

THE Lutheran

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'No longer
children,
but brothers'

LUTHERANS
CELEBRATE
RECONCILIATION

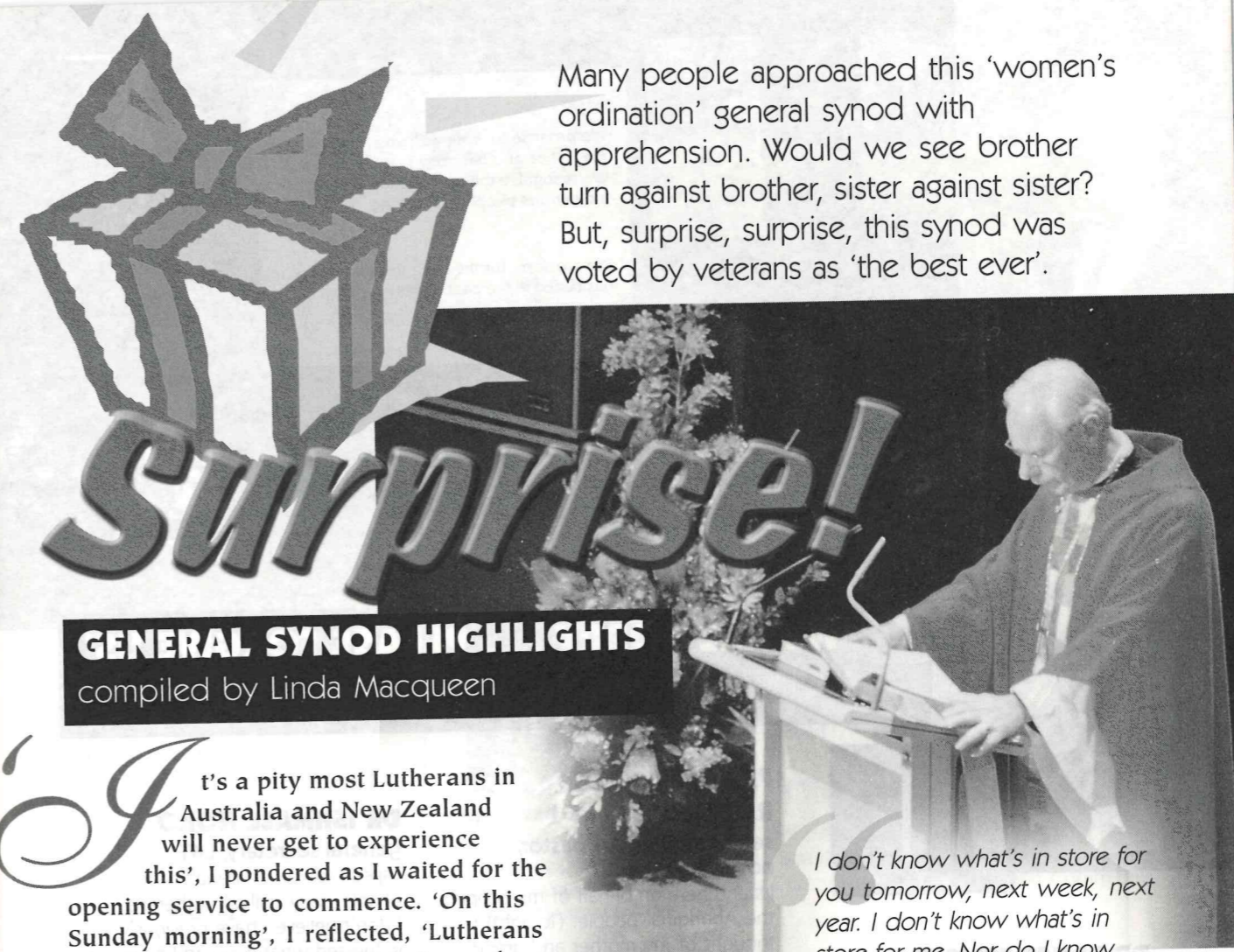
General Synod
all the
highlights

PLUS: Reinventing family meal times



1. Full house at The Faith Centre, Tanunda, for the women's ordination debate
2. At Dr Steicke's farewell evening: Pastor George Rosendale embraces his 'brother'
3. Celebrate 2000: Doris Tali, a member of the colourful singing and dancing troupe from Siassi, PNG
4. Meal breaks offered excellent opportunities for fellowshiping
5. The general synod logo and theme: 'Christ, our future', based on Hebrews 6:19,20
6. Celebrate 2000: the vibrant youth choir, Shine
7. Celebrate 2000: Sandra Hoopmann, from the Adelaide Church of the Deaf, presents a powerful rendition of 'Amazing Grace'.

Photos: David Thiele and Linda Macqueen



Many people approached this 'women's ordination' general synod with apprehension. Would we see brother turn against brother, sister against sister? But, surprise, surprise, this synod was voted by veterans as 'the best ever'.

GENERAL SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS

compiled by Linda Macqueen

*I*t's a pity most Lutherans in Australia and New Zealand will never get to experience this', I pondered as I waited for the opening service to commence. 'On this Sunday morning', I reflected, 'Lutherans will be gathering in congregations of twenty, fifty, two hundred perhaps'.

In some places, the organ will be off-key, the new hymn will fall flat, the three strong voices will struggle to lead the liturgy. Of course, worship does not depend upon the state of the organ or the quality of the voices, but I couldn't help thinking: 'If only you people in struggling congregations

could be here. If only you could see thirteen hundred of your Lutheran brothers and sisters assembled at one place. If only you could hear what thirteen hundred voices singing 'Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty' sounds like. If only you could

