

Constitutional Committee's report 2/2023 on the proposal of the Bishop's Conference 3/2023 to the General Synod

Recognition of the transitivity of the North American Anglican–Lutheran Agreements with the Porvoo Declaration

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Background of the presentation

The Bishops' Conference proposes that our church recognize the transitivity of the Anglican–Lutheran ecumenical agreements reached in Canada and the United States with the Porvoo Common Statement and Declaration (1996). This does not concern the drafting of a new agreement but the confirmation of the previous agreements' transitivity, or parallelism. The Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion have recommended their respective institutions jointly to apply the results covered by the agreements between the churches.

The parallel Anglican–Lutheran agreements are *Called to Common Mission* (1999/2000) between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Episcopal Church, and *Full Communion: The Waterloo Declaration* between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada.

At its plenary session on Monday 6 November 2023 the General Synod decided to request a report on the matter from the Constitutional Committee. The Constitutional Committee heard from church councillor Kimmo Kääriäinen, leading expert Tomi Karttunen, docent Jaakko Rusama, and docent Minna Hietamäki on the matter.

Constitutional Committee's assessment

The Constitutional Committee evaluated: 1) the background of the parts of the Anglican–Lutheran conversations relevant to the presentation; 2) the key content of the Porvoo Declaration and the North American documents; and 3) the documents' transitivity.

1. Background of the conversations

The Porvoo Common Statement provides the theological basis for our church's fellowship with the Anglican Communion. The Porvoo Agreement is limited to European churches. Its members are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the Church of England, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the Church of Ireland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania, the Church of Norway, the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church in Portugal, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden, the Church in Wales, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain. Since the Porvoo Communion's inception the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia has also participated as an observer.

Anglican–Lutheran fellowship in North America is based on other agreements. These, however, also draw partly on the Porvoo Common Statement. They are the Episcopal–Lutheran *Called to Common Mission* in the United States and the Anglican–Lutheran *Waterloo Declaration* in Canada. The *Memorandum of Mutual Recognition of Relations of Full Communion*, in which the churches affirm the transitivity of the agreements they have reached, was based on these two agreements.

Through the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland enjoys altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran churches of the United States and Canada, but not with The Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada. Like our church, the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church in the United States are churches of the Reformation. There are also practical connections with the churches.

The conversations between the LWF and the Anglican Communion have recommended that the ecumenical results thus far achieved should be applied more widely between the churches than at present. In its report *To Love and Serve the Lord* (2012) the *Anglican–Lutheran International Commission III* (ALIC) calls on all the churches of the LWF and Anglican Communion to honour work that brings local Anglican and Lutheran churches into fellowship. ALIC therefore recommends, for example, that when a priest of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland moves to Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada recognize their priesthood based on the Porvoo Declaration, without the Anglican Church of Canada having to join the Porvoo Agreement, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland the Waterloo Declaration. The LWF Council approved the report in Bogota in 2012, and the Anglican Consultative Council in Lusaka in 2016. In recent years the Porvoo churches' Contact Group has discussed the agreements' transitivity. This has faced no theological obstacles. It has

been suggested that each church examine the process by which it recognizes the transitivity of these three agreements.

2. Main content of the documents

Porvoo Common Statement

The Porvoo Common Statement is based on a declaration in which the communion of the member churches, the theological recognition of the interchangeability of ordained ministries, and the treatment of each member of the respective churches as a member of each other's churches has been agreed. It also expresses the desire to pray and work for the growing fellowship of churches, both in the Porvoo Communion and more broadly ecumenically.

In the Porvoo Declaration the churches acknowledge that: 1) each other's churches belong to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ; 2) the Word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist are duly administered in the churches; 3) all the churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith; 4) each other's ordained ministries are given by God as instruments of his grace and as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also Christ's commission through his Body, the Church; 5) oversight (*episcopate*) is exercised in the churches; 6) the episcopal office is valued and maintained in the churches as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.

In the declaration the churches also commit to: 1) share a common life in mission and service, to pray for and with one another, and to share resources; 2) welcome each other's members to receive sacramental and other pastoral ministrations; 3) regard baptized members of each other's churches as members of their own; 4) welcome diaspora congregations into the life of the indigenous churches; 5) welcome persons to serve in any of the churches to the office of bishop, priest or deacon to serve in that ministry in the receiving church without re-ordination; 6) invite one another's bishops normally to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of bishops; 7) work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry; 8) establish appropriate forms of collegial and conciliar consultation; 9) encourage consultations of representatives of the churches, and to facilitate learning and exchange of ideas and information in theological and pastoral matters; 10) establish a contact group.

The declaration also commits to ecumenism between Lutherans and Anglicans and other denominations worldwide.

Called to Common Mission (CCM)

CCM declares full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church (TEC). The ELCA approved the document in 1999; TEC in 2000.

In the document ‘full communion’ refers to a relationship between two separate churches in which both recognize the other as catholic and apostolic and as committed to the essentials of the Christian faith. Full communion also entails the establishment of cooperation bodies.

The document shows there is a consensus between the churches concerning doctrine and ministry. The churches’ actions following the document’s approval are also presented. For example, the section on ministry discusses the relationship of apostolic succession and episcopacy. The document avers that apostolic succession is unbroken in The Episcopal Church but is not completely unbroken in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Episcopal Church considers apostolic succession a prerequisite for full communion. In the agreement the Lutherans undertake to invite bishops from The Episcopal Church to participate in the laying on of hands at ordination. The ELCA’s oversight will thus be brought entirely within the scope of historical continuity.

