

## **Lutheran-Reformed Proposal Study Results**

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*February 14, 1996*

In 1993, copies of A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today were sent to ELCA clergy, and a congregation study guide, “A Common Discovery: Learning About the Churches of the Reformation in North America Today,” was made available. Everyone was encouraged to study the dialogue report and respond using the form contained in the study guide. In 1995, A Formula of Agreement, which was designed to clarify and explain the recommendations in A Common Calling, was sent to ELCA clergy. In addition, 500 ELCA congregations were selected and invited to form study groups and evaluate the proposal. Two hundred congregations agreed to study the proposal, and 58 (12%) completed the study and sent in a response form. Eventually, 90 surveys were received from all sources. Although this is a disappointingly low response rate, the thoughtful responses of 58 congregational study groups and 32 other groups and individuals do provide an understanding of how ELCA leaders and members evaluate the proposal, which parts of the proposal are strongest and weakest, and how the proposal might be improved.

Overall, in response to the question of whether the ELCA should enter into full communion with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC), 57.8% of ELCA congregation study groups or leaders said yes, 35.6% said no, and 6.7% did not answer. Many comments about entering into full communion focused on broad issues, such as the unity of Christ’s church, and these comments were very positive. Ecumenism is generally seen as a desirable activity. Comments focusing on details of the proposal and differences among the four churches tended to be negative. Issues receiving much attention were the Lord's Supper and the real presence, Lutheran subscription to the Augsburg Confession, and the interchangeability of clergy.

Below is a list of all survey questions in order by the number of agree and strongly agree responses each question received. This list provides a sense of which items were the most supported and which were the least supported.

### Number Percent

82	91.1%	Question 3F	Commit to ongoing process of theological dialogue
77	85.6%	Question 3G	Pledge to living under the Gospel
75	82.4%	Question 3C	Recognize baptism and authorize sharing of Lord’s Supper
72	78.9%	Question 3B	Withdraw historic condemnations
69	76.6%	Question 3E	Establish channels of consultation and decision-making
62	68.9%	Question 3A	Recognize each other as churches—Gospel and sacraments
<b>52</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>Question 2</b>	<b>Enter into full communion</b>
39	43.3%	Question 3D	Recognize ministries and orderly exchange ordained ministers

The question on the overall proposal (Question 2) is found near the bottom of the list. All of the questions which focused on details of the proposal received stronger agreement than the 57.8% agreement for the overall proposal except for question 3D which addressed recognizing ministries and orderly exchange of ordained ministers. Question 3D received only 43.3% agreement.

Most of the negative comments for all questions focused on three areas of concern:

**(1) Agreement on the Lord's Supper and the real presence.** Many comments pointed out that Reformed don't believe in the real presence, but Lutherans do. Recognizing each other as churches in which the sacraments are rightly administered is hard for many respondents to do because they state that there is no agreement on the real presence. "In spite of everything I have read we are not in full communion understanding of the real presence with these church bodies." Authorizing and encouraging the sharing of the Lord's Supper showed less disagreement, but the lack of agreement on the real presence was mentioned here too. "The issue of communion needs to be resolved. I can't accept it though as a symbol only."

**(2) Faithfulness to Scripture and confessional clarity.** Many of the respondents wrote lengthy comments about the ELCA being a confessional church. They worry about the congregationalism of the three churches in the proposal and the perceived diversity in beliefs their clergy have. Lutherans want Lutheran clergy and clergy serving Lutheran congregations to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. They feel that changing this will water down the Lutheran identity that currently exists. "As a community that holds the Scripture to be the 'ONLY' sound and norm for faith and life in the church, and as a confessional church, we do not need our faith diluted." The Augsburg Confession was mentioned again by respondents who said that the condemnations could not be withdrawn without altering the Augsburg Confession. Several people reported that the common unity of beliefs and structure simply is not perceived. "We are not confident that the doctrine of the Gospel is at the center of the teaching of these churches. This is not to say that they are not Christian or don't believe the Gospel; but there is no confession of faith which serves as a symbol for all of them. Some CONFESSIO OF FAITH, which is centered on the Gospel, is necessary before we can enter into 'full communion' as proposed."

**(3) Problems with the exchange of clergy.** Given their concern with differences in sacramental beliefs, faithfulness to Scripture, and confessional clarity, respondents also express worry about liberal pastors and gay and lesbian pastors, especially from the UCC. "One member made the comment that the issue of ordination of homosexual persons needed to be resolved first among Lutherans before joining with the Reformed." Respondents also want all clergy to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. "This was our group's area of greatest concern. While we recognize and affirm ordained ministers of the Reformed traditions, our members felt strongly that any pastor serving this congregation needs to be grounded in Lutheran theology and praxis." Practical concerns, such as controlling pastors from another denomination, the equivalencies of the educational requirements, who authorizes ordination, and who suggests pastoral candidates, were also

connected to the exchange of clergy. “A clergy friend serves on a synod candidacy committee. Within the ELCA procedure for approval we have some concerns. To approve a non-Lutheran for call to a Lutheran congregation, how will this be consistent with the present rigorous process for ELCA persons to be approved for ordination?”

Positive comments to the proposal focused on three areas:

**(1) Supporting the unity of Christ’s church.** Many respondents stated that God wills us to be one church, we are stronger together than we are apart, and we would be enriched by the experience and would grow in our faith. “We should continue to do more. We are supposed to be one. The answer is mandated by Scripture that we become one. The Church is committed to Lutheran and Christian unity. This unity serves the community best.” “It’s an enriching experience, one that would cause us all to grow in faith. It would make us examine what we believe and discuss it freely.”

**(2) Many of these activities we should be doing.** Respondents stated that we should be establishing channels of communication, holding ongoing theological dialogues, pledging to live under the Gospel, and doing this at all levels of the church so that pastors, congregations, lay leaders, and synods all participate in developing these new relationships. “One Lord - One faith - One Baptism.” “Such commitment allows and encourages cooperation in neighborhoods and councils of churches on local, statewide, and national levels, provided confessional theology is not compromised.”

**(3) Many of these activities we are already doing.** Many congregations report that they are working together, recognizing each other, exchanging clergy for special events or in rural areas where there are fewer clergy, agreeing on baptism, recognizing Global Missions and specialized ministries, holding dialogues, etc. “Our unity in Christ demands it. Officially entering into full communion would recognize and undergird our local cooperation that already exists.” “We do that now.” “This is already being done in some rural settings.”

In summary, many responses expressed support for the proposal and improved ecumenical relationships. For many respondents, ecumenism is something we are called to do by God. Disagreement focused on perceived theological differences including understanding of the sacraments, faithfulness to Scripture, and confessional clarity. Concern over having ministers from these three churches serving ELCA congregations focused on the theological differences these pastors would bring with them and concern regarding gay and lesbian pastors.

