



Confessing our Faith Together



A Study and Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION TO CONFESSING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

Dear Friends,

In response to the proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church, several voting members at the recent ELCA Churchwide Assembly stated enthusiastically, “It’s about time!” Lutherans and United Methodists have been well acquainted with one another. Our relationship, locally and nationally, has been forged through friendships, family ties, congregations, ecumenical councils, colleges, and seminaries. We are, in countless places, partners in ministry. Now that our two churches have committed to Interim Eucharistic Sharing, it is indeed about time, about discovering the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this particular kairos of our life together.

Lutherans and United Methodists have engaged in formal conversations over the last three decades. The First Round of dialogues (1977-79) explored the Sacrament of Baptism. The Second Round of the dialogue (1985-87) explored issues of Episcopacy. Significant convergence around these topics pointed toward a Third Round in order to explore the two churches’ understandings of Eucharist. In response to a formal invitation from The United Methodist Church, dialogue was resumed. In November of 1999 the two co-chairs and ecumenical staff members began planning for the next conversations. Third Round dialogue teams first met in September 2001.

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ecumenical relationships are described in a 1991 policy statement, *Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. This statement describes the deep desire of the ELCA to “manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.” Four stages of ecumenical relationship are described: Ecumenical Cooperation; Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues; Preliminary Recognition, including Interim Eucharistic Sharing; and Full Communion. For the ELCA, the characteristics of full communion are theological and missiological implications of the Gospel that allow variety and flexibility. These characteristics stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone. Full Communion includes at least the following: (1) a common confessing of the Christian faith; (2) a mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing of the Lord’s Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members; (3) a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of a church in full communion, subject only but always to the disciplinary regulations of other churches; (4) a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service; (5) a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life; and (6) a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches.

Paragraph 2404 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* states, “The United Methodist Church strives toward greater Christian unity through its participation in councils of churches and/or covenantal relationships. The United Methodist Church may establish covenants with other Christian churches through bilateral or multilateral efforts.”

At the sixth plenary session of this Third Round of dialogue, August 24-29, 2004, members unanimously voted to submit a proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing for consideration by each church. In April of 2005, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church

committed their church to Interim Eucharistic Sharing with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Shortly thereafter, in August 2005, the ELCA enthusiastically embraced the proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing. Now it is our pleasure to share with you the work of the Third Round of dialogue between Lutherans and United Methodists.

We have discovered a profound convergence in the witness of our two churches. The Lord's Table, Baptism, and Word are at the heart of our churches' life, precious gifts and fundamental means of Grace. We hope that in the seventy-one paragraphs of *Confessing Our Faith Together* you will be able to trace our joyful journey of discovery. We have learned that ecumenical conversation means giving up the demand that everyone speak only our language and use only our words. We have also found that ecumenical conversation leads to deeper understanding of our own faith tradition, while opening our eyes to the unending riches of the Holy Spirit's work in and through the whole Church.

Now we who have explored this terrain invite our churches to the conversation. Over the next few years, we imagine ELCA Lutherans and United Methodists in joint conversations about their faith and history. We envision groups small and large, formal and informal, contributing to the dialogue. We hope this document will provide a helpful beginning to these conversations, and we hope the conversations will lead us to Full Communion. Moreover, we hope that Full Communion may strengthen our common witness in the Gospel for the sake of the whole world.

Finally, as co-chairs of this dialogue, we must offer profound thanks to the participants. To be in the company of these articulate and gracious theologians has been a wonderful gift. They have demonstrated unwavering persistence in clear and accurate expression of our traditions. Always seeking the truth in love, they have artfully complemented one another.

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Now, we offer this work to you. May it enrich your journey of faith, and in some small way, may it lead to a deeper understanding of what we mean when we confess together one holy catholic and apostolic church, our Lord's blessed communion of saints.

Bishop Allan C. Bjornberg
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Bishop Melvin G. Talbert
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CONFESSING OUR FAITH TOGETHER
A STUDY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

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HOW TO START

Confessing our Faith Together: A Study and Discussion Guide is for use by members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The United Methodist Church (UMC) as they consider together the possibility of full communion for their individual and mutual faith, order, life, and work as communions. The two communions are considering the implications of full communion for national and regional expressions of the church. As congregations are a primary place for carrying out the church's mission and ministry, it is among congregations of the ELCA and UMC that full communion will be expressed in its most fundamental sense. This study and discussion guide is meant to encourage congregational participation and feedback in a period of interim Eucharistic sharing.

For the ELCA and UMC, the characteristics of full communion represent theological and missiological implications of the Gospel that allow variety and flexibility. These characteristics stress that each church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, and not for itself alone. These characteristics will include the following:

- 1) a common confessing of the Christian faith;
- 2) a mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members;
- 3) a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject only but always to the disciplinary regulations of the other churches;
- 4) a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service;
- 5) a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life;
- 6) a mutual lifting of any condemnations that may exist between churches.

Through this study, you are encouraged to work together in order to identify the possibility of full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church for their own mission and ministry. In a congregational study and discussion setting, this guide assumes:

- 1) Two congregations, one ELCA and one UMC, from the same community have agreed to engage with each other in this study and discussion, will meet for the five sessions, and will return the enclosed Evaluation and Planning Response Form by **January 15, 2007**.
- 2) Each congregation will be represented in the discussion by roughly the same number of people (eight to ten from each congregation will make a lively and diverse group).
- 3) Each participant will have a copy of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Study and Discussion Guide* to which he or she can easily refer.¹
- 4) Sessions will be held weekly, with representatives of the two congregations sharing leadership as appropriate and jointly planning how discussions will be structured. Each session may last up to two and a half hours.

¹ This publication is available online at the ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Web site at <http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/bilateral/elca-umc.org> and through the UMC General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns Web site at <http://www.gccuic-umc.org>

- 5) Sessions will meet alternately in each congregation's building and begin with worship led by the host congregation in a manner so as to express something of its authentic liturgical and devotional tradition.
- 6) Each congregation, under the guidance of their respective pastors where possible, will meet for the five sessions and return the enclosed Evaluation and Planning Response Form by **January 15, 2007** to: Research and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

This study and discussion guide is self-explanatory and requires few additional resources. However, plan carefully so that leadership may be shared between the two congregations, and participants may have the best opportunities to see what the possibility of a relationship of full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church may mean for each congregation's witness.

SESSION SUMMARIES

Session One—Providing opportunity for participants to begin to know one another, this session also looks at a brief history of the two communions and their interactions, their understanding of the Triune God, and their authoritative documents.

Session Two—Participants examine their common understanding of justification by grace through faith, and how this relates to sanctification and perfection. Participants will discuss the United Methodist understanding of prevenient grace and how it relates to the Lutheran understanding of justification.

Session Three—In this session, participants explore the Lutheran and United Methodist understandings of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Eucharist. Attention is given to the special emphasis the UMC places on the Holy Spirit's work in conveying Christ's presence in communion.

Session Four—Participants discuss the concept of “the Church” and how the ELCA and UMC have structured different forms of ministry to bear witness to the body of Christ. The similarities and differences of understanding regarding the work of ordained clergy and the office of Bishop will be discussed.

Session Five—The final session will begin with discussion of the world and how we understand our common Christian mission. The session concludes with a time for future planning and recommendations to both the ELCA and UMC.

Please note the full text of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* has been included in this document following Session Five.

Thank you for your participation, and God's blessings as you begin your study and discussion!

SESSION ONE

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this session, participants will have begun to:

- 1) Know each other as individuals and as people of faith.
- 2) Know each other's congregation, identifying similarities and differences.
- 3) Understand something of the history of each communion and its historical relationship with the other.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION:

Prior to the start of the session, consider making the following preparations:

- About one week before the first session, ask participants to read the sections titled, "Preface," "The Triune God" and "Our Authorities" in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 1-18).
- Have simple refreshments available.
- Arrange chairs in a large circle so participants can easily see and hear each other.
- Have a nametag available for each participant.
- Have available a flip chart, paper, markers, masking tape (or a chalk board and chalk), overhead projector, computer access, or other technology.
- Have additional copies of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Study and Discussion Guide*.
- The host congregation for this session should prepare a brief opening worship drawing on its authentic liturgical and devotional tradition. Finally,
- Have teams of two or three from each congregation prepared to introduce their congregation to the whole group (see Activity C).

ACTIVITY A—Opening Worship (15 minutes)

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY B—Introductions (30 minutes)

With participants seated in a circle have each participant introduce him or herself, telling their name, congregation, and how long they have been a member, and sharing what they recall or know of their baptism and something of their personal faith journey.

