I have been asked to speak specifically about the special arrangement the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has with the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) and the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) which allows congregations of these churches, under certain circumstances, to offer and receive eucharistic hospitality. But before that, I need to provide you with some background about the LCA and to say a few words about the LCA’s reaction to Leuenberg since this is the main theme of the conference.

Lutheranism in Australia began in 1839 with the arrival of the first Lutherans who refused to join the Prussian Union. After a complicated history two synods were formed in the first half of the 20th century. One (the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia [UELCA]) was in fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF); the other (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia [ELCA]) was in fellowship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. In 1966, after 20 years of inter-synodical negotiations, in which Dr. Hermann Sasse played a leading role, a new church was formed: the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). A condition of union was that both former synods sever ties with other churches or church bodies and that the fellowship arrangements be worked out by the new united church as it saw fit. The result is that the LCA today is in official fellowship with only one other church.

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5 However, it does have a special understanding with the Lutheran Church Canada (LCC) as set out in the document: ‘A Confessional Agreement between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Lutheran Church—Canada’ (1993); see the LCA’s website: http://www.lca.org.au/doctrinal-statements--theological-opinions-2.html (last accessed November 2011).
and that is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea which it helped to establish. It now also holds associate membership in both the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the International Lutheran Council (ILC). The LCA is a confessional church and pastors at their ordination vow to carry out their ministry in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the confessions of the Lutheran church.

Because the LCA is not a European church, it has never made an official statement on the Leuenberg Agreement. However, several of our theologians spoke against it because of its deficiencies in the three critical areas of christology, sacramental theology, and eschatology. For that reason, the LCA would not have been able to subscribe to the Leuenberger Konkordie or join the Leuenberg Church Fellowship (today: The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe). I believe that would still be the case today, although its theological stance is changing as it tries to balance its confessional commitment with its ecumenical responsibility. The church today, for example, is split 50/50 over whether to seek full membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The constitution however requires a minimum of two-thirds of the registered delegates to a synodical convention to vote in favour of such a proposal.

For the LCA, the realistic understanding of Christ’s bodily presence in, with, and under the consecrated elements of bread and wine is central to its understanding of the gospel. Conversely, it holds that where this real bodily presence of Christ in

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6 At the time of amalgamation, the UELCA gave up membership in the LWF as a condition of union with the ELCA. The matter of LWF membership was not taken up for fifteen years to allow the union to cement. In 1981 the LCA decided to apply for membership, subject to two provisos that safeguarded its doctrinal integrity. However, before the application could be made, the LWF changed the membership clause of its constitution to reflect the shift in its self-understanding from that of an association to that of a communion. This means that any member church is now to understand itself in automatic altar and pulpit fellowship with every other member church. This makes it difficult to deny that the LWF is now more like a church than an association of churches. And this the LCA cannot accept on the basis of A.C. VII. Consequently, the 1993 convention of the Church decided to seek only associate membership. This at least allows the LCA to participate in the life, work, and committees of the LWF although its delegates cannot vote at an assembly. For the arguments pro and contra full membership in LWF, see the LCA’s website: http://www.lca.org.au/doctrine-and-theology.html (last accessed November 2011).

7 For the ordination vows, see Church Rites, ed. David A. Schubert (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1994), 140.


9 This is most fully articulated by one of its most famous theologians, Hermann Sasse, who devoted so much of his life, as did Luther, to defending the scriptural teaching that in Holy Communion the
the sacrament is denied, this is tantamount to a denial of the gospel itself. Even though Protestant evangelicalism has made inroads into the LCA and has caused some Lutherans to give up this sacramental realism, it nevertheless remains the publica doctrina of the Church.  

