

**REPORT  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**TO THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD**

**UPON COMPLETION OF  
FORMAL FELLOWSHIP DISCUSSIONS  
WITH**

**THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
LUTHERAN CHURCHES**

**OCTOBER, 2006**

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE PRESIDENT  
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**I. A History of the American Association of Lutheran Churches**

In September of 1982, The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America simultaneously agreed to begin the formation of a new Lutheran church. A Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) was established to prepare recommendations for its formation. Concerns among members of the American Lutheran Church regarding the direction their church body was taking resulted in the emergence of a number of groups who were interested in bringing their conservative influence to bear upon the new Lutheran church discussions, with particular interest in the doctrine of the authority of Scripture.

In August of 1986, members of the American Lutheran Church who continued to be concerned about the direction taken by the CNLC met together and encouraged a “no” vote on a pending referendum of American Lutheran Church congregations. On March 15, 1987, after their efforts had failed to influence the decision-making of the CNLC, first steps were taken to form the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) and American Lutheran Church congregations were encouraged to study the issues. On November 6-7, 1987, the AALC was formally constituted with nine charter members.

As an interim arrangement, the AALC functioned with three categories of association with the national organization. At the time of its first meeting with the LCMS on August 30, 1988, 75 congregations claimed “affiliation” with the AALC, 48 were said to hold “membership,” and 51 were considered “connected” to the association. Representatives of the AALC stressed that they were “not building a church,” that it is God who builds His Church, and that they considered their association one of several that could be considered by those interested in changing church body affiliation. It would be a “church body” with a strong emphasis on congregational autonomy.

**II. A Summary of AALC/LCMS Meetings**

Representatives of the AALC and the LCMS met nine times beginning in 1988. Copies of AALC documents provided during these meetings as well as LCMS presentations made and materials other than CTCR documents distributed are included with this report. Summary reports of the meetings follow.

1. St. Louis, August 30, 1988:

This first meeting, at the time when the AALC was still in the formation process, served as an opportunity for leaders to become acquainted and to discuss opportunities for mutual aid and support. Background information was provided, official documents were exchanged, and statements regarding the Doctrine of the Word in particular were shared. Close cooperative ties in specific areas of ministry and church life were discussed, but AALC representatives indicated that they were not interested in pursuing altar and pulpit fellowship at that time. The training of AALC pastors in LCMS seminaries, contacts between AALC and LCMS pastors at the local level, and issues associated with the charismatic movement were among the topics of conversation. While acknowledging that some of their congregations were “open to receiving persons who have received all gifts of the Spirit,” the AALC representatives stated that they were not “a charismatic synod.”

2. Minneapolis, January 31, 1989:

AALC representatives reported that their church body was growing steadily, now totaling 55 “member” congregations, 25 “affiliates,” and more than 50 “connected” congregations. They also reported that planning for the development of an AALC seminary was underway, with three regional houses of study to serve until the seminary came into being. In discussions of doctrinal matters, both church bodies agreed upon (a) the importance of maintaining the confessional understanding of the Scriptures and the centrality of the Gospel; (b) the acceptance of the writings contained in the *Book of Concord* “because” and not “insofar as” they are in agreement with Scripture; and (c) the rejection of the eight doctrines held by proponents of the charismatic movement listed in 1977 LCMS Res. 3-10A, regarding such notions to be “contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and therefore dangerous to the salvation of men to teach.” With regard to the latter, the AALC representatives stated that they regarded *glossolalia* as “a private gift of the Spirit” and that they insisted upon a commitment from their pastors “not to push the charismatic movement.” Also discussed were continued interest in AALC seminary training at LCMS seminaries (including a “Proposed [LCMS] Policy for Assisting the AALC in the Training of Seminarians”) and various possibilities for expressions of fellowship among pastors and congregations on the local level. At this meeting the AALC representatives expressed interest in pursuing altar and pulpit fellowship, and this interest was welcomed by the LCMS representatives.

3. St. Louis, September 28, 1989:

Respective positions on the charismatic movement was the primary topic of discussion at this meeting. Copies of pertinent LCMS convention resolutions from 1977 and 1979 and the 1989 CTCR review of Renewal In Missouri materials were distributed. AALC representatives indicated that their official position on the charismatic movement “seemed to be consistent with that of the LCMS.” Discussion was also continued from previous meetings regarding opportunities for the LCMS to be of assistance to the AALC in the areas of seminary training, military chaplaincy, and social ministry. It was reported that both LCMS seminaries were in the process of reviewing a proposed protocol agreement for AALC students to study on their campuses. AALC representatives expressed gratitude for assistance given by LCMS Laborers for Christ and expressed interest in developing such a program for their own purposes. Interest was also expressed in the development of a protocol agreement with respect to social ministry services. At this time the AALC numbered 90 congregations and 13,000 members.

