



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## A Pastoral Letter Regarding the Actions of the Reformed Church in America General Synod 2021

*"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, 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 bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3 NRSV).*

Dear church,

Like many of you, I have been praying for the Reformed Church in America (RCA) as it met in General Synod, Oct. 14-19, in Tucson, Ariz. For nearly a quarter century, we have grown in full communion with the RCA, sharing in mutual ministry and mission. We have come to know each other through our common witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In recent years, we have accompanied the RCA as it has wrestled with differences in theology and practice with regard to human sexuality. After being postponed due to the pandemic, the final [Vision 2020 Report](#) was presented to the General Synod in Tucson. This report offered recommendations for the future of the denomination with regard to staying together, radical restructure and grace-filled separation.

The synod said yes to all three by affirming the central place of global mission in the RCA, forming a restructuring team, and adopting regulations to provide an unobstructed pathway for those local churches that will depart the denomination. On the whole, these actions reflect the RCA's commitment to walking together, respecting differences, and affirming common mission and ministry. Importantly, the spirit of the synod was conciliatory and hope-filled, as delegates shared their disagreements in the bond of peace. We give thanks to God that the RCA, and our full communion partnership, will continue.

This is not the first time that we have accompanied an ecumenical partner in this way, nor will it be the last. We also have benefited greatly from the accompaniment of others as we traveled this same road. Our presence with our ecumenical partners is an opportunity to offer solidarity, to encourage unity, and to give witness to the good gifts from God received through the full inclusion of all people in the church and in ministry. We affirm that it is possible, by the grace of God, to be a church that makes an active choice to live with the disagreement among us, and "to accompany one another in study, prayer, discernment, pastoral care, and mutual respect" (*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, 2009). This is the same spirit in which we approach our ecumenical partnerships.

As the apostle Paul reminds us, we are to bear with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity that is already ours in Jesus Christ. We pray that God will continue to strengthen the bond of peace within the RCA and the body of Christ, and to reveal new ways for us to be in service to God's liberating love for all people and creation. This is a life worthy of our calling together.

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

For more information, see [General Synod 2021 News Summary | Reformed Church in America \(rca.org\)](#)

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**About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.3 million members in more than 8,900 worshiping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands.," the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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