When all have had the opportunity to introduce themselves, invite participants to discuss:

- What do we seem to have in common as individuals?
- How do we seem to be different as individuals?

Note these similarities and differences on the flip chart or chalkboard, or through other compatible means.

ACTIVITY C—Congregational Introductions (60 minutes)

Ask each team to introduce its congregation to the group. The introduction might contain some or all of the following:

- A brief history of the congregation.
- The congregation's self-understanding of its mission and identity-defining core values.
- Something of the congregation's programmatic ministry, including its support of and participation in denominational and ecumenical ministry.
- Something of the congregation's organization and governance.

When the two teams have finished their introductions, invite participants to discuss:

- What do we seem to have in common as congregations?
- How do we seem to be different as congregations?
- What might we be able to learn or appropriate from each other as faith communities?

Again, note the similarities, differences, and possible learnings on the flip chart or chalkboard.

ACTIVITY D—Historical Background to Full Communion (40 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups of about five participants each. Ask each group to review the sections titled, “Preface,” “The Triune God,” and “Our Authorities” in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 1-18) and identify a) new or surprising knowledge and b) questions which the reading raises for them.

When the small groups have had time to discuss the reading, reconvene the whole group. Ask each small group to report first what it learned and briefly list them on the flip chart. Then ask each to report its questions, again listing each briefly on the flip chart. Then, invite the group to discuss how it will find answers to each of the questions raised and negotiate responsibility for finding answers.

CLOSING (5 minutes)

Remind participants of the activities planned between the congregations and the meeting place for the next session. Have participants read the section titled, “Salvation by Grace through Faith” in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 19-31). Close with prayer including a time for silence and petitions.

SESSION TWO

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this session, participants will have:

- 1) A greater understanding of their common confession of faith.
- 2) Had an opportunity to explore apparent similarities and differences between the two communions expressed in sanctification and perfection.
- 3) Begun to deepen their personal and congregational relationships.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION:

- Read Paragraphs 19-31 of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement Toward Full Communion by the ELCA-UMC Bilateral Dialogue*.
- Have simple refreshments available.
- Arrange chairs in a large circle so participants can easily see and hear each other.
- Have a nametag available for each participant.
- Have available a flip chart, paper, markers, masking tape (or a chalk board and chalk), overhead projector, computer access or other technology.

ACTIVITY A—Introductions (15 minutes)

Unless people have gotten to know each other well, have participants briefly reintroduce themselves to the whole group.

ACTIVITY B—Worship (15 minutes)

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should invite a moment of silent reflection and then lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C—Questions and Answers

(90 minutes)

After everyone has had the opportunity to reacquaint him or herself with the section, “Salvation by Grace through Faith” (Paragraphs 19-31) in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*, ask participants to reflect a moment on the following questions:

- How do you understand the reality of “grace” in your life?
- What is the connection between grace and what you have read about justification, sanctification, and perfection?

As you are discussing, make a list of all the questions on the flip chart, moving around the circle and inviting each to pose one question. Keep going around the circle until all questions have been listed.

After the questions are listed, take a moment to review the questions and decide where to begin. Begin working through the questions together, encouraging participants to explore possible responses and to draw on their own knowledge and experiences. Breaking into small groups may be helpful. If there are questions that “stump” the group, help them to identify how they might research an answer to present at the next session.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Have participants read the section titled, “The Sacraments” in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 32-46). Close with prayer including a time for silence and petitions.

SESSION THREE

THE SACRAMENTS

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this session, participants will have:

- 1) Studied the way in which the ELCA and UMC understand the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Eucharist.
- 2) Begun to reflect on how the differing sacramental emphases of the two communions might enrich and be expressed through the common life and witness of their two congregations.
- 3) Continued to deepen their personal and congregational relationships.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION:

- Read Paragraphs 32-46 of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement Toward Full Communion by the ELCA-UMC Bilateral Dialogue*.
- As before, have refreshments, name tags, etc. available. Arrange the room with chairs in a circle, and have a flip chart and markers or other technological aides.
- Consider setting out instruments used in the sacramental acts of Holy Baptism and the Eucharist such as a baptismal shell and communion vessels. These will help focus discussion for the group.
- Read Activity C and prepare an explanatory handout as described therein.

ACTIVITY A—Introductions (10 minutes)

Unless you are sure participants have come to know each other's names, invite each to briefly introduce her/himself. You may even choose to update others since your last meeting together.

ACTIVITY B—Worship (15 minutes)

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C—Explanation of Baptismal and Eucharistic Practices (60 minutes)

Have clergy or other appointed leaders from each congregation prepare an explanatory handout or overhead that parallels the Baptismal and Eucharistic services used at each congregation. Take time to explain the specific practices of each congregation to the whole group and then discuss the following questions:

- What are the similarities in the celebration of these sacraments?
- What are the differences in the celebration of these sacraments?
- What questions arise with respect to the celebration of these sacraments?

ACTIVITY D—Small Group Discussion

(60 minutes)

Divide the whole group into small groups of 3-5 participants each. Make sure each group contains participants from each congregation. Ask each small group to discuss the section of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* assigned on “The Sacraments” (Paragraphs 32-46), posing the following questions:

- What did you learn about yourselves as a communion in this section?
- What did you learn about the other communion in this section?
- Are there any specific concepts or practices you would like to share with the other communion not covered in *Confessing Our Faith Together* and that you have not so far discussed from your own congregational Baptismal and Eucharistic practices?
- What have you discovered that might enrich the life and ministry of your congregation?

After the small groups have had ample time to discuss, gather the whole group and ask each small group to report its findings. Make particular note of any suggestions for enriching the life and ministries of the congregations.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Have participants read the section titled, “The Church and its Ministries” in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 47-63). Close with prayer including a time for silence and petitions.

SESSION FOUR

THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRIES

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this session, participants will have:

- 1) Explored the roles of a) the Church, b) the Ministry and c) the Bishops.
- 2) Begun to reflect on how the theological perspectives of the two communions (expressed in their understanding of what it means to be “the Church”) might enrich the common life and witness of their two congregations.
- 3) Continued to deepen their personal and congregational relationships.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION:

- Read paragraphs 47-63 of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*.
- As before, have refreshments, name tags, etc. available. Arrange the room with chairs in a circle, and have a flip chart and markers or other technological aides.
- Identify 3-5 spaces where working groups can meet.

ACTIVITY A—Introductions (10 minutes)

Unless you are sure participants have come to know each other’s names, invite each to briefly introduce her/himself. Please share any additional and helpful information since your last time together.

ACTIVITY B—Worship (15 minutes)

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY C—Small Group Discussion

(60 minutes)

Divide the whole group into small groups of 3-5 participants each. Be sure each group contains participants from each congregation. Ask each small group to discuss the section assigned on “The Church and its Ministries” (Paragraphs 47-63) in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*. Consider the following questions:

- What did you learn about yourselves as a communion in this section?
- What did you learn about the other communion in this section?
- Are there any specific concepts or practices you would like to share with the other communion not covered in *Confessing Our Faith Together* as part of your congregational understanding of what it means to be “the Church”?
- What have you discovered that might enrich the life and ministries of your congregation? Please be as specific as possible.

After the small groups have had ample time to discuss, gather the whole group and ask each small group to report its findings. Make particular note of any suggestions for enriching the life and ministries of the congregations.

ACTIVITY D—Generating Ideas for Action

(60 minutes)

Divide participants into working groups of 3-5 persons each, taking care to be sure each group contains representatives of both congregations. Ask each group to build a list of ideas for how the two congregations *together* might continue to explore “Interim Eucharistic Sharing.” It will be helpful to make available the document: “Interim Eucharistic Sharing between the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church”² for reference. Instruct the groups to note their ideas on newsprint (see that each group has a supply of paper and markers), writing enough about each idea so that others can grasp what the idea means.

² This publication is available online at the ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Web site (http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/unitedmethodist/InterimEucharisticSharingUMC_1.pdf).

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Remind participants of the activities planned and the meeting place for the next session. Have participants read the section titled, “The World and Our Common Mission” in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* (Paragraphs 64-71). Close with prayer including a time for silence and petitions.

