

Full Communion Relationships: An Ecumenical Way Forward
Lourdes University, Sylvania, Ohio
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“Remember your Church, O Lord; save it from all evil, and complete it in your love. And gather it from the four winds into your kingdom, which you prepared for it. For yours is the power and the glory forever.” (Didache 10,5)

As I begin this presentation, I want to express my gratitude to this University and to the Sisters of St. Francis Theological Studies Department who offer this Ecumenical Lecture Series in cooperation with Toledo Area Ministries and The Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee. This series says much about your desire to tend to the holy work of the church’s unity in Christ. At this significant time in the life of the Christian church, I include in my prayers the Roman Catholic Church as a new pope is selected and this university as you welcome Dr. David Livingston at your new president. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) entered into full communion relationships with the Reformed Church in America, The Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ in 1997, the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in 1999, and the United Methodist Church in 2009. During the course of this presentation, I briefly will review the foundation for these relationships, the gifts and challenges received through these relationships and why these relationships provide an ecumenical way forward.

A. Beginning with Thanksgiving and Yearning

As I begin this presentation, I do so with thanksgiving to God for the growing realization among Christians of the unity given to us in Christ Jesus by virtue of being joined to Jesus’ death and resurrection in the waters of baptism. We realize that to “get Jesus” is to get the whole company of Jesus’ friends. We have not always wanted to recognize that. Those of you who are my age or older, easily recall times when we viewed other Christians with suspicion. We thought we knew what they believed and how those beliefs betrayed the Gospel. Within my own extended Lutheran family, we could not commune with other family members of another Lutheran denomination and were not sure that we could pray with them. We could spend the rest of the day recalling such stories. But we won’t.

Rather we begin by praising the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by whose Spirit we are able to discern the body of Christ in other Christians. As a Lutheran Christian I praise God for our full communion relationships. And, much more: the congregations of our communities are working together, building Habitat Homes, feeding the neighborhood, tending the needs of the community. Toledo Area Ministries is one of many examples of that. But, even more, we often come together in worship to share our identity as brothers and sisters in Christ. We share in Thanksgiving Services, Holy Week Services, and we have learned to pray for one another. How precious it has been for me as Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod for the past 15 years to participate in worship with your bishops together with Lutheran and Roman Catholic and other brothers and sisters in Christ. I thank God for the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification received in October, 1999 by the Catholic Church and member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. I thank God for the Covenant between the Northwestern Ohio Synod and the Toledo Diocese signed in 2001. I am grateful for the recent agreement between the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee of the U.S Catholic Conference and the ELCA to begin working on a document, “Declaration On The Way” that in recognition of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation would include noting important areas of agreement. Thanks be to

God that we could spend the rest of the afternoon recalling the manner in which we have learned more about what it means to be the body of Christ together. But we won't. However, let those memories provide a doxological framework for this conversation. Indeed, as the hymn declares, "The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord."

But accompanying this thanksgiving, at least for some of us and perhaps for all of us gathered in this space, is a yearning. The yearning is that we might more fully realize the unity for which our Lord prays as we gather at the Table of our Lord. In that meal, we come in our brokenness to receive the gift of him who was broken for us. In that meal, we experience reconciliation, as we hear the words, "My body broken for you; my blood poured out for you." In that meal we learn what it is to be gathered into the Holy Communion as we are knit together in Christ by the Holy Spirit. In that meal we learn again what it means to be formed into the body of Christ for the sake of the world. In that meal as we catch a glimpse, a foretaste of the kingdom of God, we are pointed to its realization, to its fulfillment.

