

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The prophet Jeremiah testifies: 'Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.' (Jeremiah 15:16)

The purpose of this letter and attached documents is to encourage those who are concerned about trends in the church by showing that there is still widespread commitment to the Word of God in the LCA. They have also been prepared in the hope that they will encourage greater faithfulness to and confidence in the Scriptures.

These papers have been prepared in the conviction that God only grants church growth, renewal and strengthening in faith and love where the seed of the Word is planted and watered. (Mark 4:1-20, 26-34; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7)

The first attachment is entitled, 'A covenant to promote biblical renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia.' The second attachment is a summary of the longer one for those who find a shorter document less daunting.

The documents are designed, in part, to help us in our preparations for the forthcoming General Convention of the LCA, when we will reaffirm our faith in the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures, in keeping with Article II of our constitution. Those involved in their preparation remain convinced that unity within our church can only be preserved on the basis of a commitment to the one Gospel and the Holy Scriptures.

These papers also have a broader, longer-term purpose. According to the New Testament, every parish pastor is called to serve as the bishop – the superintendent, the overseer – of God's church in that place. We are pledged as pastors and laypeople to make the most of opportunities to promote and provide biblical teaching in local parishes and beyond.

We would encourage you to share these documents with your congregations. As an encouragement to us all, you may wish to gather names of people who support this covenant. While we will not keep adding names to the document itself, you may like to advise me of others who endorse it. This will help us build a supportive network.

Dr Greg Lockwood
(email: greg.lockwood@internode.on.net)
12 February 2015

A Covenant to Promote Biblical Renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia

‘Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.’ (John 14:23)

Preamble

The Reformation Day weekend in October, 1966, saw the formation of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). The ending of the long division between the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (UELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) gave joy and exhilaration to laity and clergy alike. At a thanksgiving service in Tanunda to mark the merger, the assembly rose to declare the confession of the new church as set forth in the unalterable Article II of the proposed constitution:

We accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life. We acknowledge and accept as true expositions of the Word of God and as our own confession all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, namely, the three Ecumenical Creeds: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed; the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; the Apology (defence) of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; the Small Catechism of Luther; the Large Catechism of Luther; and the Formula of Concord.

This union around a common confession has brought countless blessings to the LCA during the last half century. At every synodical convention the delegates still rise and declare this confession to be their own. The unalterable article serves as a benchmark for all faithful teaching and practice in the LCA.

It is, then, with heavy hearts that we see that the authority of the Scriptures, while being nominally adhered to, is often belittled and dismissed. A critical approach to the Bible and its interpretation, as well as to the biblical teaching of the Book of Concord and the Theses of Agreement, is undermining the church’s foundation in Christ and his Word. (Ephesians 2:20) We say this as pastors and people aware of our own frequent failures to stand on this foundation. We pray that God will give all of us the repentance that leads to life. (Acts 11:18)

Will we as a church continue to follow the authority of God’s Word, or will we follow ‘the spirit of the world’ that refuses to bow to this authority? This, we believe, is the key question facing the LCA today. For the sake of greater openness regarding this issue, we (the undersigned) present the following theses on the authority of the Word of God:

A. Theses on Scripture

1. The authority of the Scriptures. In harmony with the unalterable article we commit ourselves, without qualification, to the holy Bible as the Word of God as a whole and in all its parts (2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:19-21). We follow the authors of the Book of Concord in pledging ourselves ‘to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm

according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated'¹. With the Lutheran Reformers, we honour the Bible as 'the divine, prophetic and apostolic Scriptures,' 'the pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God.'²

2. The inspiration of the Scriptures. In keeping with the Constitution's Article II, we believe the whole Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. From beginning to end we hear our Lord speaking.

Accordingly, we do not accept an acknowledgement of the Bible's inspiration which rejects verbal inspiration, the inspiration of its actual words. According to St Paul, Christ's apostles proclaim the Gospel 'in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.' (1 Corinthians 2:13) Jesus says, 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' (John 6:63) So we confess in the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets.

