



**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**

OF AUSTRALIA

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA
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PASTORAL LETTER FROM DISTRICT BISHOP ANDREW

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It has been just over a week since the delegates to General Convention of Synod voted to allow the Lutheran Church of Australia to ordain women as well as men. This has not been an easy discussion over three decades, as members of the church hold different convictions on this matter, based on the way that understand what God's word has to say on this matter. Therefore the decision of 2024 General Convention has significant implications for all of us. For some of us, it has been the answer to hopes long held, and for others of us it has caused distress and grief.

As you reflect on what has happened, I want to you to know that as the pastors of the church, and the lay delegates to General Convention discussed and debated this issue, they showed great love and respect for one another. Delegates were seated around tables and were able to share their heartfelt concerns and to listen deeply to the heart and the hopes of fellow church members. They worshipped together at the beginning and end of each day, they prayed, and when the result of the ordination vote was announced, they showed great care and sensitivity toward each other.

As you consider what this decision means for you personally, for your congregation, and for the LCA, I believe that you should hear the hope that the pastors of the church expressed about how we might live together as one church in the light of this decision. General Pastors' Conference gave this following guidance to the convention delegates, and through them, to all of us:

Many pastors, theologians, and lay people in our church, after considerable study, reflection and prayer, are not convicted that the teaching in TA VI:11 reflects the will of God as revealed in Scripture. Many others, however, are convicted that faithful acceptance of scriptural teaching allows the church to continue to ordain men only. In light of this experience, the LCA permits those within the church who hold the conviction that women can be ordained to call a woman pastor. Those who do not hold this conviction are free to call men only.

As we live out our faith, we call on God to heal any divisions among us through the bond of peace. As we bear with one other, we make every effort to ensure that church structures, practices and fellowship among people of differing convictions reflect a spirit of love that preserves church unity. **We also affirm that brothers and sisters who hold opposing views on this issue remain beloved and faithful members of God's family, reflecting the words of the Apostle Paul:** 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:4).

I encourage you to reflect deeply on these words. Our unity is to be found in our shared identity as the body of Christ. The good news he proclaimed and the forgiveness he has given us through his cross is the heart of all we say and do, in our worship, our service, and our witness to the communities in which we live. Please pray for your pastors, your congregational leaders and your fellow members, especially those who you know hold a different opinion to you on the question of ordination. Seek ways to show your love and concern for all. As the Apostle Paul counsels us, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.' (Romans 12:15)

Please continue to pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ and across the whole of the Lutheran Church in Australia and New Zealand. As you do this and as you continue to gather in worship and fellowship, "May the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

Peace in Christ

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Brook', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev Andrew Brook
Bishop
Lutheran Church of Australia, SA-NT District

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. - Ephesians 2:10

where love comes to life