Two experiences come to mind. The first is the experience of visiting Gethsemani Abbey and spending a week with the monks in the hours of prayer. Yes, I got up in the middle of the night. But then I had the experience of sorrow as I respected the request, as a non-Roman Catholic, to not participate in the Lord's Supper even as I was encouraged to pray for the unity of the church. The second grows out of one of the most delightful, joy-filled experiences as bishop, namely, participating with Bishop Blair to provide leadership for an ecumenical journey with 45 Lutherans and Roman Catholics to Wittenberg and Rome. The Roman Catholics on the trip commented that in Germany they learned that, contrary to public opinion, Lutherans also have saints and relics. Every day we joined for evening prayer, recalling our baptism into Christ, singing the Magnificat. But in the mornings, we would have our separate celebrations of the Eucharist. How profound it was that one morning we gathered at a hotel in Berlin, with windows overlooking the former site of the Berlin wall, Lutherans and Roman Catholics in adjacent rooms, singing the liturgy of the Eucharist but separated by a thin wall. I understand the rationale for such separation. I really do. But what I experienced was a holy yearning. You too have your places of holy yearning.

B. A Yearning That Goes Back To Our Lord Jesus... and Before

The promise given to Abraham and Sarah was that "...in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b). The prophets could speak of that time when "... the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:2b-3). The Gospel of John speaks of the Word made Flesh, who "...became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son." (John 1:14) This Word made flesh will declare the odd way in which God will be glorified as Jesus later declares, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth (ed. think "death and resurrection), will draw all people to myself." This glorified One does not want his followers to mess things up and so he prays also for them prior to his "lifting up": "The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have love me." (John 17:22-23) Earlier he will pray, "... so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (17:21)

This "yearning" both expresses the reality (i.e. beloved in Christ) and the purpose, that is, for the sake of God's mission (i.e. that the world might believe). This yearning will be echoed by the Holy Writer who reminds an early church prone to division, "I...beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3) You already know the grounding for such evangelical persuasion: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (4:4-6) A holy yearning, indeed!

C. An Introduction to a Lutheran Vision for Ecumenism

In 1990, early in its formation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted the statement: “Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” I will quote from that document in order that you might understand something of this church’s rationale for full communion relationships. The following briefly summarizes the contribution of the Lutheran Confessions with respect to this discussion:

The Lutheran Confessions were the products of an effort at evangelical reform, which, contrary to its intention, resulted in divisions within the Western church. As evangelical writings, they stress justification by grace through faith alone as the criterion for judging all church doctrine and life. As catholic writings, they assert that the Gospel is essential to the church for being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Their evangelical and catholic aspects are complementary, not contradictory. When a particular misinterpretation of the catholic tradition conflicts with the Gospel, the classic Lutheran confessional choice was and remains for the Gospel. They are concerned for the oneness of Christ’s church under the Gospel, the preservation of the true catholic heritage, and the renewal of the church as a whole. That the Confessions have such concerns can be seen from the following:

1. They always point to Scripture, with its stress on teaching the truth of the Gospel—which they see as the only sufficient basis for Christian unity—as normative. Because of this evangelical stress they also point to Scripture’s confession of one Lord and one church as basic for understanding Christian unity.
2. They begin with the ancient ecumenical creeds—Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian—as “the three chief symbols.” Lutherans always have a common basis with those who share these creeds and the Bible.
3. They draw upon the theological reflection of the early church leaders in East and West, and thus share a resource with those who also know and honor the theologians of the patristic era.
4. While many of the Lutheran Confessions were hammered out in the struggles of the sixteenth century and dwell on the differences with the Roman Catholics, the Reformed, the Anabaptists, and even some Lutherans, they also contained, whether specifically noted or not, many points of basic agreement with such groups.
5. The primary Lutheran confessional document, the Augsburg Confession of 1530, claims to be a fully catholic as well as an evangelical expression of Christian faith. Part I, which lists the chief articles of faith, states that the Confession is grounded clearly in Scripture and does not depart from the universal Christian [that is, catholic] church. The confessors at Augsburg asked only for freedom to preach and worship in

accordance with the Gospel. They were willing, upon recognition of the legitimacy of these reforms, to remain in fellowship with those who did not share every theological formulation or reforming practice [Augsburg Confession, Preface, Article XV, Article XXVIII and Conclusion]. It is in this historical context that Article VII is to be understood: "for the true unity of the church it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." The confessors allowed for diversity of opinion and discussion of many other matters (see Smalcald Articles, Part III, introduction).