## Appendix

*(The numbers in parentheses after comments indicate the total number of times that comment was made.)*

**Question 1:** “This response form was completed by”: There were 54 surveys that came from all or parts of study groups, 10 were from a layperson alone, 13 were from a pastor alone, and one was from an Associate in Ministry alone. Thirteen response forms were returned which did not describe who completed the response form. Study groups ranged in size from three to 21 members, with a median of 7.5.

**Question 2:** “Should the ELCA enter into full communion as described in A Common Calling and the Formula for Agreement with three churches: the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ?”

Yes	52	57.8%
No	32	35.6%
No answer	6	6.7%

There were twenty-nine comments made by those agreeing with full communion. The comments included: we are supposed to be one (19), do it if it won't hurt our Lutheran identity (6), and generally agree with the proposal (5).

There were forty-one comments made by those disagreeing with full communion. They included: disagree because of a lack of faithfulness to scripture and confessional clarity among the reformed churches (10), it will water down our Lutheran identity (8), it needs more study (5), it won't change a thing; don't seek unity for unity's sake; we don't need full communion (4), the reformed are too liberal and politically active (4), we are stronger being separate (3), the common unity (beliefs and structure) is not perceived (2), the materials were poorly written and we could not evaluate the proposal (2), and why must Chicago lead; let it happen at the local level (2).

**Question 3A:** “That they recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God.”

Strongly agree	23	25.6%
Agree	39	43.3%
Disagree	11	12.2%
Strongly Disagree	6	6.7%
Not Sure	9	10.0%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were 12 comments made by those agreeing with the question. The comments included: we agree on baptism (8) and the differences are not church dividing (2). There were thirty-nine

comments made by those disagreeing with the question. The comments included: there is no agreement on the Lord’s Supper and the real presence (28), specific concerns regarding the sacramental understanding of the UCC and less so of the PCUSA (5), and concern about a weakened theology of baptism (3).

**Question 3B:** “That they withdraw any historic condemnations by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today.”

Strongly Agree	38	42.2%
Agree	33	36.7%
Disagree	6	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	4	4.4%
Not Sure	7	7.8%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were eight comments made by those agreeing with the question. The comments generally supported withdrawing the condemnations. There were eleven comments made by those disagreeing with the question. The comments included: this seems OK, but will this alter the Augsburg Confession (7) and this implies agreement which has not been reached (3). There were also nine comments made by those not sure of the question which said let’s not rewrite the past, just move on, it’s our roots (6) and requesting more information, Biblically based, on the condemnations (2).

**Question 3C:** “That they continue to recognize each other’s baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord’s Supper among their members.”

Strongly Agree	43	47.8%
Agree	32	35.6%
Disagree	8	8.9%
Strongly Disagree	3	3.3%
Not Sure	2	2.2%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were ten comments made by those agreeing with the question. The comments included: general support (7) and yes, but they are sacraments, not just ordinances (2). Two comments made by those disagreeing with the question said that they already did this, why need full communion? (2). Five comments made by those not sure stated that beliefs regarding the Lord’s Supper should be retained by the individual (5).

**Question 3D:** “That they recognize each other’s various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

Strongly Agree	9	10.0%
Agree	30	33.3%
Disagree	18	20.0%
Strongly Disagree	14	15.6%
Not Sure	17	18.9%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were eleven comments made by those agreeing with the questions. Comments included: support for recognizing their ministries (5), general support (2) and support if a congregation wants to do it (2). There were fifty-five comments made by those disagreeing with the question. The comments included: rejection of the exchange of clergy (30), concern regarding homosexuals in the UCC and PCUSA (9), they must subscribe to Lutheran confessions (8), and exchange is OK, but not permanent calls (4). There were twelve comments made by those not sure with the question. They wondered how one church would control the pastors from another denomination (7) and if the educational standards of the churches are similar (3).

**Question 3E:** “That they establish appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches.”

Strongly Agree	31	34.4%
Agree	38	42.2%
Disagree	9	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	4	4.4%
Not Sure	6	6.7%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were sixteen comments made by those supporting the question. The comments included: of course we should do this with all churches (8), this should be done at all levels of the church (5), and do this for specialized ministries, global missions, rural ministries (2). There were five comments made by those disagreeing with the question. They felt that the channels of communication were unclear, distant, and bureaucratic (5). There were five comments made by those not sure with the question, all asking for clarification of the topic (5).

**Question 3F:** “That they commit themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service.”

Strongly Agree	45	50.0%
Agree	37	41.1%
Disagree	3	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Not Sure	3	3.3%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were eighteen comments made by those agreeing with the question. The comments included: this sounds good, we can grow from this (12), involve the laity and publicize this well (3), and orthodoxy must be maintained (2). There were two comments made by those disagreeing with the question.

**Question 3G:** “That they pledge themselves to living together under the gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for each other will have a chance to grow.”

Strongly Agree	44	48.9%
Agree	33	36.7%
Disagree	5	5.6%
Strongly Disagree	3	3.3%
Not Sure	3	3.3%
No Answer	2	2.2%

There were eight comments made by those agreeing with the question. The comments expressed general support (4) and stated that this is already being done (3). There were two comments made by those disagreeing with the question.

Final Comments: At the end of the response form respondents were asked to share any additional comments. There were three comments which focused on the study process. They raised questions concerning (1) the ELCA’s putting a positive spin on ecumenism while glossing over serious theological differences (2) becoming suspicious of Chicago because of the clarity of the proposal, and (3) the lack of parish participation in the development of the proposal.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree    Not Sure

! that they pledge themselves to living together under the gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for the other will have a chance to grow  
*Comments:*

              

Please feel free to enclose comments on any aspects of A Common Calling or the study process on a separate sheet of paper.

Please return the completed response form by **November 1, 1995**, to the:

Department for Research and Evaluation  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
 8765 West Higgins Road  
 Chicago, IL 60631

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

**A Common Calling:  
 The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today**

Department for Ecumenical Affairs  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**RESPONSE FORM**

**Background:** *On March 7-8, 1992, an officially appointed team of Lutheran and Reformed theologians proposed "full communion" among four churches on the basis of more than three years of conversations. The report, A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today, asks the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC) to, among other things, "recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God."*

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions from your view as a member of the ELCA.

1. This response form was completed by:

- \_\_\_ a study group composed of \_\_\_\_ people (*enter number of persons*)
- \_\_\_ a layperson alone
- \_\_\_ a pastor alone
- \_\_\_ an Associate in Ministry or lay staff member alone

2. Should the ELCA enter into full communion as described in A Common Calling and the Formula for Agreement with three churches: the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ?

- \_\_\_ Yes
- \_\_\_ No

Why or why not? If you answered no, what else do you think should be required?