SESSION FIVE

THE WORLD AND OUR COMMON MISSION

OBJECTIVES: By the end of these sessions, participants will have:

- 1) Explored the section of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* dealing with the world and the common mission the ELCA and UMC share.
- 2) Begun to reflect on how this common mission might enrich and be expressed through the common life and witness of these two congregations.
- 3) Continued to deepen personal and congregational relationships.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SESSION:

In addition to discussing “The World and Our Common Mission,” this final session is designed as a planning session. By this time, participants have come to know each other and their respective congregations relatively well and have, because of this knowledge and deepening personal relationships, begun also to sense possibilities for a future common life between the congregations, a common life that takes seriously the nature and mission of each. Likewise, take time throughout this session to be clear and further explore common Christian commitments in witness and service.

- Read Paragraphs 64-71 in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*.
- As before, have refreshments, nametags, etc. available. Arrange the room with chairs in a circle, and have a flip chart and markers or other technological aides available.

ACTIVITY A—Worship (15 minutes)

Representatives of the host congregation, after welcoming participants, should lead a brief worship period.

ACTIVITY B—Small Group Discussion

(60 minutes)

Divide the whole group into small groups of 3-5 participants each. Be sure each group contains participants from each congregation. Ask each small group to discuss the section assigned on “The World and Our Common Mission” (Paragraphs 64-71) in *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*, posing the following questions:

- What did you learn about yourselves as a communion in this section?
- What did you learn about the other communion in this section?
- What have you discovered that might enrich the life and ministries of your congregation? Please be as specific as possible.

After the small groups have had ample time to discuss, gather the whole group and ask each small group to report its findings. Make particular note of any suggestions for enriching the life and ministries of the congregations.

ACTIVITY C—Planning for Action (45 minutes)

Tell participants that they will have a chance to develop some of the ideas for how to “live into full communion” that were suggested in the last session. Do some “what, by whom, and by when” planning for implementing the idea as a large group. Plan at least one event in which both congregations are invited to participate together, with particular attention to the possibility of sharing the Eucharist together.

ACTIVITY D—Reporting (15 minutes)

Take the last fifteen minutes of this session to briefly give participants an opportunity to suggest comments for the evaluation and planning response form.

CLOSING (15 minutes)

Thank participants for their energy and creativity and close with prayer. You might consider working together to plan a brief service that incorporates specific aspects of each congregation’s worship practices to close this final session.

CONFESSING OUR FAITH TOGETHER:

A STATEMENT TOWARD FULL COMMUNION BY THE ELCA-UMC BILATERAL DIALOGUE

Preface

- 1) This proposed agreement for full communion between The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is noteworthy among such ecumenical statements. The United Methodist Church, an international church, already stands locally in full communion with other member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. *Fellowship of Grace: Report from the Conversations between Church of Norway and the United Methodist Church in Norway* (Oslo, 1994), has profoundly affected the current dialogue. Thus, this round of the dialogues started with a document already accepted locally by one dialogue partner (UMC) and by the Lutheran Church of Norway, which is already in full communion with the ELCA.
- 2) This round of dialogues leading up to the present proposal also had the benefit of two previous rounds of dialogue in the USA. The First Round study on Baptism (1977-79) concluded that Lutherans and United Methodists share “in one spirit and one baptism.” The Second Round of the dialogue (1985-87), focused on the office of bishop, and produced *Episcopacy: A Lutheran-United Methodist Common Statement to the Church*, emphasizing “that no particular structure of oversight is of the essence of the Church.” Moreover, our dialogue also used the document produced in the international dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Lutheran World Federation, published as *The Church: Community of Grace* (Geneva, 1984). Taken together, these documents have provided the basis for the language and spirit of much of what follows in the statement of our common confession of faith.
- 3) The Third Round of the dialogue (2001-) addressed additional topics of concern. In the fall of 2005 the dialogue team drafted “Confessing Our Faith Together” to articulate the high level of convergence we experienced around the Triune God, our authoritative documents, salvation by grace through faith, the sacraments, the Church and its ministries, and the world and our common mission.
- 4) As happened in the previous two rounds of dialogues, the participants quickly discovered that the two churches had much in common and much to recommend in the pursuit of full communion. Moreover, there were no historical condemnations requiring our attention, since one consequence of the separate contexts in which our churches arose is that neither church ever officially condemned the other. Distinctions between our churches, whether matters of style, history, or ethos, and even differences of theological expression, content and emphasis, need not be considered church-dividing. As one of the confessional documents of the ELCA, the *Formula of Concord*, reminded Christians of the sixteenth century (quoting the second-century bishop Irenaeus of Lyon), “Dissimilarity in fasting is not to disrupt unity in faith.” That is, in the face of agreement in the faith, “no church should condemn another because the one has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other has” (*The Formula of Concord*, Epitome, X.7). Likewise, John Wesley consistently distinguished between essential doctrines upon which agreement or consensus is critical and opinions about theology or church practices upon which disagreement is permissible (Sermon on Catholic Spirit).

- 5) Moreover, since the First Round of dialogues in 1979 dealt with the question of Baptism, much has transpired in our churches. In 1987, the merger of the Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches created the ELCA. In 1996, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism," and in 2004 it adopted "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion." These documents articulate the current United Methodist understanding of the sacraments and their spirit is reflected in this proposed agreement.
- 6) The present challenges and opportunities in the United States for the mission of Christianity demand higher and more serious levels of cooperation among churches. A full communion agreement such as this one allows for interchangeability of clergy, sharing common goals in mission, serving individual congregations with educated, well-equipped, and ecumenically minded leaders, and, above all, demonstrating to the world in a concrete way the unity given to us in Christ through the gospel and sacraments. In fact, the diversity of gifts, history, and self-understanding in the UMC and the ELCA indicates that each communion needs the other. Our distinct theological perspectives, growing out of different historical contexts, will enrich each church's understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We may support and encourage one another in our unique ministries and mutually edify one another, as we seek to bring the living gospel of Jesus Christ to a broken world.
- 7) Both of our churches began as reform movements within the Western church, and even now, as separate denominations, we have unique, reforming voices for our world. We especially note the ELCA's strong commitment to justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, to the efficacy of the sacraments in daily life, and to the distinction between law and gospel. We also celebrate the UMC's unwavering confession of the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewing of Christian life, the need to translate faith into action, and the necessity of Christian engagement in this world. Together, our churches can raise their voices to proclaim God's Word of mercy and to work for those things that make for peace in this world.
- 8) We commend our growing life together as Christian churches and understand that this agreement will succeed precisely as each church takes seriously its responsibility for mutual admonition and accountability, as we discover what practical consequences this agreement holds for us. Full communion is not the end of a process but rather an invitation to grow together in Christian faith and love, commending to one another and the world the hope that is in us. Thus, in approving this agreement both churches commit to continue the process by holding regular talks, working responsibly through any issues that may arise, and providing resources to congregations and other groups.
- 9) In this regard, we also call upon local judicatories and congregations to begin the process of realizing more fully what this agreement will mean for their life together. For this agreement to make a difference in the lives of our churches and our society, leaders at every level within our churches must explore how to remain faithful within their respective churches while at the same time finding new ways to implement the higher level of cooperation envisioned here. The goal of full communion must not simply be theological rapprochement but honest, committed cooperation for the sake of Jesus Christ and God's mission in the world.

The Triune God

- 10) We confess with Christians of all ages that the Triune God, invoked in our baptism and confessed in our creeds as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the one true God, who created the heavens and the earth, who in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God, became a human being, suffered, died, and was raised for our salvation, and who as the Holy Spirit is our comfort and guide in this life and for the world to come.

- 11) Doctrine is essentially practical and shapes our lives in the world. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there is communion within the divine life. To confess the Trinity is to ground all expressions of unity in the character of the Creator. Since we are made in God's image, we find fullness of life in relationships of love and service. This is reflected in family and friendship, in society, and above all in the church. This doctrine also leads us to value variety and diversity. The unity we celebrate is genuine communion, and the life we live is meant to be a glorious dance of fellowship and love.
- 16) In the UMC *The Twenty-five Articles of Religion (of the Methodist Church)* and *The Confession of Faith (of the Evangelical United Brethren Church)* represent the inheritance of ancient and Reformation faith and are formally endorsed as doctrinal standards. *The General Rules of the Methodist Church*, a statement of the nature and design of Wesley's original "United Societies," are an honored part of the Methodist theological inheritance. John Wesley's *Standard Sermons* and *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, historically described as the Wesleyan Standards, reflect distinctive Methodist emphases.