Here it is important to note that when the confessors speak of the "teaching of the Gospel" the chief concern is that the church in its proclamation, life and witness make use of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Lord Jesus so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit troubled consciences are consoled, sins are forgiven, and Christ's righteousness becomes ours. When that good news is spoken, when baptism and Eucharist deliver it and when by the Holy Spirit such good news is received in faith, there is the church. With that Lutheran confessional understanding, the predecessor church bodies of the ELCA were very much a part of the ecumenical conversations that multiplied in the mid-twentieth century. Lutherans made up the largest confessional group that was a part of the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Ecumenical dialogues flourished in the next years. There was a new impetus for ecumenical dialogue with the entry of the Roman Catholic Church ratified by the Second Vatican Council. In addition to the Roman Catholic Church, Lutherans began or continued dialogues with Reformed and Presbyterians, Episcopalians, United Methodists, Orthodox, Baptists, and conservative evangelicals.

In 1983, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches relayed to member churches for their response and reception the document, "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry." This document would provide another impetus for ecumenical understanding for the predecessor bodies of the ELCA and other Christian churches.

In 1984, the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation "...declared themselves to be in altar and pulpit fellowship" and the churches of the federation "...declared themselves to be a communion of churches." The 1984 Assembly then adopted a statement on unity that, I believe, has had implications for the full communion relationships that have developed with other traditions. It states:

The true unity of the church, which is the unity of the body of Christ and participates in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is given in and through proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This unity is expressed as a communion in the common and at the same time, multiform confession of one and the same apostolic faith. It is a communion in Holy Baptism and in the eucharistic meal, a communion in which the ministries exercised are recognized by all as expressions of the ministry instituted by Christ in his church. It is a communion where diversities contribute to fullness and are no longer barriers to unity. It is a committed fellowship, able to make common decisions and to act in common.

The diversity present in this communion rises out of the differing cultural and ethnic contexts in which the one church of Christ lives out its mission and out of the number of church traditions in which the apostolic faith has been maintained, transmitted, and lived throughout the centuries. In recognizing these diversities as expressions of the one apostolic faith and the one catholic church, traditions are changed, antagonisms

overcome, and mutual condemnations lifted. The diversities are reconciled and transformed into a legitimate and indispensable multiformity within the one body of Christ.

This communion lives out its unity in confessing the one apostolic faith. It assembles in worship and in intercession for all people. It is active in common witness to Jesus Christ; in advocacy for the weak, poor, and oppressed; and in striving for peace, justice, and freedom. It is ordered in all its components in conciliar structures and actions. It is in need of constant renewal and is at the same time, a foretaste of that communion, which the Lord will at the end of time bring about in his kingdom.

The Vision Statement goes on to describe the manner in which the Lutheran tradition is open to critique:

Even more boldly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America takes its Lutheran theological heritage so seriously that it believes God's word of justification excludes the patterns of ecclesiastical self-justification, which have resulted from the polemical heritage of the sixteenth century. The first word, which the Church speaks ecumenically, may well be a word of self-criticism, a word against itself, because we are called to be seekers of a truth that is larger than all of us and that condemns our parochialism, imperialism, and self-preoccupation. If it can speak such a word of self criticism, the church will be free to reject a triumphalist and magisterial understanding of itself and cultivate instead in understanding of itself as a community of mission and witness that seeks to be serviceable to the in-breaking of the reign of God.

