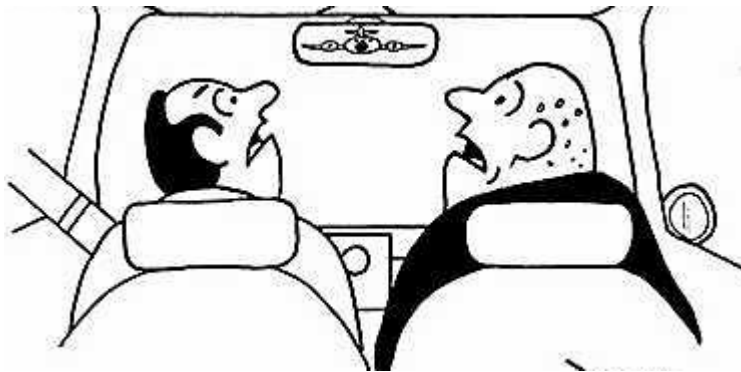


Final Report Stage 1 for the SA-NT District of the LCA - 4.9 Team



Consultant – Fuzz Kitto

Spirited Consulting Pty Ltd

Helping Churches grow their effectiveness in the emerging realities, cultures and communities



It had been decided that purpose of the three phases be:

Phase 1.

- to develop the process and timing for the second phase. (This is the report of this Phase)

Phase 2.

- to develop the priorities and foci for the Mission and Ministry across the District
 - a Strategic Mission Plan.

Phase 3.

- to action the Mission Plan.

In the discussing of the intent of Resolution 4.9 from the 2006 Synod it became obvious that the resolution was aimed at tackling a symptom not a cause.

John Smith tells the story of his Mother who used to have terrible headaches when he was younger. She would take analgesics to ease the pain. She actually had an aneurism on the major artery to the brain. As her blood pressure would increase the aneurism would bulge out and put pressure on the brain, causing the headaches. She went in for a simple operation for Varicose Veins and the pressure burst the aneurism and caused a massive brain haemorrhage. She was in a coma for four weeks and then died leaving her husband a Pastor and seven children. If they had got to the cause a simple tube could have replaced the artery with the aneurism and she would have lived. Instead they just treated the symptom with pain killers and not the cause.

The lack of young people in the councils and life of the Lutheran Church across the District is a symptom of a wider cause. It was decided by the 4.9 Committee (hereafter called the 4.9 Team) that the key outcomes desired from Resolution 4.9 were:

1. Clarify the situation in the Churches around the District in regard to the attitudes about where the church is at.
2. Assess the opportunities for building hope for the mission and life of Church into the future.
3. Asses the opportunities for growing leadership and participation of young people in the present and future of the church.
4. Find a variety of ways the Churches around the District can joyfully celebrate and find expressions of their relationship with God.
5. To find some understandings of how all the perspectives fit together and what solutions might help move forward the Churches around the District.

One of the key bits of information and image I shared with people in the interview was from Brian McLaren's book *Generous Orthodoxy*. Brian reflects that the key issue in the Western World has been between the rights of the individual verses the rights of the Society/Community. In the Eastern World the issue has been the rights of the dead verses the rights of the living – How do we respect the elders and the wisdom and culture they ave passed on. However there is an emerging issue facing us now – that is the rights of the living verses the rights of the not yet born. It is being discussed in the environmental circles in terms of what sort of environment/world are we leaving to the future

generations? **In the Church the question is what sort of church are we passing on to the future generations?**

Brian presents a metaphor/image of many churches being like driving a car continuously looking into the rear vision mirror. If only we had been back at the early church, the reformation, the good old days when...! If we drive looking at the rear vision mirror we do not put our foot on the accelerator very quickly or very far – and our other foot is always on the brake pedal. The question then comes; **how do we help churches shift the vision from looking through the rear vision mirror to looking through the windscreen?** What are the reference points in the future? How does the Lutheran Church around the District live the story from the past into the future? Where is the *faith that makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.*(Heb 11:1) For we know *It was their faith that made our ancestors pleasing to God.* (v2).

As I met with 178 people in group discussions and one on one across the life, ministry, mission and institutions in the SA-NT District, they taught me a number of things as we dialogued around the 7 Questions asked:

1. What are the gifts of the Lutheran Church to the SA-NT Community?
2. What is the purpose of the Lutheran Church?
3. What is the image of the Lutheran Church in the Community?
4. What is the image of the Lutheran Church amongst the Lutheran Churches?
5. What would you like the Lutheran Church to be known for?
6. What does the future of the Lutheran Church look like across the District?
7. What are the opportunities that will grow the hope of an effective, dynamic Church?

