



CONFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND ECUMENICAL RESPONSIBILITY

A Statement from the XXVI World Conference of the International Lutheran Council

The International Lutheran Council (ILC) gathered in Antwerp, September 25-28, 2018, to share papers on and to discuss the twin topics of fellowship and ecumenism, framed by devotional reflection. Members of the organization, all of which share a vigorous subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, recognize that each member body will express its confessional commitment in ways unique to its specific context.

Lutherans affirm an ecumenical approach and an ecumenical claim at the same time. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of the ecumenical creeds in the Book of Concord and expressed, for instance, in the structure of the Smalcald Articles. Here Luther states a basic consensus agreement on the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the Person of Christ, a basic dissensus on justification, and further questions to be debated. This claim for catholicity provides a basic framework for confessional Lutheran ecumenical engagement in our time and context: identify points of agreement, points of disagreement, and points for further conversation.

This approach has manifested itself in the rich and varied histories of the church bodies of the ILC. These different historical expressions challenge us to strive towards greater internal unanimity. At the same time, we are also driven to engage churches outside of the ILC community, because we are convinced we have an obligation to share the Gospel of Christ and all its articles—our confessional heritage—with the whole of Christianity.
