

# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING IN A LUTHERAN SCHOOL

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## Preamble

### Purpose

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has a variety of agencies through which it carries out its ministry and mission to the people of Australia. One such agency is the Lutheran School in which the Church makes available to its members and to others in the community a formal education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities. Thus, through its Schools the Church deliberately and intentionally bears Christian witness to all who make up the world of the school.

### Spiritual Leadership

All individuals who make up the community of a Lutheran school are spiritual people. However, they express their need to experience awe, mystery, and a sense of the transcendent in very different ways. Christians believe that the community of the Lutheran school is also the context in which the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and the sacraments calls people to faith in God and nurtures the faith of those who already believe. Lutheran school principals, as part of their vocation, are spiritual leaders in their schools. While they have final responsibility for the spiritual life of the school, principals will in this area, as in other areas of their responsibility, delegate to others in the area of spirituality where appropriate.

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## 1. Definitions

**Acting/Interim** – A temporary appointment to a role or position, typically to cover a vacancy or the absence of the permanent occupant. The person in the acting or interim role assumes the responsibilities and authority of the position for a defined period or until a permanent appointment is made.

**Appraisal** – Monitoring of accreditation requirements, contractual conditions, and ongoing professional and formational growth.

**Active communicant membership** – As defined by By-Law Section E of the LCA Constitution are baptised, confirmed members of a congregation of the Lutheran Church of Australia who commune at least twice per year.

**Educator/teacher** – Those employees of Lutheran education with educational qualifications who are teaching or administering schools.

**Mission** – The school's mission field is 'the world of the school'. For mission to occur, the gospel must be proclaimed and central in all aspects of school life. The school works in both the secular and spiritual kingdoms. Students, children, and staff are challenged regularly with the gospel and the Spirit does its work, as some are encouraged in their faith and others are brought to faith. ([The Lutheran School as a Place of Ministry and Mission](#))

**Principal** – The leader of the educational site appointed by and reportable to the governing body.

**Senior Leaders** – Those who have decisional responsibilities that impact budgeting, policy and strategy directions of the school e.g. heads of college, principals, deputies, heads of sub-school.

**School** – The P-12 colleges, P-10 colleges, secondary colleges, secondary schools and primary schools which operate in the name of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

**Spiritual Leader** – The principal/director of a Lutheran educational site who holds overarching strategic and administrative responsibility for the faith formation and spiritual life of the school. While they may delegate the day-to-day implementation of programs, they retain ultimate oversight of the site's spiritual direction and initiatives.

**The Church** – The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA)

## 2. Leadership and governance

### 2.1 Knowledge, skills and capabilities

Lutheran theology distinguishes God as working within the world in two ways – with the law and with the gospel, with justice and with mercy - 'the two hands of God'. As spiritual leaders in their schools, Lutheran school principals are challenged to function clearly under the 'two hands of God', even though maintaining this distinction is very difficult at times. On the one hand, 'left hand', it means that they are educational professionals who have the responsibility under God of ensuring that their school is the best place of education it can be and that it complies with all state requirements. On the other hand, 'right hand', they have the responsibility under God as the spiritual leaders of the school to ensure that the Word of God with the gospel of Christ at its heart is clearly proclaimed in the school and informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities of the school.

It is the expectation of the LCA that principals and senior leaders of its schools be active communicant members of the LCA as defined in the LCA constitution. If an active communicant member of the LCA is not available or suitable, a committed and actively worshipping Christian could be appointed. In this case, prior experience in Lutheran education, including the completion of Accreditation as a Leader (AL), will be valued attributes.

In relation to the recruitment of a non-Lutheran as principal, the candidate will demonstrate prior to appointment, their ability and willingness to acknowledge and uphold the teachings and confessions of the Lutheran church through approved processes and procedures.

These processes and procedures will be approved by the Board for Lutheran Education Australia (BLEA) and administered by Lutheran Education Australia (LEA). Full details can be found in [Schedule 1](#) of this document.