People taught me that they perceived that the strengths of the Lutheran Church across the District were:

- The teaching (Grace through Faith) , right Doctrines, correct interpretation of the Bible and strong and clear theological understandings
- The Lutheran Schools
- Aged Care Centres
- The traditions and keeping the traditions
- The stability and steadfastness of the people
- The high level of training of the Pastors and teachers
- The history and resilience of the church and its missions and its German heritage
- The Community services
- And recently the camps and wider church gatherings of young people

I did not ask about weaknesses (although they were often offered – and quickly) as most times our weaknesses are our strengths in excess – and the best way to tackle our weaknesses is through our strengths. I did observe and test on a number of occasions, by asking *which* doctrines, right teaching and theological understandings they were referring to? Consistently the answer (from the Lay People) was *Grace through Faith* but people seemed to flounder after that.

Upon reflection I noted that no one told me, nor can I remember anyone leaving the Lutheran Church because of its teaching or theology. To the contrary even those I interviewed who had left the life of the Lutheran Church fiercely defended the teaching! It was the practices of the Church (or lack of permission to express/practice their beliefs in other expressions) that were mentioned as reasons to shift to other churches or no church.

There was a mixed understanding about the purpose of the church. Most talked in terms of worship and proclaiming the Gospel. There was a stream of people that said it was to pastor the members in Word and Sacrament while others said to be salt and light and share God's love.

When it came to people's perception of how the community image the Lutheran church people mentioned:

- That Lutheran Schools are the key face of the church in the community
- The *German Church*
- Unknown - not well known - closed and invisible – keep to themselves
 - (except in the Barossa)
- Tradition Church – unchanging - conservative (seen by some as good and others bad) – quiet church
- Middle Class
- Older
- Just another Church
- Hypocritical / strict
- Aged Church
- Neat and tidy and well kept buildings
- Inwardly focused

However when asked how Lutherans imaged the Lutheran Church there were mixed responses including:

- More successful in its Overseas Mission than its own backyard
- Find it hard to share faith
- Strong German background and traditions
- Pastor oriented
- Grace has been made a law
- Don't like to get too excited – conservative
- Stable
- Family oriented
- Scared of change – keep Status Quo
- Fearful of future - a lot of denial
- Can be a little tolerant of other churches
- Self sufficient – cliquy
- A diversity of Pastors
- Traditional - stuck in a mould

- Liturgy has treated us as kindergarten children – hit people with Word and Sacrament
- Good liturgies – good sacramental tradition
- Controlling
- Some Pastors afraid to *step out of line – do things differently*
- React a lot
- Keep apologising – and use *but* a lot
- Not quick to be affirming of each other - Lack of confidence
- Think they are on the right track
- Most proud of being Lutherans
- Very individual based – me oriented
- Have long memories of bad (hold grudges) and good things
- In touch – out of touch
- Very vulnerable to people that speak well and will listen to them
- Structured – organised (seen as a positive by some and a negative by others)
- Too busy talking – great at talking – not at actions
- Dying
- Vibrant
- Church is divided
- Contemporary Service people more social
- Grace – Cross – Luther’s Rose
- ½ its members nervous – ½ its members excited
- Conflicts in worship styles
- Positive seems to be a very rich church
- Not had a connection between practice and theology
- Want to see Lutherans as being important
- Not a welcoming bunch
- Bit middle class
- Scared what other people in the church might think of them
- Institutional
- Unwilling to embrace the gifts of all [its] people

I also picked up there was a pervading fear amongst many people to “risk” a way forward and to experiment in the areas that might bring about the desired changes that were yearned for. It seems the fear is mainly around “getting it wrong” and not doing it in a “Lutheran way” (i.e. the “right way”. 1 John 4: 18 reminds us that *A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished [day of judgement] is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love.*

Many told me that there was a much needed affirmation of people and an encouragement to *build each other up* and to move past the *self praise is worthless* mindset of previous generations. A cultural move from the fear of getting it wrong to the joy and deep fun of living the Kingdom of God *on earth as it is in heaven* would be good to concentrate on.