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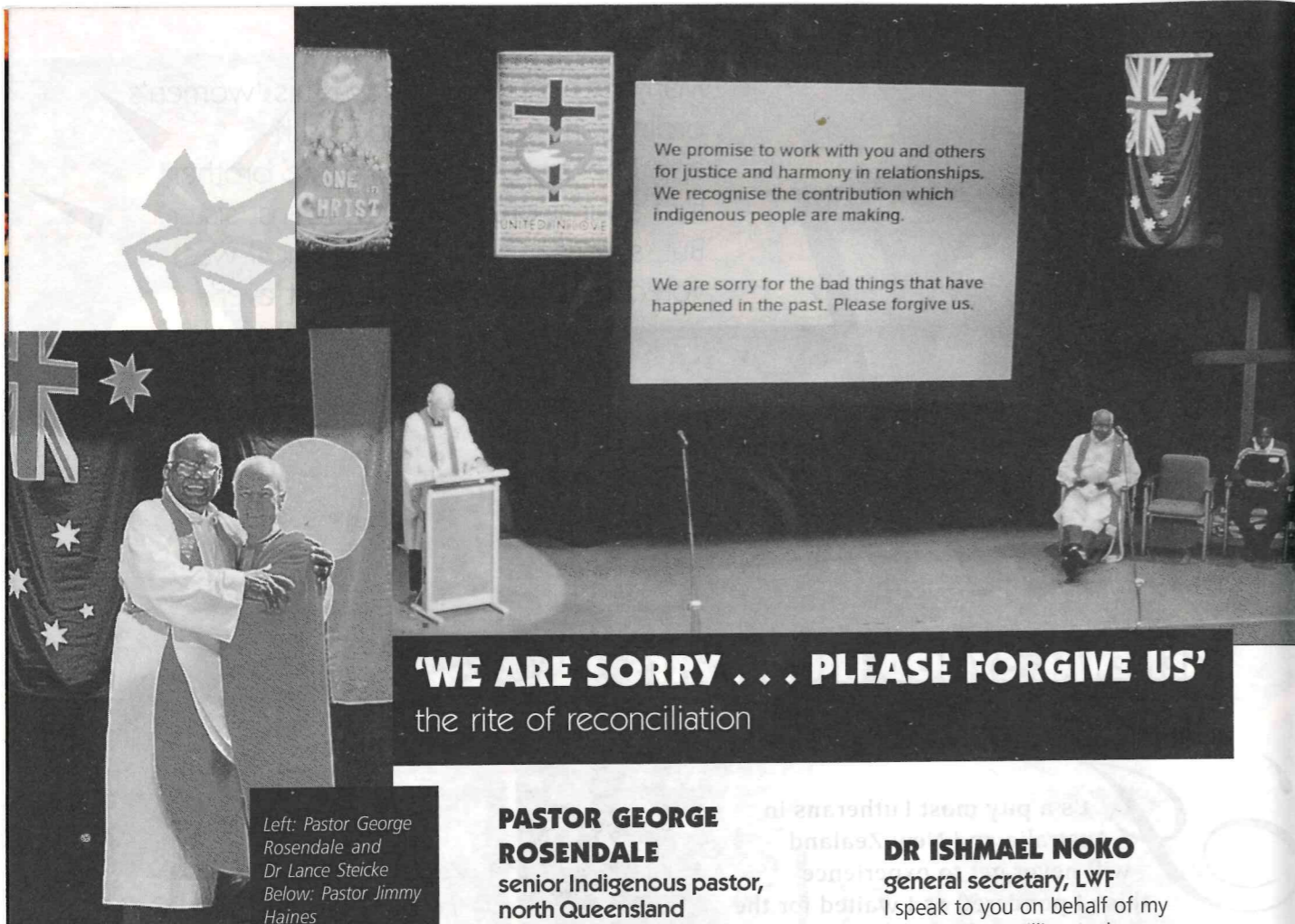
I don't know what's in store for you tomorrow, next week, next year. I don't know what's in store for me. Nor do I know what's in store for our beloved church in the days immediately ahead in this convention, post-convention, during this next synodical term or at any stage in the future.

But one thing I do know: Jesus Christ is Lord. He's our anchor, our forerunner, our high priest. Our future.

This is our confidence, a confidence in a God who is faithful. This is our source of courageous Christian living. And this is our hope, a hope which cannot be shaken.

Christ, our future.

Dr Lance G Steicke
LCA President



'WE ARE SORRY . . . PLEASE FORGIVE US'
the rite of reconciliation

Left: Pastor George Rosendale and Dr Lance Steicke
Below: Pastor Jimmy Haines

DR LANCE STEICKE
LCA president

On behalf of the rest of the people of our church, I am sorry for the suffering and hurt that your people have had to endure. We ask God to forgive us for the evil we have done, and the help we have failed to give you.

We resolve to work together with you, to share and learn together, to accept and respect each other. Help us to listen to you and learn from you.

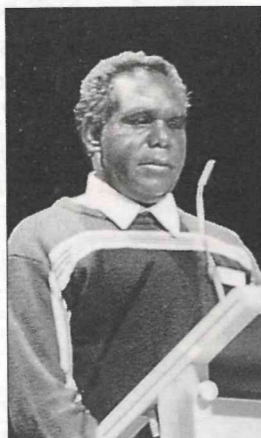
We promise to work with you and others for justice and harmony in relationships. We recognise the contribution which Indigenous people are making. We are sorry for the bad things that have happened in the past. Please forgive us.

PASTOR GEORGE ROSENDALE
senior Indigenous pastor,
north Queensland

I stand here on behalf of my people, the Aboriginal people. (Tonight) I thought of my mother and grandmother. They would be thrilled. I am standing on air. I can't feel the floor, I feel so uplifted. For years I have worked to bring about reconciliation. Tonight is the night that this has been fulfilled.

PASTOR JIMMY HAINES
representative of the Aboriginal people of central Australia

Many of us Aboriginal people living in central Australia and also us pastors have been discussing this word 'reconciliation' for a long time. More recently, people asked me to speak on their behalf at this synod. That's why I'm speaking to you as their representative. We do not hold a grudge against white people for what happened. There are people who always want to only talk about the bad things the white people did. We however would rather remember that many white people helped us and many are our friends to this day. More than anything, however, we thank God that he sent his messengers to us with his word. The missionaries taught us about God and stayed with us for a long time. Today there are many Aboriginal Christians and pastors in central Australia. We are really happy about that. We are also happy that the Lutheran Church continues to help us.



