

Cooperative Agreement between the IELB and the IECLB

1. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (IELB) and the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), as the two largest Lutheran Churches in the country, affirm and seek the unity of the body of Christ, and therefore acknowledge their commitment to the following objectives:

- 1.1 To seek the conditions necessary to achieve full communion in the use of the Word and Sacraments, in accordance with the will of the Lord Jesus Christ and the concern of the Church expressed in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: “We beseech Christ that he look upon the afflicted and scattered churches and restore them to holy and everlasting concord” (Preface, paragraph 19).
 - 1.2 To promote confessional identity in the sense of manifesting the catholic (universal) tradition of the Lutheran Church and responding to the challenges of our time.
 - 1.3 To provide a testimony of the truth of the Gospel in the world, particularly in Brazilian and Latin-American society.
 - 1.4 To promote co-operation in common activities and goals, in order to attain better results through unified action.
2. The two Churches confess that, in spite of their common origin and commitment, they have not invested the necessary effort toward mutual convergence and toward the development of joint projects which follow from their mandate.
3. Although certain theological differences persist and there is not yet altar and pulpit fellowship between the two Churches, both acknowledge the need to commemorate a co-operative agreement in order to support already existing projects and give them official recognition as well as to suggest other endeavors among the diverse activities in both Churches, always with the intention of furthering the above mentioned objectives.
4. The two Churches accept and confess the canonical books of the Sacred Scriptures as the revealed Word of God. Both accept the Creeds of the ancient Church, the Augsburg Confession and other basic documents of the Lutheran Reformation as the correct exposition of the Sacred Scriptures.
5. On the basis of the aforesaid, the IELB and the IECLB affirm the present co-operative agreement toward the end that they might fulfil the obligations of the Christian Church in this country, with particular emphasis in the following areas.

I. LITERATURE

1. The two Churches support the work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Literature (CIL), formed in 1974 and composed of members of both Churches.
2. The two Churches support the project “Martinho Lutero—Obras Selectionadas” (“The Selected Works of Martin Luther”) as a great common enterprise.
3. The two Churches promote a common edition of the daily devotional “Castelo Forte” (“A Mighty Fortress”), with texts provided by workers from both Churches.
4. In addition to the books already published, the two Churches propose that the CIL promote other joint publications.
5. The two Churches propose that the CIL look into common publications and avoid duplication of effort.

II. PUBLISHING HOUSES

1. The two Churches recognize that the Concórdia Editora and the Editora Sinodal, even with their business aspects, are instruments to help the Churches to fulfil their evangelical objectives.
2. The two Churches encourage the directors of the two publishing houses to promote and sell the publications and the materials of the two Churches whenever possible.
3. The two Churches encourage the directors to examine all the official supplies for the congregations and submit them to the editorial advisors and editorial administrators for eventual use in both Churches (e.g., certifications, forms, membership roles, index cards), as well as to work toward common versions of hymns, the Catechisms of Luther, etc.

III. THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

1. The two Churches encourage the theology faculties, i.e., at the Seminário Concórdia of São Leopoldo and at the Escola Superior de Teologia of São Leopoldo to organize regular meetings with an aim toward “mutual edification and counsel” in the areas of research and theological formation.
2. The two Churches recognize the graduate programs of both theological institutions and recommend that each accept the credits of the other.
3. The two Churches underline the importance of exchanging qualified professors in graduate programs whenever necessary and whenever possible.

IV. CONVENTIONS AND CONFERENCES

1. The two Churches recommend that the co-operation between the Churches be explicitly and concretely promoted, with official representatives of each being invited to participate in their conventions and general councils and in other important events at national, regional, and district levels.
2. The two Churches propose the organization of seminars and meetings of Church workers at various levels, as well as of the graduates of the respective seminaries and theological institutions, with an aim toward mutual understanding and common awareness of confessional Lutheran identity and of its importance in the Brazilian and Latin-American contexts.
3. The two Churches propose that theological dialogue be deepened at all levels and that the discussion of topics important for the life and activity of the Church be advanced. (Examples: chaplancy, ecumenical challenges, diversification of ministries, religious movements).

V. WORSHIP AND MUSIC

1. The two Churches recognize the importance of using a common text in the worship book and in hymnals (e.g., lectionary, pericopes, liturgies, hymns).
2. The two Churches commend the interchange and mutual development of sacred choral and instrumental music.

VI. MISSION

1. The two Churches propose the organization of missionary conferences so that together they might advance mission theology and seek appropriate missionary strategies.
2. The two Churches affirm the importance of conducting and sharing missionary research in Brazil and abroad.

3. The two Churches emphasize the need for common planning in mission areas, particularly in developing and frontier regions, in order to avoid competition and animosity.
4. The two Churches recognize that prosylitism is not an acceptable form of conducting Christ's mission and, therefore, recommend the development and adoption of common criteria for the transfer of members between the two Churches.

VII. SOCIAL SERVICE

1. The two Churches affirm the necessity of taking up and developing common projects in all activities of social service (e.g., hospitals, clinical laboratories, homes for children and the aged, private retirement plans, etc.).

VIII. EDUCATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. The two Churches recognize the common origin and confessional nature of their schools, starting from the importance Luther gave to education and, consistent with his thought, including a wholistic approach and the ethical development of each citizen.
2. The two Churches seek to join the forces of their primary, secondary, and higher educational institutions with respect to the practice of the Lutheran philosophy of education, applying all the available human and material resources.
3. The two Churches will develop a joint action plan with the aim to co-operate with public entities in the fulfillment of their responsibility for quality of public education and its accessibility for all Brazilians.

IX. PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

1. The two Churches recognize that Martin Luther, in his writings and public declarations, took up his civic responsibilities, thus making manifest that a confessional foundation, established in the Gospel, and Lutheran worship have concrete application in everyday life.
2. The two Churches recommend the promotion of the constant analysis of the Brazilian and Latin-American socio-economic and political contexts and the furtherance of the awareness of their specific responsibility and mission within these contexts.
3. The two Churches advocate the importance of seeking to articulate public positions with respect to the specific challenges of our age with the intention of bringing about the will of God the Creator for life, justice, and the common good.

X. METHODOLOGICAL STEPS

In order to bring about the propositions for joint action, at least one annual meeting of the agencies responsible for the respective sectors of activity should take place.

XI. PRAYER

The two Churches join in common prayer to the Lord of the Church:
"May the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant us the grace of His Holy Spirit so that all may be united in Him and that we may continually persevere in this Christian unity which is pleasing to Him. Amen." (FC-Epitome, Art. XI, 23. Book of Concord, p. 536)