Although the LCA is a confessional church, it has been engaged in ecumenical dialogue for the 45 years of its existence. It is in dialogue with three churches: the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Uniting Church (made up of the former Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches, the UCA was formed in 1975). The purpose of these dialogues is not just to learn more about each other or to strive for theological convergence but to work towards mutual recognition (otherwise known as altar and pulpit fellowship). The Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue has been the longest and most productive. While at the

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The doctrinal position of the church is set out in the 'Theses of Agreement', which were adopted by both former synods prior to amalgamation and included in the Document of Union (1966). They were originally published in Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the Lutheran Church of Australia (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1980, 3rd rev. ed., 1989); see the LCA website: http://www.lca.org.au/doctrinal-statements--theological-opinions-2.html (last accessed November 2011).


The different categories of dialogue are noted in the introduction to Stages on the Way II: Documents from the Bilateral Conversations between Churches in Australia 1994-2007, edited by Raymond K. Williamson (Strathfield NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2007), 7-12: Dialogues seeking mutual recognition (this is the category that all LCA dialogues fall into), Dialogues seeking theological convergence, and Dialogues seeking Understanding.

international level the Catholic–Lutheran Joint Commission was working on the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ)\(^\text{17}\), the Australian Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue was drafting its own statement on justification. Its has currently begun working on the topic of the Petrine office.

In July 2000 the General Synod of the Lutheran Church of Australia instructed the College of Presidents 'to establish and supervise local arrangements for pastoral care in special circumstances (e.g. isolated areas) on a church to church basis’ (Resolution 16). In mind in particular were cooperative arrangements between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia. Since then, the bilateral dialogues of these churches have developed a theological basis for selective Eucharistic hospitality between congregations of these churches in special cases, where one or the other is without pastoral care and sacramental ministry.

The Anglican–Lutheran dialogue produced the covenanting document *Common Ground* in 2000 (revised 2006)\(^\text{18}\) and the Lutheran–Uniting dialogue produced a similar document *The Declaration of Mutual Recognition* in 1999 (revised 2008).\(^\text{19}\) Both these documents are the fruit of over twenty years of dialogue and constitute an initial agreement between our churches in the *doctrina evangelii* which of course includes the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The dialogues will continue until our churches can reach full agreement in the doctrine of the gospel and of the sacraments. So while it is not a sufficient basis (cf. the *satis est* of CA VII) for the true unity of our churches and thus for full Eucharistic *koinonia* and the mutual recognition of ministries, it is sufficient for Eucharistic hospitality between the congregations of the respective churches in special circumstances, with the approval of the respective church leaders.\(^\text{20}\)

The synodical convention of the LCA in 2009 adopted *The Declaration of Mutual Recognition between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church of Australia*:

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\(^{17}\) The LCA’s Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations accepted the JDDJ (today known as the Augsburg Accord) with two reservations: 1) that the doctrine of original sin needs to be properly studied (the Annexe to the JDDJ itself recognises as much), and 2) that the Roman Catholic reticence to speak of the Christian as simul iustus et peccator must also be investigated. In a word, the topic of theological anthropology remains contentious.

\(^{18}\) To view this document, see: [http://www.vcc.org.au/Ang%20Common%20Ground%20NZ%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.vcc.org.au/Ang%20Common%20Ground%20NZ%5B1%5D.pdf) (last accessed November 2011).

\(^{19}\) This document can be viewed on the UCA website under the title: Lutheran Church and UCA Dialogue Documents: [http://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/dialogues](http://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/dialogues) (last accessed November 2011).

\(^{20}\) Up till this agreement, the LCA had been operating according to a set of guidelines prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations titled: ‘Pastoral Care of Isolated Members’. This statement can be accessed on the LCA website: [http://www.lca.org.au/doctrinal-statements--theological-opinions-2.html](http://www.lca.org.au/doctrinal-statements--theological-opinions-2.html) (last accessed November 2011).
In presenting the proposal to the convention on behalf of the Commission on Theology and Inter Church Relations, I had to make it clear that this declaration did not mean that members of our two churches could commune at each other’s altars across Australia, but it meant that our churches could cooperate in ensuring that members of our churches could receive word and sacrament ministry in remote places where one congregation had a pastor or Minister of the Word and the other did not.