DR ISHMAEL NOKO
general secretary, LWF

I speak to you on behalf of my people, sixty million Lutherans. I don't believe I have previously witnessed what you and I have seen tonight. This is not your occasion only: it is our (the LWF's) occasion as well. I hope that from now on, the LCA will be able to export this to other Lutheran churches. I will go out and tell this story.

hear Dr Lance Steicke's rousing final address to synod as its president. Basing his sermon on the convention theme, Hebrews 6:19,20, he said: 'Christ our future. There's all the hope in the world for us as we go forward with him, with him as our anchor, our forerunner, and our great high priest . . . O my people, people of the LCA, now that we know what is ours—Jesus our great high priest and all that comes with him and from him—let's not let it slip through our fingers.'

In his keynote address, Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), urged us to take some risks with God, to step beyond our comfort zones and borders, whether in national or theological arenas. Direct but diplomatic, he touched on the ordination of women debate, noting that the LWF would be happy if the LCA could 'find its way forward to ordain women'. But he added that the LWF respected our right to make our own decisions. Earlier he had noted that 'you can dialogue with Australian Lutherans, but you cannot push them!'

'We, the LWF, pray for guidance and the mind of Christ as you face difficult issues', he concluded.

That same night Dr Noko saw the first of many answers to his prayer. Stepping to the microphone after the rite of reconciliation (see opposite page), Dr Noko said: 'I speak to you on behalf of my people, sixty million Lutherans. I do not believe that I have previously witnessed what you and I have seen tonight. This is not your occasion only: it is our (the LWF's) occasion as well. I hope that from now on, the LCA will be able to export this to other Lutheran churches. I will go out and tell this story.'

The rite of reconciliation was a most significant occasion for our

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Right: Dr Lance Steicke congratulates Pastor Mike Semmler on his election to the position of LCA president



BETWEEN JOBS

Pastor Mike Semmler, LCA president-elect



Occupation

In his own words, Pastor Semmler is 'between jobs', referring to his election by general synod to the position of president of the LCA. He is currently president of the SA/NT district, and will be installed as LCA president on 22 October 2000.

Parishes served

Katanning, WA; Horsham, Vic; Enfield, SA, (one-year exchange pastor, Regina, Canada); Bethlehem, SA

Also served on/as

General Church Council (since 1990), district church councillor (WA, Vic, SA), vice-president (WA, Vic, SA), Board for Lutheran Schools, various school councils, Armed Services Commission, Loans Allocation Committee, radio ministry (WA, Vic, SA)

Family

Married to Christine for twenty-nine years; four children, Tamra (married to Micah), Kirsty, Jared and Anika

Interests

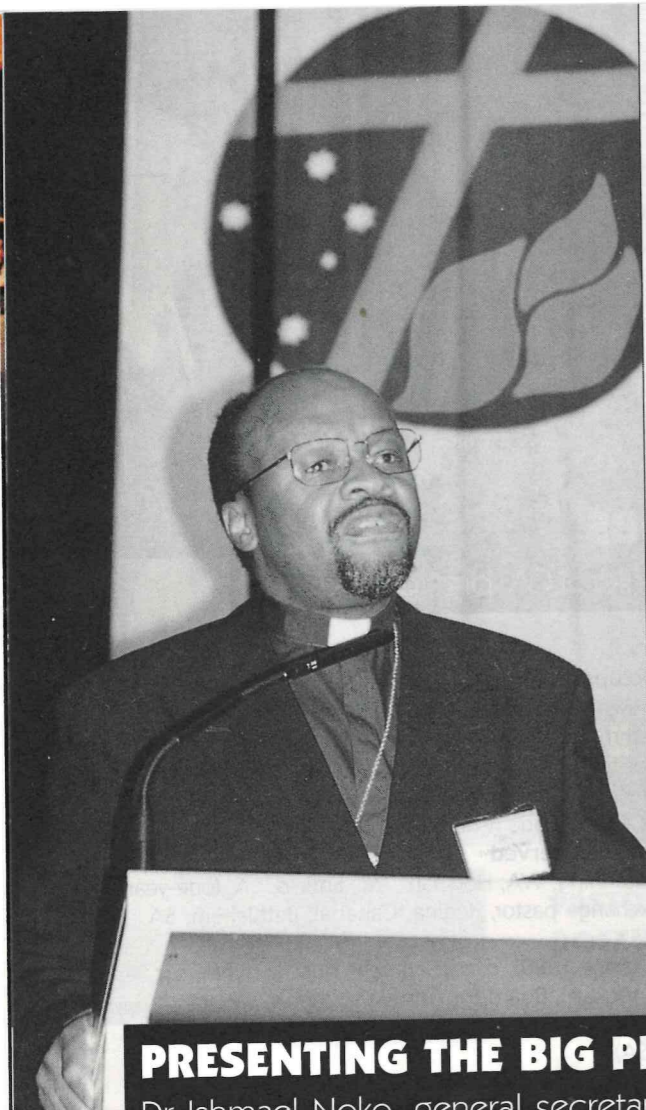
Family and friends, Rotary International, Aussie Rules football, cricket, motor vehicles, motivation, Australian attitudes

Challenges before us

The Christian church in Australia will more and more be challenged by other faiths and religions presented by multiculturalism and what appears to be an increasing movement of refugees from across the globe. As the Lutheran Church in this country engages in spiritual warfare, it faces apathy, negativity and lowest-common-denominator thinking, when the real issue is to direct our resources and efforts into making disciples. Disciples need to be grounded in their faith, committed as members of the body of Christ, active locally, in Aboriginal communities and in overseas ventures.

Hopes for our church

My personal hope for our church is that we will walk together as synod into the future, in Christ, in a nurturing church of mission culture, clearly Lutheran. To this end, I hope we will use cultural insights with discernment, to inform the culture rather than to have our policies determined by the culture. I hope we will continue to take the risk, away from protecting ourselves, towards contributing to the interchurch scene locally and to the Lutheran church globally. For each of us personally, may we rediscover the joy of salvation and experience the blessing of being generous.



PRESENTING THE BIG PICTURE

Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of LWF

Delegates and visitors to general synod were honoured by the presence of Rev Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Born in Zimbabwe, Dr Noko became a parish pastor and lecturer in theology. In May 1982 he was called from the University of Botswana to join the LWF Department of World Service. He took up the post of general secretary of LWF in 1994. As such, Dr Noko is the chief executive officer of the entire organisation which is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The LWF is a global communion of 131 Lutheran churches in seventy-two countries, representing 59.5 million of the world's 63.1 million Lutherans. English is Dr Noko's sixth language.

