

Local Reflections on the Fifth Anniversary of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine
Justification”

A festive celebration of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” was locally held in Seattle, Washington on October 31, 1999. Seattle Archbishop Alexander Brunett and Lutheran Bishops Donald Maier and David Wold offered brief remarks to a gathering of several hundred worshipers from the greater Seattle area in the context of a liturgy of repentance, thanksgiving, hymnody and prayer.

In the five years since that occasion, few local congregations or clergy have studied the particulars of the *Declaration*. Scholars at Seattle University and Pacific Lutheran University, as well as a standing Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic (LARC) theological dialog team dedicated some months of study to the document, but issued no written report or local recommendations.

The reception of the *Declaration* has been less oriented to the specific issues of justification than it has been welcomed as one more sign of rapprochement between our faith traditions. It has served as one more indication to the grass roots of the church to move forward in affirming nascent patterns of mutual understanding, communication, and cooperation. It has acknowledged the reciprocal respect for biblical, theological and liturgical integrity and has accompanied some local innovative institutional cooperation (Seattle University’s Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies, for example). Councils of local parish clusters meet together in certain parts of the Synod/Archdiocese and actively pursue common social and community programs, nourished by an atmosphere of trust and hope partly born of the bilateral conversations.

Priorities have shifted somewhat at the adjudicatory level, however, in the ensuing years. There have been no local joint liturgies with Lutheran and Catholic bishops since the 1999 celebration. They do not even meet collegially on a regular basis, if at all. The experience in the parish arena remains the real proving ground of reception of the *JDDJ* and all other bilateral agreements – if not in the letter, then certainly in the spirit.

*The Rev. Dennis A. Andersen
Ecumenical Representative, Northwest Washington Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*