3. A Common Calling makes specific recommendations for action by the ELCA and the three Reformed churches. (See Appendix II, page 2 of this study guide for recommendations.) To what extent does your study group or do you agree with each of the following recommendations for the churches involved?

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
! that they recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
! that they withdraw any historic condemnations by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
! that they continue to recognize each other's baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord's Supper among their members <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
! that they recognize each other's various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
! that they establish appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
! that they commit themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Complete Listing of Comments from Lutheran-Reformed Surveys

*Question 2. Should the ELCA enter into full communion as described in A Common Calling and the Formula for Agreement with three churches: the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ?*

Some in the group still have concerns about the exchange of clergy.

There was an exception to the 4th proposal. It is felt by one participant that the issues of the ordination of homosexuals need resolution first.

This question is much too extensive. Communion among lay members who have a basic understanding of Word and Sacrament is worthwhile. But a full sharing of pastors would go too far. All four churches must first reach a consensus in doctrine and practice.

In spite of everything I have read we are not in full communion understanding of real presence with these church bodies.

We are not confident that the doctrine of the Gospel is at the center of the teaching of these churches. This is not to say that they are not Christian or don't believe the Gospel; but there is no confession of faith which serves as a Symbol for all of them. Some CONFESSIO OF FAITH, which is centered on the Gospel, is necessary before we can enter into "full communion" as proposed.

Generally agree with proposal. Would like to grow in faith through others.

Our concern are outweighed by the possible benefits.

We have different views of our role in the world, different experiences of life in America, different emphasis in our beliefs about the Sacraments and different gifts to share. We have much to learn from and share with each other. Our group thinks that is best alone by maintaining our distinctiveness.

We should continue to do more. We are supposed to be one. The answer is mandated by scripture that we became one. The Church is committed to Lutheran and Christian unity. This unity serves the community best. We face problems-that are historically based do have much substances.

Concern that it can't be reversed. As Corrie TenBoom said, "You can't unscramble scrambled eggs." Biggest problem area is orderly exchange of ordained ministers. Biggest goal is common witness because we Christians are a minority.

I believe that the Gospel and sacraments were given to us by God so that we could be united in Christ as his people. I believe we can hold our individual beliefs and also unite and work with people who have differing views-that are also Christian.

Though there seems to be substantial areas of agreement among the church bodies, our group was concerned. About a weakened theology of baptism and the Lord's Supper among the Reformed. About the practicalities of the "orderly exchange of the clergy". About the "satis est" clause does not necessitate formalized "full communion".

If our theologians see no serious problem, I see no difficulty.

Issue of communion needs to be resolved- I can't accept it though as a symbol only.

If they understand our thinking on it.

As a community that holds the Scriptures to be the "ONLY" sound and norm for faith and life in the church and as a confessional church we do not need our faith diluted.

We have one God.

The only reason I say "no" is over the issue of Holy communion. The Reformed Church is unable to embrace "Real Presence". I respect this, but feel we cannot share in the sacrament for this reason.

Why not?

No reason not to.

I've encountered nothing in our study that would prevent full communion.

It's an enriching experience, one that would cause us all to grow in faith. It would make us examine what we believe and discuss it freely.

Even though the UCC does not have a unifying confessional tradition. We would hope that through discussion and within the principle of complementarity we could see more consistency.

More time and study by all members.

Divisions within Christianity present a poor image to those whom we seek to include.

No. We need to keep our Lutheran identify. We need to work together, but keep our own identities.

No, not until there is agreement on the embodiment of Christ in the Sacrament of Communion.

Yes. We are one body. Our differences are not dividing. We compliment one another. We must strive toward Christ's prayer for unity.

Too many areas of difference. A pastor may know another's doctrine, but its preaching must come from the heart.

Provides for better Christian witness in today's world.

Yes. I am in full agreement with all the recommendations. Recommendation #1 is true. The gospel is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered in all denominations.

Yes, the areas that we have in common seem to be the important ones and the differences seem to be fairly insignificant.

Yes. I believe we should enter into full communion, but with reservations for communion, we are different. Even though these differences are not dividing, the differences do effect the spirituality, piety and faith theology of each person.

No. Because it would be more divisive than unifying. We should continue a dialogue, not sacrifice our convictions, insist on the purity of the gospel and the sacraments, and insist that the reasons for those ancient condemnations have been corrected in their teaching and understanding of the gospel. Lutheran pastors should not be expected to enter a congregation which has different theological convictions. And the Lutheran Laity would not accept some of the teachings expressed by these groups.

NO!! Unlike Lutherans and Episcopalians, members of our communions have defined each other over against each other. Four centuries of difference cannot be cavalierly dismissed as now two diverse and equally valid in one overarching commodity called "reformation theology." The doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper is part of the Gospel, not an addendum. The question is what is believed, taught, confessed, experienced and practiced. For Lutherans real presence is ONLY the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in, with and under the consecrated bread and wine. "How?" is an open question; THAT is NOT. Required: development of a joint confession like Leuenberg Concord or Arnoldshain Theses (which still fall short). Sine qua non: manducatio oralis, manducatio impiorum; UNIO SACRAMENTALIS. Grape juice is an issue, even according to our current communion practices statement (we're concerned to follow the biblical institution and it's a consideration when we're to commune in ecumenical settings, you'll note). We are selling sacramental faith and obedience short. Why? To show "progress" for all the funds spent?

Should not swap ministers. Need to keep our own identity.

Unity of purpose in proclaiming of the Gospel is central. Unity of structure and beliefs is too diverse.

Because we share a common belief in the Triune God; acknowledge the primacy of Holy Scripture as the only source and norm for Christian faith, life, and outreach,... therefore we ought to act together to proclaim the Gospel and minister to the needs of all God's people - in the midst of our increasingly secularized and a religious society.

Yes, as a witness to Christian unity! As a pastor in the ELCA and formerly in the ALC, lay people want unity with other denominations much more than turf-bound clergy.

The group perhaps more clearly said, "not yet." There was not enough clear information as too some of the questions in the study. Perhaps, with concise information, and much more education of the lay member in the pew and of the clergy, the ELCA could enter into full communion with the Reformed churches.

Further definition/exploration/interpretation of the issues and the common understanding we share of our faith, particularly at the level where the church lives, the congregations. Some ideas in A Common Calling almost appear as fresh thoughts, yet we are to hold them as convictions, share clergy and are discussing pension plans. We don't believe, at our level, this common unity is perceived. When we meet with members of the Reformed Churches, which is formerly not very often, we don't sense the common agreement that would allow us to exchange clergy or assume a common understanding of the Lord's Supper.

