

*The Dialogue of
the Lutheran Church of Australia and
the Uniting Church in Australia*

AT THE TABLE

THE EUCHARIST

JUNE 2022

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Preface

- [1] In our 2010 *Declaration of Mutual Recognition*, the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) and the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) committed to work together towards ‘intentional sharing in pastoral ministry and in mission’ and a ‘Concordat for full communion, so that members from either denomination may share in Holy Communion in each other’s churches’. *At the Table* represents a stage on the way towards such a Concordat.
- [2] *At the Table* builds on decades of fruitful dialogue between our two Churches that has patiently and prayerfully, with humility and gentleness, reflected our common desire to grow into and maintain the unity which is ours in Christ. We participate already now in the unity as promise. We share in one Body and are called to the one hope that belongs to our call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism. *At the Table* builds on the work that has gone before to deepen our bonds of unity and enrich our shared understanding of the Eucharist.
- [3] A preliminary version of *At the Table* was submitted to the two Churches in early 2018 for study and feedback. Subsequent feedback led to this final version which, we pray, will serve our two Churches and the whole church catholic well.

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to *At the Table*

- [4] *At the Table* is a product of the Dialogue between the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) and the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), which itself has its origins in a preliminary meeting on 14 October 1978, which proposed that the general aim of the Dialogue was ‘to establish pulpit and altar fellowship between the Churches’.
- [5] The Dialogue produced five major statements which were accepted by the two Churches at national level in the years that followed:
- *Agreed Statement on Baptism* (1984)
 - *Agreed Statement on the Eucharist* (1985)
 - *Agreed Statement on the Ministry* (1986)
 - *Agreed Statement on the Church* (1988)
 - *Agreed Statement on One Christ in Church and World* (1990)
- [6] Our two Churches officially received these five statements as ‘stages on the road to altar and pulpit fellowship’.¹
- [7] After a pause for several years, the Dialogue recommenced in 1997. The following agreed statements were produced in this second phase of the Dialogue:
- *A Doxological Affirmation* (1997)
 - *Revisions of A Doxological Affirmation* (2006 and 2009)
 - *The Declaration of Mutual Recognition* (LCA 2009; UCA 2010)²
 - *A Great Prayer of Thanksgiving with Commentary* (2013), as a guide for cooperating LCA-UCA congregations, and as an educational tool in both Churches

¹ R K Williamson (ed), *Stages on the Way* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1994), 174.

² *Declaration of Mutual Recognition by the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia*, submitted by the LCA-UCA Dialogue, November 1999; adopted by the 9th Assembly of the UCA, July 2000; revised by the LCA-UCA Dialogue, November 2008; adopted by the LCA, October 2009; adopted by the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, 2010.

[8] Along the way, the Dialogue also completed a number of documents designed specifically to help LCA and UCA congregations desiring to work in a cooperating arrangement with each other. These documents include:

- *Guidelines for Establishing Shared Ministry (2009)*
- *Rites of Installation and Induction (2009)*
- *Guidelines for the Oversight of Co-operating Congregations, LCA-UCA (2012)*

[9] The Dialogue started fresh work on the Eucharist as the first stage on the way towards a Concordat. From 2011 the Dialogue gave its attention to this collaboration with good results, particularly in resourcing the cooperating congregations coming together to share a minister or pastor on the basis of *The Declaration of Mutual Recognition*. The situation has been reached where it is permissible for a minister of either denomination to administer Holy Communion to all members of cooperating congregations under certain conditions.

[10] The Dialogue has drawn on the principles of 'Receptive Ecumenism', which urge partners to engage in both robust exchange and appreciative listening to perspectives other than their own. Through this we become open to new insights which have not been a focus of the tradition or doctrinal confession of our respective Churches. In this way too, the Dialogue has been blessed to move beyond presumed, and even false, understandings of the other Church, and to a better understanding of our own. The practice of Receptive Ecumenism has taken us to a new place in the conversation, rewarding us with the refreshing discovery that our two Churches' positions on the Lord's Supper complement one another far more than previously thought. The statement on each of the key topics below reflects the consensus that has been reached; in other words, the statements indicate the place of arrival. Rather than regarding the characteristic emphases of each Church as barriers to communion, we now realise that they broaden our respective horizons and enrich our understandings.