On the LCA's strengths

This church can show the way in the area of mediation. We know that now we can come to you. Because of your presence, you can show us the way in the area of mediation.

I hope you (the LCA) can become a full member (of LWF). We are poorer without you.

I have discovered the theological competence and seriousness of this church. Your full membership (of LWF) would benefit your sisters and brothers in the LWF.

I have discovered the theological competence and seriousness of this church. Your full membership would benefit your sisters and brothers in the LWF.

On the role of women

I want to recognise Leah (Dr Steicke's wife) and through her, all

the women of the church. I want to recognise the women of the church who have worked so silently. I want to recognise those who have silently served the church through the ministry of their husbands and fathers.

I hope that you will one day find the way forward (to ordain women). At the same time, we (the LWF) respect your right to make your own decisions.

On the impact of Islam

(In Africa) some Christians have been frightened back into being Muslim. Much blood has been shed. In one Nigerian church, the members heard that thirty of their people had been killed by Muslims. 'But', continued the reporter of this news, 'we killed sixty of them'. We are trying to encourage dialogue between people of different faiths.

On AIDS

We must talk about sexuality in our homes. We have been too quiet. As long as we are quiet, a person dies.

On success

You cannot measure the success of the church in numbers. If you do so, then you have to conclude that Jesus didn't succeed.

On becoming a pastor

When I was young, I hated everything about church. I wasn't very clever, except for biology. I went to church with my biology textbook, which looked like a Bible. My father was a pastor. One day when I was reading my biology textbook, my father asked me to come up to the front and read the Bible lesson from my own Bible! . . . After that I went to the seminary.

On God's call (speaking to Y@S)

You are the leaders of today and tomorrow. How will you prepare yourselves for that?

Get yourselves ready. You'll never know what you'll be called to do. Those subjects you don't like . . . you never know how God will be able to use them one day.

church. Speaking on behalf of the LCA, Dr Steicke asked for forgiveness for our sins against the Aboriginal people and for withholding help from them: 'We are sorry for the bad things that happened in the past . . . Please forgive us.'

Pastor George Rosendale, a senior Indigenous pastor from north Queensland led prayers for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation: 'Make us a people who will walk and live together in lasting acceptance and respect for each other'.

There was also reaffirmation of the many positive aspects of the Lutheran Church's history in working with the Aboriginal people. The long-established partnership in the gospel that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of our church was encapsulated in the words of Pastor Jimmy Haines, representing the Aboriginal people of central Australia. Speaking in Arrarnta (translated by Mr Garry Stoll), Pastor Haines said: 'We do not hold a grudge against white people for what happened . . . (but) would rather remember that many white people helped us and many are our friends to this day'.

Presentations were made by the Finke River Mission, Far North Queensland Mission and the Committee for Aboriginal Ministry in South Australia. We learnt first-hand from our Indigenous brothers and sisters of the work being done in their communities and the challenges they face.

Drawing the evening to a powerful conclusion, Dr Noko presented a plate to Dr Steicke (representing the 'asker of forgiveness') and the partner plate to Pastor George Rosendale (representing the 'forgiver'). Dr Noko then asked them to swap plates, so that Pastor Rosendale takes home a plate that reminds him that he was asked for for-

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Australian Lutherans Honoured

Dr Brian Neldner and Mr Gary Simpson

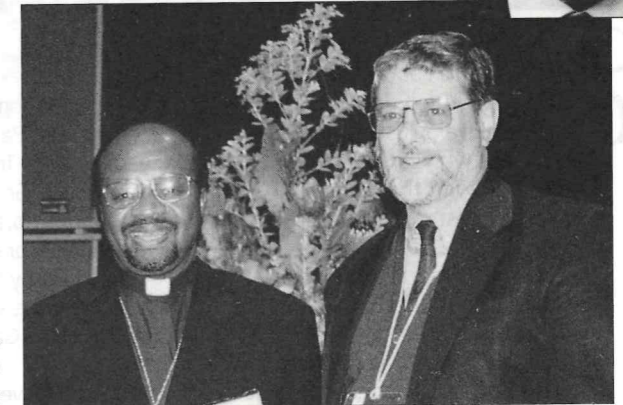
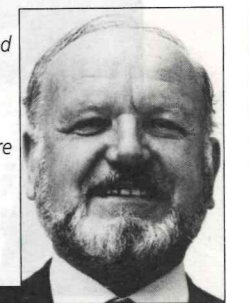
Dr Noko commended Australian Lutherans for their commitment to Lutheran World Service (LWS). In particular, he praised the work of two Australians, Dr Brian Neldner and Mr Gary Simpson.

Dr Neldner commenced working for LWF in 1955, with his appointment as a case worker at the Bonegilla Migrant Centre near Albury, NSW. In 1991 he was appointed to the position of Director of the Department for World Service (LWF) in Geneva, Switzerland. Following his retirement in 1995, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of his work for LWF over a period of forty years. At general synod, Dr Noko presented an award to Dr Neldner who accepted it 'on behalf of all members of the LCA who have served in LWF'.

Dr Neldner said: 'It has been a privilege to serve in this international organisation as an expression of our response as Christians to those in need. The strong support of the LCA was very important to us. On a per capita basis, the LCA has been one of the strongest supporters of LWS, even while it grappled with the serious questions of fellowship in LWF.'

Also recognised for distinguished service to LWF was Mr Gary Simpson, executive secretary of Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS). Mr Simpson has served LWF in this capacity for over ten years and is due

Right: Dr Brian Neldner, recognised for distinguished service to Lutheran World Federation over forty years
Below: Dr Noko with Mr Gary Simpson, soon-to-retire executive secretary of Australian Lutheran World Service



to retire at the end of 2000. On behalf of LWF, Dr Noko presented Mr Simpson with a silver engraved pen in recognition of his diligent service.

Mr Simpson accepted the gift on behalf of the ALWS supporters in Australia and on behalf of the voiceless people ALWS seeks to assist in overseas countries. 'ALWS is really a conduit connecting the two and seeks to translate the compassion and concern for the needy into practical programs of assistance', Mr Simpson said.

