

ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN THE LCA NZ

Some say.... But did you know?



Some say... #1 Women can't be pastors in Lutheran churches

But did you know.... There is only one Lutheran teaching (doctrine) of the ministry, as presented in the Augsburg Confession in Articles 5 and 14, and in our *Theses of Agreement*, 6.1-10. These foundation documents say nothing about the gender of the pastor.

In fact, many Lutheran churches across the world have ordained women as pastors. The Lutheran World Federation (an organisation that has 149 Lutheran member churches in 99 countries and includes 77 million Christians) conducted a survey in 2016 that showed:

- 82% of Lutheran churches in the LWF ordain both men and women - this includes Lutheran churches in the regions of Europe, Asia, America and Africa
- Of those churches who ordain both men and women, 30-50% of the pastorate are female

Some say... #2 The Bible prohibits the ordination of women

But did you know... The Bible does not specifically mention ordination in relation to men or women, although two texts are often cited to deny women's ordination: 1 Corinthians 14: 34 -35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-14. Most Lutheran scholars do not consider these texts related to the ordination of women. In Australia, the LCA NZ's Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) provided a report to General Synod in 2018 which states quite simply: "The ordination of women to the office of the ministry is consistent with the Scriptures and with the doctrine of the ministry as articulated in the Lutheran confessions" DDS CTICR 2018 p.3

Some say... #3 Ordination of women in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand will split the Church

But did you know... The ordination of women does not need to be an issue that splits or divides the Church. In Lutheran churches, the only cause for church division is the denial of one of the chief teachings of the Bible as found in the Creeds and Lutheran Confessions. The Principles Governing Church Fellowship, devised in 1948 to provide guidance where there are theological differences in the LCA NZ, states that "Differences in exegesis that do not affect doctrine are not church divisive" (4.d). Thus, our Church Principles allow for differences in theological understandings about ordination without these needing to cause division. We need to prayerfully consider how these differences can be listened to in a respectful way that enables our Church to fulfil Jesus' commission for us to spread the gospel to all people in today's world.

Some say... #4 Women should not be ordained because male headship and/or the order of creation mean women should not lead or have authority over men

But did you know... The argument that women are subordinate to men (and therefore should not be ordained or in positions of leadership) does not align with scripture that states “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21) and that the orders of creation are transformed in Christ, enabling the gifts God has given the individual and their identity to be defined in Christ rather than in relationship to each other (Galatians 3:27-28). It is also notable that the ‘office of the keys’ which is used as the basis for ordination of pastors was given by Jesus to the disciples (i.e. the eleven) and to ‘those who were with them’ which clearly includes women and other men. (Luke 24:45-49).

Some say... # 5. Ordaining women in the Lutheran Church will compromise my salvation

But did you know... Your salvation is God’s gift of grace, given to you through faith. This is not dependent on the gender of the pastor or whoever led you to faith. Ordination, or the office of ministry, is simply the way Jesus instituted for the Church to provide the gospel and sacraments to the people of God.

Some say... # 6. Congregations that oppose women’s ordination will have a woman pastor imposed on them if women’s ordination is introduced

But did you know... A congregation is always free to make their own choice of whom they wish to call from the roll of pastors. The proposals before the LCA NZ’s General Synod in February 2023 ask Synod to delete TA 6.11 (which specifies ordination of men only) as the teaching of the whole Church and replace it with two practices of the ministry on an equal footing, while reaffirming the one Lutheran teaching of the ministry. This means that congregations will have choice about whether they call within a practice ordaining women and men or within a practice ordaining men only. These proposals are true to Lutheran Confessions and preserve the unity of the LCA NZ.

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