

A Pastoral Letter On the Occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Full Communion:  
Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in America and The Episcopal Church  
May 1, 2011

Grace to you and peace.

Ten years ago, when Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada and in the United States embarked on journeys of full communion with one another, we pledged our commitment to unity in Christ for the sake of the mission of Christ's church. On this anniversary, we rejoice and give thanks for those places of cooperation and ministry that our agreements have enabled. We are mindful that our commemorations in Buffalo and Fort Erie this day take place during the great Fifty Days of Easter. As the Resurrected Lord breathed his Spirit onto his disciples and commanded them to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, we continue to ask for God's Holy Spirit to empower us continually to live together into that call.

We have chosen a place near the border between our countries to celebrate our historic agreements, to provide a unified witness to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus, to share our commitment for renewal in Christ's Church and God's creation, and to serve our neighbor in need.

As we continue this journey, we call upon our pastors, bishops, and denominational and congregational leaders to active engagement in God's mission and an increase in their capacity for multiplying ministry in the world.

We recognize God's call to serve and protect Earth in the face of unprecedented global threats to our air, land, and water. Principles of justice call us to live more sustainably as individuals and in community, and to work for systemic changes that support care for God's creation and for our neighbors. We acknowledge that our economy is based upon a worldview that sees creation as "resource" rather than sacred, of intrinsic worth, and "very good." As a result we often plunder creation, and the well-being of low-income and minority communities, as well as other-than-human communities, suffer. We call upon our congregations and institutions to advocate for and embody a more sustainable, compassionate economy. We also challenge our congregations and institutions to make choices and support policies to reduce our collective consumption of energy, thereby reducing the pollution and climate change that stems from the burning of fossil fuels. We call upon our four churches to work together in matters of environmental justice.

As people of faith, we have a strong tradition of helping our neighbor in need. These acts of charity are an integral expression of our faith and help meet the immediate needs of people living in poverty and those hit by disaster. Now is the time to work for justice as well, to advocate for more substantial long-term solutions that will create an anti-poverty agenda which we can all support. We will continue to encourage members of our congregations to meet immediate needs but also ask them to join together and pressure our governments to focus seriously on reducing poverty. We must continue to advocate for decent employment and to enhance our social safety net -- and to ensure that all have the opportunity to access both. Working together on matters of poverty and economic justice is an area where our four churches can forge an important common witness.

Meeting along the border of our countries, we are painfully aware of the issues of immigration and of people who lack lawful immigration status along other borders in the world. In our own context, we are mindful of those who have migrated to our countries to join their families, to work, or to seek refuge from persecution or violence. Countless families are separated by stringent immigration laws. As Christians, we are compelled by Christ's life and teachings to welcome the stranger as neighbor, serving, as Christ did, those who are marginalized. In our national and international ministries with and for migrants and refugees, we continue to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform.

We acknowledge that almost all of us are immigrants ourselves: we live in nations built on land taken from others. Our churches have long involvement in mission and evangelism among First Peoples. Sadly we have an equally long history of marginalization and oppression, often through church-run boarding schools, whose main goals were assimilation and the eradication of First Peoples' culture and heritage. As we atone for the past, we call upon our churches to continue processes of dialogue, healing, and reconciliation. Today, the definition of Evangelism and Mission has transformed into partnerships with First Peoples and their ministries walking side by side with Christ.

We are also aware that our own full communion arrangements reflect this border between our two countries: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church in Canada are in full communion, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church are in full communion. We ask our four churches to explore ways to formalize our relationships and deepen the partnerships between all four of our churches. On the basis of *Called to Common Mission* and the Waterloo Declaration, we look forward to the development of fuller relationships that will lead to a common mission, ministry, and witness in the world.

We put our trust and hope in Christ, who has led us thus far in these relationships. With boldness we venture now with a time of breaking new ground, planting more seeds, and tending them in the spirit of authentic partnership in the Gospel. With humility we offer all our labors to the Lord, hoping they take us and all our brothers and sisters in Christ towards a fuller realization of that unity for which he prays.

In the words of the *Waterloo Declaration*, "We rejoice in our Declaration as an expression of the visible unity of our churches in the one Body of Christ. We are ready to be co-workers with God in whatever tasks of mission serve the Gospel. We give glory to God for the gift of unity already ours in Christ, and we pray for the fuller realization of this gift in the entire church."

In the words of *Called to Common Mission*, "We do not know to what new, recovered, or continuing tasks of mission this Concordat will lead our churches, but we give thanks to God for leading us to this point. We entrust ourselves to that leading in the future, confident that our full communion will be a witness to the gift and goal already present in Christ, 'so that God may be all in all.'"

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Anglican Church of Canada

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, The Episcopal Church

National Bishop Susan Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada