

Response of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee to the Request of the Seventy-Seventh General Convention of The Episcopal Church

1 The seventy-seventh General Convention of The Episcopal Church—in resolution
2 A036—addressed the topic, “Further Dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in
3 America.” The resolution, as adopted, read:

4 *Resolved*, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 77th General
5 Convention give thanks for the full communion relationship between The
6 Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which
7 celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2011, and be it further

8 *Resolved*, That we give thanks for the work of the Lutheran-
9 Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC), and be it further

10 *Resolved*, That we continue to encourage the LECC to seek the
11 Holy Spirit's guidance for new mission and ministry among our churches,
12 and be it further

13 *Resolved*, That the LECC address the areas of our common life
14 where our ecclesiological practices differ, especially lay presidency and
15 our understandings of the role of deacons, and be it further

16 *Resolved*, That the LECC report to the Standing Commission on
17 Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, who will in turn report back to
18 the 78th General Convention.

19 Members of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee have
20 welcomed with joy the many situations and settings in which the commitments
21 made in “Called to Common Mission” have flourished. With leaders and
22 members of our churches, we have prayed for guidance and perseverance for the
23 fruitful exercise of the relationship of full communion between our churches.
24 Those relationships continue to deepen and expand as our awareness grows of the
25 profound implications of full communion.

26 The resolution specifically requests that the committee examine differing
27 practices regarding “lay presidency and our understandings of the role of
28 deacons.” In so doing, a study was undertaken by the coordinating committee.

29 The findings of this report come out of a situation in which both of our traditions
30 continue to participate in the liturgical renewal of our age. A central feature of this
31 renewal has been the recovery of the Christian assembly’s celebration of the Eucharist as
32 the principal liturgy of the Lord’s Day. This context of recovering an ancient norm,
33 exemplary as it is in itself, has given occasion to pastoral problems of implementation
34 that deeply relate to the practice of lay presidency among Lutherans and the exercise of
35 the diaconate in an authentic manner among Anglicans. As the ELCA and the Episcopal
36 Church continue to grow into the relationship of full communion, it will be important to
37 continue to promote mutual understanding and to invite conjoint theological and
38 ecclesiological reflection in these matters. This, then, is a major burden of the following
39 report.

40 Under “Called to Common Mission,” provision for exchangeability applies only
41 to ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament. This is a crucial principle that informs this
42 report in response to the resolution of the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal

43 Church:

44 We acknowledge that one another's ordained ministries are
45 and have been given by God to be instruments of God's grace in
46 the service of God's people, and possess not only the inward call
47 of the Spirit, but also Christ's commission through his body, the
48 church. . . . We agree that ordained ministers are called and set
49 apart for the one ministry of Word and Sacrament. . . . In order to
50 give witness to the faith we share. . . , we address that the one
51 ordained ministry will be shared between the two churches in a
52 common pattern for the sake of common mission.¹

53

54 **The Lutheran Experience**

55 Since the earliest days of Lutherans in North America, a crucial concern for
56 members and leaders has been the need to provide pastors for congregations. Initially,
57 trained and ordained pastors were immigrants from European churches. With the
58 formation of the first Lutheran synod in North America in 1748—namely, the
59 Ministerium of Pennsylvania—a system was established for the preparation, examination,
60 and ordination by the church of properly trained and approved candidates. As
61 immigrants moved westward in the new nation, gatherings of Lutherans sought pastors.
62 The pattern of training at that time was study under a pastor until synodical approval was
63 received for ordination. Evidence indicates that some candidates within a year or so of
64 their likely ordination were licensed for sacramental ministry in remote settings.

65 In 1826, the first Lutheran seminary in continuous existence in the U.S.A. was
66 established at Gettysburg, Pa. In subsequent years, additional seminaries were founded
67 for the formal training of candidates for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.
68 To this day, that is the normative pattern for the preparation of candidates for ordination
69 in the ELCA.

