

## Finding out about the difference between Lutherans and Episcopalians

On 18 March 2023 there will be a signing ceremony for full communion with the Church of Sweden with their new Archbishop of Uppsala, Martin Modéus, which will be held in Paris on the occasion of the Cathedral's centenary.

The Church of Sweden is Evangelical Lutheran. What does that mean?

Well, it's not like we, at All Saints', are totally in the dark. We are lucky to count among our clergy Rev. Katie Osweiler, who is Lutheran, and we all fit perfectly well together. Good news. So, there's nothing to be anxious about. But it would be helpful to understand what unifies Lutherans and Episcopalians, which is the purpose of this short paper.

Both traditions originated in separate protests against the Roman Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. We are both 'Protestants', which means we value the Bible more than tradition itself; the Bible being the words of God, and the traditions mere human attempts and constructions to apply it.

The Episcopalians, part of the Anglican Church, emigrated to America. Lutherans grew up in nearby Germany. At that time there was no internet, nor any phones, so some differences of sensibility occurred. But the Holy Spirit was at work and though there was little contact between Lutherans and Episcopalians, a strong common root began to grow.

We share the same Creed, and believe in the Holy Trinity. We share that only Christ can save us, plus many other points that you can look at on the following page on the internet site of Pastor Daniel Isaiah Joseph:

<https://christianityfaq.com/lutheran-episcopalian-comparison/>

These shared beliefs led naturally to a full communion on 6 January 2001 between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church, in a ceremony held at Washington National Cathedral.

"Full communion is an organic relationship. It is not a document nor a set of legislative criteria. Being in communion, which is a very ancient principle, does not mean merging. Being in communion means respecting one another's traditions – be they liturgical, linguistic, cultural or theological – but recognizing that there's a sufficient commonality of faith so that those two entities can share life in Christ to the full," said the Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church.

"It is, therefore, my prayer and earnest hope that full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church of the United States will lead to ever-widening and deepening relationships of shared life and mission with other churches of the Reformation, as well as the Church of Rome and the churches of the East," Griswold said.

A kind of prophetic talk, as we now see Europe following America on this route.

As a conclusion, tolerance is the master word, though very likely we keep our own tradition, and through a full communion we can use our differences to be complementary to fulfill God's Work at our best.

Vincent Musschoot