The LCA expects that those who hold positions of senior leadership in schools uphold the Lutheran ethos of the school and:

- Can articulate the core teachings of Lutheran theology and lead the school community in living out the Christian faith.
- Recognise the Holy Spirit's work in calling and nurturing faith within the school.
- Integrate faith and leadership, reflecting spiritual insights in professional practice and decision-making.
- Actively participate in and lead worship, prayer, and the study of God's Word where possible, within school and congregational community.
- Support staff spiritual formation, including the accreditation of new teachers and collaboration with the pastor and/or ministry personnel.
- Value and resource Christian Studies, ensuring it is well supported and central to school life.
- Foster a culture of service and justice, shaped by the theology of the cross and Lutheran understanding of God's work in the world.
- Provide gospel-centred pastoral care, acknowledging human brokenness and offering grace through law and gospel.
- Participate in collegial professional networks that include a focus on Lutheran identity and formation (e.g. Lutheran Principals Australia).
- Cultivate Lutheran identity, through meaningful rituals, stories, and practices that create a welcoming and hope-filled community.
- Demonstrate commitment to the LCA's teachings and mission both within the school and the wider church.
- Balance responsibilities to family, school, church, and society.

## **2.2 Accreditation and ongoing formation**

Accreditation is the means whereby the Church can be assured that its teachings are known to and understood by those who lead the school or teach Christian Studies have an adequate grounding in Lutheran theology.

Accreditation is core and central to the role of principal. Ideally, principals are expected to have completed all accreditation requirements of a principal prior to appointment as a principal. If necessary, their employment contract should specify completion of all accreditation requirements within the first two (2) years of their initial contract commencement.

The employment contract of other senior leaders will specify a clear pathway and timeframe by which they will achieve accreditation if they have not achieved it prior to appointment.

Requirements for accreditation are established by BLEA. The process of granting accreditation is the responsibility of the LEA National Office.

Additionally, leaders are required to have ongoing theological and formation training included in contractual conditions. These activities may include:

- Setting aside time for nurturing their own spirituality, including the contemplative aspects of spirituality, through study of God's Word and an active prayer life.

- Leading by example in undertaking theological studies and in encouraging and supporting teachers in their theological studies and development.
- Reflecting on how they can develop in their understanding and competency to contribute more effectively to the mission of the Lutheran School.
- Participating in retreats, time out, theological studies, mentoring and reflection.

### **2.3 Acting and interim principal requirements**

In the event of a school having to appoint an acting or interim principal, it is preferable that an active communicant member of the LCA be appointed. If an active, communicant member of the LCA is not available or suitable, then a committed Christian may be appointed. In the event that a suitable person is not available for the position of acting or interim principal the following will apply:

1. The school governing body chair, in consultation with the Regional Director, will appoint a suitable candidate for up to, but no longer than, one year as acting/interim leader.
2. If the appointment needs to be extended and/or is for longer than one year the decision would be subject to consultation with and approval of the responsible District Bishop of the District in which the school is located, and Regional Director.
3. Any such appointments will be communicated to the LEA Executive Director and other Regional Directors.
4. Any principals (regular, acting or interim) who are not active communicant members (as defined by the LCA) do not assume the rights of members of the LCA. In particular, they do not have the right to:
  - attend and/or vote as a delegate at LCA General and District Synods,
  - participate in the election of delegates to LCA General and District Synods.

### **2.4 Governing Bodies**

The governing bodies of Lutheran schools play a vital part in upholding the mission and ministry of Lutheran schools to ensure that the Lutheran ethos of the school is valued, understood and enacted. They do this by:

- Employing a principal who meets the criteria of a spiritual leader in a Lutheran school.
- Implementing and administering contractual arrangements for the principal that fulfil accreditation and ongoing formation requirements.
- Supporting principals in their vocation and providing opportunities for principals to grow spiritually through such options as retreats, time out, theological studies, mentoring and reflection.
- Having oversight of the Lutheran ethos/mission of the school and supporting the principal in this role through ongoing appraisal and resourcing.
- Praying for principals in their vocation, also as the spiritual leader of the school.
- Committing to their own formation and Lutheran theological understandings.
- Acceptance of the school governing body code of conduct supplied by the school that includes a commitment to uphold the Lutheran ethos of the school.
- Selection according to the criteria of LCA.<sup>1</sup>

## **3. Staffing**

The Church seeks to staff its schools with people who are able to uphold the teachings of the Church. In the first instance it seeks to use the services of outstanding registered educators who are active

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<sup>1</sup> See Policy Re Membership of Non-Lutherans On Governance Boards in Special Circumstances.

communicant members of the Church. Beyond that, the Church seeks to staff its schools with people who are active Christians from other denominations willing to uphold the Lutheran teaching of the school. Lutheran education does not and is not seeking to discriminate against any staff based on their personal attributes (e.g. race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status, parental status, pregnancy etc). Lutheran education does not seek the right to discriminate on the basis of a protected attribute, but simply to be able to employ staff who share or are willing to uphold the ethos of the religious educational institution.

