

On Closer **ACQUAINTANCE**

AN INTERIM REPORT

2016



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An interim report on the ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), and Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC), as presented to Archbishop Foley Beach (ACNA), President Robert Bugbee (LCC), and President Matthew Harrison (LCMS).

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Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE LUTHERAN CONFSSIONAL WRITINGS

CA.....	<i>Confessio Augustana</i> (Augsburg Confession)
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SA	Smalcald Articles
Tr.....	Tractate/Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
SC.....	Small Catechism
LC	Large Catechism
FC Ep.....	Formula of Concord, Epitome
FC SD.....	Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration
RN.....	Rule and Norm

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

Art.....	39 Articles
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
LSB.....	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i>
WA.....	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke</i> , Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]

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AN INTERIM REPORT

on the ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), and Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC).

Why bother with ecumenical relations between ACNA & LCMS–LCC?

SOME OBSERVERS MIGHT QUESTION THE VALUE OF THE ONGOING TALKS between ACNA and LCMS–LCC. After all, the numerically largest Lutheran and Anglican churches in North America have been in full communion with each other for some decades past, and this state of fellowship is reflected in the relations between many churches of the “mainline” Anglican Communion and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Moreover, since neither side of our dialogue expects to achieve altar and pulpit fellowship with the other in the foreseeable future, many might understandably yawn in boredom over the slowly developing relationship between us and even question the wisdom of investing time, effort, and money in the series of joint meetings we have held in various locations over the past six years.

We offer three replies to these serious questions.

1. Lutherans and Anglicans are the closest ecumenical cousins in Christendom

INSTEAD OF RENEWING THE ONE HISTORIC CHURCH OF THE WEST as Martin Luther had desired, the Reformation of the 16th century ended up producing several distinct church bodies severely at odds with each other. In this process many sharp words were spoken and negative judgments delivered, by Lutherans against Roman Catholics, Reformed, and Anabaptists; by Reformed against the other three groups just named; by the Church of England in her classic formularies against Roman Catholics and Anabaptists; and by Roman Catholics against all who had left their communion. Remarkably, Lutherans and the church body later called Anglican aimed few if any direct shots against each other. While not of one heart and soul, neither were our forefathers at daggers drawn with each other.

There is in fact enormous overlap between successive editions of the Book of Common Prayer and how it took shape in church life, on the one hand, and the

way in which the Book of Concord was reflected in the teaching, worship, and ethos of the Lutheran churches of Germany and Scandinavia. Accordingly, we can ascertain much compatibility between historic Anglicanism and Lutheranism in fundamental doctrine, liturgy, hymnody, and devotion.

For a considerable portion of the 18th century the ruling kings of England (who remained electors of Hanover) were practicing Lutherans and Anglicans at the same time; the Lutheran George Frederick Handel composed his church music mainly in England; and there was much formal cooperation on the mission field between some German Lutherans and the Church of England. We should not overstate the case, however. The Lutheran chaplain of Prince George of Denmark (1653–1708) refused to commune him after he decided, on certain state occasions, to receive the sacrament alongside his wife, Queen Anne.

Rather than describe ACNA and LCMS–LCC as sister churches, we should acknowledge each other as ecclesial first cousins, closely related indeed, but not yet partaking publicly of the same Lord’s Table. Our church bodies share a common foundation in the Holy Scriptures and in their confessions. The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion draw heavily on the Augsburg Confession and other Lutheran influences. Eight of the Thirty-Nine Articles are drawn directly from the Wittenberg Articles¹ of 1536, a joint Lutheran–Anglican document.

2. The significant internal divide within world Anglicanism and Lutheranism

THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE between the majority of Lutheran churches gathered in the Lutheran World Federation and the minority who

¹ Not long after Henry VIII broke with Rome formal negotiations ensued between a delegation of high-level English churchmen, including Edward Fox and Robert Barnes, and the Wittenberg theologians, which included Luther, Melancthon, and Bugenhagen. These meetings resulted in the Wittenberg Articles. See The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, *Christian Cyclopedia* (accessed February 16, 2016): <http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=W&word=WITTENBERGARTICLES>.

belong to the International Lutheran Council (ILC) have long been apparent for all to see. And it is important to note that some churches that belong to the LWF are increasingly acknowledging more commonality with the ILC than with the governing circles of the World Federation.