As Dr Noko outlined in his presentations, ALWS has been the one continuous link between the LCA and LWF. From 1950 to 1990, ALWS was the LWS field office in Australia. In 1990 the office was transferred to the LCA but it continues to implement most of its work through the global program of LWS.

Forty-two years of service

General synod recognises Mr Garry Stoll



Left: Mr Garry Stoll, second from left, with Pastor Peterson Stewart, Pastor Jimmy Haines and evangelist Casey Nelson

En route to Papua New Guinea, Mr Garry Stoll dropped into Finke River Mission. His stopover lasted forty-two years. After working side by side with the Aboriginal people for most of his adult life, he will retire at the end of this year.

General synod recognised the enormous contribution Mr Stoll has made to the work of the Finke River Mission. He is fluent in Arrarnta, the language of the Aboriginal people with whom he lives and works. He is loved and respected by them, and according to Pastor Jimmy Haines, 'he has done a ton of really good

things for us'.

'We need someone to take Garry's place', Pastor Haines said. 'We need help at Ti Tree to teach the people about God's love and to teach them to pray. We will miss Garry. We will pray for him.'

Pastor Casey Nelson says: 'We are friends with the white people, through Jesus. Garry is a good friend.'

Mr Stoll leaves a legacy of trained Aboriginal pastors and evangelists, and a strong relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of the LCA.

Synod offering over \$41,000

Australian Lutheran World Service says 'thank you'

Australian Lutheran World Service conveys its sincerest gratitude to the members of the Lutheran Church of Australia for the wonderful recognition of our fiftieth anniversary expressed through your general synod offering. This offering, in excess of \$41,000, represents to us an endorsement of the work we have undertaken on behalf of the church in reaching out to the poor around the world over the past fifty years. It is a wonderful encouragement for the staff and Board of ALWS to continue its role of translating the love and concern of the LCA into practical programs of service to people in need.

During 2000 our focus countries include Mozambique and Kenya in Africa; Nepal in South Asia and Cambodia in South East Asia. It is to these types of programs that this synod offering will be directed.

We give thanks to God for opening the hearts of people to the needs of others.

Gary Simpson, executive secretary, ALWS

giveness, and Dr Steicke a plate that tells him that forgiveness has been granted. It was a wonderful symbol of reconciliation.

One of the 'difficult issues' to which Dr Noko had earlier referred was that of the ordination of women. The auditorium was filled for the debate which many people feared might set brother against brother, sister against sister. Countering this apprehension, however, was the awareness that the women's ordination debate had been dealt with by pastors' conference in a courteous and brotherly manner. Pastor Lionel Otto had commented that the debate had been one of the finest he had witnessed in the time he had been attending pastors' conferences. Another pastor said: 'I never felt so proud to be a member of the LCA as during that debate yesterday'.

Chair of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR), Dr Vic Pfitzner, introduced the debate, saying: 'Many of you will have already made up your minds. But let us listen to each other. We might learn something we didn't know before. I have changed my mind on some things. It is only the sectarian who is always right.'

Pastor Lionel Otto presented the report from pastors' conference, concluding: 'May we deal with the question with respect and concern for one another and for the truth of Scripture in this matter . . . And may we pray that the Spirit of God will enshroud all that we say and do.'

The Spirit of God did just that. Reflecting later on the manner in which the debate was conducted, some delegates said they were aware of being 'bathed in prayer'. Others said they were 'amazed' by the spirit of goodwill between those holding opposing views. An atmosphere of respect, dignity and courtesy prevailed throughout

the day. 'Dr Steicke did a brilliant job in the chair', said one delegate, 'even using a little humour when appropriate'. Some delegates commented on the breadth and depth of the arguments. 'I thought I had read it all, heard it all', said one delegate, 'but I heard things that I had never heard before. I will continue to think about and pray about these things.'

At 4.30 pm, synod voted to close the debate. There was a nervous pause. Pastor Tim Jaensch led synod in prayer (see opposite). Delegates voted by secret ballot. Of the 427 delegates at general synod, 416 cast votes. For the motion to be carried, a two-thirds majority—278 votes in favour—was required.

Dr Steicke announced the result: 220 in favour, 195 against, with one abstention. We paused for a moment to consider the impact of the result. Pastor Jaensch led synod in prayer (see opposite).

No doubt some people were shocked, some frustrated, some relieved. A few cried. Yet the spirit of goodwill remained after the announcement. Reflecting later on synod highlights, not a few delegates said that the women's ordination debate was the pinnacle. 'It demonstrated how we can voice our opinions with conviction, yet separate our opinions from the person', said one delegate. A Youth at Synod (Y@S) participant (see page 15)

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SANDWICHED IN PRAYER:

the women's ordination debate

Before the vote

God of grace, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come before you in deep humility seeking to know and do your will. Through your Holy Spirit, give us wisdom and discernment as we now cast our votes in this important matter. Give us confidence also, so that, whatever the outcome, we may continue to move forward with you and with each other, in your ministry of reconciliation. In the precious name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

After the announcement of the result

Gracious and merciful God, we experience many different feelings as we reflect upon the outcome of our debate and vote. We thank you for the guiding influence of your Spirit as we prepared for, engaged in, and now respond to the decision we have made. We have not been able to agree among ourselves what is your will in this issue before us. But we do agree that you long for all people to be saved and to come to know the truth. Bless us in our continuing partnership with you and each other in this, your mission that we share. In the name of him who is the way, the truth and the life. Amen.

Pastoral statement on the matter of the ordination of women

The following statement was released by Dr Lance Steicke, LCA president, and Pastor Mike Semmler, LCA president-elect, in consultation with the College of Presidents.

The public doctrine and practice of the Lutheran Church of Australia has not been changed, and so continues. However, in the light of the debate and vote of Synod, discussions on this will need to continue. We affirm the encouragement of General Pastors' Conference to take time to reflect, to minister to each other, and to gather feedback from individual members, congregations and pastors' conferences. The General Church Council, after considering the responses, will give advice to the church on how to proceed.

