

# Contents

Editorial 51

## Articles

Adam Hensley	(God's) ordering of ministry in the church	53
Andrew Pfeiffer	Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand: organised and authorised	58
Andrew Pfeiffer	The specific ministry pastor in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand	63
Tim Jarick	Ministry and ministry workers in Lutheran schools	65
Adam Yeager	Specific ministry pastors: the future of the LCANZ	67
Russell Briese	Case study: Lutheran Services—how a leading Queensland aged care provider delivers ministry in a changing landscape	71
Thomas Böhmert	Thorough education is vital to future ministry in LCANZ	75
Noel Due	Back to the future? Talking about Roland Allen in the LCANZ	78
Michelle Eastwood	Rethinking the purpose of ministry	81
Valdis Andersons	Why are we so afraid of women as pastors in the LCANZ?	83
Helga Jansons	Lutheran church leadership—always being made new!	85
Alison Short	Beyond an earthly reign: changing custom to meet context	89
Tania Nelson	Implications of the call for gender equality on God's mission through the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand: a socio-cultural analysis	96
Roger Whittall	Ordering the church's ministry: Luther's priorities	102

## Review article

Peter Lockwood Victor C. Pfitzner. *Early Christian Witnesses: Biblical and Theological Explorations. Selected Essays by Victor C Pfitzner.* Adelaide: ATF Press, 2021. 105

### Abbreviations

AC	Augsburg Confession
CTICR	Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations
FC Epit.	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
LCA	Lutheran Church of Australia
SC	Small Catechism
TA	Theses of Agreement
Tractate	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

### Commonly cited works

DSTO	Lutheran Church of Australia, Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations. <i>Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions.</i> <a href="https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/">https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/</a> .
Kolb and Wengert	Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.</i> Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
LCA By-laws	Lutheran Church of Australia. <i>Constitution and By-laws.</i> 2018. <a href="https://www.lca.org.au/about-us/structure-governance/">https://www.lca.org.au/about-us/structure-governance/</a> .
LCA Constitution	Lutheran Church of Australia. <i>Constitution and By-laws.</i> 2018. <a href="https://www.lca.org.au/about-us/structure-governance/">https://www.lca.org.au/about-us/structure-governance/</a> .
Tappert	Theodore G. Tappert, trans. and ed. <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.</i> Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959.
Theses of Agreement VI	Lutheran Church of Australia, DSTO Volume 1 A. <i>Theses of Agreement. VI: Theses on the office of the ministry</i> (1950).

# Implications of the call for gender equality on God's mission through the LCANZ: a socio-cultural analysis

Tania Nelson

---

This paper provides a brief critique of the impact of the Australian and New Zealander social-cultural issue of gender equality on God's mission through the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand. Gender equality is defined as the state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender. Gender equity, which includes affirmative action, is defined as the means by which gender equality is achieved.

## Historical considerations

In numerous instances, the Christian church has been a slow adopter of gender equality. Noting that women's right to vote was first given in 1895 in South Australia, it was as late as 1966 that women in the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCANZ) were given the right to vote in congregational meetings, with a later added qualification in 1968,

That, when women are given the right to discuss and vote in congregations, the principle that in our congregations the woman is in subjection to the man be safeguarded by recognizing the right of the men to reserve the final decision on any matter to a male vote whenever the men desire to invoke this right.<sup>1</sup>

Varied interpretations of the concept of subordination (or subjection/submission) and varying opinions on whether a wife is subordinate to her husband, and women are subordinate to men may be one reason for the slow response of traditional Christian denominations to the notion of gender equality. An LCANZ document, edited as recently as 2001, gives one viewpoint on the matter:

The passages which come into consideration are 1 Corinthians 11:2–10; 14:33b–36; and 1 Timothy 2:13,14. These lay down the principle of subordination and reserve for women in the church. Or to put it negatively: women are not to take a leading, independent, authoritative role in the church. Note: a congregation of women would, of course, have to have women officers.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, emeritus Bishop John Henderson gives the counter argument when he stated:

---

1 DSTO Volume 1 F. *Women in the church: Statement on rights of women to vote at meetings of the congregations* (1966), 2. The General Synod of 1968 resolved that the 'qualification' listed in the text of the essay be inserted into the constitutions of congregations.