Secondly, because the Uniting Church is a confessing church and not a confessional church, it has no uniformity of doctrine and practice. This means that while there are some Ministers of the Word in that church who have been strongly influenced by Luther and follow him in confessing Christ’s bodily presence in Holy Communion and the efficacy of infant baptism and baptismal regeneration, the majority are more inclined to follow Calvin or Zwingli. Moreover, since the LCA does not ordain women, it would not permit a woman to preside at the altar or to preach at a combined service. Hence, only certain UCA ministers would satisfy LCA requirements.

Furthermore, some UCA presbyteries permit the ordination of ministers who are in a committed, monogamous, same-sex partnership. Since this is contrary to the publica doctrina of the LCA, this is another problem that would need to be addressed before an LCA congregation could agree to Eucharistic hospitality with a UCA congregation in special circumstances.

In order to overcome all these obstacles, the LCA, with the agreement of the UCA, resolved at its 2009 convention that any UCA minister would need to satisfy four criteria before he could be considered suitable for call to an LCA congregation in a remote area. He would need to:

1) confess the real bodily presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar
2) confess the reality of baptismal regeneration, including that of infants
3) be a male
4) not be in a same-gender relationship

What follows is an excerpt from my presentation to the 2009 synodical convention of the LCA where I spoke, on behalf of The Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, in support of the proposal to adopt the Declaration of Mutual Recognition between the LCA and the UCA.

While this Declaration is a vital step along the way, we are not yet at the point where we can agree to the mutual recognition of ministries and the mutual sharing of Holy

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21 The convention of the LCA had already adopted the document Covenanting for Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Lutheran Church of Australia in 2003.

22 The LCA is evenly divided over the issue of whether the ordination of women is contrary to Scripture and theology. For a summary of the case for the ordination of men only as well as the case for the ordination of women (as presented to the General Pastors Conference of 2006), see the LCA website: [http://www.lca.org.au/doctrine-and-theology.html](http://www.lca.org.au/doctrine-and-theology.html) (last accessed November 2011).
Communion. Local arrangements, however, can be made on a case-by-case basis, where need arises, under the oversight of the Uniting Church Presbytery and the Lutheran Church District President.

There is a reason our two churches are not yet at the point where we can recognise each other’s ministries across the board and commune at each other’s altars. The LCA has always placed a high premium on biblical doctrine and has argued that there can be no church fellowship or full communion with another church without full agreement in the doctrine of the gospel. But we must also realise that our insistence on doctrinal agreement as a precondition for church fellowship has often been perceived by others as loveless and judgmental. The LCA is trying to steer a middle course and to keep faith and love together for the sake of the mission and ministry of the church.

We cannot insist on full agreement in every article of doctrine before a local LCA congregation enters into fellowship with a local UCA congregation—in special circumstances. The proviso ‘in special circumstances’ is important, because we are not talking about fellowship between two churches but between two congregations in special circumstances which has the blessing of the respective church leaders. However, even in this situation of special need, the LCA still insists that if a UCA minister is to be called, he must agree to the teaching of the gospel and the enactment of the sacraments as set out in the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism.

It must be stressed that the Declaration of Mutual Recognition is merely a stage along the way to greater cooperation between our churches. It does not mean that Lutheran and Uniting Church members will now hold joint worship throughout Australia. It means rather that there is now a basis for limited cooperation in word and sacrament ministry in certain situations where one or other of our congregations finds itself in a situation where it either cannot secure a pastor or it cannot support a pastor. Under these conditions, and with the approval of the respective church leaders, the Declaration says it is possible for joint worship arrangements to be worked out between these congregations so that they can be pastored either by a LCA or a UCA minister.

Happily, the synodical convention approved the proposal unanimously.

What follows is a short summary of the theological basis for the Eucharistic hospitality as set out in the Declaration of Mutual Recognition between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia. I am concentrating on the joint agreement between the Lutheran and Uniting Church in this paper rather than that between the Lutheran and Anglican Church (based on Common Ground) simply because there are more joint arrangements with the Uniting Church than with the Anglican Church.

The following summary comes after the introduction and a section on the historical and confessional backgrounds of our churches:
We have been in official dialogue since 1979, and have produced the following agreed statements:23

1) *The Word of God, Justification by Faith* (1981); and *Law and Gospel* (1982). These reports to our churches formed a basis for our future work.


3) *A Pastoral Statement on Marriage* (1987), of which the two churches were asked to take note.

4) *A Doxological Affirmation* (1997; revised 2006).

5) *Summary and Outcome of discussion on Interpretation of Scripture* (2008).

Some practical co-operation is already in place, ranging from consultation at the level of heads of churches through to local ministry arrangements.

3. **Our Shared Christian Heritage**25

We identify the following ways in which we believe and practise a shared faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

3.1 **The Gospel of Grace**

We proclaim that ‘in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself’ (2 Cor 5:19),26 and that we are saved by this grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone. ‘This is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life’ (Eph 2:8-10). (See *The Word of God, Justification by Faith* and *Law and Gospel*.)

3.2 **The Bible**

We stand under the authority of the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the prophetic and apostolic testimony to Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. (See *The Word of God, Justification by Faith*.)

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25 Each of the following sub-sections is a brief summary of a particular topic discussed by the dialogue. For a full discussion of each topic, please refer to the text of the respective agreed statement indicated at the end.

26 All scripture references are to the NRSV.
3.3 The Creeds

We profess the ecumenical creed of Nicaea and the Apostles’ Creed. We believe that Jesus is true God and a true human being, and confess one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3.4 The Church

We believe that the church is created and preserved by the triune God, through God’s saving action in word and sacraments, to be in the world as sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God. We recognise that the church stands in constant need of reform and renewal. (See The Church.)

3.5 Mission and Ministry

We believe that all members of the church are called to participate in its apostolic mission. For this the Holy Spirit gives them various gifts for service. Within the community of the church, the ordained ministry exists to serve the ministry and mission of the whole people of God. We hold that the ordained ministry of word and sacrament is God’s gift to the church, and so an office of divine institution. (See The Ministry.)

3.6 Baptism

We believe that through Baptism with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the baptised are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, incorporated into his body, the church, and receive by faith God’s grace and the gift of new life in the Spirit. (See Baptism.)

3.7 The Eucharist

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. (See The Eucharist.)

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27 The LCA also adds the Athanasian Creed.
28 In the UCA, ordained ministry includes the Ministry of Word and the Ministry of Deacon.
3.8 Public Worship
We rejoice that God graciously serves us in word and sacrament when we gather in Christ’s name. We celebrate and proclaim our salvation in Christ, and we are built up together into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. We use similar orders of service for the Eucharist, for Baptism and Confirmation, for confession and absolution, for marriage and funeral rites. We share a common lectionary, as well as songs and prayers. (See A Doxological Affirmation.)

3.9 The Christian Hope
We look forward to the fulfilment of Christ’s prayer that we may all be one (John 17:11,22,23), to the renewal of creation (Rev 21:1) and the universal acclaim of the Lamb that was slain, to whom be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever (Rev 5:13).

4. Affirmation
We affirm in each other’s churches the presence of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. We believe that, despite our shortcomings, we stand in the continuity of apostolic faith and ministry. We acknowledge and respect each other’s ordination and look forward to the mutual recognition of one another’s ministries as real and effective expressions of the proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and pastoral oversight. We have learnt much from each other. We pledge to work together to develop joint participation in worship, witness and service, and to continue to seek ways of manifesting the unity that is ours in Christ.

5. Cooperation
We encourage local co-operation between our two churches in the ministry of the word and pastoral care, and a shared deployment of human and material resources for witness to local communities by word and deed. This co-operation will respect and learn from the distinctive traditions enshrined in the Book of Concord and the Basis of Union. Particular arrangements may include arrangements for shared ministry where it is preferable that a minister of either church be given pastoral and/or sacramental responsibility for the members of both denominations. In such cases, the minister(s) will be commissioned by the Uniting Church Presbytery Chairperson and the Lutheran Church District President.
6. Future Growing Together in God’s Mission

We undertake to continue to work together towards the following goals:
1) **Intentional sharing** in pastoral ministry and in mission.
2) **A Concordat for full communion**, so that members from either denomination may share in Holy Communion in each other’s churches.

