

The Bishops' Resolution

March 8, 1999

CONCERNING "CALLED TO COMMON MISSION"

Voted

CB99.03.06 To adopt the following resolution concerning "Called to Common Mission:

A Lutheran Proposal for a Revision of the *Concordat of Agreement*:

RESOLVED, that the Conference of Bishops affirm the following understandings of "Called to Common Mission":

- A. The Conference of Bishops understands that "Called to Common Mission" contains:
 - 1. no requirement that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must eventually adopt the three-fold order of ministry. Rather, "Called to Common Mission" recognizes that the present understanding of one ordained ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including both pastors and bishops, may continue in effect;
 - 2. no requirement that ELCA bishops be elected to serve as synodical bishops for life. Rather, they will continue to be elected and installed for six-year terms, with eligibility for re-election, subject to term limits, where applicable;
 - 3. no defined role for the presiding bishop or synodical bishops after their tenure in office is completed;
 - 4. no requirement that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America establish the office of deacon, nor that they be ordained;
 - 5. no requirement that priests of The Episcopal church will serve congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America without the congregation's consent;
 - 6. no requirement that the Ordinals (rules) of The Episcopal Church will apply to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
 - 7. no commitment to additional constitutional amendments or liturgical revisions other than those presented to the 1999 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (ELCA constitutional provisions 8.72.10-16.; 9.21.02.; 9.90-9.91.2.; 10.31.a.9.; 10.81.01., and parallel provisions in synodical and congregational constitutions); and further
- B. The Conference of Bishops has the expectation that:
 - 1. ordinations of pastors will continue to be held at synodical worship services and in congregations, as is the present pattern;
 - 2. the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will continue to receive onto the roster of ordained ministers, without re-ordination, pastors from other traditions, some of whom will not have been ordained by a bishop in the historic episcopate;

3. following the adoption of “Called to Common Mission” if someone who has been received onto the roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who was not ordained into the pastoral office in the historic episcopate is elected bishop and installed, he or she will be understood to be a bishop in the historic episcopate;
4. lay persons may continue to be licensed by the synodical bishop in unusual circumstances to administer the sacraments of baptism and holy communion as is the present practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;
5. “Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline of Ordained Ministers” will apply to priests of The Episcopal Church and ordained ministers of the Reformed churches serving ELCA congregations;
6. the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is not in any way changing its confessional stance that, “For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” (Augsburg Confession, Article VII);
7. The Episcopal Church accepts fully, and without reservation, present Lutheran pastors and bishops who are not in the historic episcopal succession;
8. priests of The Episcopal Church and ordained ministers of the Reformed Churches will not be asked to subscribe personally to the Confession of Faith of the Lutheran Church as their personal faith. They will be expected to recognize the agreement in faith of the churches and to preach and teach in a manner consistent with the Lutheran Confessions;
9. the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America receives the historic episcopal succession as a sign of and service to the continuity and unity of the Church and in no way as a guarantee of the faithful transmission of the faith;
10. future decisions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on matters of common concern will be made in consultation with churches with whom a relationship of full communion has been declared, but these decisions will not require their concurrence or approval;
11. future Churchwide Assemblies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be free to make whatever decisions they deem necessary after mutual consultation on matters related to full communion;
12. the joint commission [to which reference is made in “Called to Common Mission”] will have no authority over the appropriate decision-making bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or The Episcopal Church; and
13. pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will continue to preside at confirmations.