

## Synod Report

### 2019 LCA SA-NT District Synodical Meeting on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May @ Salisbury Lutheran Church with the theme: "From the Ashes"

**Day opened with worship** led by Salisbury Church band. To be part of an overflowing church singing praises to God is awesome. It's such a shame that more congregational members don't get involved with these days.

**Bishop David Altus** shared a **message** around the theme using **Isaiah 61:1-6**. We saw a photo of the recently burnt Notre Dame Cathedral. What do we see when there is devastation and ashes? What do we see when we enter our churches? Is the focus on the cross or all the other things eg empty seats etc. The cross points us to Jesus to find comfort, peace & forgiveness. In the passage God talks about rebuilding his people. We are the people God has planted to serve where He has placed us. We go as people, the church into the broken world as the good news. We need to not waste time on attacking behaviour but we need to go to the heart, to listen and to speak the love of God into the hearts. We need to **look & listen, to step out & to step up for Christ**. *(a copy of this message will be available in hard copy for those who would like to read it, & will be sent out via the email address system from the office.)*

#### **Bishop David Altus gave his report:**

**1. Where to** from General synod in Sydney. College of Bishops give guidance & direction, we serve the church. Met in Feb and discussed role of Bishops, issues, deeper questions & issues. Please pray for our Bishops & give them time. Core issue is mission.

**2. Prayer points:** Pray for Western South Australia – no one at Yalata, Ceduna to support especially our aboriginal communities; and Darwin & Alice Springs.

:pray for our chaplains; :pray for our children, Youth & Young Adults

:pray for the decision regarding Two Wells Lutheran School

:pray for communities with vacancies : Children, youth, young adults – 3 part time positions 2 to still be filled

**4. Lutheran Education** -looking at strengthening governance

**5. Call process** – issues re supply, information on Pastors, need for clear consistent information

**6. ALC training & support for pastors.** The early training will occur in all states, not just Adelaide

**7. Child abuse** – regular review and training, need for self care & awareness; healthy spaces for our Pastors

**8. Pastors** need for continual training -40 hours for year. They need to have space to reflect, refresh, develop and grow

**9. Develop a lay preaching course.** Online & will enhance the hearing of the word.

**10. Safe Church** – needs to be taken seriously. Compliance & checks need to be up to date

**11. Domestic Violence** ministry training about to roll out

**12. Leaders of Christian Churches** – Growing invitation from governments, groups etc for wisdom from Christian churches. James Winderlich & David Altus actively involved.

**13. Suicide** – name it and talk about it – with listening hearts.

**The Mission Stimulus** Grant winner was \$25,000 to St Petri Lutheran church Nuriootpa for 'Messy Church'

**The mission Resource** funds went to –the Mallee (connecting with local shows)

- St Marks, Mt Barker (family/child friendly space)
- Victor Harbor (Signage)

Thanks to LLL and their partnership in these grants.

**Rohan Feegrade** LCC Ex director introduced himself & spoke on the inspiring powerful god's work through LCC

**Simon Rodger** chair of LCC proposed merger with Lutheran disability services. Passed unanimously

**Stephen Kroker** presented finance & budget. 2018 has been a time of refinement. *(Thank you to congregations as their donations exceeded expectation, despite a difficult year especially for people on the land)* the proposed budget was passed by the delegates.

**Stephen Schultz presented "Ministry Structure in the LCA - Structuring Ourselves for growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"**. During this time he presented some statistics, what's happening now and what can we do in the future. He said 'Our role is not to survive as the LCA but we have a role as Lutherans to ensure that's God' love & His word maintains'. There were many opportunities for discussion, sharing of ideas and being challenged.

The day closed with a closing devotion. (Stephen Schultz has been visiting congregations to gain information and share ideas on this topic. *Following this session I as delegate for our GGLC congregation would encourage our community to invite him to share this information with us. This will give us the big picture so we look outward and not always inward – with the cross of Jesus as the centre and focus.*

A day filled with – spiritual food, physical food, fellowship opportunities and challenges. A positive and encouraging day for all who attended and for the vision of Lutheran Church as a whole.

Submitted by Rosalie Hoklas

## SA-NT District Synod - May 2019

### Isaiah 61:1-3

**The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.**

What do you see in that picture? (You probably recognise it as the Notre Dame Cathedral in France after the recent fire)

What draws your attention most?

What do you focus on?

Is it:

- The empty pews?
- The chaotic pile of rubble in front around the altar from parts of the roof that had fallen in?
- The eerie empty darkness of the picture?

**Or is it the cross**, shining through the gloom that draws your eye and arouses and inspires your faith and reminds you that not just the roof but heaven itself is open to you...

And what do you focus on most as you enter the church where you come from?

Is it:

- The empty pew and the state of the building?
- Reminders of what was, and what and who has been lost?
- An ageing and dying membership?
- The seemingly impossible task ahead to rebuild your congregation...

