

DRAFT

Guidelines for the Celebration of Full Communion

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—The United Methodist Church

January 11, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The full communion agreement between The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is noteworthy among such ecumenical statements. Some non-US conferences of the United Methodist Church, an international church, already stand locally in full communion with other member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. Moreover, there were no historical condemnations requiring our attention since one consequence of the separate contexts in which our churches arose is that neither church ever officially condemned the other. We rejoice in our new full communion agreement between the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and:

- recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic faith as it is expressed in the Scriptures, confessed in the church's historic creeds, and attested to in the Lutheran Confessions and the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church;
- recognize the authenticity of each other's baptism and Eucharist, and extend sacramental hospitality to one another's members;
- recognize the validity of our respective ministries, including:
 - each other's ordination of people to the ministry of word and sacrament;
 - the authentic diaconal service of ordained deacons in the UMC and rostered lay ministers in the ELCA; and
 - each other's polity and ministries of oversight; and
- recognize the full interchangeability and reciprocity of all ordained ministers of word and sacrament, subject to the constitutionally approved invitation for ministry in each other's churches.

Because these churches recognize each other as churches that rightly preach the gospel and administer the sacraments according to the word of God, the following guidance for shared worship is offered to foster our full communion and to promote the worship of God in ways that enrich and honor both our churches. As background, it will be helpful for planners of joint worship to refer to the teaching documents on the practice of word and sacrament that each church has approved: *The Use of the Means of Grace* (ELCA, 1997), *This Holy Mystery* (UMC, 2004) and *By Water and the Spirit* (UMC, 1996, Renewed 2004). These guidelines for the celebration of full communion are not designed to be a set of regulations that answer every local situation. They do express, however, agreed-upon principles between our two churches. These guidelines are provided at the direction of the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops prior to the establishment of the joint commission described in the "Implementing Resolution for Full Communion."

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Proclamation of the word of God is at the heart of our full communion. The clear and strong proclamation of Scripture by public reading is our common heritage. Ample opportunity to read, sing, preach and hear the gospel should be included in every experience of shared worship.

- The use of a shared lectionary for worship together is an important tool. Use of the Revised Common Lectionary is the norm for Lutheran congregations and is widespread in United Methodist congregations. In shared liturgical settings, the use of this ecumenical lectionary is the norm. It builds upon what we share and proclaim Sunday by Sunday in our congregations.
- The singing of hymns is particularly important to our shared tradition. Congregational singing of hymns, the psalms, biblical paraphrases and liturgical texts enhances our shared witness to the gospel. Our respective hymnals and the hymnody found in them illustrates this shared tradition.
- Proclamation through preaching on biblical texts is at the heart of our shared histories and ought to be apparent whenever we worship together.

HOLY BAPTISM

Congregations of our churches will continue to recognize the validity of baptism administered in the other church participating in this relationship of full communion.

Celebrating together the baptism of infants, children or adults, with ordained ministers of word and sacrament from both church bodies participating, is encouraged as a sign of our unity in Christ. While each baptism is administered by one ordained minister, the presence of ordained ministers and laity from the other church, and their participation in the other parts of the liturgy, testifies to the ecumenical character of all baptisms and to our mutual recognition of members in full communion. Occasions especially fitting for such baptismal celebrations in shared worship are the Vigil of Easter, Pentecost, the Baptism of Our Lord, All Saints Day or All Saints Sunday.

When baptisms take place in the context of the worship in a congregation of one of our churches, inviting representatives from the other church to be present as guests, as witnesses or as sponsors also can serve this sign of our common baptism into Christ. Each baptism is entered into the records of the church accepting responsibility for the ongoing care and nurture of the newly baptized and whose ordained minister of word and sacrament administered the sacrament.

HOLY COMMUNION

Within the relationship of full communion, participating together in the eucharist is an important mark of the full communion we now share as church bodies. To encourage celebrations of the Holy Communion or Service of Word and Table among our congregations and other expressions of the church, the following mutually agreed upon guidelines are provided.