Informed observers were taken by surprise when major rifts began to appear within the worldwide Anglican Communion in the 1990s. Outsiders had viewed Anglicanism as endlessly pliable in matters of Christian doctrine, a form of church in which incompatible “parties” simply agreed to disagree.

This perception has been sharply challenged by the emergence of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), which has more adherents than the “mainline” Anglicans that include the Church of England, The Episcopal Church of the USA, and the Anglican Church of Canada. It is apparent that the divide in Lutheranism between the LWF and the ILC is paralleled by the division between GAFCON and the Anglican “mainline” churches of the Anglican Communion. GAFCON’s Jerusalem Declaration of 2008 confessed the God-man Jesus Christ as the only Savior of mankind and the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. “We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation.” It likewise affirmed the creedal dogma of the ancient Church: “We uphold the four Ecumenical Councils and the three historic Creeds as expressing the rule of faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” Moreover, it professed the 39 Articles more explicitly than many Anglicans had done for some time: “We uphold the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God’s Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.” As it went on to “uphold the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as a true and authoritative standard of worship and prayer,” the Jerusalem Declaration made it clear that, as a response to the grave pressures of the time, an explicitly confessional form of Anglicanism was emerging as a force within Christendom. While ACNA is not confessional in the same way as LCMS–LCC, it is confessional nonetheless. *To Be A Christian: An Anglican Catechism* (2014) indicates that the 39 Articles “have become the doctrinal norm for Anglicans around the world” (10).

From ancient times the expression *lex credendi lex orandi* (“law of faith, law of prayer”) has expressed the intimate inter-relationship of doctrine and worship, of what is preached with what is prayed. We note that while Anglicans have been famous for their patterns of prayer and devotion, Lutherans have majored in more

precise doctrinal definition and theological precision. While both sides acknowledge the essential quality of both *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, it may be that Lutherans can assist Anglicans toward more careful attention to the first and that Anglicans can help Lutherans to deepen their practice of the second. Moreover, as our denominations acknowledge God’s call to a life transformed in Christ we can agree that our spiritual practices and doctrinal statements are part of the transforming power of Christ in our lives or the law of life in Christ, *lex vivendi in Christo*.

3. “That they may all be one” (John 17:21)

WHILE THE PARTICIPANTS IN OUR DIALOGUES SPEEDILY AGREED to work toward intermediate goals that stop short of the establishment of full communion/altar and pulpit fellowship between us, both sides acknowledge that the sad divisions within Christendom do not correspond with the will of Him who is the sole Head of His mystical body, the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We accordingly make it our prayer that, in the time and manner of His choosing, our Lord would grant each side in our conversations to acknowledge our “first cousin” to be in fact a true sister church, with the result that we would welcome each other wholeheartedly to our respective altars and enjoy the blessed situation in which our clergy and people would be interchangeable with each other as we stand under the grace of God and work for His kingdom.

The Nature and Purpose of This Report

WE EARNESTLY HOPE THAT THESE PAGES MAY BE READ AND PONDERED as widely as possible by the clergy and people of our respective church bodies, not only in private but also in the setting of Bible classes, clergy and theological conferences, and other appropriate forums of Christian education. The report is intended as an aid for ACNA folk wishing to get a deeper understanding of their counterparts in LCMS–LCC and vice versa, and as a resource that will help us determine the nature and goals of our relationship in the years ahead. In the process we hope that both sides will become convinced of the width and depth of the common ground we share in doctrine, liturgy, hymnody, devotional resources, and Christian life. At the same time, we anticipate the development of an informed awareness of the areas in which significant differences still divide us. As this study finds prayerful use, we ask that our church bodies consider

the ways in which we can cooperate and come together in ways that fall short of full communion but do allow the greatest measure of cooperation while maintaining full theological integrity.

As the report moves forward, questions will be noted that each side fraternally and respectfully poses to the other, questions that can be answered both separately and also together, in joint study sessions and other gatherings convened on regional and local levels.

