

Signatory Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) regarding the Porvoo Declaration

With this letter the Council on International Relations of the ELCD becomes a signatory to the Porvoo Declaration. This statement, drawn up in collaboration with the bishops of the ELCD, means that the ELCD participates on equal footing with the other churches in the Porvoo Communion.

Close links have always existed between the ELCD and the Anglican churches. Since 1956 there has been a Eucharist fellowship between our churches, and representatives of the ELCD shared in the drawing up of the Porvoo Common Statement of 1993 of which the Porvoo Declaration forms a part. The ELCD is mentioned in the Porvoo Declaration, which means that the signatory churches recognise the ELCD with its existing church organisation.

Following consultations in the Danish parish councils the bishops of the ELCD issued a statement in August 1995 to the effect that they were unable to sign the Porvoo Declaration on behalf of the church. However, the bishops emphasized that there are no differences that divide the ELCD from the other signatory churches, and that the ELCD recognizes without reservation ministers ordained in the Anglican churches, just as bishops from the Anglican churches can take part without reservation in consecrations of bishops in the ELCD.

Since 1995 the ELCD has therefore officially recognized the other signatory churches as belonging to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in which the Word of God is authentically preached and the Sacraments duly administered. The ELCD thus recognizes the ordained ministries of the other churches as true apostolic ministries, as expressed in the Porvoo Declaration. Similarly, the ELCD understands itself as being in the same apostolic tradition.

The ELCD was pleased to recognize the Anglican churches in 1995, however the ELCD was unable to sign the Porvoo Declaration because of a number of reservations at the time about the way the Porvoo Communion was expected to develop. There was concern in the church at the lack of recognition of women bishops, as well as concern as to whether the churches could maintain their individual character and independence within the Porvoo Communion.

Today we note that the Porvoo Communion has not developed as some might have feared in 1995. We note a general move towards the recognition of full admission for men and women to the ordained ministry. In some churches this has already been implemented, while others have initiated a process towards full equality between men and women. Moreover, we can see today that the Porvoo Communion is a blessing and a benefit for the signatory churches and we can also see the benefit to the ELCD of having participated in the mutual exchange of experience that has taken place while the ELCD has been an observer. On this basis the ELCD now expresses its wish to participate fully in the Porvoo Communion and to assume the commitments that ensue with the signing of the Porvoo Declaration.

With this letter we wish to clarify specific areas of concerns with regard to our participation in the Porvoo Communion. We hereby hope that the other signatory churches will take note of our views as presented below.

1. The ELCD recognizes the admission on an equal basis of men and women to both the priesthood and the episcopate. In consequence of this, no distinction is made between priests ordained by a male or female bishop.
2. Within the understanding of the ELCD there is only one ministry of the church (*ministerium ecclesiasticum*), to which both the priesthood and the episcopate belong. The episcopate is understood in a Lutheran context as a distinct form of the one pastoral office (cf. "The Lund Statement" art. 45, the Lutheran World Federation, 2007). However, bishops in the ELCD have a number of duties that are specifically assigned to them as bishops, namely, the oversight of the church and the ordination of priests. Bishops in the ELCD are installed at a specific service of consecration which includes the laying on of hands by the presiding bishop and other attending bishops. In special circumstances the bishop's duties may be transferred to the dean of the cathedral for a brief, limited period in the absence of the bishop, in that by virtue of his office and existing church law the dean is dean of the whole diocese and as such the bishop's deputy. By tradition in the ELCD this practice may also include the dean's authority to ordain priests. During consultations with representatives of the Anglican churches it has been emphasised that ELCD clergy are fully recognised as ministers, whether they are ordained by a male or a female bishop or by a dean as the bishop's deputy. In some churches, however, certain legal limitations may apply to appointments due to the law of the land (cf. Porvoo Declaration 58 b v), even though the minister's ordination is recognised. Such questions will be discussed and attempts made to solve them under the terms of the Porvoo Declaration 58 b viii and ix.
3. After signing the Porvoo Declaration the ELCD remains an independent church with full jurisdiction over its own affairs. However, participation in the Porvoo Communion means that we will consult with the other signatory churches in order to exchange ideas and information in theological and pastoral matters.
4. The ELCD has close and good relations with other Protestant churches in Europe and the rest of the world. Signing the Porvoo Declaration does not affect the efforts of the ELCD to establish and develop contact to other churches; this includes being an active, full member of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe – Leuenberg Church Fellowship. However, it is our hope that signing the Porvoo Declaration will also enrich our contacts to other churches and church communions.