

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 3 C. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Membership in the Lutheran World Federation

*Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) Executive, July 2002.
Synod Agenda Reference: 8.1.2*

INTRODUCTION

At the time of union, thirty-seven years ago, the UELCA gave up membership in the Lutheran World Federation LWF as a condition of union with the ELCA. The matter of LWF membership was not taken up for fifteen years to allow the union to cement. In 1981 the LCA did decide to apply for membership, subject to two provisos that safeguarded its doctrinal integrity. However, the LWF foreshadowed a change to its constitution, reflecting the desire that member churches understand themselves as being in altar and pulpit fellowship with one another. Consequently, the 1993 convention of the LCA decided to seek only associate membership.

Now, after a ten year period of review, the 2003 convention is asked to decide whether the LCA should apply for full membership in the LWF or remain an associate member. Straw votes taken at all district pastors' conferences last year showed that a majority of LCA pastors is in favour of full membership. This document attempts to set the issues before the church as fairly as possible, but advocates full membership in the LWF. This is the majority position of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR), which holds that existing theological reservations are not sufficiently strong to rule out full membership.

This document first provides background information on the LCA and the LWF. It then articulates the hopes and concerns some people have about full membership in the LWF. The document proceeds to set out the main arguments for full membership, as well as the minority view within the CTICR: continuation of associate membership. The main focus is on the theological issues involved. The more practical arguments for both positions are set out in Appendix 2: *The LCA and Membership in the Lutheran World Federation*.

I. THE LCA'S POSITION ON FELLOWSHIP

The Document of Union (1966) states the church's position: 'We acknowledge ourselves to be in church fellowship with all Lutheran churches which subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions in their constitutions and adhere to them in their public teaching and practice' (DU 9). It adds, 'We cannot acknowledge ourselves to be in church fellowship with Lutheran Churches which do not give expression in their public teaching and practice to their adherence to the Lutheran Confessions as expressed in their constitutions' (DU 10).

The 1968 synodical convention adopted the statement 'Fellowship and Declared Fellowship', which affirms that subscription to the Lutheran Confessions is required of any Lutheran church with which we enter into fellowship. There must be agreement in word (gospel) and sacrament. According to Augsburg Confession, Article 7, such agreement is sufficient for true unity. Lutheran tradition has understood this to imply that there must be consonance between the formal acceptance of the confessions and the actual teaching and life of the church.

Augsburg Confession 7

Since Article 7 is important in the present debate, an English translation of the German and the Latin versions of this article follows (translations are from the Kolb/Wengert edition of *The Book of Concord*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2000).

German version:

It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel. For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere. As Paul says in Ephesians 4[:4–5]: 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism'.

Latin version:

Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. As Paul says [Eph. 4:5,6]: 'One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...'

II. THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

The LWF is a global communion of 136 Lutheran churches in 76 countries, with 62 million members. According to its constitution, the LWF 'confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life, and service. It sees in the three ecumenical creeds and in the confessions of the Lutheran church, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, a pure exposition of the Word of God' (Article II). The LCA recognises this as a sufficient basis for church fellowship. Subscription to the Formula of Concord is not necessary to be Lutheran, only the non-rejection of it.

Until 1990 the LWF understood itself as a federation of churches. The 1990 Assembly changed the constitution to reflect a change in the LWF's self-understanding. It now sees itself as 'a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in altar and pulpit fellowship' (Article III).

All member churches understand themselves to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with one another.

Because of this the LCA resolved in 1993 to apply only for associate membership while continuing to explore the ramifications of the change. Could it become a full member without compromising its doctrinal position on church fellowship? (For a fuller account, see Appendix 1, *Church Fellowship and the LCA*, released by the CTICR in 2002.)

III. WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE LCA?

Within the LCA attitudes to fellowship with other churches have been slowly changing. The degree of change can be gauged by the following indicators:

1. Our commitment to dialogue with the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Uniting churches reflects a growing conviction that our ecumenical engagement is not an optional extra but is central to what it means to be a church in the world.
2. The LCA's ecumenical role is greater than its size would suggest, a fact that is appreciated by other churches. Our involvement is giving us confidence to adopt a higher profile in ecumenical affairs.
3. Our 'Recognition of Relationship with Lutheran Church Canada' (1993) signalled a departure from our previous practice of settling for nothing less than altar and pulpit fellowship (*communio in sacris*).
4. The LCA voted to become an associate member of the LWF at the 1993 convention.
5. The LCA voted to become a member of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) at the 1996 convention.
6. A consultation on church fellowship (*communio*) with LWF representatives in 1998 has given us a better understanding of what the LWF means when it says that it understands itself as a communion of churches.

Changes in its approach to church fellowship and greater ecumenical involvement signal that the LCA has put behind it the ghetto mentality that marked its early history and that contributed to our isolation due to the fear of doctrinal compromise.

IV. FULL MEMBERSHIP: HOPES AND CONCERNS

Members of the church differ on whether the LCA should remain an associate member of the LWF or become a full member. They also have a variety of reasons for their opinions. Some may be valid, others misinformed. In an attempt to be as transparent as possible, we list a sample of opinions that reflect thinking in the church.

Concerns

1. Our Lutheran confessional identity may be eroded because many LWF member churches are not as strongly confessional as the LCA.
2. Some LWF member churches (like the ELCA in America) have entered into communion with non-Lutheran churches whose doctrinal position is not in agreement with the Lutheran confessions.
3. The LWF could pressure us into ordaining women.

4. If we delay deciding on full membership until the 2006 synod, the church will be faced with two major issues at the one convention: the ordination of women and the question of full membership in the LWF.
5. Full membership could lead us down the path of social activism since some LWF churches seem to care more about social justice than justification by faith.
6. The LCA will forfeit its right to colloquise visiting pastors and theologians from member churches because all member churches understand themselves to be in communion with one another.

Hopes

1. We should let our confessional and theological light shine instead of hiding it.
2. Full membership will be mutually beneficial: we will gain from the LWF's theological insights, and the LWF will gain from our confessional commitment.
3. The LWF will provide a global forum for all Lutherans to let their voice be heard—in our case, a welcome compensation for geographic isolation.
4. The LWF will help us become more conscious of the social implications of the gospel and provide opportunities to work in partnership with other Lutherans in addressing questions of international significance.
5. Full membership will increase the possibility of LCA involvement in the LWF's ongoing work of education, reflection, and leadership.
6. The LWF will help us draw closer to Lutheran churches that have not been part of our history, e.g. churches in South America, South Africa, and the Middle East.

V. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE LWF

1. Traditionally, the LCA has taken as its starting point for fellowship with other churches agreement in the doctrine of the gospel and the sacraments. Doctrine has come first. Increasingly, Lutherans and others are starting from the ancient church's understanding of *communio*, which grounds communion among Christians as well as among churches in the mutual communion between the Father, his Son, and their Spirit. The church as the icon of the Trinity finds the source and goal of its own life in its participation in the life of the divine Trinity. The mutual love between the persons of the Trinity also permeates and forms the communion (*koinonia*) of the church on earth, which is both proclaimed and enacted in the eucharist. These two approaches should not be played off against each other. One approach grounds church communion in the communion of love that exists between the three persons of the Trinity and in which we all participate by faith. The other approach bases church communion on prior doctrinal agreement between the churches. The two approaches belong together, for where there is no agreement in the gospel and the sacraments there can be no true communion.
2. The unity that we share through our common life in the triune God is grounded in baptism and confirmed and strengthened in the Lord's supper. All who are united with Christ by baptism and faith are made one body with him as they eat his body in the Lord's supper. As we eat Christ's sacramental body the Spirit 'embodies' us in Christ's mystical body, the church. Our unity in Christ's body, which is a gift of the Spirit, is expressed doxologically in worship and articulated in our common confession of faith (Eph 4:5,6).

