"We Are Together Because We are Called to Do this Work"

Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee
February 8-10, 2017
Lutheran Center, Chicago, Illinois

The Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee met at the Lutheran Center in Chicago, February 8-10, 2017. This committee is charged with encouraging and assisting efforts in The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) as they live into their relationship of full communion provided for in "Called to Common Mission" (CCM). This meeting, which brought a number of new members and guests to the sessions, was devoted to looking backward, appraising the present, and looking forward. Specific attention was devoted to collaboration in advocacy, with focus on the distinctive challenges and outlooks of the current moment. A staff member for advocacy expressed the shared commitment of the two churches this way: "We are here together because we are called to do this work – not necessarily because we will 'win.'" As always, times for prayer framed the days, and the Eucharist was celebrated according to both Episcopal and the Lutheran traditions.

The committee welcomed a new Episcopal co-chair, the. Rt. Rev. Douglas Sparks, Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana. Joining him and continuing member the Rev. Jon

Perez were new TEC members: the Rev. Nils Chittenden, the Rev. Nancy Green, and the Rev. Canon Dr. David Perry, as well as the Rev. Canon Rob Towler, representing the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission (JALC) in Canada. On the Lutheran side, co-chair Bishop Donald Kreiss joined continuing members Dr. Mitzi Budde and the Rev. Canon Natalie Hall. The Rev. Kari Jo Verhulst joined a session from MIT. Bishop Claire Burkat was unable to attend. Staff were the Rev. Margaret Rose (TEC) and Kathryn Lohre and Kathryn Johnson (ELCA).

Mitzi Budde led the committee in "looking backward" to the work of the committee over the fifteen years since CCM was adopted. The complex ecclesial and theological challenges of the early years had produced substantive work from the committee; Dr. Budde highlighted especially diaconal ministry and Eucharistic presidency. Emphasizing the committee's role as "encourager," she pointed to the crucial tasks of strengthening infrastructure necessary for implementing the full communion relationship.

The committee heard an overview of the current state of staff collaborations from Evelyn Soto, ELCA Director for Synod Partners & Unit Operations. Joining by Skype from the Washington advocacy offices were Rebecca Blachly, Patricia Kisare and Amy Reumann, who described both current priorities and Lutheran-Episcopal collaborations. (See attached Roster.) They encouraged these opportunities for opt-in networks through which they work:

For EPPN: http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/app/register?0&m=29629

For the ELCA Advocacy Network:
http://support.elca.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=1621&_ga=1.144037367.315637596.1461956335

In a globe-spanning conversation, Prairie Rose Seminole in Austria and Heidi Kim in Washington state talked frankly about the implications and challenges of "standing with Standing Rock"; they cautioned that Native American experience and voice can be lost among other priorities, and discussed how ecumenical solidarity can strengthen witness in each church.

The committee took a further step to encourage mutual recognition of (full) communion agreements among the churches embraced by CCM, Waterloo, and Porvoo. In May the committee had expressed to JALC its encouragement for further work toward this end. At this meeting it gladly received the letter sent by the JALC co-chairs to the co-chairs of the Porvoo Agreement concerning interchangeability of clergy. Bishops Kreiss and Sparks will write to JALC to convey LECC's support for such an extension of interchangeability. They will also indicate that LECC continued conversation around the vocabulary of "transitivity" and expressed support for sharing information with the Anglican Communion and The Lutheran World Federation.

Committee discussion explored these areas for future attention:

> Recalling its earlier document, "Concerning Voice and Vote for Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament Serving Under Exchangeability Provisions of Full-Communion Relationships" (attached), the committee asked that this recommendation concerning recognition and welcome of clergy serving under full communion agreements be lifted up again in both churches.

> The committee met with the Rev. Chris Boerger, Secretary of the ELCA, to discuss consequences of the strong vote at the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to combine the current three "lay rosters" (associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses) into a single roster of Ministers of Word and Service, who will be called "deacons." Decision on how these ministers would enter the roster, through ordination or another rite; was deferred to an ongoing Entrance Rite Discernment Group. The committee emphasized that the ELCA would need to be clear with its ecumenical partners concerning how it is understanding this form of ministry. Desire was expressed for inclusion of ecumenical feedback in the conversations as well as communication of decisions.

> The committee again underlined the importance of consultation with Lutheran liturgists as TEC approaches decisions about what forms of new worship resources it will create.

> Prompted by a request Mitzi Budde brought from the Washington Area LECC, the committee asked how CCM could be more fully reflected in seminary education: how could there be more "transitivity" in preparing for ministry? Resources were mentioned to include in further conversation.

> Creation of a FAQ resource around the practicalities of shared ministry was discussed; this project could be advanced electronically.

The Committee will meet next on November 28-30, 2017, mid-day to mid-day, in Chicago. In 2018 there will be a joint meeting with JALC in Niagara, planned for September 25-28. The extra day will allow each committee time for its own work as well as collaborative sessions.