2 DSTO Volume 1 F. *Women in the church: The role of women in the church* (1978), 2.

Some of us who hold passionately to a male-only pastorate now believe that the LCA needs to learn how to think rightly. They are tempted to include things the LCA does not teach, such as male headship and subordination based on orders of creation. Some of us have personal views on these matters, but pastors and teachers must not burden consciences by giving the impression that our church teaches them. What we do teach is that in Christ there is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) in which all are equal in him (Galatians 3:28).<sup>3</sup>

For the LCA, lived reality for many Lutheran congregations does not align with the LCA's doctrinal statements and theological opinions. There are many women who lead in governance, management, in key mission and ministry positions, as elders and as worship leaders in the congregations of the LCA.

The widely reported causal link between advocates of gender subordination and perpetrators of family and domestic violence<sup>4</sup> has further damaged the reputation of the Christian church in the minds of many across Australian and New Zealand society. Though the Christian church condemns all forms of violence and abuse, some are asking whether the church is doing enough. In response, the LCA launched a 'Hidden hurts healing heart' campaign with an accompanying website. On the issue of submission, the website quotes emeritus Bishop John Henderson:

Any man among us who uses Christianity and the Bible to justify abuse of his wife or partner has clearly lost sight of his faith. If we are to use the word 'subordination' at all, it must relate to Christ's voluntary submission to the will of his heavenly Father when he went to the cross. Such submission is freely given and never demanded. It's a loving expression that marks the difference between Christians and the world (see the contrast Jesus establishes in Matthew 20:25–27). That does not mean that we encourage people, particularly women who are at risk, to stay in abusive relationships. We plead with such women: please actively seek help and support to protect yourselves and your children.<sup>5</sup>

The view, in some areas of the church, that God created women to be submissive to men and that this submission is part of the created order of the world, and not a cultural practice or a result of sin entering the world, will continue to tarnish God's mission in Australia and New Zealand through His church as long as that view persists.

As I complete this paper on the eve of International Women's Day 2022, it is timely that the LCA considers, as do I, how we can collectively #BreakTheBias. The International Women's Day website calls us to

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. A

3 John Henderson, 'Heartland eNews—post-Convention message to the church,' 14 November 2018, <https://www.lca.org.au/heartland-eneews-post-convention-message-to-the-church/>.

4 Laura C.M. Piosiadlo and Rosa M.G.S. da Fonseca, 'Gender subordination in the vulnerability of women to domestic violence,' *Investigación y Educación en Enfermería* 34, no. 2 (2016): 261–270.

5 Lutheran Church of Australia, 'Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts, LCA Campaign for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, 'FAQ', <https://www.preventdfv.lca.org.au/faq/>, accessed 7 March 2022.

world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality.<sup>6</sup>

This imagining, for many Christians in Australia and New Zealand, includes imagining equality in leadership and in governance within the church, as well as the ordained ministry.

## **Women leadership and the mission of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand**

This section does not provide a theological argument for encouraging women leaders, nor does it provide another commentary that advocates for permitting women into the ordained ministry, as the latter topic has been well argued within the LCANZ.<sup>7</sup> This section challenges us to consider how just and good is the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand's (LCANZ) stance on women in leadership generally and, specifically, how just and good is the stance that women may not be pastors of the LCANZ. How does the LCANZ's current teaching demonstrate that our churches are joining in with God's mission in Australia and New Zealand?