[11] A chronicle of Dialogue proceedings was prepared along the way, charting progress over the years from initial questions and misgivings about the other Church's teaching, to the far deeper appreciation of the mystery of the sacrament that embraces our respective positions, without compromise. A summary of this chronicle is available separately.

[12] In preparing *At the Table*, the Dialogue used fresh terminology that avoids the shorthand expressions of each tradition which can cause unnecessary misunderstanding, because these often bear richer meanings unknown to the other Church. The work has been done with humility, in the knowledge that no human language will fully comprehend the mystery of the divine presence and gifts in the sacrament. An effect of this new language is that familiar expressions or emphases may not seem explicit enough to readers. We believe, however, that the work done by such familiar terminology is also done by the new language.

1.2 Previous Statements of Agreement on the Eucharist

[13] The following review of the achievements of the Dialogue up to the point of *At the Table* will help to set it in context.

[14] The most succinct statement of the Churches' agreement is found in the *Declaration of Mutual Recognition (2010)*:

We believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Thus, the bread and wine we eat and drink are a participation in the body and blood of Christ and join us with the whole creation in thanksgiving and praise to God our creator and redeemer. We believe that we receive the grace of divine forgiveness and new life offered in the sacrament and respond with the thankful offering of ourselves for God's service. (Section 3.7)

[15] The *Doxological Affirmation (2009)* is a prayer which includes the following:

You have given us the Eucharist, in which Christ comes to us; Christ who died for our sin and lives for our salvation; Christ who gives himself to us as the bread of life to nourish us for his mission into the world.

[16] More extensive statements are made in the 1985 *Agreed Statement on the Eucharist*, of which the following excerpts are the most pertinent as preamble to the affirmations in Part 2 of *At the Table*:

[17] I. The Nature and Importance of the Eucharist

Both the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia hold the Lord's Supper to be a sacred act instituted by Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor. 11:23-25). They hold it to be a precious sacrament which sums up in a unique way the whole Gospel of the redemption through Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation he has won for all people. Through it the Lord of the church feeds his people on their way to the final inheritance of the kingdom...

[18] II. Gift and Presence

There is agreement in great part among us as to the gift of the Lord's Supper. It is the gift of Christ's presence with his church in a unique way. In it Christ feeds us with the bread of life and gives us spiritual drink. In it Christ gives us himself to feed on in our hearts. In it we are partakers of his body and blood...

[19] III. Reception of the Gift

While all receive the essential gift offered, only those who receive the gift in faith receive the blessing of the Sacrament. The Sacrament in this respect is just like the Gospel, which is to some a fragrance from life to life, while to others it is a fragrance from death to death (2 Cor. 2:15, 16). Nevertheless both churches would want to underline the objectivity of God's gift alongside the importance of faith in the recipient...

[20] V. Liturgy

Very much that is common is found in the services of the Lutheran Church and the Uniting Church. As long as the dogma is preserved, variety in forms does not bother Lutherans. In respect of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Lutherans would insist that the real heart of the Lord's Supper as gift and reception (words of institution, distribution, eating and drinking) be kept as the central and most important part of the service and that it not be concealed or obscured by elaborate ceremonial, however fine.

The Uniting Church also allows a variety of forms for Eucharistic worship, while stipulating that certain essential features must be included. (Basis of Union, Appendix 1 says: 'Christ's words of institution as found in the Gospels or Epistle, and the manual acts there commanded: the breaking of the bread, the taking of the cup, and participation in both kinds by ministers and people')...³

[21] *At the Table* builds upon these earlier Dialogue statements, examining theological and liturgical matters in greater detail. Important resources have included:

- *The Basis of Union* (UCA);
- *Uniting in Worship 2* (UCA);
- relevant reports and theological statements in *Theology for Pilgrims* (UCA);
- *The Lutheran confessions contained in the Book of Concord*;
- *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA*;
- *LCA Church Rites, approved liturgies and other worship resources*;
- *other resources indicated in the footnotes.*⁴

³ This paragraph references the Appendices to the *Basis of Union*, which are not properly part of the *Basis* and so do not share in its authority in the UCA. The 'manual acts' are nevertheless taken up as an expectation in eucharistic celebration, in *Uniting in Worship 2* (see the Notes to the Service of the Lord's Day in *Uniting in Worship 2* [Sydney: The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 2005], p.140 note 6).