I shared a draft of this paper with my nephew, Martin Lohrmann, who is a reformation scholar in his own right. He offered the following comment: "It crossed my mind while reading your paper that Lutherans view not only individuals as "simul iustus et peccator" but that we also view the visible church that way. Born into sin, we and our institutions (including the church) are never free of sin in this life. At the same time, created by the call of God, the church on earth is also the place of divine grace and will never be otherwise." He adds, "That gets to your point about Christian unity being a gift (an 'already') and a call to live into (a 'not yet')."

As it considers the development of ecumenical relationships, the Ecumenical Vision statement continues:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is an active participant in the ecumenical movement, because of its desire for Christian unity. It seeks full communion as its goal, i.e., the fullest or most complete actualization of unity possible before the parousia with all those churches that confess the Triune God. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, both as a church and as a member of the wider communion of churches in the Lutheran World Federation, seeks to reach this goal, in order to express the unity of the Church and to carry out better the mission of the Church in proclamation and action.

What follows now is a definition of "full communion":

Full communion, a gift from God, is founded on faith in Jesus Christ. It is a commitment to truth in love and a witness to God's liberation and reconciliation. Full communion is visible and sacramental. It includes all that Lutherans have meant by "pulpit and altar

fellowship," but goes beyond that historical formulation because of the obligatory mission given by the Gospel. Full communion is obviously a goal toward which divided churches, under God's Spirit, are striving, but which has not been reached. It points to the complete communion and unity of all Christians that will come with the arrival of the Kingdom of God at the parousia of Christ, the Lord. It is also a goal in need of continuing definition. It is rooted in agreement on essentials and allows diversity in nonessentials. In most cases, however, the churches will not be able to move directly from their disunity to a full expression of their God-given unity, but can expect to experience a movement from disunity to unity that may include one or more of the following stages of relationships.

1. Ecumenical Cooperation
2. Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues.
3. Preliminary Recognition. Here the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can be involved on a church-to-church basis in eucharistic sharing and cooperation, without exchangeability of ministers.
4. Full Communion. At this stage the goal of the involvement of this church in the ecumenical movement is fully attained. Here the question of the shape and form of full communion needs to be addressed and answered practically in terms of what will best further the mission of the Church in individual cases, consistent with the Lutheran understanding of the basis of the unity of the Church in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.

The Vision Statement continues by offering a description of full communion relationships:

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 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:

1. a common confessing of the Christian faith;
2. a mutual recognition of Baptism and a sharing of the Lord's Supper, allowing for joint worship and an exchangeability of members;
3. a mutual recognition and availability of ordained ministers to the service of all members of churches in full communion, subject only but always to the disciplinary regulations of the other churches;
4. a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service;
5. a means of common decision making on critical common issues of faith and life;
6. a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches.

D. Some Gifts Received Through Full Communion Relationships

The ELCA has now had over 15 years of experience with full communion relationships. What are some of the gifts that have been received through these relationships? Chief among them is the growing

understanding that by the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit we know ourselves to be one. What defines us is that our identity is deeply linked to the God who in Christ Jesus claims us in baptismal water and feeds us with the Bread of Life (John 6). That trumps all that would divide us, including sin, death and the power of the devil. Many of us historically have defined ourselves by our denomination. I have increasingly referred to myself as a Lutheran Christian as a way of pointing to the more profound identity. We experienced that more profound identity several years ago when United Methodist Bishop Bruce Ough preached a powerful sermon at a Eucharist Service for our Synod Assembly.

These relationships provide an occasion for joy for marriages, families and friends that have been divided among denominations now in full communion relationships. In the past we often would speak of being converted from one denomination to another. The commonly accepted inference was that to leave one denomination for another risked betrayal of our faith and the heritage of our family. Some days ago I talked with an elderly couple, recently married, who spoke about how their individual faiths have been enriched through their experiences with the other's Christian faith tradition. "I'm learning to talk about Jesus," the Lutheran confessed with a laugh.

