

50th QUEENSLAND DISTRICT SYNOD

Popular Report

Note: All reports were published in the Book of Reports and were taken as read.

Under clear winter skies, 197 delegates and 111 visitors gathered at Grace Lutheran College, Rothwell, for the fiftieth Queensland District Synod.

Friday Evening

Registration opened at 5pm and a light meal was served for delegates and visitors prior to the 6pm start.

Mr Michael Connolly, whose children had attended Grace Lutheran College and whose artwork hangs in the College's Chapel, shared the Acknowledgment to Country and closed this welcome with the didgeridoo.

Bishop of the LCAQD, Rev Paul Smith led the opening devotion during which the Convention of Synod was constituted.

The first session of Synod consisted of presentations from **Departments of the LCA.**

- 1) Tania Nelson (Executive Officer of the LCA Board for Local Mission) reported on new Boards and committees particularly Committees for New and Renewing Churches, Cross-Cultural Ministry and Ministry with the Ageing. She also reported on the work of Grow Ministries and Lutheran Media. (These departments all had stalls with information for Synod attendees).
- 2) Peter Schirmer (Executive Officer of the LCA) reported for LCA Support Services.
 - He reported on the LCA Governance Review (an outcome of the LCA General Synod 2013) which has also resulted in reviews of Lutheran Education Australia and Aged Care.
 - Prevention of Domestic Violence campaign. Ian Rentsch is the campaign coordinator. Mrs Angela Mayer and Pastor Keith Stiller are Queensland representatives for this initiative.
 - Review of the Call System as requested by General Synod 2015. This review is being led by ALC/ALITE under the leadership of Professor Wendy Mayer (ALC staff member)
 - Professional Standards Department. Brochures and a video have been supplied to every congregation. Please ensure that these are distributed and that the whole congregation views the video.
 - Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse. There have been 57 hearings around Australia and there are upwards of 6700 survivors of abuse. The report will be available by the end of this year. The Royal Commission has advocated for a redress scheme for survivors in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

- Church Worker Support is aiming to provide an integrated approach to support all church workers. The 2017 National Lay Workers Conference will be held at Maroochy Waters, Queensland from 4 – 7 September 2017.
 - Lutheran Archives have a project running for the digitisation of photos and films. They can also assist congregations by providing advice on the management of record keeping for the purpose of maintaining records.
 - Communications led by Linda McQueen are able to assist with building congregation websites. Design services and journalist support are based in Queensland. Congregations are advised to check Copyright Guidelines,
 - Finance and Administration. For assistance with the HR System contact the Liaison Officer, Melissa Juergensen.
- 3) Emma Graetz (on behalf of ALC). Australian Lutheran College partners in mission with LCA agencies and departments by providing higher education and vocational education training. They also offer training and support for overseas partners. The current review has the acronym SALT – Stay, Adapt, Lead and Transform.
- 4) Glenice Hartwich (Board for Overseas Mission) spoke passionately and told stories about very real people who are being touched by the Gospel of Christ and are meeting Jesus, who changes their lives.
- 5) Susan Hawke provided information on behalf of Australian Lutheran World Service. There are currently 15 (full-time and part-time) staff based in the Albury office and elsewhere. ALWS is an ongoing presence in 7 countries as well as providing crisis intervention where and when needed.
- 2016 Queensland supporters gave \$838,000
 - Current appeals are for the famine in East Africa where ALWS is providing food, primary health care, water pumps for clean water, teachers and support for trauma
 - “Walk My Way” – on 4 July 2017 walkers will take the 26km Pioneer Trail from Hahndorf to Beaumont in Adelaide to raise funds. See www.walkmyway.org.au
 - Currently ALWS is supporting the peoples of Syria and Mosul, Iraq; Cambodia; Papua and New Guinea; and Nepal, especially in earthquake recovery.
 - In 2016 ALWS underwent accreditation with DFAT (Dept for Foreign Affairs and Trade) at the Albury Office and received the highest ranking. Because of this the Federal Government matches 5:1 every dollar raised by supporters of ALWS.