I sensed that the pervading feeling was that people did want to reach out to others in the community, care for the young people and make the Lutheran Church effective – **it is that they just do not know how!**

When asked what they would like the Lutheran Church to be known for they mentioned:

- A better connection between the Schools and Church
- Outreach – interested in others – getting outside its walls
- Welcoming and friendly place
- Affirming of each other – loving each other and those around them
- Interested in others
- A place of hope
- Giving it a go – not afraid of doing it wrong
- Smarter and wiser in what we do
- To smell it from a long way off – aroma of Christ
- Non-judgemental
- Sharing Jesus as Jesus shared with the crowds
- Growing GenY leaders for the church now and the future
- Leadership retreats in Churches and schools
- Community of people that give themselves away
- Constantly bringing up the next generation
- Encourage and empower younger generations in the life of the church
- Redefining what it means to be a Christian today
- Relate to *outside people*
- Live the theology
- Less institutionalised
- Stand up against social injustices
- For caring for people
- A living faith
- Greater care in engaging in Good Samaritan stuff
- Lutheran Community Care
- Church Schools
- Transportable faith
- Thoughtful and happy
- Great music for young people
- Evangelism
- Gifts of the Spirit
- More positive
- Nourishment from Word of God
- Working together with other churches
- Safe place
- Pastors to going beyond *Shepherds of the flock* and to include other ministries
- Lutheran Pastors being able to study in other Theological Colleges
- Theologically conservative but practically adventurous
- Start a movement to reach out and lead the way

- Want kids to experience family and belonging
- Interesting, lively active – then remember it
- Sermons have to speak to us more – not over our heads
- More contemporary music
- In the community helping people
- More youthfully oriented
- Relevant
- Giving of ourselves and example setters
- Willing to make sacrifices for others
- A place where we can sense the Holy Spirit at work
- Helping non-Christians find faith
- Love
- Compassion
- Exciting vibrant dynamic
- Learn from our life experiences and for the next generation to grow further
- Church that sends young people
- Humble and forgiving
- Real things of life
- All things to all people
- Integrating ages
- Risk taking
- Inviting church

One of the key callings to the church is how to mission and minister in a pluralistic, Multi-cultural, multi-generational (Builders, Boomers, GenX, GenY) reality?

I asked a number of people about assumed correlation that because the Lutheran Church has a conservative theology – it must have a conservative praxis? Luther could rarely be seen to have a conservative praxis. Often quoted to me was the famous Luther saying of *Reformation and continual reformation!*

When I asked about how the future of the Lutheran Church looked like across the District, a number of people taught me that they thought that the Lutheran Church would be *closing a number of doors* (closing and amalgamating Churches). In some places due to changing demography this might well be true and helpful. However there is another choice and that is to plant Churches. Both are choices that the Lutheran Church across the District have opportunity to make. When I raised this with people they offered rich insights like; I guess if we started House Churches or met in football Club rooms or Schools we would not need buildings nor would we have to have Pastors (or Pastors at first) Lay People or Lay Workers or teachers could do that. There is a rich resource of creativity and motivation to share the strong teachings of their faith development.

I have also picked up that there is a pervading negativity about the Lutheran Church and in particular to its perceived leaders. Negativity and cynicism are learned behaviour – this means optimism and reality can also be learnt. It is a church cultural determinate and an

attitudinal dimension that has effected relationships with the wider Lutheran Church and its staff - making it difficult for them to carry out their ministry effectively - and the relationship with and imaginations of the future.

The reports carried out with the LCA have found :

That evangelism, welfare and Lutheran Schools are priorities to focus on developing and growing. Technological change and the widespread use of the Internet, competition with work, shopping and sport on Sundays, the rural decline and the general mobility of Australian people were also a key concern.

They have also found that Lutheran people consider that a wide range of *aspects of worship* should be given consideration by the Church and none of the aspects should be considered unimportant. However the highest affirmation was given to preserving the sacramental nature of worship. The involvement of children/families in services as well as worship being more interesting - while not being mere entertainment - and noted that:

- the content/form of preaching
- and the provision of more simple services for 'unchurched',
- as well as encouraging worship outside the context of Sunday congregations (such as cell group),
- and the involvement of lay people in services,

and that these should be given attention by the Church.

Mission was unanimously endorsed by those who attended the 2005 Summit as a key priority for the Church, and it was described as “the heartbeat of the Church”. Included under this banner were working more closely with our indigenous members, reaching out to those untouched by the gospel, world mission, and the place of the LCA in the global Christian church.

In the survey responses, there is a strong congregational focus, particularly highlighting the importance of welcoming newcomers, equipping lay people, and connecting with local communities.

In many ways, the underlying issue seems to be about how should the LCA needs to change to relate more effectively to contemporary Australia, and how should it stand against the culture to witness to its faith? Philip Hughs also notes when he summarises that the Gospel and Culture question is a critical issue that:

At times, it is important to provide pathways from the culture to the fullness of the Gospel”.

