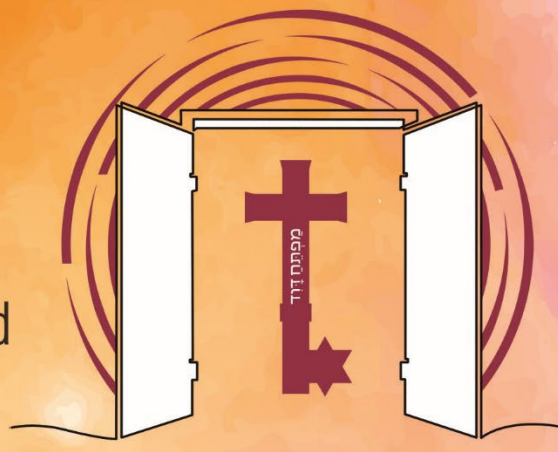


Open Doors

to many communities of grace.

57th Annual LCAQD Convention of the Synod
30 May - 1 June 2025 | Peace Lutheran College, Cairns



The 2025 LCAQD Convention of Synod Popular Report

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Introduction

The Lutheran Church of Australia Queensland District (LCAQD) Convention of Synod gathered at Peace Lutheran College, Cairns, from 30 May to 1 June 2025.

It began on Friday morning with two songs from the Peace Lutheran College choir.

LCAQD Bishop Mark Vainikka welcomed delegates including Synod 'newbies' and Synod 'groupies'. He spoke about the poignancy of Synod gathering during National Reconciliation Week.

Peace student Saia Yorkston delivered an Acknowledgment of Country before opening worship, led by First Assistant Bishop Ben Hentschke. Bishop Mark then constituted the Convention of Synod.

Guests

Following the Friday morning opening worship, the following leaders greeted the convention:

- Cr Brett Olds, Deputy Mayor, Cairns Regional Council
- Ms Bree James, State Member for Barron River, representing Premier David Crisafulli
- Mr Matt Smith, Federal Member for Leichhardt
- The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph, Bishop, NQ Diocese, Anglican Church
- Rev Bruce Moore, Moderator Uniting Church
- Mr Peter Eckersley, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Qld
- Lts Edward and Beola Conteh, Salvation Army Cairns

Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes from last Synod were accepted with amendments.

Synod offering

This year's Synod offering was directed to Peace Lutheran College Cairns' Service-Learning Program, which involves students from Years 7 to 12 visiting Wujal Wujal on a three-day community experience.

LCAQD Strategic Charter 2025-30

Bishop Mark said the *LCAQD Strategic Charter 2025-30* was a missionary charter for a missionary people – one that would help orient the church around the mission of God in a rapidly-changing landscape.

'We are at a critical juncture for the church in the west and more will change over the coming decades,' he said.

'What sort of a church, in partnership with Christ, are we building for future generations?

'(The Charter) is not just for Church House at Milton but for every community of grace.'

The charter is structured around five key themes – Open Doors – which define how we live out our mission:

- Open Door to Spiritual Renewal: Strengthening lives of faith through prayer, baptism, and Holy Communion.
- Open Door to the World: Living out an incarnational faith, joining God's mission beyond our Church walls.
- Open Door to the Church: Ensuring our communities remain welcoming places of grace and belonging.

- Open Door to Collaboration: Partnering across local, national, and international ministries for greater impact.
- Open Door to the Future: Building sustainable foundations for ministry to the next generations.

Governance Change Program update

FAB Ben began the update to delegates on the Governance Change Program (GCP), which was endorsed at Convention of Synod in 2022.

He said the mature governance model continued to address non-compliances and risks that could impact the LCAQD's financial and legal status.

'In today's world, hope is not a compliance strategy,' he said.

'But governance that doesn't connect to the gospel is just bureaucracy.'

In the past 12 months, the program has:

- prepared the Lutheran Services constitution and trust deed for final review
- continued reviewing the LEQ draft constitution
- developed new terms of reference for the Risk Audit and Finance Committee.
- implemented other matters approved in 2024.