3. The inerrancy of the Scriptures. We confess that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.³ While the psalmist complains in his consternation, 'every man is a liar,' our God never lies. (Psalm 116:11; Titus 1:2)⁴ With Martin Luther we confess: 'My neighbour and I – in short, all men – may err and deceive, but God's Word cannot err.'⁵ We whole-heartedly endorse the defence of biblical inerrancy in the Theses of Agreement.⁶ With the Theses of Agreement, we regard inerrancy as an article of faith rather than a human deduction.⁷

4. The clarity of the Scriptures. We believe the Bible is wholly clear. It is 'a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.' (Psalm 119:105) The Old Testament is 'a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in (our) hearts.' (2 Peter 1:19) In accord with the Book of Concord, we believe the Bible is 'the clear Scripture of the Holy Spirit.'⁸

We therefore reject all claims that the Bible is opaque, especially in those parts that speak to the controversial issues before us. On the contrary, these passages are not unclear; they are simply too 'hard' for human ears to hear. (John 6:60; Hebrews 5:11)

5. The sufficiency of the Scriptures. We maintain that with 'Christ alone,' 'grace alone,' and 'faith alone,' Holy Scripture alone is sufficient for our salvation. We object to the elevation of experience, reason and human tradition as additional bases for Christian teaching.⁹ Accordingly we reject the claims of those who say that 'the Word alone is not enough,' and that we need another spiritual authority in addition to it, such as the teaching office of Rome, the Pentecostal 'second experience' of the Spirit, or the elevation of the church's creeds, confessions and traditions as if they have more authority or clarity than Scripture itself.

¹ The Formula of Concord, in The Book of Concord, Tappert edition, pages 503-504.

² Preface to The Book of Concord, Tappert edition, pages 3, 8.

³ LCA Constitution, Article II.

⁴ We reject the distinction that is sometimes made between biblical inerrancy on the one hand and, on the other hand, the Holy Scriptures' infallibility only in so far as they infallibly show us the way of salvation. Paul's words about the Bible's making us 'wise to salvation' (2 Timothy 3:15) may not be played off against his statement in Titus 1:2: 'God never lies.'

⁵ Large Catechism Part IV, Baptism, paragraph 57.

⁶ Theses of Agreement VIII.10.

⁷ 'This inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures cannot be seen with human eyes, nor can it be proved to human reason; it is an article of faith.' (Theses of Agreement VIII.10)

⁸ Preface to the Apology (the Defence) of the Augsburg Confession, paragraph 9.

⁹ Notably in the 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral' – scripture, tradition, reason, experience – the source of authority acknowledged in the Uniting Church of Australia's Basis of Union.

B. Theses on Bible interpretation (hermeneutics)

1. Christ as the centre of the Scriptures. We hold that ‘all the (Old Testament) promises of God find their Yes in him.’ (2 Corinthians 1:20) Our risen Lord said: “Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.’ (Luke 24:44; similarly Luke 24:25-27; Hebrews 1:1-2) So we confess with Luther: ‘All of Holy Scripture, from beginning to end, points solely to Christ as our source of grace and truth.’ All the sacred books ‘preach and promote him.’¹⁰ This Christ-centred understanding of the Bible is the most important hermeneutical principle.

From the words ‘promote Christ’ we should not deduce that Luther refers exclusively to the gospel rather than to Christ as the preacher of both law and gospel. Nor should the Bible’s focus on Christ be used to devalue its reliability as a historical record.

