

**A COMMUNION
OF COMMUNIONS:
ONE EUCHARISTIC
FELLOWSHIP**

*The Detroit Report and Papers of the
Triennial Ecumenical Study
of the Episcopal Church, 1976-1979*

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have overtaken the Consultation on Church Union, shall it, by way of adjustment, turn itself into a continuing "dialogue," or admit that the way to church union is likely to be a long, slogging one? Shall it, in short, adjust its sights to a more distant consummation? If so, though, what is its use? Ecumenical conversations are not, after all, the best situations for serious theological reflection. They aim not at theological but at institutional results. Yet institutional results—at least in the very near future—may be just what cannot be had.

On the other hand, the churches involved in COCU belong together because they share a field of mission and because even now they do not understand one another well enough. There is safety in international confessional dialogue (and use as well, no doubt). It is arguable, however, that the hardest, and therefore the most important, people to talk to are the ones who operate just next door. The Episcopal Church must decide whether the COCU churches are its neighbors, and if so, how to let this truth shape its life.

4. *Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue*

This report needs to be read in the context of the 1978 Lambeth Conference Resolution on relations with Lutheran Churches:

The Conference encourages Anglican churches together with Lutheran churches in their own area:

- 1) To study the report entitled "Anglican-Lutheran International Conversations" [The Pullach Report, 1972], Resolution 2 of the second meeting [Dublin, 1973], and Resolution 5 of the third meeting [Trinidad, 1976] of the Anglican Consultative Council;
- 2) To give special attention to our ecclesial recognition of the Lutheran Church on the basis of these reports and resolutions; and
- 3) To seek ways of extending hospitality and of engaging in joint mission.

The International Anglican-Lutheran conversations met in four sessions between September 1970 and April 1972. From the beginning, these conversations sought to determine the conditions necessary for "mutual recognition and fellowship between the two churches" in the context of the mission of the Church to the world. Such convergence and present agreement was found to exist in matters theological, liturgical, creedal, in sacramental life and practice, as well as the place and role of the ordained ministry, that the conversations recommended a mutual recognition by Anglican and Lutheran churches seeing each other as "a true communion of Christ's body

possessing a truly apostolic ministry." It is important to note that the Anglican participants could not foresee "full integration of ministries apart from the historic episcopate." It was suggested that this present agreement and convergence was sufficient to justify increasing intercommunion and eucharistic sharing as the context for further growing together in the mission of the Church and theological discussions.

The 1973 Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Dublin received with satisfaction the report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Conversations, commended it to the member churches for recognition, approved the setting up of the Anglican-Lutheran Joint Working Group to receive and examine the comments from the churches and to take account of other international conversations in which Anglicans and Lutherans were involved. The 1976 Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Trinidad received the Joint Working Group's report which noted that while there is wide agreement between the two traditions, several areas call for further discussion, especially concepts of justification, eucharistic presence, apostolicity and episcopacy, with attention being given to the role and place of the bishop—and not only the more functional idea of *episcopus*. This exhortation from Lambeth and these reflections of the international discussion and the Joint Working Group do reflect both the continuing urgency and also some of the most important historical influences which help shape the continuing Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue in the U.S.A.

Procedures

Participants for the First Series of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue were appointed by the Joint Commission (now Standing Commission) on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church and by the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. (which was at that time the cooperative agency for the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod). Six meetings were held between October 1969 and June 1972. A series of papers on key issues was presented and discussed as follows:

1. Detroit, Michigan, October 14–15, 1969: "The Meaning and Authority of Scripture in the Life of the Church Today"
2. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 7–9, 1970: "The Relationship of the Church's Worship and Sacramental Life to the Unity of the Church"
3. New York, New York, November 17–19, 1970: "Our Baptismal Unity and Its Ecumenical Significance"