It was noted that Lutheran Services is the first faith-based organisation in Australia to achieve dual purpose registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

Deputy District Executive Officer John Hoffman said it was vital for the GCP work to continue considering the Presbyterian Church Queensland's ongoing legal matters.

The GCP submitted a number of proposals to enable ongoing governance change, with ratification of:

- the Risk Audit and Finance Committee terms of reference
- a minor wording change for the LCAQD Constitution for voting rights for sole member subsidiaries to maintain the intended make-up of the voting body at Synod
- the Vocare Law Property Trust Review Report (12 May 2025) and the property trust purpose assessment and final right to occupy processes
- the Lutheran Services Ltd Constitution and Trust Deed (with a late motion that the Board be appointed at the Convention of Synod 2026 instead of this year)
- District Church Board being able to change the company name for Lutheran Services Ltd from Department of Lutheran Services.
- updates to By-laws Part B to reflect the new Lutheran Services subsidiary.

Bishop Mark commended the continuing work of the GCP at the conclusion of this discussion.

LCAQD department reports

Written reports from LCAQD departments are published in the Book of Reports, and departments were asked to provide video reports ahead of the Convention of the Synod in lieu of in-person reporting to the convention.

All council chairs and departmental heads were available to respond to questions and reports were moved and accepted.

The videos for each department can be viewed at <https://qld.lca.org.au/events/synod/> (under Book of Reports & Video Reports tab).

Lutheran Services

Dr Leena Vuorinen, Chair of the Council for Lutheran Services, highlighted key initiatives and achievements for Lutheran Services over the past year, as well as those stemming from their *Strategic Plan 2020–25*.

The report prepared by Leena and CEO Nick Ryan also included 2024 financial year statements and a supplement summarising current strategic plan results and future vision.

Highlights for the past 12 months include:

- The culmination of the *Lutheran Services Strategic Plan 2020–25* (with performance goals achieved) and the commencement of the 'New Horizons' *Strategic Plan 2025–30*.
- Recording a second consecutive surplus in 2024 – a significant increase on the previous – while revenue, reach and staff numbers all continued to grow.
- Occupancy for residential aged care and retirement living, as well as staff retention, remaining above the industry average.
- Continuing to celebrate the 'Lutheran in Lutheran Services' and articulating their unique identity and ethos.
- Continued reinvestment in their communities, services and people.
- A competitive new Enterprise Agreement, with care workers continuing to be paid above the award.
- Delivering a range of initiatives across core service areas of residential aged care, home care, retirement living, disability, domestic and family violence, mental health, and youth and family.
- Delivery of a range of enterprise transformation initiatives that strengthen organisational capability, ICT infrastructure, administration and sustainability.

By the numbers:

- 115 volunteers giving 20,000 hours of service.
- 2100 staff, which has steadily grown over the past five years.
- More than 6000 people served.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Leena announced she would be stepping down from her role after 14 years of service to the Council for Lutheran Services and thanked the many people who have supported her during this time.

Lutheran Youth of Queensland

Chair Janelle Anderson and Executive Director Darren Pope spoke to their report, highlighting the achievements of the past year.

Their report included:

- Luther Heights Ministry continues to thrive, with strong bookings and positive client confidence for 2024–2025, offering impactful youth camping experiences through excellent facilities, programs, and staff.
- Koojarewon Youth Camp, part of LYQ since 2013, faced ongoing challenges due to aging infrastructure and compliance requirements, leading to a thorough review and consultation with local stakeholders. LYQ ceased operations at Koojarewon in July 2024, formally transferring the site back to LCAQD by March 2025. Youth ministry in the Darling Downs continues to be supported via alternative camp venues.

