



Together in Christ

Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Video Scripts

Session 1—The Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation, 2017

Memories are perhaps less about the past than they are about the future. The way we choose to remember the past shapes the way that we move into the future. Faith communities, like all human communities, are shaped by history, by the events of the past—be they joyful or fraught with pain. Communities are shaped by the way they choose to recall those defining moments, by the lessons drawn from past experiences. Those memories are handed down from one generation to the next in the telling and retelling of our collective story. They shape us and have profound consequences on our relationships with others.

As Lutherans, Catholics, and other Christians enter into the year 2017, we recall together the events of the Lutheran Reformation that took place five centuries ago. For almost half a millennium the recollection of these events was tainted by the bitterness of isolation, opposition, and division. But times are changing. On this five hundredth anniversary Lutherans and Catholics have chosen to remember these events together in a spirit of repentance for the sins of division, in a spirit of joy for the common faith that continues to bind us to one another in Christ, and in the desire that this joint remembering will draw us more closely together in the unity of Christ's body, the church.

We also celebrate the achievements of the past fifty years, where Lutherans and Catholics have been engaged in a sustained and constructive dialogue. Scholars and historians have revisited the controversial moments of the sixteenth century and come to a deeper appreciation of each other's theological views. We have come to a clearer understanding of one another's concerns and of our shared responsibility for the reality of ecclesial division. We have addressed many misunderstandings and discovered beyond the differences of theological language or church practice considerable agreement on matters relating to our common faith in Jesus Christ, on sacramental life, and on many practices of ecclesial life. Lutherans and Catholics have come to know one another more deeply as members of one family in Christ. We have begun to gather together again more naturally to pray with and for one another, and to give a common witness in the works of justice, service, and the care of creation.

In light of this growing communion between the Lutheran and Catholic communities, Lutherans could not imagine commemorating these events, which have been so formative in the life of their churches, without the participation of Catholic fellow Christians. On October of 2016, Pope Francis joined Archbishop Antje Jackelen,

the Primate of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and Bishop Munid Younan, President of the Lutheran World Federation, in Lund Sweden for a celebration of common prayer to mark this year where Lutherans and Catholics commemorate the Reformation. Together they reaffirmed with joy our common faith in Christ, they repented for the sins of the past, they recalled our continuing need for conversion in the present, and recommitted our communities to continue on the path toward full visible communion.

In the past, anniversaries of the Reformation became occasions to reinforce oppositional differences. Today, Lutherans and Catholics together look upon this anniversary as an occasion for a healing of memories and for mending the wounds of division. We recall the events of the past in the light of our common faith in Jesus Christ, in a spirit of self-critical discernment, aware that as individuals and communities we stand in need of continual reform. The ninety-five theses that Martin Luther posted on October 30, 1517, are generally held to have triggered the debates which led to new divisions in the Western Church. The first thesis affirms that “the entire life of believers is to be one of repentance.” Luther, who Lutherans and Catholics have jointly recognized as a witness to the gospel, never intended to create a new church. During a period of crisis and upheaval, he sought rather to renew the Western Church, calling it to return to the truth of the gospel. There are many factors—doctrinal, social, and political—that contributed to the unfortunate breakdown of church unity in this period.

The modern ecumenical movement, which seeks to bring about the reconciliation of the divided Christian churches, is also a movement of renewal and reform. The Second Vatican Council, which gathered the leaders of the Catholic Church in a series of deliberations from 1962 to 1965, was a council of reform. It initiated a series of reforms that touched on forms of common worship, the use of the Scriptures in theology and preaching, forms of religious life and ministry, and the vocation of the laity in carrying forward the mission of the church in the world. The presence of ecumenical observers and the Catholic Church’s official entry into the ecumenical movement at Vatican II opened the door to official Lutheran-Catholic dialogue at the international, national, and regional levels.

The 1980s were marked by a series of important anniversaries and breakthroughs, beginning with a joint study of the Augsburg Confession, a document setting out the central principles of Lutheran doctrine. On the 450th anniversary of its publication, the Lutheran-Catholic International Commission recognized that the Augsburg Confession, produced in a period before the definitive separation of Lutheran and Catholic communities, was not concerned to establish a separate theological tradition nor to establish a new church. Its primary intention was rather to preserve and renew the Christian faith in harmony with the ancient church, with the Church of Rome, and in agreement with the witness of the Scriptures. This insight is an important key to understanding and interpreting the Lutheran confession of faith.

In 1983, Lutherans marked the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s birth. The Lutheran-Catholic international commission reflected on the importance of Luther as a “Witness to Jesus Christ.” In contrast to the manner that Luther had been regarded in the past—as either a heretic or hero—together they could now see him as “a witness to the gospel ... and a herald of spiritual renewal.”

The joint ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation in 2017 follows the trajectory of these previous anniversaries that aim to celebrate all that Lutherans and Catholics share in common, and which far outweighs the areas of our continuing disagreement. On this historic occasion, we stop to take stock of the road travelled in

our common journey of faith. We recommit ourselves to leave behind the bitterness of the past and to continue our efforts, at every level of church life, to lay the foundations of a future together where we are fully reconciled in Christ.