At 8pm Bishop Paul Smith led a Closing Devotion where new Pastors were welcomed into the District. They are; Rev Murray Thomas (retired), Rev Ron Buchold (SWQ Parish, Dalby ministry area), Rev Ray Pace (Good Shepherd, Toowoomba), Rev Mark Hansen (Good Shepherd, Noosa), Rev Chris Janetzki (Emmanuel Lutheran Fellowship, Toowoomba), Rev David Haak (Bethesda, Beenleigh), Rev Greg Schiller (Cairns Lutheran Parish) and Rev Mark Doecke (South Burnett Lutheran Parish).

To conclude the evening, fellowship continued with wine and canapes.

Saturday Morning

Worship - Morning worship was conducted by Second Assistant Bishop, Rev Mark Vainikka. With the Unity candle burning brightly, Pastor Vainikka preached on Hebrews 3:1-6, reminding us that we were gathered as one people, the people of Christ, and there are no divisions in the household of God. As “Christ Citizens”, we proceeded to the business of the morning after further words of welcome from Bishop Paul Smith and a welcome to invited dignitaries by Secretary of DCC, Margit Hubbers.

Bishop’s Report – Pastor Smith spoke to his report, making brief comments on a number of matters including: 50/500, Trinity Toowoomba, Governance Consultations, Women’s Ordination Consultations, the Royal Commission and Mandatory Reporting for “religious workers”, St Stephen’s and St Martin’s Gladstone, Living Grace Toowoomba, and the Cyclone Debbie Appeal. He thanked members of the church for their faithful witness and service to God.

The Bishop sought, and was granted, permission to be absent during the afternoon and evening sessions so that he could participate in his daughter’s wedding.

Questions – Pastor Mark Hampel asked whether the issues related to mandatory reporting will be worked through with other denominations. Yes. Bishop Emeritus Noel Noack is our representative on the Religious Education in Queensland quality assurance committee.

Following the first reading of Nominations by Pastor Lionel Rohrlach, announcements and prayer, the meeting paused for morning tea before reconvening to hear the District Church Council Report, presented by Margit Hubbers.

DCC Report - Margit noted that since the report was written and published in the Book of Reports two vacancies have been created for pastor representatives on DCC, following the calls accepted by Pastor Milton Fritsch (Vic) and Pastor Peter Hage (WA). Margit challenged the meeting to think about how our congregations are “future proofing” and she encouraged us to think laterally and creatively about pastoral vacancies. She reminded us that, “It’s great if children are disturbing your services – they are the future.” The assembly was asked to pray for the DCC in the work that they do between Synods.

Questions

- Bishop Emeritus Noel Noack referred to the Governance review by GCC and asked what DCC sees as its role in this. Margit responded by commenting on the need for greater understanding of the Governance/Management distinction and the need to work more

efficiently, nimbly and with agility. Pastor Smith stated that as GCC does its review it will send out documents for congregations to study prior to National Synod in October, 2018.

Ministry & Mission Presentation

Pastor Dirk Willner highlighted that, as a consequence of the proposed budget not being passed at the 2016 Synod, all departments came together during the year to discuss mission. This has been a real blessing.

Pastor Matthew Wilksch spoke passionately about the newly-planted Arise Lutheran Church at Springfield, which launched weekly services on 12/2/17 and currently hosts about fifty people.

The challenges of the indigenous congregation based in Hopevale were presented: other denominations, gambling, alcohol, domestic violence, small number of men involved in worship, mixed family structures, financial insecurity. They need prayer support.

Pastor Brian Shek spoke about the Asian Ministry, ahead of a proposal to be presented later in the meeting. Challenges include lack of ministry workers and finances.

Pastor John O’Keefe challenged the church - “Money **follows** Mission”.

Budget Presentation - Risk, Audit and Finance Committee Presentation

Michael Klatt (DCC) commended the work done by the Bishop, DEO and Heads of Department since the 2016 Synod. While congregations’ contributions fell in the past year, there has been a significant rise in income from Property, Donations and Disposal of Assets. The 2017 budget, approved by DCC, is tracking steadily.

