

Declaration on the Way  
**Church, Ministry, and Eucharist**

Study Guide



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

DECLARATION ON THE WAY: CHURCH, MINISTRY, AND EUCHARIST  
Study Guide

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References to ELW are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

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## Facilitating this study

Let's face the facts. No one in 1517 wanted to begin a church division that would last five hundred years. Martin Luther did not intend to break from the Catholic Church when he hung his ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg. He was Catholic, and his theses were meant to stir up a conversation that would reform the church from within. However, things did not turn out the way he had hoped, and rifts developed between the reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. Soon the divisions came to be taken for granted. Many older Lutheran adults will, no doubt, remember when Reformation Sunday was celebrated as a "we got it right" day as they sang Luther's rousing hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Times have changed. A translation of this hymn is now included in *WORSHIP: A Hymnal and Service Book for Roman Catholics*.

Over the past fifty years, Roman Catholics and Lutherans have engaged in a number of deep and intense conversations as they sought to understand each other and address the scandal of their divisions. It turns out we have quite a lot in common—and what unites us touches the very heart of the faith. *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, and Eucharist* lists the international, regional, and national dialogues and studies that have occurred over the last half century (see xi–xiii). A significant development was the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* agreed upon by The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in October 1999.

By the time the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was approaching, it was clear that it was time to make the commemoration reflect the changed tone of Lutheran–Catholic relations. To encourage this change, in 2013 the international Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity issued a study document, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. Most recently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops together appointed a task force to develop a new kind of text, a document of consensus identifying thirty-two theological agreements already reached in the dialogues. More tentatively, this task force also identified fifteen remaining differences. This work is titled *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist* (2015).

At its Churchwide Assembly in 2016, the ELCA passed the following action:

To express profound gratitude for "Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist" as another sign of the ELCA's commitment to making visible the unity that is God's gift in Christ ("Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," 1991);

To receive the thirty-two Statements of Agreement, acknowledging that "receiving these agreements recognizes that there are no longer church dividing issues with respect to these Statements..." ("Declaration on the Way"); and

To commend to the ELCA the "Declaration on the Way," "From Conflict to Communion" and the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" as resources for the common life of the church as we approach 2017 and beyond.

Following the Churchwide Assembly, a number of pastors and congregations asked for a resource to help unpack the Declaration. This study guide is another step in the journey toward reconciliation between the Catholic and Lutheran churches. You and your congregation, synod, or regional gathering can participate by holding your own conversations.

## Using this study guide

The four sessions in the study guide are written to be copied and shared with participants during your time together. These sessions may be used in many settings with various groups. Here are some suggestions.

- **Congregations:** Work collaboratively with a local Catholic parish to host conversations between Lutherans and Catholics, journeying together as God’s pilgrim people. Form a planning team, with representatives from both groups, to organize the event logistics and publicity. Consider having two facilitators, one from each tradition.
- **Adult study groups:** Explore how far we have come in dialogue with Catholics, or hold conversations with those who have come from the Catholic faith to Lutheranism. How do they experience Lutheran–Catholic similarities and differences?
- **Synods and conferences:** Sponsor conversations between Lutherans or join with Catholics to dialogue.
- **Seminaries:** Create a learning experience about Lutheran identity for seminarians or for congregations.

## Time frames

Conversations could be held during a daylong event. In this case, look at the church, ministry, and eucharist sections and choose one or two agreements from each to guide your conversations. The schedule for such an event might look like this:

9:00 a.m.	Gathering and devotions
9:15 a.m.	Rooted in baptism
10:15 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m.	Church
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
12:45 p.m.	Ministry
1:45 p.m.	Break
2:00 p.m.	Eucharist
3:30 p.m.	Prayer and sending

Another option is to hold conversations during the regular meeting time of an adult study group or class. In this setting, spend up to twenty minutes per question. Consider sharing the facilitation of the sessions among several people, and taking time after each session to discuss how the study went and what you learned as facilitators. If the study is spread out over several weeks, encourage participants to journal their thoughts and feelings at the beginning and end of the conversations to track their learnings.

### **Facilitation tips**

This study guide has been prepared utilizing the theory of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences to incorporate a variety of ways to process information. For example: The suggestion to allow learners to use their smartphones to do internet searches would appeal to kinesthetic processors. Drawing would appeal to visual-spatial processors. Plan to include a variety of activities in each session to involve everyone in your group.

Facilitators need to be familiar with the material in this study guide and *Declaration on the Way*. The agreements highlighted in the study guide have been selected to focus discussion. (All thirty-two are not covered, but if your group wants to spend additional time discussing more of the agreements, encourage this!) Quotes from *Declaration on the Way* draw attention to the main point of the agreements. These quotes can also be helpful to participants who have not read the book chapters prior to the sessions. Note that each of the agreements is repeated and elaborated in chapter 3—that would be the first place to go to explore an agreement. If you want more information on specific points, the resource list can help you, and you can refer others to it as well.

Each of the sessions on church, ministry, and eucharist contains a list of remaining differences that require further attention and conversation. Invite your group to select one or two of these differences for further investigation and conversation. Keep in mind that not all remaining differences carry the same weight. Some will be harder to resolve than others. Depending on your time limitations, discuss one or more of the study guide questions related to remaining differences. Remind your group that the point of the conversation is the journey toward unity. With thirty-two agreements, we have already come quite far. Celebrate this!

As a facilitator, you don't need to have all the answers, but you do need to know how to conduct large- and small-group conversations. When working with a large group, break into smaller groups of no more than six people to encourage wider sharing and participation. Circulate among the groups to listen in and keep them on task. Solicit each group's main points in a larger discussion at the end. What commonalities and differences do participants see?