In this study series we will explore together the fruits of fifty years of dialogue as they are reflected in the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity's re-reading of our common history in, *From Conflict to Communion*. We will examine how these many years of patient study and dialogue have helped us to understand the events of the Reformation in a new light. We will learn about the surprising areas of theological convergence and agreement that have been uncovered beyond our differences of theological language and practice. We will re-read our common history together, beginning from the events of the sixteenth century and its aftermath, and including modern efforts at renewal through interchurch dialogue, prayer, and common witness. We hope to re-member and "make new memories together" in view of a common future as brothers and sisters in the one family of Christ.

We are justified by God's free gift of faith alone, and not by our own human effort. Agreement on this central concern of Martin Luther has enabled Lutherans and Catholics to move beyond positions that were once considered church-dividing. Together Lutherans and Catholics want to proclaim this good news of God's merciful and liberating love to the world. This teaching, the core of the gospel message, is at the heart of our common heritage, and at the origin of the Christian family throughout the world. This is the good news that binds us to one another and that we are called to proclaim in the world. Though we are not yet fully reconciled, this historic anniversary of the Reformation is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to work and pray for reconciliation and full ecclesial communion. We do so in a spirit of hope, recognizing our responsibility for continual renewal and reform of our communities today in faithfulness to the gospel. Let us take advantage of this opportunity to deepen our growing friendship, to join together for common study, to pray with and for one another, and to imagine new ways of proclaiming the love of Christ together in a divided world.

Session 2—Conflict and Division: The Sixteenth Century Reformation

In the previous session, we reflected on the importance of remembering our shared history together as Lutherans and Catholics commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. In this session, we explore the events of the Lutheran reform and the Catholic response in the sixteenth century.

The root of the word “Reformation,” from the Latin *reformatio*, suggests a change, a move away from a negative situation and a return to the right path. From the days of the desert fathers, processes of reformation were introduced during moments of decline or in the face of new challenges to the life of the church. In the Middle Ages Francis of Assisi and Dominic de Guzman founded new religious orders to spread the teaching of the gospel. In the fourteenth century John Wycliffe challenged the privileged lifestyle of the English clergy and urged the translation of the bible into the vernacular. And in the turbulent fifteenth century, marked by internal schism in the Western Church and rival claimants to the papal office, the Council of Constance sought to reform the church “in head and members,” restoring unity and good order. Others called for the reform of the Renaissance papacy, criticizing church leaders for their pursuit of wealth and power. These precursors of the sixteenth century Reformation, like all reforming movements, sought to return to the heart of the gospel message.

Martin Luther was an Augustinian friar and professor of theology in Wittenberg, Germany. In his personal journey of faith, he became convinced that the gospel offered the assurance of God’s constant presence, mercy, and liberating love. He found God’s support in every step of the struggle against the effects of sin that wound our relationship with God, with other persons, and with creation. Luther saw all of life as a journey of repentance and rebirth. He experienced a constant yearning for God and the assurance of healing grace. Luther rarely used the term “reformation” and did not anticipate the events precipitated by the publication of his ideas.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther addressed a letter accompanied by a list of 95 theses to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Bishop Hieronymus of Brandenburg. He circulated his theses among colleagues and posted them for others to see in Wittenberg, hoping to initiate a debate among scholars as was the custom in his day. Luther was concerned with the widespread preaching and practice of indulgences. He questioned the practice of imposing “penalties”—such as prayer, acts of charity, and almsgiving—for sins that were already forgiven by God. He wondered whether such practices, including the exchange of money, really helped to liberate repentant believers, or whether they imposed unnecessary burdens. When challenged by church authorities, Luther insisted that his views were consistent with church teaching. As it became apparent that church leaders were unwilling to consider his views, he became increasingly convinced that the Roman Church had departed from the core of the gospel. This crisis in the church took place in a context of great social and political upheaval, causing Luther to see the world in dramatic and increasingly apocalyptic terms.

Pope Leo X received a report from Archbishop Albrecht. Failing to grasp the seriousness of the crisis at hand, he saw Luther’s ideas as undermining papal teaching and authority, and insisted that he recant. When Pope Leo called Luther to appear before a church tribunal in Rome, the Prince Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, offered protection and proposed the alternate location of Augsburg. Luther defended his views before the Imperial Diet at Augsburg in 1518, under examination by Cardinal Cajetan. Cajetan was unwilling to label Luther a heretic, though he considered some of his views to be rash assertions. In hindsight, scholars today view this meeting as a tragic encounter, a missed opportunity for genuine dialogue. While their views were not far apart, Luther and Cajetan debated the issues at hand from differing presuppositions and intellectual frameworks.

