

A Word to the Churches

from the heads of

The Anglican Church of Canada
The Episcopal Church
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

TWELVE YEARS AGO Anglicans and Lutherans in Canada and Episcopalians and Lutherans in the United States embarked together on a journey of full communion, by which we fully recognize each other “as churches in which the gospel is truly preached and the holy sacraments duly administered” (*Called to Common Mission*). With joy we can point to many ways in which our churches have drawn more closely together in the service of the gospel. We would highlight just a few:

In the United States:

- **Joint congregations and mission planning:** A number of Episcopal and Lutheran congregations across the United States are becoming more and more integrated by sharing buildings, clergy, and worship with each other, in the spirit of full communion. The two churches are also planting new ministries together and cooperating in outreach ministries.
- **Combined disaster relief efforts:** Lutherans and Episcopalians have pooled their resources to help respond to the victims of natural disasters, from floods in Iowa to hurricanes in Mississippi.
- **Shared personnel:** The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share campus ministries and training for federal prison and military chaplains, as well as an international policy and advocacy staff person in Washington, D.C.

In Canada:

- **Joint Assembly:** In July the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada will hold their General Synod and National Convention together in the form of a Joint Assembly under the theme, “Together for the Love of the World.” They will worship together, consider God’s mission in the world today, and discern next steps in their relationship as churches in full communion.
- **Combined youth and worship gatherings:** The Canadian Lutheran-Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering and the Anglican-Lutheran National Worship Conference are two biennial events organized and sponsored jointly by both churches.
- **Shared space:** The Diocese of Rupert’s Land and the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod are sharing the same office space in Winnipeg and have published a joint issue of the diocesan newspaper.

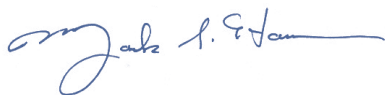
We celebrate also those things we have been able to do together as full communion partners across the Canada-U.S. border, and the four of us look forward to participating in the Joint Assembly in Ottawa in July. That chance to be together will be in addition to a meeting that happens among us each year. As the heads of our respective churches, we gather for a time of prayer, discussion, and fellowship. At our most recent meeting, held last December in Chicago, we reflected on the accomplishments of more than a decade of full communion.

We also recognized that in many ways we are still at the very beginning of our relationship as full communion partners, and that our full and mutual recognition of each other's ministries and sacraments "marks but one step toward the eventual visible unity of the whole Church catholic" (*Waterloo Declaration*). There is so much more we can be doing as churches in full communion, both within our respective countries and across the international boundary. We invite you to consider a few of the possibilities before us:

- **Theological education:** Can our churches work more collaboratively as we call forth and form lay and ordained leadership? Are those being trained for leadership in our churches instilled with the spirit of full communion? Do we equip them with the knowledge and tools they require to give expression to full communion among the local communities they will serve?
- **Shared episcopal oversight:** As a parallel to Anglican/Episcopal-Lutheran combined congregations that share a single priest or pastor, are there some regions of our countries where a similar model might be appropriate at the diocesan/synodical level? Could such a form of shared episcopal oversight in some places enhance the church's ministry and mission?
- **Speaking with one voice:** In countless ways our countries and churches share a common context that would allow us to speak in unison on many issues affecting Canadians and Americans, as well as to our global neighbours. What might our four churches say together about the environment, resource extraction, immigration, Indigenous people, poverty, the Holy Land? Might our voices in the public square be more clearly and credibly heard if they speak as one?

When the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America came into full communion in 2001, we acknowledged that "we do not know what new, recovered, or continuing tasks of mission this Concordat will lead our churches" into together (*Called to Common Mission*). Similarly, when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada celebrated full communion that same year, we declared ourselves "ready to be co-workers with God in whatever tasks of mission serve the gospel" (*Waterloo Declaration*).

As we continue the journey as full communion partners, may we have the courage and determination to follow where the Holy Spirit is leading our churches, and the strength and steadfastness to be faithful in serving God's mission in the world—together.



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