### **Communication guidelines**

Because a range of emotions can surface during these conversations, it's important to know your context. In your community, what kind of relationship has existed between Lutheran and Catholic faith communities? Also consider the variety of experiences the individuals in your group bring with them. How have they experienced Lutheran and Catholic faith communities? What kind of relationships do they have with family members or friends of other faith traditions? Taking time to discuss these questions will prepare your group to learn about the Lutheran-Catholic agreements and remaining differences identified in *Declaration on the Way*.

Remember that the foundations of good conversations include respect and curiosity. One of the discoveries of the wider bilateral conversations has been the need to explore the terms used by Lutherans and Catholics and their intention in using them. Discussing and more clearly understanding the words that both Catholics and Lutherans use for their theological understanding is essential in proceeding with any conversation. Encourage questions that help participants learn more about each other.

*A bilateral conversation is a discussion between two groups—in this case between the Lutherans and Catholics.*

## Meeting space

Since some of the conversation is focused around writing and drawing, use a room with tables if possible. If your group is large, set up several tables to facilitate small group conversation.

Choose a meeting location with internet availability, if possible. The links in this study guide are “clickable” when the document is open in a computer or mobile device connected to the internet. Preset tabs on a computer’s browser for any videos, graphics, or other information you intend to project. This will save you time and will keep the session flowing. Encourage participants to search for additional information via smartphones. (Note: Plan to search for possible sites prior to class sessions to check for reliability. The internet has made volumes of information accessible, but not all of it is reliable.)

If your group is very large, a sound system may also be necessary to ensure you are heard as you facilitate.

## General supplies

- A copy of *Declaration on the Way* for each participant  
Single copies can be downloaded at <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Bilateral/Declaration-on-the-Way>. Copies for group use are available for purchase at [www.augsburg.org](http://www.augsburg.org).
- Bibles (various translations), including at least one study Bible for annotated explanations of the text
- Lutheran and Catholic hymnals
- Computer, speakers, projector, and screen
- Paper (both lined and unlined), colored pencils, crayons, pastels, and pens
- Five pillar candles and a candle lighter
- Colorful cloths on which to place the candles (optional)
- A large, clear bowl and a pitcher of water

## Sharing your experiences

The ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious staff would be happy to help with questions. They also would be grateful to hear how this study guide worked in your context. Send a report to [kathryn.johnson@elca.org](mailto:kathryn.johnson@elca.org).

## Resources

### Cyber sources

Declaration on the Way: <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Bilateral/Declaration-on-the-Way>. Also see the Executive Summary at: [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Way\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf?\\_ga=1.205559827.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Declaration_on_the_Way_Executive_Summary.pdf?_ga=1.205559827.1871471677.1427809396).

“Ecumenical Witness on the Eve of the Reformation Anniversary 10-27-16,” ELCA webcast with Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryge5ZZw9fY>

*From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, text and study guide: <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations>

Joint Catholic–Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation, October 31, 2016, in Lund, Sweden, “From Conflict to Communion—Together in Hope”: <http://www.lund2016.net/>  
YouTube video of the Joint Catholic–Lutheran Commemoration: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP_0)

Joint Statement on the occasion of the Joint Catholic–Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation, Lund, Sweden, 31 October 2016: [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/joint\\_commemoration\\_joint\\_statement\\_en.pdf?\\_ga=1.22174779.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/joint_commemoration_joint_statement_en.pdf?_ga=1.22174779.1871471677.1427809396)

Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/120740771271610>

The Salvadoran cross (commemorative cross at the Joint Catholic–Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation, Lund, Sweden, 31 October 2016): <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/salvadoran-cross>. Also see the downloadable poster at <http://www.lund2016.net/poster/>.

### Print resources

Julie K. Aageson, John Borelli, John Klassen, Derek Nelson, Martha Stortz, and Jessica Wroblewski. *One Hope: Re-Membering the Body of Christ*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress; Collegeville, MN: Order of Saint Benedict, 2015.

Buzan, Tony. *How to Mind Map®: The Ultimate Thinking Tool That Will Change Your Life*. London: Thorsons, 2002.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, Eucharist*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015. Available at <https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/22028/Declaration-on-the-Way-Church-Ministry-and-Eucharist>.

Kasper, Walter. *Martin Luther: An Ecumenical Perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016.

Kleinhans, Kathryn A., ed. *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016.

Krey, Philip D. W., and Peter D. S. Krey. *The Catholic Luther: His Early Writings*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016.

Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, English language edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Also available at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Joint\\_Declaration\\_On\\_The\\_Doctrine\\_Of\\_Justification.pdf?\\_ga=1.205102992.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Joint_Declaration_On_The_Doctrine_Of_Justification.pdf?_ga=1.205102992.1871471677.1427809396).

*Reformation 500 Sourcebook: Anniversary Resources for Congregations*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016.

Rusch, William G. *Ecumenical Reception: Its Challenge and Opportunity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Wood, Susan K., and Timothy J. Wengert. *A Shared Spiritual Journey: Lutherans and Catholics Traveling toward Unity*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016.



# Rooted in Baptism

## Session 1

For question 2 in "Reflections and discussion," plan to project the "final version" of the poster at <http://www.lund2016.net/poster/>, or print out the poster to show to your group.

Place the five pillar candles in a central location in the room. (The candles can be placed on colorful cloths, if you wish.) Place the large bowl and pitcher of water near the candles.

As participants gather, you may want to play parts of the YouTube recording of the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation held in Lund, Sweden, on October 31, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP_o).