2. The simple and natural meaning. With Luther, we adhere to the simple and natural sense of the words of Scripture: ‘We must everywhere stick to the simple, pure, and natural sense of the words that accords with the rules of grammar and the normal use of language as God has created it.’¹¹ ‘The pure, simple, original sense should be sought, unless the context or an evident absurdity forces one to recognise a figurative expression.’¹² While we recognise that there are many types of literature in the Bible, we avoid strange and obscure interpretations that evade the natural sense of the words, including those that refuse to acknowledge the obvious historical claims in the biblical text.
3. Faith. We read the Bible in faith, trusting that every word is true. We therefore reject interpretations that question the trustworthiness of any part of the Scriptures, including its history. As Luther says, ‘Faith must be built up on the basis of history.’¹³
4. The Bible is a harmonious whole. We believe the Bible is not a cacophony of voices but a melodious symphony with one theme – Jesus Christ – and one primary composer, the Holy Spirit. So we follow the hermeneutical principle: Scripture interprets Scripture. As the Apology explains in the German version:

This most important topic of Christian teaching, rightly understood, illumines and magnifies the honour of Christ. It is especially useful for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible. It brings the abundant consolation that devout consciences need.¹⁴

We also contend that the Bible is a harmonious whole because its primary author is the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, we reject exaggerations of its diversity and claims that the secondary authors often contradict one another.

5. The Gospels are based on eyewitness testimony. We believe the four Gospels are grounded on the eyewitness testimony of the apostles and evangelists. (John 1:14;

¹⁰ Prefaces to the Epistles of St James and St Jude, Luther’s Works (LW), American Edition, volume 35, page 396.

¹¹ *Bondage of the Will*, LW vol. 33, p. 162.

¹² *Against Latomus*, LW vol. 32, p. 167.

¹³ *Lectures on Isaiah*, LW vol. 16, p. 327.

¹⁴ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, IV.2, in *The Book of Concord*, Kolb-Wengert edition.

1 John 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-18) We therefore reject the idea that the Gospels were formulated and transmitted to us by anonymous Christian communities.

6. Paul wrote all the 13 letters attributed to him. We hold that Paul is the author of all thirteen of the New Testament letters written under his name. We reject the notion that he wrote no more than seven of these letters and the others, including 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, are falsely attributed to him and therefore less authoritative. The passage on women's ordination in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 may not be discounted on these grounds.
7. Scripture has the power to transform us. We believe God holds us to account for the way we hear his Spirit-inspired Word. (Isaiah 66:2; Revelation 2:7,11) With Luther, we believe that 'The power of Scripture is this: it will not be changed into the one who studies it; instead, it transforms the one who loves it.'¹⁵ Accordingly, we reject a subjective interpretation of the Bible in which our personal response to the content tends to replace what the text actually says.
8. The importance of the original languages. We believe, with the Lutheran Reformers, that the biblical text in the original Hebrew and Greek languages is normative and must be respected. Modern sensitivities regarding inclusive language may be considered when appropriate, but they are not a superior norm over and above the original text.
9. Reading the whole narrative. Interpretation and exegesis¹⁶ must be carried out within the framework of all the major themes in Scripture's grand narrative — creation, fall, redemption, restoration. God's redemptive and restorative work may not be used to cancel out his ordering of creation and his will for his church.
10. Doctrine comes from clear passages. We reject appeals to 'the whole of Scripture' which are intended to undermine the *sedes doctrinae* – the foundations of an article of Christian teaching.
11. Law and gospel. With the Formula of Concord, we hold that:

The distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God's Word properly and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles. Therefore, we must diligently preserve this distinction.¹⁷
(FC V.1)

However, this distinction does not give us a warrant to dismiss divine commands on the grounds that we are a gospel-centred church. God's law holds up a mirror to our sin. (James 1:22-24; Romans 3:20) It is wrong to proclaim that God, in his 'radical grace,' simply affirms us as we are, with no need on our part for repentance and forgiveness.

God's law 'is holy, and the commandment is holy, just and good.' (Romans 7:12) The law is the unchangeable will of God. His commandments promote peace and harmony in society and in the church. They serve as a guide for our daily walk as Christians by showing us what pleases God and has his blessing. (1 John 3:21, 22)

With the Formula of Concord, we uphold this 'third' use of the law.¹⁸ In the Small Catechism, Luther's explanations of the Ten Commandments are framed as third use:

¹⁵ *First Psalm Lectures*, LW vol.10, page 332.

