



**Bishop Paul Smith**  
**Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand**

**8 April 2025**

On the ordinations of the first women Pastors in the Lutheran Church of  
Australia and New Zealand

Dear Bishop Paul Smith,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Christ, our liberator and friend.

With joy and deep reverence, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand as you prepare to ordain six new pastors including—for the first time in your church’s history—two women: Maria Rudolph and Sue Westhorp. On behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, I give thanks to God for each of these ordinands, and especially for the faithful steps that have brought your church to this significant and sacred moment.

To Maria and Sue, I wish to say: what a powerful witness your ordinations will be, not only to your own communities, but to the wider church and to women of faith across the world. I remember the first time I stepped into a pulpit as a young woman — the weight of history on my shoulders, the quiet courage of those who had gone before me echoing in my heart. I imagine you may feel the same. You do not walk alone. You are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—past and present—who have prayed, persevered, and hoped for this.

May you preach with courage, lead with wisdom, and serve with the compassion of Christ. Your ordination is not a victory over others, but an offering of your life for the sake of the gospel. You have been called, gifted, and prepared for such a time as this.

And to the other four ordinands, Mark Tung, Justin Allen, Abraham Poulson, and Adam Morris, I pray the Spirit strengthens you as you step into ministry among your communities. May each of you know the encouragement and prayers of the wider church.

To you Bishop, and to the beloved people of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand: we honour your discernment, work and courage in coming to this point. The Uniting Church in Australia, which has always celebrated the ordination of women, stands with you in prayerful solidarity.

I acknowledge, too, that within your community there are those who continue to wrestle with this change. This is not an easy journey. In moments of significant transformation, it is natural for grief and uncertainty to sit alongside joy and

**President:** Rev Charissa Suli **General Secretary:** Andrew Johnson

**I pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land, past, present and future.**

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expectation. My prayer is that, even in difference, your church might remain held together by the grace of God—making space to listen deeply and to remain rooted in the love of Christ.

This moment is not just for today—it will ripple across generations. I think of the young women in your churches who, because of this step, may now dare to dream that God could be calling them too. I think of the communities who will be ministered to, loved, and led by these newly ordained Pastors. And I think of the church universal—how much stronger we are when every person is free to bring their full selves to the life and leadership of Christ’s body.

In a world yearning for good news, may this moment be a sign of hope—not just for today, but for every girl wondering if she belongs, every woman who has waited, and every community longing for renewal.

May the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand continue to walk gently and boldly into the future, held together by the love of Christ. And may the Spirit lead us all—across denominations, cultures, and generations—into deeper unity, greater compassion, and renewed courage for the work of the gospel.

With prayer, love and blessing,

**Rev Charissa Suli**  
**President of the Uniting Church in Australia**