70 Actually, the issue of lay presidency has been a concern for Lutherans since their
71 earliest days in North America. In spite of the extreme shortage of ordained pastors
72 during various periods in history, most Lutheran groups were very cautious about the
73 authorization of lay presidency. Many Lutheran churches precluded such a practice,
74 while others did so with reluctance and caution. When done, such was seen as something
75 that might be allowed only in extraordinary circumstance and then with restricted
76 conditions.

77 A part of the reason for moderate pressure in the nineteenth and much of the
78 twentieth centuries for lay presidency at the Eucharist was this: Holy Communion in
79 early U.S. Lutheran churches was observed only quarterly and then gradually monthly.
80 That pattern of quarterly or only monthly communion in Lutheran congregations changed
81 dramatically in the past forty years. Weekly Eucharist became the common and preferred
82 practice with the introduction of *Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978 and *Evangelical*
83 *Lutheran Worship* in 2006.

84 In the predecessor church bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
85 only the bishop could authorize such an exception for lay presidency, in keeping with the
86 communion practices policy formalized in 1978. Within the history of the ELCA, bylaw

¹ *Called to Common Mission*, paragraphs 7 and 8.

87 7.61.01. was adopted in 1993, following a five-year study of ministry. That bylaw
88 stipulated:

89 When need exists to render Word and Sacrament ministry for a
90 congregation or ministry of this church where it is not possible to provide
91 appropriate ordained pastoral leadership, the synodical bishop—acting
92 with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the
93 Synod Council, and in accord with the standards and qualifications
94 developed by the Division for Ministry, reviewed by the Conference of
95 Bishops, and approved by the Church Council—may authorize a person
96 rostered in other rostered ministry², or a non-rostered person who is a
97 member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
98 to offer this ministry. Such an individual shall be supervised by a pastor
99 appointed by the synodical bishop; such service shall be rendered during
100 its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod’s
101 pastor. Such an individual will be trained and licensed to fulfill this
102 ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only.
103 Authorization, remuneration, direct supervision, and accountability are to
104 be determined by the appropriate synodical leadership according to
105 churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry.
106 Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed
107 only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation.³

108 This ELCA bylaw was in place at the time of the 1997 consideration of the
109 proposed *Concordat of Agreement* and also the subsequent adoption of *Called to*
110 *Common Mission* by the ELCA in 1999 and The Episcopal Church in 2000.

111 Key stipulations in the bylaw limit any ELCA bishop in regard to lay presidency
112 at the table. Those stipulations include: (1) explicit need “where is it not possible to
113 provide appropriate ordained pastoral leadership”; (2) authorization only by the synodical
114 bishop; (3) bishop must follow churchwide standards and qualification; (4) supervision
115 by “a pastor appointed by the synodical bishop”; (5) service rendered “under the
116 sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod’s pastor”; (6) individual trained and
117 licensed “for a specified period of time and in a given location only”; and (7) annual
118 review with the possibility of renewal “only when a demonstrated need” is deemed to
119 exist for continuation.⁴

120 The 1997 ELCA policy document, *The Use of the Means of Grace*, also addresses
121 this issue.⁵ Paragraph 40 of that document reads: “In witness that this sacrament is a
122 celebration of the Church, serving its unity, an ordained minister presides in the service
123 of Holy Communion and proclaims the Great Thanksgiving.” That paragraph continues:
124 “Where is it not possible for an extended period of time to provide ordained pastoral
125 leadership, a synodical bishop may authorize a properly trained lay person to preside for

² This refers to diaconal ministers, associates in ministry, or deaconesses of the ELCA.

³ Bylaw 7.61.01., *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This policy document—*The Use of the Means of Grace, A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*—was adopted by the Fifth Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on August 19, 1997.