The LCANZ, as an institution, has done little proactively to promote and encourage women leaders. When experience has variously shown that affirmative action and the setting of quotas has been an important factor in improving the status of a women,<sup>8</sup> there has been, to date, no call for affirmative action and quota setting for women in leadership—for gender justice—in the LCANZ. Many individuals however, have graciously, faithfully and courageously inspired women to leadership within the church and for these individuals I express my sincere gratitude. The Lutheran World Federation (of which the LCANZ is an associate member) has a Gender Justice policy<sup>9</sup> which includes a quota for women on all committees, for attendances at meetings/events and for scholarships. The LCANZ has applied a quota at its synod of 2018 for youth—defined as under 30s—on governing boards and committees of the church, though has shown little interest in gender equity or mandating such a quota system for female membership on boards and committees. 'It's not enough to merely articulate a scriptural case for biblical equality. And it's not enough to give intellectual and theological assent to equality in ministry, and then do nothing about it.'<sup>10</sup> Hill, in *Holding Up Half the Sky: A Biblical Case for Women Leading and Teaching in*

6 <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>, accessed 7 March 2022.

7 Peter Lockwood, 'The ordination of women: assessing the counter claims of complementarianism,' *Lutheran Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (May 2021): 13–32; Noel C. Schultz, *Neither Male nor Female: The Bible, Women and the Ministry of the Church* (Bayswater, VIC: Coventry Press, 2020); Lutheran Church of Australia, *Ordination—We're listening* (2022), <http://owl.lca.org.au/>.

8 In 1986 the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act was passed. It is '[a]n Act to require certain employers to promote equal opportunity for women in employment, to establish the office of the Director of Affirmative Action, and for related purposes.' Cf. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A03332>. See also 'Party commitment to gender equity' in Joy McCann and Janet Wilson, *Representation of Women in Australian Parliaments* (Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, 2012), [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/1481963/upload\\_binary/1481963.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%22library/prspub/1481963%22](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/1481963/upload_binary/1481963.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%22library/prspub/1481963%22).

9 The Lutheran World Federation, *Gender Justice Policy* (2013), [https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS\\_Gender\\_Justice.pdf](https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/DTPW-WICAS_Gender_Justice.pdf).

10 Graham Joseph Hill, *Holding Up Half the Sky: A Biblical Case for Women Leading and Teaching in the*

*the Church*, advocates to:

1. Get real about empowering female leaders
2. Enable women to sit at the table
3. Help women see women at the table
4. Transform male-dominated cultures
5. Model and esteem real professional and personal partnerships
6. Build cultures where women and men can equally succeed
7. Stop talking and start listening
8. Honor all women
9. Examine your beliefs and practices
10. Embrace reciprocal mentoring
11. Get proactive about women speakers
12. Ask what you're willing to give up (and gain)
13. Profile female Christian leaders
14. Pray with women
15. Make honoring women and girls a lifestyle and an institutional value<sup>11</sup>

There is much that women and men of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand can do to empower, honour and raise the profile of women to further the culture of the church toward one that truly embraces equality in Christ.

The LCA, at its synods, has narrowly rejected proposals for the ordination of women,<sup>12</sup> though at each vote the majority of delegates desired change to the current practice. Despite extensive debate both for and against the ordination of women, and despite many well-written papers and careful churchwide consultation, the issue has become an increasingly polarising one. The LCA has long considered that the issue of ordination of both women and men should be decided on the basis of scripture, as is the practice for all doctrinal matters, however when biblical scholars come to conflicting conclusions on the issue, when does reading scripture through the lens of a missional/cultural hermeneutic better serve the debate? To what extent have the scholars considered the missional direction, missional purpose, missional locatedness and engagement with cultures/context<sup>13</sup> of the key texts espoused to argue their respective positions?

I hold the view that our knowledge of God and His ways are limited by our own blinkered capacity, and that scripture—the divinely inspired Word of God—does not speak

---

*Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 83.

11 Hill, *Holding Up Half the Sky*, 95–102.

12 The LCA Constitution states: 'For a resolution on a matter of doctrine to be deemed to be the official position of the Church it shall require a two-thirds majority of all the registered delegates at the convention.' Cf. LCA Constitution, Article 7.3.28.3.

