

Guidelines for Collaborative Congregational Ministries for Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada

**Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission
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Introduction

In July, 2001, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada signed the Waterloo Declaration establishing a relationship of full communion between them. These guidelines have been prepared by the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission of Canada to assist those who are seeking opportunities for organic collaboration between Anglican and Lutheran congregations.

Initial Stage – Discernment

On its own initiative, or at the invitation of the bishop, a congregation undertakes a visioning process for its future directions in ministry. As part of this process it examines the areas of collaboration with other congregations which already exist and the potential for mission together with other partners.

Second Stage – Invitation

An individual congregation or parish, or the respective judicatories and bishops, invites two or more congregations to enter into an intentional relationship. As part of this process they explore new directions in ministry together, including the possibility of entering into a collaborative ministry relationship.

- This process may include
 - bible study and theological reflection
 - sharing stories about each congregation's history and present ministry status
 - sharing ideas of, and possibilities for, co-operation
 - joint worship and the development of common programs and projects

Third Stage - Exploration

- A congregation wishing to explore the possibility of sharing ministry more fully would contact their respective bishop requesting that the partner bishop be contacted to see if there is a willingness to proceed further in the process. At an initial meeting, the congregations share with each other and with their bishops a

summary of their history and their present ministry status and some ideas for cooperation. In the days following this initial meeting, each bishop will consult with their respective congregational leaders to determine whether there is a willingness to proceed further in the process. If all parties are agreeable, the bishops will formally appoint members to serve on a Task Force comprised of strong lay leadership and appropriate representatives of the respective judicatories.

- ❑ Task Force meets with each congregation and together:
 - to educate congregations about models for shared ministry
 - to explore those models that might suit their situation and realize their vision
 - to encourage the congregations to enter into concrete commitments to work in ministry together for a specific limited time
- ❑ Task Force reports regularly to each Congregational Council and Bishop
Towards the end of the specified time, the Task Force undertakes an evaluation and invites the congregation to make a decision about exploring a further step.

Fourth Stage – Developing a Concrete Proposal

- ❑ Practical matters need to be considered as appropriate; e.g.
 - personnel e.g. determining personnel needs
 - audit of human resources, including secretaries, custodial staff, volunteer skills and resources (e.g. Sunday school teachers, choirs, outreach ministry)
 - finances, including ministry and operating costs, debts (e.g. allotment arrears, loan payments), assets (e.g. trust funds, investments, endowments, memorials, designated gifts)
 - evaluation of buildings (churches, rectories, halls), land, furnishings
 - how to communicate well with all those involved in the potential changes. Facts need to be communicated clearly and frequently to combat rumour.
 - designation of offerings
 - parish governance structures
 - participation in diocesan and synod structures
 - liturgical schedules and primary worship resources
- ❑ Development of proposals by Task Force.

Some possible outcomes include:

1. Continue on “trial basis” (i.e. remain at stage two)
2. Share ministry; retain buildings

- existing individual councils continue with joint collaborative ministry council
 - shared costs of ministry, administration (e.g. secretary, office) and programming (e.g. Lenten resources, Christian Education materials)
 - establish new ministry team
3. Share ministry; close one or more buildings
- buildings deconsecrated and disposed of
 - establish new ministry team
4. Move directly to formal amalgamation
- legal decisions for new parish
 - one new corporation
 - new name
 - one new council
 - all assets and liabilities go into one
 - establish new ministry team

Fifth Stage – Decision-Making

- Consideration of specific proposals by Congregations and their Councils with feedback to Task Force about preferred option.
- Task Force brings results of meetings back to Bishops for review and development of a specific proposal.
- Special congregational meetings are convened to occur on the same day in each congregation to present the proposal and request approval.

Sixth Stage - Implementation

- Implementation may involve the following aspects:

Liturgical

- Service of celebration and commitment for the new witness of these congregations
- learning of new liturgies
- recommitment of people in renewal of baptismal vows
- deconsecration and closure liturgies (where necessary), giving thanks for the congregations' historic witness

Pastoral

- care for parishioners in transition
- care for personnel whose positions are affected
- develop ways of honouring and symbolizing the past, e.g. a “memory book”, furnishings that signify who we were
 - ↳ who/what we were; process we used; who we are now; signs of new life
 - ↳ this was our struggle; what we decided to let go; what we decided to keep
 - ↳ this is our vision and how we have been moving together toward it
- Help parishes involved to develop strategies for welcoming people if their buildings are closing.

Educational

- teaching with regard to history and theology of the partner tradition
- teaching with regard to governance practices of the partner tradition

Administration

- envelopes – what is the effect on giving during the process; after a decision?
- changes to charitable registrations
- new accounting procedures
- parish registers: archiving old, starting new
- parish lists
 - disposition of assets, buildings, property
 - administration of cemeteries
- diocesan allotment/synodical benevolence offering negotiation
- request for deconsecration of church building requires a specific resolution from parish council. Sale of property requires the consent of the diocesan bishop and/or synod.

Legal

- changes to the Constitution and Church Act with respect to separation/amalgamation/name change (to be approved by Diocesan/Synod Councils)
 - transfer of deeds
 - involvement of Diocesan/Synod Solicitor through the offices of the Bishops
 - financial commitments
 - new parish seal
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- Appointment of new Clergy and new Parish Council.
 - Celebration of New Ministry arranged through the respective Bishops’ offices (if not included above)

Seventh Stage - Evaluation

- ❑ Time for scheduled review is set at the time the new collaborative ministry arrangement is put in place.
- ❑ Matters to be addressed at the Review:
 - in your experience to date, what can you . . .
 - ↳ applaud?
 - ↳ affirm?
 - ↳ celebrate?
 - in your experience to date . . .
 - ↳ what gives you cause for concern?
 - suggestions for strengthening new ministry configuration
 - suggestions/advice for other congregations considering this process