⁴ Many of these Dialogue and other documents are available in the two Churches' online repositories.

Part 2: At the Table – Affirmations

- [22] The purpose of the Dialogue's work toward *At the Table* was to expand on our Churches' common understanding of the nature of the Eucharist, with particular attention to agreement on the understanding of the nature of the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. This common understanding has already been expressed in our revised *Declaration of Mutual Recognition (2010)*:

We believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Thus, the bread and wine we eat and drink are a participation in the body and blood of Christ and join us with the whole creation in thanksgiving and praise to God our creator and redeemer. We believe that we receive the grace of divine forgiveness and new life offered in the sacrament and respond with the thankful offering of ourselves for God's service. (Paragraph 3.7)

- [23] The affirmations below treat the principal concerns – the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the effect of that presence and its honouring by communicants. Several liturgical matters important for testing our Churches' developing recognition of an understanding of Christ's presence in the Eucharist that we hold in common are then considered. It was the recognition of notable differences in tradition and practice which gave rise to some of the particular themes treated here.

2.1 Do This in Remembrance of Me: Anamnesis

What we hold in common

- [24] Just as it is Christ, the risen and exalted Lord, who speaks to us whenever the gospel is proclaimed in words, so also in the sacrament of the Eucharist Christ continues to give the church his crucified and risen body, as he did to the disciples on the evening when he first instituted this holy meal. This is a making-present-again of Christ in the Eucharist, designated by the Greek *anamnesis* in liturgical studies. The LCA and UCA agree that Jesus' eucharistic words, 'Do this in remembrance of me', do not mean that the Lord's Supper is simply a memorial meal, an opportunity to call to mind Christ and his sacrificial death for us on the cross. Rather, the Eucharist makes the crucified and risen Christ present to us, uniting us with him here and now in a way that transcends everything that we otherwise call remembrance. The centuries between Christ's last supper with his disciples and the church's celebration of the Eucharist in our day disappear and the time interval is bridged. This is accomplished by the Spirit working through the sacramental word, the effective promise of Christ, to make Christ present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.

2.2 This is My Body, this is My Blood: the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

What we hold in common

- [25] Both Churches affirm the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and have previously agreed that the Lord's Supper is 'the gift of Christ's presence with his church in a unique way';⁵ Christ 'comes to us' in the Eucharist, and 'gives himself to us as the bread of life to nourish us for his mission into the world'.⁶
- [26] We jointly affirm the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist; Lutherans have traditionally called this the 'real presence' of Christ in the Eucharist. Neither Church adheres to a 'how' of the realisation of Christ's presence, or seeks to pinpoint a particular liturgical moment at which Christ is held to 'become' present. We jointly affirm simply *that* Christ is present for us in this holy meal, as he has promised.
- [27] We jointly affirm that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a dynamic and effective presence in which we encounter Christ, specifically as the Christ who is present for us with all his benefits.
- [28] We jointly affirm that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is distinct from other ways in which he is present. Jesus gives us his body and blood to eat and drink in the tangible elements of bread and wine, with the promise that whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup receives Christ himself.
- [29] We jointly affirm that Christ is present and active in the eucharistic liturgy with its range of liturgical elements which variously acknowledge and teach how it is that God approaches us with reconciling grace in this celebration.

LCA emphases

- [30] The LCA emphasises that in the Lord's Supper Christ is present in his body and blood 'for you', for the forgiveness of sins, i.e. personally. Since Christ forgives sin through this sacrament, it is received as gospel by all who recognise they are undeserving of attendance at the table. In order to stress the gospel character of the Eucharist, LCA pastors and assistants, when they distribute the sacrament, will usually say the words: 'This is the body of Christ, given *for you*; this is the blood of Christ, shed *for you* for the forgiveness of sins'.
- [31] This is not meant to be a denial of the corporate and communal character of the Lord's Supper (the 'for you' in Matthew 26:27 and Luke 22:19f is plural), but is intended only to highlight its personal dimension. The LCA also affirms that the Eucharist feeds God's people for life and service in church and world. There is an intimate connection between the sacramental body and the ecclesial body as the former nourishes the latter. So, when the LCA distinguishes between the particular presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine and his general presence in his body, the church, it wants to stress the priority of the sacramental body as the source of life and forgiveness and not to separate them, for they belong together and are one in Christ.

