

The ELCA takes another step on the road to the Episcopal/Roman Catholic priesthood.

The ELCA will soon vote to “ordain” deacons. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly, meeting August 5-10, 2019, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, will take this action, which requires a constitutional change (§7.52 will be amended to add the word “ordained”).

This action follows the constitutional change made by the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to establish deacons (§7.54.01). The 2016 Assembly also voted to delete the word “clergy” to describe pastors because deacons are clergy, too.

The above 2016 and 2019 constitutional changes are required steps on the road to the Episcopal/Roman Catholic threefold hierarchy of bishop, priest, and deacon.

The sacred touch of power. The ELCA’s unity agreement with the Episcopal Church, *Called to Common Mission* (CCM), **requires** the ELCA to have ordained deacons which are interchangeable with Episcopal deacons (§16). ELCA leaders, some deceptive, others naïve, have not told their people what this means.

When ordained, Episcopal deacons are given **power to become priests**. To be sure, not all deacons become priests. Permanent (permanently remain) deacons do not transition to priests. But **all priests must first be ordained a deacon**. This practice is required by Episcopal canon law. Usually one is ordained a deacon for six months before being ordained a priest. In time, the ELCA will have two kinds of deacons, too: Permanent deacons and transitional deacons who are on track to be pastor/priests. It is a **required** step just like the constitutional changes made in 2016 (§7.54.01) and 2019 (§7.52) were required steps.

Back in 1997 J. Robert Wright, an Episcopal architect of CCM, told the ELCA Churchwide Assembly that Episcopal leaders were troubled by the way **“ELCA leaders ‘were fudging’ on the future requirement for ordained deacons”** (*Lutheran Forum* 10/1997, p.5). To be sure, ELCA leaders from Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson to the present have fudged and obfuscated [time and again](#).

Episcopal Church in 2012: The ELCA must ordain deacons like we do. In 2012 the Episcopal General Convention adopted [a resolution](#) identifying the ELCA’s lack of deacons as an impediment to **achieving** full communion as agreed to in CCM §16.

Achieving full communion? The ELCA declared full communion with the Episcopal Church in 1999. But the Episcopal Church does not declare full communion with the ELCA ([§14](#)) until the ELCA has taken all the required steps to achieve the full threefold hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons ([§16](#)).

Ordained deacons, the kind required by CCM, are an anomaly in Lutheranism. Some Lutheran churches have an office of deacon but most do not regard it as the first rung on the hierarchical ladder. Episcopalians, however, do, and CCM requires ELCA deacons to conform to Episcopal norms (§16).

In the Lutheran view of ordained ministry some are “called” by all to act on behalf of all. This calling (vocation) is what ordination is about, not some touch of a sacred hand.