

# Lutherans in Australia

Schild, Maurice E. and Hughes, Philip J. *The Lutherans in Australia* Canberra, Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research/Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996, pp 72-73.

## **From the BIMPR series - Religious Community Profiles**

### ***Chapter 7 - Lutherans in contemporary Australian society***

The Lutheran Church began as small groups of German immigrants looked for freedom to express their faith and to worship in their own ways. The early Lutherans settled on the land, particularly in South Australia and Queensland. There has been a long struggle as these groups have sought to find unity and to integrate themselves with the wider Australian society. That process was made more difficult by the two World Wars.

Today, the Lutheran Church is as Australian as any other major denomination. Although Lutheranism has its roots in Germany, most of its members come from families that have spent several generations in Australia. Lutherans are now spread throughout Australia, but the original patterns of settlement are still evident in the concentration of Lutherans in rural areas, and particularly in South Australia, although South Australia is no longer as dominant as it was. Since the Second World War, the churches have welcomed fellow Lutherans from many new cultural backgrounds, from Latvia and Estonia, Finland and other parts of Scandinavia. Some have come from Asia and Africa. Many new congregations, speaking a variety of languages, have formed.

Today, however, the Lutheran Church faces new problems. Its membership is ageing and

shrinking. It is finding it hard to retain the involvement of younger people, and there are signs that many younger people who are not involved will not return in the future. People from farm-owning and professional families feel comfortable in church life, but many working-class people do not. Many recent immigrants from Germany, while identifying themselves as Lutheran, have not joined the churches.

The Lutheran community is seeking to contact and interact with these people in a variety of ways. Indeed, it has had an influence on Australian society as a whole through its schools and its facilities for the elderly, and through many community care projects and chaplaincies.