⁵ *Agreed Statement on The Eucharist*, section II.

⁶ *A Doxological Affirmation*.

UCA emphases

- [32] The UCA is concerned to preserve recognition of the communal *telos* (end, goal) of the gift of Christ in the Eucharist. The UCA affirms that Christ signs and seals his continuing presence in the Eucharist. Like every presence of Christ, this is a dynamic, effective, influential presence. It extends beyond any particular moment or location in the liturgical movement, from communal thanksgiving to consumption of the elements. The Christ who promises in the words of institution is the Christ who is received in our consumption of the elements, and is the Christ whose body is realised in the reconciliation of his disciples to each other. This reconciled body is the sign, the concreteness, of our reconciliation to God.
- [33] Our 'participation', 'sharing' or 'communion' (Greek: *koinonia*; 1 Corinthians 10:16) in Christ's body and blood by consuming the bread and wine is both a conforming to the humanity of Christ and a conjoining to the body of Christ. The Spirit-enabled conforming of the individual to Christ and the conjoining into Christ's one body-community are, together, the shape of the divine forgiveness and new life graciously given in the sacrament as a foretaste of God's coming kingdom.
- [34] The UCA recognises that its understanding of the intent of the Eucharist has shifted to its present communal orientation from more individualistic understandings in the uniting Churches.

2.3 For the Forgiveness of Sins: Reconciliation and Mission

What we hold in common

- [35] We agree that both personal forgiveness and relational aspects of reconciliation are important for understanding the sacrament. We agree that the Eucharist is a communal action by which individual believers are gathered as the body of Christ to be sustained by the body of Christ. As members of the body of Christ, formed by God through their participation in the sacrament, believers are forgiven and reconciled to God, others, and the world. Once-for-all divine forgiveness of sin and cosmic reconciliation in Christ are made personal and communal now in the Eucharist as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. This forgiveness and reconciliation is not for individuals, or the church only, but is offered for the whole world, prompting us to mission and opening us to a vision and hope of the reconciliation of all creation with God.

LCA emphasis

- [36] The Eucharist is a communal sacrament which profoundly personalises the gift of forgiveness as believers receive Christ's body and blood on their own lips and in their own mouths, removing all doubt that 'this truly means me'. In traditional Lutheran language the Eucharist thus provides certain comfort for troubled consciences through the forgiveness of sins. The emphasis on forgiveness 'for me' (*pro me*) is pastoral in intent; it confirms for individuals that they are released from sin and guilt and freed to live for God and others. Forgiveness and salvation are never purely private matters between an individual and God alone, but are given personally to empower forgiveness of, and reconciliation with, others.

UCA emphasis

- [37] By viewing the Eucharist as a sacrament of reconciliation, the UCA emphasises that divine forgiveness transforms the whole community and, just so, works at an individual level. The body of Christ makes the body of Christ. Individual bodies are formed into the body which is the church. The scope of the reconciliation indicated and effected in the Eucharist embraces the individual, the communal, the cosmic and the eschatological dimensions of God's work. These dimensions are all interconnected: the communal points to the individual in reconciliation, to each other and to God; the being-reconciled community is pointed to the wider world, to take its share in God's reconciling mission in the light of eschatological call and promise.⁷

⁷ Cf. *The Basis of Union*, paragraph 8.

2.4 Take and Eat, Take and Drink: Fitting Participation

What we hold in common

- [38] The Dialogue reflected on how each Church admits people to the Eucharist, and the related matter of ‘worthy reception’, drawing from 1 Corinthians 11:27: ‘Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.’ The Dialogue rejoices that we are in substantial agreement about ‘worthy reception’ expressed in this agreement as ‘fitting participation’. In particular, we agree that the sacrament presupposes the baptism of those attending, and faith in the words and promises of Christ regarding the sacrament. This includes recognition of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated gifts, recognition of the body of Christ in the gathered congregation, and the intention to live in conformity with the gifts received. We agree that candidates for baptism and confirmation should be appropriately prepared to receive the sacrament ‘in a fitting manner’, and that there should be ongoing teaching in regard to the sacrament. We also agree that participation in the liturgy itself serves to prepare for fitting participation through, e.g., the hearing of the gospel, the confession of sins and declaration of forgiveness in the name of Christ, the sharing of the peace, the recollection of Christ’s saving death and resurrection, and our Lord’s words instituting the sacrament and declaring its benefits. Through the liturgy, God refreshes our faith in what God gives in the sacrament.

