

Resolution 07.07

Regarding the Suspension of the *Formula of Agreement and Called to Common Mission*

WHEREAS the ELCA's first and necessary condition for a full communion relationship is "a common confessing of the Christian faith" (*A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, 1991); and

WHEREAS the statements and actions of prominent leaders of the Episcopal Church USA, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church USA are moving their denominations further away from "a common confessing of the Christian faith" with churches within their own traditions and with most other Christian churches in the world, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches (*see references on back of this page*); and

WHEREAS we as ELCA members fervently desire to work with all believers in Jesus Christ in other denominations to make common confession of the Christian faith, to proclaim the Gospel in our communities and to the world, and to serve all our neighbors in need;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod memorialize the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to suspend the *Formula of Agreement*, a full communion agreement with the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Church of Christ (as well as the Reformed Church in America¹) and *Called to Common Mission*, a full communion agreement with the Episcopal Church USA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Minnesota Synod continue to support congregations and synods who have established local partnerships with congregations of those denominations in which there is "a common confessing of the Christian faith" and a shared mission in faithfulness to the Gospel; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly call for a resumption of formal ecumenical dialogues with the Episcopal Church USA, the United Church of Christ, and the Presbyterian Church USA to determine if, in fact, there exists "a common confessing of the Christian faith."

Submitted by Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, Minnesota

¹ *This full communion partner's leaders have not questioned the faith of the Church.*

References:

1. Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, when asked by Time magazine in July 2006, “Is belief in Jesus the only way to get to heaven?” responded: “We who practice the Christian tradition understand him as our vehicle to the divine. But for us to assume that God could not act in other ways is, I think, to put God in an awfully small box.” In January 2007, Schori told the Arkansas-Democrat Gazette about her beliefs concerning John 14:6:
[I]n its narrow construction, it tends to eliminate other possibilities. In its broader construction, yes, human beings come to relationship with God largely through their experience of holiness in other human beings. Through seeing God at work in other people’s lives. In that sense, yes, I will affirm that state-ment. But not in the narrow sense, that people can only come to relationship with God through consciously believing in Jesus.
2. The Presbyterian Church USA’s 2006 General Assembly approved a document, “The Trinity: God’s Love Overflowing”, that commends the study and use of a multitude of images for the Triune God, including “Compassionate Mother, Beloved Child and Life-giving Womb.” The document only specifies the use of the revealed name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in the baptismal formula. Otherwise Presbyterians are encouraged to explore other options.