A Lutheran Caveat

THE RESPECTIVE THEOLOGICAL HERITAGES of ACNA and LCMS–LCC led the two sides in the dialogue that began in the fall of 2010 to come to the table with different understandings of the preconditions for the practice of full church fellowship, which pinnacles in intercommunion at the altar.

Historic Anglicanism extended a memorable olive branch to the rest of Christendom in the shape of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886-88, which ACNA acknowledges as part of its heritage.² As they have insisted on a fuller listing of the articles of faith and on more precise definitions in controverted questions such as the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament of the altar, Lutherans who adhere to the Book of Concord have held the bar of fellowship higher by insisting on agreement "in doctrine and in all its articles" (FC SD X, 31).

These points raise several questions:

- Should the Lambeth Quadrilateral be more specific about the nature of the two chief sacraments, their benefits, and their role in the life of the Church?
- Was the Lambeth Quadrilateral forged against the background of English church history following the Reformation and thus mainly concerned with "Home Reunion" rather than with rapprochement between the various confessions of Christendom?
- How does Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*, CA) VII impact our discussions?

² As adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888, the Quadrilateral encompassed these four points: (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith. (b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith. (c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself — Baptism and the Supper of the Lord — ministered with un failing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him. (d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

- Which of our differences are church-divisive, and which represent legitimate plurality within the one Church of Christ?

At this stage we walk the middle path of what our RC friends call "imperfect communion." We aim here to draw upon our respective formularies from the Reformation period and, where possible, also the modern era, to establish the range and degree of consensus that exists between us on major articles of faith and their consequences for churchly practice. In the process we shall also identify areas of unresolved disagreement and points requiring further thought and study.

Doctrinal Comparisons

The headings used in this section are drawn primarily from our foundational statements of faith, the ancient Creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Augsburg Confession respectively.

1. God the Holy Trinity (Art. I = CA I)

BACK IN THE 16TH CENTURY CONSENSUS on the "lofty articles of the divine majesty" (SA I) could be taken for granted, but over the intervening centuries a whole host of movements and tendencies (e.g., Unitarianism, pantheism, process theology, death of God theology, open theism) have hammered at the bedrock of the historic Christian faith. Against this background we rejoice that both our churches are unanimous in confessing the oneness and eternity of God whose essence is equally shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and who infinitely transcends all created being. All our members make this confession their own through frequent repetition of the Nicene Creed.

Our churches embrace the faith of the historic church as expressed in the ecumenical councils and seek to protect that faith as it has been passed down over the centuries. As a corollary of this truth, all prayer to the Father, both public and private, is to be offered in the holy name of Jesus. "For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved" (Art. XVIII).

Both sides are alert to the danger of religious syncretism in contemporary North American culture and call upon our clergy and people to encourage each other in resisting its pressure.

Major theologians have influenced many through their speculations on the supposed final salvation of all men, including those who reject the Gospel in this life. We are unanimous in affirming the danger and reality of

eternal damnation and in warning against the seductive force of universalism, which is unfaithful to Scripture and has the effect of crippling mission and underplaying the seriousness of the warfare of the Church militant.

2. Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word and His saving work (Art. II = CA III)

BOTH CHURCHES CONFESS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST as fully God and fully Man, one divine person in two natures, according to the Definition of Chalcedon of AD 451.

In our present context, where many argue that the “historical Jesus” was other than the one Christ portrayed in the Gospels, we affirm that, “the four Gospels . . . , whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven” (*Dei verbum*, 19).

We each confess the hypostatic or personal union, that is, the taking up of Christ’s human nature, at the moment of His conception, into the person of the Eternal Son.

Original and actual sin have rendered it impossible for fallen mankind to make even the least contribution to its reconciliation with Almighty God. We therefore jointly confess that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man “truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men” (Art. II). The same one Christ “was truly born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to propitiate God’s wrath” (CA III).

Pastors of LCMS–LCC can pray, in words taken from the Communion service of BCP, to the Father, “who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.”

3. The unique authority of the divinely inspired Holy Scripture

BOTH CHURCHES UNDERSTAND 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:20-21 to speak of the entire Holy Scripture of both Old and New Testaments, whose full inspiration by the Holy Spirit we unhesitatingly affirm.