4. St. Louis, January 8, 1992:

At this fourth meeting, shortened by the inability of several key representatives to attend due to scheduling conflicts, infant communion, historical criticism, altar and pulpit fellowship, and life issues were among the topics discussed. Membership in the AALC was reported to total 140 pastors and 104 congregations.

5. St. Louis, December 1, 1998:

After a lapse of six years, this meeting began with the new leadership of the AALC and LCMS sharing information regarding their church bodies. AALC Presiding Pastor Duane Lindberg reported that since the 110 congregations, 165 pastors, and 18,000 souls of the AALC were located primarily in the Midwest, its headquarters and seminary remained in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. Their Builders for Christ program was credited with many new church starts, creating a special challenge to help grow strong congregations from small beginnings. He reported that fifteen per cent of AALC congregations support parochial schools, and that four emphases help to describe and understand the AALC: (1) the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible as God's inspired Word; (2) the full authority and veracity of the Lutheran Confessions; (3) the primacy of evangelism and world missions; and (4) the authority of the local congregation. An explanation was given for the cessation of AALC/LCMS meetings after 1992: an internal struggle within the AALC resulting from the three streams which had come together to form the church body, namely, former orthodox members of the American Lutheran Church, charismatics, and evangelicals—a struggle that he assured had been resolved, as demonstrated by the Policy and Position Statements approved by 1998 convention action.

After LCMS President Alvin Barry asked CTCR Executive Director Samuel Nafzger to provide a history of earlier meetings, LCMS materials, including recent CTCR documents and "What About..." pamphlets, were provided to the AALC representatives. After continued discussion of military chaplaincy, social services, capital punishment, altar and pulpit fellowship, homosexuality, deacons/deaconesses, and Lutheran schools, the representatives from both church bodies expressed interest in future meetings and theological discussions.

6. St. Louis, March 22, 2005:

After another lapse of more than six years, representatives from the two church bodies again met and were brought up to date regarding developments in the church bodies. With interest expressed by both church bodies in resuming serious discussions toward altar and pulpit fellowship, specific theological issues were identified and plans were made to meet at least twice more for such discussions. Charismatic concerns, lay ministry, and church and ministry would be discussed at the first such meeting on the basis of papers presented by representatives from both church bodies. The topics of close(d) communion, inter-Christian relationships, the role of women in the church, and piety vs. pietism would be similarly presented and discussed at a second meeting. It was also agreed that the meetings would be publicized to alert both church bodies to the discussions taking place. Prior to the close of the meeting, the ELCA task force report addressing issues of sexuality was discussed, with concern expressed that it be made clear to the public that the ELCA does not speak for all Lutherans. Initial plans were made for the development of a public statement to be used in major newspapers across the country if deemed necessary after the upcoming ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

This sixth meeting signaled the beginning of a new level of discussions, with the subsequent three meetings, as planned, intentionally addressing the theological issues recognized to be most important for determining whether doctrinal agreement, the basis for altar and pulpit fellowship, existed between the AALC and the LCMS. Representing the AALC for the three final meetings were Presiding Pastor Thomas Aadland; Administrative Assistant Gregory Gerendas; Secretary Harold Johnson; ALTS Seminary President Frank Hays; and Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations member Darrel Deuel. Representing the LCMS were President Gerald Kieschnick; First Vice-President William Diekelman; Secretary Raymond Hartwig; Commission on Theology and Church Relations Executive Director Samuel Nafzger; and Concordia Seminary Professor Charles Arand.

