



February 2018 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

In the fall of 2017 I was privileged to participate, among other events, in three Common Prayer Services with the Roman Catholics, and with Anglican presence and participation, in Calgary, Edmonton and Whitehorse.

The Common Prayer Services were meaningful in their hopefulness, in a moving forward together, and in their commitment through five ecumenical imperatives. Regularly, over the course of the next year I will be briefly reflecting on these imperatives via this monthly newsletter article.

Ecumenical Imperative 1: Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity, and not from the point of view of division, in order to strengthen what is held in common, even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.

Each of the Common Prayers Services was a sign of this unity. Catholics and Lutherans (and Anglicans) gathered to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. These were solemn events, cognizant of the pain between our two churches over the centuries, of the pain in families and communities. They acknowledged the areas where we need to repent our arrogance, our certainty that we and only we are right.

But each also joyously affirmed our oneness in Christ. Through scripture, through prayers, through music, through homilies (yes, in Edmonton and Whitehorse there were two sermons!), we celebrated and pledged to find more ways to focus on our oneness. In reflecting on the powerful impact of the service, many people said, "Oh, we have to do this again!"

The services were built around the Five Ecumenical Imperatives that are part of the Lutheran-Catholic "From Conflict to Communion" project. It doesn't take a large group of people in an imposing Cathedral or a group of pastors in a hotel conference room to discuss the imperatives. You can do it with your congregation, you can do it in groups of 2 or three. You can get together with a Catholic parish, or a Catholic neighbor and discuss each of the Ecumenical Imperatives together. (You can find "From Conflict to Communion" document here:

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>

As part of the Edmonton service Archbishop Richard Smith, Bishop Jane Alexander and I signed a Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic (LARC) agreement establishing a dialog between our three denominations. The first gathering of this group takes place the end of January.

We have now commemorated the 500th anniversary. But remember, it is the 500th anniversary of the beginning, not of the ending. And so, as we move into the next 500 years, we have the gift of the five Ecumenical Imperatives to guide us. The first one reminds us always to start with unity, not division. That's what we did through the Common Prayer Services, and that is our ongoing challenge as we journey forward together.

Won't you join me?

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,
+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*
Romans 15:13