

Full Communion Partners

Full communion is when two denominations develop a relationship based on a common confessing of the Christian faith and a mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing of the Lord's Supper. This does not mean the two denominations merge; rather, in reaching agreements, denominations also respect differences. These denominations worship together, may exchange clergy and also share a commitment to evangelism, witness and service in the world. Each entity agrees that even with differences, there is nothing that is church-dividing.

A central document to Lutherans is the Augsburg Confession . Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states that “the true unity of the church” is present where the gospel is rightly preached and sacraments rightly administered. The ELCA is committed to this model of full communion as an authentic expression of Christian unity.

Characteristics of full communion

For the ELCA, the characteristics of full communion are theological and missiological implications of the gospel that allow variety and flexibility. These characteristics stress that the church act ecumenically for the sake of the world, not for itself alone. They will include at least the following, some of which exist at earlier stages:

- Common confessing of the Christian faith
- Mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members
- Mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all, subject to the disciplinary regulations of other denominations
- Common commitment to evangelism, witness and service
- Means of common decision-making on critical common issues of faith and life
- Mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between denominations