Our Authorities

- 12) Together we confess that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst, and therefore the foundation of all authority. Scripture reveals the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life. Both of our traditions and their founders gained impetus for their work in the church from their encounters with God in Scripture.
- 13) Our traditions also understand that Christians never encounter the Scriptures without witnesses, which shape our faith today and which point the way into God's Word. Thus, with Christians around the world we confess and bear witness to the common apostolic faith using the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds.
- 14) Our churches arose in their own unique circumstances and therefore name as authoritative different witnesses to the faith. These testimonies, too, have called and continue to call our churches to faithful witness to the gospel in today's world.
- 15) The ELCA accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the gospel. Other texts of *The Book of Concord (the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord)* also are valid interpretations of the faith of the church.
- 17) We acknowledge that other documents and people continue to shape our traditions today. We both recognize the importance of the early church and its writers and leaders for shaping our faith. Martin Luther and John and Charles Wesley, among others, continue to inspire our communities by their witness to the faith. Our worship resources and especially our hymnody, much of which we share in common, are important sources for our faith. We also acknowledge the importance of contemporary ecumenical agreements in providing further witness to the unity we receive from Christ.
- 18) The question of authority with regard to matters of faith looms large in our day. It reaches into the life of every congregation and touches the hearts and minds of faithful Christians within both our churches. We are called to make faith-based decisions every day that affect our lives on many levels. This is an important issue in our particular traditions, perhaps in part, because our early histories reflect tension and confrontation with positions of authority in our communions of origin. It was critical then and remains important in our own time to recognize the authority of Scripture as the rule and guide for faith and practice. Our traditions understand this authority to be something dynamic that requires attentiveness to both the received faith tradition and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace through Faith

A. Our Common Confession of Faith

- 19) The ELCA and the UMC agree that, in accordance with the Scriptures, human beings are justified by God's grace in Christ received freely through faith alone. The essence of this faith is a sure trust and confidence in God and God's promises, born of God's Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Persons as sinners, estranged from and in rebellion against God, are justified by God's gracious mercy and love in Christ and not on the basis of human efforts or worthiness. Beginning in Baptism and continuing throughout the life of faith, God declares sinners forgiven and righteous by virtue of Christ's righteousness alone, and the Holy Spirit uses the judgment of the law and the comfort of this very promise to engender trust in God.
- 20) Justification depends upon Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. In Christ, God reconciled the world and conquered the evil forces that dominate human life and the rest of the created order. In justification, God forgives sin, liberates us from its enslaving power, comforts sinners, moves us toward lives of faith made effective through love, and imparts new life in Christ. Therefore, to obtain such faith God has given the Word and sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit nourishes and strengthens the believer, as well as evoking faith and the experience of pardon. Throughout their lives, Christians are in need of God's forgiving grace. At the same time, God's creating and sustaining grace is also continuously present in the world and in human life.
- 21) The ELCA and the UMC agree that sanctification, being made holy, is the gracious work of God's Holy Spirit. On the one hand, this holiness is complete in the forgiveness of sins, when God justifies and reconciles human beings through Christ. On the other, it is God's continuous work in the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit, calling, gathering, and equipping us to live as those dedicated to the care and redemption of all God has made. Through daily renewal of God's baptismal promises and growing into conformity with Christ's image, the old creature is put to death and the new is raised to life, being drawn closer to God in faith and to the neighbor in love.
- 22) The ELCA and the UMC agree that good works are the natural and spontaneous fruit of faith. These works do not save us and do not earn God's grace or favor. Instead, they arise from true faith and are most accurately called by St. Paul "fruits of the Spirit" in contrast to "works of the law." They consist not merely of religious actions but any action that serves God, loves the neighbor, and cares for creation. Christians do not place their trust in these works but only in God's grace in Christ, which provides genuine consolation for the weak and troubled. This living faith is ever active in love, enabling the faithful to rejoice in God's will, to serve the neighbor, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.
- 23) The ramifications of salvation by grace through faith are manifold. Many people both outside and inside the church are burdened by the assumption that they must earn God's love. Even those who know the language of grace may never have experienced the freedom of the gospel in their lives, or may forget this good news in times of difficulty and doubt. Surrounded daily by people and institutions that place conditions upon acceptance, many strive to prove themselves worthy through frenetic activity, while others capitulate to apathy and cynicism. The heart of the gospel is the liberating message of God's unconditional mercy.

B. Our Unity in Diversity

On Prevenient Grace

24) The UMC confesses that the prevenient grace of God prepares human beings to receive God's mercy in Christ and also affirms justification by faith alone as the foundation for full redemption in Christ. United Methodists define prevenient grace as the divine love that surrounds all humanity and precedes any and all of our conscious impulses (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶101). Through this grace God fosters a sense of right and wrong and the recognition of fallen life as under the judgment of God. Since all life is enveloped by the wooing activity of the Holy Spirit, God draws people to the saving grace given to us through Word and sacrament and received by faith in Jesus Christ.

25) The ELCA maintains that in creation God graciously gives human beings material goods necessary for our living and governs all creation. God also opposes forces that would destroy creation. In the redemption that comes through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God gives to people the fruits of Christ's saving work when the Holy Spirit comes to them through the Word and sacraments with forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The Holy Spirit engenders the courage for participating in God's activity for the sake of the world.

On Justification, Sanctification, and Perfection

26) The ELCA confesses that the Christian is at the same time righteous and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*). This means that believers are declared totally righteous by God because of Christ's righteousness alone, which is received through faith. However, at the same time, looking at themselves in the light of the law, they recognize that they remain sinners, for they continually turn to false gods and do not love God or their neighbors with the love that God commands. Thus, Christians depend at every moment in their lives upon God's justifying grace and forgiveness. Although Lutherans do not customarily use the language of perfection, the *Augsburg Confession* (XXVII.49) defines Christian perfection as

fearing God earnestly with the whole heart, having confidence in God's grace because of Christ, expecting help from God in all affliction, and diligently doing good in our various callings.

27) The UMC confesses the work of the Holy Spirit in justification and new birth and emphasizes how the regenerated Christian can live in ever deepening and more fruitful love of God and neighbor. The UMC sets no limit to God the Holy Spirit's activity and power in this present life. Thus, especially according to John Wesley, Christians may earnestly hope to receive perfect love of God and neighbor in this life, not according to their works or merit but by God's grace alone. This optimism concerning the Holy Spirit's work is always held in tension with a deep theological suspicion of a human being's best efforts and a genuine awareness of the depths of human sin.

28) The ELCA also confesses the power and activity of the Holy Spirit in this present life and understands that the Christian life flows from baptism as daily dying and rising (recognizing and confessing sin and calling upon God's forgiving grace) and as faithful following of Christ in joyful obedience. The law still orders and restrains daily life and judges sin, driving believers to a renewed trust in Christ's righteousness as the only ground of salvation, life and confidence.

C. Appreciating our Differences as Gifts

29) With regard to distinctive emphases related to the doctrine of salvation within the UMC and the ELCA, there is little question that the primary area of difference revolves around Lutheran insistence upon the enduring pervasiveness of sin and the Wesleyan concept of sanctification as a process leading to "perfect love" in this life.

30) Those ordained into the ministry of the UMC are asked whether they believe themselves to be "going on to perfection" and whether they "expect to be made perfect in this life." These questions bear witness to a strong teleological orientation in the Wesleyan way of salvation (*via salutis*) aimed at the full restoration of the image of God in the Christian believer. Yet, the goal of Christian perfection toward which

the process of sanctification moves is a gift every bit as much by grace through faith as is the gift of justification. The goal of the Christian life is to love as Christ has loved, and the UMC confesses an optimism in the power of God's grace to realize this ultimate gift in the faithful Christian. The UMC, therefore, offers to the ELCA a dynamic vision of redeemed human existence as faith working by love leading to holiness of heart and life.

- 31) In turn, the ELCA offers to the UMC a vision of the Christian life that is defined by the Sacrament of Baptism (see ¶¶32-38 below) as well as God's decisive action for us in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The ELCA stresses that the restoration of the image of God occurs fully in Baptism and that human beings cannot achieve any status in relation to God other than that which is given in and with the Sacrament, namely, justified sinner. Being careful to distinguish between the "works of the law" and the "fruits of the Spirit," Lutherans describe the regenerate life not simply as freedom from the accusation of the law but as led by the Holy Spirit and engrafted into Jesus Christ, being conformed to the will of God in a free and joyful spirit (*Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, VI.17). Since those reborn in Baptism, however, continue to rebel and give themselves over into the power of sinning, i.e., not trusting in God, the battle between the old and the new creature continues in them down to the grave.

The Sacraments

A. Holy Baptism

- 32) The First Round of dialogue formulated agreement on the Sacrament of Baptism. Both the ELCA and the UMC accept as valid all acts of Baptism in the name of the Trinity using water according to Christ's command and promise.
- 33) Baptism is the sacrament of entrance into the holy catholic Church, not simply a rite of entrance into a particular denomination. Baptism is therefore a sacrament that proclaims the profound unity of the church. Baptism is a gift of God for building up the Christian community.