### Key points in this session

- One Lord, one faith, one baptism.
- Jesus is the vine, we are the branches.
- Ecumenism makes visible our "vine connection."

Let's face the facts. No one in 1517 wanted to begin a church division that would last five hundred years. Martin Luther did not intend to break from the Catholic Church when he hung his ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg. He was Catholic, and his theses were meant to stir up a conversation that would reform the church from within. However, things did not turn out the way he had hoped, and rifts developed between the reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. Soon the divisions came to be taken for granted. Many older Lutheran adults will, no doubt, remember when Reformation Sunday was celebrated as a "we got it right" day as they sang Luther's rousing hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Times have changed. A translation of this hymn is now included in *WORSHIP: A Hymnal and Service Book for Roman Catholics*.

Over the past fifty years, Roman Catholics and Lutherans have engaged in a number of deep and intense conversations as they sought to understand each other and address the scandal of their divisions. It turns out we have quite a lot in common—and what unites us touches the very heart of the faith. *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, and Eucharist* lists the international, regional, and national dialogues and studies that have occurred over the last half century (see xi–xiii). A significant development was the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* agreed upon by The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in October 1999.

By the time the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was approaching, it was clear that it was time to make the commemoration reflect the changed tone of Lutheran–Catholic relations. To encourage this change, in 2013 the international Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity issued a study document, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*.

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In *From Conflict to Communion*, Roman Catholics and Lutherans identified five commitments that would help them move toward greater unity. These commitments were celebrated by the Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation at the historic Joint Commemoration of the Reformation on October 31, 2016, in Sweden.

Begin your study of *Declaration on the Way* and the agreements between Catholics and Lutherans with these five commitments.<sup>1</sup>

If time is available, watch a portion of this ceremony on the YouTube video at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP_o), beginning at 1:10:17.

## Our commitments to each other

Pour water into the bowl prior to reading each commitment. Have five volunteers each read a statement and then light a candle.

1. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
2. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
3. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
4. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
5. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

## Prayer

Prayers are included in each session, but feel free to draw upon other worship and prayer resources, especially if you are holding an ecumenical conversation.

*Lord Jesus, you have told us that you are the vine and we are your branches in the world who have been charged with bearing fruit in your name. Empower us to celebrate our vine connection in you and with one another. Strengthen us for our service in your name. Bless us now as we begin our conversation to increase our understanding of our unity in you. In your name we pray. Amen.*

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1. *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, Lutheran World Federation (2013), 87–88. Used by permission.

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## Reflections and discussion

We are united in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). Baptism makes all Christians one as members of the body of Christ. One way we live into that unity is by engaging in ecumenical relationships and dialogue.

In the dialogues that produced the *Declaration on the Way*, baptism was not a major subject—because it is not a divisive issue. But as we begin to approach topics where Lutherans and Catholics have had differences, it is important to remember our common beginning in baptism.

Catholics and Lutherans agree that God acts through baptism so that the baptized person dies to sin and rises to a new life in Christ. Through baptism, the Holy Spirit incorporates the newly baptized into the body of Christ—the communion of all the saints—which includes the church on earth.

Both Catholics and Lutherans recognize their unity as Christians through their baptism into Christ. This is emphasized in excerpts from the Joint Statement at Lund, which was signed by Pope Francis and Bishop Munib Younan, president of The Lutheran World Federation, at the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation on October 31, 2016: “Aware that the way we relate to one another shapes our witness to the Gospel, we commit ourselves to further growth in communion rooted in Baptism, as we seek to remove the remaining obstacles that hinder us from attaining full unity,” and “As we recommit ourselves to move from conflict to communion, we do so as part of the one Body of Christ, into which we are incorporated through Baptism.”

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. If possible, read this passage from several different versions of the Bible, including *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson. Discuss: What does “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” mean to you? What does it mean that Lutherans and Catholics (and many other Christian bodies) recognize each other’s baptism? What might unity in the body of Christ look like?
2. John 15 was an important part of the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation. Not only was it a central theme of the joint sermon, but its imagery appears on the Salvadoran cross created for the Commemoration. (For an image of this cross, see p. 12.) Read John 15:1-5 out loud. How does the Salvadoran cross portray this passage? What does the Salvadoran cross say to you? (Hint: There is additional information on the Salvadoran cross at <https://www.lutheran-world.org/news/salvadoran-cross>.)
3. Ecumenism is the movement to address the divisions among Christian bodies. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been committed to ecumenism from its beginning. In 1991 it adopted a vision for ecumenical relations that said, “Ecumenism is the joyous experience of the unity of Christ’s people and the serious task of expressing that unity visibly and structurally to advance the proclamation of the Gospel for the blessing of humankind” (“The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” 6).

In her October 27, 2016, webcast “Ecumenical Witness on the Eve of the Reformation Anniversary,” Bishop Elizabeth Eaton elaborates this vision:

But what do we mean by *ecumenism* or *ecumenical*? In short, “To be ecumenical means to be committed to the oneness to which God calls the world in the saving gift of Jesus



The Salvadoran cross, commissioned by artist Christian Chavarria Ayala for the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation, was carried in the procession at the beginning of the service. The cross depicts the triune God's creative, reconciling, and sanctifying work. Image: LWF/Christian Chavarria. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Permission is granted for congregations to reproduce this page provided copies are for local use only and the following copyright notice appears: From *Declaration on the Way Study Guide*, copyright © 2017 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Christ.” Amid the brokenness of the church, including the brokenness of the Reformation, we are called to heal the breach. Not only for the sake of the world, but as we hear Jesus say in John, chapter 17, “so that the world may believe” [17:21].