7. Albuquerque, October 6-7, 2005:

Charles Arand provided the LCMS presentation on “Church and Ministry,” emphasizing that the believer lives in two distinct but inseparable relationships—with God (*coram Deo*) and with the world (*coram mundi*), applying this distinction to church and ministry. His presentation was followed by discussions of ordination and lay ministry, during which the LCMS positions on the pastoral office and ordination were defined and differentiated from the view of ministry held by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

In response, Thomas Aadland presented a paper, “Church and Ministry Viewed by the American Association of Lutheran Churches With Reference also to Lay Ministry,” also distributing the documents: “Rostered Licensed Lay Pastor Approval Process,” “Unrostered Licensed Lay Minister Approval Process,” “Blue Ribbon Committee Report to the 1995 General Convention,” “Declaration of Faith and Policy and Position Statements,” “A Past to Cherish...A Future to Claim, The AALC, 1987–1992,” and “AALC Constitution/Bylaws.” The presentation included a review of the AALC’s understanding of church and ministry as conditioned by its history and self-understanding and called particular attention to articles III to V of the AALC Constitution describing the purpose, nature, and powers of the church. It also called attention to the documents describing the rationale and approval processes for licensed lay pastors and lay ministers and, noting the factiousness that existed in the AALC in the mid-1990’s, called particular attention to the report of the blue ribbon committee that was accepted and approved by the 1995 General Convention, which reaffirms the confessional identity and evangelical purpose of the church body.

Addressing the subject, “Charismatic Concerns,” Frank Hays presented a paper on behalf of the AALC, underscoring that the Holy Spirit comes into the lives of men and women through the proper administration of the means of grace, noting that persons most filled with the Spirit are least conscious of it, differentiating between being filled with the Spirit and feeling filled with the Spirit. Regarding the gifts of the Spirit, he identified transformation, not ecstasy, as the proper end of evangelism and that the ultimate task of the Holy Spirit is to plant the confession “Jesus is Lord” at the center of every individual life and being. Belief in Jesus Christ is in itself evidence of being Spirit-filled, and Christians who show loving concern for their neighbors are acting in the Spirit. “A Statement Concerning the Holy Spirit and His Gifts,” adopted by the Third General Convention of the AALC in 1990 and amended by the 2005 convention, was also distributed and discussed.

Samuel Nafzger reviewed a variety of printed materials to detail the position of the LCMS relative to charismatic concerns: 1972 CTCR Report, “Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology”; 1977 CTCR Report, “The Lutheran Church and the Charismatic Movement”;

1979 LCMS convention Resolution 3-10A, "To Clarify the Synod's Position Regarding Charismatic Teaching"; and 1998 LCMS convention Resolution 3-12, "To Work Toward Renewing Discussion with RIM and to Bring to Conclusion." He noted that most discussions relative to this subject have involved Renewal In Missouri, a charismatic movement in the LCMS, which led to the "Revised 'Concluding Affirmations and Rejections'" document of September 28, 2000.

At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants affirmed that the AALC and the LCMS share similar positions regarding church and ministry, lay ministry, and charismatic issues, neither group noting significant differences in doctrine or practice.

8. Saint Louis, March 7-8, 2006:

Charles Arand provided an oral presentation, "LCMS on Inter-Christian Relationships," also supplying copies of related CTCR studies. In his presentation he again distinguished between "*Coram Deo*: Spiritual Unity of the Church," a gift and work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and therefore a hidden unity of faith, and "*Coram Mundo*: External Unity of the Church," a concordia expressed through altar and pulpit fellowship based upon agreement in confession of the Word.

Gregory Gerendas responded with "Relations with Other Christians," highlighting a section from "Declaration of Faith and Policy and Position Statements of The American Association of Lutheran Churches," "Inter-Church Cooperation," describing the AALC's relationships with L.C.U.S.A., other Lutheran denominations, the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and Lutheran independent ministries. He underscored that while its formal statements are limited, the AALC has retained a strong stance on Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and continues to affirm a position similar to the familiar "Galesburg Rule" when relating to other Christians. While the AALC allows for "the witness of others in our pulpits" on a less than regular basis, it intentionally pursues cooperative opportunities other than worship activities. Discussion following the presentation addressed specific statements from the founding documents, the extent that AALC congregations share pulpits (especially when vacancies exist), the AALC's declaration of fellowship with the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches, the AALC's use of the terms "incarnational" and "missional," a letter of concern from an LCMS district president regarding local AALC communion practice, the ecclesiastical supervision and discipline practices of both church bodies, and plans for providing guidelines for AALC pastors to provide guidance regarding worship services with other Christians.