- Relational faith community: Holiday camps provide a valuable space for young people to build faith through connection with peers and mentoring from older Christians, supported by a strong tradition and community backing.
- Growth and expansion: LYQ supported a successful CLW in Central Queensland in 2024 and plans to co-create a new CLW in Cairns in 2025 with Peace Lutheran College.
- Volunteer and financial support needed: There's a growing need for more inter-generational volunteer leaders and financial sponsors, to meet camp demand and support young leaders with limited resources.
- Widespread student impact: Delivered leadership and personal development workshops to over 2,000 students in Lutheran, Catholic, and Independent Christian schools across Queensland, focusing on key life skills and faith-based leadership.
- Faith-centred engagement: Authentically shared the Gospel and modelled servant leadership through school workshops and residential camps like Enthuse and Momentum, fostering Christian values in young leaders.
- Ongoing leadership support: Launched LYQ LIFT, a three-year support initiative for Lutheran congregations and schools, with plans for a 2025 leadership conference to further empower young Christian leaders.
- In 2021, funding for a young adult ministry role was moved by DCB to the Commission for Mission. LYQ, though without formal responsibility, actively supports young adult ministry through planning, admin, risk management, and promoting key events like The Gathering and Dapper Day Trips.
- LYQ remains committed to partnering with stakeholders to explore district-level support for churches and congregations facing challenges.
- LYQ has invested heavily in transforming digital infrastructure, business systems, and cloud-based platforms to improve efficiency and security.
- Key improvements include enhancing staff, client, and guest interfaces, supporting online volunteer learning, and addressing cyber-security risks.
- The transformation aims to improve guest experiences, empower staff with reliable technology, and ensure data safety across the organisation.

By the numbers:

- 113,294 meals prepared and served
- 17,687 guests
- 6,992 volunteer hours
- 476 campers

Lutheran Education Queensland

Council members Rod Krenske and Gary Fulton joined Director Tanya Crooks to present the report.

Lutheran Education Queensland has a long history of educating Australia's young people and is also a proud employer of highly qualified and talented education professionals.

Key points of the report include:

- Australia's education industry is facing tremendous challenges, in every state. For many Lutheran learning communities across Queensland, recruitment has been a big focus in recent years – and a real struggle.
 - Educators must be across so much – not just to teach, but to support individualised learning, to respond to students' evolving needs, and to inspire.

- Educating the next generation is not a simple calling. It requires grit and grace, passion and perseverance.
- Growing workloads and increasingly complex classroom dynamics stretch staff; more acutely so in rural and regional communities.
- In 2025, one of LEQ's priorities has been retention, and strengthening the supports available to staff.
 - The purpose is to ensure educators across learning communities in Qld are not just equipped but encouraged to do the important work they've been called to.
 - Each has a responsibility to create working environments people want to be a part of – and want to come back to, day after day, year after year – despite the challenges.
 - That calling is honoured through professional learning, leadership development and a culture that allows everyone to thrive.
- What is seen day-to-day across the community is extraordinary:
 - People leading with purpose and compassion who carry Christ's presence into every classroom and every conversation
 - Teams who innovate with courage, and who lift one another up in difficult times
 - Educators who are deeply committed to the LEQ model of nurturing the whole child – helping students to grow academically, creatively, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Education is more than a curriculum, it's a calling: to serve others, to build community, and to nurture the God-given potential of every learner. LEQ thanks every educator and staff member for living out their mission – to inspire learning for life.

By the numbers:

- 22,000 school aged students
- 7,000 kindergarten students
- 2,000 staff

Churchwide entities and department presentations and reports

On Friday afternoon, presentations and reports from churchwide entities and departments were received from:

- LCANZ Bishop's Report by Churchwide Bishop Rev Paul Smith
- Australian Lutheran College, presented by Bishop Paul on behalf of Rev Dr Tim Stringer
- Churchwide Office Report by Executive Officer of the Church Brett Hausler
- Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) by Suzanne Jessen
- Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) by Executive Director Michael Stolz
- International Mission by Rev Mark Schultz

By the numbers:

- 52 students at ALC
- 90,000 books in the ALC library being relocated currently
- 77 schools, 60+ childcare and outside hours school care, tens of thousands of students
- 75 years of ALWS

Rite of Welcome to new pastors

Four new pastors were welcomed to the Queensland District at the Friday afternoon closing service:

- Rev Greg Benstead
- Rev Geoff Schefe
- Rev Sean Hotinski
- Rev Yong Bong Cho

Friday night dinner function

During the Friday night dinner function, Peace Lutheran College Principal Shane Jurecky spoke about Lutheran education in Far North Queensland, entitled 'Christ in the cane fields – 30 years of Lutheran education in Cairns.' The presentation traced the amazing circumstances which led to the formation of Peace Lutheran College, through the triumphs and challenges of establishing a multicultural, faith-based learning community in a remote location, to what the exciting future holds beyond the current horizon!