While this is an important development and step, we have two concerns. 1) Our primary place in the ecumenical world is serving a link with the Roman Catholic Church. We broke with them. We were the first to make, or be forced into that break - we should be the ones that connect back with Rome. The Roman Catholic Church ought to be our primary concern and we should do nothing to jeopardize that function and role with Roman Catholic. 2) Second hesitation - why must Chicago lead. Let this happen and encourage on local level. ELCA has made major blunders by trying to do too much for us.

The first of The Book of Concord contain the historic Creeds (Nicene, Athanasian, Apostles') for a reason: a continuity with the catholic faith. To join with Churches that do not subscribe to these Creeds is to cut the anchor of our faith.

Our unity in Christ demands it. Officially entering into full communion would recognize and undergird our local cooperation that already exist.

No, not with UCC. They are too liberal and they ordain homosexuals. Yes with the Presbyterian Church USA. There is enough theological agreement and sociological compatibility to make "full communion" work. Undecided about the RCA; I do not feel the ELCA has enough in common with them to justify "full communion". But I may see in Robert Schuller more of the RCA than there really is.

This is the composite response from the study group which consisted of the five members of the adult education commission of St. Paul's Lutheran Church Berea, Ohio. The group voted unanimously to accept the proposal for common communion with the three Reformed churches: Presbyterian Church, Reformed Church in America, and The United Church of Christ. Is the ultimate goal one of a single reformed Church? Would we as Lutheran Churches lose our identity? If the answer to these questions is yes, then a great deal of ground work will need to proceed such a monumental step. Certainly a slow beginning to assure congregations adjust to this concept will be necessary.

We should celebrate those things we have in common and not dwell so heavily on those things we do not have in common. There can be unity in the midst of diversity.

Unable to come to a single conclusion. Opinions ranged from one strong yes to one strong no. The majority leaned just barely to no. Although we wished to embrace full communion, we felt that more attention was needed to procedures for sharing and exchange, as well as more conversations on the congregational level. The time frame for implementation is too constricting.

Until we can agree to a common language in regards to the Lord's Supper and issues of Christology, we do not see how we (or they, for that matter) can enter into full communication.

Our group voted yes on the basis of the theological arguments presented in the readings. HOWEVER given the strong congregational autonomy of the UCC, can anyone really speak for their church? If not, our vote would be different.

We think more in-depth study is needed before uniting the four churches. There is agreement up to a certain point. When it comes to the essence of the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine either IS Christ's body and blood or, if one can not say it IS, then it IS NOT. We can respect that someone believes something different, but we do not agree it can be a matter of semantics, or can be stated as a consensus. We also have reservations regarding church policy, especially Congregationalism.

Up until recently I was willing to go along but now after direct encounter with UCC I can no longer agree if they are party to agreement. I am not in communion with.

Qualified yes. There is concern about how this will affect other dialogues in which the ELCA is engaged. We are a Lutheran and Episcopalian fellowship and wonder how this will affect the proposed Concordat of Agreement between our two churches.

"Because..therefore..." our differences over particulars should not dissuade us from recognizing the mission we share in common. 1 Cor.3, 6-15.

Christ is sorrowed by our disunity. We have denied access to Christ by our lack of full communion. The walls that divide us are based on foundations more than 400 years old. Those foundations and the concerns which motivated them no longer are present. Full communion will permit the church to be built up.

The Formula of Agreement is heavy on Reformed doctrine and seems to gloss over Lutheran theology. A Common Calling chooses to advise us to ignore the Real Presence as a difference that can be worked out later. At least in Europe, the Leuenberg Agreement required the signers to acknowledge the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar whether they chose to emphasize it in their teaching or not.

A sense that The Body and Blood of Christ is specifically associated with bread and wine and its eating and drinking. (One participant keyed in on one problem on this issue- "The language is strange"). This is basic. Ministry needs looking of, but this is prime.

The phrase "full communion" bothers me because I interpret that to mean without reservation and with full, or total acceptance of each other's beliefs. If we are advocating fellowship and shared worship with an understanding

and respect for our differences, I can support a decision to partake in one another's worship services and activities. If not, I cannot because I see there are fundamental differences in how we feel about principle sacraments, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Can the sacraments be rightly administered when they are looked upon primarily or entirely as symbols. We object to the "plateau" idea where we lose and hopefully they gain. One participant said our differences are like one person eating the cake and the other eating the box - a symbol of the cake. Differences should be worked out before "full communion". The ELCA is a good example where it is not done.

A Common calling says there are no "church dividing differences" to prevent full communion between the three churches, in the Reformed traditions and the ELCA. However, the study in every session points out differences - some I would consider "church - dividing". A Common Calling acknowledges that there are important differences between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions regarding the Lord's Supper. It is pointed out at the end of each session: others (changes) might be viewed as negative. Why would we want to go into any new negative positions. Can't "Christian unity" be achieved for Lutherans without "full communion" with other denominations? Must we dilute our traditional and historical positions? Is this the first time individual member input has been solicited, or has all previous discussion been at the "leader" level? It sounds to me as though this is a "done deal". The document has now been referred to all the governing bodies of the participating denominations for their formal action.

I particularly have reservations about the United Church of Christ. What assurance is there that a theologian can speak for that church body. Because of my associations, I question whether a theologian can. It is the one church body of the dialogue partners which is non-confessional in its stance.

While I subscribe to the Lutheran doctrine/ theology and feel secure with its interpretation, I think we have no monopoly on truth and interpretation. We do not have to compromise our beliefs to enter into full communion.

While not part of the Reformed Study, our 10 week study process which included the Reformed, Presbyterian, and UCC has brought us to the conclusion that we are diametrically opposed to entering into Full Communion agreements with all or any members of this dialogue proposal. This also is the sentiment of our Church Council and Congregation.

***Question 3a. To what extent do you agree that they recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God?***

We note that some members within all four bodies have moved away from "rightly preached" and "administered" in both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. At the same time, we note that other members now share common understanding within all four.

One objection (disagree) That full review of Eucharistic practices are not explained fully and must be examined carefully.

It may very well be that the Gospel is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered in the Reformed churches, but our concern is that there is no assurance of this - no confession of faith. The materials we studied, in fact, suggest that the sacraments are not rightly administered. we were distressed by the material in "A Common Discovery" which indicated a Reformed emphasis on the action of the community in the sacraments rather than the action of God.

We question whether the Lord's Supper is rightly administered (from our Lutheran perspective) in the Reformed churches.

Key words that need to be addressed are "rightly" and "sacrament". If one believes in real Presence and other believes in symbolic Presence, there is confusion. Who decides if it's "rightly"?

These is substantial difference in our Theologies of Baptism- specifically we believe that baptism is the pre-requisite to salvation and they don't.

The UCC is certainly suspect. I also question the Presby's sacramental understanding.

Differences are not church dividing.