The Lutheran confession of Holy Scripture as unique and ultimate authority over the Christian Church

(“the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated,” FC SD RN 3) is matched by Art. VI’s acknowledgement of its “sufficiency for salvation”: “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” “This means that the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel” (SA II.ii, 15).

Both churches agree in their estimate of the status of the Old Testament Apocrypha, or deuterocanonical books, as Art. VI echoes Luther: “And the other Books (as *Hierome* saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet it doth not apply them to establish any doctrine.”

Both churches speak of the infallibility of Holy Scripture as a consequence of its inspiration. We understand that Scripture IS the Word of God and not merely contains the Word of God. Both sides commit to Scriptural inerrancy. Exactly how we each understand it is a topic which should be the subject of further, ongoing discussion among our theologians, pastors, and people.

4. The credal heritage (CA I – Art. VIII)

BOTH CHURCHES CONFESS THE BINDING QUALITY of the scripturally demonstrable teaching of the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and of the Chalcedonian Definition of AD 451 (quoted in full in the Catalogue of Testimonies, *Concordia Triglotta*, 1109), along with the Christological decisions of the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils. The three historic Creeds are the first confessions included in the Book of Concord, which are affirmed in Art. VIII and have appeared in almost all editions of the BCP. As vital doctrinal statements, the creeds serve as foundational tools for catechesis, faith and devotion.

Affirmation of the classical creeds goes hand in hand with deep respect for the ancient Fathers and for the practices of the Church of the early centuries. But as Christian antiquity assists us in the understanding of the Scriptures, it adds nothing to their content. We note and affirm the major role played by patristic studies among the Lutheran and Anglican theologians of the 17th century.

5. Original Sin (Art. IX = CA II)

EACH CHURCH IS EQUALLY AT HOME with the confession of the other concerning the essence and consequences of original sin.

It [original sin] is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. (Art. IX)

All men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers' wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. (CA I)

The Anglican confession agrees with the Lutheran conception of the bondage of the (unregenerate) will:

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will. (Art. IX)

6. Justification (CA IV = Art. XI)

IT IS ALSO TAUGHT AMONG US that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5. (CA IV)

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort. (Art. XI)

Luther's teaching on justification was spread throughout England in the belief that it is fully compatible with the Anglican formularies when the Elizabethan Bishop of London, Edwyn Sandys, wrote the foreword to an English translation of the Reformer's 1531 Commentary

on Galatians, calling it "a Treatise most comfortable to all afflicted consciences exercised in the Schoole of Christ."

In his *The Rise of Moralism*, Bishop C. FitzSimons Alison has demonstrated how the Anglican formularies' expression of the doctrine of justification dominated the Church of England until the Civil War of the 17th century, from which time onwards other conceptions came into play (as happened at the same time in Lutheranism through the influence of the Pietist movement).

The remarkable convergence of our two confessions on this point of doctrine on which Luther comments, "When this article stands, the Church stands; when it falls, the Church falls" (WA 40 III. 352, 3), gives a strong impetus to our churches to implore the Lord's assistance toward our achieving the degree of consensus that would make full church fellowship possible.

7. Good Works (Art XII = CA VI)

OUR CHURCHES AGREE that, that, in order for works performed in obedience to God's will to be pleasing in His sight, their doers are to be such persons as are justified by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith.

Our churches teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruit. It is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will. We should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. The forgiveness of sins and justification is received through faith. The voice of Christ testifies, "So also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" The Fathers teach the same thing: Ambrose says, "It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving forgiveness of sins, without works, through faith alone." (CA VI)

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's Judgement; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit. (Art. XII)

Consensus exists between us that, while the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, having been fulfilled by Christ, is now abolished, and while the political-civil law of the Old Testament is not binding on Christian societies, the moral law of the Old and New Testaments

remains in effect for believers. This truth places a forceful question mark against all forms of situation ethics.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s and its continuing impact have gravely exacerbated the antinomianism that lurks even in the human nature of the regenerate. A major example of this is the redefinition of marriage in both Canada and the United States, concerning which a joint statement has been issued in the course of our dialogue.³ This situation highlights the pertinence and relevance of the Lutheran confession of the third use of the law (FC VI), whose content ACNA wholeheartedly accepts. We agree that God will reward good works done in grace, both here and hereafter.