The Lutheran movement did not set out to divide the church, yet one of the consequences of the Reformation was church division. Lutherans have always seen themselves as part of the larger church. Today as we seek to heal the brokenness of the church, we recognize that oneness in Christ can be expressed in many ways.

Discuss: What does ecumenism mean to you?

4. Ecumenical conversations between Catholics and Lutherans have been going on for fifty years at international and national levels. Internationally, the Catholic Church is in dialogue with The Lutheran World Federation, a communion of 145 churches including the ELCA. These conversations resulted in the groundbreaking *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999 and *From Conflict to Communion*, a call for a “common commemoration” of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Seeking to make a contribution to this effort, the ELCA joined with the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to produce a new kind of document, *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry, and Eucharist*. This text identified thirty-two agreements on three crucial topics where there has been significant progress but where there are also remaining differences requiring further conversation. At its 2016 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA voted overwhelmingly to receive the Statement of Agreements and to commend *Declaration on the Way*, *From Conflict to Communion*, and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* as resources for the church for ecumenical conversations.

Discuss: How do you experience Christian unity on a daily basis? Where have you experienced Christian unity? Where do you see the costs or the pains of disunity? What fruits of ecumenism have you seen in your community?

## For further learning

Here are some suggestions to dig deeper and extend your learning.

- View the webcast “Ecumenical Witness on the Eve of the Reformation Anniversary 10-27-16” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryge5ZZw9fY>.
- Read about the Lutheran–Catholic agreements (*DOTW*, pp. 17–38) and remaining differences (pp. 73–92) on church.
- Write down your response to this question: What questions, concerns, hopes, or plans do you have for greater unity between Lutherans and Catholics? If you wish, discuss your response with one or two others.

# Church

## Session Two

For the discussion on agreement 4, you might want to project the "final version" of the poster at <http://www.lund2016.net/poster/>.

Place the five pillar candles in a central location in the room. (The candles can be placed on colorful cloths, if you wish.) Place the large bowl and pitcher of water near the candles.

In this session you will look at the twelve agreements on church that Catholics and Lutherans have identified to make their unity in Christ more visible. These agreements have evolved over fifty years of bilateral discussions at a national and international level. They are agreements that can be acknowledged and celebrated.

You will also have the opportunity to discuss five remaining topics requiring further conversation and understanding before reconciliation is possible. The task force that produced *Declaration on the Way* sketched out these disagreements more tentatively, and they are not exhaustive. This means that as you discuss these differences, you, too, are part of the ongoing conversation.

### Key agreements in this session

- The church is assembled by God.
- The church is apostolic with an apostolic witness.
- The church has visual and auditory elements and hidden spiritual realities seen only through the eyes of faith.
- The church is a pilgrim church called to mission in Christ.

### Our commitments to each other

Pour water into the bowl prior to reading each commitment. Have five volunteers each read a statement and then light a candle.

1. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.

By church we mean the communion of those whom God gathers together through Christ in the Holy Spirit, by the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, and the ministry instituted for this purpose. Though it always includes sinners, yet in virtue of the promise and fidelity of God it is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which continues forever (*DOTW*, pp. 17–18).



2. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
3. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
4. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
5. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

## Prayer

*O God, you have created your holy church and united it throughout the ages. As we come together in curiosity and conversation, help us feel and live out those connections more concretely. May we see ourselves as your pilgrim people on the way to a deeper understanding of our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversation this day so that it might be fruitful and honor you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

## Reflections and discussion

### Agreements on church

Discuss the first question, then select from the remaining questions in this section.

1. Go around the room and have volunteers read each of the twelve agreements on church out loud (*DOTW*, pp. 9–11). Discuss: What surprises you? What delights you? What confuses you? What leaves you unconvinced or uncertain?

### 2. Agreement 1: Assembled by God

**1** Catholics and Lutherans agree that the church on earth has been assembled by the triune God, who grants to its members their sharing in the triune divine life as God's own people, as the body of the risen Christ, and as the temple of the Holy Spirit, while they are also called to give witness to these gifts so that others may come to share in them.

Three "master images" of the church are named in the agreements:

- God's pilgrim people
- Body of Christ
- Temple of the Holy Spirit

On your own or in a small group, draw a picture that explains your understanding of one of these images. (Feel free to refer to *DOTW*, pp. 17–20.) Then share your pictures in the larger group. How do the pictures affect your understanding of the church?

### 3. Agreement 4: The church's apostolic character

**4** Lutherans and Catholics agree that the church is in every age apostolic, because it is founded upon the apostles' witness to the gospel, and it continuously professes the apostolic and evangelical faith while living by mandated practices handed on from the apostles. Thus, we recognize in both our ecclesial communities the attribute of apostolicity grounded in their ongoing continuity in apostolic faith, teaching, and practices.

Read Colossians 1:15-20. What does this passage say about Christ and his church? What pieces of the apostolic faith, teaching, and practices do Lutherans and Catholics share? Why might it be important to recognize these similarities? What can we celebrate about our unity in Christ?

Part of Colossians 1:15-20 was used as inspiration for the Salvadoran cross designed for the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation. How does this cross, shown on p. 12, portray the growth of the apostolic church?

### 4. Agreement 8: The audible, visible, and hidden elements

**8** Catholics and Lutherans agree that the church on earth combines audible and visible elements with profound spiritual realities that remain hidden from empirical investigation and perception.

Give examples of audible elements of faith and visible elements of faith in the church. What are hidden elements of faith? How do we experience the hidden elements of faith today? (Hint: Feel free to refer to *DOTW*, pages 29–30.)