¹⁶ The word 'exegesis' simply means explanation. 'Hermeneutics' refers to the principles that guide biblical exegesis.

¹⁷ Formula of Concord, Article V.1.

¹⁸ Formula of Concord, Article VI.

we are to keep the commandments because we fear and love God. Moreover, we believe this use is found in many admonitions in the Scriptures. For example, Paul writes to potential (or former) thieves among the Ephesian Christians: 'Let the thief no longer steal.' (Ephesians 4:28) So we pray that we may delight in his will and walk in his ways.¹⁹

We therefore reject all forms of 'antinomianism' (opposition to law) which teach that our Christian freedom gives us the right to disregard the commandments of God and the commandments that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us through his apostles (1 Cor 7:19). God's forgiveness of our sins leads to restored life according to his will. It does not lead to the abandonment of the law.

C. The Book of Concord

1. The Book of Concord is a true exposition of God's Word. With the LCA Constitution Article II, we acknowledge and accept the whole Book of Concord as a true exposition of the Word of God and as our own confession.
2. The Book of Concord is drawn from Scripture. We agree with the Preface to The Book of Concord which attests that the Augsburg Confession and all the other documents in the Book of Concord are drawn from Scripture. They are 'compiled out of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures' and 'based solidly on the divine Scriptures.'²⁰
3. Our confession before God and the world. In committing ourselves to all the books in The Book of Concord, we make our confession before God and the world, in keeping with the psalm verse that introduces the Augsburg Confession of 1530 ('I will also speak of your testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame' [Psalm 119:46]), *because we regard them as true expositions of the Bible, not merely in so far as they faithfully expound the Bible.*

We therefore reject the view that The Book of Concord is, to a large degree, an outdated book that speaks mainly to the circumstances of churches in the 16th century and has less relevance to Christian churches today.

4. The Small Catechism is a basis for all Lutheran teaching. We believe the Bible and the Small Catechism should be the primary basis for all catechetical teaching in Lutheran churches and schools.

D. The Theses of Agreement as a foundational document of the LCA

1. Foundational status of the Theses of Agreement. We pledge ourselves to the Theses of Agreement which served as the basis for resolving disagreements among Australian Lutherans and paved the way for Lutheran union in 1966. We regard the Theses of Agreement as in accord with the Scriptures and the Book of Concord. Therefore they should not be disregarded or rejected as a foundation for the LCA's public teaching and practice.

¹⁹ The Service – Alternative Form, *Lutheran Hymnal and Supplement*, p. 58.

²⁰ Preface to The Book of Concord, Tappert edition, pages 3, 12, 13.

2. Theses on Scripture. With all the other articles of the Theses of Agreement, we reaffirm the 'Theses on Scripture and Inspiration.'²¹

We reject the misuse of the Theses of Agreement's analogy of 'the divine and human nature of Jesus' with 'the divine and human side' of the Bible'²² in such a way as to deny the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. We fully acknowledge that each book of the Bible has a human author, but this does not imply that these writings contain errors. According to St Paul, the apostolic teaching is 'not a human word; it really is the Word of God.' (1 Thessalonians 2:13) As such, it is inerrant, just as Jesus is the sinless Son of God. Thus it does not err nor does it lead into error and untruth, since God never lies. (Titus 1:2)

We reject the caricature of the doctrine of inspiration as the mechanical dictation by the Holy Spirit to the biblical writers. With the Theses of Agreement, we believe that 'God dealt with each of the prophets in a different way, which shows that the personality, character, and way of thinking and speaking of the individual man were not extinguished.'²³

3. Ordination of women. We endorse Theses of Agreement VI.11:

Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor[inthians] 14:34-35 and 1 Tim[othy] 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic ruling is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are not impaired.

E. Some issues facing the church

The erosion of confidence in God's Word in parts of the LCA and the resort to other authorities have allowed false teaching such as the following to infiltrate the church.