To address the topic, "AALC on Close(d) Communion," Frank Hays presented the paper, "Responsible Administration of Communion," underscoring the position of the AALC that the words associated with the Lord's Supper in the Scriptures are to be received and confessed in their plain, literal sense. The paper reviewed the primary teachings of the Sacrament, including its proclamation of Christ's death, its strengthening of personal faith, its proclamation of union in Christ and a common confession, and its real presence of Christ's body and blood. The paper also underscored the proper administration of the Sacrament by the pastor, referred to as "responsible communion." Discussion followed regarding the use of grape juice, the use of leavened or unleavened bread, the extent of agreement in sound doctrine that is required, and the examination through colloquy of all pastors entering ministry in the AALC, which includes consideration of their understanding and practice of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was also noted that the AALC often refers to LCMS CTCR documents for authoritative reference.

Raymond Hartwig presented on the topic “LCMS on Close(d) Communion” by providing copies of three LCMS convention resolutions establishing the Synod’s position regarding communion practice: “To Maintain Practice of Close Communion” (1986 Res. 3-08); “To Reaffirm the Practice of Close[d] Communion” (1995 Res. 3-08); and “To Reaffirm Our Practice of Admission to the Lord’s Supper” (1998 Res. 3-05), calling attention to the paragraphs most descriptive of the Synod’s official practice. Discussion followed regarding the use of the Synod’s convention-adopted communion card statement, background and use of the terms “close” and “closed,” the distinction between “worthily” and confessional agreement, differences in local practice of close(d) communion in the LCMS, plans to address the need for consistency in communion practice in the AALC, the importance of uniform practice versus terminology, allowances for pastoral care, and the importance of instruction regarding the proper reception of the Sacrament.

William Diekelman presented orally on the topic, “LCMS on Piety vs. Pietism,” speaking of how doctrine takes flesh, how our practice is what we believe, and how it becomes the behavior and automatic reaction of people within the church. He reviewed the process required for a congregation to become a member congregation of the LCMS and spoke of the LCMS as a voluntary and not lock-step association that provides ecclesiastical supervision by its President, district presidents, and circuit counselors while respecting the right of self-governance of every congregation. He spoke of the covenants of love that govern association with the Synod and the latitude that exists in the life of the Synod except when God’s Word speaks clearly, as demonstrated in the variety of worship forms and music in use in the Synod. He called particular attention to Article VI 2 of the LCMS Constitution (renunciation of unionism and syncretism) as relative to a time when the Synod was small and community-located, and Article III 6 & 7 (varieties of resources and practices) as becoming ever more important as the landscape of the Synod changes. Discussion followed regarding the referenced constitutional paragraphs.

Thomas Aadland presented a paper on the topic, “AALC on Piety vs. Pietism,” discussing the origins of the concepts of “piety” (the attitude of faith and its expression in life which lets God be God) and “impiety” (godlessness, the distinguishing feature of fallen humanity). He observed that the Reformation can be seen as a recovery of the true biblical meaning of piety—faith and life in relation to the living God, effected only by God the Holy Spirit who creates, sustains, and deepens faith through the Gospel and the sacraments. Such piety is directed vertically toward God and horizontally to the neighbor and always bears fruit. He then applied this biblical view of piety to practice in history and the church, noting that some AALC congregations have roots in traditions that date back to 17<sup>th</sup> century pietism and its tendency to undermine true piety with an emphasis on experience over doctrine, which in turn leads to other mistaken notions. He assured that such is not the norm in the AALC, which recognizes the need for the right use of the means of grace and the application of the Word and the proper distinction between Law and Gospel in its preaching and soul care. Discussion followed regarding the ease of crossing the lines when it comes to pietism and its opposite, cheap grace, which holds that no one is perfect and forgiveness is always available later on. It was agreed that piety vs. pietism is not at issue in the current AALC-LCMS fellowship discussions.

Darrel Deuel addressed the subject, “AALC on Role of Women in the Church,” by providing copies of two documents, “The Role of Women in the AALC” and “The Danvers Statement,” the first citing actions by conventions of the AALC in November of 1987 and June of 1998 and the second a statement by the Council on Biblical Manhood and

Womanhood adopted by the AALC at its June, 1998 convention. He stated that the AALC uses these materials to affirm that both men and women are created in the image of God and therefore have a spiritual equality before God. While neither is superior to the other, equality is not sameness, for there is a divine order proclaimed by Scripture with different functions for men and women. While women have great value and dignity, they are also subordinate to men. Because man is given the position of headship, woman is not to have authority over man, and therefore the pastoral office is to be held by men. Women are encouraged to seek and consider God's call into all other areas of ministry. This is regarded as a non-controversial issue in the AALC. Discussion followed regarding the background of the "Danvers Statement," the absence of restrictive policies regarding women serving in congregational offices (although no AALC congregations are known to have women serving as elders), and the refusal to ordain women as one of the two primary reasons (the other being the authority of Scripture) why the AALC has not received many new congregations into its fellowship from the ELCA.