Where Luther approached questions from the more personal and existential perspective of monastic theology, Cajetan's theology was shaped by the thought-world of the medieval scholastics and the philosophical categories of Aristotle. In the highly charged context of conflict between the German Princes and the Pope, a struggle for political and financial authority and autonomy, neither side was able to hear and fully appreciate the views of the other. The following year Luther took part in another public disputation in Leipzig against Johannes Eck, who would later call for the burning of Luther's works. Luther was excommunicated by papal decree in January of 1521.

Tempers cooled somewhat with the election of the devout Pope Hadrian VI who reigned briefly from 1522 to 1523, forgoing the excesses of his Renaissance predecessors. In November of 1522 he sent a representative to the Diet of Nuremberg who acknowledged, in Hadrian's name, the decadence that had spread downwards from the papacy to infect much of church teaching and practice. Hadrian's letter announced his intention to reform the papal office, the Roman Curia, and the office of bishop. He continued, however, to regard Luther as a rebel who might be received back like an errant son, were he to repent of his views. Pope Hadrian seriously underestimated the sympathy for Luther's evangelical message in the German lands.

Luther had lit a match, unwittingly, under the dry tinder of accumulated grievances and tensions between the German princes and bishops sympathetic to Roman influence. The Emperor Charles V condemned Luther's teaching at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and called upon German rulers to suppress the "Lutheran heresy." Many of the princes, convinced by Luther's argument, declined to carry out the Emperor's edict. Other important attempts were made to address the growing doctrinal conflict at Augsburg in 1530, and at the colloquies of Speyer (1540), Worms (1540–41), and Regensburg (1541–46). Luther's teaching pointed to the dignity of all the baptized who belong to the priestly people of God (1 Pet 2:9). He argued against the celebration of the Mass without the participation of the people, and for the sharing of the cup with the laity. The Augsburg Confession, a document which sought to express the shared faith of the church and to correct a number of church practices, would become a defining document for Lutheran church life. At the heart of the Confession is the Pauline doctrine that human persons are justified by God's free gift of grace, not by their own effort or through good works (Article 4). The Church is presented within the Augsburg Confession as "the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel" (Article 7).

During this time the German princes supported a renewal of church preaching and ministry in their territories by the establishment of new structures for oversight. They translated the Bible into the language of the people, prepared new catechisms for improved religious education, and wrote new hymns and orders of service. In 1535, adopting a model of early church ministries from the writings of Saint Jerome, Lutheran ministers began to ordain new pastors to ensure the continued preaching of the gospel and celebration of the sacraments for their people.

The Emperor Charles V, hoping to restore unity in the Holy Roman Empire and impose his will on the Lutheran territories, launched the Smalcald War against the Lutheran princes from 1546 to 1547. The princes remained adamant in their adherence to Lutheran principles, even in the face of military defeat. Fighting resumed in 1552 and ended with the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. By this treaty, the lands of the German Empire were divided up between Catholic and Lutheran territories, where the religious adherence of the peoples was determined by that of their rulers.

Political conflicts across Europe delayed the convening of the Council of Trent until 1545, a full generation after the events that triggered the Lutheran Reformation. Its work dragged on over a period of eighteen years due to violent upheavals and tensions between church and state. It was hoped that Trent might be a force for the healing of division and for the reform of the Western Church. Each doctrinal decree was accompanied by a disciplinary one, to bring church structures and practice into line with the teaching of the gospel. Trent's decrees did not condemn individual persons or communities, but sought to affirm Catholic teaching in four principal areas that had been the object of the Reformers' critique.

First, the Council reaffirmed the traditional understanding that church teaching must convey the "purity of the gospel." It insisted on the interdependence of scripture and tradition, without entirely resolving the question of their relationship. Second, on the central question of justification by faith, Trent rejected the idea that human persons might be saved by their own works.

Third, in its teaching on the sacraments Trent maintained that the Mass was not a repetition of the unique self-offering of Christ, made once and for all in the cross of Calvary. It affirmed the sacramental nature of ordination and presented the ordering of ecclesiastical office, including the office of bishop, as an institution established by "divine ordinance." Finally, the most extensive disciplinary reform undertaken by the Council of Trent related to the office of bishop. Changes in practice sought to eliminate abuse and refocus on the pastoral care of the people in the local church. Seminaries were established to provide improved formation of the clergy, including a renewal of gospel preaching on Sundays and holy days.

Throughout this period movements of Reform continued to spread across the European continent and England through the influence of other Reformers. Right up until 1561 efforts were made to bring Lutheran representatives to the council, with no success. When the third session convened in 1562, there was no longer any prospect of reconciliation. Lutheran and Reformed communities had taken on a new ecclesial form, one fully supported by and aligned with the emerging structures of new nation-states within European civil society.

Religious conflict was further exacerbated during the Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648. Throughout the seventeenth century period of "confessionalization," Protestant and Catholic parties increasingly defined their positions in opposition to the perceived teaching and practice of the other. If Lutherans defined themselves according to the tenets of the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran catechisms, the teaching of Trent and the Tridentine liturgy would remain touchstones for Catholic identity until the Second Vatican Council in the mid-twentieth century. The intervening centuries would be characterized by mutual estrangement and isolation, misunderstanding, and at times misrepresentation of one another's belief and practice. The wound of division cut deep into the ecclesial body of Christ.

