



# Highlights from Synod



**400-plus delegates met in Sydney for the 19<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Synod plus 100 volunteers, exhibitors, visitors & staff**



# Worship

Every day began with a holy communion service. The sermon based on an Exodus text was preached by various bishops. Worship styles & liturgies varied, with choirs, organists & bands adding diversity & richness to the songs and hymns. Delegates & visitors walked between desert 'rocks' and rippling blue velvet walls of 'water', to enter the worship space. The altar was in the dimensions of the tabernacle altar.



**Tues.-B. John Henderson: Moses & the Burning Bush** ‘But what if God distracts us? Will we, will you, will I allow it? Are we prepared to be surprised?’

**Wed.-B Paul Smith QLD: The Passover** “Lamb of God’ prayer is not just about me – we don’t say, “Lamb of God have mercy on me” – it is “Have mercy on us”.

**Thurs.-B David Altus SA NT: Travelling with Cloud by Day & Light by Night** ‘It’s not about who we are and where we are going at all. It’s about who God is and where God is going.’



- **Fri.-B Mark Whitfield NZ Crossing the Red Sea:** ‘Each new day – you and I – who by God’s grace and the working of the Holy Spirit make up this living thing called church ... each new day we are invited to remember and be embraced by the grace and promise of our baptism’.
- **Sat.-B Lester Priebbenow VIC TAS: God speaks at Mt Sinai**  
‘Let us remember who we are and whose we are, in Christ’,



Sun.-B. John Henderson: *Exodus 29:45 'I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God.'*

**'As we take the next steps, let's be patient with God and kind to one another'; 'fix our eyes on Jesus'.**



Business – Synod delegates sat in table groups for sessions.



- **Governance and structural changes - Synod backed formal introduction of changes trialled over past 3 years.**
- Proposed at 2015 Synod by General Church Council (GCC), changes designed for more effective leadership, mission-centric activity, & deliver resources efficiently in the church.
- In 2017 GCC commissioned independent review of trial structure. Review reported greater effectiveness in church's core mission, improvements in governance and administrative efficiency.
- Key changes are nominations to all boards, committees & commissions be competency-based, GCC is renamed General Church Board (GCB) to reflect governance role, membership is fully elected by General Synod 3 pastors & 6 lay members.

- **Pastors John Henderson and Andrew Pfeiffer re-elected as LCA Bishop and LCA Assistant Bishop respectively for next three years.**
- Synod elected to General Church Board GCB Pastor James Haak, Paul Argyle, Charmaine Harch, Faye Schmidt, Tim Wiebusch, Mel Zerner, Peter Zweck. GCB members elected under new governance framework approved previous day.



# Reports



- 1. Church workers** – working with ALC for training, many challenges
- 2. Professional Standards** – SP3 Safe people. Safe program safe places
- 3. Finance & Admin-** LAMP2 payroll, information technology
- 4. Lutheran archives** – harvesting records of ministries, preserving stories
- 5. Communications-** LCA eNews; LCA facebook; Lutheran. Building connections and community. Not more roads, but people on roads
- 6. LLL** – ADI process near completion, now under Banking Act – Allen Kupke

# Reports: Local Mission

1. **Cross Cultural Ministry-** step into their world, find something in common. Apply for a grant
2. **Grow ministries** – intergenerational relationships
3. **Lutheran Media-** reach people, engage conversation.  
Messages of Hope
4. **Ministry with Aging-** document available “God’s love – our care”
5. **Planting churches** – Dean Eton, relational evangelism
6. **Christ in the Centre** – Finke River Mission

# Reports

1. **Worship**- check out web site, huge amount resources including for children
2. **ALWS**- new CEO; Walk my Way on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019
3. **International Mission**-
4. **Reconciliation Ministry** –variety workshops available. Biblical wisdom +vital skills +practical resources
5. **ALC** – new branding and logo. Learning is changing. Expand online, a college without walls
6. **LEA** –new Director –Lisa Schmidt; strategic plan to strengthen Lutheran Identity, ensure system sustainability, enhance thriving learning communities



NSW Bishop James Haak: "Faith, freedom, and future is not just for us as the LCA or us as individuals, but faith, freedom, future is also for that vast sea of souls in Sydney and elsewhere who do not know Christ."

- **General Synod again said ‘no’ to the ordination of women in the LCA.**
- 161 voted against the resolution, 240 supported it. The LCA Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of registered delegates to bring about a change in matters of a theological or confessional nature. This was the fourth time Synod has voted on the issue.
- The vote was the last item of business on the Friday. Next morning delegates gathered at tables to pray and listen with each other. District bishops moved among them & reported back to Synod the feelings & concerns of table groups.

**‘If I could put it into my own words I would say that the LCA is hurting, and hurting very badly’, SA–NT Bishop David Altus said. ‘She’s a broken woman, hurting in all parts of the body.’**



*NSW Bishop James Haak then proposed a motion, which Synod passed almost unanimously and without debate: **‘that Synod acknowledges the deep hurt and harm to individuals and groups that has been occasioned over the past years in the course of the debate regarding ordination; repents of the hurt, and seeks forgiveness and reconciliation with one another’.***



- **National Apology**
- **During an evening devotion General Synod reflected in prayerful silence on our church's part in failing to protect children in our care.**
- 'We acknowledge the harm suffered by victims of sexual abuse by pastors, other people in positions of trust, and members of the Lutheran Church of Australia and the synods that preceded it', our delegates confessed.

**So far as we know, the LCA will become the first national church in Australia to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as part of its commitment to better hear, recognise and support Aboriginal people in the church.**

‘At its core this proposal is about continuing to build upon our solid foundation of respectful and dignified relationships between the First Nations people and other Australians to enable us to come together and live reconciled in Christ’, Mrs Reid said. The resolution was carried with a standing ovation.



## Other items of Business

1. Changes to LCA constitution to **increase opportunities for aboriginal representation & participation** in church decisions.
2. General Synod underscored its commitment to **Lutheran Education** by committing the church to ongoing improvements in collaborative ministry, governance & administration. The resolution also directs the LCA's General Church Board (GCB) and the Board for Lutheran Education Australia (BLEA) to develop a coordinated approach.

3. General Synod requested General Church Board (GCB) to conduct an overarching review of the LCA's ecclesiastical discipline, adjudication and appeals provisions, policies and processes.

4. **Synod offering is \$11,408.30 for drought relief.**

5. General Synod voted to not introduce practice of **infant communion** in the LCA. It did endorse the church's existing practice of offering the sacrament to children 'at the earliest appropriate age'.

6. **17 items of business not addressed.** The GCB will deliberate on these proposals during the next synodical term and report back to the 2021 General Convention

**‘Youth consultants, sponsored by Grow Ministries** were a part of synod to add a young person’s presence and perspective during table discussions and to observe and participate in the sessions and worship.’, They have the privilege of sitting at table with the delegates but hold no voting rights.



Youngest consultant, at 19 years, **Noah Hahn, from Golden Grove SA**, was interested in seeing the business side of church life in action.