1. It is important that a spirit of graciousness and commonality mark the planning of a service for assemblies of our two churches, including all of the details of the celebration. This planning is best done well in advance of the common celebration and should include ordained and lay leaders from each of the participating churches. Liturgical leadership also should include the ordained ministers and laity of both churches. Planning offers an opportunity for participants to develop familiarity with and appreciation for the liturgical traditions of the participating churches as they are embodied in the worship books and

lectionary of each. These include *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELCA, 2006), *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (ELCA, 1998), *This Far by Faith* (ELCA, 1999), *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (UMC, 1992), *The United Methodist Hymnal* (UMC, 1989), *Mil Voces para Celebrar* (Spanish-language hymnal; UMC, 1996), *Come, Let Us Worship* (Korean-language hymnal; UMC, 1992) and the *Revised Common Lectionary* (1992), used in both churches.

2. In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, approval of a bishop may be necessary for special worship services outside congregations (see *The Use of the Means of Grace* [1997], applications 39b, 39c and 39d). Planners need to be alert to these polity requirements so that the tradition of each participating church body is respected. The bishop may request a report containing such things as expected attendance, the order of service, and a listing of presiding minister, assisting ministers and preacher together with their respective church bodies. The United Methodist Church has no similar requirement. However, it would be advisable for United Methodist congregations to notify the office of the Bishop and the District Superintendent as these events are planned to occur so their respective offices can help publicize them more widely.
3. Mutual respect among the churches is enhanced and nurtured when the parity of ministries in the churches is manifested in sacramental worship. This principle should inform planning as well as leadership in the actual celebration. Choosing one presiding minister to offer the eucharistic prayer, as opposed to concelebration through word or gesture by ministers from each of the church bodies, is a mutual recognition of our ministries in which one may serve on behalf of all. Therefore, parts of the Great Thanksgiving should not be parceled out among ministers. The presence of an ordained minister from each of the participating church bodies at the altar or table during the Great Thanksgiving is encouraged as a visible sign of our full communion and our mutual ministry in Christ, as is the participation by ministers (lay and ordained) of both communions in the distribution of Holy Communion. Both churches recognize the need for an ordained minister (pastor or elder) to preside and consecrate the Holy Communion.
4. Planners need to be sensitive to the fact that the manner and mode of distribution varies widely among congregations. What is comfortable and familiar to some may feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar to others. Care should be taken that the manner of distribution be understood clearly by all. Lutherans receive the consecrated elements standing or kneeling, at the altar or at stations for distribution (not seated or standing at their seats). United Methodists prefer a similar practice; however, in some of the predecessor denominations of United Methodism, the consecrated elements were distributed and received in a variety of ways, including passing the elements through the pews. In shared liturgical settings, communicants should always come forward in the manner described above as the preferred practice of both churches. United Methodists, while speaking of the “bread and wine” of the meal, generally use unfermented juice of the grape. While this practice does not today always reflect a complete abstinence from all forms of alcoholic beverages, it preserves the American Methodist commitment to be as open as possible to all who might come to the table, including those for whom alcohol might provide a danger or temptation. Lutherans have used bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper in accordance with the words of institution, and to emphasize the historical and ecumenical continuities that wine provides as well as the richness and multivalences of its symbolic associations. However, in accordance with guidance given in *The Use of the Means of Grace* (application 44c), for pressing reasons of health many Lutheran congregations offer small amounts of nonwheat bread or nonalcoholic wine or grape juice. Also, trusting that the crucified and risen Christ is fully present under each element, the reception of one element is another alternative in these situations. In shared liturgical settings, as a sign that this difference is not a church-dividing issue or even fully incompatible, the availability of both alcoholic and nonalcoholic wine (or grape juice) is encouraged. United Methodists will understand the presence of unfermented juice of the grape as a normal practice in their tradition. Lutherans will understand wine as the norm, and the

presence of nonalcoholic wine (or grape juice) as an option of choice for those individuals who have pressing health concerns.