Sadly, what began as a movement for renewal and a struggle for the truth of the gospel had degenerated, on all sides, into a seemingly intractable quarrel. Yet the desire for unity in Christ was never entirely lost from view. In our next session we will examine the roots of the modern ecumenical movement.

Session 3—From Conflict to Communion: The Ecumenical Turn of the Twentieth Century

In the previous session we saw how the events of the Lutheran Reformation in the sixteenth century, originally intended as a movement for the renewal and the reform of the Western Church, resulted in the fragmentation of the Church. Social and political upheaval contributed to a delay in the convocation of the Council of Trent, and to a hardening of Protestant and Catholic positions. Yet on both sides the fundamental confession that the church is one, glowed through the centuries like an ember beneath the ashes. In the twentieth century, the passion for Christian unity would once again burn brightly in the modern ecumenical movement.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, Christian missionary societies began to realize that competitive missionary efforts in colonial lands were both counter-productive and a contradiction of the gospel. Christians unable to live in harmony with one another could hardly give a convincing witness to Christ's reconciling love. Missionary leaders became deeply conscious of the ways in which the division of Christ's ecclesial body undermines the very proclamation of the gospel to the world. Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed and Baptist missionaries met in Edinburgh Scotland in 1910 to reflect together on these challenges and founded the International Missionary Council. Some held triumphalistic hopes of bringing the whole world under the banner of Christ. Yet the dream of a unified global Christian society soon unraveled in the conflict of the First World War, where adversaries from so-called Christian countries sparked a conflict of global proportion, devastating the European continent and bringing an end to many colonial aspirations.

In 1925, the Swedish Lutheran Bishop Nathan Soderblom established the movement of Life and Work, inviting Christian churches to come together in service of the poor and the many persons displaced by the World War I. Two years later, Christian leaders and theologians gathered together in Lausanne, Switzerland, founding the Faith and Order movement, whose primary task is to address the doctrinal disagreements at the root of ecclesial division, and thus help the churches move towards the goal of full visible unity.

Lutherans participated in all of these movements, while Catholics observed from a distance. An invitation was extended to Pope Pius XI, requesting that he send representatives to the meeting of Faith and Order. Pope Pius remained suspicious of this new "pan-Christian" movement, and replied that the only path for the restoration of church unity would be for those who had left the Catholic Church to return to it.

In 1948, the movements of Life and Work and Faith and Order came together to form the World Council of Churches, signifying the close connection between doctrinal unity and the common witness of the churches. In 1961, the International Missionary Council was integrated into the World Council, and a number of Eastern Orthodox Churches became members. This integration is a further indication that the unity of the church is not an end in itself, but is essential to the accomplishment of the church's mission in service of the world.

Catholic leaders and scholars began to rethink their relationship to the organized ecumenical movement, initiating informal contacts and attending meetings for joint study and conversation. Already in the 1930s Catholic scholars began to revisit the works of Martin Luther, rereading them in a more positive light.

The devastation of the Second World War, and in particular the genocide of six million Jews, led to a growing consciousness among Christians of the need for humility, repentance, and reform across all Christian churches. Both the Catholic and Lutheran churches have sought repentance and expressed acts of deep sorrow and regret for errors and failures committed by their sons and daughters during this period. It remains a haunting question as to how such unspeakable crimes could emerge out of countries with such long-standing Christian civilizations. Yet there were new signs of hope forged in the crucible of suffering.

Throughout World War II, Christians came together from across denominational lines in movements of resistance as in the Confessing Church in Germany. In 1943, Lorenz Jaeger founded a new department for ecumenism within the German Catholic conference of bishops. By the grace of God, Christian witnesses—such as The Rev. Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Father Alfred Delp, S.J.—demonstrated a unity of faith—one which already existed between our two churches—through their loyalty to the one Gospel of Christ and consequent martyrdom. In 1946 he joined Dr. Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg University to establish a Lutheran-Catholic Ecumenical Working Group—one of the first “laboratories” for Protestant-Catholic dialogue.

By 1949 Pope Pius XII would recognize the growing ecumenical movement as a work of the Holy Spirit and authorize Catholic participation in ecumenical meetings. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January of 1959, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to organize an ecumenical council—gathering together Catholic bishops from around the world to deliberate on the life and teaching of the church. Among the Second Vatican Council’s principal aims were the updating and renewal of Catholic teaching and practice, and the growth of Christian Unity. Pope John understood instinctively that as the churches were renewed and grew closer to Christ, they would grow closer to one another.