District Bishop's report

On Saturday morning, Bishop Mark Vainikka reflected on his written report, and spoke of the District's guiding principle: *One Church, One Purpose, Many Ministries*.

He said the Convention's theme of *Open doors to many communities of grace* reflected the 'many ministries' aspect of that principle in the Queensland District, including places of worship, schools, youth, aged care and other community support services.

'To speak of many ministries is to speak of people,' Bishop Mark said.

'We call our entities ministries of grace – where God's grace is shared and where God's grace is lived.'

Bishop Mark spoke about the Strategic Charter (see pp 1-2 of this report) and also shared on the following matters:

- **Ordination of men and women**

Following General Synod's decision in October 2024 to allow the ordination of men and women, Bishop Mark said the Church had been walking through a significant time of reflection, change and discernment.

'Our call right now is to hold space for one another,' he said.

'To be gracious with one another. To be long suffering with one another. To be gentle with one another and ourselves, as God is gentle with us. To weep with those who weep.'

'We are one Church, and we remain a Church of the scriptures.'

Bishop Mark reminded delegates the decision gives churches the right to call, or not call, women.

'We all have come with diligent study and integrity into these matters,' he said.

- **Governance reform and legitimacy**

Bishop Mark likened governance to a Danish pastry, with layer upon layer of bureaucracy at times, but reminded delegates that mission needed to be a focus.

'Our next task is to simplify our governance structures in the District so people can participate in gatherings like this in a meaningful way,' he said.

'Whether you're a congregation of 20 people or 200 people, we need to have the same governance structures.'

- **Ministry resourcing and regional ministry**

The growing number of pastoral vacancies across the church was reiterated.

'One pastor per congregation is increasingly difficult to achieve,' Bishop Mark said.

He spoke about a regional ministry model to share pastoral and ministry responsibilities across multiple congregations, parishes and agencies, with General Ministry Pastors as leads, supported by Special Ministry Pastors and lay people.

- **Listening and Learning Tours**

Bishop Mark said the District's Listening and Learning Tours reminded him not of what church communities might lack, but what they continue to offer in worship, service, welcome and a quiet resilience of faith.

He said the Church was people, parishioners and generations and generations of faithful members.

'There are many generational stories that have shaped us,' he said.

'We must remember we are an immigrant church.'

- **Far North Queensland Mission**

As delegates met in Cairns, Bishop spoke about the vast distances that needed to be travelled and the stretched resources to serve the region.

'The regional ministry approach in this area has been shaped by the vision of local leaders,' he said.

'I encourage you to pray and to listen and discern what the Holy Spirit might be asking of us as a church... from the coast to the cape.'

- **Pastoral care of pastors**

Rest is not a luxury, it's a necessity, Bishop Mark said as he encouraged ministers to take two full days off per week, and congregation leaders to support that.

'The church that cares for its pastors positions itself to care for people and wider community,' he said.

FAB Ben also spoke briefly about the new Pastor for Pastor initiative, LCAQD's response to pastoral and spousal wellbeing.

The program will include check-ins and counselling for ministers and their partners, a Bishop Advisory Group, retreats and other supports that will roll out over the next 12 months and beyond.

- **Personal reflections and closing remarks**

In closing his report, Bishop Mark spoke proudly about becoming a grandparent for the first time as well as some health issues and injuries that had occurred over the past year.

He said his usual coping mechanism – long-distance running – was on hold as he waits for full knee reconstruction.

He will take Rest and Recuperative Leave for June and July and acknowledged the many people who provide leadership and support to the District and Office of the Bishop.

'We are the church together. Christ remains with us,' Bishop Mark said.

'The Lord has placed before us an open door. Let us walk through it together.'

District Church Board report

District Church Board (DCB) Chair Michael Klatt spoke to his report, acknowledging the joys and challenges of the past 12 months through the vibrant and diverse communities of grace in the District.