3. The unity of all believers is a gift of the triune God. God draws us into communion with himself through the gospel and the holy sacraments. On the other hand, unity among and within the various churches is a task. Church fellowship begins with the recognition of the unity that already exists among all Christians through faith in the triune God, and it ends with a common confession of that faith and with church practices consistent with it.
4. Church unity is both gift and task. The unity of the church (*una sancta*) is God's gift, not a human achievement. The church as the body of Christ is one because Christ is one. This unity cannot be seen; it is an article of faith as we say in the creed: 'I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church'. Christ's church is one in spite of the divisions within Christendom. However, unity among the various churches is a task. It is not enough simply to confess our unity in faith; we are compelled by truth and love also to work for a clear expression of that unity among all churches, beginning with our own Lutheran family. The task of Christian unity is undertaken in joyful obedience to our Lord, who in his high priestly prayer in John 17 prays that his disciples of all ages may all be one—even as they are already one by faith. Our Lord gives his church its ecumenical imperative: 'That they all may be one ... so that the world may believe' (John 17:22–23).
5. Within the LCA there has been disagreement over how Augsburg Confession 7 relates to church fellowship. The article states that 'the church is the gathering of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are ministered rightly'. The question is, what is meant by the 'pure' teaching of the gospel, or when is the gospel taught 'purely'? At the time of the Reformation, the pure gospel meant the gospel properly distinguished from the law. The gospel was taught purely when it was taught as gospel, i.e. as God's offer and gift of unconditional grace and forgiveness through Christ. The gospel was taught purely when it was not confused with the law and turned into a new demand. In the history of the LCA the 'pure' teaching of the gospel has mostly been understood to imply the full doctrinal content of the Book of Concord. Historically, Article 7 does not refer to the doctrinal position of a particular church body but to how the gospel is being proclaimed. It addresses the question: Is that which is being preached really the gospel or is it something else? The same applies to the question: When are the sacraments ministered rightly? Answer: When the sacraments are enacted in such a way that the gospel is proclaimed and not the law.
6. The second point of disagreement relating to AC 7 has to do with what is necessary and sufficient for church fellowship. The article says: 'It is sufficient (*satis est*) for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word'. Since the LCA has tended to understand the 'pure' teaching of the gospel to imply the full doctrinal content of the Book of Concord, it has usually made full agreement on the Book of Concord a condition of church fellowship. The other interpretation, which we adopt here and which is also adopted by the LWF, is more faithful to the original meaning of the text. It holds that the necessary but sufficient condition for church fellowship is agreement in the teaching of the gospel and the ministry of the sacraments, where gospel refers to the message of God's unconditional gift of salvation in Christ. The conclusion of article 7 states that 'it is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by human beings, should be observed uniformly in all places' (see Eph 4:4–5). The Reformers were here answering charges that they were breaking away from Rome and setting up their own new (sectarian) church. This article makes it clear that they were not espousing some novel teaching but that their doctrines were biblical and catholic. The concern of the article is to emphasise that the basis of church fellowship is agreement in the gospel as properly distinguished from the law, for the gospel alone, proclaimed in the sermon

and enacted in the absolution and the Lord's supper, is constitutive of the church.

7. AC 7 was originally used to promote reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics. Subsequently, the article has been used to define Lutheran theology in contrast to other theological positions. Australian Lutherans have tended to use it to justify remaining separate from other Lutheran churches. However, the given unity of the church obligates us to strive for full communion with other Lutheran churches, especially where there is common confession. The LCA is acting contrary to the spirit of CA 7 if it rejects altar and pulpit fellowship with LWF member churches.
8. Church fellowship demands agreement between a church's formal confession and its actual teaching and life. If the LCA entered into communion with LWF churches, it would have the right to expect consistency in doctrine and practice in the life of other member churches. But instead of first attempting to determine whether the practices of member churches match their stated doctrinal position prior to becoming a full member of the LWF (which would be impossible to do), the LCA would first enter into full membership with the LWF and then let its voice be heard when and where it encountered a member church whose practice was not consistent with its confession. The LCA should honour a church's claim to subscribe to the Lutheran confessions unless or until it can be proved false. We should not rush to judgment about inconsistencies in doctrine and practice in other member churches lest we ourselves be condemned.