For the first time since the sixteenth century a formal invitation was extended for Reformation communities to send official observers to the council. Over the four sessions of Vatican II between 1962 to 1965, a total of 17 Lutheran representatives took part, ten of whom represented the Lutheran World Federation, including Dr. Kristen Skydsgaard of the University of Copenhagen and Dr. George Lindbeck of Yale Divinity School. Pope John welcomed the observers as “beloved fellow workers.” Attending all of the council debates and studying the documents under consideration, the ecumenical observers were encouraged to offer constructive criticism and to share their concerns with the bishops and theologians. Edmund Schlink, representing the Evangelical Church of Germany, noted that this level of participation marked “a new atmosphere of openness toward the non-Roman churches.” Speaking at the opening of the second session of the council in September of 1963, the newly elected Pope Paul VI called for mutual forgiveness, regretting the events that had led to division in the past: “If we are in any way to blame for that separation,” he said, “we humbly beg God’s forgiveness and ask pardon too of our separated brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us.”

Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism, published in 1964, speaks of division as an open contradiction of Christ’s will. It acknowledges that both sides bear responsibility for the sin of separation, and calls upon every member of the church to undergo a genuine conversion, to grow in faithfully following of Christ as individuals and communities, undertaking whatever renewal of the church is necessary so that the church might to better reflect the face of Christ. The council links Catholic ecumenical engagement, which aims at reconciliation and the visible unity of the church, to the church’s need for continual reformation, since the members of the Christian community remain subject to sin and stand in constant need of God’s healing grace as it moves through history.

The Second Vatican Council acknowledges the ecclesial reality of other Christian communities, a reality expressed in the proclamation of the Scriptures, in the celebration of the sacraments, including the Lords' Supper, and in lives of virtue and holiness. These gifts and "endowments" are recognized as constitutive "elements," that belong to and build up the Church of Christ. They "truly engender a life of grace" and can lead believers in the way to salvation. While maintaining the conviction that the Catholic Church retains all the means necessary for salvation, the council humbly admits that Catholics do not always live by them as they should. The path to Christian unity entails a humble self-criticism and readiness to renew Catholic teaching and life whenever they fail to reflect faithfully the message of Christ.

Vatican II underlines the importance of the sacramental bond that unites all those who are baptized in the one body of Christ. Through baptism Catholics are joined in a relationship of genuine communion to other Christians, even if that unity is not yet perfectly realized in the full institutional unity between our communities. That baptismal bond calls us to work towards the day when, with the help of God's Spirit, we are fully reconciled in Christ.

Lutherans, observing the new openness of the Catholic Church to ecumenism at Vatican II, accompanied by many reforms of church structure and practice, saw that the conditions were coming together for a constructive dialogue, one "based on mutual esteem, love, and frankness," in a common search for the truth of the gospel. The Lutheran World Federation was the first world confessional organization to establish an official dialogue with the Catholic Church—becoming a model for other international bi-lateral conversations. Exploratory conversations began in 1964, before the council had concluded. A new partnership began where a sustained series of exchanges, consultations, and mutual visits has continued to this day. An official theological commission was established in 1967. This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of that dialogue, in gratitude for its many accomplishments.

The Second Vatican Council was an historic moment where the Catholic Church began a process of reform that answered many concerns raised centuries ago by Martin Luther and other Reformers: rediscovering the common calling of the priestly people of God; emphasizing the participation of the people and their sharing in the cup of the Lord's Supper; placing the Scriptures at the center of the church's preaching and prayer; using vernacular translations of the bible and the liturgy; introducing a hymnody that corresponds to the language and culture of the people; promoting a life of worship centered in Christ and avoiding exaggerated devotion to Mary and the saints; renewing collegial forms of church governance.

Inspired by the same spirit of renewal, Lutheran Churches also reformed their practice of prayer and church structures in the wake of the council: recovering the weekly celebration of Sunday Eucharist; adopting a common lectionary of Sunday readings; updating liturgical prayer books; and restoring the office of bishop in many synods. The Second Vatican Council was prepared by important movements of biblical, patristic, and liturgical renewal in the early part of the twentieth century. Those renewal movements had a strong ecumenical character, as scholars from across denominational traditions returned together to the earliest sources of the Christian tradition. The fruits of that renewal can be seen in the practice of gathering together around the altar of the Lord's Supper in both Lutheran and Catholic practice, and in the similarities of the revised liturgical rites in both communities, based on the prayers and practice of the early church.

In dialogue with one another, Lutherans and Catholics have undertaken a common study of the scriptures and of their Christian heritage, seeking to overcome the disagreements of the past and to deepen their common understanding of the gospel. In our next session we will explore in greater detail how fifty years of dialogue have enabled us to continue moving from conflict to communion.