13 George R. Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a missional hermeneutic: mapping a conversation,' *Missiology: An International Review* 39, no. 3 (July 2011): 309–321.

specifically into every issue with which humans struggle. Therefore, using a hermeneutic of cultural analysis, we ask of difficult passages of scripture ‘*which of these instructions from Scripture are still in force for us today exactly as they are articulated “on the page” [of Scripture]’* and which instructions are ‘still in force [today] only *in part* or *in a modified fashion*.’<sup>14</sup> A consistent application of these questions is important. As an example of inconsistency, scholars agree that despite the words on the page saying that ‘women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety’ (1 Timothy 2:15 NIV), we know from other parts of scripture that women, and all people, are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (and not from an act such as the ability to give birth to a child). Scripture interprets scripture. Rather, the verse honours women’s important role in the family and is part of Paul’s call for propriety from women in worship. So, when we acknowledge that verse 15 requires a hermeneutic of cultural analysis, why do some scholars decide that a preceding verse ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet’ (1 Timothy 2:12 NIV) must be taken literally and not viewed through a cultural lens? We rightly need to ask what was going on that Paul was compelled to write to Timothy and include instructions on respectful and decent worship practices.

Right theology is important (as far as we can claim right theology this side of heaven) and equally important is right practice. The LCANZ’s tagline is ‘where love comes to life’. Is the LCANZ showing the people of Australia and New Zealand that we are a place where love comes to life, or are we demonstrating that there are limits to our love, and the enactment of life, in the case of women? If the LCANZ’s primary missional action is reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection (being God’s hands and feet in His mission—the *missio Dei*), is the LCANZ striving to be ‘all things to all people, that by all means I might save some’ (1 Cor 9:22 ESV) or is it limiting its gospel message through its social-cultural stance on women’s leadership including ordination? Are our limitations on women an example of our espoused theology (which advocates that all are equal in the sight of God) not aligning with our operant theology<sup>15</sup>?

Considerable energy has been spent since 2000—when women’s ordination was first debated at a churchwide synod—which has drawn our collective attention away from the mission of God in Australia. Some members and friends are leaving the church over the issue of inequality for women, while others are waiting patiently (and increasingly impatiently) for change. Together with Hill, I affirm that:

Men and women are now one in Christ. Women and men are brought together as equally and completely as Jews and gentiles. All are equally honored in the family of

---

14 William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 13 (emphasis in original).

15 ‘Operant theology’ is one of the ‘four voices of theology’, an interpretative working tool for theological reflection upon how practice and theology are connected. It was developed as part of the Theological Action Research (TAR) approach (cf. Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* [Norwich: SCM Press, 2010]). The other three voices are ‘normative theology’, ‘formal theology’ and ‘espoused theology’.

Jesus Christ. All the barriers separating women and men that are keeping us from being one body in love and worship are now done away with in Christ. Just as Gal 3:28 has social implications for slaves and gentiles, it also has social implications for women. Gal 3:26–28 is both a theological and sociological declaration. In Jesus, racial, class, and gender divisions are broken down. Women and men are equally valued, equally loved, equally honored, and equally included, and equally able to use their gifts to serve Christ and his body (Gal 3:28).<sup>16</sup>

For the sake of God’s mission to Australians and New Zealanders, the LCA NZ must be proactive in honouring, promoting and encouraging the leadership of women, and this includes ordaining willing, dedicated and trained<sup>17</sup> women as well as men.

*Tania Nelson is LCA’s Executive Officer – Local Mission.*

---

<sup>16</sup> Hill, *Holding Up Half the Sky*, 115.

<sup>17</sup> The LCA By-laws, Section 5.1.1, states:

‘Candidates for the Ministry

5.1.1 A candidate for the office of the Ministry in the Church shall be a person who has

5.1.1.1 indicated willingness for and dedication to this office;

5.1.1.2 been found as being of sufficient standard in theological knowledge for this office and of sound confessional standing;

5.1.1.3 indicated willingness to accept a call or appointment; and

5.1.1.4 whose ordination has been approved by the College of Bishops.’