VI. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR REMAINING ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

The theological rationale for remaining an associate member of LWF includes the following three points: 1. in the Lutheran Confessions fellowship and unity with other churches proceed from doctrinal consensus; 2. the LWF does not have the same understanding of the link between theology and practice as expressed in the LCA's Document of Union; 3. the exercise of LWF oversight and influence on its member churches would undermine the theological autonomy of the LCA.

1. Church unity according to AC 7

Lutherans find in AC 7 a key for their ecumenical relationships with other churches. 'It is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding, and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine word'. Lutherans believe that churches are to seek agreement in two realities: the preaching and teaching of the gospel, and the administering of the sacraments in conformity with the divine word. Here it is essential to define what is meant by 'gospel' and 'in conformity with the divine word'.

The confessions themselves teach what AC 7 means. In the Apology, the church is defined as 'the assembly of saints who share in common the association of the same gospel or doctrine and the same Holy Spirit, who renews, sanctifies, and governs their hearts' (175.8) The marks of the church are specifically confessed as *the Word, confession of faith, and sacraments* (174.4), or later, as *the given Word and the divinely instituted sacraments* (181.36).

The key point is that the church is defined as those who share a common confession of faith. Agreement on the 'gospel' in a narrow sense involves agreement on the teachings of the church in which the gospel is preached, taught and administered (AC 7), agreement in what the gospel is (AC 4), agreement on why we need the gospel (AC 2), and agreement on how the gospel sacraments are understood (AC 9,10,13). It is this

common confession of faith, involving at least the first 14 articles of the Augsburg Confession that protects the confession of the gospel in the narrow sense and maintains the focus on Article 4: justification for Christ's sake through faith.

The confessions teach that fellowship with other churches is not to be based on a minimalist view of the gospel but on a broad common teaching and confession which is faithfully put into practice. Without this, the gospel is endangered. This is not to be sectarian but to be genuinely Lutheran. Common confession leads to altar fellowship not vice versa. Full membership of LWF would commit the LCA to fellowship with churches who show by their practice that they are not in agreement with us in doctrine and practice, especially with respect to the Lord's Supper.

2. Theology and Practice in the Document of Union and the LWF

The document of union of the LCA (1966) states that there is an integral connection between theology and practice, between what is confessed by a Lutheran Church and what is actually taught, preached and practiced, especially as far as the Lord's supper is concerned. 'We cannot acknowledge ourselves to be in church fellowship with Lutheran Churches which do not give expression in their public teaching and practice to their adherence to the Lutheran Confessions as expressed in their constitutions' (DU 10).

Some LWF member churches commune with other churches that deny or question the real presence. For example, in 1997 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) signed a Formula of Agreement with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ (UCC). In this document the churches recognise each other as 'churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God' (Preface to the Formula). The UCC's web site states that, from its beginnings as a union church in 1957, it has been a church where 'Christians did not always have to agree, to live together in communion'. At issue is not agreement in non essentials or ceremonies, but in essential teachings, especially on the Lord's Supper. The UCC 'receives the historic creeds and confessions of our ancestors as testimonies, but not as tests of faith'. So the web site lists Luther's Small Catechism as a testimony, but also the Heidelberg Catechism, the Presbyterian Catechism and various UCC statements of faith.

Through this agreement the ELCA, an influential LWF member church, failed to confess the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's supper as articulated in AC 10 (see also Formula of Concord 7). It determined that the historical doctrinal differences over the Lord's supper between the Lutherans and the Reformed churches were no longer of consequence. Rather than working towards a common confession and witness to the world for the sake of the assurance of the gospel, the ELCA settled for 'reconciled diversity' which allows differing views of the real presence in the sacrament to be equally valid. This can mean sharing the altar with pastors and congregations who actually deny or avoid saying that the bread of the sacrament is the body of Christ and the cup is the blood of Christ. Significantly, the LWF failed to give loving admonition to the ELCA in this matter.

