miller
285. Nathan Wessling
286. Erik Tikoft
287. Suanne Tikoft
288. Graeme Tepper
289. Tommi Vuorinen
290. Fred Veerhuis
291. Minna Vainikka
292. Samuel Vainikka
293. Miriam Vainikka
294. Sam Vainikka
295. Eva Pailas
296. Harry Mithen
297. Maureen Walkemeyer
298. Stuart Heinrich
299. Andrew Graebner
300. Mike Graebner
301. Diane Graebner
302. John Pepper
303. Fiona Pepper
304. Roslyn Schulz
305. Peter Schulz
306. Liz Wieland
307. Lois Whittal
308. Roger Whittal
309. Linda Leibbrandt
310. Christine Sindt
311. John Gerlach
312. Peter Maley
313. Jenny Maley
314. Ashlee Jewson
315. David Walkenhorst
316. Janet Evans
317. Murray Evans
318. Yvonne Claus
319. Karen Crouch
320. Glenn Crouch
321. Robin Hueppauff
322. Andre Jewson
323. Hilde Grey
324. Ruth Brisbane
325. Dean Solmundson
326. Colin Hentschke
327. Carolyn Carson
328. Tiffany Turner
329. Andrew Pietsch
330. Chey Mattner

331. Libby Mattner
332. Kathy Wilson
333. David Wilson
334. Lauren Grieger
335. Dan Bricknell
336. Cathy Beaton
337. Dan Mueller
338. Monica Bodenstaff
339. Rob Bodenstaff
340. Margaret Ames
341. Colin Ames
342. Mike Cunningham
343. Ingrid Phyn
344. Peter Fleig
345. Sue Otto
346. Martin Ellgar
347. Robyn Masters
348. Renee Simpfendorfer
349. Craig Heidenreich
350. Glenn Schultz
351. Wendy Schultz
352. Karen Weier
353. Dennis Canute
354. Ian Lutze
355. Joel Cramer
356. Mark Whitfield
357. Leanne Whitfield
358. Chelsea Whitfield
359. Brittany Whitfield
360. Charlotte Whitfield
361. Maurice Materne
362. Myra Materne
363. Peter Gerhardy
364. Eric Hedt
365. Leanore Hedt
366. Cheryl Kuhne
367. Robert Kuhne
368. Pamela Mickan
369. Audrey Burger
370. Sharon Geue
371. Robyn Oatey
372. Ronda Hahn
373. Lesley Johnson
374. Judy Butler
375. Micaela Romiti
376. Liz Bartholomaeus
377. Rosemary Cramer
378. Jonathan Westhorp
379. Andrew Collyer
380. Thilo Troschke
381. Julie Troschke
382. Jan Collyer
383. Kirsten Zweck
384. Darren Trentepohl
385. Colin Reuter
386. Doris Reuter
387. Jill Hobden
388. Sabine Slade
389. Arja Nurkka
390. Erik Rohde
391. Josie Rohde
392. Phoebe Pilli
393. Claudia Kerley
394. Ted Bromwich
395. Bethy McKinnon
396. Tracy Adams
397. John Walkenhorst
398. Marg Walkenhorst
399. Jill Walkenhorst
400. Keith Braendlar
401. Kay Braendlar
402. Fay Modra
403. Erika Walker
404. Pauline Simonsen
405. Lynda Truss
406. Rowan Truss
407. Ian Pfeiffer
408. Peter Neville