The section on Our Shared Heritage provides only a brief summary of the doctrinal agreement on particular topics that is set out more fully in separate statements. I will refer to just two of these statements, one on Baptism, the other on the Eucharist; both are included as an appendix. I single out these two statements since they are critically important for Lutherans in the question of church fellowship.

The LCA dialogue group believes that both of these statements are sound and do not involve a compromise in Lutheran doctrine. However, as I mentioned earlier, the LCA still felt that it was necessary to insert two caveats in the form of two conditions that a potential UCA minister would need to fulfil before he could be called to a joint ministry arrangement, namely, (1) that baptism gives the gift of salvation and regeneration, also to infants; and (2) that Christ’s body and blood is given and received with the consecrated bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper.

By allowing congregations, in certain situations, to enter into joint sacramental ministry with the Uniting Church or the Anglican Church, the LCA is breaking new ground. It is not waiting till it reaches full doctrinal agreement with these churches before it allows a congregation, typically in a remote area, to enter into Eucharistic hospitality with approved congregations of the Uniting and Anglican Churches. This outcome is not only one of the fruits of the long years of dialogue but it has also been accelerated by a growing shortage of pastors, priests and ministers in our three churches. These are new and exciting times because they will impel our churches to find new ways of working together while at the same time listening to the Scriptures together as we continue our theological journey, so that we can also be united in a common confession of the one true faith.

Appendix

These two documents are published in *Stages on the Way: Documents from the Bilateral Conversations between Churches in Australia*, edited by Raymond K. Williamson (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1994), 204-206 (Baptism); 207-210 (Eucharist).

Baptism

[December 1984]
1. **What Baptism Is**

Baptism is a sacrament of Christ’s church. The Lord himself commanded the application of water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

2. **What Baptism Gives**

   A. In baptism the Holy Spirit conveys the benefits of Christ’s redemption. These benefits are the same as those proclaimed by the Gospel and received in faith. According to the New Testament baptism gives:
      
      a) forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16);
      b) justification (1 Cor. 6:11);
      c) new birth by which one enters the kingdom of God (John 3:5; Titus 3:5);
      d) renewal (Titus 3:5);
      e) adoption as God’s children (Gal. 3:26, 27; 4:6);
      f) incorporation in Christ’s body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13);
      g) a new ‘garment’ (Gal. 3:27);
      h) salvation (1 Pet 3:20, 21);
      i) union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection and final glory (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:12; 3:3, 4).
   
   B. God in Christ acts both in the church and the world through the Holy Spirit. In baptism, the Holy Spirit is both gift and agent (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38 cf. 41; 9:17, 18; 19:2, 3). The Spirit is the seal God promised as a guarantee of the future inheritance (Eph. 1:13; 4:3; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22). The Spirit also creates the faith which receives the gift of baptism. This faith is not a product of human decision and commitment. It should be noted that the reception of the Spirit after a lapse of time and subsequent to a Christian baptism without the Spirit (cf. Acts 8) is obviously not the norm (Acts 8:16). Baptism is the complete act of Christian initiation which requires no supplementary rite or ceremony.
   
   C. Baptism creates new life. Christians can trace the beginning of their new life in Christ to their baptism (Rom. 6:4). Baptism nurtures a life of discipleship which begins in baptism and which continues through the life of the baptised through instruction in all that Christ has commanded his church to teach (Matt. 28:19). The people of God are motivated and empowered by their baptism to struggle against sin (Rom. 6:1-11), to witness in church and world to Christ’s resurrection, to love God and their neighbour, to serve, help, encourage and comfort all people and to do everything else that the new life in Christ involves. People who have been reborn as God’s sons and daughters are prompted to live righteously (1 John 2:29), and members of Christ’s body are
prompted to use their charismatic gifts for the common good and the edification of all other members of Christ in love (1 Cor. 12-14). As those who have been enlightened, they shine as lights in this dark world to the glory of God, the Lord of their baptism.