Samuel Nafzger provided the presentation, "The LCMS on the Role of Women in the Church," also providing copies of a formal opinion provided by the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters, "Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office)," and the CTCR reports, "Woman Suffrage in the Church" and "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices with Guidelines for Congregations." Particular attention was called to the latter document, published in January of 2005, and its "Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices." He used these documents to demonstrate that the question of the role of women in the Synod has been around for many years and continues to be a significant issue. Particular attention was called to the six conclusions from the 1968 report on women's suffrage included in his presentation outline, as well as the four major principles made in the 1985 CTCR Report: "Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice." He stressed that while there is no biblical application of the Order of Creation regarding the holding of positions in the civil estate, this is not the case with regard to pastoral functions, in which case God has spoken and women should not hold the pastoral office. The task force report provided in the January 2005 document and its guidelines were offered as a concise expression of the Synod's position on the role of women (and of men) at this time. It was agreed that the AALC and the LCMS are in doctrinal agreement regarding this issue.

In the general discussion that followed the presentations it was observed that the eight meetings have demonstrated an outstanding spirit of collegiality, camaraderie, mutual respect, and desire to work together. Questions were raised regarding the meaning of church fellowship and readiness to move in that direction. While the relative lack of formal documentation on the part of the AALC was noted, it was also noted that the AALC has responded affirmatively to the LCMS documentation and does bring to the table a *quia* subscription to the Book of Concord to accompany the documents that it has shared. It was agreed that, while the church bodies may be on the road to fellowship, it would not be possible to make this final recommendation without opportunity for further discussion by church body representatives away from the joint meetings, followed by at least one additional formal meeting.

Processes to be followed and deadlines to be met if a proposal for altar and pulpit fellowship were to be brought to the church bodies' 2007 conventions were discussed. It was agreed that another meeting should be scheduled and that a document presenting the AALC's understanding of the doctrine of church fellowship would be prepared for discussion along with discussions of any other remaining issues.



A joint statement prepared after the meeting included the following paragraph: “The participants from both church bodies expressed satisfaction with the meeting, characterizing the discussions as collegial and hopeful. AALC’s Aadland expressed particular ‘satisfaction that progress is being made.’ ‘We have been encouraged by our agreement on sensitive issues including church and ministry, the charismatic movement, and now also the role of women in the church,’ added Nafzger of the LCMS.”

9. Saint Louis, July 13-14, 2006:

The final meeting began with the review of a recent edition of the AALC publication, *The Evangel*, and its coverage of AALC convention actions at the church body’s 19<sup>th</sup> General Convention. It was reported that “almost unanimous support” was expressed by the convention for the continuation of fellowship discussions with the LCMS. The convention also determined to review the AALC Constitution, move to biennial conventions, consolidate the national ministry from ten to five regions, increase mission efforts and the planting of new congregations, and request the Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations to look at fellowship-related issues.

To facilitate discussion of fellowship issues, Thomas Aadland presented the paper, “The AALC and the Doctrine of Church Fellowship,” prepared by a pastor of the AALC in anticipation of discussions with the LCMS. It was noted that the paper enjoys no official status and that the AALC through its Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations continues to work on formal theological statements, including a statement on communion practice.

Addressing the topic, “The LCMS and the Doctrine of Church Fellowship,” Samuel Nafzger distributed copies of the February 2000 CTCR document, “The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship,” providing a historical background for the document and noting its approval by convention action for continued use and guidance. He also distributed copies of the recent April 2004 CTCR document, “Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events,” calling particular attention to its statement on page 3 regarding “cases of discretion” and to the Synod’s official position statement on page 33 of the CTCR February 2000 document. He underscored that the basis for church fellowship is agreement in doctrine and practice and that “fellowship” and “church fellowship” need to be distinguished from each other. He noted the LCMS Constitution’s definition of church fellowship in its Article VI and underscored the Franklin Clark Fry quotation in the February 2000 CTCR document (p. 32): “Insistence upon agreement in doctrine as a precondition for church fellowship is the distinguishing mark of Lutherans among all Protestants and should never be relaxed.” Also calling attention to the same document’s section on fellowship in the Scriptures (p. 30), he anticipated the release of a new CTCR document by 2007 regarding inter-Christian relationships at levels short of altar and pulpit fellowship, this in response to a 1981 request. Discussion followed regarding the application of these principles in real life situations.