According to the churches it does not follow from the documents’ acceptance that they will be in communion with third churches with which the other church is in communion.

Full Communion: The Waterloo Declaration

The *Waterloo* Declaration between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC)¹ was drafted in 2001.

The declaration’s introduction outlines the Lutheran–Anglican conversations in North America before the document’s drafting. The introduction also mentions the Porvoo Common Statement.

The document understands full communion as a relationship between two separate churches that preserves their autonomy and recognizes their catholicity, apostolicity, and adherence to the essentials of Christian faith. Full communion also includes altar fellowship and the ability of the churches’ ordained ministers to administer the sacraments in the other church.

In the declaration the churches acknowledge: 1) that in both churches the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel; 2) that both churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith; 3) that in both churches oversight is exercised in apostolic life, mission and ministry; 4. that their ordained ministries are given by God as instruments of divine grace and as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also Christ’s commission through his body, the Church; and 5) that the episcopal office is valued and maintained in both churches as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church’s unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.

¹ Translator’s note: In the Anglican Communion, ACC also stands for the Anglican Consultative Council. It’s use in this document refers only to the Anglican Church of Canada.

According to the declaration it follows from the previous confessions that the churches recognize each other's ordained offices (of bishop, priest, and deacon), and that episcopacy is seen as a sign of the apostolic faith's continuity and unity.

The declaration states the commitments related to the churches' full communion to the following positions, related ordinations, and shared conversations. The churches commit: 1) to welcome persons ordained in either of the churches to the office of bishop, priest or deacon to serve in the church without re-ordination; 2) to invite each other's bishops to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of bishops as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church, and to invite priests to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of priests in each other's churches; 3) to consult each other regarding matters related to ministry; 4) to work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry; 5) to establish appropriate forms of collegial and conciliar consultation on significant matters of faith and order, mission and service; 6) to encourage regular consultation and collaboration among members of the churches at all levels; 7) to establish a Joint Commission to coordinate the implementation of the Declaration; 8) to hold joint meetings; and 9) to continue to work together for the full visible unity of the whole Church of God.

Memorandum of Mutual Recognition of Relations of Full Communion

The document was drawn up between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Episcopal Church (TEC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in 2018. The document addresses the recognition of the transitivity in the CCM and Waterloo documents that describe the churches' full communion.

The document describes the churches' agreements presented above. It also describes their historical, doctrinal, and daily connections, and it states that full communion already exists with the other two churches that signed the CCM and Waterloo documents (ELCA – ELCIC, ELCA – TEC, ELCIC – TEC), but not with the third church (ELCA – ACC, ELCIC – TEC). The document maintains that it is necessary for the churches to recognize each other's agreements of full communion and on this basis to extend full communion to the aforementioned churches with which they do not enjoy a bilateral agreement.

The document presents some actions designed to deepen the fellowship between the churches of North America. It also suggests that conversations between other members of the Anglican Communion and the LWF be continued to deepen the fellowship between other Anglican and Lutheran churches.

3. Transitivity of the agreements

The Constitutional Committee considers that in their theological content the North American documents correspond to the Porvoo Declaration and are therefore parallel.

Consistent with the Porvoo Declaration, the aforementioned ecumenical documents of the North American Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican, and Episcopal churches, especially the CCM document, state a consensus on the basic truths of the Christian faith, concerning: the triune

God; Christ as fully human and fully God; the Bible as holy and instructive for the church; salvation by grace alone; the holy sacraments; the church and its apostolicity; the universal priesthood; and the church's ordained office in the service of its apostolicity and mission.

Based on this, the churches recognize each other's apostolicity, sacraments, and the office requiring ordination, and it is stated that the churches enjoy a spiritual fellowship that manifests itself as communion. This lays the ground for the members of another church to be welcomed and those ordained to the office of that church to act and serve in one's own church in accordance with any laws and regulations in force at any given time.

The *CCM* document acknowledges the real presence of Christ in the sacraments in a manner that is consistent with the Porvoo Declaration. The *Waterloo* document is based on ecumenical documents that are clearly committed to the real presence and in a manner that accords with Lutheran theology.

Each church may have its own ecumenical agreements with other churches, but they are not covered by this decision. The recognition of the transitivity of these documents with the Porvoo Declaration therefore does not embrace any other ecumenical agreements the churches of North America may have with other churches.

Constitutional Committee's position

The Constitutional Committee's view is that the church can recognize and state that the Porvoo Declaration and first, the *Waterloo* Declaration signed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, and second, the *Called to Common Mission* document signed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and The Episcopal Church, are similar and parallel in their content and reasoning.

They have achieved a theologically sufficient consensus on the apostolic gospel, justification, the sacraments, and the office of the church. Based on this, altar fellowship, the interchangeability of offices, and deeper cooperation do not require separate theological negotiations.

Constitutional Committee's proposal

That the Synod agree that the documents *Called to Common Mission* between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Episcopal Church, and *Full Communion: The Waterloo Declaration between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada* are parallel with the Porvoo Common Statement and Declaration.

8 November 2023

On behalf of the Constitutional Committee

Matti Repo
Chair

Tuomas Vaura
Secretary

Chairperson Repo and members Åstrand, Hahtola, Hautala, Haverinen, Jolkkonen, Juntunen, Kemppainen, Koskenniemi, Löytty, Mithiku, Niemelä, Orsila, Puhalainen, Rantala, Raunu, Räsänen, and Zitting participated in the addressing of this matter.