In Six Challenges, Six Mysteries, A Charter for Lutheran Schools, it notes the reality of spiritual searches deep in the human spirit. The 6 challenges developed are:

1. Learning Centred - Creating an environment where students really love to explore, discover, analyse and understand their world as part of an exciting life long journey
2. Spirit Sensitive - Discerning the personal spirituality of students and listening to their inner search for meaning as the work of the Spirit

3. Faith Informed - Integrating essential Lutheran expressions of the Christian faith into the core curriculum and life of the school
4. With a Conscience - Active in the school community and alive to the social needs and injustices in the world
5. With a heart - Caring for the inner needs of students and staff as they struggle with social, psychological and emotional challenges.
6. Conscious of its Dual Heritage - Celebrating our local Australian roots and our inclusive international Lutheran connections with passion and pride.

And a faith formed by 6 mysteries:

1. *Creatio continua and the learning principle*

- the mystery that God keeps on creating at the core of the cosmos and in the mind of the child

2. *Finitum capax infinitum and the spirituality principle*

- the mystery that the finite embraces the infinite, the material the spiritual and the student heart the searching Spirit

3. *Sola gratia and the faith principle*

- the mystery that God comes free, Christ comes free and faith is free for staff who teach the faith in a society that operates otherwise

4. *Theologia crucis and the conscience principle*

- the mystery that the way of the cross creates a capacity to identify with those who suffer injustice

5. Deus crucifixus and the heart principle

- the mystery that the God who became flesh and suffered on the cross continues to suffer with those who struggle with despair

6. Was Christum treibet and the heritage principle

- the mystery that reading our past in terms of where it led us to Christ can inform how we face the future with Christ

They can equally be used as very helpful resources for finding ways forward for the Churches and agencies across the District. I found the Christian teachers and the Lutheran Education staff particularly helpful. They are placed in a very strategic position as bridges between the life of the church and the life of the communities they seek to serve. The Constitution also highlights the Lutheran Distinctive of the highly regarded role and ministry of Christian Teachers in Lutheran Schools (*Constitution Article III (e)*).

The District camping movement has gathered growing numbers of young people and is widely recognised within the District – and amongst other churches – as a key strength at this time. Connecting the experiences, teaching, enthusiasm and community formed at the camps with the congregations is a need developed in the Children’s, Youth and Family Ministries strategic plan last April. Two other areas chosen for development were Youth Ministry in Rural areas and ministry and mission with young adults.

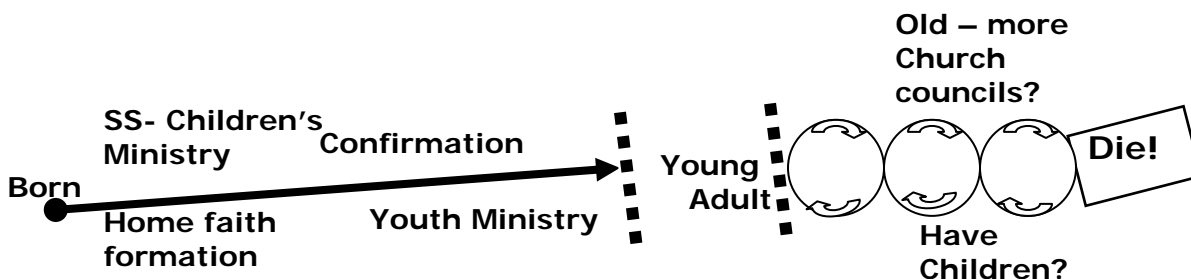
Ministry with young Adults

What I discovered in the Consultation with the District’s Children’s, Youth and Family Ministries Department is that in the past the path through the church looked like this:



After going through youth ministry, young Lutherans got married and continued connection with the church through marriage and having children which started the next generational cycle.

Now people's tertiary education has extended and generally they are not marrying till later and have children even later still. This has caused a gap particularly in the 23-35 age group. Many of these do not relate to "family based" worship or church models and are intentionally looking for community, fellowship and ministry/mission opportunities outside of many of the traditional settings of the Lutheran Church. It is not that they do not appreciate the doctrine and beliefs of the Lutheran Church – just their expression. Many local Churches do not have anything for this age stage either for single and young married with no children. So many Churches now look like this:



Young adults do not live linear lives but cycle through life in *chapters* as they move, change jobs and careers, connect with different communities, circles of friends and even churches. Specific intentional faith communities or ministries in local churches need to be explored and experimented with.

Taking the desired outcomes, the research and consultations already done as well as the insights from this Consultation I would present the following proposals.

Proposals for the next phase (second Phase) of the process:

Option 1. Make stage 2 a listening, reflecting and planning phase.