Concern only with communion.

Our study group moved from "agree" closer to "strongly agree" by the end of the study.

The basic beliefs of the other churches are beliefs that I share.

The gospel and sacraments are both rightly preached and administered, but not the same. The emphasis is still different. Thus we ought to be more aware of how our differences play out in the life and faith of our members.

With such significant differences in the understanding and teaching, particularly the sacraments and church organization, it is incomprehensible to think that all are rightly preaching the gospel and rightly administering the sacraments.

That the Gospel can be heard in all four churches on occasion is not debatable. the most celebrated RCA preachers, for example, (Robert Schuller, Norman Vincent Peale and his successor Arthur Caliandro) do not preach the apostolic Gospel. The sacramental catechesis and practice of the Reformed churches do not bear witness to the fullness of the truth of the embodied Gospel in the Lord's Supper.

In the absence of a UCC credal affirmation, there seems to be no check on individual faith deviancy, and no defining corpus of values and beliefs.

How can Presbyterians rightly preach the gospel if they ordain homosexuals into their ministry.

There needs to be an on-going discussion on the differences in understanding the sacraments.

For us, the presence of Christ is not as light an issue as the A Common Calling indicates. We do not wish to dwell on the "how" of the presence, but we won't equivocate on the presence.

What difference do sacraments make in churches that see no link to Catholic Christianity.

By "churches" we assure we are speaking about both churches as a whole.

We disagree that these two traditions are at the point of sharing a common language in regards to the sacraments.

Again- can anyone insure UCC congregations accept the doctrines presented? It is a real concern for us.

But only UCC other are Zwiglian.

We as Lutherans believe that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. It is our understanding that the Reformed do not. To say the Sacraments are rightly administered, in the Reformed tradition, according to the Word of God would be denying what we believe the Scriptures say and as confessed in Article X of the Augsburg Confession and also the Small Catechism.

Lack of intimate knowledge of the Reformed churches prevented a "strongly agree" on this question. Also some lingering suspicion remains about commitment to the "real presence" in UCC churches.

"Rightly" leads to a Pelagian controversy. We must avoid turning the Gospel into a new law at all costs.

There is a sense in which we cannot accept right administration of The Sacrament of the Altar in churches which do not associate elements and presence.

"That the Gospel is rightly preached...." is somewhat acceptable. "Sacraments rightly administered..." is not. Some churches in the Reformed tradition choose not only to ignore the Real Presence but have no compunction about denying it. Some of their alleged confessional documents speak to that doctrine.

In general I feel we agree on the rudiments. The interpretation of the sacraments is the area of dissension.

Can the Gospel be rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered when a church and pastor believe they only represent "symbols".

The Reformed churches administer the sacraments according to their interpretation of the Word of God - this, in some cases, is not the same as Lutheran interpretation.

***Question 3b. To what extent do you agree that they withdraw any historic condemnations by one side or the other as inappropriate for the life and faith of our churches today?***

We note some current trends which indicate that many members within all four bodies have moved away from these historic stances.

The word withdraw was questioned as an initial part of the process. Is there a necessity or possibility of altering the Lutheran Confessions.

The condemnations are probably not helpful or appropriate for the life and faith of our churches. At the same time, our group thought that withdrawing them would only raise other issues that are probably not helpful.

Should be "all" instead of "any"

Condemnations get us nowhere - yet dialogue and differences must continue.

Unless the condemnation is based on SOUND biblical scholarship.

This has no place or purpose today.

We cannot and should not speak for our forbearers. That was then - this is now.

Differences that important centuries ago simply do not appear to be divisive at this point.

They ought to be withdrawn, but then replaced with a clear understanding of the historical and theological differences which led to the original condemnations.

Until such condemnations as those expressed against the Calvinistic teaching in the book of Concord pg 484-485 #'s 8, 10, 11, and 12 are officially recanted, these condemnations should not be withdrawn.

The differences still obtain. we may not like the vituperativeness of the original, but we have no business re-writing history or the confessions (as the RCA has done, concerned about inclusive language and condemnations). The

Lutheran Confessions understand themselves not as transient expressions of what a certain community of believers stood for at one time.....they have a self understanding of witnesses down through the ages to the truth of the Gospel as normed by the scriptures once and for all.

We do not believe the exchange of ordained clergy is necessary or beneficial. Exchanges would inevitably lead to "a blurring of the distinctiveness of the traditions"... which "is not the goal of the relationship."

There needs to be an on-going discussion on the differences in understanding the sacraments, which is the basis of the condemnation described in the resource materials. What are the condemnations? Communion was the only condemnation emphasized in the resource materials. We can withdraw from something that we do not know about.

New condemnation may be in order!

We recognize the historic differences, believe there was a reason for them that no longer holds true, but are not convinced we should try to change history. Why do just admit they are part of our past but no longer shape our pasture today?

The group felt that the materials were unclear on whether a call to a pastor not trained in a Lutheran seminary could be allowed. Does it mean all pastors of the four denominations will form a common pool from which a pastor could be called to any church? It was felt that exchanging pastors on a limited or emergency basis was acceptable, but that a call to serve an ELCA church should only be made to a graduate of a Lutheran seminary.

This is necessary so that old wounds can heal completely and we can move onward, united in common goal and mission.

The language of the 16th century condemnations are probably not helpful in our ecumenical age. However, are the theological reasons behind the condemnations how considered not valid?

The difference which remain are based on differing interpretation of Scripture. We believe that no one should be condemned for their interpretation. However, we cannot withdraw the historical condemnations because they are part of our history. The wording might be better said as The Leuenberg Agreement: "The condemnations pronounced by the Reformation fathers....are no longer an obstacle to church fellowship."

But not on all sacrament issues.

We find the significant part of this recommendation to be the last part....life and faith of our churches today. Keeping historic condemnations will impede full communion, but we didn't study specific condemnations.

They must not deny that they were once made for good reasons, but may admit that they no longer apply.

The condemnations are based on medieval differences. We are no longer medievalists.

agree, only so far as it allows ecumenical efforts in social action and joint worship in non-Eucharistic settings.

Although condemnations ought not remove discussion... or imply agreement when it is not yet reached.

I assume these historic condemnations are what resulted in the development of the Christian denominations. They should not hold on to these "condemnations" but I believe we have risen above this to the position of recognizing differences - not condemning for there differences.

IN ALL CHURCHES, INCLUDING ELCA, THERE ARE INSTANCES WHERE THIS IS DONE WELL AND SET EXAMPLES WHERE IT IS LACKING. I do feel the ELCA has more recent history of discipline in this regard.

The central beliefs of Christianity should be our concern - not small details and past condemnations.