Session 4—Overcoming Conflict, Uncovering Communion in Faith through Dialogue

In the previous session, we saw how the convergence of the modern ecumenical movement and the renewal of the Second Vatican Council opened the door to a conversation aimed at an honest evaluation of past conflict and a reshaping of present and future relationships. In 1967 an official theological dialogue was established at the international level between representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. Dialogue at the international level has been complemented by the contributions of regional conversations in Germany, France, North America, and Australia. Today we celebrate the many ways that fifty years of sustained dialogue have helped us to come to a deeper knowledge of one another and to dispel many misunderstandings about one another's practice and belief. Through dialogue Lutherans and Catholics have discovered that they hold much more in common than they might have first imagined. Careful study has revealed that many positions once considered to be opposed, must be seen as complementary; they can no longer be judged as church-dividing. Joint studies have been carried out on topics as varied as: the relationship of Scripture and tradition; the role of the creed; the meaning of baptism, eucharist, and ministry; the role of the papacy; the invocation of the Saints and Mary. It would be impossible to treat all these questions here. Instead, we will highlight some key moments in Lutheran-Catholic dialogue at the international level. But before doing so, it is important to say a word about the meaning of dialogue.

Some Principles of Dialogue

As a rule, dialogue takes place in a context of fellowship and prayer. The bonds of mutual trust and friendship, the common celebration of faith, and the constant reminder of our dependence upon the guidance of God's Spirit are essential ingredients in these meetings. Biblical scholars, historians, pastors, and theologians revisit the scriptures and re-examine the Christian tradition in an effort to discern together a fuller and more accurate appreciation of the gospel. Dialogue is not a negotiation, nor is it the pursuit of a lowest common denominator. It is rather a common search for the truth. In dialogue, partners do not shy away from the hard questions. Yet the focus is not on the perceived short-comings of the other. Lutherans and Catholics listen *self-critically* to each other. Each brings a self-critical regard to bear on the teaching and practice of their own community, examining themselves in the light of the gospel. In all loyalty, they are attentive to those aspects of church teaching and practice that may need to be renewed and reformed in light of what they learn through dialogue with other Christians.

The journey toward Christian unity involves both personal conversion and institutional renewal and reform. Dialogue and conversion go together. Those who take part in this dialogue of truth come to appreciate more fully both the gifts and the weaknesses of their own tradition. They come to know and love their fellow Christians more deeply, and grow in love for the many riches found in their communities. Dialogue is a mutual exchange of gifts where we learn and receive from what God has done in the life of one another's communities. While the work of theological dialogue engages many specialists and scholars, commitment to dialogue, prayer, and work for Christian unity is the responsibility of every Christian. Being a Christian implies a desire for the church, and the church is by its very nature, one.

Through official dialogue, Lutherans and Catholics have made great strides in overcoming disagreement. Of particular note is the growth in agreement on doctrines relating to justification by faith, eucharist, ministry, and the church.

Justification by Faith

The first phase of the international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue began in 1967. Already in its first report on “The Gospel and the Church,” published in 1972, it noted a “far reaching agreement” on the central concern of Martin Luther’s teaching—the doctrine of justification by faith. This question, which lies at the very heart of the Lutheran Reformation, centers on the understanding of Paul’s teaching in the New Testament that we are justified—brought into right relationship with God in Christ—by the gift of faith alone. In the 1980s, important studies in Germany and North America helped to show that while Lutheran and Catholic theologies treat this question using differing language and approaches, they are nonetheless agreed upon the fundamental insight that our salvation depends entirely upon the free and gracious initiative of God’s love and mercy. Where Luther understood faith in more biblical terms as the adherence of the whole person in response to God’s free gift, the Council of Trent saw faith as an intellectual ascent to Christian doctrine which must be complemented by charity—the work of God’s Spirit in us—bringing interior renewal and moving us to do good works. Beyond these differences in approach Lutherans and Catholics agree that nothing we do can ever “earn” God’s favour or make us more deserving of God’s gratuitous gift of love. Scholars on both sides argued convincingly that this doctrine—a key to understanding the outworking of God’s grace in the life of the church—need no longer be considered church-dividing.

During a 1988 visit to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity by a delegation from the Lutheran World Federation, LWF President, Landesbischof Johannes Hanselmann and General Secretary, Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, asked that a formal process be initiated, where the highest authorities of the Lutheran and Catholic Communion would officially receive the achievements of the theological dialogue. The most significant fruit of this initiative was the signing—after much public debate and consultation—of the historic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. It was signed at Augsburg, Germany, on October 31 of 1999 by Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, and Cardinal Edward Cassidy, then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Joint Declaration affirms a consensus on the basic truths of faith, beyond differences in Lutheran and Catholic emphases and language. It declares that the condemnations of the Reformation on this question cannot be applied to Lutheran and Catholic teaching today. This fundamental consensus on the doctrine of God’s grace places all other disagreements on matters pertaining to sacramental life and ministry into an entirely new context. Since the signing of the Joint Declaration other Christian communions, including Methodists, Anglicans, and Reformed, have begun to align themselves with this historic agreement.

Eucharist

Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on eucharistic doctrine has uncovered significant agreement between Lutheran and Catholic positions. Catholics and Lutheran Christians together confess the real and true presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. They agree that “through the creative power of God’s word” and “the action of the Spirit” the

bread and wine of the Lord's Supper become the body and blood of Christ. Contemporary biblical and liturgical studies have enabled Lutherans and Catholics to recover a fuller understanding of the liturgy as a memorial or *anamnesis*. The eucharistic memorial is not a mere a recollection of events in the historic past; nor is it a repetition of Calvary. In this sacrament the self-giving of Christ, completed once and for all in the sacrifice of the cross, is made actual, enabling us to participate in his saving acts today. Although there remain differences in pastoral practice, Lutherans and Catholics agree that the complete form of the sacrament comprises communion in the bread and the wine. Christ is truly present in his entirety in both the bread and the wine.