126 a specified period of time and in a given location only.” In addition to echoing the
127 language of bylaw 7.61.01., as cited above, this policy document specifies that such lay
128 presidency may be authorized only if ordained pastoral leadership at the table is not
129 possible in a given setting “for an extended period of time” [emphasis added]. This
130 document, too, was the policy of the ELCA prior to the adoption by the ELCA in 1999 of
131 *Called to Common Mission* and the subsequent approval by the Episcopal Church in 2000
132 of that agreement for full communion.

133 By later action of the ELCA’s churchwide ministry unit, acting in consultation
134 with the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the Church Council, further restrictions were
135 added to the possibility of such lay presidency, including that each such instance should
136 involve study in preparation for ordination.

137 Unlike some churches, including The Episcopal Church, Lutherans have no
138 provision for reservation of the sacrament from one Sunday to the next. The possibility
139 of carrying the sacrament from the table to sick and shut-in does exist, however, as
140 provided in rubrics related to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.⁶ Many parishes do follow
141 this pattern for those absent from the gathered community on the day of the Eucharist
142 meal.

143 Have the bylaws and policy statements on the issue of lay presidency been
144 followed scrupulously by all ELCA bishops over the years? The Lutheran-Episcopal
145 Coordinating Committee gained the impression from some reports that the answer to that
146 question is no. At the same time, the members of the committee do find through reports
147 of informed consultants that most ELCA bishops are mindful of their church’s history
148 and restrictive policy on any instance of lay presidency. They also are aware and
149 concerned over the ecumenical implications of the issue.

150

151 **The Episcopal Experience**

152 It falls upon every Episcopal bishop in their ordination vows to promise to
153 “provide for the sacraments of the New Covenant.” In turn only those ordained priest or
154 bishop are authorized to preside at the Eucharist. No provision is made for lay
155 presidency. Where the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the rubrics in the *Book of*
156 *Common Prayer* indicate “the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to distribute
157 Holy Communion to the congregation from the reserved Sacrament.” It is understood
158 that deacons are singled out because of their ordained status which is of significance in
159 that this is another area where Lutherans and Episcopalians differ. In this one instance of
160 ecclesiastical need – namely the provision of the sacrament of the Eucharist for the
161 people of God in The Episcopal Church – this is the only suggestion offered. A difference
162 of opinion, however, does exist within The Episcopal Church as to whether this is a
163 suitable role for the deacon. More will be said later about the changing or developing

⁶ "Sending of Holy Communion," *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care: Occasional Services, Readings, and Prayers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 81-92. As noted, "This order extends the assembly's service of Holy Communion by sending ministers from the assembly, bearing the gifts of God's word and sacramental meal to those who are unable to be present in public worship. This ministry offers these people (such as those who are sick, homebound, or imprisoned) a means of participating in the worship of the whole assembly, and it helps those who have gathered publicly to recognize their oneness with sisters and brothers who are absent."

164 role of the deacon within the Church that has caused this rubric to be ignored by a
165 number of bishops and by a majority of deacons.

166 Except for a resolution to the 1994 General Convention from the Diocese of
167 Maine asking for permission to practice lay presidency at the Eucharist for a three-year
168 period, no substantial movement for lay presidency in The Episcopal Church has
169 occurred. The Maine resolution was defeated, and before A036 in 2012 there has not
170 been any further attempt at debating this topic.

171 Such interest has been expressed within the Anglican Communion particularly in
172 India, the Province of the Southern Cone and in Sydney, Australia. In India, after an
173 initial effort by Bishop Azariah of Dornakal to call for lay presidency at the Eucharist, the
174 Church of South India in its early formation did allow such a practice. This was seen as a
175 carryover of the experience of members of the newly formed ecumenical body, such as
176 Methodist lay preachers. It was assumed that the practice would become redundant with
177 time as local ordinations became more frequent.