### 5. Agreement 12: Called to mission

**12** Catholics and Lutherans agree that the church on earth is mandated to carry out a mission in which it participates in God's activity in the world by evangelization, worship, service of humanity, and care for creation.

The hymn "To Be Your Presence" (ELW 546) was sung as the recessional hymn at the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation. Look at the text of this hymn. How does it highlight agreement 12? What possibilities does the hymn call us to in the present and future, as Lutherans and Catholics work together to fulfill this agreement?

In the Nicene Creed we confess, "We believe in one holy catholic and *apostolic* church" (emphasis added). This recognizes our continuity with those who were "sent out" (as the Greek word means) to proclaim the risen Jesus.

The Office of the Keys or "keys for the forgiveness of sins" (*DOTW*, p. 29) refers to the authority given by Christ to proclaim God's forgiveness to repentant sinners. This aspect of pastoral discernment and authority is exercised in the church.

If you would like to listen to this recessional, it can be found at 1:37:07 in the YouTube recording of the Joint Commemoration: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP_0).

## Remaining differences regarding church

Because they have significant agreements, Catholics and Lutherans already are in a "real but imperfect" communion. While discussions among Catholics and Lutherans have produced twelve agreements on



church, they have also identified five areas that need additional dialogue and understanding, some more serious than others:

- Designating the church: “Congregation of the faithful” or “sacrament of salvation”
- The church holy and sinful
- Doctrine enunciated in and by the church
- The nature and limits of the binding character of church teaching
- The parish congregation or diocese as “church” in the full sense

Major points for each remaining difference are provided below. Read them out loud and discuss: What surprises you? What confuses you? Where do you need further understanding on the position of either Catholics or Lutherans? Where do you stand in regard to the statements of the remaining differences? Which are the most significant? Which might be hardest to resolve?

Another option for discussing the remaining differences is to assign a small group to each one. Beginning with the elaborations in the Declaration itself, each group makes a two-column list showing the Catholic understanding and the Lutheran understanding of their assigned topic. What recommendations for moving ahead does *Declaration on the Way* make? Share and discuss your findings in the large group.

### **1. Designating the church: “Congregation of the faithful” or “sacrament of salvation”**

*“The traditional Lutheran designation of the church, ‘congregation of the faithful,’ emphasizes that the church comes together as an assembly by receiving salvation given by God, while the Catholic designation ‘sacrament of salvation,’ used analogously, highlights the church’s role, in Christ, as a sign and instrument of salvation for its members and the world” (DOTW, pp. 75–76).*

### **2. The church holy and sinful**

*“While Lutherans and Catholics both confess that the church on earth is holy, despite the presence and influence of sin at work in it, they set different limits in calling the church itself ‘holy’ and ‘sinful,’ with Catholics refraining from calling the church itself ‘sinful,’ and Lutherans maintaining that no church office or decision is so immune from error and sin as to be exempt from critical examination in view of reform” (DOTW, p. 78).*

### **3. Doctrine enunciated in and by the church**

*“Catholics attribute a special responsibility and authority for teaching to the ministry and in particular to the episcopate. . . . But in viewing the Catholic Church, Lutheran reformers believed the inerrancy promised to the whole church had been concentrated too fully in the teaching ministry of bishops and popes in such a manner that the primacy of the gospel was at stake” (DOTW, p. 82).*

### **4. The nature and limits of the binding character of church teaching**

*“For Catholics, the Lord’s promise that the church will abide in the truth grounds a conviction that the episcopal and papal magisterium can articulate the truth of the gospel in doctrinal affirmations that express or interpret divine revelation. . . . Such teaching may in certain cases even be inerrant and infallible and thus bind church*

members to assent at this level. Lutherans see the church's ministry and decisions as liable to error and so hold that as a matter of principle they must be open to examination by the whole people of God" (DOTW, pp. 84–85).

### **5. The parish congregation or diocese as “church” in the full sense**

*“Lutherans hold the church to be present in all its essential elements in a congregation of believers in which the gospel word is preached and the sacraments administered, both by rightfully called ministers.*

*Catholics hold that a particular church of Christ is truly present where a portion of God's people is entrusted to a bishop with his clergy, to be formed into one by the Holy Spirit and by eucharistic celebrations” (DOTW, pp. 88–89).*

## **For further learning**

Here are some suggestions to dig deeper and extend your learning.

- Read about the Lutheran–Catholic agreements (DOTW, pp. 38–54) and remaining differences (pp. 92–110) on ministry.
- Explore the website for the Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation, October 31, 2016, in Lund, Sweden (<http://www.lund2016.net>), or watch portions of the video recording at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plkK6zNHP_0).

# Ministry

## Session Three

Place the five pillar candles in a central location in the room. (The candles can be placed on colorful cloths, if you wish.) Place the large bowl and pitcher of water near the candles.

In this session you will look at the thirteen agreements on ministry that Catholics and Lutheran have identified to make their unity in Christ visible. These agreements have evolved over fifty years of bilateral discussions. They are agreements that can be acknowledged and celebrated.

You will also have the opportunity to discuss to discuss six remaining topics requiring further conversation and understanding.

### Key agreements in this session

- All the baptized share in the priestly character of the church.
- All ministry is subordinate to Christ.
- Ordained ministry both serves the community and has authority over it.
- Ministry serves the worldwide church.

The question of the office of the ministry in the church, its origin, its position and correct understanding represents one of the most important open questions between Lutheran and Catholics (*DOTW*, p. 39).

### Our commitments to each other

Pour water into the bowl prior to reading each commitment. Have five volunteers each read a statement and then light a candle.

1. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
2. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
3. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.

4. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
5. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

## Prayer

*We give you thanks, O God, that through baptism you have called each of us to the vocation of being your child and serving our neighbors in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. May we recognize that which unites us in ministry and the vocations to which we each are called. Bless us as we work together to live out our identity as Christians in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

## Reflections and discussion

### Agreements on ministry

Note that this section concentrates on the "special ordained ministry." Discuss the first question, then select from the remaining questions in this section.

1. Go around the room and have volunteers read each of the fourteen agreements on ministry out loud (*DOTW*, pp. 12–14). Discuss: What surprises you? What delights you? What confuses you?

#### 2. Agreement 14: Shared ministry through baptism

**14** Catholics and Lutherans agree that all the baptized who believe in Christ share in the priesthood of Christ. For both Catholics and Lutherans, the common priesthood of all the baptized and the special, ordained ministry enhance one another.

Read: 1 Peter 2:5, 9. What does this passage say about the identity of the Christian? How do all the baptized live out their identity? How do members of the ordained ministry live out their identity? How do both groups support one another?

While consciousness of the calling of the whole people of God had sometimes been neglected "in both our churches," recent discussions have restored its prominence for ecclesiology and for the theology of ministry (*DOTW*, p. 42).

#### 3. Agreement 16: Subordinate to Christ

**16** We both affirm that all ministry is subordinated to Christ, who in the Holy Spirit is acting in the preaching of the word of God, in the administration of the sacraments, and in pastoral service.

Agreement 14 establishes that all the baptized share in ministry. Draw a picture or make a list of your various ministries and how they are subordinate to Christ. How is Christ the source of your ministries? (Hint: The Salvadoran cross was the artist's depiction of Colossians 1:18, Christ the head of the body. Now it is your turn to develop a personal illustration.)

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Share and discuss your pictures in small groups.

#### 4. Agreement 20: Exercises authority over community

**20** We also agree that the office of ministry stands over against (*gegenüber*) the community as well as within it and thus is called to exercise authority over the community.

Discuss: The office of the ministry serves the gospel of Christ, through whom it receives its authority. When might the office of ministry exert its authority over the community? What might that look like? How can you tell when the exercise of authority is serving the gospel? How can you tell when it is not?

The authority of the ministry must therefore not be understood as delegated by the community (*DOTW*, p. 47).

#### 5. Agreement 26: Ministry serving worldwide unity

**26** Catholics and Lutherans affirm together that all ministry, to the degree that it serves the *koinonia* of salvation, also serves the unity of the worldwide church, and together we long for more complete realization of this unity.

In his sermon at the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation in Lund, Sweden, on October 31, 2016, the Reverend Dr. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation, proclaimed this: “Thus, as we see Jesus among us, we have also started to see each other anew. We acknowledge that there is much more that unites us than that which separates us. We are branches of the same vine. We are one in baptism.”

List and discuss some things that unite Lutherans and Catholics in the faith. What themes run through your list and discussion?

#### Remaining differences regarding ministry

While discussions among Catholics and Lutherans have produced fourteen agreements on ministry, they have also identified six areas that need additional dialogue and understanding:

- The ministry and continuity of apostolicity
- The relationship between ordained ministry and the priesthood of the baptized
- Sacramentality of ordination
- Who can be ordained?
- Distinction between bishops and priests/ministers
- Universal ministry and Christian unity

Major points for each remaining difference are provided below. Read them out loud and discuss: What surprises you? What confuses you? Where do you need further understanding on the position of either Catholics or Lutherans? Where do you stand in regard to the statements of the remaining differences? Which are the most significant? Which might be hardest to resolve?

Another option for discussing the remaining differences is to assign a small group to each one. Each group makes a two-column list showing the Catholic understanding and the Lutheran understanding of their assigned topic. What recommendations for moving ahead does *Declaration on the Way* make? Share and discuss your findings in the large group.

### **1. The ministry and continuity of apostolicity**

*“Lutherans recognize the apostolic character of Roman Catholic ministry, but Catholics do not so recognize Lutheran ministry” (DOTW, p. 93).*

### **2. The relationship between ordained ministry and the priesthood of the baptized**

*“Catholics sometimes assume that Lutheran ministry is a delegation to exercise the ministry of the universal priesthood in such a way that there is no difference between the office of ministry and the priesthood of the baptized. Lutherans sometimes speak of the priesthood of the baptized as a rediscovery by the Reformation” (DOTW, p. 96).*

### **3. Sacramentality of ordination**

*“Catholics consider ordination to be one of seven sacraments, while Lutherans do not call it a sacrament” (DOTW, p. 99).*

### **4. Who can be ordained?**

*“Many Lutheran churches ordain women, while the Catholic Church considers itself not authorized to ordain women” (DOTW, 100–101).*

### **5. Distinction between bishops and priests/ministers**

*“When Vatican II emphasizes the episcopate as the basic form of church ministry, it gives prominence to a difference from the Lutheran understanding of ministry, which is fully recognized in the public service of word and sacrament in the local community” (Apostolicity, § 115, in DOTW, p. 102).*

*“Vatican II expanded the theology of the episcopate by identifying it as the fullness of the sacrament of order; by emphasizing that episcopal consecration is also an ordination and not just an additional jurisdiction, and by situating the episcopacy within the episcopal college” (DOTW, p. 103).*

### **6. Universal ministry and Christian unity**

*“The questions of a universal ministry of the church and the roles of bishop of Rome are among the longstanding and obvious differences between Lutherans and Catholics” (DOTW, p. 106).*

## **For further learning**

Here are some suggestions to dig deeper and extend your learning.

