

## Lutheran Church of Australia: Commission on Worship

### STATEMENT 16

#### RATIONALE FOR SYNODICAL DECISION ON USE OF APPROVED ORDERS WITH HOLY COMMUNION

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*Adopted by the Commission on Worship, July 1987. The Department of Liturgics prepared the statement to give an explanation and reasons for Resolution no. 269 of the 1987 General Convention, which reads as follows:*

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**Whereas** the order with holy communion is the basic form of worship of the church and the fullest liturgical expression of its faith; and

**Whereas** according to the constitution of the LCA (III.h) it is the object of the church to cultivate uniformity in its worship, ecclesiastical practice and customs in accord with the principles laid down in the Formula of Concord, Article X; and

**Whereas** the church has authorised **The Service with Communion** (*Lutheran Hymnal and Supplement*), has released **The Service — Alternative Form** for trial use, has approved **The Liturgy in Modern Form** (*Worship Today*) for selected use, and from time to time releases other orders of service; and

**Whereas** the presidents are responsible for the oversight of the spiritual life and wellbeing of the church:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that pastors and congregations shall normally use the above specified orders for the corporate celebration of the Lord's supper, and that pastors and congregations that, for special reasons, intend to substitute other orders of service for the above specified orders be asked to submit such orders to the president of the District for assessment.

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Reformatted and revised: 8 May 1998

1. The resolution refers to the main service of the LCA, that is, the service with holy communion. It does not refer to other acts of worship which congregations or groups of people may wish to conduct. Neither does it refer to special services and extraordinary situations that may call for adaptation. (In mission congregations there is a special need to explain the liturgy.)
2. The orders of service listed in the preamble are orders that have been adopted by the LCA. They are the LCA's basic forms of worship. The LCA has adopted them as the fullest liturgical expression of its faith. They are the principal form through which its theology is prayed publicly and 'with one accord'. The orders both reinforce and give expression to the 'communion of saints' who are bound together by a common faith.

- 3 Studies in ritual and anthropology have emphasised that commonly accepted and universally used rites have the power to unify a community (in this case the LCA) and reinforce its identity.
- 4 Individualisation of the church's main rites has a number of disadvantages.
  - It tends to fragment the church.
  - It makes it difficult for members of the church travelling or transferring from one congregation to another to fit into the new congregation.
  - It creates difficulties for a pastor following a colleague who has promoted or permitted individualisation, and can bring such a pastor into unnecessary conflict.
- 5 The church's rituals are not designed to provide the novelty and variety that our culture is particularly prone to. In any case, variety is provided in such elements as the propers, and novelty in new hymns, prayers, and methods of proclamation.
- 6 Besides being contemporary, the rituals of the church seek to bind together worshippers of past, present, and hopefully future generations. Our basic form of worship is both historical and ecumenical, linking us to Christians of all times and places. It is not something which individuals make up.
- 7 On the other hand, considerable permissible variety is available within the LCA-adopted orders. The service can be basic or more elaborate, 'traditional' or 'contemporary', spoken or sung. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to look carefully at the alternatives provided in the orders.
- 8 A proper Lutheran understanding of 'adiaphora' in matters of worship does not allow for an abandonment or compromise elements that are essential to the main Lutheran service. Lutheran worship, as distinct from Reformed worship and the worship of 'enthusiasts', has always sought to preserve and use what tradition has handed down. At the same time, Lutheran worship makes room for responsible freedom of the gospel, realising that the gospel itself uses various forms to express itself.
- 9 The variation in early Lutheran orders was not intended to be a carte-blanche for individualism. It reflects the situation of the time when the Lutheran Reformation was beginning in different provinces. All the clergy in a particular province were required to adhere to the order accepted by that province. (See the stringent instructions to provincial visitors.)
- 10 There has been a strong and welcome movement in the Christian church generally, and in Lutheranism in particular, towards healthy uniformity in worship. Many Christians realise that their unity in the Spirit is publicly and powerfully expressed through unity in forms of worship, and that togetherness in worship here on earth anticipates and proclaims the togetherness of heavenly worship.