

13. May 2001

Signatory Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) regarding the *Leuenberg Agreement*

The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark is pleased to be able now to express the readiness of the ELCD to become a full member of the Leuenberg Fellowship. We on our part regard this letter as a signing of the Agreement. With this letter we express our positive evaluation of the Agreement and emphasize our wish to join the fellowship on equal terms with the other churches that have joined the Leuenberg Fellowship.

Since the beginning of the Leuenberg doctrinal dialogue the ELCD has participated in the dialogue and been engaged in the theological investigations which have been part of the Fellowship. This has been an enrichment also to our church. The dialogue has made us realize that the churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship and our church have grown into a closer fellowship and a greater mutual understanding also since the signing of the *Leuenberg Agreement*. We have had the privilege of being “fully participating church” since the adoption and have, during the period, confirmed that we would like to continue this participation, which has functioned in relation to the Leuenberg Church Fellowship like for a church that had signed the Agreement. With our signature we confirm our praxis and intention up till now; at the same time it is a manifestation of our wish to participate as full members in the work for continued mutual understanding and closer fellowship between our churches.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark is involved in many relationships with other churches. Through the Lutheran World Federation we are in full church fellowship with the other Nordic folk churches and with all the other Lutheran member churches. The ELCD is a member of the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches and the Nordic Ecumenical Council with the fellowship and obligations involved. Moreover we have a long range of close but not formalized relationships with other churches, not least with protestant churches in Germany and the Anglican/Episcopal churches in Great Britain, but also with churches of other confessions and in other regions, e.g. the Middle East and Southern Africa. Also relationships with other churches in Denmark are an obligation to our church. Consequently, we look upon our participation in the Leuenberg Church Fellowship as a participation in the ecumenical fellowship such as it develops in both close and more distant relations.

With this letter we wish to express what we understand as our obligation as a member church of the Leuenberg Fellowship:

1. We recognize with gratitude that the doctrinal disagreements between our churches have been sufficiently clarified through the *Leuenberg Agreement*. By signing the *Agreement*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark officially confirms this recognition.
2. Our Lutheran understanding of the gospel and the sacraments is compatible with the formulations of the *Leuenberg Agreement*. In this way, we put behind us the doctrinal disagreements that our churches have considered to be church dividing. On the basis of our

agreement regarding the understanding of the Gospel we commit ourselves, through the *Agreement*, to offer altar and pulpit fellowship to the signatory churches (LA § 33), just as we recognize ordination by the other signatory churches. This obligation rests on the conviction, expressed in the Leuenberg Agreement, and which we share, that the churches of the Fellowship “share together in the one Church of Jesus Christ and that the Lord frees them and commits them to common service” (LA § 34).

3. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark stresses the importance of the doctrinal dialogues that have been conducted between the signatory churches since 1973. The deepening of ecclesiastical and sacramental understanding is an important factor in our positive assessment of the *Leuenberg Agreement* and our joining the Leuenberg Church Fellowship. We wish to underline the need for further theological discussions. In line with the other churches of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship, we cannot accept altar and pulpit fellowship with churches practising re-baptism.
4. In the *Leuenberg Agreement* the crux for the church fellowship is the common understanding of the gospel. This means that there is room for variations, e.g. within the ministry of oversight. The ministry of oversight is a necessary function in all churches, but the structuring of pastoral oversight may vary. In the ELCD the ministry of oversight is exercised by the bishops.
5. In signing the *Leuenberg Agreement* we acknowledge our close relations to the Leuenberg signatory churches. Our signature does not imply that we look at the development within the Leuenberg Church Fellowship uncritically. Signing the *Leuenberg Agreement* does not mean that we support a development of a Protestant synodical structure in Europe. Co-operation with the signatory churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship must not hinder other ecumenical relations.
6. The realization of church fellowship takes place on both theological level and in daily life among the churches that have entered into the fellowship. We are grateful for the challenge that follows from our signing of the *Agreement* and from the altar and pulpit fellowship which it represents. It is our hope that we will be able to contribute through the Leuenberg Church Fellowship to the mutual enrichment of our traditions and our church life. According to our understanding, signing the *Leuenberg Agreement* does not necessitate any changes of our church law. Nor can any changes or consequences following our membership of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship be forced on our church without its consent.
7. On the basis of both the concord obtained in the *Agreement*, and the openness for reconciled diversity among our churches, which are both compatible with the confession and tradition of our church, we wish in this way to express our fellowship with the signatory churches of the *Leuenberg Agreement*. Signing of the *Agreement* takes place in the conviction that we thereby affirm our commitment to the unity of the Church in Christ.