LCA emphasis

- [39] LCA pastoral guidelines on responsible communion practice affirm that what everyone receives who eats the bread and drinks from the cup is the body and blood of Christ, regardless of personal piety ‘...[but] the benefits of the sacrament – forgiveness, life, and salvation – are received only by penitent believers who accept Christ’s words and trust his promises expressed in the words of institution.’⁸
- [40] The LCA has taken careful note of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11: 27-35 in the matter of ‘fitting participation’. Sharing the bread-body of Christ and the cup-blood of Christ unifies the many members of the one body. There is a connection between the sacramental body and the ecclesial body. In particular, the LCA has included with its understanding of ‘fitting participation’ a clear confession that the Lord’s body and blood are received ‘in, with and under’ the bread and wine of the sacrament. Luther’s Small Catechism also directs the matter toward faith in the personal reception of forgiveness, responding this way to the question, ‘Who then receives this sacrament worthily?’

Fasting and bodily preparation are a good and external discipline, but that person is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: ‘for you’ and ‘for the forgiveness of sins’. On the other hand, whoever does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared, for the words ‘for you’ require truly believing hearts.

- [41] LCA teaching on responsible communion practice has moved beyond historic general guidelines that reserved Lutheran altars for confirmed Lutherans. Pastoral guidelines formulated by the LCA in

⁸ Paragraph 1 of ‘Some pastoral guidelines for responsible communion practice’, *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA Volume 2E, The Sacraments*, 1990 (Edited 2001).

recent years have resolved challenges posed by past tradition. While it is desirable that all who commune together at the table share a common understanding of church fellowship and teaching about the Eucharist, LCA pastoral guidelines state that ‘we have no clear direction from Scripture that this is always an essential qualification for attendance at the Lord’s Table.’⁹

- [42] ‘Fitting participation’ was an element in the LCA’s Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations’ work in the early 2010s on early-age communion, summarised in its document, ‘Infant communion: a reappraisal’, with the outcome that, without specifying a minimum age, the benefit of communion for children was affirmed in the context of a faithful, worshipping family, accompanied by teaching appropriate to their age.

UCA emphasis

- [43] The ‘words of invitation’ in the liturgy state who may come to the table. The UCA holds that through the Lord’s Supper ‘... the risen Lord feeds his baptised people on their way to the final inheritance of the Kingdom’,¹⁰ and so recognises that the table is for all the baptised, but respects that members of other Churches may not be able to receive communion in the Uniting Church due to their own teachings.¹¹
- [44] The UCA has a particular focus on the discernment of the body of Christ in and as the community constituted through the Risen One who was rejected and put to death on a cross. There is an expectation that ministers and leaders prepare candidates for Baptism and Confirmation to receive the sacrament and offer ongoing teaching concerning the sacrament. In terms of the UCA’s expectation doctrinally of those who receive, this is more implicit than explicit, and is captured in the formal options in *Uniting in Worship 2* for words to be offered by the communion server, ‘The body/blood of Christ, given for you’, with the communicant’s response, an affirmative ‘Amen’.¹² The UCA regards the whole liturgy as the Eucharist and considers that the journey of the liturgy itself prepares people to ‘eat and drink in a worthy manner’ through hearing the word, confession, declaration of forgiveness, and the sharing of the peace. The UCA maintains, with the World Council of Churches’ 1982 document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, that the Eucharist is not only ‘... a sign but a means of grace.’¹³ At core, fitting participation in the Eucharist is dependent on the grace of God poured out in Christ who is the host at the meal.

⁹ Paragraph 11 of ‘Some pastoral guidelines for responsible communion practice’.

¹⁰ *Basis of Union*, paragraph 8.

