

THE ELCA AND ECUMENISM: WHAT IS FULL COMMUNION?

From 'Characteristics of Full Communion'
 (www.elca.org/ecumenical/fullcommunion/characteristics.html)

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the characteristics of full communion are theological and missiological implications of the Gospel that allow variety and flexibility. These characteristics stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone. They will include at least the following, some of which exist at earlier stages:

- a common confessing of the Christian faith; a mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members;
- a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject only but always to the disciplinary regulations of other churches;
- a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service;
- a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life;
- a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches. We hold this definition and description of full communion to be consistent with Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, which says, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." Agreement in the Gospel can be reached and stated without adopting Lutheran confessional formulations as such. It allows for flexible, situation-oriented decisions about order and decision making structures. It does not demand organic union, though it does not rule it out. This definition is also in agreement with the understanding of unity

adopted by the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in 1984, "The Unity We Seek" (quoted under the Lutheran World Federation section of this statement).

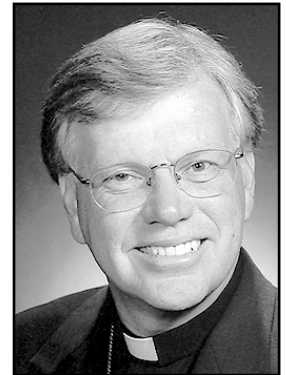
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks to be faithful to its scriptural and confessional foundations. As a confessional church that is evangelical, catholic and ecumenical, this church will pursue the goal of full communion and will rejoice in all movement toward that goal.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- The ELCA currently is in full communion partnership with the Moravian Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Get more information on these churches at www.elca.org/ecumenical/fullcommunion/
- More from the ELCA on ecumenical relations: www.elca.org/ecumenical/

MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

This Bible verse was selected by Harold Usgaard, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, for everyone in the synod to study.



"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." ISAIAH 2:3

ABOUT OUR SYNOD

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 130,000 baptized people in 184 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

The Bridge is a monthly publication of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA. For more information, contact the synod office:

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