178 In Kenya in 1985, deacons were permitted to preside at the Eucharist. The
179 diaconate was a transitional phase as ordinands move towards becoming priests, and did
180 not embrace the diaconate as a complete and distinct order but as a probationary period
181 for the priesthood. It was an anticipation of their ultimate call to the priesthood similar to
182 the practice cited above within the ELCA. In 1986 the Province of the Southern Cone in
183 Latin America sought ways to respond to the vast distances between mission outposts and
184 parishes and the paucity of available priests. It did not seem appropriate to locally ordain
185 as the congregations were mostly constituted with recent converts. Leadership
186 development would take time. Lay presidency was viewed as a reluctantly considered
187 approach to new and challenging pastoral situations, and as a temporary measure for
188 church order to catch up with its mission.

189 Since 1970 the Diocese of Sydney has shown interest in the practice of lay
190 presidency and attempted to endorse it as a diocese within their canonical structure in
191 1985. Further developments led to the 1999 passing by the diocese of authorization for
192 diaconal and lay presidency at communion, but the Archbishop of Sydney at the time,
193 Harry Goodhew, withheld his assent because of its impact upon the Australian Church
194 and the wider Anglican Communion. In 2004, under a new Archbishop, Peter Jensen, the
195 Diocesan Standing Committee decided to avoid the canonical route, and proposed that
196 the synod agree not to discipline anyone who practiced lay presidency. By 2008, the
197 diocese was ready to affirm diaconal and lay presidency as a norm within their common
198 life. Sydney is a highly controversial diocese within the Anglican Communion for several
199 reasons, and its independent stance on lay presidency is seen more as an action of
200 Episcopal control than that of enhancing the standing of the laity. Their action is seen as
201 an aberration to the norm within Anglicanism.⁷

202 The Church of England has looked at the issue on several occasions, most notably
203 in 1983 in its report “Strategy for the Church’s Ministry” and in the House of Bishops
204 report “Eucharistic Presidency,” known as the Ely Report of 1997. Other conversations
205 have been held at Lambeth 1988, and within the Anglican Consultative Councils of 1984
206 and 1987. This period of time from the early 1980s to the latter part of the 1990s seems to
207 be the time frame at which the Anglican Church came to a consensus that rejected the

⁷ Nicholas Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist* (New York: Mowbray, 2009), 186-196.

208 idea of lay presidency in favor of permitting local ordinations of priests even with an
209 easing of the normal educational criteria of ordination.

210 The debate at an informal level, however, has not ended. This is not only because
211 The Episcopal Church faces the same issue of increased Eucharistic practice within
212 geographical areas where there is an inadequate supply of priests, but also because of two
213 other current interests. The first is this: Lay leadership within The Episcopal Church has
214 been encouraged through the emphasis since the 1979 Prayer Book on baptism as our
215 central place of calling into ministry. The ministry of all the baptized has become a
216 profound influence on our understanding of ministry, and how we work together as the
217 One Body of Christ within our denominational framework.

218 Nevertheless, it would be true to say that for some the ministry of all the baptized
219 has begun to generate interest in asking questions that would previously not be
220 considered regarding occasions when laity might preside at the Eucharist. In some
221 dioceses, rather than following the rubric in the *Book of Common Prayer* of seeking a
222 deacon's services, the Bishop has used the licensing system for lay Eucharistic Ministers
223 or Worship leaders as a way of permitting lay leadership in the distribution of the bread
224 and wine from the reserved Sacrament. In the Anglican Communion this is called
225 "extended communion," and raises more problematic questions than the single issue it
226 seeks to answer. Deacons, if present in such a congregation, perform their usual liturgical
227 duties but do not officiate or preside. It could be argued that this arrangement preserves
228 the order that a bishop is required to maintain. It is seen as a temporary practice, and not
229 the norm. It assumes that the Worship leaders are acknowledged by the congregation as
230 such in terms of the customary administrating of the church. Some see in this practice,
231 however, an overly magical belief both in terms of the power of the priest and in the
232 reserved sacraments.

