

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 2 K. WORSHIP

# Rationale for the synodical decision on the use of approved orders with holy communion

*Adopted by the Commission on Worship, July 1987. Revised May 1998. The statement gives an explanation and reason for Resolution 269 of the 1987 General Convention.*

*Edited August 2001.*

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Resolution 269 of the 1987 General Convention reads as follows:

*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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1. The resolution refers to the main service of the Lutheran church, 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. Nor does it refer to special services and extraordinary situations that may call for adaptation.

Note: In some congregations there is a special need to explain the liturgy as well as adapt it.

## RATIONALE OF THE USE OF APPROVED ORDERS

2. The orders of service listed in the preamble to Resolution 269 are orders that have been adopted by the Lutheran Church of Australia. They are our church's basic forms of worship. They are the fullest liturgical expression of our faith. They are the principal form through which our church's theology is prayed publicly and 'with one accord'. The orders reinforce and give expression to the 'communion of saints' who are bound together by a common faith.
3. Studies in ritual and anthropology emphasise that rites which are commonly accepted and universally used have the power to unify a community and reinforce its identity.
4. The move by some pastors to make their own changes to the church's main rites has a number of disadvantages.
  - a. It tends to fragment the church.
  - b. It makes difficulties for members of the church who are travelling or transferring from one congregation to another. They find it harder to fit into the new congregation.
  - c. It creates difficulties for a pastor who follows a colleague who has promoted or permitted unauthorised changes to the liturgy. It can bring the new pastor into unnecessary conflict with the congregation.
5. The church's rituals are not designed to meet the demand for novelty and variety to which our culture is particularly prone. In any case, variety is provided in various parts of the service (for example, the 'propers'), and novelty is offered 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 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 as they please.
7. On the other hand, considerable permissible variety is available within the orders which the church has adopted. 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* [things which God's word neither commands nor forbids] in matters of worship means that we should not give up or compromise those parts which are essential to the main Lutheran service. Lutheran worship, as distinct from the Reformed worship and the worship of 'enthusiasts', has always tried to preserve and use what history and tradition has handed down. At the same time, Lutheran worship makes room for the exercise of responsible freedom in the gospel, realising that the gospel itself uses various forms to express itself.
9. The variation in early Lutheran orders of service 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 of Germany. All the clergy in a particular province were required to adhere to the order accepted by that province (see the stringent instructions to the official provincial visitors).
10. There has been a strong and welcome movement in Christendom generally, and in Lutheranism in particular, toward healthy uniformity in worship. 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 and now anticipates and proclaims the togetherness of heavenly worship.