A STUNNING CONFESSION

Exciting progress in ecumenical dialogue

While recent events have brought it into the limelight, ecumenical dialogue is not new to the LCA. In presenting the report of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR), Dr Vic Pfitzner noted that our church has been in dialogue with the Anglican Church for twenty-eight years, with the Roman Catholic Church for twenty-five years and with the Uniting Church for twenty years. There has been much progress in recent years. All three churches have signed common statements with the LCA, which Dr Pfitzner sees as 'arrivals at railway stations along a long journey'.

Three representatives from the dialogue committees addressed general synod. Bishop Graham Walden (Anglican Church) spoke about how much we share. He said: **'We share one baptism and we participate together in the unity of the Spirit.** We have a common basis in church renewal at the time of the Reformation.'

Dr Robin Boyd (Uniting Church) noted that the Uniting Church had just passed the 'Declaration of Mutual Recognition' at its recent national synod. This provided possibilities for limited eucharistic hospitality between our churches. He sees it as **the major ecumenical step** since the formation of the Uniting Church in 1976.

Father (Dr) Denis Edwards (Roman Catholic Church) spoke of the recent Joint Declaration on Justification which reverses nearly five centuries of disagreement. 'Things can never be the same after this', he said. And then this, the stunning confession which synod applauded loud and long: **'I am absolutely convinced we are justified by grace alone. We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ, but this is always already God's gift to us. With my Lutheran colleagues and with all of you, I affirm that we are saved, not by anything that we do, but by God's free gift to us in Christ Jesus.'**

Synod responds to rural needs

General synod opened the way for emergency reciprocal arrangements between Lutherans and Anglicans, and between Lutherans and members of the Uniting Church, to participate more fully in worship with each other. The College of Presidents was authorised to establish and supervise local arrangements for pastoral care where special circumstances exist, for example, in isolated areas. The proposal arose from the concern that some remote congregations were no longer able to support a resident Lutheran pastor. Dr Vic Pfitzner said that eucharistic sharing is to be practised in exceptional circumstances where the Lutheran church cannot adequately minister to its people.

'The church has been struggling to provide a ministry to people in some small communities', he said. 'In these places we hope to cooperate with other churches to look after our people. We believe we have reached sufficient unity of faith to allow us to cooperate in this manner.'

'It means that our parishioners don't cease to be Lutherans, but are under spiritual care of another pastor. This is a proactive response on the part of the churches to address the needs of some rural sectors.'

The Uniting Church's national synod, which met in Adelaide in the week before the LCA general synod, passed a similar resolution. The Anglican Church has also supported the proposal.

said that this separation of one's opinion from the person was like 'leaving your work at the office'. There was a general feeling that we have matured enough to live with uncertainty and differing views.

One indication of this maturity was the tremendous difficulty the secular media encountered when trying to find just one woman who would speak negatively about the church. One woman (who openly supports the ordination of women) said that she was 'saddened that we keep hearing on the news that this issue is dividing the church. On the contrary, this is giving us a wonderful opportunity to grow together.' The youngest synod delegate, Kylie Lee Archer (see page 19), said: 'I had arrived at the place where I felt that this wasn't going to be the end, regardless of the result. This is not going to change my relationship with Jesus or my commitment to the church. But because I'm planning on hanging out with the LCA, I want to get it right.'

Dr Noko applauded the manner in which the debate was conducted. 'I am impressed with the dignity with which you speak to one another', he said. 'This is something you can export to your sisters and brothers (in the LWF): the dignity of your procedures'. The following evening Dr Noko commented that Dr Steicke had 'excelled in (his) leadership of the debate'.

Dr Noko was certainly not the only one to applaud our retiring president. On the Wednesday night of synod, many others were given opportunity to do so (see page 17). Dr Steicke's family and friends gathered with delegates for an evening that honoured a man who has led our church with courage, distinction and Christ-like humility. And with not a small amount of humour.

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Main photo: Youth at Synod (Y@S) take the central aisle and invite delegates to join hands with them across the auditorium as they lead general synod in prayer
Below: Karl Kiss (Wudinna, SA) and Lavinia Heffernan (Darwin, NT), two members of the Y@S contingent who represented the youth of our church at general synod

SHOWING US THE WAY

Youth at Synod (Y@S)

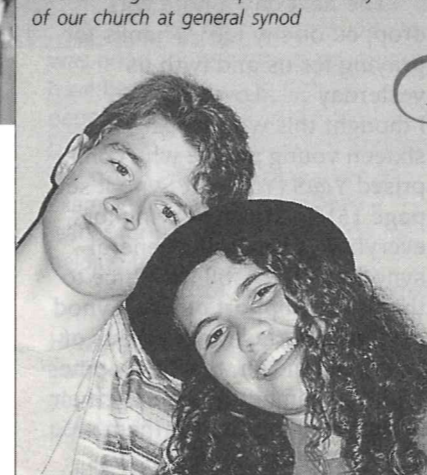
As the doors of the auditorium burst open, delegates tumbled out exclaiming: 'That was the absolute highlight of synod', 'That was brilliant!', 'Those kids are showing us the way'.

They were referring to the Youth at Synod (Y@S) presentation, which featured a video summary of young people's hopes for

our church and the challenges confronting it. They pleaded with the adults of our church to keep their eyes on 'what's most important' and always to remember that, since we are united in Christ, we can work through the issues that threaten to divide us. 'Surely, what matters is that we are one in Christ', a Y@S spokesperson told the delegates.

The sixteen Y@S participants represented youth from a broad cross-section of cultures and communities. Under the inspired leadership of Jo Hartley and her gifted team of youth mentors, Y@S observed a number of key sessions and later discussed the implications of the resolutions. During the closing hours of convention, their moving presentation drew a long and loud standing ovation. This was in recognition, not only of Y@S's enthusiasm for our church and its mission, but also of the way they showed us how to be generous with the love of Christ. During synod they chatted and laughed with us. They invited us into their worlds. They encouraged us with words of praise and gratitude.

But mostly, they prayed.



OUR 'TOP THREE' SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS

KARL:

1. Dr Steicke's farewell evening: 'He's been so supportive of us. He's such a great guy.'
2. Celebrate 2000 (a multi-media presentation, highlighting the work that God is doing through his people in the LCA)
3. The women's ordination debate: 'Interesting to see how our church handles such a big issue; very orderly'.