5. Ordained ministers are encouraged to vest in the manner appropriate to their tradition or as agreed in the planning of the service. At the Holy Communion an alb, stole and chasuble, or alb and stole of a color appropriate to the liturgical season or day are customary for Lutherans and increasingly for United Methodists as well.
6. Planners are encouraged to give careful consideration to the following models of service.
 - When the service is hosted by a particular church body (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the United Methodist Church) or by a congregation of that church body, that church's official rite, as provided in their official worship resources, is used. An ordained minister from the other church body normally presides. An ordained minister from the host church may be invited to preach.¹
 - When the service is an occasion where no one church body acts as host, the form of service may be a form of the outline for an adapted common liturgy below.
 - When an order drawing materials from various sources of both churches is desired, the following order of service, rooted in our shared Christian tradition, offers a faithful and helpful structure. The elements included preserve the historic liturgical pattern of our churches. Elements of the Holy Communion printed in roman type are more important to this shared liturgical pattern. Elements printed in italic type, also found in each liturgical tradition, help provide a fuller and richer experience of worship for all participants.

GATHERING/ENTRANCE

Thanksgiving for Baptism *or* Affirmation of Baptism²

Gathering Song (may include any or all of the following):

Hymn

Kyrie (Lord have mercy)

Canticle of praise

Greeting³

Prayer

WORD/PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

First Reading (usually from the Old Testament)

Psalm

Second Reading (from the New Testament, but not the Gospels)

Sung Gospel Acclamation

Gospel

Sermon

*Hymn*⁴

Nicene Creed⁵

¹ Should a pastor or elder of either church be in any way unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the Holy Communion liturgy in the other church, she or he should be invited to preach at the joint celebration rather than preside.

² Forms for these rites are found in the commended worship books of both churches.

³ If a Kyrie and/or canticle of praise are/is used, they might be placed after the greeting and before the prayer.

⁴ In a uniquely Lutheran addition to the Western liturgy, a hymn following the sermon (Hymn of the Day) has served as a central way the assembly takes its part in proclaiming and responding to God's word for the Sunday or festival. It serves to gather up the relationships among the day's readings and the season within the church's year.

Intercessions
*Invitation to the Lord's Table*⁶
Greeting of peace

MEAL/THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

Offering and Setting the Table
Great Thanksgiving
 Dialogue
 Preface
 Holy, Holy
 Eucharistic Prayer/Thanksgiving at the Table
Lord's Prayer
Communion
Communion song
Prayer

SENDING

Blessing
Sending Song
Dismissal

7. Among the best ways to express the relationship of full communion is for congregations to share the form of worship they ordinarily use by inviting the participation of congregations of the other church body to worship with them on a regular or an occasional basis.
8. When Holy Communion is celebrated together, the service needs to offer the gospel by word and sacrament to all the baptized present. All those welcome at the table in their own churches should be welcomed in a shared service.
9. It is important for planners to remember that in full communion, both churches have agreed that they will continue to honor the governing documents of the other church body participating in shared worship. Care must always be exercised to honor the governing documents and policies of both the churches participating in shared worship in a way that respects our unity in diversity.

⁵ Normally the Nicene Creed will be used here, not only because it is the creed historically associated with the eucharistic liturgy, but it is important to make public use of a statement of faith we hold in common. If the Apostles' Creed is used as part of Affirmation of Baptism, either at the Gathering or here, the Nicene Creed is omitted.

⁶ *The presiding minister gives this invitation, called for by the United Methodist tradition, using these or similar words:*

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sins
and seek to be at peace with their neighbors.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.
(*exchange of the peace*)

If Affirmation of Baptism was not included in place of the creed or at the Gathering/Entrance, confession and forgiveness/pardon could be included after the Invitation, before the Peace. Confession and Pardon is an expectation in the Service of Word and Table for United Methodists. It is a regular, but not required component in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, particularly if the service has included Thanksgiving for Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism.