



# Australian Lutherans: A statement on Lutherans and Jews

29.09.1996 | Council of Presidents of the Lutheran Church of Australia

**In keeping with similar approaches of Lutheran churches in other countries recognising the need to address the prejudices inherited from the past. September 1996**

**Council of  
Presidents of  
the Lutheran  
Church of  
Australia**

## **Lutherans and the Jews**

The statement by the Council of Presidents of the Lutheran Church of Australia on Lutherans and Jews is in keeping with similar approaches in other Lutheran churches overseas, recognising the need to address the prejudices inherited from the past. The statement is presented by the Presidents in their pastoral concern for the well-being of the church including its attitudes towards others.

Judaism, like Christianity, is one of the world's living religions. Although Jewish people have

settled around the world, the state of Israel and the city of Jerusalem still hold a central place in the faith and the life of most Jews. Jewish people have lived in Australia from the earliest times of European settlement, as have Lutheran Christians.

We need to recognise that Christians over the centuries have often mistreated and persecuted the followers of Judaism and so have failed to live by the faith they profess. We Lutherans must also acknowledge that the anti-Jewish writings of Martin Luther were used by persecutors of Jews to justify their position and practices, and could be used by anti-Jewish extremists by tearing them out of their historical context.

Here in Australia, Lutherans have often been unaware of Luther's anti-Jewish writings and of their impact. Fortunately, perhaps because of greater tolerance under the mateship banner, and perhaps because both Lutherans and Jews were minority groups, there have

been very few occurrences of direct confrontation between Lutherans and the Australian Jewish community.

It is true, however, that before and during World War II, our Lutheran church papers naively and uncritically published German propaganda against the Jews. It is also true that the stress in Australian Lutheranism on the doctrinal gulf between Judaism and Christianity has led to instances of unloving attitudes by Lutherans towards Jewish people here. Unfortunately there are still some Lutherans who, through ignorance, envy or fear accept bigoted information put out by extreme right-wing groups about Jews; for example, that Jews control the international finance markets, or that there is a conspiracy among leading Jews to take over the world through a one-world government.

We declare that all forms of anti-Semitism are contrary to the Christian way of life. We urge the members of the

Lutheran Church of Australia to repent of and to confess our silence over the Holocaust and other such attacks on Jews, and our sins of prejudice against and misunderstanding of the Jewish people. We also thank God for those of both faiths in Australia who have modelled the way of peace, love and friendship in the past.

We call on members of the Lutheran Church of Australia to make the following commitment:

- to respect and defend the rights of the Jewish community to observe the faith of their ancestors;
- to live out their Christian faith by showing love and understanding towards Jewish people;
- to engage in open and honest dialogue with Jewish people about our common Old Testament

- heritage and  
our  
distinctive  
religious  
beliefs; and
- to oppose in  
word and  
action  
religious  
bigotry of  
whatever  
form both  
within the  
church and  
in the wider  
community,  
and to join  
with  
members of  
other faiths  
in working  
for harmony  
and  
tolerance in  
Australian  
society.

At the same time,  
since we believe  
that Jesus is the  
saviour of all  
people, let us all  
continue to confess  
him publicly as  
God's promised  
Messiah.

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