233 The second current interest is in the development of alternative styles of faith
234 communities, particularly those that grow in plain environments and with a large
235 evangelistic emphasis on gathering people with little or no experience of the church. In
236 England this is called fresh expressions, or the emergent church in the United States.
237 Both Lutherans and Episcopalians are looking to this way of being church for gathering
238 the present generation of new converts.

239 An important aspect of the argument for an ordained priest to be the presider is
240 that the priest through ordination by the bishop represents the connectedness of the local
241 church with the wider church. By the time individuals are ordained as priests, they have
242 been nominated locally but formed and evaluated and vetted through the diocesan and
243 church-wide process. They represent, therefore, more than the local community, just as
244 the Eucharist is always more than a local sacred meal. "Authorization of lay presidency
245 would constitute a fundamental redefinition of Christian priesthood as well as alter the
246 character and orientation of lay ministry" is the conclusion of one significant study.⁸

247

248 **Diaconal Service**

249 Asymmetry exists between The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran
250 Church in America in the area of diaconal service. For example, the rite of entry for
251 deacons of The Episcopal Church is ordination, while the rite of entry for ELCA diaconal

⁸ Taylor, *Lay Presidency...*, 266.

252 ministers is consecration. True, *Called to Common Mission* does indicate, “Some of the
253 functions of ordained deacons in The Episcopal Church and consecrated diaconal
254 ministers and deaconesses in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can be shared
255 insofar as they are called to be agents of the church in meeting needs, hopes, and
256 concerns within church and society (*paragraph 8*). Exchangeability, however, does not
257 apply to this category of ministry in our churches.

258 The ELCA rejected a proposal to ordain diaconal ministries and adopted at the
259 1993 Churchwide Assembly the creation of that lay category within the ELCA’s rostered
260 ministries. Such diaconal ministers in the ELCA are “called. . .to a public ministry that
261 exemplifies the servant life, equips and motivates others to live, and shares the Word of
262 God in Law and Gospel through word and deed wherever possible and in a great variety
263 of ways, in order to serve officially in interdependence with other laity, pastors, and
264 bishops. . . .”⁹

265 Bylaw 7.52.11. of the ELCA outlines the process for preparation for that church’s
266 lay rosters, as follows:

267 Associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers shall be
268 governed by the following standards, policies, and procedures:

269 **a. Basic Standards.** Persons approved and continued as associates in
270 ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers of this church shall
271 satisfactorily meet and maintain the following, as defined by this church in
272 its governing documents and in policies developed by the appropriate
273 churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by
274 the Church Council:

- 275 1) commitment to Christ;
- 276 2) acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church;
- 277 3) willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church;
- 278 4) academic and practical qualifications for the position, including
- 279 leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships;
- 280 5) commitment to lead a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in so
- 281 doing to be an example in faithful service and holy living;
- 282 6) receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and
- 283 7) membership in a congregation of this church. . . .

284 **d. Preparation and Approval of a Diaconal Minister.** A candidate for
285 approval and consecration as a diaconal minister of this church shall have:

- 286 1) membership in a congregation of this church and registration by its
- 287 pastor and council of the candidate with the appropriate synodical
- 288 candidacy committee;
- 289 2) been granted entrance to candidacy by and under the guidance and
- 290 supervision of the synodical candidacy committee for at least a year before
- 291 being approved by the synodical candidacy committee for call;
- 292 3) demonstrated competence in at least one area of specialization or
- 293 expertise according to guidelines established by the appropriate
- 294 churchwide unit;

⁹ *Minutes of the 1993 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, 270.