Addressing the topic, “Close(d) Communion in the LCMS,” Raymond Hartwig provided a printed presentation quoting key convention resolutions (1995 Res. 3-08 “To Reaffirm the Practice of Close[d] Communion”; 1998 Res. 3-05, “To Reaffirm Our Practice of Admission to the Lord’s Supper”) and the “Concluding Summary” section of ““Admission to the Lord’s Supper,’ A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (November, 1999)” (pp. 52-53). Discussion followed regarding pastoral responsibilities with regard to the sacrament, the handling of extraordinary situations, and the dangers of not taking this pastoral responsibility seriously.

Franklin Hays referred again to the document he presented to the March 7-8, 2006 meeting, “Responsible Administration of Communion,” as he addressed “Close(d) Communion in the AALC.” He explained that the AALC has very little history regarding this issue because the need for closer attention has not arisen. He noted that the willingness on the part of the Fort Wayne seminary to allow AALC students to commune at its table was an important supporting factor in the decision to move AALC seminary operations to the Fort Wayne seminary. He also reported that AALC response to LCMS documents on this subject is positive and that any concerns that may exist have to do with local experiences.

The final subject discussed at the meeting, “The Practice of Church Fellowship,” entailed a review and discussion of section 4 of the 1981 CTCR document, “The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship,” “4. Ecclesiastical Declaration of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship,” and a review of documentation from the LCMS Council of Presidents that provides models of partnership with other church bodies. Discussion followed regarding the process to be followed by the AALC and the LCMS leading to convention actions, including the development of an accompanying protocol document.

### **III. Recommendation of the Committees**

Upon completion of the discussions, representatives of the AALC and the LCMS caucused separately to discuss the recommendations they would bring forward from the meeting. Both groups reported that they had reached unanimous decisions to support moving forward with their respective processes for declaring altar and pulpit fellowship with the other church body, as evidenced by the press release after the meeting:

Representatives of the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) unanimously recommend that their respective church bodies proceed toward entering into Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with each other.

This recommendation was reached at the conclusion of the third in a series of formal meetings held in St. Louis July 13-14. Discussion at this meeting focused on church fellowship practices, including discussions about the practice of close(d) communion. Previous meetings were held in St. Louis and in Albuquerque in 2005.

In the earlier two sessions of these meetings, participants discussed each church body’s official position on “Church and Ministry,” “Lay Ministry,” “Charismatic Concerns,” “Inter-Christian Relations,” “Piety vs. Pietism,” and the Role of Women in the Church.” Also discussed at length were each church body’s understanding of the authority of Scripture and the binding nature of subscription to the writings in the Book of Concord.

The participants expressed their thanksgiving to God for the agreement reached in these discussions. “We are grateful to God for this godly opportunity to work together toward the expression of our common confession and witness to Christ, and we look forward to the prospect of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Missouri Synod,” said Rev. Thomas Aadland, Presiding Pastor of the AALC. “How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters in Christ dwell in unity,” stated Dr. Samuel Nafzger, Executive Director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, echoing the words of Psalm 133. “I pray that this important step in the process of working toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, one of the important objectives of our Synod, will be a genuine

blessing to both the AALC and the LCMS, strengthening the Gospel witness of both,” said Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, President of the LCMS. The meeting concluded with the singing of the doxology.

This recommendation will now be presented by each set of representatives to their respective church bodies for consideration in accordance with the procedures required for entering into church fellowship.

Expressions of thanksgiving and appreciation for brotherly reception and generous hospitality were exchanged before the final meeting was closed with prayer.

#### **IV. Recommendation to the President of the LCMS**

The LCMS representatives to the meetings with representatives of the AALC have concluded unanimously that the discussions that have taken place as described in this document have revealed no valid reason for discontinuing the process leading to a declaration of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the American Association of Lutheran Churches. The President therefore is encouraged to advocate such fellowship and advance the process that will allow its consideration and declaration by the 2007 convention of the Synod.

Submitted to President Gerald Kieschnick, October 2006, by the Committee

Dr. Charles Arand  
 Dr. William Diekelman  
 Dr. Raymond Hartwig  
 Dr. Samuel Nafzger