



# Recommendations: Full Communion with Moravian Provinces

## Background

Following seven years of formal dialogue, the 1999 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted 1007 to 11 [CA99.04.11] to adopt the following action, which established a relationship of full communion between this church and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America:

The Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America, hereinafter termed the Moravian Church in America, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hereby agree that in their respective assemblies there shall be one vote to accept or reject, without separate amendment, the resolutions which follow. If adopted by both churches, each church agrees to take these measures to establish full communion:

WHEREAS, Jesus our Shepherd calls us to unity so that the world may believe; and

WHEREAS, Moravians and Lutherans share common theological traditions and commitments to mission; and

WHEREAS, in North America Lutherans and Moravians have developed distinct church bodies while cooperating in serving our Lord; and

WHEREAS, "Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion," the report of the Lutheran-Moravian dialogue, affirmed that there are no "church-dividing differences" precluding full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in America; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that:

1. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in America hereby 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, attested to in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism, and the Ground of the Unity of the *Unitas Fratrum*;
2. The Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hereby
  - recognize the authenticity of each other's Baptisms and Eucharists, and
  - extend sacramental hospitality to one another's members;
3. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in America hereby
  - recognize each other's ordinations of persons to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament; and
  - recognize each other's polity and ministries of oversight (including the interpretation of church doctrines, discipline of members, authorization of persons for ordained and lay ministries, and provision for administrative functions);
4. The Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

hereby 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;

5. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in America hereby authorize the establishment of a joint commission by June 2000
  - to coordinate the implementation of these resolutions,
  - to assist joint planning for mission,
  - to facilitate consultation and common decision-making through appropriate channels in fundamental matters that the churches may face together in the future, and
  - to report regularly and appropriately to each church;
6. The Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the aforementioned joint commission shall
  - encourage the development of worship materials to celebrate the churches' full communion,
  - encourage on-going theological discussion,
  - encourage joint formulation of educational materials, and
  - encourage continuing education for church professionals regarding the churches' full communion;
7. The Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hereby affirm that neither will issue an official commentary on the text of these resolutions that has not been approved by the joint commission as a legitimate interpretation thereof;
8. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church in America hereby agree that each will continue to be in communion with all the churches with which each is in communion presently;
9. The Moravian Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America hereby
  - pledge to take each other and these agreements into account at every stage of their dialogues and agreements with other churches and faith traditions,
  - pledge to seek to engage in joint dialogue when appropriate, and pledge not to enter into formal agreements with other churches and faith traditions without prior consultation with the other.

In the course of the dialogue that led to the establishment of this relationship of full communion, it was not possible for the Alaska Province of the Moravian Church in America and the East West Indies Province of the Moravian Church in America to participate in the conversations even though geographically these two provinces overlap with the territory of this church. The Lutheran-Moravian Coordinating Committee has encouraged church leaders in those two areas to engage in conversation about deepening their cooperative efforts and have received periodic reports on these conversations. On the basis of these local dialogues the Coordinating Committee has urged this church and the Northern and Southern Provinces to invite the Alaska Province and the East West Indies Province to vote to enter this relationship of full communion by adopting "Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion." The East West Indies Province voted on August 17, 2006, to adopt "Following our Shepherd." The Alaska Province is considering a similar action.

## Recommendation for Assembly Action

1. To continue to rejoice in the relationship of full communion between this church and the Northern Province and the Southern Province of the Moravian Church in America;
2. To recognize that these two provinces of the Moravian Church in America do not cover all the geographical territory encompassed by this church;
3. To acknowledge that by extending the relationship of full communion as outlined in "Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion" to the Alaska Province and to the East West Indies Province more people can participate in the closer working relationship allowed by full communion;
4. To rejoice in the action of the East West Indies Province, which approved a relationship of full communion with this church by adopting "Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion";
5. To encourage the Alaska Province to take a similar action;
6. To invite the Alaska Province and the East West Indies Province to appoint members to the Lutheran-Moravian Coordinating Committee in order to live into this relationship of full communion more effectively; and
7. To declare that a relationship of full communion exists between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the East West Indies Province of the Moravian Church in America and between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Alaska Province of the Moravian Church in America, pending approval by the Alaska Province.