At issue is what the LCA intends to confess about the Lord's supper. Full membership in the LWF, according to its self understanding, would oblige the LCA to confess that it is in communion with the member churches in teaching and practice. But the LCA's confessions are more than historical testimonies. The LCA is pledged to uphold them and let them inform its teaching and practice.

3. The LWF and autonomy

In spite of its acceptance of 'reconciled diversity', the LWF seems to treat the ordination of women as a central article of faith. It influences member churches to accept the

ordination of women. This is significant for the current situation of the LCA. It has been argued that the LCA could not consider two major theological issues at the next synod: women's ordination and full membership in the LWF. This is no argument for forcing a decision on LWF membership. The LCA needs time and space to have its own discussion about women's ordination without pressure from the LWF. That will become more difficult if the LCA enters full membership in LWF as the following points outline.

At its eighth assembly in Curitiba (1990) the LWF committed itself to work actively for women's ordination in its member churches. It would 'through consultation and cooperation of all member churches, and in a climate of mutual respect, undertake practical efforts to open the way for women to enter the ordained ministry of all our member churches' (Lutheran World Information, 8/90). When the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus approved the ordination of women in 1997, the LWF responded:

For one of the larger churches in Africa this decision will be a source of encouragement for churches on that continent and elsewhere that have not so decided ... Viewed in the context of the Curitiba message, EECMY has fulfilled one of the commitments that is a test for our inclusive communion'. (Lutheran World Information 4/97)

In a significant resolution at the 1997 assembly in Hong Kong, the LWF asked its council to 'ensure that only those theological schools that provide equal access to theological education for women and men receive funds from the LWF' (Lutheran World Information 13/97). They further voted to

Reaffirm the commitment to women's ordination as an expression of the communion of all the baptized in giving witness to the gospel ... and ... study practical methods for women to enter ordained ministry in all member churches. (Lutheran World Information 13/97)

The LWF not only uses its influence to move member churches towards the ordination of women. It also says that it sees the ordination of women as a test of its inclusive communion and a part of the witness of the gospel. Given this understanding, what does 'the gospel' mean and what does autonomy for individual churches mean if they are not free to reject the ordination of women on theological grounds? If the unity of the LCA is to be preserved it must have its own debate on women's ordination in a context of theological freedom. For the sake of its own unity, the LCA ought to continue as an associate member of the LWF. This allows it to participate without necessarily being in communion with all member churches.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a full member of the LWF involves an element of risk, but the LCA can take it in faith. Becoming a member of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) meant taking a risk and membership is not without its struggles. In the national forum the LCA often speaks with a solitary voice, but our commitment to scriptural truth and doctrinal integrity is appreciated by all the churches of the NCCA.

The difference between the LWF and the NCCA is that the LWF is family. Families argue over many things, but through these struggles families also grow together. In a functional family, members learn from and support each other in love as they grow together. The analogy applies both to the congregational family and to the worldwide Lutheran family. For many years we have not been part of this family. Nine years ago we took the first step to joining it as an associate member. After more than thirty-five years of union, the LCA can take the final step and become a full member.

Associate membership in our other church family, the International Lutheran Conference, will not be affected by a decision to become a full member of the LWF. Some ILC churches are already members of the LWF. Churches to which the LCA is especially close

(Lutheran Church Canada, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in England) have asked the LCA to delay application for full membership as they want us to help them move towards associate membership. They would prefer the LCA not to become a full member but they will understand if it does.

If the LCA becomes a full member of LWF three things are clear: 1. the LCA can continue to practise selective fellowship with non-LWF churches; 2. the LCA will not be asked to surrender autonomy in its own affairs; 3. the LCA is still free to develop close relations with those churches with which it identifies most closely in doctrine and practice.

The LWF wants the LCA to be a full member. It values our theological contribution, it respects our doctrinal position, and it wants our voice to be heard more than at present. We in turn need the vision, the wisdom, and the experience of the LWF and its member churches to help us in our struggle to be an authentically Lutheran church here in Australia as well as in East Asia. To isolate ourselves from LWF member churches may be a safe option at the moment, but we may miss a unique opportunity.