Selection processes will ensure that staff are willing and able to uphold the Lutheran ethos of the school. The LCA expects that those who work in the Lutheran School in whatever position:

- contribute towards the mission of the school as they live out their vocation in their specific appointment,
- are professionally competent to undertake the task to which they are appointed, and
- are a witness to the love of God through Christ in the full range of relationships, programs and activities in which they are involved.

### **3.1 Accreditation**

All educators in Lutheran schools are required to be accredited by the Church. Accreditation involves the completion of required study that is relevant to the responsibility held and is maintained by ongoing study and reflection.

In order to advance the ethos of the School, the Church reserves the right to develop practices which ensure that all who work in its schools are willing to uphold those teachings in both word and deed. The Church establishes standards of theological training required to carry out particular educational tasks, leadership, and other roles. The process of granting accreditation is the responsibility of the LEA National Office. A register of those people who have been accredited for employment in the Lutheran school is maintained.

It is the responsibility of the employing body to ensure that educators are properly equipped for their tasks in accordance with this policy. Letters of Appointment for all educators and other staff as specified by LEA will include the Church's expectations of the person for theological development.

### **3.2 Recruitment, employment and induction**

The Church expects that those who work in the Lutheran School understand and support the school's mission and are equipped to fulfil the Church's expectations. In order to fulfil this intent, schools will:

- Ensure recruitment documentation, role descriptions and contracts include clarity around expectations and responsibilities to support the Church's mission.
- Deliver an induction, orientation and ongoing training program that enables staff to understand and fulfil these expectations.
- Provide all staff with appropriate teaching and support, to enable them to make a genuine and informed commitment at installation to the school's mission, their responsibilities to fulfil the Church's expectations, and any statements of belief included in installation rites.

## **4. Ministry**

As a school of the Church the LCA expects that pastors and other ministry personnel will be called to exercise a ministry of Word and/or sacrament within the school.

### **4.1 The School pastor**

It is desirable that every Lutheran school has a school pastor on the roll of Pastors of the LCA so that the connection between the school and the mission of the Church is reinforced and supported. In

some instances the school pastor will also be the pastor of the local congregation, in other instances the pastor may be called to serve exclusively in the school context.

A school pastor will exercise a ministry that is congruent with the ordination vows of the LCA. Thus, such a ministry will be centred in leading the school community in worship and find full expression in the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The ministry of each school pastor will be further shaped by the particular context of each school and be subject to the policies and procedures Lutheran Education Australia (LEA).

A pastor operating in a school will be part of a team working together with principal and staff in a shared ministry that will vary according to the local context. The school governing body is responsible for all that happens in the school. The principal is the agent of the governing body and is the spiritual leader of the school. This provides the context in which the school pastor works. The pastor is part of a team and works on developing good working relationships with the school team in general and the principal in particular.

#### **4.1.1 The responsibilities and relationships of the school pastor include:**

- Tasks and responsibilities consistent with the Call document.
- Specific duties assigned to them by the principal or school governing body that align with the distinctive Lutheran aims of the school.
- The school pastor is regarded as a non-voting consultant to the school governing body, attending governing body meetings at the invitation of the chair in consultation with the principal.
- The pastor is responsible to the principal and comes under the jurisdiction of the school governing body except where a teaching of the Church is at stake. The District Bishop will determine if an issue concerns a teaching of the Church.

#### **4.1.2 Schools should provide a position description that include desirable characteristics such as:**

- Pastoral skills and understandings which will enable them to exercise pastoral care both for young people and adults.
- An ability to work as a member of a team and under the direction of the school principal in matters and activities pertaining to the school, staff, students and families.
- A degree of maturity of Christian faith which will give integrity to their ministry with students, staff and parents.
- An open and warm personality which demonstrates a loving concern for others.
- An experience of life either in the parish or as a mature student.
- Professional qualification in Religious Education or Education if classroom teaching is generally a requirement of the position.