He noted the dedicated service former Chair Shiron Dixon had given to DCB before her resignation in December 2024.

'She was a tireless leader of the District,' Michael said.

DCB members Gary Fulton, Andrew Spyropoulos and Matthew Webster are also retiring from the board at this Synod.

While Michael said the work of DCB was sometimes difficult and time consuming, DCB was committed to restoring relationships with the other Councils of LCAQD.

'As the body of Christ, may we strive to be peacemakers—reflecting the love and justice of Jesus in all our relationships,' he said.

- **Endorsed DCB proposals**

Remove the vision and mission from the LCAQD bylaws for Council of the Department for Lutheran Youth

Commission for Mission report

Assistant Bishop for Mission Rev David Schmidt shared in his report that the LCAQD finds itself at a crossroads, facing significant challenges such as demographic shifts, financial pressures, and declining participation.

Yet amid these concerns lies a profound opportunity to reimagine ministry, deepen discipleship, and rediscover the Church's calling through Spirit-led transformation.

'People are open to hearing the good news,' Rev David said.

The data and voices gathered in the report highlight both the urgency and the potential for faithful, courageous renewal.

One statistical reality is the current and growing pastoral shortage, with many pastors nearing retirement and more congregations left without consistent pastoral leadership.

- **Voices from the Church**

Concerns include generational gaps, outreach limitations, and sustainability.

There is a strong desire for discipleship, deeper spiritual formation, and meaningful community.

While views on women in ministry vary, many support respectful dialogue and inclusion.

Despite current fatigue, congregants remain hopeful and eager to engage more actively in mission.

- **Moving Forward**

This is a call not to retreat, but to renew—moving forward with faith, courage, and adaptability.

Reimagining ministry will require collaboration, open dialogue, and Spirit-led creativity to live out the Gospel in changing contexts.

Rev Schmidt also shared findings and experiences from the recent Listening and Learning Tour of the Darling Downs and Western Queensland, that echoed both the hopes and the challenges of the broader church.

- **Endorsed Commission for Mission proposals**

Develop a regional ministry model to revitalise sustainable ministry.

Create Communities of Practice and a coaching network for pastors and lay workers to support each other.

Establish formal support for congregations with 15 to 20 members (or less) for spiritual care, governance and financial sustainability.

Financial support to strengthen the Far North Queensland Mission Region (\$60,000 per year for three years – 2026-28), with all LCAQD congregations encouraged to prayerfully and practically support the mission.

Lutheran Women of Queensland (LWQ) report

Marilyn Jonas presented the report for LWQ, highlighting the fellowship, friendship, faith and service that guides members.

Highlights for the past year include:

- Regular gatherings and retreats among local groups, zones and statewide
- Financial support for a range of mission arms
- Ongoing Bible study as a primary reason to gather
- New spiritual advisor Pastor Jordan Bennett managing the lwq.org.au website
- Queensland women filling all five positions on the LWA Executive
- By the numbers:
- 13 Queensland women attending the Lutheran Women of Australia Convention in October 2024
- More than \$20,000 offered to various mission arms
- 529 members in LWQ.

Lutheran Laypeople's League (LLL)

Board Chair Steve Podlich highlighted that LLL is a partner in the gospel in the wider church.

He said a transition from being an Authorised Deposit-taking Institution to a Religious Charitable Development Fund over the past year had led to some teething problems.

He encouraged delegates to spread the word about LLL's services as it supports ongoing ministries of the church.

Chief Relationship Officer Scott Ross spoke about what LLL has funded, including the kindergarten building at Peace Lutheran College Cairns, where the Synod was held, and a new junior school building at LORDS at Ormeau.

'There is no such thing as a crazy idea in achieving our mission,' Scott said.

'We want to support you with delivering it.'

- **Mission Outreach Grant**

St Andrew's Lutheran Church, Brisbane, will receive \$25,000 from LLL for its 'Diverse by Design' project, which is focused on reaching the multi-ethnic communities of the Brisbane CBD.

Congregation representative Owen Dixon said St Andrew's had been refining and articulating its plan for mission.