For 2018 the strategic goals are: Growing Together, Reaching Out Together, Success & Sustainability. Total income (\$2.78million) and total expenditure (\$2.6million) in the 2018 budget are both an increase over the 2017 budget. The proposed 2018 budget was adopted.

Questions:

- Ian Hauser, Good Shepherd Noosa, questioned whether a large bequest is being used, as intended, to provide aged-care services on the Sunshine Coast. The response was that DCC and LCC are working together on a proposed project. In due course a final business case will come to DCC for approval.
- Pastor Mark Hampel questioned whether District can help congregations to engage in property development, as this process is beyond the capacities of most congregations. This is currently under discussion and it is hoped that a system will be set up within twelve months.

In Memoriam

The following were remembered – Rev Rick Zweck, Mrs Ora Pohlner, Mrs June Stolz, Rev Horst Gesswein, Rev Alan Dahms, Rev Russell Weier.

Saturday Afternoon

Following the second reading of the Nominations (still some vacancies), the Nominations were closed and the ballot papers were prepared.

LYQ Presentation

Ian Grieshaber, Chair LYQ Council, spoke to the LYQ report, thanking congregations and District for their prayers and financial support. He also thanked the many volunteers.

Sarah Calder, Luminate Coordinator, interviewed Luminate graduate Sarah Turner and reminded the meeting, “People say that young people are the future of our church – but they are the NOW”.

Peter Schilling entertained us with a story from his Dad’s youth camp experience, and left us with the thought that, “The faith that’s grown, the memories made and the friendships formed are as important now as ever”. Luther Heights Youth Camp aims to build new accommodation blocks and a dining hall to seat 400 in the coming years.

Aaron Glover reminded us that LYQ is available to help congregations with what they are doing locally.

Questions:

1. Pastor Ben Hentschke asked if there is more we can do to protect young people in the light of challenges in getting training from Professional Standards Unit. Response – the PSU does not meet the needs of the church; there is a disconnect between the training concept and reality on the ground.
2. Other speakers shared their experience of CLW, applauded the work of LYQ in our schools and camps, and highlighted the partnerships between LYQ and other departments.

Strategic Chartering

Margit Hubbers introduced the strategic charter document which was devised by DCC but belongs to everyone. The format of the plan links directly with the LCA plan, “Engaging people with God’s love in everyday life, not just Sunday Church”. Strategic priorities = Growing Together, Reaching Out Together, Success and Sustainability. Then followed table discussions about how our congregations are working or could be working in these areas. Notes of suggestions were made and will be collated and distributed by DCC.

It was proposed that the document be accepted as a guide for future planning in the church. Carried.

LWQ Presentation

President, Karen Bryce, presented a slide show illustrating the social contact, fellowship, sharing, faith building, retreats and fundraising that is LWQ. In the past year financial support has been given to bursaries, Luminare, International Missions, ALWS, LWA, LYQ, Our Saviour's Toowoomba Mission Fund. Report adopted.

Questions / Comments

Pastor Andrew Jaensch and Pastor James Haak thanked LWQ.

50/500 Session

Assistant Bishops Mark Vainikka and James Haak led the meeting in a presentation to unpack the meaning and significance of the Reformation. Key to understanding the Reformation is understanding Luther and the context in which he lived, but we were warned not to worship Luther – “We worship the God he pointed to”.

Table groups spent some time in discussion, personal reflection and a worksheet before the meeting was invited to pose questions to an expert panel (Rev Dr Russell Briese, Rev Andrew Jaensch, Rev Dr Michael Lockwood).