- 295 4) completed a first theological degree from an accredited theological
296 school in North America;
297 5) completed approved work in Lutheran studies as defined by the
298 appropriate churchwide unit;
299 6) completed the required formation component in the preparation
300 program for Lutheran diaconal ministry as defined by the appropriate
301 churchwide unit;
302 7) completed an approved internship or practical preparation as defined
303 by the appropriate churchwide unit;
304 8) been examined and approved by the appropriate synodical candidacy
305 committee according to criteria, policies, and procedures recommended by
306 the appropriate churchwide unit after consultation with the Conference of
307 Bishops, and adoption by the Church Council;
308 9) been recommended for call by the bishop of the synod to which the
309 candidate has been assigned in accordance with procedures recommended
310 by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of
311 Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council;
312 10) received and accepted a properly issued and attested letter of call.¹⁰

313 Within the ELCA, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers are
314 lay members of the church who have been identified and trained for particular
315 responsibilities on behalf of the church. They are called to those roles by the church and
316 are under the discipline of the church for the fulfillment of their responsibilities, be their
317 service in parish settings or social service, educational, or other settings. They are not
318 seen, however, as a separate order of ministry.

319 A study is under way in the ELCA on its three lay rosters. Led by what is known
320 as the Word and Service Task Force, a progress report was presented to the November
321 2012 and 2013 meetings of the ELCA Church Council. The council affirmed “the
322 preliminary conclusion of the Word and Service Task Force that this church should move
323 toward the creation of a single, unified lay roster of Word and Service ministry.” Further,
324 the task force was directed to outline “how the existing lay rosters [of associates in
325 ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers] would be closed” as well as how those on
326 the existing three lay rosters might “transition” into a new roster. A draft proposal is to be
327 submitted to the ELCA Conference of Bishops and Church Council in the spring of 2015
328 in order to prepare possible recommendations for actions by the August 2016 ELCA
329 Churchwide Assembly.

330 At points along the way, consultation regarding diaconal ministry in the ELCA
331 has taken place with appropriate representatives of The Episcopal Church, as envisioned
332 in paragraph 9 and elsewhere in *Called to Common Mission*. The conclusions of the
333 ELCA study will not be known until 2015 and a vote on any recommendations must
334 await action by the August 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

335 Within The Episcopal Church, the experience of the order of deacons is organic.
336 The understanding of the order’s significance as a complete and distinct order has been
337 evolving since its rediscovery. Deacons in general understand their roles as ministering
338 beyond the church walls, linking community and altar by their presence and by the

¹⁰ Bylaw 7.52.11., *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

339 distinctive nature of their liturgical roles and public engagement. Contemporary views of
340 the diaconate see the deacon as one whose primary ministry is to call the congregation
341 into their active service within society both by word and example. The liturgical roles
342 assigned specifically to a deacon indicate this: the proclamation of the Gospel as one
343 identified with those beyond the Church or for whom the Church is intended as the means
344 of salvation in Jesus Christ; the call to confession and the coordinating of the prayers of
345 the people as one who interprets the needs of the world to the Church; the receiving and
346 preparing of the gifts of the people for the Eucharistic table; and above all regarding their
347 role at the administering of communion, the attending to the needs of the celebrant and
348 Eucharistic servers as a servant throughout the liturgy; and the sending out of the people
349 of God to their places of ministry in the world.

350 Title III of the Canons of The Episcopal Church specify the requirements for
351 preparation for deacons and their assignment processes. Those seeking to become
352 deacons in The Episcopal Church must show competence in five general areas, including
353 (1) academic studies of Scripture, theology, and the tradition of the church, (2) diakonia
354 and the diaconate; (3) human awareness and understanding; (4) spiritual development and
355 discipline; and (5) practical training and experience. The bishop, in consultation with the
356 Commission on Ministry of the diocese, determines the length of time and extent of the
357 formation need to prepare each candidate for ordination as a deacon.¹¹

358 Deacons have been growing away from being used as curates, or priest substitutes
359 when a priest cannot be found, and as mentioned above, bishops are less inclined to use
360 the opportunity of “at discretion” to ask deacons to serve in such capacities where
361 congregations do not have a priest on a given Sunday. As mentioned, it is practice in
362 some diocese to arrange for Licensed Eucharistic ministers to lead distribution of the
363 reserved sacrament even with a deacon available. Deacons fulfill their liturgical duties
364 but continue to attend rather than preside at the administration of the Eucharist.