If Christians lapse from the faith (and it seems that many do) and the Holy Spirit leads them back again to repentance, they must not be baptised again. Baptism maintains the Christian’s status of being joined once and for all to Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. The very nature of baptism excludes the practice of re-baptism.

3. **What Baptism Demonstrates**

Baptism, especially when infants are baptised, demonstrates that Christians are justified by faith apart from human efforts to fulfil what God’s law requires. Baptism itself works faith (Col. 2:12) also in children who are baptised because they, too, are part of ‘all nations’ whom the Lord commissioned the church to baptise. Infants are also part of sinful humanity and need to be reborn, as well as adults, of water and the Spirit. Our Lord clearly regarded his kingdom as received by children, even infants (Luke 18:15).

4. **What Baptism Recalls**

Baptism recalls three events of salvation-history: Christ’s baptism in the river Jordan (Mark 1:9-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22); the Lord’s death on the cross and his resurrection (Luke 12:50; cf Col. 2:9-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22); and the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-3,38; cf John 1:31,32; Acts 10:44-48). These events teach the baptised that Christ is the ‘Head’ of his body, the church, and that the baptised people of God receive in the sacrament of baptism a unique participation in the benefits of his life, suffering, death, resurrection (Rom.6) and ascension, which includes the gift of the Holy Spirit.

5. **What Baptism Demands**

Baptism demands that the church remembers the command of Christ (Matt. 28:19) and that water be used. The word ‘baptism’ requires the use of water. These two aspects – the triune name and water – are essential to every baptism. The quantity of water is of relatively minor importance. Water may be sprinkled or poured, or the candidate may be immersed in water. Since our two churches call and ordain pastors or ministers to proclaim the Word of God and to administer the blessed sacraments, it is the practice, except in exceptional circumstances, that those ordained administer baptism.
Agreed Statement on Baptism

Baptism takes place, in normal circumstances, in the presence of the people assembled for worship, and our churches provide forms of worship or orders of service for use in congregations. The current liturgies of our churches have the following elements in common:

- Invocation (or Call to Worship)
- Confession and Absolution (or Declaration of Forgiveness)
- Readings from Scripture
- Affirmation of Faith (the Creed)
- Exhortation, which includes references to the baptismal command and its promises
- Reading of Scripture passages relevant to the candidate(s) for baptism and to those who are about to witness the administration of the sacrament, e.g. Matt. 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-4
- Address to the candidates for baptism which includes the renunciation of evil, and the confession of faith on the part of the candidate(s) to be baptised
- Prayer and/or the ‘Invocation of the Holy Spirit’
- The Baptism with Water in the Name of the Triune God
- The Sign of the Cross (the moment for this differs in the liturgies of the two churches)
- Various ‘Auxiliary Acts’, e.g. the gift of a baptismal candle
- Prayers and Benediction

Eucharist

[December 1985]

Preamble

As with other reports of this dialogue, the following statement is a step on the way to ‘pulpit and altar fellowship’. It does not attempt a full description of the meaning of the Eucharist, nor is there agreement at all points; however, we believe it will enable our two churches to come to a fuller understanding and agreement in the future.

We are aware of the World Council of Churches statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, and of bilateral statements emanating from various continents, but we have not followed all their suggestions.
1. 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. Its celebration calls for the response of faith and grateful worship of Christ’s people, and the history of the church has shown that it is precisely the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper of Holy Communion which has inspired the most exalted expressions of praise and thankful adoration of the people of God.

2. 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.

However, there is a difference between the churches when it comes to describing the nature of the gift.