Questions

1. Dr Neil Bergmann – How can the Lutheran Church continue to reform when the last documents on which the church agreed date back to the late sixteenth century? Response – Pastor Lockwood - There are some issues that have been addressed in current times e.g. place of scriptures. The church takes things for granted until they are challenged → flurry of activity. Pastor Jaensch - The LCA does not have a worldwide body, such as the Roman Catholic church does; this should make change easier.
2. Luther's anti-semitic teachings – Response – Luther was a child of his time, who got frustrated when the Jews did not convert to Christianity. We cannot defend everything – sometimes we can only apologise.

Synod Dinner

During dinner at the Golden Ox, we were both entertained and informed by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane – Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who spoke of the need to unsettle stereotypes as we undertake our ecumenical journey. He highlighted the value of personal encounters and the dangers of institutional pride, which is often hidden. He warned that we need to be conscious that the power of culture can be inhibitive and reminded us to revisit our sense of what is non-negotiable – recognising that more may be negotiable than we first think. God dislocates us; if we don't dislocate, we die in the desert instead of living in the garden.

Sunday morning

Following Pentecost worship with Holy Communion, the meeting reconvened for business.

Election Results

Only two ballots were required – those to fill pastor and lay vacancies on DCC. There were twelve informal votes for pastor representatives and four informal votes for lay members.

Pastor Ben Hentschke (1 year) and Pastor Mark Brinkmann (2 years) were elected, Pastor Thomas Bohmert was unsuccessful.

Michael Klatt, Andrew Spyropoulos, Danielle Robinson and Margit Hubbers were elected for two years; David Radke (1 year) and Richard Pietsch (unsuccessful).

Congregational Resolutions

Resolutions from St Peter's Lutheran Congregation and Asian Ministry were presented as per the Book of Reports, voted on and carried.

Lutheran Education Queensland

Tim Kotzur (Principal, St Peter's) highlighted the outstanding achievements of Lutheran schools in a variety of contexts. He also noted the challenges of affordability and sustainability, the challenge to remain authentically Lutheran and the competition coming from government schools.

The Rolph Mayer Award for Teacher Excellence was presented to Gordon Rackley (Grace Lutheran College).

The TT Reuther Award for School Excellence was awarded to St Andrew's Lutheran College for their Christian Studies program, and accepted by Principal, David Bliss.

Mr Dennis Mulherin was announced as the recently-appointed Director for Lutheran Education Queensland.

Moving testimonies were presented by Monika Bennett (parent) and Laura Robbins (Lutheran school past student and current teacher) and the meeting was reminded, "We never forget the people in our lives who show us Grace ... Grace is brilliant because it meets us in the mess".

Lutheran Community Care

A proposal was made to change the name from Lutheran Community Care to Lutheran Services, voted on and carried.

The report, presented by Dr Clare Seligmann, noted the breadth of services offered. Over the past twelve months, clients have more choice about what services are delivered, how and where. In the next phase of development there will be an increased focus on dementia care, as part of a comprehensive twenty-year strategic plan. Report received.

LLL Presentation

Mission Stimulus Grant (\$25,000) - The recipients of the 2016 grant (Arise Lutheran Church, Springfield) shared how they have used this money to employ a part time Community Connections Worker who connects with school families, runs a playgroup and has organised Bibles for Preps.

The Mission Stimulus Grant for 2017 was awarded to Trinity Ashmore community to develop their Messy Church initiative.

Marie Pawsey reported that in 2015-2016 the LLL provided nearly \$10,000,000 to the LCA. Over \$332 million was loaned and over 500 different tracts were made available through the Lutheran Tract Mission. LLL savings accounts remain at-call with no minimum deposit or balance at 2.50% interest.

Hosting Congregation for 2018 Synod

St John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bundaberg.

Vote of Thanks

Margit Hubbers expressed thanks on behalf of the Synod to the volunteers, Grace College, the chaplaincy team, the AV team, the Directors of Departments and Council Chairs, Representatives of LCA NZ, trade show exhibitors, those nominating to serve and those retiring from service, delegates and visitors, our Bishop and Assistant Bishops, our Great God.

Closing Service

Synod ended, as it had begun, with worship where the newly elected District Church Council was installed by Bishop Paul Smith.