LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA - LCA

Year Started and Brief History

Union in 1966. The Lutheran Church was established in South Australia in 1838 by German emigrants from Prussia. The first emigrants came because of the religious persecution they had suffered in Prussia. Although this persecution ceased in the mid-1840s, many more Germans followed, seeking the better life that the first migrants reported to them. Settlements were established at Klemzig, Hahndorf, Lobethal and in the Barossa Valley. Some 20,000 German Lutherans migrated to South Australia between 1838 and 1860. With the expansion of settlement, the German Lutherans began to spread out across the state in search of larger landholdings. In their settlements they soon built churches and schools.

German Lutherans also came to Victoria from the 1840s onwards and established the Lutheran Church in the Melbourne district. Some Germans moved from South Australia to Victoria, first to the Hamilton district in the 1850s and then to the Wimmera in the 1860s and 1870s. In the 1860s Lutheran families moved from South Australia to the southern region of New South Wales as land became available for selection. As a result, the Riverina became the main area for the Lutheran Church in New South Wales. German migration to Queensland began in large numbers in the 1860s. Their places of origin in Germany were different from those which produced the earlier migrants to southern Australia. Because of the distance from South Australia, separate Lutheran Churches were established in Victoria and Queensland. Only a small number of Lutheran congregations were established in Tasmania and Western Australia. As a result, 45 per cent of all Lutherans in Australia today are found in South Australia. Queensland has 25 per cent, Victoria 15 per cent, with the remaining 15 per cent in New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania.

The Lutheran Church was predominantly a rural church and it remained so for over 100 years. With the growth of cities from the 1950s and the recent rural decline, there has been a steady rise in urban congregations.German continued to be the language of many Lutheran homes for up to three or four generations. Similarly, the language of the Lutheran Church was German in its worship and its business. In the early 1900s moves were made to introduce English, and this was hastened by the outbreak of World War I. There was a transition period in the 1920s and 1930s, and after World War II only English was used.

The early Lutheran Church in Australia has unfortunately been marked by division. The first pastors, Kavel and Fritzsche, disagreed on a number of matters and in 1846 they established separate churches. Further division led to more separate churches being formed. Victoria established its own church. Queensland had two Lutheran churches. As a result, in the early 1900s there were eight separate Lutheran churches, plus some independent Lutheran pastors.

In the 20th century efforts were made to bring unity and in 1921 five churches joined together. Another one joined in 1926. The final union in 1966 created the present-day Lutheran Church of Australia. Despite three Australian-trained pastors graduating in 1855, most of the pastors in the 1800s came from Germany, especially from the theological seminaries of Hermannsburg, Neuendettelsau, and Basle in Switzerland. From the 1880s the church sought pastors from the US (Missouri Synod, or Iowa Synod). From the early 1900s they began training pastors in Australia at Concordia College and Immanuel College.

The provision of schools for their children was a priority for the early Lutherans. Many congregational primary schools were started in the 1800s. During World War I these schools were closed in South Australia by an Act of Parliament. However, they gradually reopened after the war. Secondary colleges were also started in the 1890s. In the 1970s and 1980s there was a rapid expansion in the Lutheran school system and numerous primary and secondary schools were established, especially in Queensland.

Church Leader

Bishop Rev John Henderson

Membership

Government censuses indicate that about 250,000 Australians and New Zealanders identify as Lutheran. In practice, though, the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), which includes the Lutheran Church of New Zealand (LCNZ) has 71,000 recorded members and 30,000 to 35,000 regular weekly worshipers.

Organisational Structure

The LCA is structured to be a synodical Church (ie, a Church whose people walk together). The major meeting of the Church is the LCA Convention of Synod which is held every three years. The Synod is headed by the Bishop who presides at the meetings General Church Council which meets as the governing council in between Conventions. The LCA is made up of congregations and parishes grouped together as Districts of the LCA. There are 6 Districts each of which has a District Bishop. The College of Bishops of the LCA meets together regularly to discuss the pastoral and theological oversight in the LCA.
As will be shown below there are many important mission and ministry arms of the LCA. These may be departments or auxiliaries of the LCA.

Main Areas of Work

Pastoral Ministry, Theology, Mission among Indigenous Australians and abroad, Primary and Secondary Schools, Aged Care, Community Care, Aid and Development.

Our mission

Our logo represents how we see ourselves as two nations under the Southern Cross, created by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve the people of our two nations and the world. Our tagline, Where Love Comes to Life, reflects the heart and soul of our mission. In every district and department of the Lutheran Church of Australia, in every congregation and school, in every Australian and New Zealander who identifies as Lutheran, we want to be the place where love comes to life. In other words, we want people to see the love, grace, forgiveness and compassion of Jesus Christ coming to them through every place and every person in our church

Activities regarding overcoming of violence

The Lutheran Church of Australia has responded to the issue of violence by aligning with others to work to overcome cycles of violence particularly in relation to domestic violence. A Joint Churches program obtained grants from the Australian Government through the Office for the Status of Women and the South Australian Government through Living Health SA to produce a handbook outlining the nature and forms of domestic violence and how to respond to domestic violence as a reference and guide for people in pastoral roles. Helen Lockwood (Director of Lutheran Community Care SA) convened the Joint Churches program which produced this resource.

The handbook is used to train people in pastoral roles and provides a basic introduction on how to respond to victims of violence through compassion, action and empowerment. It also provides guidance as to how to address those who have been violent or abusive and how they can be supported within a faith community.

Special Challenges

The Lutheran Church of Australia [LCA] came into being in 1966 as the amalgamation of two Lutheran Synods, each with its own world wide Lutheran connections. This remains a challenge today as do associated theological issues.

Involvement in Networks or International Operations

Associate member of Lutheran World Federation
Associate member of International Lutheran Council
Member of LWF Mekong Mission Forum

Member of Lutheran Overseas Partner Churches in PNG
Partner with various Lutheran Churches in S E Asia.