¹¹ ‘Doc.bytes: Discussion starters offered by the National Working Group on Doctrine, Worksheet 8: The Lord’s Supper’ (Sydney: Uniting Church in Australia-National Assembly, 2009).

¹² Doc.bytes: . . . Worksheet 8’, 182.

¹³ R Bos and G Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims: selected theological documents of the Uniting Church in Australia* (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2008), ‘Response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* by the Uniting Church in Australia’, 217.

2.5 Children at the Table

- [45] We jointly affirm that baptised children are members of the church and participate in its life and worship, including the Eucharist.
- [46] Baptism and the Eucharist are closely connected. These sacraments are gifts from the Lord ‘for the life and nourishment of Christ’s followers’ (John 3:5; 6:53-58).¹⁴ The faithful are strengthened and nourished in the Eucharist and are called to return daily to their baptism in repentant faith. In this way the sacraments sustain the faithful ‘from cradle to dying breath’.¹⁵
- [47] With regard to the appropriate age for admitting children to the Eucharist, the UCA affirms that ‘there is no minimum age for participation that can be justified theologically. ... Part of the nurturing ministry of the Church is to ensure that children are welcomed and prepared for participation. Pastoral sensitivity to the corporate and individual issues involved will suggest an appropriate age in each case and appropriate guidance generally.’¹⁶ Similarly, after the LCA’s Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations conducted an extensive study of the theology, history, and pastoral benefits of communing children, the LCA College of Bishops affirmed the study’s conclusion that the Church can offer to families ‘the preparation and admission of children to communion at the earliest possible age, as part of the Church’s responsibility to children, to strengthen their life in Christ, and in his body, the church.’¹⁷
- [48] Both Churches uphold the connection between communion and life-long catechesis and the need to ensure children admitted to communion are being appropriately catechised. We recognise as unhelpful the extremes of claiming that God’s grace can come only to those who understand it; or claiming that preparation and education are unnecessary. Rather, children and adults enter into the drama of the Eucharist, where meaning is conveyed through words and actions. Understanding is a complex process: theologically ‘to understand is to recognise signs pointing to and affirming mystery’.¹⁸ ‘Children can learn the gospel fundamentals at their level by participation in this celebration; the experience of belonging can deepen faith and confirm their place as members; and the traditional Christian education programs can build on what is learned experientially.’¹⁹ Confirmation is an important step in formation in both Churches, but is not considered a rite of admission to the Eucharist.

¹⁴ ‘Infant communion: a reappraisal’, 2012, *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA*, vol. 3. See also Bos and Thompson, 483.

¹⁵ ‘Infant communion: a reappraisal.’

¹⁶ Bos and Thompson, 501.

¹⁷ See ‘Infant communion: a reappraisal’.

¹⁸ Bos and Thompson, 491-492.

¹⁹ Bos and Thompson, 492.

Part 3: Liturgical Learnings

- [49] Our understanding of the Eucharist takes particular liturgical form, and part of the earlier work of the Dialogue was to compose a *Great Prayer of Thanksgiving with Commentary* for use in cooperating congregations and as an expression of our agreement.
- [50] While there is much in common in the accepted liturgies of the LCA and UCA, we have found it important to explore differences in emphasis and in the elements regarded as 'essential' in our respective Churches. The following statements of agreement relate to those liturgical emphases in one tradition which most caught the attention of members from the other: the explicit anamnesis and the prayer for the Holy Spirit within the Great Prayer (the Epiclesis), the practice of breaking bread within the context of the celebration (the Fraction), and the practice of taking the Lord's Supper to congregational members not able to attend public worship. Most of these liturgical elements were more commonly present, or emphasised, in UCA liturgies than in LCA practice, but both Churches have been enriched with fresh liturgical insights from one another in our wrestling with these.

