

Considerations for Collaboration in Mission and Sharing in Worship between Congregations of the Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Congregations of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion in this Territory

Over many years, a number of congregations from our two churches in this Rocky Mountain territory have developed important relationships in their local settings. These relationships rest on strong affinities in mission, including substantial proximity on many issues of our time, and thus enrich the witness of these communities to the world. Members of these communities also desire to share together as much as possible in worship.

These Considerations seek both to celebrate and to provide guidance for these relationships.

General Principles

The ELCA's 1991 Policy Statement, "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment,"¹ articulates principles helpful for these Considerations:

- "Ecumenism has as its focus and goal clarity of understanding among Christians and a greater realization of unity among Christ's people."
- "Local ecumenism, and its synodical and regional forms, provides a rich area of progress and challenge for the unity of the church. It has much to teach and much to learn from the national and international ecumenical movement."
- Ecumenical collaboration in many forms, including through the National Council of Churches to which both national church bodies belong, can be an important step toward deeper relationship.

Particular Guidelines for worship

- Especially when sharing the same facilities, ECC and ELCA congregations are encouraged to pray together, to study the Scriptures, and to gather together for special occasions of the church year. In particular, they can make a practice of presence at one another's baptismal celebrations and on occasions like the installation of a new pastor.
- Both the ELCA and the ECC practice eucharistic hospitality, welcoming all baptized persons to the eucharistic table. Therefore, ELCA Lutherans are welcomed to participate in ECC Eucharists, making "conscientious decisions" about receiving the sacrament,² as ECC members do at Lutheran celebrations.
- Both churches allow for clergy from other traditions to preach in worship, including at celebrations of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Therefore, ECC clergy are welcome to preach in ELCA congregations when invited to do so by the local congregation and vice versa.
- Both churches provide for lay persons to assist in certain roles in their own and in other Eucharists, e.g., as lectors, eucharistic ministers, etc. Therefore, lay members present at a liturgy of the other community are welcome to assume roles which the hosting community deems to be lay roles.

¹http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The_Vision_Of_The_ELCA.pdf?_ga=2.103748736.1672852241.1554941828-220387071.1553740506, p. 8.

²*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* 50B.

- Since our two churches are not in full communion with each other, it is not permitted for ECC clergy to preside at an ELCA liturgy or vice versa, or for ministers from the two churches to co-preside at a Eucharist. Nor are they to administer other sacraments or ecclesial rites.

Exceptions may be made only by joint agreement of the local ELCA and ECC bishops and only in cases of genuine pastoral need.

This agreement is signed by

Bishop Jim Gonia

For the ELCA Rocky Mountain Synod

October 30, 2019

Date

Bishop Francis Krebs

For the ECC Proto-Diocese³

October 30, 2019

Date

³ The ECC Proto-Diocese is the original diocese of the ECC and is composed now of that territory in the United States where a newer ECC diocese has not yet been carved out.