1. Gospel reductionism

'Gospel reductionism' is the view that the Bible's authoritative content may be reduced to the Gospel which makes us 'wise for salvation.' (2 Timothy 3:15) The good news that God justifies us by grace through faith in Jesus is the heart of the Gospel. But the heart is not the whole body. Scripture has limbs and a frame of which justification is the life-giving, beating heart. To reduce the Bible's authority to the heart – the Gospel – disembodies the doctrine of justification. Gospel reductionism has been used to justify disobedience to God's Word and to give heed, instead, to societal trends and values.

Gospel reductionism fosters various perversions of the Gospel. St Paul spells out the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and on the third day he was raised according to the Scriptures.' There is no other Gospel than this. (Galatians 1:6-10) Accordingly we reject the perversions that occur when the Gospel is turned into a social and political message or replaced with psycho-analysis.

²¹ Theses of Agreement, VIII.

²² Theses of Agreement, VIII.9.

²³ Theses of Agreement, VIII.9.

2. Human reason in Bible interpretation – a good servant but a bad master

When we approach God's Word in a spirit of humble submission, God's gift of reason serves as a useful tool. However, our reason becomes a bad master when we adopt a negative attitude to the Word. The 'historical-critical method' of interpreting the Bible makes this mistake. Applying human reason, it treats the Scriptures as if they are of dubious historical value. Indeed, the Bible's critics sometimes speak as if a sceptical attitude towards the truthfulness and authority of the Word is a virtue. By so doing, they are asking, 'Did God really say?'²⁴ Yet this approach is defended with the claim that it is the only honest way of dealing with people's big questions.

While rejecting scepticism, we endorse a 'hermeneutics of appreciation' – a positive approach to biblical interpretation that appreciates and treasures the Scriptures. This will open the way for us to attain the full assurance, boldness, confidence and joy in our faith that God's Word encourages. (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:22; 11:1; 1 Peter 1:8).

3. Mission and ministry

The Christian church has always been counter-cultural. Looking to authorities other than God's Word has led to unhealthy approaches to mission and ministry.

- a. We are committed to the whole of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus says:

All authority in heaven and upon earth is given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you **all the days**, to the close of the age.

In our Lord's final mission command to his church he uses the word 'all' four times. Not only does he claim *all* authority in heaven and on earth, not only does he send us to *all* the nations, not only does he promise to be with us *all* the days, but he also charges us to *observe all that he has commanded us*. We cannot expect the LCA to grow in faith and thrive in mission if we disregard part of Jesus' command and teach only what is popular.

- b. In keeping with the Great Commission, St Paul urges us to imitate him in his eagerness 'by all means to save some.' (1 Corinthians 9:22; Romans 1:14,15) In our interfaith dialogues with adherents of non-Christian worldviews and religions we need to go beyond dialogue. Our mission is still 'by all means *to save some*.'
- c. We reject the misapplication of 1 Corinthians 9:22 ('I have become all things to all people'), as if Paul thereby suggests the Christian message may be changed to allow for social trends which contradict the New Testament. At stake again is the question of what authority we follow, God's clear Word or the culture of our day. If we imitate Jesus and Paul, we will seek to communicate the Christian hope to all peoples and languages without compromising the truth of the gospel.
- d. We reject attempts to play off 'mission' against 'maintenance' which downgrade the need to nurture members of the church. Jesus, the good shepherd, cared for those who were already in his fold as well as those outside it. (John 10:11-16)

²⁴ This is the serpent's question to the woman in Genesis 3:1.