The key theological basis for full membership is the Lutheran teaching that the unity, fellowship, and communion that exist among churches involve both gift and task. By seeking to become members of the LWF we are beginning with the Spirit-given gift of unity. We are beginning with the recognition that we and the member churches of the LWF are already one in our communion in the triune God through faith in Christ, which is confirmed and strengthened as we gather together in worship to receive the one bread and the one cup of the one Lord. In seeking to become members of the global Lutheran family, we are committing ourselves before God to work towards full doctrinal consensus so that the unity we have in faith and love might be expressed in a common confession to the truth of the gospel as articulated by the Lutheran confessions.

[Dr John Strelan, a member of the CTICR, dissociates himself from this document.]

See also the document: 'Church Fellowship and the LCA' included in this section of the Synod Report book (reference 8.1.1)

APPENDIX 1

The LCA and membership in the Lutheran World Federation

The following paper is submitted by the CTICR to the Pastors Conferences of the LCA in preparation for General Pastors Conference 2003.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the formation of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) in 1966, each Lutheran synod in Australia was in fellowship with other Lutheran synods overseas. At the time of amalgamation these fellowships were dissolved with the exception of those with Papua New Guinea. The Document of Union asked the new church to act on a 'case by case' basis when dealing with relationships with overseas Lutheran churches. Since its formation the LCA has shown genuine concern for Christian unity as gift and task (see *DSTO 2 C, 6:1*). This concern is particularly for fellowship with other Lutheran churches overseas. The following moves have been made towards establishing such fellowship:

1. In 1968 the Convention of General Synod adopted the statement, *Fellowship and Declared Fellowships*. This statement was reiterated by General Synod in the 1972 Convention and states our belief that:
 - a. 'the One, Holy, Christian Church is present in those visible churches where the marks of the church are to be found' and
 - b. 'true Christians are found in every denomination in which to a greater or lesser degree the marks of the One, Holy, Christian Church are present in spite of existing errors, and we rejoice in the unity of Spirit that binds all true believers to their one Lord.'

The statement affirms the position enunciated in the Document of Union (1966): 'We acknowledge ourselves to be in church fellowship with all Lutheran churches which subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions in their constitutions and adhere to them in their public teaching and practice.'

The statement further asks that churches with which fellowship is to be established subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions, in effect demanding that there be agreement in Word and Sacrament. According to the AC 7, such agreement is sufficient for true unity, but there must be consonance between the formal acceptance of the Confessions and the actual teaching and life of the church.

2. In 1968 the difficulties were recognised (see *DSTO 1:C3, Relationships with Overseas Churches*). World Lutheranism 'is in a state of flux', so 'the boundary lines between the genuine Lutheran church and nominal Lutherans today are not everywhere so clear to allow for clear-cut and unambiguous choices'.

3. The 1981 Synod declared that membership in the LWF 'is possible and does not necessarily invalidate or impair the confessional position' of the LCA provided that
 - a. membership does not involve 'mutual or reciprocal' church fellowship on the part of the LCA with any of the member churches
 - b. it is made clear to the LWF that the LCA continues 'in close relationship with those Churches in the Lutheran family that have a confessional attitude similar to that enunciated in the Theses of Agreement'.

However, LCA discussions towards joining the LWF stalled with LWF's decision at Budapest in 1984 whereby member churches came to understand themselves as being in altar and pulpit fellowship with one another.

4. In 1993 the LCA resolved to seek associate membership in the LWF. This became a reality in 1994 (see *DSTO 2, C4, The Lutheran Church of Australia's Application for Membership in the Lutheran World Federation*).
5. In 1998 the LCA under the aegis of the LWF held a special *Communio* Consultation. Points emanating from this consultation were issued for discussion by pastors and the entire church.