- 34) Baptism is intended for all persons, including infants. No person should be excluded from Baptism for reasons of age or mental capacity.
- 35) God gives the Holy Spirit in Baptism to unite us with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection; to effect new birth, new creation, and newness of life; to offer, give, and assure us of the forgiveness of sins in both cleansing and life-giving aspects; to enable our continual repentance, daily reception of forgiveness, and our growing in grace; to create unity and equality in Christ; to make us participants in the new age initiated by the saving act of God in Jesus Christ; and to place us into the Body of Christ where the benefits of the Holy Spirit are shared within a visible community of faith.
- 36) In Baptism, God enables the Christian to rely upon this gift, promise, and assurance throughout all of life. Such faithful reliance is necessary and sufficient for the reception of the benefits of Baptism.
- 37) Baptism embraces both the prior gift of God's grace and the believer's life of faith. Baptism looks toward a coming "to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). In faith and obedience, the baptized live for the sake of Christ, the church, and the world that Christ loves. In Baptism, the church witnesses to the faith and proclaims to the world the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- 38) Baptism has practical ramifications for the Christian life. Through the Holy Spirit Baptism gives us our true identity. People struggle with that most central of questions in life: Who am I? The church proclaims boldly in Baptism that we become forgiven children of God and members one of another. In Baptism we are reminded of who we are and to whom we belong in life and in death. By welcoming us freely into the Body of Christ, the Sacrament also points to the central commitments in the Christian life, including the mandate of the family of God to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Every celebration of Baptism is a reminder of our responsibility to one another. Baptism is connected intrinsically to mission. The Sacrament not only proclaims who we are, it frees us for our primary vocation in life, to love God and neighbor as agents of God's reign of peace, justice, and abundant life for all.

B. Eucharist

- 39) The Lord's Supper is one of the fundamental means of grace. Christ himself instituted this meal and commanded us to continue to celebrate it until he comes again. He himself promised to be present in this meal, and through the Holy Spirit he establishes and strengthens our faith there.
- 40) Like Holy Baptism, the Lord's Supper is an efficacious sign of God's grace. This means that Holy Communion is not only a visible sign that points to God's presence in the world, but it includes and gives real participation in Christ. In this sharing (*koinonia*), Christ offers his life-giving body and blood through bread and wine to all who take part in the celebration of this meal (1 Corinthians 10:16). In the words of Christ that institute this meal stands a promise that he himself is truly present for us. These words in the Supper call us to faith.
- 41) The entire eucharistic celebration expresses the real presence of Christ. In a special way, Christ's word ("Do this in remembrance of me") draws all participants into God's saving act, carried out once and for all in Christ's death and resurrection, by joining them to Christ's presence in the meal. Furthermore, this same presence of Christ comes to expression by emphasizing the Holy Spirit's activity for us in the Supper. It is by the living word of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that the bread and wine become the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.
- 42) Together, both churches affirm the special emphasis that the UMC has placed on confessing that the Holy Spirit conveys Christ's presence in communion. The ELCA also confesses that the fullness of God is given through the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacraments. Both churches also confess that, according to Christ's promise, all receive his body and blood in the elements of communion, without attempting to explain this sacramental mystery. Both churches agree that Christ is truly present, that he is shared and received in the forms of bread and wine in the Eucharist, and that the blessings of this Supper are received by faith alone.
- 43) In the Lord's Supper, believers receive the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This means that in communion we receive the forgiveness of sins and all the other blessings that Christ has brought us, such as life and salvation. We also believe that the grace of divine forgiveness offered in the sacrament is received with the thankful offering of ourselves for God's service. This meal strengthens and transforms us in faith, hope and love, and sends us out into the world bearing Christ's promise of peace, justice and reconciliation.
- 44) Our churches have come to stress that the Holy Spirit uses the Supper to express and realize the communion of the people of God with Christ and with each other. We view Holy Communion as an anticipation of that final feast when God will be all in all. At the same time, our Lord's gifts of forgiveness and reconciliation in this meal seal and empower us to challenge injustice in the world. We long for and live toward a world where people truly are reconciled with each other and with the rest of creation, and share God's gifts justly.
- 45) Both churches also emphasize the dimension of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) in communion in their liturgies. In the Sacrament, we give thanks to God for everything we have received in creation, in redemption and among God's faithful people of all ages, until the day when God will create a new heaven and a new earth. By extension, we understand the entire action of the supper as a sacrifice of praise, in which we celebrate with God's created gifts of bread and wine in the presence of Christ all that God does.
- 46) On the most practical level the eucharistic feast delivers what all meals signify to us in our lives. The Sacrament is a meal in which God provides for us what we need to be healthy and whole. As we eat Christ's body and blood, we become the Body of Christ for the sake of the world. This meal unites us with God and with one another; the more time we spend at the Lord's table, the more we come to love one another and appreciate the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

The Church and Its Ministries

A. The Church

- 47) The ELCA and the UMC both affirm that the church is the community of Jesus Christ called into being by the Holy Spirit. In the life of this new community of love Christ has overcome the divisions that separate us from one another and binds all of God's people together. In the words of the Nicene Creed, we confess "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."
- 48) For both of our traditions, the assembled worshiping community is the central generating reality of the church. In worship, empowered by the Spirit, we hear and celebrate what God has done in creation and redemption and offer in response our thanksgiving through communal praise and prayer. Given this fundamental understanding, both define the church as the assembly of the faithful in which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered.
- 49) Beyond this common foundation, however, our distinct histories reveal a kindred vision regarding the life of the community of faith. Both of our traditions brought gospel-based criticisms to the communions of their origin, seeking reform, yet hopeful in their efforts to avoid schism. Both have a rich history of preaching. Both share a common journey toward a richer realization of the importance of the sacraments in regular worship. In the dialogue itself we have discovered a rich treasure in the hymnody of both churches. Through hymns we proclaim the gospel, teach the faith, and sustain believers in Christ. Both believe that faith is not a "private" matter but communal. Both emphasize that the church is not simply an invisible reality but is embodied necessarily in God's creation.
- 50) Our traditions also have lifted up different emphases in our theologies and styles of manifesting the Body of Christ to our mutual benefit. United Methodists have emphasized the centrality of mission, prophetic action, and the realization by faith of God's reign on earth as in heaven. Lutherans can benefit from the rich tradition of Methodist testimony and service as a "public" church and their passion for justice. The ELCA has emphasized the

gathering of the community around Word and Sacrament, celebrating the grace of God that enables mercy, service, and love to flow out in praise of God and service of neighbor. United Methodists can benefit from this rich tradition of sacrament-centered worship and passion for the reality of God's liberating grace.

- 51) Both churches yearn for and seek ecumenical outreach and hospitality. In its *Book of Discipline* the UMC affirms that "Christian unity is not an option; it is a gift to be received and expressed." The ELCA states: "The unity of the church, as it is proclaimed in the Scriptures, is a gift and goal of God. Ecumenism is the joyous experience of the unity of Christ's people and the serious task of expressing that unity visibly and structurally" (*Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA*, 1991).
- 52) John Wesley asserted that there is no such thing as a solitary Christian. Martin Luther described the church as a holy Christian people. The church as a body, a living organism, is of critical practical importance. We need one another in order to grow "to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Moreover, in a culture that is infectious individualistic (speaking from a North American context), the church calls us with compelling force away from any path leading to narcissism and privatized spirituality. In both of our traditions courageous men and women have reminded us that the church is a family for others, called to offer its life for the life of the world. As we live into these convictions with the support of the community, the practical dimension of our faith is perennially before our eyes.

B. The Ministry

- 53) Both the ELCA and the UMC emphasize the ministry of the whole people of God. Ministry is an activity of the entire church and of each individual within it. Whether described as "the priesthood of all believers" or the "ministry of all Christians," both churches insist that the mission of God is carried out through both laity and clergy, who are called to ministry by the Spirit in Baptism. The forms of this ministry are diverse in locale, in interest, and in denominational accent, yet always universal in spirit and outreach.