Through these relationships, we have developed a growing awareness of and appreciation for what has shaped the faith, life, and witness of the other. One of our retired pastors who has been serving an Episcopalian parish commented, "God really does have a sense of humor. I was an outspoken opponent of the full communion relationship with the Episcopalian church. Now I am serving one. And what a gift this has been for me." Recently I attended Sylvania United Church of Christ for Lutheran church historian Martin Marty's presentations. During the course of my weekend at that church I learned that one of the predecessor's church's of the UCC was among the first to speak out against slavery. I did not know that although I did know that the UCC and its predecessor bodies have a long tradition of seeking to make the link between one's confession of faith and how that impacts matters of justice. We are the body of Christ. We need each other and the distinctive gifts we bring to the whole for the sake of Christ's mission in the world.

Full communion relationships insist that we move together in conversation in the face of potential disagreement rather than cutting off the other. Full communion relationships establish and understand the ongoing role of mutual affirmation and admonition. It is no secret that Christians in this country and in our denominations have struggled mightily with matters of sexuality. The ELCA's full communion partners have had differing perspectives on this matter. In 2010, the Reformed Church in America invited the ELCA, the Presbyterian Church, and the United Church of Christ, partners in the Formula of Agreement-along with the Christian Reformed Church, the Disciples of Christ and the Moravians "to engage in a consultation on the interpretation and use of Scripture in moral discernment and ethical decision-making." Papers have now been compiled that explore the topics: Jesus is Lord; Scripture and Decision-Making in the Church; and Practices for Moral Discernment in Christian Community.

Attentiveness to other Christian traditions can deepen a growing awareness of our own tradition. Several years ago, the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, provided leadership for a retreat for Ohio Council of Churches denominational leaders. He commented that ecumenical conversations require the most substantial understanding of our own traditions. The full communion relationships allow us, in conversation with those we are getting to know better, to know our own tradition better, warts and all.

The full communion relationships enable us to more naturally share gifts with each other. The Northwestern Ohio Synod has used the Rev. John Edgar, a former United Methodist executive and now pastor at Church of All People in Columbus, as a resource for our urban parishes who seek to have vital word and sacrament ministries that also connect with the communities of which they are a part. Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus hosts Bexley Hall, a seminary of the Episcopal Church as they both prepare leaders for Christ's church. Imagine how the lives of seminarians are enriched through those relationships. Over the years the staff of the Northwestern Ohio Synod has met with the staffs of the Episcopalian Diocese and Western Conference of the United Methodist Church. Picture how those emerging relationship pave the way for greater collaboration for the sake of God's mission in this territory.

Most of the counties in Northwestern Ohio are in numerical decline with congregations, in many instances, reflecting that decline. Full communion relationships allow us to have conversation concerning how we might better collaborate for the sake of Word and Sacrament communities of faith. For example, for about five years Pastor Mike Wiechers has served two parishes, one ELCA and one Episcopalian in Port Clinton. Both congregations rejoice in the relationship. We presently are in conversation with full communion partners concerning shared ministry in other communities. I suspect that such contexts will multiply in the next years.

It is not hard to come up with more examples of the gifts received through full communion relationships. Participants in this gathering surely could provide more stories and illustrations.

E. Some of the Risks and Challenges of Full Communion Relationships

Are there risks and challenges related to full communion relationships? I think there are. One is the possibility that participants become theologically indifferent. Many applaud full communion relationships simply because they like it when people work together. Togetherness for its own sake is the ultimate goal. I understand the appeal. You have heard the statements celebrating togetherness, "There are many paths to the grist mill." "We are all heading for the same place so we might as well work together." Then there is the oft quoted, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." Full communion relationships could be perceived by some as fostering such thinking. When that takes place, it is a loss. Theology and doctrine do matter. I like the definition of doctrine that insists, "Doctrine is what must be said in order for the Gospel to be heard." My hope and prayer is that full communion relationships foster such trust that we can explore the deepest truths of the Christian faith in order that the Gospel may be heard for the sake of Christ's mission to the world.