365 As the sense of the Diaconate as this complete and distinct order intensifies, the
366 role of laity properly licensed in being used for the sacramental provision of the people
367 may also increase, where priests, and one would have to say Lutheran pastors, are not in
368 good supply. The differences between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church regarding
369 lay presidency and the Diaconate as an ordained order are probably not going to be
370 reconciled any time soon. Placing them, however, within the context of the need to
371 provide for the spiritual nourishment of God’s people through the bread and the wine,
372 there is a possibility that both parties can learn from one another.

373 Is it possible that the witness of the Episcopal experience with the Diaconate as a
374 complete and distinct ordained order could draw the attention of the ELCA members to
375 see an aspect of ordination that is to be desired within their common life? Is it possible
376 that the use of laity in positions of sacramental need within the Lutheran experience could
377 assist the Episcopalians to embrace an expansion of their concept of ministry of all the
378 baptized? It is noteworthy that the Lutheran Church expects those called to diaconal
379 ministries to hold a degree in theology. That is not the case for Episcopal deacons. This
380 also raises the issue of educational and formational expectations for those who minister
381 the Word as licensed preachers. It could be suggested that Lutherans might feel as
382 shocked by the inadequacy of requirements for Episcopal licenses to preach as

¹¹ See Title III, Canon 6, Section 3, of the Canons of The Episcopal Church.

383 Episcopalians are expressing about Lutheran practices of lay presidency. It is also noted
384 that the Episcopal experience has no place for allowing those who are in formation to
385 become priests to carry out the functions of an ordained person prior to actual ordination.

386 The issues before us have been raised because they are seen as signs of the
387 incompleteness of the *Called to Common Mission*. We live with incompleteness in so
388 many aspects of our life as Christian people. Can we not live with our differences,
389 especially if the consequence is to threaten a way of common life in ministry that has
390 begun to reap so many advantages for the Gospel? Clarity, however, about why these
391 differences disturb us is important. This response aims to provide some of that. We also
392 acknowledge that Episcopalians from time to time will walk into Lutheran congregations
393 and find anomalies, and visa versa.

394 The question is how do we want to respond? Full Communion is not about
395 creating each other in our own image; but in teasing out over time through the enabling of
396 the Holy Spirit those things which can make us all stronger in our sense and capacity for
397 common mission. It is along these lines that we will find the best approach and growth.
398 In particular we should consider the significance of the lay order as a ministering order of
399 the Church alongside bishop, presbyter and deacon. Does lay ministry come from
400 baptismal identity or is ministry for clergy and laity alike something we must grow into
401 through maturing confession and commitment? And what are the implications of the new
402 mission movement with its roots in a post-modern and possibly de-ritualizing culture?

403 Each of our churches has been richly blessed through well over a decade of full
404 communion relationship. We have been called to common mission to plant the church
405 together and to cooperate in parish clergy exchanges and in campus ministries. Joint
406 parishes in many places throughout the U.S. are providing new forms of ministry. We
407 have shared disaster relief in times of crisis in the Gulf Coast and in Iowa. Collaborative
408 work has led to joint chaplain retreats and coordinated ministries in our military
409 chaplaincies. Together, we have more effectively fed the hungry, housed the homeless,
410 advocated for immigration rights, assisted refugees, and prayed for persons affected by
411 AIDS. Members throughout the ELCA and Episcopalians have “drawn more closely
412 together in the service of the gospel”¹² through our full communion agreement. Our
413 churches are able to incarnate mission and ministry together in powerful and creative
414 ways that serve the needs of the church and bring the gospel to the world, and for that, we
415 give thanks to God.

¹² Presiding bishops of the Anglican Church in Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Episcopal Church, Joint Pastoral Letter: “A Word to the
Churches,” June 27, 2013: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/sites/default/files/a_word_to_the_churches.pdf.