

Lutheran Church of Australia: Commission on Worship

STATEMENT 34

THE CHASUBLE

Adopted by the Commission on Worship, February 1997. This statement was prepared by the Department of Liturgics

Reformatted and revised: 6 May 1998

1 The reason for this statement

In 1988 the Commission on Worship issued statement 20 on Liturgical Vestments and the Alb. It mentioned the possible use of the chasuble with the alb for services with holy communion on festivals. This statement is prepared in response to inquiries about the nature and use of chasubles.

2 The design of the chasuble

- a. The chasuble is a liturgical vestment, hanging loosely over the shoulders of the wearer.
- b. Usually each season of the year has its own chasuble, made in the colour of that season, with appropriate symbols worked into its front and back.

3 The history of the chasuble

- a. The chasuble was originally the outer coat commonly worn by people in ancient Greece and Rome.
- b. In the seventh century, the Council of Toldeo established its use for bishops and priests. A century later the Ordo Romanus restricted its use to the presiding celebrant of the eucharist.
- c. In the Middle Ages it was cut away at the sides and reduced in size to accommodate the practice of elevating the host in the mass.
- d. After the Reformation it was reduced further in the Roman Catholic church into an apron or shield-like garment, but has been restored to its fuller earlier shape by the movements for liturgical reform in the twentieth century.
- e. It was used by Lutheran churches in some places after the Reformation but was gradually discarded by most churches as a Roman Catholic practice. During the twentieth century it has been brought back in some congregations of the Lutheran church.

4 The liturgical use of the chasuble

- a. In the Roman Catholic church and in the Orthodox churches the chasuble is used only for the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy.
 - When a Roman Catholic priest puts it on, he says: ‘O Lord, you have said: My yoke is easy and my burden is light: make me so able to bear it that I may obtain your favour. Amen.’
 - When an Orthodox priest puts it on, he says: ‘Your priests, Lord, shall clothe themselves with righteousness and your saints shall rejoice’ (Ps 132:9).
- b. When the chasuble is used, it is worn over an alb.
- c. The chasuble serves two practical functions:
 - It identifies the presiding minister at the service with holy communion.
 - It highlights the importance of the occasion and the celebration of the Lord’s supper.
- d. The Commission on Worship makes the following recommendations for the possible use of the chasuble in the LCA:
 - that chasubles may be used in those congregations which find them liturgically acceptable and devotionally helpful
 - that the use of chasubles may be reserved for the major festivals of the church year and other festive occasions
 - that the chasuble may be worn by the presiding minister throughout the service with holy communion on these occasions
 - that pastors and congregations be urged not to act individualistically and carelessly in introducing and using chasubles. Those who wish to purchase a set of chasubles or have them made are encouraged to consult the Department of Visual Arts for further advice on their manufacture and design.