- 54) Both churches acknowledge God's gift of the ordained ministry, exercised by women and men alike. For both of our traditions, there is a called, ordered, representative, and public office of ordained ministry for the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, the exercise of pastoral care, and service to the world. Maintaining that the New Testament prescribes no particular form of ordained ministry or church order, both churches have developed patterns of ministry distinctive to our histories, global identities, and changing contexts. Both have adapted the ordering of ministry to remain faithful and effective in the stewardship of God's creative and redemptive mission in the world.
- 55) The UMC provides for two forms of ordained ministry: deacons are called to ministries of Word and service, and elders are called to ministries of service, Word, sacrament, and order. The ELCA has established one office of ordained ministry of Word and sacrament. In both churches persons who are ordained are called to an exemplary life in Christ as a gift from and a witness to the community of faith. In ordination, the church publicly affirms an inward call of God and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- 56) Both churches authorize (or have authorized in the past) other specific forms of ministry as well. Whether described as "deaconesses," "diaconal ministers," "home missionaries," or "associates in ministry," these lay offices are established by both bodies through either "consecration" or "commissioning." We recognize and applaud the venerable history of these historic ministries.
- 57) Both churches also vest bishops with the authority to "license" lay candidates to serve with full ministerial privileges in local congregations. Whether called "probationary members," "local pastors," "authorized" or "licensed ministers," the bishop is responsible for the supervision of those who serve in these pastoral roles. Both traditions are seeking ways to balance our commitments to pastoral leadership for all congregations with high standards for preparation and oversight.
- 58) Both churches are called to work together in equipping the whole people of God for our common vocation in the world. It is increasingly important to stand together in proclaiming and living the gospel so that our testimony to the world will be one of healing, reconciliation, wholeness, and unity in the body of Christ. We recognize that together we can give greater attention to cooperation regarding ecumenical shared ministry, supervision, and spiritual formation and theological education.
- 59) Both churches are discovering anew that all of God's people possess gifts to be used in ministry. Because of this, many members within our respective denominations are experiencing the joy of faithful service to God with the affirmation of the church. Christian vocation is not a privilege possessed by the few, but God's gift to all. The false dichotomy between the clergy and the laity, an issue central to the origins of both our traditions, is once again giving way to an integral vision of mission. Perhaps no issue is of greater practical significance today than the renewal of the ministry of the whole people of God.

C. Bishops

- 60) Both the UMC and the ELCA regard oversight (*episcopé*) as fundamental in the life of the church. Historically, both of our traditions had forms of oversight, often called "super-intendents" or bishops, and subsequently both have adopted and adapted the "office" of bishop. While this office is not regarded as essential to the church, both churches have come to value the superintending function of this office and recognize ordination under either Lutheran or United Methodist discipline as having continuity with the apostolic tradition. The UMC "consecrates" bishops for life (or for terms in some parts of the world) and the ELCA "installs" bishops for a stated period of time subject to reelection, but neither view the episcopacy as a separate order of the ordained ministry.

61) The bishops' length of service, their mode of selection, and their role in the governance structures of the church vary between the two churches (and even inside them given their global context), but their primary responsibilities are strikingly similar. In both traditions bishops are elected from among the ordained clergy who are called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Both affirm the primary pastoral role of the office. Bishops are given authority to preach, teach, and uphold the apostolic faith of the church; to lead all persons entrusted to their oversight in worship and in the celebration of the sacraments; to supervise and support the church's life, work, and mission throughout the world; and to consecrate, commission, ordain, or authorize the ordination of persons for the ministries to which they are called.

62) Bishops are a crucial link in the network of relationships and processes that position men and women strategically in local congregations for ministry. Both our churches rely upon bishops to encourage and enable ecumenism on multiple levels within the life of the church. Bishops also stand in unique positions within the larger body of Christ to express God's gift of unity in the church and to extend the ministry and mission of the church. To many outside the life of the church, they are the "face of the church" to the world.

63) Both churches look to Jesus Christ as the shepherd and "bishop" of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). In service to this Christ ELCA and UMC bishops play a crucial leadership role. Not only do they encourage ministry and uphold the gospel, they also exercise courageous and prophetic leadership in the cause of justice. Full communion between our two churches will enhance their oversight of the church in a number of ways. It will enable them to cooperate in the supervision of congregations and pastors in common geographical areas, to consult with one another and cooperate in new mission strategies and disciple-making initiatives, and to oversee the mutual interchange of ordained and lay ministers. Perhaps most critically, it will enable them to bear witness to the unity in the body of Christ, and it will enable our churches to be more effective in our common mission and prophetic vocation.

The World and Our Common Mission

64) Both the ELCA and the UMC affirm that God's self-revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ summons the faithful to God's mission in the world through the Holy Spirit as a gracious gift and challenging responsibility. Both affirm that the church is a people formed by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to give thanks for what God is doing in the world, witness to it, and participate in it. We are created and sustained for God's mission in the world. Our common mission includes hearing and proclaiming the gospel and encouraging faithful response to it; baptizing and nurturing new believers; celebrating the Lord's Supper; responding to human need through loving service; caring for God's creation; challenging and seeking to transform unjust structures in society; and working toward peace in all the earth.

65) Evangelism constitutes a critical aspect of the church's life in the world. The UMC declares that making disciples of Jesus Christ is its primary mission. In the ELCA the all-encompassing emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel in Word, Sacrament, and deed constitutes an eminent evangelistic impulse. The early followers of Martin Luther sought to rediscover the apostolic witness and mission of the church in sixteenth century Europe and the Methodist revival originated as a missional movement within the Anglican Church. Both emphasized the liberation and deliverance implicit in God's evangelistic call of love and the offer of forgiveness that entails the response of repentance, faith, and obedience in love.

66) Both churches recognize the intimate connection between Baptism and discipleship. It is in Baptism that God makes us part of the church, the body of Christ on earth committed to God's mission. They value catechesis and life-long learning as essential aspects of the church's mission that nurture the Christian's desire to be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), and that equip the Christian for the life of discipleship. Both churches are deeply rooted in a Trinitarian theology of mission, bearing witness together to the one God who calls us all into the mission of the Son for the sake of the whole world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- 67) God's mission is most perfectly revealed in the life of Jesus who came "not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45), and "to bring good news to the poor . . . proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 2:18-19). Our baptismal vocation demands our bearing witness to and participating in God's creating, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world. It particularly involves responding to human need and suffering wherever it is found. The ELCA and the UMC have extensive, and frequently shared, histories of compassion for the poor and humanitarian aid in the midst of human tragedy. One of the three "General Rules" from the early Methodist movement is to "do good and be merciful according to your power as far as is possible to all." Lutherans have been guided by Martin Luther's principle of the value of each person's calling to serve God and neighbor in all walks of life. Thus, doing good to one's neighbor always includes living justly in this world (*Small Catechism*, Fifth Commandment).
- 68) The ELCA and the UMC believe that faithfulness to God's mission involves seeking to disclose, challenge, and dismantle unjust structures in society. Both affirm that all persons are equally valuable in the sight of God and are bound, therefore, to work for a world in which every person has the necessities for life with dignity. The UMC has a legacy of concern for social justice and has often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian values. The "Social Principles" of the UMC are a prayerful and thoughtful effort to champion justice, peace, and human well-being on the basis of biblical and theological foundations. The ELCA affirms that "the church is to witness to God's call for justice in every aspect of life, including testimony against injustice and oppression, whether personal or systemic," and "expects its ordained ministers to be committed to justice in the life of the church, in society, and in the world" (*Vision and Expectations*, p. 15). Both churches have repeatedly renewed their commitment to be faithful witnesses to the gospel message of shalom in their common life and work.
- 69) The Word of God speaks in creation, God's saving love embraces the entire creation as it longs for fulfillment (Rom. 8:19-22), and the breath of God daily "renew[s] the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). Both the UMC and the ELCA affirm that God's intimate involvement with the earth makes care for the earth an integral dimension of the church's mission. Human devastation of God's earth and its web of life is a sin that demands repentance and conversion. Both of our faith communities have begun to address ecological destruction, offering rich theological perspectives, biblical interpretation, and moral teaching. Restoration of a biblical view of life calls for deepening that commitment. The church in our time is called to promote lifestyle and systemic changes in society that enable a more ecologically just world. We are called to offer the unique resources of our faith traditions to the universal human task of building an ecologically sustainable and nourishing relationship between humankind and our generous planetary home, God's good earth.
- 70) No area of our common faith bears more directly upon our lives in practical ways than God's mission. Every aspect of this mission—the proclamation of the gospel through word, sacrament, and deed, the ongoing nurture of Jesus' disciples, the service of all in need, the commitment of the community to peace with justice, and the stewardship of our fragile earthly home—is the responsibility of every Christian. Mission defines the life of the believer. This mission is both empowered by God's gift of unity within the church and implements and makes visible the church's unity for the world to see and believe. The unity of the church in this common witness, anticipating the final triumph of God's Word in human affairs, emboldens the ELCA and the UMC to manifest the life of the gospel in the world and to serve as a prophetic sign of the reign of God.
- 71) In 2005, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church unanimously recommended and the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America overwhelmingly adopted "Interim Eucharistic Sharing" between our two churches. In light of the convergence we have discovered and experienced in our conversations together, and given the absence of church-dividing differences, this bilateral dialogue recommends full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church, longing for that glorious day when all are one.