LAVINIA:

1. The ladies from PNG (Celebrate 2000): 'So good to see people praising God in their traditional way'.
2. Singing with the Aboriginal ladies on the rite of reconciliation night: 'I hadn't sung in my own language for ages'.
3. The women's ordination debate: 'Good to see that people who disagree on an issue can still be friendly towards each other afterwards. It was like leaving your work at the office.'

The Youth at Synod 2000 video is available for \$15. Ph: 08 8267 7300

Mission in the New Century

LCA administration streamlining

Readers of *The Lutheran* will recall that the 5 June issue presented the rationale for the proposal to streamline the administration of the LCA. General synod passed all elements of the proposal (called 'Mission in the New Century'), except for the elimination of the positions of first and second vice-presidents. Instead, synod resolved to reduce the number of vice-presidents from two to one. Pastor Wayne Zweck, of Southport, Qld, was elected vice-president.

Key features of the new structure are:

1. The LCA will have a president and a secretary/mission director. Support staff of two is envisaged.
2. The president's areas of responsibility will be:
 - presidential oversight
 - leadership in mission, theology, worship and education
 - inter-church relationships, both with other denominations in Australia and Lutheran churches outside of Australia.
 The president will be assisted by the College of Presidents.
3. The secretary/mission director's areas of responsibility will include:
 - assist the president in the implementation and coordination of mission work at home and abroad
 - assist the president in leadership in theology, worship and education
 - LCA secretarial and administrative functions.
4. The position of LCA administrator will be devolved to various areas of the church.
5. General Finance Council will be dissolved. General Church Council will assume responsibility for all financial matters. A mechanism will be put in place whereby the church can give directions to the Central Treasury Service.
6. General Church Council will be streamlined (from twenty to fourteen members) and will comprise:
 - the president
 - the vice-president
 - the presidents of the SA, Qld, Vic and NSW districts
 - one lay representative from the SA, Qld, Vic and NSW districts
 - one representative from the WA district and LCNZ (either their president or a lay representative)
 - two members at large (one ordained, one lay, unless both the LCNZ and WA district are represented by their presidents, in which case it shall be two lay people) elected by synod.
7. The Home Mission Department and the Board for Church Cooperation in World Mission (BCCWM) will be dissolved and replaced by a Board for Mission with the following functions:
 - develop a holistic approach to mission in the LCA
 - provide leadership and direction to mission in the LCA
 - coordinate all the mission elements of the LCA.
8. All national LCA fiscal administration will be carried out by the Central Treasury Service.
9. The number of LCA committees and advisory bodies will be continually reviewed with a view to achieving efficiencies.

Paying tribute to Dr Steicke were international heads of Lutheran churches, the National Council of Churches in Australia (to which Dr Steicke has been appointed president), and representatives of the LCA. As evidence of the esteem in which Dr Steicke is held and the love that he has earned as our president, he was presented with a bound book containing letters of gratitude from over three hundred congregations.

Tribute was also paid to Mrs Leah Steicke who has served her Lord and his church by making the sorts of sacrifices that enabled her husband to serve as president for the past thirteen years.

Dr Steicke will retire in October. Synod elected Pastor Mike Semmler to be his successor (see page 9).

The next day a note was dropped on my lap: 'Thanks for praying for us and with us yesterday . . . Love. Y@S.' I thought this was ironic. The sixteen young people who comprised Y@S (Youth at Synod: see page 15) had been praying for everybody else during general synod, yet they still took time to thank and support others. Synod leaders reported that at times of stress or tension, they sometimes found a member of Y@S by their side asking to pray for them. Their presence among us was marked by prayer.

When they weren't praying, Y@S were learning how general synod functions, studying the issues on which delegates would be voting, observing several sessions and discussing the possible implications of synod's decisions.

In a moving presentation just hours before the close of synod, Y@S asked Lutheran adults to include them in the work of the church, to nurture them in their faith (and to allow ourselves to be nurtured by them) and to provide

cont page 18



Left: Pastor Lionel Otto presents Dr Lance Steicke with a gift in recognition of his thirteen years of outstanding service to the Lutheran Church of Australia as its president. The 'praying hands' were created by renowned craftsman, Hans Muller, from St Paul's Lutheran Church, Christchurch, NZ.

Below: Dr Lance and Leah Steicke enjoy one of the lighter moments of the evening that paid tribute to a loved and respected president.

GOD GIVE YOU JOY

Farewell to Dr Lance and Mrs Leah Steicke

I was not like a pappa to us. He was very much like a brother. I had been told that I was good for nothing; that I should have been shot along with my people, but I have found a brother in Lance who has heard our cry and felt our pain. Lance, you have been an example for us. You have been a leader for our cause. Thank you for helping us along the way.

Pastor George Rosendale

Humility and modesty are his hallmarks. He has come from where you've come from, not flash, not powerful. He has the common touch.

Dr Joy Pollnitz
Member, General Church Council

He played full-back at Concordia College, and his rhinoceros-like charges terrified both the opposition and his team mates.

Pastor David Strelan
Concordia classmate

As a president of the church, I honour you. As a man of God, I respect you. You were Christ to me.

Jo Hartley
Youth at Synod

I thank God for his call to me in baptism and for his continuing call on my life. I thank God for the LCA, our beloved church, for allowing me the privilege of service. For me, joy has been the characteristic of my ministry—what tremendous joy there is in service and in studying the Scriptures. I thank you all. I pray God's richest blessings on you, the church, as we go forward to take the precious gospel to all people in our land.

Dr Lance Steicke
LCA President

God give you joy

God give you joy and lead you on ahead,
God give you wisdom for the path you tread:

May he fit you for each task
and wrap you in his love.
God give you joy always.

God give you faith to lean on him each day,
God give you grace to trust him and obey:

God give you peace when troubled times are near,
God's presence be with you to drive out fear:

God give you joy and fill you with his power,
God be your strength and helper hour by hour.

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Snapshots

Changing, moving, growing, breaking new ground

Your synod delegate will be able to provide you with the details of the following snapshots (including full statements where applicable), as well as other synod resolutions not recorded here.

Church Planting

Synod noted with thanksgiving the church planting developments that have taken place during this synodical term. It encouraged the LCA to foster a church planting mindset, with the aim of establishing at least six church plants per annum for the next five years.