### **Or is it the cross?**

- The place where our suffering, rejected, lonely and dying God meets us....
- The place where the past is forgiven and done with, and new life begins for us.
- The place where we find comfort, strength, peace and hope....
- The cross which is not the last word but leads to the open grave, and an open heaven, and the sure hope that even our own dust and ashes will be turned into a new and glorious body?

The day after the Notre Dame fire, the world said *“this is a disaster, we must rebuild this building”*. A world that passed through this church as tourists said we can't lose this building. Malcolm Turnbull even tweeted we should be asking Aussie taxpayers to chip in!

In Isaiah 61, to a people who were mourning what they had lost – church, land, people, God promised to send a servant who would be anointed, chosen and empowered to speak and be a message of good news - God was on his way to rebuild - not firstly to rebuild their temple but to rebuild and transform them!

In Isaiah 61 it's only in v4 that the messenger says: **"They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated.."**

But vv1-3 talk about God coming to build up his people:

- God putting broken hearts back together
- Offering hope to people who feel empty and poor
- Flooding with light the lives of people for whom everything is grey and black.
- God freeing people who feel bound and trapped and addicted and imprisoned.
- God assuring people that he is with them and onside, and that God will sort things out one day and make things right
- Offering comfort to people who cry tears and grieve over what and who they have lost and over themselves
- Replacing the ashes on the heads of people living with grief and despair and humiliation in this life, with a crown of beauty
- God replacing tears with joy, and despair with praise!

That's the good news this servant would bring and be.....

Centuries later Jesus stood up in church one day and said "I am that servant, and this good news is fulfilled in me."

Think about the ways Jesus has done that in your life, think about the beauty from ashes you have seen in each other..... Recognise and celebrate it whenever you see it... The beauty of faith shining through the ravages of life.

***“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour”***

God plants us people like trees that grow and thrive in him even from a pile of ashes....

And he plants us here and all over SA and NT to green his world, to change the spiritual climate as we breathe out the oxygen of his grace, his loving kindness, forgiveness and hope to a world suffocating in its own air.

**v6 And you will be called priests of the Lord,  
you will be named ministers of our God.**

Not just pastors, but every man, woman teenager and child in the LCA, is sent as servants with the same good news Isaiah talks about, life and beauty from the ashes of sadness and death through Jesus Christ.

I love our church buildings because they are places where we hear this good news. We shared some money with each other in the District to help maintain them didn't we! But we are not here ultimately to maintain them - we are here to leave them every Sunday and be this priests, his servants with a message in the name of Jesus, a message that has the power to transform lives.

In some ways I am not afraid to live in a broken church, a humbled and yes in recent times even humiliated Christian church in Australia. All we have is this message, all we have is Christ himself to point to, not ourselves.

I would rather live in a broken but Christ-dependent, cross-shaped, and cross-hopeful church than a complacent,

comfortable, lukewarm Christian church. Maybe as we meet people from and in our own brokenness we might make more of a connection with their brokenness than we will if we look and sound like we have never been touched by what they experience....

Somewhere I read this about this passage:

*“A broken church where Christ and his cross are central is a place for broken and poor people, unloved people, people for whom everything they had looked to for security and strength has become a heap of ashes. Jesus is there for them. We are there for them. You are there for them....”*

Recent research indicated Aussies don't resonate with high profile Christians thanking Jesus when they win or achieve things, but they are open to ordinary Christians who have been through stuff and yet have hope, peace joy even and who live their following of the servant Jesus with integrity. They are more open to considering faith when the roof falls in on their lives, and they watch us, and those who know one of us see us as loving and kind and trustworthy and faithful more than we think.... Twice as many who know you think that's what you are like to them than old fashioned, opinionated and hypocritical... that should give us heart... and courage.

I visited my doctor last week. A Christian from India, served as a pastor in Pt Augusta. I went for a flu shot but got a whole lot more. He knows I am a bishop and while checking my blood pressure which was rising before pastors conference out of the blue he said two things quietly:

1. I think we churches spend too much time trading sheep between each other and not enough time and energy looking and listening out for the lost.
2. We spend too much time attacking behaviour and not enough time listening to their hearts...

My doctor was right, in Isaiah 61 God hears the cry of the heart and he comes with good news, and he wants to use us to deliver it...

We don't go to church, we go as the church into a broken world. With good news, as good news.

Don't waste time attacking behaviour, go to the heart, listen for the heart, the broken heart, the despairing heart, the empty heart, the aggrieved heart, the hard heart, the captive heart, the wounded heart...

As I look at you I see broken people and at times a broken hearted church, but at the same time I see a beautiful people, people dressed in their baptism, crowned with righteousness from Christ, people God is rebuilding and whose hearts he has restored, I see priests sent with this same good news to communities and a world that is starved of good news.

There is life from the ashes.

You and I are living proof of that.

Praise God!

Listen and share that life with hearts that need it.