



**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**between**  
**The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania**  
**and**  
**The North American Lutheran Church**

We have been blessed by our meetings, discussions and experience together during the Jubilee Celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Worship Services conducted within the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Recognizing the long and fruitful history of inter-Lutheran cooperation, fellowship and ministry between Lutherans in Tanzania and North America, we now affirm this “Memorandum of Understanding.” Our prayer is that this memorandum will serve as guide and counsel for leaders, pastors and congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).

**Introduction**

The unity of the Christian Church is Christ’s gift to all who believe in Him. It is also the task of all Christians and every Christian body to seek every way possible to manifest this unity in our ecumenical and inter-denominational relationships.

We acknowledge that for all Lutherans, a relationship exists when it is founded on mutual understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, an understanding of our Lutheran faith that is shaped by the authority of the Word of God, the proper interpretation of the Scriptures and our common Lutheran confessional heritage and the mission of the Church.

Recognizing that relationship and the unity that already exists in Jesus Christ, we now seek to nurture that relationship and strengthen our partnership in mission and ministry by establishing a “Memorandum of Understanding” that initiates a time of learning about one another, sharing in on-going conversation and exploring ways that we might develop our relationship further in the future. To that end, we will initiate this time by acknowledging that any relationship is mutual, with the goal of listening to each other, as well as speaking with each other. We acknowledge our mutual needs as well as the gifts each partner has to share for the sake of building up and strengthening the Church, for the sake of our witness to the world.

**With this goal, we will at this time:**

- a. Encourage local parishes and Mission Districts/dioceses to be in conversation with one another, developing individual partnerships that might include but not be limited to: mutual learning and visitation, shared ministry for the sake of education and care for the poor and those in need, shared Bible study and cultural exchange experiences. Such relationships will be facilitated and coordinated by agents appointed by the respective decision-making bodies of each church.
- b. Encourage leaders of the NALC and the ELCT to regularly invite and visit judicatory meetings of the other for the sake of learning more about one another and bringing official greetings and, when appropriate, preaching the Word of God.
- c. Explore the possibility and encourage development of a shared global theological education program to include the NALC and the ELCT, as well as other national and international Lutheran bodies.
- d. After a period of two (2) years living under this “Memorandum of Understanding,” the Presiding Bishop of the ELCT and the Bishop of the NALC will request the appropriate decision-making bodies of the respective denominations to consider the appropriateness of appointing a team of two (2) persons from each body to design and recommend a process to move toward Full Communion (as defined below), including all necessary theological and ecclesiological discussions and actions. If the respective decision-making bodies vote to form such a team, the process toward Full Communion will move forward. If the decision-making bodies do not approve formation of such a team, the “Memorandum of Understanding” will continue to be in effect indefinitely, or until such a time that the respective decision-making bodies choose to form such a “Full Communion Task Force.”

**With Regard to Other Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Relationships**

We acknowledge that each of our two Lutheran bodies have and are developing relationships with other Lutheran denominations as well as other Christian bodies. We agree that this “Memorandum of Understanding” does not imply, create or exclude such other relationships but that this Memorandum is intended to speak solely about the new and developing relationship between the ELCT and the NALC.

**Conclusion**

This “Memorandum of Understanding” has been approved by the respective decision-making bodies, as determined by each denomination’s governing documents and procedures, and is effective as of the date indicated below.

In obedience to Christ’s prayer and intention for the unity of His Body, we acknowledge that this relationship is the result of the design, power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Trusting that what we seek to encourage in this new and developing relationship will be fulfilled through that same Holy Spirit, we pray that our witness to the world and to the whole Church will be strengthened, to the Glory of God and the praise of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

**Understanding of Full Communion:**

- a. The recognition that each church is an authentic church body within the one Church of Christ according to the Lutheran Confessions.
- b. The admission of members in the one church body to the Lord’s Table in the other church body.
- c. The permission of pastors in the one church to preach and preside at worship services in the other church.
- d. The interchangeability of pastors in one church to serve as pastors in the other church.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

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The Rev. Israel Peter Mwakyolile  
Bishop, Konde Diocese  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

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The Rev. John Bradosky  
Bishop  
The North American Lutheran Church