

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 1

#### G. INTER-DENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION – CHURCH MOVEMENTS

## Pastors serving full-time in interdenominational ministries

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1. No pastor can be committed to the official teaching of the Lutheran church and at the same time engage in any ministry which involves a denial of that teaching, or which gives truth and error equal status. That much is clear. A Lutheran pastor would surely find himself in a false position if he tried to exercise a spiritual ministry within a church body whose official teaching differed from his own Lutheran teaching.
2. Some interdenominational ministries are not directly connected with the word and sacraments (the 'outward marks of the church'), although they are usually connected in some way. When pastors appointed to such ministries are called to engage in an activity which involves the word and sacraments, they must act in such a way that they give a clear and uncompromising witness to the marks of the church. For example,
  - if they are called on to preach, they must preach as people committed to the Lutheran witness to the gospel. They should, if necessary, insist that their status as a Lutheran pastor is advertised and made known to all concerned.
  - if the Lord's supper is celebrated in meetings they have to attend as part of their ministry, they must refuse to commune, and if asked, give their reasons for refusing to commune.
3. It is impossible to formulate rules to cover all possible situations, some of which may have been entered into with the encouragement of the church. Decisions may well differ from case to case. The basic requirement is that an unadulterated and unequivocal witness be given to the gospel and the sacraments, that is, to the outward marks of the church.

4. Opportunities should be provided within the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) for pastors with special interests and capabilities to exercise their gifts and follow their interests. Where such opportunities do not exist – or for other reasons – the LCA may encourage a term of full-time service in an interdenominational undertaking which it approves and perhaps even supports financially. In such instances a leave of absence could probably be granted.
5. If, however, a pastor of his own accord and against the advice of the LCA seeks a temporary or permanent ministry in an interdenominational undertaking, he should ask himself whether he has lost a sense of vocation in the Lutheran church. In such a case, the question of leave of absence would have to be weighed carefully.