EVALUATION AND PLANNING RESPONSE FORM FOR
 CONFESSING OUR FAITH TOGETHER:
 A STATEMENT TOWARD FULL COMMUNION BY THE ELCA—UMC BILATERAL
 DIALOGUE

Return this completed form by January 15, 2007 to Research and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. Thank you for your participation.

We are completing this response form as: (please enter number of persons)

_____laypeople

_____pastors

This response comes from a study group composed of: (enter number of persons)

_____ Methodists and/or

_____ Lutherans and/or

_____ other(s): _____

1) Which (if any) paragraphs (please cite numbers) of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue* were unclear to you?

Please explain.

2) Please rate and explain what you found most helpful in each section of *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA—UMC Bilateral Dialogue*.

“Preface,” “Triune God” and “Our Authorities” (Paragraphs 1-18):

Not at all Helpful					Very Helpful	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	9	
<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain:

“Salvation by Grace through Faith” (Paragraphs 19-31):

Not at all Helpful					Very Helpful	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	9	
<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain:

“The Sacraments” (Paragraphs 32-46):

Not at all Helpful					Very Helpful	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	9	
<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain:

“The Church and its Ministries” (Paragraphs 47-63):

Not at all Helpful					Very Helpful	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	9	
<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain:

“The World and Our Common Mission” (Paragraphs 64-71):

Not at all Helpful					Very Helpful	No Opinion
1	2	3	4	5	9	
<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain:

3) Is it clear from *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Statement toward Full Communion by the ELCA-UMC Bilateral Dialogue* how the communions complement each other?

YES NO

Please explain.

4) What specific steps can your congregation take to make full communion visible in your community?

5) Please make any suggestions to the ELCA-UMC bilateral dialogue that will improve the *Confessing Our Faith Together* document.

6) Do you favor the establishment of a relationship of full communion between the ELCA and the UMC, as outlined in the “*How to Start*” section?

YES NO

Why or why not?

APPENDIX A
POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTION FOR FULL COMMUNION
BETWEEN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA AND THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The United Methodist Church (UMC) hereby agree that in their legislative bodies 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 the following measures to establish a relationship of full communion:

WHEREAS Jesus Christ calls us to unity so that the world may believe; and

WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church share a common heritage of faith and a commitment to mission; and

WHEREAS “Confessing our Faith Together,” the report of the ELCA-UMC bilateral dialogue, affirmed that there are no church-dividing differences precluding full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church hereby:

- 1) 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, and attested to in the Lutheran Confessions and the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church;
- 2) recognize the authenticity of each other’s Baptism and Eucharist, and extend sacramental hospitality to one another’s members;
- 3) recognize the validity of our respective ministries, including:
 - each other’s ordination of persons to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament;
 - the authentic diaconal service of ordained deacons in the UMC and rostered lay ministers in the ELCA; and
 - 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) 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) authorize the establishment of a joint commission to:
 - coordinate the implementation of these resolutions;
 - assist joint planning for mission;
 - facilitate consultation and common decision-making through appropriate channels in fundamental matters that the churches may face together in the future; and
 - report regularly and appropriately to each church;

- 6) direct this joint commission to:
- develop worship materials to celebrate our churches' full communion;
 - foster on-going theological discussion;
 - formulate joint educational materials; and
 - encourage continuing education opportunities for lay and clergy leaders regarding full communion;
- 7) applaud one another's ecumenical conversations with other church bodies acknowledging that each church remains free to pursue additional full communion agreements as each deems appropriate, so that the world may believe.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

25 Articles of Religion – Upon recognition of American independence in 1783, John Wesley realized that the Methodists in America should become an independent church. Wesley furnished the American Methodists with a liturgy (The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America) and a doctrinal statement—the Articles of Religion. Wesley revised the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion into twenty-four articles and the church in America revised them into the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion. (2004 *Book of Discipline*, page 50)

Associate in Ministry – An Associate in Ministry (AIM) is called to serve in one of the officially recognized lay ministries of the ELCA and works collegially with ordained clergy in a congregational or other recognized ministry of the ELCA.

Authorized/licensed Minister – In the UMC, persons who are not ordained as elders but who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor are licensed by the annual conference boards of ordained ministry. (2004 *Book of Discipline*, para. 315)

Bilateral – Pertaining to two communions or churches in dialogue, and to joint statements on agreements and differences resulting from dialogue. In line with its predecessor church bodies, the ELCA has pursued full communion through bilateral dialogues for the past forty years.

Book of Concord – Published June 25, 1580, fifty years to the day after the initial presentation of the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Book of Concord* is a collection of ten foundational documents for Lutheran theology: the three ecumenical creeds, *Augsburg Confession*, *Apology*, *Smalcald Articles*, *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, *Small Catechism*, *Large Catechism* and *Formula of Concord*. It became the official standard of doctrine for most Lutheran churches.

Book of Discipline, The – A fundamental book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work, and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends *The Book of Discipline*, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. Often referred to as *The Discipline*. (*Sharing God's Gifts Glossary of United Methodist Terms* <http://umcsgiving.org/content/glossary.asp>)

Commissioned ministers/ Commissioning – in the UMC, commissioned ministers are probationary members of the annual conference who are preparing for ordination as elders. The probationary period begins with a commissioning of the candidate for leadership and service in the name of Jesus Christ. (2004 *Book of Discipline*, para. 325)

Communion – A grouping of churches having common origins and traditions and in communion with each other nationally and/or internationally. The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches.

Confession of Faith, The – A statement devised by The Evangelical United Brethren Church. At the time of union in 1968 with The Methodist Church, the Confession of Faith was included in the *Book of Discipline* as one of the historic doctrinal statements of The United Methodist Church.

Consecration – In the UMC, elders who are elected to the office of bishop are consecrated, or set apart, for service. The Order for the Consecration of Bishops (*Book of Worship*, page 700) includes the sign-act of the laying on of hands by other bishops. Laying on of hands is a sign of episcopal unity and collegiality, signifying the bishop-elect’s empowerment by the Holy Spirit and admission to the duties of the office.

Coordinating Committee – Coordinating committees are instrumental in a full communion relationship with respect to the area of “reception.” Through a bilateral dialogue, the purpose of the coordinating committee is to find and initiate multiple ways in which both communions will learn about the nature of the full communion relationship, grow into the relationship, and facilitate a vision for the future of the relationship.

Churchwide Assembly – The biennial churchwide assembly is designated as the “highest legislative authority” in the ELCA. Synodical assemblies elect the clergy and lay voting members who will represent the Synod at the assembly that deals with the purposes, functions, and directions of ELCA ministries. The assembly also addresses issues that affect the life of the entire ELCA.

Deacon – In the UMC, a deacon is an ordained clergyperson who is called to serve all people, particularly the poor, the sick, and the oppressed, and to equip and lead the laity in ministries of compassion, justice, and service in the world. In this capacity, he or she leads the church in relating the gathered community to their ministries in the world, thus connecting the church’s worship with its service in the world. A deacon has the authority to teach and proclaim God’s Word, to lead in worship, to assist elders in the administration of the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, to perform the marriage ceremony where the laws of the state permit, and to bury the dead. (*Source: InfoServ*)

Deaconess – In the UMC, a laywoman who, in response to God’s call and on recommendation by the General Board of Global Ministries, is commissioned by a bishop to share faith in Jesus Christ through ministries of love, justice, and service. Deaconesses serve the church in any capacity not requiring full clergy rights. They are related to the General Board of Global Ministries. A lifetime commitment to mission is presumed. (*Sharing God’s Gifts Glossary of United Methodist Terms*)

Dialogue – An exchange of traditions and ideas or opinions on particular issues, with a view to reaching an agreement or settlement. In the context of this document, dialogue is the conversation process in which teams of ELCA and UMC persons wrote this common confession.

Ecumenical – Pertaining to the “whole inhabited earth.” It is now used to describe the movement to restore unity to all Christians or to describe openness and self-examination shared with other Christians to the end that Christ’s prayer for unity might be fulfilled. It is sometimes used to describe any cooperative venture between communions.

Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA – Published in 1991, this document presents the ecumenical vision and a declaration of the ELCA’s ecumenical commitment. It is also available online (<http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/vision.html>). The UMC is said to be “constitutionally ecumenical,” because paragraph six of its constitution declares that the UMC will seek and work for unity at all levels of church life. See the website for the General Commission of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns at www.gccuic-umc.org

Elder – In the UMC, an elder is a person ordained to a lifetime ministry of service, word, sacrament, and order. He or she is authorized to preach and teach God’s word, to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the church for mission and ministry. (*Sharing God’s Gifts Glossary of United Methodist Terms*)

Epitome – Written by Jacob Andrea in 1576, the *Epitome* is a summary of the work of Lutheran theologians who met at Torgau, Germany, to discuss theological controversies within Lutheranism. The *Epitome* is the first part of the *Formula of Concord*.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – This denomination was formed in 1987 by the merger of the Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

Formula of Concord – *The Formula of Concord* (FC), written in 1577, is composed of two parts, the Solid Declaration and the Epitome. The twelve articles comprising the FC are a restatement and exposition of the Augsburg Confession that resolved the major controversial issues within early Lutheranism and formed the foundation for the *Book of Concord*.

Full Communion (from the biblical term *koinonia* meaning to share, to act together, to be in fellowship) – A relationship between two distinct churches or communions where each maintains its own autonomy and recognizes the catholicity and apostolicity of the other. The term often refers to an agreement of pulpit and table fellowship and includes mutual respect and consultation in teaching. For more characteristics of Full Communion see:

<http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/FullCommunion/characteristics.html>

General Conference – The highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference convenes every quadrennium (four years) to enact legislation and to establish the general ministry of the church. It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination. (*Sharing God’s Gifts Glossary of United Methodist Terms* <http://umcsgiving.org/content/glossary.asp>)

General Rules of the Methodist Church, The – A set of rules devised in 1738 by John Wesley for his societies. According to *The Book of Discipline* (2004, page 48), “the General Rules were originally designed for members of the Methodist societies who participated in the sacramental life of the Church of England.” The three-fold rules connect faith and life, as John Wesley taught it. The rules are summarized this way: first: by doing no harm...; second: by... doing good of every possible sort...; and third, by attending upon all the ordinances of God. In 1743, Wesley published these in a pamphlet entitled *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*. The *General Rules* were approved by the American Methodist Church in 1785 and continue to be published as a part of *The Book of Discipline*.

Koinonia – a Greek word meaning to share, to act together, or to be in fellowship with one another. *Koinonia* occurs at least twenty-two times in the Bible. A unifying term, *koinonia* may be translated in a sense of communal *sharing* and activated *caritas* in the vital life of fellowship, Gospel, in Christ’s body and blood, in salvation, and in mission. In its most appropriate and unifying sense, Christians are a *koinonia* (i.e., a Christocentric and universal fellowship of sharing) called in Christ by and for the Gospel. In terms of method, *koinonia* ecclesiology is at heart Christocentric; in terms of vocation, Christians of every stripe share in a broad, global *koinonia*. In terms of unity, Christians are called to fellowship with one another from the linguistic and semantic ground of the Gospel. Finally, *koinonia* language in the New Testament is not a unity that assumes a former brokenness. Rather, Christians are

called from the healthy sinews of a living Gospel, recasting the ecumenically popular John 20:17 “That they may all be one,” as a phrase to be heard *anew* not from this side of our centuries-old ecclesial brokenness, but on the far *first* side of this divide, in the original and informative, unfractured ground of Gospel hope for unity in the world.

Interim Eucharistic Sharing – Interim Eucharistic sharing is a stage in official bilateral dialogue where two communions reach substantial agreement without unsettled issues considered church dividing. In a time of interim Eucharistic sharing, both communions have an opportunity to get to know one another. Congregations and other ministry contexts are encouraged to spend time together in study, praxis, further local discussion, and in sharing the Eucharist in worship. Interim Eucharistic sharing is understood as an important step on the way to a full communion relationship. For a view of the ELCA-UMC agreement on interim Eucharistic sharing, please visit:

http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/unitedmethodist/InterimEucharisticSharingUMC_1.pdf

Local Pastor – In the UMC, a local pastor is not ordained but is licensed and annually authorized by the district committee on ordained ministry to perform all duties of an ordained minister, including the sacraments, while assigned to a particular charge under the supervision of a district superintendent. A clergy mentor oversees the local pastor’s work in the course of study for ordained ministry and advises on matters of pastoral responsibility. (*Sharing God’s Gifts Glossary of United Methodist Terms* <http://umcsgiving.org/content/glossary.asp>)

Luther, Martin – The founder of the Lutheran movement. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born and died in Eisleben, Germany. Luther is known as the Father of Protestantism. He had studied to become a lawyer before becoming an Augustinian monk in 1505, and was ordained a priest in 1507. While continuing his studies in pursuit of a Doctor of Theology degree, he discovered significant differences between what he read in the Bible and the theology and practices of the church. On October 31, 1517, he posted a challenge on the church door at Wittenberg University to debate 95 theological issues. Luther’s hope was that the church would reform its practice and preaching to be more consistent with the Word of God as contained in the Bible.

What started as an academic debate escalated to a religious war, fueled by fiery temperaments and violent language on both sides. As a result, there was not a reformation of the church but a separation. “Lutheran” was a name applied to Luther and his followers as an insult but adopted as a badge of honor by them instead. Lutherans still celebrate the Reformation on October 31 and still hold to the basic principles of theology and practice espoused by Luther, such as *Sola Gratia* (saved by the grace of God alone), *Sola Fide* (Salvation is through faith alone), and *Sola Scriptura* (The Bible is the only norm of doctrine and life).

Lutheran World Federation – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. The LWF currently has 138 member churches in 77 countries all over the world, with a membership of nearly 65 million Lutherans.

Means of Grace – The practice of Word and Sacrament ministries as understood by the ELCA. For an in depth discussion, see: *Principles for Worship: Renewing Worship* Vol. 2. Augsburg Fortress, 2002. It is also available online: <http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worship/sacraments/umg.html>

Prevenient Grace – For United Methodists, prevenient grace is “the divine love that surrounds all humanity and precedes any and all of our conscious impulses. This grace prompts our first wish to please God, our first glimmer of understanding concerning God’s will, and our ‘first slight transient conviction’ of having sinned against God.” (*2004 Book of Discipline*, page 46)

Probationary members – In the UMC, probationary members are candidates for ordination. Ordinarily, probationary members have completed all of the educational and other requirements for ordination and are recommended for a probationary or review period (minimum of 3 years) before ordination.

Round – The bilateral dialogue teams of ELCA and UMC persons met in three rounds of study and conversation. Each round lasted several years. The most recent round began in 2001 and involved several meetings of the participants.

Solid Declaration – Theologians met at Bergen Abbey in Germany in 1577 to discuss the formulations of the Lutheran Theologians at Torgau (see *Epitome* above). The *Solid Declaration* became the product of these negotiations and the second part of the *Formula of Concord*.

Standard Sermons – John Wesley’s standard sermons, preached between 1746 and 1760, are collected in the first four volumes of Wesley’s *Sermons on Several Occasions*. Although the precise number of sermons (about 53) is disputed between British and American Methodists, the sermons serve as a doctrinal authority because they lay out John Wesley’s unique understanding of the way of salvation.

Unaltered Augsburg Confession – The first version of the *Augsburg Confession* (AC) was written in 1530 by Philip Melancthon and presented to Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg as a statement of Lutheran beliefs. This is the version found in the *Book of Concord*. In 1540, Melancthon revised some of the articles of the AC into an “Altered Augsburg Confession.” The 1540 version is also known as the *variata*.

United Methodist Church, The (UMC) – This denomination was established in 1968 by the union of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church. It has more than 10 million members in sixty-three Annual Conferences in the United States and nearly forty conferences outside the United States (Africa, Europe, and the Philippines). (<http://www.umc.org>)

Wesley, John – The founder of the Methodist movement within the Church of England. John Wesley (1703-1791) was born at Epworth, England, the son of a Church of England clergyman. He graduated from Christ College, Oxford. A priest himself, John was, for a brief period, a missionary to Georgia. A prolific preacher and writer, his writings provided a core of standard doctrine and interpretation to guide the new Methodist movement. In 1784, he sent instructions to America for the formation of a separate Methodist church for the United States. (*A Dictionary for United Methodists*, Alan K. Waltz, Copyright 1991, Abingdon Press. Used by Permission.)