Schools and Mission Vision Statement

In recognition of the emerging role of our Lutheran schools in the mission of the church, the following vision statement was adopted by synod:

The mission of the LCA is to share the love of God in Christ with the world. Lutheran schools provide the church with many opportunities to make contact with the people of local communities and to respond to their physical and spiritual need, and so to both demonstrate and declare the gracious love of God. Congregations and schools are encouraged to be more intentional, diligent, sensitive and flexible in responding to these mission opportunities.

Our Church in Mission

A LCA Statement on Mission has served our church well since its adoption in 1990. A new statement was referred to the College of Presidents and to district pastors' conferences with a view to it being adopted by the next general synod. The document has a holistic approach to mission, choosing not to list individual ministries, and is broad enough for boards, congregations and individuals to develop their own mission vision.

Statement on Gambling

In response to the negative impact gambling has on our community, synod resolved to ask our pastors and other church leaders to point out to our members and communities the dangers and resulting harm associated with persistent gambling practices, especially in regard to poker machines. Synod also requested agencies of the church and

individual members to actively lobby members of parliament and local government to cap the number of gambling outlets in their jurisdictions and to spend a greater proportion of gambling revenue on rehabilitating addicted gamblers.

World Wide Web

Given that the World Wide Web (Internet) has become an important means of communication, synod encouraged congregations to become actively involved in the development of a Lutheran web presence as a means of gospel outreach and as a cost-effective and creative way of sharing information and resources within the church.

Finke River Mission

The oversight of the Finke River Mission (including responsibility for the board and its work) will now be the responsibility of the SA/NT district. This was seen as conforming with the 'Mission in the New Century' streamlining proposal (see page 16).

Church Worker Recruitment

Synod noted the strides Luther Seminary is taking in providing training for a broad range of church worker ministries—ordained and non-ordained—and encouraged men and women of the LCA to offer themselves for these ministries.

Lutheran Media Ministry

Recognising that the excellent work of Lutheran Media Ministry is conducted 'off-budget', synod urged our people to offer support through prayer, interest, donations, sponsorships and bequests.

The Lutheran

Synod asked every congregation to promote our church's magazine on an ongoing basis and noted that Openbook Publishers had produced resources to assist in this regard.

them with relevant worship experiences. Then, taking their places in the centre aisle, Y@S invited delegates to join hands with them across the auditorium. Then they did what they had been doing all week. They prayed. They prayed for our church and for unity among all who belong to it. They prayed for our leaders and the challenges before them. They prayed for all of us, together as brothers and sisters in the LCA, that we would walk together with Christ our future. Many delegates were moved to tears as they sensed the youth of our church showing us the way forward, even leading us there.

A few hours later, at the conclusion of divine service with holy communion, general synod was officially closed. For me and for many others, it had been a synod filled with surprises.

Surprise! Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous brothers and sisters. Surprise! Goodwill and Christ-like attitudes—evidence of the Spirit's presence and power—during the women's ordination debate. Surprise! Vibrant praise times led by diverse Aboriginal groups, the PNG ladies, the Adelaide deaf choir and the delightful Y@S. Surprise! The LWF chief gives us a glimpse of how Christ is working

Highlights of supporting conventions and conferences—pastors, LWA, principals and tertiary chaplains—will be reported in the next issue of *The Lutheran*.

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in the lives of sixty million Lutherans beyond our shores. Surprise! Relationships are being strengthened with our brothers and sisters in other Christian churches. Surprise! The youth of our church are showing us the way forward, teaching us to pray. Our church has a bright future.

'Christ, our future.' This was more than a catchy theme for a synod poised at the edge of a new millennium. Flowing through this general synod was a certain confidence, a hope, a conviction that the future of our church is indeed bright.

We saw it in so many ways. We saw it in our emerging maturity as we learn to live with issues that refuse to be defined in black-and-white terms. We saw it in the determination to respect and love each other as brothers and sisters, despite holding differing opinions. We saw it in the commitment to move out into an Australia (and the shores beyond) that is as alien to us as the first-century world was to the early Christians.

We saw that we can do all this in the sure hope that Christ will be with there with us. For us. Before us.

Christ, our anchor. Christ, our forerunner. Christ, our high priest. Christ, our future.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following people. Their creative energy and hard yards provided me with much of the material used in the production of these general convention highlights. Media liaison officers: Grace Bock and Helen Beringen
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Photographer: David Thiele
Linda Macqueen

The Final Word

'The best synod ever'



I've attended four general synods and this was the best one ever. There was a real celebratory note here... there was new life, freshness and enthusiasm in this synod—something that said, 'God is alive!'

Ruth Rathjen, Devonport, Tasmania



Synod left me with a real sense of wanting to be part of our church, a better understanding of the workings and faces of our church, and an awareness that there are so many wonderful ministries going on that I'm sure many people don't know about. Now we just have to... encourage congregations to include youth among their delegates.

Tim Wiebusch, LCA Victorian District youth consultant

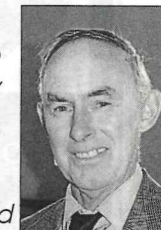


A real pleasure to be here... so good to re-focus on our Lutheran church and to remember the stuff I love about it. This was a great opportunity to hear—and even meet—so many of the people I've only read about.

Kylie Lee Archer (youngest delegate), Epping, NSW

My first general synod, and I'm very impressed. It's good for people like me from small congregations to get together with so many other Lutherans. I was really happy with the Christ-like way in which the women's ordination debate was conducted. I would recommend to others that they try to get to a general synod. (Terrible weather, though!)

Barry Kucks, Biloela, Qld



There was no noticeable tension or animosity during the debates, even though there were deeply held views. It was unexpected that a tense subject (women's ordination) was discussed in such a civil manner. Friendly people, brilliant venue... well worth attending.

Em Unger (oldest delegate), Parkes, NSW

Being surrounded by so many Lutherans at one time was overwhelming. I now understand a lot more about our Lutheran heritage. (I've only been a Lutheran for seven years.) The issues were dealt with really well... the speakers showed respect for other people. It was wonderful being here, and I would certainly encourage other people to attend. You get a different perspective on so many things.

Kathy Suggate, Rockingham, WA