- e. While statements about mission and ministry contain much that is helpful, we regret that we rarely hear about laypeople's *vocation* in the home and work place. Inspired by the Gospel, lay Christians are active in loving service to God and their neighbour, in keeping with the Ten Commandments. (Galatians 5:6)
- f. The New Testament teaches that Christ builds his church on the one and only foundation of himself and his Word. (1 Corinthians 3:10-17) In the parable of the sower, the parable of the seed growing silently, and the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:1-20, 26-32), Jesus teaches that 'the seed is the Word of God.' (Luke 8:11) God grows His church when the Word is planted and watered. (1Corinthians 3:5-9)
- g. We therefore reject the theories of 'natural church growth' advocates who separate the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures, claiming that the Spirit works to convert people and extend the church apart from the preaching and reading of God's Word. Nor do we accept that for churches to be healthy they must regard doctrine, the divine service, the sacraments and sound biblical preaching as 'static' forms that hamper mission because, allegedly, they do nothing except protect the church as a human institution from the need for change.
- h. The New Testament always equates spiritual health with sound (literally, 'healthy') teaching. (1 Timothy 1:10; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8; 3 John 2) False teaching, on the other hand, makes the teacher and the church sick. (1Timothy 6:4)
- i. Finally, we disassociate ourselves from the public teaching of churches that ordain women and homosexuals and thereby damage the church's mission and ministry.

4. The public ministry of the Word, instituted by God

The office of the pastor – the under-shepherd of God's sheep and lambs – has been instituted by God and derives all its authority from the Word of God.²⁵ We dare not set aside his Word in relation to the qualifications he lays down for a call into this public position.

According to God's Word in the Old Testament, only men were to be priests. (Exodus 28:1) According to the New Testament, only a man could fill a gap in the ranks of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:21), and a pastor 'must be a man of one woman.' (1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6) To be unwilling to accept this part of God's plan for the pastoral ministry is to place a roadblock in the way of his blessing the church.

We see the admission of women to the pastoral office as one symptom of a misguided approach to biblical interpretation. We do not accept appeals to the 'gospel' that are designed to overturn the apostolic ruling (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14) and its basis in the biblical order of creation. (Genesis 2:18-25; 3:1-16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:13,14)²⁶

²⁵ The office of the pastor – the 'under-shepherd' under Jesus, the chief shepherd – has strong roots in the New Testament. Compare John 10:11-16; John 21:15-17; and 1 Peter 5:1-4; see also Acts 14:23; 20:17-35.

²⁶ The *sedes doctrinae* – the seats (foundations) of the teaching – that support Thesis of Agreement VI.11 on women's ordination are 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Luther sees these texts as an integral part of the doctrine of the holy ministry (On the Councils and the Church, Luther's Works, American edition, volume 41, pages 154-55).

We believe the words of Scripture give a mandate only for the ordination of approved men. In this issue 'the teaching of the apostles' (Acts 2:42) is at stake, and the church's attitude will ultimately determine whether it remains within the folds of the apostolic church or becomes a syncretistic sect.²⁷

The questioning of apostolic teaching arises from secular ideologies which have contributed to the breakdown of the divine institutions of marriage and family. Now the same belief-system has infiltrated the church and threatens to destroy the public ministry of the Word.

* * *

A Covenant and an Appeal

We have prepared these theses for our mutual encouragement and as an appeal to all LCA members to join us in our endeavour to uphold the authority of God's Word. We commit ourselves to provide sound biblical teaching in line with these theses, and thereby promote renewal within the Church.

We are thankful for the unity God gave the LCA at its inception. With his help we will strive to preserve that unity on the basis of the common confession of the two former churches. We pledge ourselves to work for the building up of the church in love, so that it will grow to maturity in Christ in its life and mission, and not be blown around by every wind of doctrine. (Ephesians 4:14-16)

In order to avoid the disunity and division fuelled by the critical attitudes of some towards our foundational documents, and in order to resolve the issues that have arisen among us, we reaffirm the following thesis on 'Principles governing church fellowship':

Where differences in teaching and practice exist or arise between Churches uniting, these differences are to be removed by willingly submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Where a difference in teaching or practice is a departure from the doctrine of the Bible, such difference cannot be tolerated, but must be pointed out as an error, on the basis of clear passages of Holy Writ; and if the error is persisted in, in spite of instruction, warning, and earnest witness, it must at last lead to a separation.²⁸

In adopting this covenant, we invite you, the Pastors and lay-members of the LCA, to append your names to ours as we pledge to uphold and promote the LCA's confessional basis, so that the church rediscovers fullness of joy in Christ and his Word.