ARGUMENTS FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP

1. By full membership in the LWF the LCA witnesses to the fact that it takes the *satis est* of the Augsburg Confession seriously in not requiring more for unity beyond the pure doctrine of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments according to the gospel.
2. Full membership will strengthen the voice of the LCA within the LWF. Its representatives will have the right to vote and hold administrative office. The relative smallness of the LCA does not mean that its voice will not be of significance. The experience of the former UELCA proves otherwise.
3. Full membership will provide support to those member churches within the Federation, who wish to hold to a strongly confessional line.
4. Ties with fellow Lutheran churches, especially in the SE Asian region, will be strengthened and avenues of service enhanced.
5. Witnessing against any dubious trends and practices of the Federation or its member churches will be more effective if coming from within the fellowship. Likewise, the LCA will be open to the constructive scrutiny of fellow members of the Federation and be enriched by mutual sharing.
6. Full membership will open the doors more widely to the benefits that the LWF can provide, e.g. scholarships, attendance at assemblies and consultations, visitations by overseas leaders and theologians, thereby broadening the perspective of the traditionally rather insular LCA.
7. Although the LWF altered its constitution at the Curitiba Assembly (1990) to state that the LWF is a communion of churches united in pulpit and altar fellowship, the Federation is not a 'superchurch'. All member churches are fully autonomous. The LWF may act on behalf of its constituents only on matters committed to it. Full membership would therefore not be a departure from the fundamental principles enunciated in

the Theses of Agreement and the Document of Union regarding church fellowship.

8. Full membership would not automatically give visiting pastors and leaders the right to preach in LCA pulpits. This would still be judged case by case. Pastors and theologians wishing to serve in the LCA would still have to be colloquised.
9. Member churches that have accepted the Lutheran Confessions as part of their constitutions, and have accepted the doctrinal basis of the constitution of the LWF, should be taken at their word until there is clear evidence that their teaching and practice is to the contrary. It must be recognised that churches that adhere sincerely to the Confessions may have practices that differ from those of the LCA.
10. Where member churches name only the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism in their constitutions—generally for historic and linguistic reasons—such subscription is to be regarded as sufficient, since non-reference to the other Confessional writings does not imply non-acceptance of their content.
11. Full membership does not prevent the LCA from entering into or maintaining relationships with non-LWF-member churches, just as in the past the LCA's non-membership did not prevent it from having church fellowship with selected LWF member churches.
12. A fee is being paid now by the LCA for associate membership in the Federation. Full membership would not mean more expense for the church.

ARGUMENTS FOR REMAINING AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER

1. Associate membership is consonant with the principles laid out in the Theses of Agreement and the Document of Union on church fellowship. These statements, although not having the same authority as the Confessions, are still definitive for the teaching and practice of the LCA.
2. Associate membership is also consonant with the 1981 General Synod resolution which stated that full membership is possible provided such membership does not 'imply mutual or reciprocal church fellowship on the part of the LCA with any of the member churches'. Since the Curitiba change to the LWF constitution states that 'the LWF is a communion of churches ... which are united in pulpit and altar fellowship' and this implies reciprocal fellowship, full membership for the LCA is precluded.
3. Associate membership places upon the LCA a healthy demand to speak confessionally at assemblies and councils. This in turn may serve to strengthen other confessional churches, who desire such confessional support.
4. By choosing associate membership the LCA paves the way for Lutheran churches who are outside the LWF, because of confessional reservations, to find opportunity for closer fellowship with other Lutheran churches without compromising their position.
5. Associate membership still allows the LCA to have its voice heard in assemblies and for its members to hold positions within the LWF.
6. Any witness against dubious trends and practices within the LWF or its member churches is more effective when it comes from an associate member rather than from a non-member.

7. Associate membership makes it easier for the LCA to maintain relations with Lutheran churches which are not LWF members.
8. Associate membership creates opportunity for strengthening relations with Lutheran churches in the SE Asian region, most of which are LWF members. The LWF can be expected to continue to foster such relationships and support mutual service.
9. Associate membership allows the LCA to participate in and benefit from LWF services and programs such as world assemblies, scholarships, and visitations by overseas leaders and theologians. Such benefits would not likely be greatly expanded through full membership.
10. The annual associate membership fee (in 2001 \$US8000) is little enough considering the benefits of membership and the support the LWF provides for those churches which exist in far less affluent economies.