

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE DEBATE ON ECUMENICAL POLICY

- *** Following the Augsburg Confession (Art. VII) Lutherans have always contended that for the true unity of the church "it is enough (satis est) to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments." This is a fundamental Lutheran principle with broad and far-reaching ecumenical implications.
- *** To propose "full communion" as defined in this document as the goal of our ecumenical activity is to hold that something more than agreement in the gospel and administration of the sacraments is necessary for the true unity of the church. This undermines the fundamental Lutheran principle.
- *** In the context of contemporary ecumenical discussion the fact that "something more" is necessary for "full communion" means that Lutheran ministry is defective and must be "upgraded" by proper "ordering" (episcopal ordination, succession, and the like) before "full communion" can be realized. The Lutheran doctrine of ministry is jeopardized.
- *** The proposed statement therefore already leads in a direction precluding decisions which can only be made by the six-year study on ministry now being carried out by the ELCA. It is too early to make such decisions.
- *** In suggesting that something more is needed for full communion the proposed statement actually restricts rather than broadens the ecumenical stance of the ELCA.
- *** Proposing "full communion" as the goal of our activity makes communion our achievement and confuses our ecumenical activity with God's gift of Holy Communion.
- *** The proposed statement is too narrow in that it limits ecumenical concern to "in-house" arrangements between churches and lacks a vision of ecumenical activity in relation to the world-wide mission of the church.
- *** The proposed statement is to say the least unclear on basic policies and premature. This Church needs more time to deliberate and know its mind before it adopts positions it may regret. There is no need for haste or secrecy. Extended public discussion is in order.
- *** It is not appropriate for an office or standing committee of the church to seek to determine theological policy issues in this fashion. Offices and Committees of this Church exist to administer its policies, not to write theology or doctrine.