8. Holy Ministry & Means of Grace

BOTH CHURCHES AGREE that, when Jesus called the apostles and laid particular mandates upon them, our Lord established an office of ministry, distinct from the royal priesthood of the baptized, which is to continue till His coming again. At the same time, there are important distinctions in our understandings of ministry and ecclesiology.

Following an interpretation of the New Testament data which Luther and his colleagues took over from St. Jerome through Peter Lombard (†1160), the Book of Concord recognizes no major difference between bishop and presbyter and hence focuses on the essential oneness of the office founded by Christ for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the feeding of the flock (CA V).

Thomas Cranmer's Preface to his 1551 Ordinal, which forms part of the Book of Common Prayer, has a different perspective on the New Testament and the early Church: "It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." Accordingly, Anglican clergy have been made Deacons, permanent deacons as well as transitional deacons. The transitional deacons in their capacity are similar to Lutheran "vicars." For the full exercise of ministry, they are ordained Priests. For the ministry of supervision over a whole diocese, which includes being the ministers of confirmation and ordination, some Priests are consecrated to the office of Bishop.

The office of bishop as such soon died out in Lutheran Germany, and as secular princes arrogated to themselves the title of "supreme bishop," they delegated their

presumed episcopal authority to ordained superintendents, who served at their pleasure. Looking at German Lutheranism from outside, Archbishop William Laud (†1645) held that while the Lutheran polity lacked the name (*nomen*) of bishop, it nevertheless retained its reality (*res*). And the major Lutheran theologian John Gerhard (†1637) taught that superintendents should be true bishops to and for the clergymen under their care.

The episcopal succession inherited from the middle ages continued in the Lutheran lands of Sweden and Finland, which have always known and valued the office of bishop, while not regarding it as essential to the existence of the Church.

Many classical Anglican theologians taught that the office of bishop pertains to the wellbeing (*bene esse*) or the full being (*plene esse*) rather than to the very essence (*esse*) of the Church, with only a minority denying legitimacy to the ministry of non-episcopal churches. A famous advocate of the latter view was John Henry Newman, who influenced many subsequent Anglo-Catholics on this point, without his perspective prevailing within the Anglican Communion as a whole.

The structuring of ordained ministry is a topic that should be addressed in our conversations on the basis of the New Testament and church-historical data.

- Anglicans ask Lutherans to consider the ways in which the ministry of bishop (as distinct from presbyter) is already at work among them, and encourage them to acknowledge this gift of the Holy Spirit in word and deed.
- Lutherans ask Anglicans how recognition of the office of bishop can go hand in hand with acknowledgement of the unicity of the office instituted by Christ.

We note that Lutheran Church–Canada has reawakened the office of Deacon, understanding it as an office auxiliary to that of pastor (bishop/presbyter) and open to both men and women. Within Anglicanism the diaconate was historically mainly a transitional office, held by a completed seminarian *en route* to the priesthood (presbyterate).

- What, according to the New Testament, is the essence of the diaconate? How is it distinguished from the episcopate/presbyterate? How could and should a permanent diaconate take institutional form in our churches today?

Using a term that emerged within both Anglicanism and Lutheranism around the middle of the 17th century, both churches understand the divinely commanded

³ "An Affirmation of Marriage" — A statement by the Anglican Church in North America, Lutheran Church–Canada, North American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. <http://blogs.lcms.org/2013/an-affirmation-of-marriage>, accessed February 16, 2016.

work of the ordained as a ministry of the “means of grace” whereby the Holy Spirit communicates to sinners the fruits of Christ’s work.

LCMS–LCC understand the instituting words and deeds of Christ, authoritatively interpreted by the apostles, to preclude the ordination of women to the office of pastor (presbyter/bishop).⁴ The majority within ACNA holds this position, while being engaged at the present time in a consensus-seeking discussion with the minority within its midst that takes the opposite view.

As Justification and adherence to Holy Scripture are points of greatest common agreement between our church bodies, the ordering of the ministry is the area where we have found the most work, study, and discussion needs to be done to reach a common understanding of the connection between our practices.

9. The Church

SLIGHT DIFFERENCES OF NUANCE, which are not freighted with church-divisive force, are apparent as the 39 Articles (Arts. XIX & XX) make their own the earlier confession of the Lutherans at Augsburg (CA VII, VIII, XV).

While the essence of the Church, which is Christ’s presence among, that is, His indwelling of forgiven sinners, is not visible to the human eye, the Church becomes manifest in time and space as the “pure Word is preached” (Art. XIX) / “the Gospel is purely proclaimed” (CA VII) and “the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same” (Art XIX) / “the Sacraments are correctly administered” (CA VII).

The Anglican wording just cited lacks the typically Lutheran awareness of the distinction between Law (God’s rigorous demand) and Gospel (His gracious gift). While many Anglicans have been sensitive to this distinction, it has not been a foremost badge of Anglican identity.

- Should and could ACNA make its own the characteristically Lutheran perception (adopted from the Reformer and highlighted by Missouri Synod founder, C. F. W. Walther) of the distinction between Law and Gospel?
- Can Lutherans maintain the Law/Gospel distinction without minimizing the place of the Law in sanctification?

The theologians of 17th-century Lutheran Orthodoxy taught that, as the Church becomes visible through the means of grace, she is seen to be the “synthetic” or

“composite” Church (*ecclesia synthetica*), composed of laity and clergy. ACNA likewise teaches the biblical doctrine (1 Cor 3:9; Phil 1:1b) of the divinely willed distinction of laity and clergy who are to work together in the mission of the Church.

We agree in rejecting the ancient heresy of Donatism combated by St. Augustine: while our shepherds are stringently urged to lead holy lives, the validity of the means of grace is not dependent on their at all times patchy holiness! See CA VIII; Art. XXVI.

As we grapple with the issue of the episcopal ordering of the Church, which has largely prevailed through space and time, we should be careful to avoid caricature of the other. LCMS–LCC appreciate the emphasis of Article IV.1 of ACNA’s constitution, which acknowledges that, “The fundamental agency of mission in the Province is the local congregation.”

10. Holy Baptism (Art. XXVII = CA IX)

HOLY BAPTISM, TO BE ADMINISTERED ONCE and never repeated, incorporates its recipients into Christ, clothes them with Him, makes them participants in His death and resurrection, and calls them to a new life under grace that will be consummated in paradise and at the resurrection of the dead. In Baptism we are made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven (Anglican Offices of Instruction BCP).

The Anglican formularies made more use than did their Lutheran counterparts of the Augustinian-medieval understanding that a sacrament is a “sign of a sacred thing.” Yet sacraments are not empty signs, “but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him” (Art. XXV). “A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God gives us the sign as a means whereby we receive that grace, and as a tangible assurance that we do in fact receive it” (*To Be a Christian Catechism* #102).

Bearing in mind how the Articles and BCP employ the term “sign,” consensus with the Lutheran confessions can be discerned when Art. XXVII praises Baptism as “a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.” Shortly after the actual Baptism in BCP, the Priest an-

⁴ LCMS and LCC understand this as a church-divisive issue.

nounces, “Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this Child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church ...” And the Priest prays, “We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this Infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own Child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church.” An italicized paragraph placed after BCP’s rite gives the assurance, “It is certain by God’s Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.”

11. Holy Communion

WE AGREE THAT the life of the Church on earth pinna- cles in celebration of the rite that our Lord instituted for all subsequent generations of His followers in the upper room on the night of His betrayal. As we fail to agree fully on this sacrament of unity, we experience the pain of Christian division and long to attain true consensus with respect to the doctrine and practice of Holy Communion.

Seven of the eight 16th-century documents included in the Book of Concord make explicit and often detailed confession of the doctrine that Martin Luther upheld against Zwingli at the Colloquy of Marburg (1529) and that his faithful followers strongly embraced after his death when Melancthon spoke and wrote ambiguously and veered toward the Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper (Philippism).