3.1 Anamnesis

- [51] While anamnesis (literally 'remembrance', from the words of Christ in Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:24-25) refers to the general 'concept' of a continuing presence of Christ to the church (section 2.1, above), it also denotes a particular liturgical element in the eucharistic prayer which is common in UCA liturgies and present in some LCA orders of service.
- [52] The UCA's perspective on *anamnesis* as the action of the liturgy embraces a high view of remembering that involves the whole sweep of Christ's saving activity, past, present and future. This is given expression in *Uniting in Worship 2*, which reminds us that, in the Eucharist, 'we are "re-membered" in Christ, "rejoined" to him as he is present with us in the action of this meal. We are "re-called" to the presence of Christ in our midst. This meal anticipates and actualises the reign of Christ....'²⁰
- [53] The LCA affirms the understanding of the UCA. In the LCA's *The Service – Alternative Form*, there is an example of a prayer in which 'anamnesis' is made explicit.²¹ The second half of this prayer has been included in *A Great Prayer of Thanksgiving with Commentary* produced by the Dialogue (2013,6): 'We thank and praise you for keeping your promise to the people of old and sending your

²⁰ *Uniting in Worship 2* (Sydney: The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 2005), 136.

²¹ *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement*, authorised by the Lutheran Church of Australia (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1989), 72.

Son Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection for our salvation we remember as he comes to us in this holy meal.'

3.2 The Epiclesis

- [54] The LCA and the UCA agree that it is in and through the Spirit that Christ is present in the sacrament, according to his word, forgiving us our sins, conforming us to his body, and empowering us for service. There should be no attempt to explain the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, or to identify consecration with a particular moment or action within the eucharistic liturgy. It is enough to say that Christ is present in the consecrated elements of bread and wine, according to his promise, in the power of the Spirit. A suitable Epiclesis (prayer for the Holy Spirit) gives expression to these things.
- [55] For the UCA's part, the incorporation of an Epiclesis into the Great Prayer reflects its appreciation of important shifts in Western theology towards a recovery of more deeply trinitarian expressions and experiences of faith, including in the liturgy. The Epiclesis, among other things, is held to contribute to a fuller doxology. This is, in part, because it makes explicit what is implicit in any invocation or 'remembrancing' of Christ; namely, that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present, reconciling us with God.
- [56] In the LCA, when it is included, the Epiclesis is expressed as a prayer over the people for a faithful and fruitful reception of Christ's body and blood, as distinct from a prayer over the elements. The LCA is concerned that the Epiclesis not overshadow the words of institution. The LCA agrees that the prayer emphasises that what happens in the sacrament is not created by us, or dependent on our faith or our words, but is dependent solely on Christ and his words in and through the Spirit.

3.3 The Fraction

- [57] The early church used the words 'the breaking of bread' (Latin: *fractio panis*) to refer to the Eucharist itself (Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 27:35; 1 Corinthians 10:16; see also the accounts of the feeding of the 5000 [Matthew 14:19] and the 4000 [15:36]).
- [58] The Fraction has been one of the items that has traditionally distinguished Reformed from Lutheran celebrations of the Eucharist. In preparation for the distribution, the presider takes the bread (a single loaf, or a large wafer) and breaks it in full view of the congregation with the words, 'The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ'. Then the cup is raised, with the words, 'The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:16). Then the bread and the cup are extended towards the people with the words, 'The gifts of God for the people of God' (*A Great Prayer of Thanksgiving*, p.9). Our two Churches agree that the commands to take and eat the bread and to drink the wine, and the promise associated with them, are essential to the Lord's Supper.
- [59] Breaking the bread in the sight of the people evokes the image of Christ's body being broken for us and for our salvation – handed over to suffer and die in lonely abandonment. The word 'broken'

speaks of Christ being broken in mind, body and spirit, in total solidarity with his broken and needy church and a broken and hungry world.

- [60] As the one loaf is broken into many parts and distributed amongst the many so that they participate in the one body, a graphic image is given of Christ's self-giving to restore a broken people, reconciling their broken relationships with God and each other, drawing them into communion, and conforming them into the one body of Christ. Broken recipients are called to identify with the brokenness of the world, to hear and respond to the cry of the needy, and thereby to minister to Christ himself (Matthew 25:40).
- [61] The loaf made of wheat from the field also evokes the image of the incarnation: God entering into the materiality of our world, the Word become flesh, present in the bread, offered for our sakes, shared out amongst us, in order that we might receive life. In the eating and drinking he lives in us and we live in him (John 6:56-58).
- [62] The Fraction also has eschatological overtones. The broken pieces of bread well represent all people from the ends of the earth who are ultimately gathered and unified to become the one body of Christ, in communion with him, with each other, and with all creation.
- [63] Dialogue members concur that the Fraction enriches the Eucharist for purposes of proclamation and teaching.
- [64] The Fraction is one of the three manual acts that the UCA regards as essential for a full diet of the eucharistic liturgy – but not as essential for a valid Eucharist. (The other manual acts are the taking of the cup, and participation in both kinds by minister and people).
- [65] While the Fraction is not mandated in the LCA, it is certainly permitted and the promotion of the Fraction in the LCA could well lead to a broader and deeper appreciation of the Eucharist within the LCA.