'One focus we have is to Korean language speakers in Brisbane, which is partly funded by a local mission grant,' Owen said.

'Sharing food is a great opener of doors. We can invite people in, but we need to go out to people who do not accept the invitation or feel it is for them.

'We thank LLL for this support. Please pray for our ministry.'

From 2026, the grant for future applications will double to \$50,000.

- **Synod Art Competition**

The Synod theme *Open Doors to Many Communities of Grace: One Church. One Purpose. Many Ministries* (Revelation 3:7-12) was represented creatively through the third Synod Art competition sponsored by LLL.

In total 37 entries were received, with winners notified prior to Convention. Winning artworks will be displayed at Lutheran Church House at Milton for 12 months and can be viewed online at qld.lca.org.au/2025/05/12/2025-synod-art-competition-winners-announced/

Age group	Prize	Winner
Prep (up to 5 years)	\$250 cash prize	Daniel Zak Kai Au
Primary school (6-9 years)	\$450 cash prize	David Zak Fai Au
Middle school (10-12 years)	\$650 cash prize	Dylan Karunarathne
High school (13-17 years)	\$850 cash prize (tied between two winners)	Sienna Lee McMahon-Shelley Evangeline Pukallus
Open category	\$1,250 cash prize	Aretha Christie
Seniors (65+ years)	\$500	Liz Jordan

CTICR statement on ordination

Bishop Paul gave an overview of what had happened for the Ordination Way Forward program in the lead-up to and at General Synod in 2024.

The 2024 Convention asked for a doctrinal statement on ordination to reflect the change of church teaching (the removal of paragraph VI:11 of the Theses of Agreement, which formed part of the LCA NZ's founding documentation in 1966. The 2024 General Synod was the first time for any amendments to be made.)

The Commission of Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) has prepared a Doctrinal Statement and Theological Opinion (DSTO) to reflect this change.

The 2024 General Synod resolution does not impose any requirements for pastors to affirm or disclose publicly or privately their views on women's ordination. Congregations have the right to call a pastor who best aligns with their ministry plans.

The DSTO is being discussed at District Pastors Conferences and District Conventions of Synod in 2025.

Convention delegates worked in small groups to discuss the statement and provide feedback.

Responses will be forwarded to CTICR, and all responses will be considered before it is submitted to General Pastors Conference and the Convention of General Synod in October 2025.

Risk, Audit and Finance Committee

Committee Chair, Michael Klatt's report spoke to the role the Committee plays in considering loan applications from LCAQD Departments, policies, budgets, financial facilities and other considerations.

The committee has some vacancies for people qualified in policy and practice in managing risk, audit and finance.

LCAQD budget and administration

District Executive Officer Trevor Ruthenberg and DCB Treasurer John Catford spoke about District Office financials and the 2025 approved budget.

The audits for the District Office, LYQ and Lutheran Services were completed by McConachie Stedman in Toowoomba.

District Office financial results 2024

The District Office had a deficit in 2024. Income comes from three main sources, being:

- congregation contributions
- governance levy on departments
- rental income from the Church office

There have been lower employee costs from staff vacancies.

Other expenses (abnormal and one-off):

- legal provisions for settlement of abuse legal claims
- provisions for doubtful debts on receivables (not written off yet but can't be sustained on a balance sheet)
- professional and consultancy fees for Governance Change Program

Net assets increased by 18%.

Budget and staffing

- DEO Trevor showed an organisational structure for District Office and presented the 2025 Budget, including projected income and expenses. A small surplus is projected.
- District is setting aside funds for historical abuse claims and congregations are able to access this as per the policy. This is a deliberate effort, noting that the number of potential claims is unknown.
- A resource working group continues to look at financial sustainability for the District post-transformation.

Elections

Due to the ongoing Governance Change Program, all positions elected for DCB, Councils and Committees at the 2025 Convention of Synod are for a singular synodical term only (i.e. 2025-26).

This does not apply to the Bishop roles.

SAB Luke, who is chair of the Nominations Committee, thanked everyone for their willingness to serve.

Bishops

Rev Luke Spilsbury was elected unopposed as the Second Assistant Bishop of the LCAQD, in addition to his role at Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Noosa.