LCMS–LCC teach that the elements of bread and wine blessed by Christ’s word are His body and blood, and that they impart His body and blood to the mouth of communicants (*manducatio oralis* “oral eating”), being received not only by the pious (who also partake of the gifts with their heart: *manducatio spiritualis* “spir- itual eating”), but also by the impious and unbelieving (*manducatio impiorum* “eating of the ungodly”). As Lu- therans articulate the “sacramental union” of the Lord’s body and blood with the earthly elements, they deny that the “real” presence is “local” or “circumscriptive” and distinguish the “definitive” (sacramental) presence of Christ’s body and blood from the “repletive” omni- presence He enjoys through the hypostatic union and especially since His ascension “above all heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph 4:10).

The sacrament of the altar has undoubtedly been the most sensitive and charged topic dealt with in our dis- cussions, with the Anglican side sometimes contesting the Lutheran reading of the Anglican formularies from the 16th century.

As Lutherans see it, the large volume of Lutheran influ- ence on the English Reformation was qualified by the close relations cultivated by Archbishop Cranmer and his colleagues and by some bishops of the next genera- tion (e.g., John Jewel of Salisbury) with Henry Bullinger and other representatives of the Swiss Reformation. The relevant sections of Cranmer’s 42 Articles of 1553 and the Black Rubric placed in the 1552 Prayer Book on or- ders of the Privy Council manifestly advocate Zwingli’s non- (actually anti-) Lutheran understanding of Holy Communion.

Some ACNA representatives have balanced an acknowl- edgement of the Lord’s specific and “real” presence with the blest elements with an insistence on the aspect of mystery associated with Holy Communion, which defies precise verbal formulations. At this point we have noted that our confessionalism is not identical in tone and content.

The Lutheran side acknowledges that Cranmer’s 42 Articles and the Black Rubric are not Anglicanism’s last word on the sacramental presence of our Lord, which has been so ardently contested from the Reformation to the present day. From the days of the first Elizabeth onwards, BCP has adopted words and ritual prescrip- tions that mark a rupture with Zwinglianism. In fact, the current ACNA communion liturgy does not have the Black Rubric at all!

The wording of ACNA’s joint statement with the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) on Holy Commu- nion implies acceptance of the *manducatio oralis* and *manducatio impiorum*:

#9. We take Jesus at his word when he said, “This is my body. ... This is my blood.” St. Paul affirms this when He states, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a partici- pation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16)

Art XXVIII states that, “The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.” Historically some Anglicans have interpreted this in a way that is consistent with the Augsburg Confession while other Anglicans have seen it as opposing the Lu- theran view. The second sentence remains problematic in Lutheran perspective. Yet, Queen Elizabeth famously penned, “Christ was the word that spake it. He took the bread and brake it; And what his words did make it, That I believe and take it.”

The Prayer of Humble Access from the 1662 BCP similarly petitions:

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

A major difference of practice between our two churches concerns the bounds of admission to the altar. As we address the sensitive issue of open versus closed communion, we admit that a variety of practice exists on the ground in the parishes of LCMS–LCC and also that a corresponding variety marks the component dioceses of ACNA. Moreover, as an open communion practice became standard practice for North American Anglicans and Episcopalians from the 1960s onwards, it must be admitted that the Anglican formularies had not previously been understood to entail open communion.

The matter of admission to the altar, and especially of the communing of Christians of other confession than that of the host congregation, requires further treatment in our conversations, and can only fruitfully be addressed in the context of (1) the nature of the holy things distributed at the altar and (2) the extent and content of the articles of faith whose unanimous confession is a precondition for the public exercise of church fellowship.

12. Holy Absolution

WE EACH ACKNOWLEDGE that the Risen Lord authorized the apostles and their associates and successors in ministry to forgive sins in His name. Used at the laying on of hands in BCP’s rite for the ordination of priests, John 20:22-23 features in the same context in *LSB*’s rite for the ordination of pastors. Luther’s Small Catechism describes this mandate of Christ as the “Office of the Keys” and interprets the Lord’s words as follows:

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

The doctrine and practice of pastoral absolution was a prominent feature of the Lutheran Reformation: “It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse” (CA IX).

