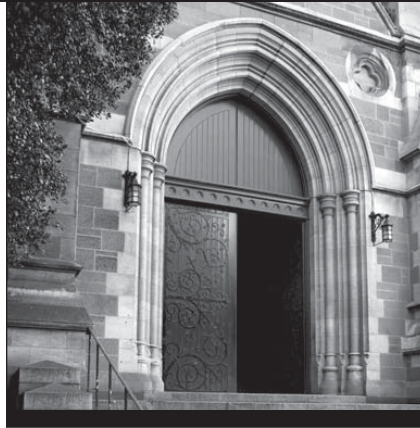


STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

Acting Ecumenically for the Sake of the World

When Lutherans and Methodists head to worship on Sundays in Lavina, Mont., their destination is the same: Lavina Methodist Church, which both denominations in the town call their spiritual home.

“We’re so obliged to the Methodists,” said Doris Hansen, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). “If it wasn’t for them, I doubt we’d have a church.”



The arrangement demonstrates one of the many benefits of full communion partnerships between the ELCA and other Christian denominations, church leaders said.

Last year, United Methodist approved a partnership with the ELCA. The ELCA, in turn, approved the partnership at its Churchwide Assembly in August 2009.

“It’s about more than supply and demand for ordained,” said Don McCoid of the churchwide organization, who oversees the ELCA’s ecumenical relations. “It’s about our working together in unity with our Christian partners to carry out Christ’s mission.”

The ELCA congregation in Lavina closed its building long ago as membership declined. The remaining few members had been worshipping in a hotel before working out an arrangement with local United Methodists, also experiencing a membership decline.

“It makes no sense to have a Lutheran congregation of six and a Methodist congregation of four in a town of 200,” said the Rev. Cathy Moorehead, the United Methodist pastor who leads them.

In Clyde, Kan., the Rev. Anita Strommen, an ELCA pastor, leads a United Methodist congregation. She remains on the ELCA roster and reports to her synod bishop. At the same time, she’s called to foster worship in a way that respects the United Methodist heritage.

“There’s a learning curve for pastors—no doubt about that,” Pastor Strommen said. “There’s also a learning curve for the denominations. What does it mean to be in full communion? I think this is going to be an ongoing discovery process.”

For more *Stories of Faith in Action*, visit www.elca.org/stories. Do you have a story to share? E-mail us at stories@elca.org.



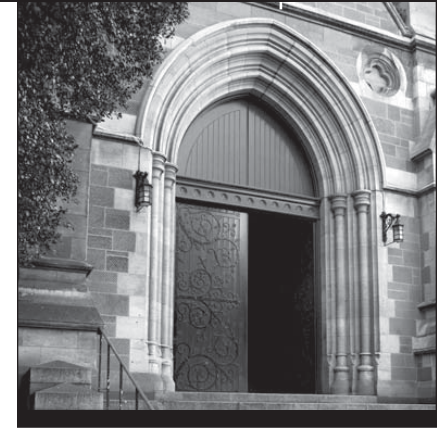
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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