

# Communion in Faith, Life and Witness

Partnership Agreement between  
the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA)  
and  
the Church of Norway (CoN)  
in cooperation with the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS)  
and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)



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## *1. Our common basis and calling*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA) and the Church of Norway (CoN) confess our common faith in the triune God, and believe that we through our common baptism belong to the one, holy, apostolic and catholic Church.

We confess together that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as found in Holy Scripture and as interpreted and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confession, is the power of God that creates, equips and sustains us for faithful participation in God's mission in the world.

As members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), we are in communion, sharing Word and sacraments and recognizing one another's ministries. As members of the (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) we affirm our common calling and commitment to unity in faith, life and witness with all the member churches of these bodies, locally, nationally, regionally and globally. We invite our partners to share - as far as they can - the communion we have with other churches.

In our communion we are bound together to explore, extend and deepen our communion. In mutual accountability we will practice mutual sharing, support, admonition and critique, as we seek together to understand and respond to God's call.

## *2. Our common history*

We acknowledge that the ELCSA and the CoN through the NMS have built a historical relationship through longstanding missionary and church cooperation since the first missionaries arrived in South Africa in 1844. We thank God for what has been granted to our churches through this relationship, by sharing of the Gospel, through the mutual sharing of spiritual gifts, through the longstanding encounters and through the sharing of our human resources. We also acknowledge the involvement of the CoN in the ecumenical struggle against racism and the apartheid regime as an important part of our common history. Other partners of our churches have also established cooperation and exchanged resources, like the Norwegian Church Aid, theological faculties and some of our dioceses. This history of our churches is intertwined in a way that has a deep impact on our churches. This inspires us to a further common involvement in the life of one another, in order to encourage one another to fulfill our calling to share the Gospel in word and deed, each in our place and together in our common world.

### **3. Our common commitment**

We commit ourselves to deepen and develop our mutual relationship through:

- Mutual sharing of concerns and mutual intercessions, e.g. through the different mass media tools of the partners,
- Exploring possibilities for some joint ventures in fields like theological studies, mission, local, national and world wide ecumenism, and initiatives for justice, peace and integrity of creation,
- Sharing information with the membership of our respective churches, the wider Lutheran communion as well as with our national and regional ecumenical partners, e.g. through our information networks,
- Holding common church leader meetings on themes of common concern at a regular basis, e.g. every four years,
- Inviting representatives from one another's churches in different positions and with a variety of responsibilities to visit and participate in the life of the other church,
- Establish or acknowledge agreements on specific programs, in cooperation with partners in both churches.

### **4. Common implementation and evaluation**

This agreement is a platform for different efforts undertaken by the partners. Each church will implement the platform according to the regulations of the churches in work and the capacities available for this pursuit. Eight years after the signing church leaders from our churches and leaders from the NMS and the NCA will gather to evaluate whether the formulations of our agreement need to be revised. There might be other specific agreements on particular projects between different partners in our churches from time to time. The agreements or covenants attached to this agreement are to be revised or rescinded according to the terms of references agreed in each one of them.

Lillehammer, November 16, 2005

**For the ELCSA:**

Louis Sibyia  
*Bishop*

Frederick Bell  
*General Secretary*

**For the Church of Norway:**

Ingrid Vad Nilsen  
*Moderator CNCEIR*      Finn Wagle  
*Presiding Bishop*

**For the NMS**

as co-partner in this partnership:

Lars Gunnar Lie  
*Moderator NMS*

**For the NCA**

as co-partner in this partnership:

Atle Sommerfeldt  
*General Secretary*