- Read about the Lutheran–Catholic agreements (*DOTW*, pp. 55–72) and remaining differences (pp. 111–119) on eucharist.
- Read “Next Steps on the Way,” *DOTW*, pp. 121–124.

# Eucharist

## Session Four

Place the five pillar candles in a central location in the room. (The candles can be placed on colorful cloths, if you wish.) Place the large bowl and pitcher of water near the candles.

If you decide to sing the hymn "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart" while discussing Agreement 30, arrange in advance to have a musician and instrument available to lead the group.

In this session you will look at the six agreements on the eucharist that Catholics and Lutherans have identified to make their unity in Christ visible. These agreements have evolved over fifty years of bilateral discussions. They are agreements that can be acknowledged and celebrated.

You will also have the opportunity to discuss four remaining topics requiring further conversation and understanding before reconciliation is possible. As you discuss these, recognize that you, too, are part of the ongoing conversation.

### Key agreements in this session

- The eucharist unites us with Christ.
- Christ is fully present in the eucharist.
- The eucharist is a sign of the new heaven and new earth promised by God.
- Eucharist is a sign of unity of the church.

*Eucharist* is derived from a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving," and is an ancient designation for the sacrament also called the Lord's supper and Holy Communion.

### Our commitments to each other

Pour water into the bowl prior to reading each commitment. Have five volunteers each read a statement and then light a candle.

1. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
2. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
3. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.

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4. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
5. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

## Prayer

*O bread of heaven, you gather us at your table and make us one in you through all time and space. Bless us as we celebrate our unity in you. United, we give thanks for the gift of your body and blood given for us as food to strengthen us for life's journey. We pray for the coming day of full table fellowship between Lutherans and Catholics. Guide us on our way. In your name we pray. Amen.*

## Reflections and discussion

### Agreements on eucharist

At a press conference following the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation in Sweden on October 31, 2016, the Reverend Dr. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation, said, "I believe . . . that eucharist and the sharing around the table is the ultimate goal of our ecumenical endeavors." He continued, "It is around the table where people in our communities experience the fragmentation of the church the hardest." (You can watch the recording at <https://vimeo.com/189685569>.)

Keep this ultimate goal in mind as you review the agreements and remaining differences on the eucharist. How does this inform your conversation? How does it enliven it?

Discuss the first question, then select from the remaining questions in this section.

1. Go around the room and have volunteers read the six agreements on eucharist out loud (*DOTW*, pp. 14–15). Discuss: What surprises you? What delights you? What confuses you?

### 2. Agreement 27: Eucharistic union in Christ in Holy Communion

*"Catholics and Lutherans agree that when we receive the Lord's supper we are personally united with Christ. Receiving this gift is a source of great blessings for those who receive it in faith" (DOTW, p. 56).*

Read John 6:35-58. List what Jesus says about himself in this discourse, then list the benefits of the eucharist. Discuss your lists. What gets stirred up in you as you look at the benefits of the eucharist? How do you personally experience these benefits? What similarities and differences are there between your experience and that of others in your group?

### 3. Agreement 30: Christ is fully present

*"In the faith of both churches, when one receives the eucharistic elements or species, one truly receives the body and blood of Christ in a sacramental way, and so comes into communion with Christ, in order to be on a pilgrimage with him" (DOTW, p. 67).*



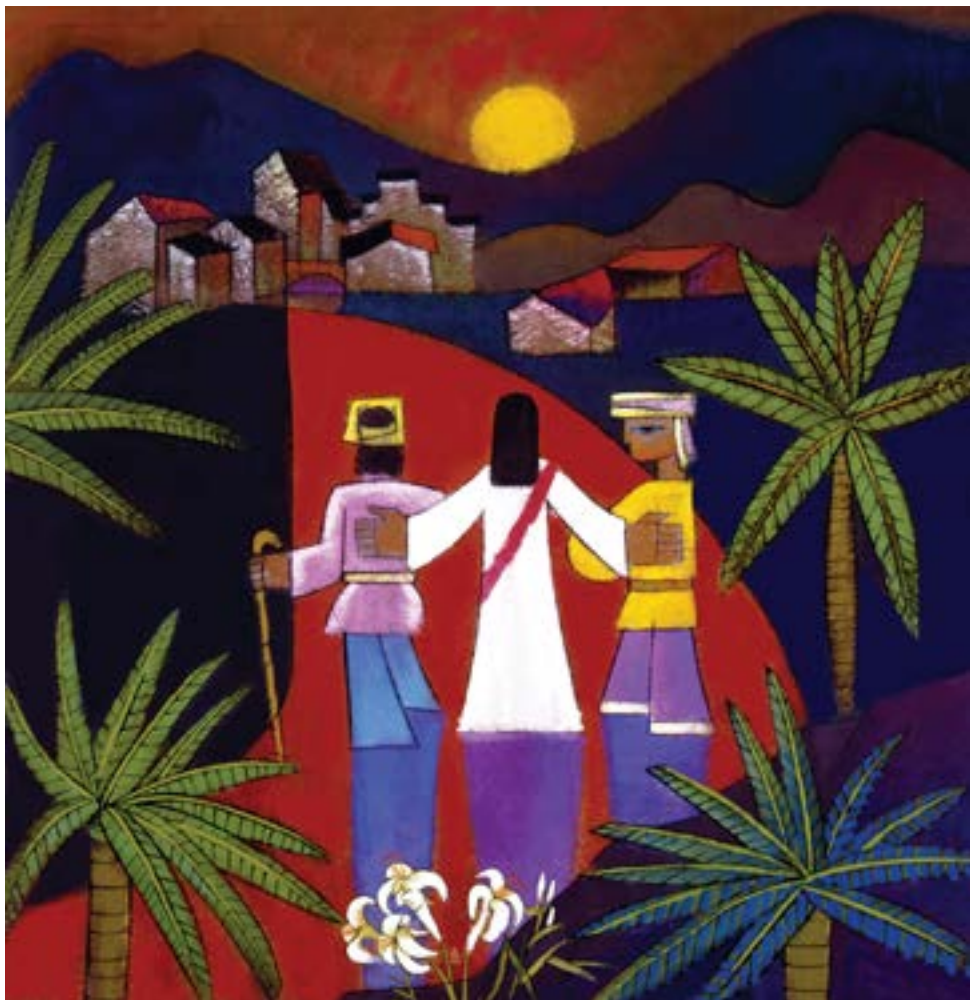
The hymn “You Satisfy the Hungry Heart” is in both *WORSHIP: A Service Book and Hymnal for Roman Catholics* (GIA Publications, 2001), hymn 736, and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 484. Sing this hymn together. What does the hymn say about Christ’s presence in the eucharist? What does it mean that both traditions include this hymn in their worship books? What questions do you have about Christ’s presence in the eucharist?