#### **4.1.3 Congregational pastor agreements**

The LCA is committed to its schools being key agencies in its mission to the wider community. Accordingly, it identifies the school pastor as a key link in leading people from the world of the school into a permanent worshipping community. A pastor who is not a full-time member of staff should be regarded at the school as a partner in ministry. This will be reflected in seeking to include them where possible in all aspects of the school life. The activities of congregational pastors in schools should be guided by a formal agreement between the school and the congregation. This agreement should outline:

- role description,
- time commitments,
- financial arrangements,

- commitments and responsibilities of both school and congregation to support the pastor in their work in the school,
- reporting responsibilities, and
- pathways for conflict resolution.

#### 4.2 Other school ministry personnel

School ministry personnel, including chaplains both ordained and non ordained, play a vital role in the life of a Lutheran education site. The school may employ chaplains and other ministry personnel to meet the growing personal and spiritual needs of the learning community.

Each school will determine the particular responsibilities and activities of these personnel in the school and outline these clearly in their role description and employment contracts. These role descriptions and contracts will vary from site to site and specific detail should be sought through school-based documentation.

These staff will be trained and accredited according to applicable policies of the LEA.

Where applicable, the relationship between ministry personnel and school pastors will be guided by school leadership structures and lines of reporting as outlined in the employment contracts of ministry staff.

### 5. Exceptions

This policy provides the minimum requirements:

- Exceptions to this policy may only be granted by the General Church Board (GCB) of the LCA.
- Districts and regions may set requirements that exceed this policy.

### 6. Related Policies

[LCA Governance policy](#)

Policy re membership of non-Lutherans on Governance Boards in special circumstances

[The LCA and its schools](#)

[The Lutheran school as a place of ministry and mission](#)

[Statement on school worship](#)

[School pastor letter of call](#)

The LEA Principal Colloquy

[LEA Accreditation policy and procedures](#)

#### Document controls

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## Schedule 1

Processes and procedures for the appointment of a non-Lutheran principal

### (Following DSTO Volume 1: D MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH: STANDARD PROCEDURES AND QUESTIONS IN COLLOQUIISING PROSPECTIVE CHURCH SERVANTS)

Where a recommended applicant for the position of Principal of a Lutheran School is not a baptised and confirmed member of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (the Church; LCA), the person shall be required to undertake a process to guide their candidacy. These processes and procedures will be approved by the Board for Lutheran Education Australia (BLEA) and administered by Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) but will include:

1. A committee of colloquy:
  - a. a three-member committee of colloquy appointed by the Bishop of the Church or delegate, in liaison with the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) or delegate and the relevant Regional Executive Director or delegate;
  - b. the committee shall consist of at least one pastor and one Lutheran educator;
  - c. the committee shall be provided with some background information on the candidate such as a curriculum vitae.
2. The person colloquized shall before being offered the position, sign a declaration in which they declare their commitment to uphold the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church.
3. Prior to the colloquy, the prospective principal candidate will:
  - a. familiarize themselves with the history and background of the LCA/NZ and with the structure of the Church;
  - b. acquaint themselves with the Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the Church and with the Church's teaching and policies in educational ministry.
4. In conducting the colloquy, the following areas of doctrine need to be addressed:
  - a. the person and work of Christ;
  - b. justification and its relationship to sanctification;
  - c. the inspiration and authority of Scripture;
  - d. the status and the content of the historic Lutheran Confessions;
  - e. the ministry of the Church;
  - f. the mission of the Church – the 'Two Kingdoms' doctrine;
  - g. the Sacraments;
  - h. the worship of the Church and its liturgy including worship in schools;
  - i. the theology of Lutheran education;
  - j. the role of the principal in the Lutheran school.

*Note: In addition to doctrine, the candidate's understanding and experience of congregational life and the relationship between congregation and school should be explored.*

*The candidate to be colloquized is to be given these categories for preparation. Relevant literature and/or literature references are to be supplied for the above purposes.*

5. A report on the colloquy shall be provided to the Bishop of the Church, the Executive Director of LEA, the relevant District Bishop and the relevant Regional Executive Director, with recommendations for ongoing theological development for the candidate, if the person were offered and were to accept an offer of principalship.
6. The report on the colloquy shall form part of the documentation submitted to the GCB.
7. Following the decision by the appointing body, the candidate may be offered an opportunity to debrief the colloquy with a member of the panel.