3.4 Lay distribution beyond the gathered congregation

- [66] Both the UCA and the LCA have rites for distribution of the sacramental elements from the altar or table to those unable to attend worship – for the LCA, 'Lay Distribution to the Housebound',²² and for the UCA, 'Communion beyond the Gathered Congregation'.²³ Recipients typically include communicants in the normal pastoral care of the congregation who are housebound due to age or hospitalised due to illness. Distribution from the altar or table is carried out by a prepared and authorised lay person taking the elements consecrated in the congregation's communion service to those unable to attend, using the rite provided. Both the UCA and LCA do this with an understanding that the practice extends the one celebration of the sacrament beyond the church doors to those served this way. The rites for distribution beyond the gathered congregation do not include

²² *Rites and Resources for Pastoral Care* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1998), 45.

²³ *Uniting in Worship 2*, 226.

consecration of the elements but recall the nature of the sacrament, its source in the worship service of the congregation, and the inclusion of the person being served in it.

- [67] Our Churches agree with and affirm each other's practice. The UCA rite includes these elements: greeting, prayer (which may include invocation and adoration of God and the confession of sin), Bible reading, reflection (which may include a brief summary of the sermon), prayers of the people (intercessory prayers which may conclude with the Collect of the day and/or the Lord's Prayer), reception of communion, the peace, prayer after communion, and blessing. The LCA rite includes these elements: the peace, announcement of source, invocation, confession of sins and declaration of grace, prayer of the day, reading, reminder of words of institution, Lord's Prayer, distribution, thanksgiving, and blessing – with summary of sermon, Lamb of God, Song of Simeon and more extensive prayers as optional.
- [68] Our Churches agree that this practice does not depend on a theory of perdurance or imply 'reservation' of the elements. It is based simply on pastoral need and a congregation's single celebration of the Lord's Supper in the usual way, albeit geographically extended.
- [69] While both our Churches also have the practice of serving those unable to attend by a separate communion service conducted by a minister in the home or hospital, we agree that there is great pastoral benefit when those unable to attend are served by lay distribution beyond the gathered congregation. It includes them in the congregation's own celebration of the sacrament, and hence in the unity in Christ which the sacrament enacts. It brings them to the heart and mind of the congregation when they are named as the lay distributor is given the elements. It alerts them to their inclusion in the congregation and extends the community of care. Finally, it widens the community of care by the inclusion of the lay people who distribute the sacrament this way. We rejoice that such rich benefits are available in each of our Churches.

Conclusion

- [70] We rejoice that we have discovered so much agreement around our theology and practice of the Eucharist. Indeed, we are delighted that this agreement extends to the point that we see no substantial matters in regard to the Eucharist itself which would prevent table fellowship.
- [71] We recognise that the celebration of the Eucharist is a pastoral and liturgical act in a gathered community with its ordained minister. A Concordat between our Churches for 'intentional sharing in pastoral ministry and in mission' and 'for full communion, so that members from either denomination may share in Holy Communion in each other's Churches' therefore involves study and agreement in regard to the ordering of ministry, including the matter of the ordination of women – not currently permitted in the LCA, although a matter of continuing debate and exploration within it.
- [72] We gratefully receive the gift of dialogue within the principles of Receptive Ecumenism, which have challenged us to share openly and listen intently. Through this, we have seen and received new things and been encouraged into deeper understanding and richer liturgical practice.
- [73] We give thanks for the stirring of the Spirit, who has urged on many theologians, ministers, pastors and laypeople to labour in patient listening and careful scholarship towards these affirmations.
- [74] We encourage our Churches to receive this document in such ways that we might be strengthened and enabled further for our part in God's mission in the world.