It's asking too much to expect

***Question 3c. To what extent do you agree that they continue to recognize each other's baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord's Supper among their members.***

We affirm continuing to share the Lord's Supper among lay members. But we also urge that a greater consensus of understanding the Lord's Supper must be reached among all four.

Yes without a doubt. How do we emphasize that all understand that Baptism brings an assurance that our sins will be washed away?

With one "disagree." All recognized baptism; one questions others "true presence" consensus.

To recognize each other's baptism? Absolutely! To ENCOURAGE sharing of the Lord's Supper? No.

Group had concern of the different ways "authorize and encourage" could be interpreted.

"Encouraging" the sharing of the Lord's Supper is a difficulty because our group felt there is a high value in communing with others with the same beliefs regarding it.

Our beliefs regarding Lord's Supper would be retained by each person.

One Lord-One Faith-One Baptism.

Absolutely, both these events are the means of grace and God is the active ingredient.

History is history. It is not good to re-write it for political correctness. Let's not celebrate our past and move forward in our faith.

If they understand the Lord's Supper to be the body and blood, the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, so long as each person's conscience makes that decision.

While they should recognize one baptism the importance of a common understanding of the Lord's Supper can't be taken for granted. A common discovery of Christians experience the truth that the body of Christ has been broken... "Clearly Christ's body was never broken (John 19:36)" "Differences in understanding of the Lord's Supper still exist today."

Recognizing each other's baptism is one thing. Our current communion practices statement enjoins us to make a clear and positive statement of the Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper at every celebration and encourage all baptized Christians to attend. How can we commend our members to churches which disobey the institution, change the elements instituted by Christ and make no profession of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ IN THE BREAD AND WINE?

We do that now.

For us, this is a yes, but??? We eagerly share the Lord's Supper and recognize Baptism, for the Sacraments are from God. But, we view them as sacraments not just ordinances. We wish this to be underscored and are wary of those who teach or imply otherwise.

Does this joint decision making apply to both local churches and missionary efforts or to both? Would such decisions bind all participating churches of the denominations to a decision?

The Lord's Supper should be shared among the members of the family of faith. It is the Lord of the church who invites us to His table, as denominations we merely extend "His" invitation.

The sharing of the Lord's Supper should be pending the mutual preparation of the congregations involved.

We do, of course, recognize each other's baptism.

They are welcome at my table, but I can't receive at some of their tables. They are Zwinglian (some UCC).

Regarding the Lord's Supper, the Lutheran church declares that Christ is present by God's promise. It is our understanding that it is a memorial meal for the Reformed. The declaration of God's promise must be present, rather than basing the Sacrament on the human ability to discern. Regarding Baptism, we Lutherans believe Baptism must be in the Name of the Triune God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is our understanding that in some of the Reformed churches, (some UCC congregations), Baptism is not in the Name of this God.

This is very important. Our unity springs for an experience of sin and grace, not in an doctrinal positions.

Baptism yes. Eucharist no.

Sharing the Lord's Supper only if the teaching of the host church is explained, allowing the worshipers to be bound by their consciences concerning the propriety of receiving.

This question caused a somewhat intense discussion. Personally, I feel participation in the Lord's Supper is acceptable when the understanding is that you accept it with your own beliefs attached.

Agree to continue to recognizing "one baptism". But disagree to sharing of the Lord's Supper because of differences in emphasis and understanding. "Common Calling acknowledges important theological differences between Lutheran and Reformed traditions regarding the Lord's Supper."

This can be valid only if the sacraments are recognized as real - not just symbols. Can symbols confer forgiveness of sins? Can symbols confer the Holy Spirit? Is being born again only symbolic?

Beliefs about this should be discussed, displayed and respected. We can each believe what we feel to be the truth while recognizing others beliefs.

***Question 3d. To what extent do you agree that they recognize each other's various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.***

Some in our group were concerned about ordination standards, particularly in regard to active homosexuals in the UCC.

One member made the comment that the issue of ordination of homosexual persons needed to be resolved first among Lutherans before joining with Reformed.

We oppose any "orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament" because we do not conclude that all four bodies share any consistent, common understanding of the gospel.

Yes to recognize ministries. Now more comfortable with a Lutheran pastor. On occasion but not a "call" require denominate specific "calls". Ordination difference make it uncertain that this should be done now - maybe in 5 years.

"Orderly Exchange" is very vague. Much concern over historical ties, education, theological training, etc. Go slowly is the unanimous voice.

Again, there needs to be subscription to a confession of faith which places the Gospel at the heart and core of what is believed and taught before clergy can be exchanged. We did not see any assurances from the Reformed that the Gospel would be taught and the Sacraments administered rightly.

Orderly exchange but not permanent call.

"Making provisions" is one thing, but exchanging clergy for the pastoral ministry in most congregational settings was questioned.

We believe this would blur the uniqueness of the gifts our communions have. Those in our group who had been members of Reformed churches worried about this the most.

Question? Pastor from another denomination follow denomination of church he serves. Is there anything else to keep this in place?

Most of us disagree, several strongly. While a united Protestant belief in the Apostles' Creed is the goal, an orderly exchange is the problem. Sounds like joint committee might have too much power. Concern that ordained practicing homosexual clergy of UCC would overshadow fundamental beliefs.

Consensus was for unity but concern was about sameness and loss of identity in expressing our Lutheran voice and approach to the Gospel.

This is already done in some rural settings. Nonetheless, we would feel better if we knew educational requirements, and practical mechanisms for doing so.

Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors.

Since pastors are called and not assigned this would be no problem. Things like alters, vestments, use of wine, etc could be worked out prior to a call.

Group spoke positively of the MO Synod experience with Ecumenical parishes.

This would need to be closely monitored so as not to confuse people with different doctrines.

The situation in which a pastor will need to teach, preach, and catechize according to. The tradition and confessional documents which are not one's own...but hold to one's tradition can (probably will) cause anxiety, distress and confusion.

Pulpit exchange is fine.

This already happening in several isolated or more sparsely.

We had some question whether all ministers from the other bodies could be assured of having the same basic beliefs.

I don't believe that a pastor could accept a call or even an "exchange" to another denomination unless she or he is ready to give up the personal theological viewpoint of that denomination.

To exchange ministers with differing theological comprehension would, for the Laity, be more division than unifying.

With rare exception, "Galesburg" is right: Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran preachers; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants... and presiders! The local UCC clergy (clergy, not lay people!) admit they don't know what they believe about the Lord's Supper, let alone what their church does. We need more confusion theologically in our church?

Our congregation recently went through the process of calling a pastor. who authorizes ordination, approves candidacy, suggests pastoral candidates? It's hard enough with ELCA procedures.

"orderly exchange" are standards of education similar?

