

As I prepare for LCA Convention of General Synod 2023

By Kathy Matuschka, January 30, 2023

When someone asks how I am feeling about the Convention of General Synod I find it hard to know where to begin in reply. So I've gathered some of my thoughts here ...

At the personal level I'm feeling unsettled; in limbo until this Synod is over. I've been feeling this way for several months now. As a woman who has heard God's call to ordained ministry, for me there is a lot riding on the outcomes of the two proposals. It's difficult to acknowledge and accept how little control I have over the outcome, even though it affects me so deeply. I wonder what lies ahead for me? Will I move further into testing my calling this year? If so, how quickly will my daily life change? What if after all this time of preparation I find that preaching is not my calling after all? At the personal level, these questions and more do laps of my brain.

When I think about the proposals that the Synod will consider, I feel optimistic that we have two God-given opportunities to agree as a church and put it on record that after over three decades of debate around two texts, six verses of scripture (1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14) we are not any closer to consensus on the ordination question.

We are currently at a stalemate. We are stuck. At the very least, the proposals invite the Synod to put a line under the debate and having acknowledged the lack of consensus to seek other ways forward. Of the two related proposals the Convention will consider, one should see women ordained in a year but requires a 2/3 majority vote to pass and the other would take longer but would be passed in 2023 by a simple majority.

So far so good: an opportunity to become unstuck. Each proposal asks *everyone* to compromise, to stop thinking in terms of winners and losers. Each proposal allows individual congregations to decide which practice is best for their context. If either proposal was passed this would be something to celebrate. If *both* were passed, I would be overwhelmed with relief and joy and hope.

But my heart yearns for so much more. I am praying that as we unstick a sticky topic, Christ's resurrection power will flow anew through the Convention and beyond, to all congregations and agencies of the LCA and their communities. I'm praying for a paradox, a disruption, an 'Aha!' moment for *every* one of us, something we didn't see coming, something we didn't deserve but we got anyway, something that helps us glimpse ourselves and one another as Jesus sees us. Something that makes us laugh at ourselves and our limited perspectives. I'm praying that this transformative power will give us the courage to meet those with whom we disagree in our *brokenness*, at the cross of Christ, who is the source of all reconciliation and transformation.

I'm praying that through God's Spirit something paradoxical will happen; something that *shouldn't* happen, so that like those who witnessed the first resurrection we will *all* go away saying 'What just happened? What does this mean?' And as we talk about it and write about and act on what we witnessed, that others will catch onto the fact that God's Spirit is leading us to more than a wise compromise. Through these proposals and in all that life brings, God is offering release from fear and inadequacy, from guilt and shame, from all that would bind us at a personal level and as a church. God is inviting us into life in all its fullness.

What might this look like? For one thing, I hope it will mean no more 'tribes', as I tend to call them. To add to the words of Galatians 3:28: There is 'neither Jew nor Gentile neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female (nor is there a 'tribe' who supports men only ordination or a 'tribe' that supports the ordination of women and men) for we are all one in Christ Jesus.'

This is already true. I pray that in 2023 we will see that more clearly and act our way further into it.

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