2.1 Lutherans hold that the gift is the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. This they assert on the basis of the passages dealing with the Lord’s Supper, especially Matt. 26:26-29 and the Synoptic parallels, 1 Cor. 10:16, 17 and 11:23-30. The term commonly used to describe the Lutheran teaching is ‘Real Presence’. What is meant is specifically the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine, not merely the presence of Christ in a general way (as Matt. 18:20, for instance, speaks of Christ’s presence where two or three are gathered together in his name). So, as the bread and wine are distributed, taken, eaten and drunk, the body and blood of Christ are distributed, taken, eaten and drunk. This eating is an eating and drinking with the mouth (manducatio oralis). And it is an eating and drinking which is true of all those who partake, whether they are worth (believing) or unworthy (unbelieving) guests.

Lutherans do not try to define the mystery involved. They are content to make the simple assertion on the basis of the worlds of the Lord in his institution. Any further statements of Lutherans on the nature of the eating and drinking that take place are meant to ward off misunderstandings of their teaching.

2.2 The Uniting Church, since its inception in 1977, has dealt with the doctrinal questions concerning the Eucharist far less than has the Lutheran Church. While there is little in the above Lutheran statements which is contrary to Uniting Church documents there is reluctance in those documents to define the gift in isolation from the Giver. Certainly, Christ is truly present in the
sacrifice, and our Lord’s statements in 1 Cor. 11 (‘This is my body which is for you’ and ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood’) are definitive. But the reference to the ‘covenant’ suggests the sacrifice on the Cross, so that the Lord’s Supper draws its significance from Christ’s remaking of the covenant by his obedience to death. Therefore, in the sacrament, Christ offers himself to us in such a way that, by receiving his body and blood, we are continually constituted and sustained as God’s people, the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

At the same time, there is a personal receiving, as the ‘Scots Confession’, chapter 21, says: ‘… the faithful … do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that he remains in them and they in him; they are so made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone …’

3. Reception of the Gift

Since the Lord’s Supper is in its essence the imparting of a gift, the gift of the body and blood of Christ, and with this also the blessing of the forgiveness of sins, both Lutheran and Uniting Churches hold that the proper use of the Eucharist must consist in the proper 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.

Much of what is contained in Uniting Church statements and in its various orders of service for Holy Communion, Lutherans will accept as valid, but they see such statements more as a result of the faith that accepts the gift than as a direct description of the sacrament. So, for example, the Lord’s Supper, in the Lutheran view of things, may properly be described, as Uniting Church documents say, as a thanksgiving of the Church for the redemption of Christ; as a communion with Christ and with all members of Christ’s body; and as an anticipation of pledge of a ‘fuller presence of Christ with his people hereafter’.

In addition to the above categories of thanksgiving, communion and pledge, the Uniting Church is re-examining the notion of sacrifice, in the way that the World Council of Churches’ statement Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry suggests. Other categories which are of increasing importance are memorial (anamnesis) and invocation of the Spirit. Because the notion of sacrifice has been especially divisive, we wish to report on our examination of it.
4. **Sacrifice**

There is a basic agreement among us in the understanding of the term ‘sacrifice’ in connection with the Sacrament. For neither church is the Eucharist a sacrifice supplementary to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Eucharist is not an offering of the church to God by which it gains merit for the church of for those communing. For both churches the Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Through it Christians are to be enabled more and more by the power of the Spirit present in the Word of the Eucharist to offer themselves up to Christ as a living sacrifice. Lutherans on the whole have not been enthusiastic about the term sacrifice, because of the ambiguity which is inherent in it. The common use of the term sacrifice to mean propitiation or self-denial makes it to them an undesirable word to use, even though it can be quite properly employed.

In the Uniting Church, the term has in the past been used only in the phrase ‘sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving’, but recent re-definition is having the effect of bringing it gradually into use in a wider sense. For example, the following statement of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* would be acceptable to the Uniting Church:

a) ‘The Eucharist is the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e. the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind’ (par. 5, p. 11);

b) ‘The Eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, whoever lives to make intercession for us’ (par. 8, p. 11).

5. **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’). The published orders of service indicate a desire to accept reforms in liturgy which ecumenical study in recent times has recommended. There are also debts to Anglican, Reformed and Roman Catholic resources.