#### 4. Agreement 31: Eschatological dimension of the eucharist

*“The form and effect of the Eucharist are a promise of the eternal glory to which we are destined, and a sign pointing to the new heaven and new earth towards which we are moving: that is why the Eucharist directs our thoughts to the Lord’s coming, and brings it near to us” (DOTW, p. 68).*

The *eschaton* refers to God’s final plan for creation. The hope of that final fulfillment inspires and guides the pilgrim people of God here on earth.

On the cover of *Declaration on the Way* is a painting by the Chinese Christian artist He Qi titled *The Road to Emmaus*. Look at this image and discuss: How does the painting represent the church on earth now? How does this painting represent the eschatological dimension of the eucharist? How does it represent the ongoing conversations between the Catholics and Lutherans?



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## 5. Agreement 32: Eucharist and church

*“The 1978 statement, The Eucharist, states that the unity of individual disciples with the Lord, and the unity of the whole church, which is his body, is rooted in and fed by the celebration of the eucharist” (DOTW, p. 70).*

Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. Imagine what the unity of the individual with Christ in the eucharist might look like. Draw your interpretation.

Imagine what the unity of the whole church might look like in the eucharist. Draw your interpretation of this. Compare your drawings with those of others in the group. What do your drawings have in common?

### Remaining differences regarding eucharist

While discussions among Catholics and Lutherans have produced six agreements on eucharist, they have also identified four areas that need additional dialogue and understanding:

- Eucharist as sacrifice
- Mode of eucharistic presence
- Reservation of the elements/eucharistic devotion
- Eucharistic fellowship

Major points for each remaining difference are provided below. Read them out loud and discuss: What surprises you? What confuses you? Where do you need further understanding on the position of either Catholics or Lutherans? Where do you stand in regard to the statements of the remaining differences? Which are the most significant? Which might be hardest to resolve?

Another option for discussing the remaining differences is to assign a small group to each one. Each group makes a two-column list showing the Catholic understanding and the Lutheran understanding of their assigned topic. What recommendations for moving ahead does *Declaration on the Way* make? Share and discuss your findings in the large group.

#### 1. Eucharist as sacrifice

*“Historically, Lutherans and Catholics have had disagreements about how the terminology of ‘sacrifice’ should be applied to the eucharist” (DOTW, p. 111).*

#### 2. Mode of eucharistic presence

*“Roman Catholic and Lutheran Christians together confess the real and true presence of the Lord in the Eucharist” (The Eucharist, §48). However, there are differences in their theological statements and terminology about the mode of presence” (DOTW, p. 113).*

#### 3. Reservation of the elements/eucharistic devotion

*“Traditionally, Lutherans and Catholics have had differing views and practices regarding the reservation, use, and disposition of the eucharistic elements after the conclusion of the liturgical celebration” (DOTW, p. 115).*

#### 4. Eucharistic fellowship

*“In our churches there are different regulations regarding the invitation of nonmembers to receive communion. Most Lutheran congregations invite baptized believers to receive at the table. In the Catholic Church, normally only those in full communion with the Catholic Church are invited to receive the sacrament” (DOTW, pp. 117–118).*

#### Conclusion

Changes begin with a conversation. Conversations transform us. It was Luther’s intent to start a conversation when he posted his ninety-five theses in 1517. Now you have been a part of a dialogue examining the thirty-two agreements and remaining differences acknowledged between Catholics and Lutherans. *Declaration on the Way* invites The Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church to lean into the developing communion between the two bodies. It also makes suggestions that can be used regionally and locally.

Discuss: How have you changed as a result of engaging in this conversation? What new understandings do you have?

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 aloud together:

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort 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 of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

#### For further learning

Here are some suggestions to dig deeper and extend your learning.

- Discuss your response with one or two others: What questions, concerns, hopes, or plans do you now have for greater unity between Lutherans and Catholics?
- If you have engaged in an ecumenical discussion with *Declaration on the Way*, consider how you might develop next steps in the areas of prayer, education, and collaboration. If you have not yet had an ecumenical discussion, how might you initiate one in your community? What next steps can you take in your community as you journey on the way, together?

#### One last note

The ELCA Ecumenical and Inter-Religious staff would be happy to help with questions that have arisen in your process. They also would be grateful to hear how this study guide worked in your context. Send a report to [kathryn.johnson@elca.org](mailto:kathryn.johnson@elca.org).

In the press conference following the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation, Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said, “Eucharistic communion, for us Catholics, is the goal . . . because for us, eucharistic communion will be a visible sign of ecclesial communion.”