While not explicitly affirmed in the XXXIX Articles, the first Exhortation of BCP’s Order of Holy Communion (1662) directs troubled sinners to private absolution:

And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God’s Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God’s holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with [spiritual] counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

The Order of the Visitation of the Sick envisages private confession as a component of pastoral care, and includes a formula of absolution that could be used by Lutheran pastors:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Lutheran Confessions intend private confession and absolution to be a normative ingredient of pastoral care and ongoing Christian formation, but this means of grace, now in the process of being recovered, largely fell out of practice in subsequent centuries. As they have invited parishioners to avail themselves of confession and absolution, Anglican clergymen have often said of this rite, “None must, some should, all may.”

Both churches acknowledge and highlight the seal of confession to which our clergy bind themselves in ordination.

The Lutheran Confessions acknowledge absolution as a “genuine [i.e., Christ-instituted] sacrament” having “the commandment of God and the promise of grace” (Ap XIII, 4). No substantial — and certainly no church-dividing — but only a minor terminological issue exists here when the Anglican Catechism issued by ACNA in 2014 distinguishes between sacraments of the Gospel and sacraments of the Church, placing absolution in the latter category (Questions #116 & 117). Questions #120 and 121 on absolution and its gift are congruous with the Lutheran confession.

13. The role of Christian princes in time past, and the ongoing dangers of Erastianism

FROM THE TIME THAT CHRISTIANITY BECAME the favored and then the official religion of the State, earthly rulers assumed a role in the public life and governance of the Church. In late medieval times secular rulers had official representation at church councils, a state of affairs that continued at the Council of Trent. The well-known role of Constantine and his successors made it axiomatic for Art. XXI that “General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes.” Art. XXXVII taught that the British sovereign “should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil,” a viewpoint that went hand in hand with the reigning king or queen being the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Along the same lines the Lutheran confessions acknowledge ruling princes as the “chief members of the Church” (Tr 54), a concession that went so far that the Lutheran princes of Germany assumed the title of “supreme bishop” of their respective territories. Till 2000 the king of Sweden was the “senior member” of the Lutheran Church of his realm, and the king of Norway was until recently the Protector of the Church of Norway.

As constitutional, representative government became the norm and effective power passed from hereditary sovereigns to elected members of the various national legislatures, the ruler’s role of “supreme governor” or “supreme bishop” fatefully passed to the secular governments of the lands of historic Anglicanism and Lutheranism. A consequence of this development is the startling fact that the ultimate authority in the established Church of England and in the State churches of Scandinavia is not the Word of God as understood by the Lutheran or Anglican confession, but the will of governments that function from an unbelieving mindset. Our churches in their old homelands are paying a high price for the state control of the governance of the churches (Erastianism) that crept in from the fourth century onwards. While Christian princes and elected rulers have indeed benefited the Church at many junctures in her history (Is 49:23), at present the threats of secular government against the Church are ominous.

Our North American setting does not feature princely/governmental rule of the Church, but both ACNA and LCMS–LCC face an uphill struggle as we resist the secularist “spirit of the age” and endeavor to implement the confession that our Lord Jesus Christ is the sole sovereign of His holy Church, and that He exercises this sovereignty through His holy Word that remains inde-

pendent of all secular lordship. Without surrendering or in any way qualifying the unique lordship of Jesus, true God and true Man (Psalm 2), as here below we remain “strangers and exiles” (Heb 11:13), we are to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings ... for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way” (1 Tim 2:1f.).

Conclusion

WHEN OUR OPEN-ENDED CONVERSATIONS BEGAN six years ago, some of the signatories to this report approached our task with a mixture of low expectations and a certain nervousness before the unknown. All of us are somewhat surprised to have discovered the deep common bonds between us in the Body of Christ, and to have registered the large measure of consensus that we have documented above. We regard these things that we have discovered together as a gift of the Lord, and trust Him to use our findings to His glory and to the good of the universal Church. As we commend this report to the people and clergy of ACNA, LCMS, and LCC, we encourage Lutherans and Anglicans to remember each other in prayer, embrace one another in Christian love, to encourage each other to confess Christ boldly in our ever darkening times, and to support each other in mission and outreach in faithfulness to Him who has laid the same Great Commission on us all.

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