One challenge is that we fail to maximize the gift of these relationships. This is hard work. Denominational and congregational leaders are often busy with our own "stuff." The principal of homogeneity too often shapes our life. We are more comfortable with those with whom we have a shared history. The matter of tending to demonstrable unity in Christ in order that the world might believe gets lost in our trap of denominational self-preoccupation.

Another risk is that full communion relationships can become an excuse for adopting survival tactics instead of wrestling with the question concerning the ways in which our relationships can enable us to be signs of and participants in God's in-breaking reign in Christ Jesus. Imagine a Lutheran congregation and a United Methodist congregation that are considering forming a shared ministry because numbers and income are down. Perhaps the congregations can no longer afford a pastor and the supporting of two buildings. Consider the questions, is this only about survival of the sacred territory of these

buildings or is it about faithful mission? How do we raise that question? How do we discern the answers? But if in the end it is only about survival, then maybe, at least in some respects, something needs to die. There is Biblical precedent for such a view. Referring to his own death and resurrection, our Lord declares, "Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat first falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)

It is also possible that full communion relationships and the sense of renewed strength that may come from those relationships may diminish the perceived necessity of addressing critical issues that are facing the church and its witness to Christ. All of us can name those issues. My list of those issues would include: the reported negative perception of the church that leads the un-churched to dismiss it as "judgmental and hypocritical"; the inability of many of our churches to connect with young people in the face of other "more attractive" alternatives; our inattentiveness to Christians of other traditions often not involved in our dialogues (e.g. the African/American churches); our struggle with articulating a "theology of the cross" to a mainline Christian culture that has opted for what Kendra Dean Crissey in her book, **Almost Christian**, calls "moralistic therapeutic deism"; the inclination of many of our churches to function more like a "club" than signs of and participants in God's in-breaking reign in Christ Jesus; our inability to nurture the Christian faith as reflected in the growing ignorance of Scripture even among those who identify with our congregations. We have major work to do with respect to knowing how to be intelligible to the culture while also conveying the scandalous good news of Jesus Christ. It would be a missed opportunity if not a tragedy if our ecumenical dialogues and full communion relationships fail to address these matters as well.

F. A Way Forward

The title of this presentation is: Full Communion Relationships: An Ecumenical Way Forward. Perhaps the risk in the title is that it might suggest that if only we do the proper work, we can accomplish the unity of the church. At last Fall's ELCA Conference of Bishops' Meeting we had the privilege of receiving a presentation by Bishop Denis Madden, chair of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee of the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops. As he concluded his address he commented, "2017 is the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Should we not be doing something together to mark this important occasion and to point the way toward unity?" Then he continued:

John Borelli in an *America* magazine article entitled "in the Beginning: How the Work of Christian Unity Got Started" sites an episode that took place in the Vatican on December 2, 1960. Doctor Jeffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had a meeting with Pope John XXIII. The Holy Father read from an address in which he enthusiastically referred to that time when other Christians could return to Mother Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury courteously and with deference, corrected His Holiness: "Not return...None of us can go backwards. We are looking forward, until in God's good time, when our two courses approximate and meet." The pope pondered for a moment and then said: "You are right."

Madden continued:

Let me thank you again my brothers and sisters for your kind hospitality today. It is wonderful to be with you. Let me encourage you in your work of Christian Unity. We know that Christ has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us. We need to rely on this guidance

always. Despite our difficulties and occasional discouragements, there is more that unites us than divides us, so let us continue in faith to work that “all may be one.”

I would already identify the “more that unites us” as the Incarnate One who went the way of the cross and empty tomb for us and for our salvation. As we are about this holy work of unity, we know our crucified and risen Lord’s prays for us, “...that we may be one... that the world may believe.” By the power of the Holy Spirit, God even now draws us together through this One who has been lifted up for the life of the world. And so we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Presented by:
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