There is not enough information on this topic. Are the various ministries similar in function (elder/deacon and AIM)? What are the role descriptions of elders and deacons? What is the "orderly exchange" of ministers? What approval does someone from another tradition need to do to serve a congregation (candidacy process)? What authority does the congregation have in calling a pastor to serve?

While this is addressed differently in the minority report attached, we expect the historic confessions. We are concerned with what is taught and seek historic objectivity. We are wary for we have encountered other teachings from the clergy of these churches.

This is not spelled out clearly and is most controversial and problematic area. in rural, low populated areas, in specialized ministries (chaplains, administrators, campus pastors), and support of global missions this is necessary. Anything further - e.g. joint pastors' meetings and serving as pastors in established congregations - needs to wait. ELCA needs clear identity and purpose with trust and acceptance by congregations before progressing on sharing of pastors.

This was our group's area of greatest concern. While we recognize and affirm ordained ministers of the Reformed traditions, our members felt strongly that any pastor serving this congregation needs to be grounded in Lutheran theology and praxis.

George Forrell is right. in the UCC they change their theology between breakfast and lunch. How does this work for the up building of the community of faith?

Such recognition and exchange should be at first only in emergency situation and with the approval of the local ELCA bishop and her/his Presbyterian or RCA counter part. Full theological agreement is needed for recognition of ministers and their exchange. Full theological agreement in all essentials.

If a congregation is open to calling an ordained minister - from whatever denomination (those under discussion) the church at large should support that.

What is meant by "orderly exchange?" Group varied from agree to disagree. Why would a Lutheran congregation call a Reformed minister? The way Lutherans refer to the Lord's Supper is classically different from the reformed approach. Is this an occasional exchange or a permanent call?

Until doctrinal issues are resolved, what is the point of exchanging ministers? That we could work together in service and outreach would be a good idea.

It is our understanding that the Reformed traditions have a much broader understanding of ministries. We can respect their various ministries, but have to have more study of what they are before saying we can recognize them. As Lutherans, we could not accept a minister for a regular call to a Lutheran congregation who is not trained and professing vows to preach, teach, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and The Lutheran Confessions. We also do not agree to receive a pastor who lives in that polity.

UCC on have open homosexual pastors, UNACCEPTABLE!

If there are provisions to insure integrity to the doctrines presented in the readings, This could be a possibility. However, the organizational structure of the UCC may not lend itself to such safeguards.

We see this as a way to enable congregations to provide needed ministry and choose pastors that complement the ministry needs. It gives the congregation greater flexibility in the calling of pastors.

Much education of clergy and laity will be required for this to happen. Such education must be done with sensitivity.

Until the equivalent of the statement concerning the Real Presence in the Leuenberg Agreement is accepted by the United States Reformed Churches, I consider altar fellowship not acceptable. Also, exchange of preachers with United Church of Christ pastors isn't acceptable. I understand persons in that tradition need not subscribe to any creeds including the accepted Ecumenical Creeds. What is the guarantee that persons from that tradition are non-heretical?

There would have to be a stronger or more stringent guideline to insure that ministers have the background (schooling) necessary for service to any congregation to which they may apply (permanently, that is).

Unless ministers coming in to ELCA agree to preach and teach in conformity with confessional standards.

Only if the ministers have been educated at a seminary which is thorough in its theological studies.

Lutheran clergy are trained in Lutheran theology tradition in Lutheran seminaries. Reformed clergy do not receive this same training. Their leadership tends more toward the social and political. "Transforming society, using political means is encouraged." I believe Lutherans perfect more "Good Heros" and might not relate to a Reformed pastor.

How can this be done when we think so differently about the sacraments? How can we reconcile the acceptance of gay and lesbian pastors by other churches? This is a violation of faith and life. We look upon this as another pro-gay, pro-lesbian move.

***Question 3e. To what extent do you agree that they establish channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches?***

Let's try to work together, but not carry this so far as to drop our need to reach a basic consensus in the Christian faith. But to what extent would these be established? On what programs or issues? Who makes these decisions? This must be clarified!

As we should all churches. The only healthy way to unify the body of Christ is through peaceful communication.

We are not sure what is implied by this question. We do believe that dialogue needs to continue, perhaps with different team members, but we would not support "new channels of consultation and decision-making" if that involves adding a layer of institutional structure to our church bodies.

Some in our group questioned what this means.

We question how this will be done? Decisions have to be made today.

Within each denomination is super.

"Appropriate channels of consultation and decision making" is troubling and vague. Our people don't want to feel voiceless or railroaded by a distant hierarchy.

This seems to be a code for the merging of ecclesiastical structures and we were not sure that this is necessary for full communion under "satis est" clause.

Why abrogate our responsibility to others who may even hold to heresy if the ordination and marriage of persons living and practicing the homosexual lifestyles.

If this means true equality and openness in discussions.

Each Church should make decisions for their own denomination.

Needs to be more at the local level.

Absolutely necessary.

Further dialogue is necessary and mandated by the doctrinal and ecumenical imperative...

Conversation and communication. decision making among the varied folks in the ELCA alone is often difficult.

We do wish to go forward! We believe these channels must include the parishes as the locus of ecumenical relations.

We envision as stated above this is most helpful in specialized ministries, global mission, cooperation and sharing pastors in rural areas, as well as in beginning new congregations and evangelism work.

We felt this is a hierarchal issue and that the appropriate channels already exist.

Only with PCUSA and RCA. Not with UCC.

Group divided between "agree" and "strongly agree". The process of establishing channels should be approved by Church Council and Church-wide assembly.

That we discuss areas of mutual concern and ministry- YES! That we complicate our decision making process with new levels of consultation and legislation- NO!

We believe communication at both congregational and jurisdictional levels is needed for the agreement to be successful.

Appropriate channels of consultation and decision making within existing structures would lead to further ecumenical strengthening of the Church in the world.

How can UCC make decisions when individual congregations are "independent"?

Amen! The channels need to be established at all levels, from neighboring parishes to churchwide.

Such commitment allows and encourages cooperation in neighborhoods and councils of churches on local, statewide, and national levels.

Absolutely- probably before any communion fellowship, let alone "full".

We question what may be captured as "appropriate" channels. We would emphasize that be appropriate.

This has to be done so all "sides" are represented. Understanding leads to acceptance, usually.

***Question 3f. To what extent do you agree that they commit themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service?***

It is good to talk. We should continue to seek unity in the Gospel as long as this does not detract from our mission.

....and to grow by understanding the different perspective and emphasis.

However orthodoxy must be sustained. Lately the ELCA has even moved away from Orthodox Christianity.

Promote congregational involvement, eg, by developing worship services.

Clear, joint statements must be reached and subscribed by the clergy... not just taken for granted and passed by a warm, fuzzy, uninformed convention vote or two.

Dialogue yes! Unity no thanks.

Because of the complexities of the world, we need to work together. Theological dialogue needs to happen.