LCAQD District Church Board

Role	Elected
Bishops	Bishop Mark Vainikka First Assistant Bishop Ben Hentschke

	Second Assistant Bishop Luke Spilsbury
Chair	Michael Klatt
Treasurer	John Catford
Secretary	Malcolm Erlich
Lay Members	Cheryl Steinhardt (Lutheran Services) Nic Monsour (Lutheran Youth) Fred Kleinschmidt Elaine Krenske Garth Hunt Susan Kloeden
Pastor Members	Rev Mark Blackwell

- **LCAQD Council for Lutheran Services**

Role	Elected
Lay Members	Jenny Danslow Andrew Spyropoulos Theresa Stolz Cheryl Steinhardt (appointed by DCB) Anna Renner (Vacant)
Pastor Member	Rev Paul Hannola

- **LCAQD Council for Department for Lutheran Education Queensland**

Role	Elected
Lay Members (5)	Rod Krenske Andrew Stanke Grant Cummins Paul (Ray) Ebert Dr Emily Ross
Pastor Member	Rev Greg Priebbenow

- **LCAQD Council for Department for Lutheran Youth Queensland**

Role	Elected
Lay Members	Janelle Anderson Dawn Schelberg Greta Mattias Christian Hansen

	Taylor Pukallus Nic Monsour (appointed by DCB)
Pastor Member	Rev Michael Mayer

- **LCAQD Constitutions Committee**

Role	Elected
Lay Members	Andrew Spyropolous Jakob Reinbott Jonathon Janetzki Daniel Warrener Malcolm Quinlan Rev Mark Gierus (dual role)
Pastor Members	Rev Mark Gierus (dual role) (Vacant) (Vacant)

Worship

Worship services and devotions were held throughout the Synod program.

Devotions followed the Synod theme *Open Doors to Many Communities of Grace: One Church. One Purpose. Many Ministries* (Revelation 3:7-12). Delegates and visitors were encouraged to welcome the Holy Spirit.

During the **In Memoriam**, led by Pastor Michael Mayer, Synod delegates and visitors remembered faithful servants of the church who have passed away in the past 12 months, including:

- Rev August Fricke
- Rev Karl Heinz Kirsch
- Rev Andy Gierus
- Mrs Bronwyn Strelan
- Rev Samuel Simpfendorfer
- Rev Hubert Krenske
- Mrs Jean Jarick
- Members of the Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal communities.

Pastor Aub Podlich, who passed away in the lead-up to Convention of the Synod, was remembered and will be formally acknowledged in 2026.

The **concluding service** on Saturday afternoon provided an opportunity to reflect on the journey that began with the Friday morning worship. The District Church Board was installed during this closing service.

The **Sunday morning worship** with Holy Communion was graciously hosted by Trinity Lutheran Church, Cairns.

In his sermon, LCAQD Bishop Mark Vainikka reminded us that Christ holds the keys to the doors he opens, and that we should rejoice in what we are, no matter how big or small we are.

He spoke again of the five open doors of the *Strategic Charter 2025-30* and that God gives us ears to hear so we can listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. He asked us to think about what the five doors might look like in our own communities of grace, to step through them when they open in his strength, to build a legacy that is quiet, deep and unflashy in witness to Jesus.

Attendees also celebrated Bishop Mark's birthday.

Thank you

Thanks were offered to everyone who helped make the 2025 Convention of Synod a success, including our wonderful volunteers.

DCB member Cheryl Steinhardt offered a vote of thanks on behalf of all delegates and attendees.

Flowers were presented to retired DCB Chair Shiron Dixon for her years of service and Dr Claire Seligmann who gifted her time and considerable skills in creating a new set of stoles for the District.

Cheryl also thanked those who have concluded their service to DCB and its councils and blessed newly appointed council members.

Finally, Peace Lutheran College Principal Shane Jurecky, along with College staff and volunteers, were thanked for the College's significant contribution to the successful preparation and running of Convention.

Conventions of Synod 2026 and 2027

We look forward to seeing delegates at Gold Coast in 2026 (5-7 June 2026) and Brisbane in 2027 (4-6 June 2027).