Develop a 2-3 week project for Congregation and agencies (LLAPP = Lutheran Listening and Planning Process) to listen to the communities and neighbourhoods that they are seeking to serve and to the people seeking to serve them (Congregations, Schools, Aged Care Centres, Community Services, Missions). These could be chosen by invitation and by application by the DRT (District Response Team)

Each of these would then enter into a Strategic Mission Planning time to reflect, pray and discern the call of God regarding what their strengths and gifts are that might match the spiritual yearnings of particular people in their communities. Then they would prepare for the actions that come out of the strategies developed in the Planning time.

An emphasis (but by no means exclusively) would be on the under 50's with a key focus on the 18-30's.

During the 2-3 weeks of LLAPP a team from around the District would preach for the 3 Sundays and a Consultant would help develop the Strategic Mission Planning on the second to last day. The final day would be a service of praise, thanks and blessing for the fruits of the planning – the actioning to come (phase 3).

The timeline might best be:

| Time | Next / first 6 months | 6-8 months after that | 6 – 36 months after that |
|--------|--|---|---|
| Action | identify the key areas and churches/Agencies/People by invitation and application | engage in LLAPP | Action the Strategies out of LLAPP |
| By | By the DRT from the District who would then oversight the responding to the Grace of God at work (response-abilty) . | Local Pastor/ Leaders/ Teachers/ Key people in the Church or Agency with a team from the District Staff and around the District to preach, teach and inspire people | With the support of the District staff and those appointed by the |
| Also | | A Consultant(s) to help run the Planning Day | |

Option 2. Develop A District Strategic Plan

A Strategic Planning group be appointed by the District and with the help of a Consultant, identify Congregations, Schools, Aged Care Centres, Community Services and any other dimensions of the life of the Lutheran Church across the district, that offer potential for growth in the Mission and life of the Lutheran Church. The District Team would then work with each of these areas to develop Strategies Mission Plans and then help the Parishes in the process of actioning the Strategic Plan.

The timeline be:

| Time | By the end of the year | First 4 months next year | 6 Months after that | For the next 3 years | 5 years after that |
|--------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Action | Appoint a District Strategic Planning Group (DSPG) | Research listen and decide which areas (key boats in the flotilla that is the District) would best strategically be developed to be Prophetic Missional Areas (PMA's) that will help example ways forward and help influence change to those around them. | Develop Strategic Mission Plan with each of these areas | Resource the PMA's | Invite others in the life and Mission of the District to also engage in a Strategic Mission Plan |
| By | District Council / Synod | DSPG | The District Staff and DSPG | The District Staff and DSPG | The District Staff and DSPG |
| Also | | | | | |

At each stage it maybe useful to engage the services of a consultant to assist with strategic intent and clarity of purpose which can be brought by an objective, skilled outsider.

Option 3. Combine stages 2 and 3. Experiment, Reflect and Plan

Instead of working out a Strategic Mission Plan then looking at implementing the strategies, combine the two by inviting 10-15% of Congregations, Schools, Aged Care Centres, Community Services and other Missions opportunities to plant 2-4 new preaching centres, congregations, faith communities or missional activities (*Constitution Article III (g)*). Through the experimenting planting and development of these, grow a learning network of leaders and teams to help the District move forward the mission of the Lutheran Church by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments in accordance with the Confession of the Church.

The timeline might best be:

| Time | Next 6 Months | Next 3 months | Next 6 months | Next 3 years | Same 3 years |
|--------|---|--|--|---|---|
| Action | Set up a DRT (District Response Team) to choose and invite areas to apply | Identify these areas over the next 6 months – a significant number of these should include young people and young adults | Have a Consultant work through a Mission plan for each group as they start | Provide helpful and appropriate ongoing in-service training for the leaders of these areas These groups would need to keep a record/journal of their activities and particularly the learnings <i>on the way</i> | Gather these groups and key helpful people across the District to reflect on the shared learnings twice a year for the next 3 years then use the learnings and insights gained to find the ways forward for the Church around the District in a Strategic Mission plan for the following 5-10 years |
| By | DRT | DRT | Consultant(s) | The District Team and DRT | DRT |
| Also | | | | | |

To aid my advice would be to set up a Lutheran Future Trust and invite members, any reserves, LLL and any further helpful sources, to facilitate an investment in the future of the Lutheran Church to fulfil the mission of the Christian Church in the world by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments in accordance with the Confession of the Church (Constitution Article III (a)) and to encourage every Congregation to carry out its Mission in its local Community (Constitution Article III (f)).

Option 4. Stay as You Are

Continue the path, practice and structure of the District as it stands - until the resources can no longer maintain these ways and then sell or give away the properties to churches or build aged care centres and help those who have been Lutheran end their days with grace and dignity.

- See timeline on Resolution 4.9 page 3.