



DECLARATION OF AUTONOMY

since 1976

140 Years from Mission to Church

since 1886

Liberated by Christ. Stand Firm. Be Fruitful | Gal 5:1, John 15:16



Why ELCPNG is celebrating 50 years, how this differs from ELCPNG Day, and how the 140 years of Lutheran mission in PNG connects with the Golden Jubilee.

HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

Why ELCPNG is Celebrating 50 Years



Ampo, 11 July 1976 - unveiling of the monument marking the change from ELCONG to ELCPNG.

11 July 1976 - 11 July 2026

National Church Identity and Autonomy in the Independent State of Papua New Guinea

The 50th anniversary marks the birth of ELCPNG as the National Church of the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea, and its declaration as an autonomous church responsible for its own affairs — that is 20 years after its first establishment as a local indigenous Lutheran church in 1956.

Papua New Guinea moved from colonial administration to self-government on 1 December 1973, and then to full political independence on 16 September 1975. In a similar way, the Lutheran Church had already taken a major step toward local leadership almost twenty years earlier.

In 1956, overseas missionaries and indigenous church leaders met at the first Synod in Simbang and formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea (ELCONG). This marked the formation of a locally governed indigenous Lutheran church body.

Then, on 11 July 1976, one year after Papua New Guinea became independent, a special ceremony was held at Ampo. A monument was unveiled to signify the change from ELCONG to ELCPNG. This change was more than a change of name. It expressed the Church's new national identity and its autonomy as a self-governing Lutheran church in Papua New Guinea.

In practical terms, autonomy means ELCPNG is not a branch of an overseas mission society or international church administration. It does not receive instructions from an international body on how to run and manage its internal affairs. Its leadership, mission, teaching, administration, property, discipline, and decision-making are carried within the Church in Papua New Guinea. The Synod is the highest decision-making body of ELCPNG, and through it the Church determines its own direction under God's guidance. Autonomy therefore placed responsibility for the life and future of the Church into the hands of the local Church itself — its members, congregations, pastors, districts, institutions, and indigenous leaders.

Autonomy did not mean separation from the Lutheran faith or from the wider Lutheran family. ELCPNG remains Lutheran in confession, doctrine, history, and fellowship. But as an autonomous national church, it carries its own responsibility for leadership, mission, teaching, administration, decision-making, and witness within Papua New Guinea.



Simbang 1956 - the ELCONG is founded.



Ampo monument plaque remembering Lutheran mission and the ELCPNG national identity milestone. Unveiled on 11 July '76

Milestones at a Glance

1886	1956	1975	1976	2026
Rev. Johannes Flierl arrives at Simbang, Finschhafen.	ELCONG is formed at the first Synod in Simbang.	Papua New Guinea becomes an independent nation.	Ampo monument marks the change from ELCONG to ELCPNG	ELCPNG celebrates 50 years of national church identity.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS | ELCPNG Golden Jubilee FAQ

1. Why is ELCPNG celebrating 50 years?

Because 11 July 2026 marks 50 years since the church publicly entered a new national identity as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. This was marked on 11 July 1976 at Ampo.

2. Why is the anniversary on 11 July?

Because on 11 July 1976, a special ceremony was held at Ampo to unveil the monument that signified the transition from ELCONG to ELCPNG.

3. Is this different from ELCPNG Day?

Yes. ELCPNG Day is celebrated on 12 July, remembering 12 July 1886 when Rev. Johannes Flierl arrived at Simbang, Finschhafen. 11 July marks the Golden Jubilee of ELCPNG.

4. Did our church only start 50 years ago?

No. The Lutheran faith in Papua New Guinea began much earlier, in 1886. The 50th anniversary celebrates 50 years since the church took on its national identity as ELCPNG.

5. What does ELCONG stand for?

ELCONG stands for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea. The name was adopted in 1956 when church leaders formed a locally governed indigenous Lutheran church body.

6. Why was it called ELCONG instead of ELCPNG?

In 1956, Papua New Guinea was not yet an independent sovereign nation. Lutheran mission work was especially strong in Morobe, Madang, and the Highlands, which were connected with the former New Guinea side.

7. What does ELCPNG stand for?

ELCPNG stands for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. The name expresses the church's identity within the modern sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea.

8. Difference between ELCONG and ELCPNG?

ELCONG, formed in 1956, marked a locally governed indigenous Lutheran church body. ELCPNG, marked in 1976, expressed the church's national identity in sovereign PNG and its autonomy as a self-governing Lutheran church.

9. What does autonomy mean for ELCPNG?

Autonomy means ELCPNG is not a branch of an overseas mission society or international church administration. It does not receive instructions from an international body on how to run and manage its internal affairs. Its leadership, mission, teaching, administration, property, discipline, and decision-making are carried within the Church in Papua New Guinea. The Synod is the highest decision-making body of ELCPNG.

10. Why is this anniversary important, and how can I join the celebration?

It helps the church remember and explain a major national milestone: the birth of ELCPNG as the National Church of PNG and as an autonomous church responsible for its own life and mission. Every Lutheran is invited to thank God for the church's mission heritage, local leadership, autonomy, and national identity.