

A THEOLOGY FOR MISSION  
BY THE ELCA  
IN THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is "one church," called into being by "one Spirit," acknowledging "one Lord," confessing "one faith," and administering "one baptism." This church has, as St. Paul declared, "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:1-7).

This church has several "expressions" (ELCA Constitution 3.02, 5.01.c, and 7.11). In the Santa Clara Valley of California, these "expressions" include 25 organized congregations, one developing congregation, and a variety of special ministries. Each is separately incorporated and/or has its own identity, yet each is a part of the "one body" that is "the church."

We who compose this "body" or "this church" are called to proclaim, by word and deed, the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ for all creation. We are called to "care" for that creation (Genesis 1:26). We are called to "go" and "make disciples out from among all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that (Jesus has) commanded (us)." And we have the promise that Christ will be "with (us) always, to the close of the age," as we fulfill our "calling" or our "mission" (Matthew 28:19-20).

St. Paul also has reminded us that, as a part of the one body, the church, each "expression" has a different role or function to fulfill. Yet each remains a part of the one body (Romans 12:3-21).

One congregation or one ministry may express its calling or mission in one way, another in another, and a third in still another way. As each remains connected, both to Christ, who is the "head," and to each other part, each receives strength, encouragement, and fulfillment. By the same token, when any part is separated--either from the head or from its other parts--it loses both the source of its identity, as well as its ability to carry out its function.

The parts of the body need each other. The "expressions" of the church need one another also, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the gospel which they are called to proclaim.

May we, therefore, who are a part of "the body of Christ," the church in this place, both acknowledge and affirm Christ as our head, as well as each part of the body working together, so that each may be about the mission to which Christ has called us. Then the people in this valley may both see and hear, as well as come to know, in a fresh and a vital way, the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

So may it be.