Ministry

Martin Luther, in his teaching on the priesthood of all believers, took very seriously the fact that the New Testament authors reserve the word "priest" for the entire congregation of the baptized, and do not apply it to office holders in the church. Nonetheless, Luther did not regard every Christian as a pastor. The Second Vatican Council, following the example of the New Testament, reserves the term "priest" (in Latin, *sacerdos*) for the priestly people of God, and uses the more biblical expression "presbyter" to refer to ordained ministers. The council's teaching emphasizes the equal dignity of all the baptized faithful. Lutherans and Catholics are agreed that within the priestly people of God, Christ and the Spirit call some to a "special ministry." Those who are called to this service are ordained through the laying on of hands.

Historically, the Catholic Church has been reticent to recognize the orders of Lutheran pastors, most of whom were not ordained by bishops standing in a succession from the time of the apostles. While Lutherans and Catholics understand the succession in the faith of the apostles as a "continuity of teaching," Catholics see succession in the office of bishop as an essential structure that ensures continuity in the apostles' ministry. Both Lutherans and Catholics recognize the necessity for a ministry of unity and oversight to ensure the Christian community's fidelity to the witness of the early church. For Lutherans, this ministry may be accomplished by other ministers and structures, rather than by the office of bishop alone. Together we confess that the church is apostolic, and that all members of the church have particular roles to play in handing on the gospel faithfully. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council reflects a renewed understanding of the office of bishop as one who presides over the faith of the local church. Through the collegial exercise of leadership with other bishops, the bishop of each diocese watches over the bond of communion with other local churches. Growth in understanding has led a number of Lutheran Churches to re-establish the practice of ordaining bishops to fulfil this role. Today Lutheran and Catholic bishops carry out similar responsibilities of oversight. Structures of decision-making and leadership are being renewed in Catholic and Lutheran communities today, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Dialogue continues in order to develop and strengthen agreement on the meaning and the role of the episcopate. Today there are many calls to draw the practical consequences from our progress through dialogue for a more generous mutual recognition of ministries.

Church

Each time they recite the Nicene Creed Lutherans and Catholics confess their shared belief that the Church of Christ is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity speaks of the growing recognition of one another's "apostolicity"—that fundamental attribute of the church which expresses our fidelity to the witness of Christ's earliest followers. Catholic teaching recognizes the enduring presence of the Church of

Christ wherever the constitutive elements of the church are found. Similarly, Luther insisted on the importance of continuing the many practices of the church which enable contemporary communities to remain in the faith of the apostles. These include “continuity in practicing baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the office of keys, the call to ministry, public gathering for worship in praise and confession of faith, and the bearing of the cross as Christ’s disciples.” In light of these parallels, the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue maintains that we are justified today in recognizing one another’s communities as possessing an apostolic character— that is to say, both communities striving to live faithfully from the teaching and practice handed on from the first witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. This partial recognition—an affirmation of the real, if imperfect communion that we share—is possible, despite the fact that we have not yet arrived at a point of full agreement on every point of doctrine. Increased mutual understanding and growth in agreement lead us to re-consider the judgments of the past as we move from conflict to deepening communion. Fifty years ago, no one could have imagined how much we would grow together in unity. This progress, a real gift of God’s Spirit at work among us, gives us confidence to move forward together along the path of reconciliation.

Session 5—Ecumenical Imperatives Today

To prepare ourselves to enter more fully into the joint commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Lutherans and Catholics have been re-reading their common history and learning how far we have come together on the path from conflict to communion. Seeking unity requires that we come to know one another more deeply, that we esteem the many gifts of the church present in one another's traditions. This has happened through the centuries wherever unnamed Christians, living side by side and led by God's Spirit, have shown good will and sought to live in friendship.

We saw how the modern ecumenical movement began to bring Christians together to work for the reconciliation between Christian churches. An important basis and impetus for these efforts is the mutual recognition of the sacramental bond of baptism that unites us to Christ and brings us into communion with one another in his ecclesial body, the church. We learned how, through the practice of dialogue, many scholars and church leaders have worked to overcome misunderstandings and doctrinal disagreements.

The practice of dialogue can also help us to build trust, mutual respect, and better knowledge of one another at the local level. Today, Lutheran and Catholic leaders and pastors gather together in ministerial associations for fellowship and mutual support. Clergy and pastoral workers come together for common study days and times of retreat. Military, hospital, and prison chaplaincy teams have become important centers for ecumenical collaboration in ministry. Couples preparing for inter-church marriage and family life come together for joint study and mutual support. Christian children from differing backgrounds encounter one another in denominational schools. Young men and women from diverse traditions prepare together for leadership in Canadian centers for theological education. In each of these contexts, Lutherans and Catholics are called to practice the habits of dialogue—that self-critical listening, always ready to esteem the gifts of God with generosity and to acknowledge the truth of one's own tradition with humility.