This, too, should become routine among us. There is a view that indicates it does not matter when this occurs, before or after the other agreements. We should again, focus on the parishes where this Agreement must be lived.

Ongoing theological dialogue is essential, especially at the congregational level.

There is hope! UP, RC are solid as are Mercerbuy UCC, It's the New England congregationalists.

In order to continue the further clarification of common understanding, we must commit to ongoing theological dialogue. There is no way we can better understand each other unless we do this.

OK. That would be good. We might learn something.

The dialogue needs to involve the laity, and needs wide publicity.

First clarify theological differences. Then work on order. in meantime, co-operate in mission.

Such commitment allows and encourages cooperation in neighborhoods and councils of churches on local, statewide, and national levels, provided confessional theology is not compromised.

We need this for clarification and understanding of all beliefs.

We raise the question, how can we improve on our Lutheran faith? Can we ever agree to just symbolism in the sacraments. How could this be effective in the mission field? Wouldn't this bother our constituents - the about face? don't we as Lutherans have something unique and valuable?

I believe we should not enter into "full communion" until differences are resolved because - can these differences be resolved? The Lutheran church has been dialoging with the Reformed churches since 1962. Why is the Lutheran church willing to compromise traditional Lutheran theology now?

***Question 3g. To what extent do you agree that they pledge themselves to living together under the gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for the other will have a chance to grow?***

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?! We ask that this very vague recommendation be much more defined and clarified first!

The more we interact with each other, the more we will trust, love, and respect each other. I may not understand all that is implied here. This seems the NORMAL relationship for people who are "in Christ".

Admonition is the key.

This is already being done in our small communities. "Ecumenism" is what happens day to day on Main St in our town and in our churches, not what happens when scholars and bureaucrats get together.

"I have come to bring a sword".

This is a step toward one body in Christ.

A lot of unrealistic flowery language to gloss over thorough-going difference. "Affirm" and "Admonish" cannot become a substitute for coming to consensus in doctrine and practice.

Agree that ecumenical conversations should continue with several different traditions.

We have more work to do!

To commit to and to live together under the Gospel manifests to the world the unity we Christians share in Christ. Such trust, respect, unity, and growth can only enhance the proclamation of the gospel of God in Christ Jesus to the world, yet the Gospel cannot be compromised. We hope we do have A COMMON CALLING some day to further understanding.

This principle works informally in many places now. We will be served by expanding its use.

All Christians owe this to one another.

So long as honestly practiced.

Lutheran theology must not be diluted so that the ELCA becomes part of the great American Protestant church. The Lutheran movement within the Church Catholic needs to be preserved. The Augsburg Confession was addressed to reconciliation with the Church of Rome. It seems that the framers of these documents chose to ignore that portion of Christian history.

That's what its' all about.

We can " respect and love and live together without "full communion".

We have been doing well for the past hundreds of years with union churches and other cooperations. Why put ourselves on the plateau? Why start all over again? Would it not be better to maintain and rejuvenate our identity? WE could hardly accept the Reformed idea on predestination. We appear to be far apart on predestination and responsibility.

*Please feel free to enclose comments on any aspects of A Common Calling or the study process on a separate sheet of paper.*

Be careful NOT to seek unity for unity's sake at the cost of comprising our basic faithfulness and effort toward consensus in the Gospel. We are concerned that thousands of Lutheran and Reformed members who are immigrant Asians are not included in this process. Our pastor will address this in a separate letter.

We strive to be ecumenical and (not ecumaniacs)

I agree with about all that is stated here but I'm not very keen on one denomination calling Pastors from another denomination or combining seminaries. I like the idea of working together in the areas of missions, colleges, sharing facilities, etc. but not so strongly in any closer co-operation than that.

I'm not sure about the calling of Pastors from other Seminaries.

What a spectacular waste of our limited resources.

Our only comment is on the structure of the study process. Our study would have been easier and more focused if the Background Notes from the Lutheran and Reform Traditions had used the same outline. Several times necessary information was missing to adequately discuss the questions.

Let's get on with it.

A clergy friend serves on synod candidacy committee. Within the ELCA procedure for approval we have some concerns. To approve a non Lutheran for call to a Luth congregation, how will this be consistent with the present rigorous process for ELCA person to be approved for ordination?

We believe it is important to work together as the Body of Christ, while respecting the uniqueness and value of our respective traditions. We do not support merger. We appreciate the authors' "because.... therefore" approach and such initiatives.

These are heart-warming positive statements. Thanks for this. Good work!

The ELCA, and the other churches of the Reformed tradition, should never forget their roots and history. There was a feeling that the sharing of ministers would tend to bring a uniformity to the church, which would tend become a "melting pot" of theology and in which the individual denominations would lose the distinctiveness of their theology. No longer would Lutherans have taught a Lutheran identity.

The proposal assumes understandings that most intimately affect parishes, yet parishes have not been represented up to now in these studies. Please remember we live where theologians speculate we are supposed to be.

The "positive" "fait accompli" or "spin" the ELCA has put on this agreement is deeply troubling as it appeals to putative notions of ecumenism without revealing the serious theological differences that would be glossed over.

We are concerned that no attention has been paid to our Lutheran/ Episcopal dialogue in regards to the Lutheran/ Reformed talks. What are we doing in other areas of ecumenical talks- surely all these conversations should be taken into consideration before the Lutheran/ Reformed progresses further. Can't there be a category other than "full communion" to express our on going relationship? Also before us is a proposal for infant communion from the ELCA- how will our Reformed partners feel about that?

We are a Lutheran and Episcopalian fellowship with a joint set of Bylaws and Constitution that works quite successfully as one congregation if full communion. This agreement will be helpful for those churches in certain geographical areas (such as Utah) or who find themselves in financial or resource difficulties. We strongly believe this moves our churches closer to what God intends for His Church - "That we all might be one."

We appreciate being able to be a part of this study. The longer the study continued, the more that several of us expressed the need for more depth and background than A COMMON CALLING provided to respond with surety to such an important question as full communion with the three Reformed churches. Reading a few of the references necessitated more time than to which we first committed. It was all very worthwhile.

There must be some guideline for the pastor. UCC faculty at Lancaster have no idea what ecumenism is. They work from the lowest common denomination not Vatican 2 "Deeper Truth". Complimentary doctrine mentioned at York, PA was BULLSHIT!!!

Other comments from members of our study group: This kind of work needs to be continued...we recognize that the path to full communion among local churches will not be easy...The proposals should be widely and frequently publicized before the 1997 Churchwide Assembly to reduce the number of surprised (shocked) people....The proposals should be publicized in expressive language that avoids theological jargon.

We think it would have been great if we would have had chart of parallel columns for each of the churches briefly giving their positions on say 20 issues.