Prepared by Dr Greg Lockwood (New Testament lecturer emeritus, Australian Lutheran College), in consultation with LCA pastors and laypeople, and supported by those whose names are appended.

(Responses to Dr G Lockwood, 15 Memorial Dr Mt Barker 5251 or greg.lockwood@internode.on.net)

28/1/2015

²⁷ *Peter Brunner, The Ministry and the Ministry of Women*, p. 24.

²⁸ Theses of Agreement 1.4a.

An initial list of baptised members who affirm this document and have desired to have their names appended to it.

Pastor Bruce Adams	Sophie Hansen
Pastor Matthew Anker	Colonel Ross Harding (Retd)
Pastor Roger Atze	Pastor Perry Hart
Jana Baikova	Wendy Hartmann
Pastor Guntars Baikovs	Pastor John Heidenreich
Pastor Andrew Bettison	Vonnie Heidenreich
Rex Bormann	Richard Hein
Lorna Bormann	Pastor Mark Henderson
Pastor David Buck	Julie Higgs
Pastor Matt Buse	Pastor Mal Huf
Pastor Bryce Clark	Pastor Ken Jaworski
Judy Clark	Pastor Graham Jenke
Pastor Avito da Graca Costa	Byron Klein
David Dreckow	Pastor Jim Klein
Kym Dreckow	Noreen Klein
Lorraine Dunn	Dr John Kleinig
Pastor Tim Ebbs	Pastor Stuart Kleinig
Pastor Mat Eckermann	Pastor Vernon Kleinig
Pastor Bill Fry	Bernice Koch
Pastor Chris Gallasch	Dr Norma Koehne
Christa Gerhardy	Pastor Peter Koehne
Pastor Gordon Gerhardy	Pastor Darrin Kohrt
Pastor Greg Graham	Vanessa Kohrt
Chris Hage	Pastor Tim Kowald
Trevor Hage	Pastor Adrian Kramer
Marie Hamann	Brenz Kriewaldt
Pastor Robert Hamann	Elizabeth Kriewaldt
Dr Ian Hamer	Helen Kriewaldt
Lyndon Hampel	Pastor Peter Kriewaldt
Gilbert Hansen	Pastor Fred Kummerow
Jewell Hansen	Pastor Joe Kummerow
Neville Hansen	Pastor David Kuss
	Neil Lehmann

Pastor Eric Liebelt
Shirley Liebelt
Dr Christine Lockwood
Dr Greg Lockwood
Dr Michael Lockwood
Horace Loffler
Sylvia Loffler
Pastor Harry Ludwig
Lorene Ludwig
Russell Male
John Manuel
Steven Marks
Bruno Matuschka
Pastor Keith McNicol
Pastor Rex Mickan
Terry Neumann
Chris Nicolai
Bill Nicolai
Pastor Greg Noll
Pastor Geoffrey Noller
Vern Nuske
Pastor Hans Oberscheidt
Lance Pech
Lorraine Pech
Alwyn Pfeiffer
Kevin Pfeiffer
Pastor Lou Pfeiffer
Olive Pfeiffer
Shirley Pfeiffer
Pastor Harry Pickett
Charmaine Pietsch
Peter Pohl
Pastor Heath Pukallus
Eric Rathjen
Lois Rathjen

Max Ronan
Susan Ronan
Pastor Dan Rooney
Helen Rooney
Dr Andrew Ruddell
Pastor Martin Scharnke
Pastor Wally Schiller
Gillian Schubert
Kevin Schubert
Pastor Jack Shepherd
Lois Shepherd
Joy Smith
Leigh Smith
Pastor Murray Smith
Gunter Stark
Pastor Michael Steicke
Pastor Kees Sturm
Pastor Richard Taylor
Pastor Carl Thiele
Jarrad Thiele
Pam Thiele
Pastor Robert Thiele
Dr Trevor Waechter
Heather Waechter
Dr Don Wicklman
Peter Wittwer
Clive Wundersitz
Nola Wurst
Trevor Wurst
Joan Zilm