Building unity leads us to gather together for common prayer, asking the Spirit to heal and reconcile the wounds of division. Even when we are apart, we continue to pray for one another as brothers and sisters in the one body of Christ. We welcome every opportunity to work together in service to others, to give a common witness to the reconciling love of Christ. Today Lutherans and Catholics work side by side to care for the needs of the poor and the homeless, to sponsor and support refugees, to combat the trafficking of human persons, to work for truth and reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples, to build a more just society, and to care for the earth.

Against the background of these many efforts, we are invited to prepare ourselves intentionally to jointly commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We rejoice in our common confession of faith in Christ and repent of all that continues to keep us apart. In this anniversary year, Lutherans and Catholics are called to recommit themselves to work and pray for the unity of the church that Christ desires so that we might be more effective witnesses to his reconciling presence within a divided world.

In its reflection on our common journey *From Conflict to Communion*, the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity invites us to enter into a new era where "the awareness is dawning on Lutherans and Catholics that the struggle of the sixteenth century is over," and "the reasons for mutually condemning each other's faith have

fallen by the wayside.” In order to enter more fully into the awareness of our growing communion with one another, we are invited to embrace “five ecumenical imperatives,” five “adjustments” in our attitude or in our regard for one another. We do so mindful of our common responsibility to carry forward the mission of Christ in the world.

First, Catholics and Lutherans renew our commitment to “begin from the perspective of unity” rather than the perspective of division in our relationships with one another. Our minds and hearts have yet to be fully converted to the point where we regard each other first and foremost from the standpoint of communion. The fact that we share a common confession of faith the Holy Trinity as it is expressed in the creed, that we are bound together through the sacrament of baptism, that we are nourished by the same scriptures, and sustained by many of the same sacramental actions—these are clear indications that we share the same foundations of Christian faith. The intuition of Pope John XXIII, often repeated by his successors, that “what unites us is much greater than what divides us” has been confirmed through fifty years of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. Differences remaining on the related doctrines of ordination for ministry and the nature of the episcopate, on the role of the Bishop of Rome in service to the communion of the churches, and on the visible structuring of church unity appear in anew light given our unity in this basic core of faith in Christ and in the power of his liberating grace.

Second, Lutherans and Catholics recommit themselves to the possibility of being “continuously transformed by encounter” with one another and by the “mutual witness of faith.” Ecumenical dialogue is often described as a mutual exchange of gifts. When we enter more deeply into relationship with others, we are transformed. We often learn from their insights and receive from the wisdom and experience they have to offer us. In doing so, we are not asked to give up or to lose anything that is essential to our own identity. In fact, through encounter with others—with our brothers and sisters in Christ as in all other human relationships—we come to be more fully who we truly are. The work of Christian unity is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit in us. We are called to continual renewal as persons and as communities.

Third, Catholics and Lutherans renew their commitment “to seek visible unity.” The goal of Christian unity is not simply the status quo. Our objective is more than mere tolerance or friendly collaboration. We have progressed from regarding one another as enemies to recognizing one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. This makes us long even more deeply for the day when we might share together at the table of the Lord’s Supper, mutually recognize one another’s ministries, and find ways to discern the demands of gospel living together on matters of concern to all Christians. The time has come to consider the next concrete steps that will enable us to move to a new stage in our mutual relations.

The fourth ecumenical imperative for Lutherans and Catholics is that together we might “rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.” This means committing ourselves to taking advantage of every opportunity to gather together for common prayer, common bible study, and to discern together our call to mission in the context of Canadian society.

Finally, Catholics and Lutherans recommit to “witnessing together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.” In many places Lutherans and Catholics have reflected together on the gracious gift of God’s justifying and merciful love. A deeper understanding of God’s grace helps us to value the irreplaceable gift of each and every person created in the image of God. Knowledge of God’s gracious and unconditional love

impels us to work together against the trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable human persons. At the same time, it moves us to protect the resources of our common home, the gift of God's creation.

We hope that you will take some time today in your study group, to renew your commitment to these five ecumenical imperatives. As well, we hope that you will set aside some time to do so prayerfully in a parish-wide or city wide celebration with your Lutheran and Catholic neighbours.

God's Spirit has been at work throughout the history of the church, always calling us to renew our faithfulness. God did not let human sin and division have the last word in the drama of the sixteenth century. In the past fifty years the work of the Spirit has been made manifest in the many efforts of Lutherans and Catholics to overcome the conflict which had deeply wounded the ecclesial body of Christ. We have grown together in remarkable ways. Together we give thanks to God for the gifts of healing and for the communion that binds us together in Christ. Together we renew our openness to the grace of ongoing renewal and reform in the confidence and hope that Christ will bring to completion the work that he has begun in us.