

**AN INITIAL STATEMENT ON THE ECUMENICAL AND
INTER-LUTHERAN COMMITMENT OF THE NORTH
AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

Executive Council

Published: 1/27/2011

Revised: 04/06/2011

Revised: 05/22/2011 (Commission on Theology and Doctrine)

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+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.+

INTRODUCTION: OUR ECUMENICAL HERITAGE

The Lord Jesus Christ prayed for his church, “that they may be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I in you.” (John 17:21a) For the apostle Paul the oneness of the church as the body of Christ is founded on the confession of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:5-6) Such a vision commits Lutherans to work and pray for cooperation and unity among Christians and churches both within and beyond world Lutheranism.

THE NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Provisional Constitution of the North American Lutheran Church, adopted at the organizing convocation in August, 2009, states in Article 13, "Church to Church Relationships": “The North American Lutheran Church (the NALC) shall participate in inter-Lutheran, ecumenical, and inter-religious relationships as a part of its ministry and mission.”

As a new church body the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) acknowledges with appreciation the various inter-Lutheran and ecumenical efforts to manifest Christian unity. We pledge ourselves to continue this journey toward unity among all Christians, convinced that the modern ecumenical movement is a gift of the Spirit of God to the churches as a means of expressing their oneness in Christ.

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OUR CONFSSIONAL FOUNDATION

With regard to our ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships, we confess

- our faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ as the power of God for the salvation of the whole world;
- the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the church and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the gospel. We confess the other confessional writings in the *Book of Concord* as valid interpretations of the faith of church.

We confess further that

- Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God;
- the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God, authored by persons inspired by the Holy Spirit;
- the law and the gospel of God are two forms of the preached Word that convey the saving knowledge of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

OUR CONFSSIONAL COMMITMENT

Our confessional commitment leads us to participate in ecumenical and inter-Lutheran associations in response to Jesus' prayer that all his believers may be one. We intend to engage in ecumenical and inter-Lutheran endeavors at the international, national, and local levels, in accordance with our commitment to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will lead us into such ecumenical and inter-Lutheran endeavors in faithfulness to the Great Commission of our Lord to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded." (Matt. 28:19) We believe that all ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships should have as their goal the mission of Christ and his church "that the world may believe. . .that the world may know." (John 17: 21,23)

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INITIAL AFFIRMATIONS

At this early stage in our life and ministry, the NALC affirms the following:

1. The North American Lutheran Church will urge our congregations to welcome participation in our celebrations of Holy Communion all who are baptized in the name of the Trinity and who believe in the real presence of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine.
2. The NALC will explore ecumenical relationships with those churches and communities whose teachings are compatible with its confessional beliefs;
3. As an initial strategy the North American Lutheran Church will
 - apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation;
 - seek working relationships with other Lutheran church bodies, for example, with the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ and with Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod;
 - cooperate in ministry and mission with other Lutheran churches in the world that share our Scriptural and confessional commitments, for example, African Lutheran churches in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda;
 - give priority to relationships, including ecumenical dialogues, with churches such as the Anglican Church in North America, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Churches.
4. For the sake of mission and ministry and out of fidelity to our Scriptural and Confessional principles, we encourage and support participation in national, regional and local ecumenical activities that are consistent with our confessional commitment, such as organized councils of ministers, informal collegial gatherings, or services such as those during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as well as fellowships and agencies to reach the lost, feed the hungry, house the homeless, and serve our neighbors in need, spiritually and physically.
5. The bishop of the NALC will initiate contact with and respond to all Christian churches, denominations, bodies, judicatories, and fellowships which desire to be in communication and conversation with this church, for the sake of Christian unity and the mission of the gospel. Through our ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships, the NALC wishes to be an expression of our oneness in Christ, the uniqueness of Christ as the Savior of the world, and the apostolic mission we share in his name.

CONCLUSION

As the North American Lutheran Church our commitment is to promote Christian unity in North America and throughout the world. We pray that the Holy Spirit will give us strength and wisdom to heed the words of the apostle Paul:

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I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

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