

**Corff Llywodraethol Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru
The Governing Body of The Church in Wales**

Porvoo Communion

Governing Body, 18-19 September 2025
Corff Llywodraethol, 18-19 Medi 2025

Agendum 13

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands: Signing the Porvoo Declaration

Background

The Porvoo Communion is a communion of 15 Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches in Europe. The communion was established in 1992 by a theological agreement entitled the [Porvoo Common Statement](#). This contains the Porvoo Declaration (reproduced in the appendix) which enables full communion between and among these churches. The Church in Wales signed the Porvoo Declaration in 1995, following the resolution of the Governing Body on 28 September 1995 and established in the Welsh constitution by the Porvoo Declaration Canon 1995. Subsequently, the 1995 Canon was supplemented by the Porvoo Declaration Amendment Canon 2016 (7 April 2016) in order to support the inclusion of five new churches, namely the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church and the Lusitanian Church of Portugal.

The 2016 Canon included provision for addition of further Churches to the list of signatories by way of simple motion, proposed and seconded by a diocesan bishop.

Since 1995 the Church in Wales has played its full part in the life of the Porvoo Communion, including hosting the meeting of the Porvoo primates and presiding bishops in Llandaff in October 2011 and a forthcoming theological conference to mark the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea which is to be held this year, in central Cardiff, from 7 to 9 October. The Church in Wales is represented on the Porvoo Contact Group by the Director of Faith, Order and Unity, the Rev'd. Canon Dr Ainsley Griffiths, and he has also served as the Anglican Co-secretary of the Communion since 2023.

Purpose of this paper

As in 2016, the Governing Body of the Church in Wales is being asked to consider ratifying the inclusion of an additional church, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands (in Faroese, Fólkakirkjan í Føroyum; in Danish, Færøernes folkekirke). The Faroese intend to sign the Porvoo Declaration at the opening Eucharist of the forthcoming theological conference, a service to be held at Eglwys Dewi Sant, at which the Archbishop of Wales and the Bishop of Llandaff will concelebrate with other bishops of the Porvoo Communion. As a sign of the communion established by the welcoming of the Faroese Church, one of the concelebrants will be the Bishop of the Faroe Islands.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands

The people of the Faroe Islands accepted Christianity around the year 1000 and, as a result of changing international circumstances, the Church has been aligned with

both Norway and Denmark, prior to being granted increasing autonomy in recent years. Between approximately 1153 and 1620 it was part of the Norwegian Church (the Diocese of Bergen and the Archdiocese of Nidaros) and in 1620 was subsumed into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. Between 1990-2007 it became as a separate diocese of the Danish Church and in 2007 it became an independent Church in its own right. The separation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark was a part of a treaty with the State of Denmark allowing for Faroese self-government within various institutions. Hence the separation was peaceful and not caused by theological controversies. Indeed, there still are close and strong contacts between the Faroese and the Danish churches. Indeed, the Faroese bishop takes a full part in the Nordic Lutheran Bishops' gatherings, the most recent of which took place in the Faroe Islands.

Currently the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands has 41,729 members, representing 77% of the Faroese population (2023). It has one bishop, one cathedral dean, 27 pastors, 61 churches and chapels and 16 parishes. The bishop (Biskupur) of the Faroe Islands is the Right Reverend Jógvan Fríðriksson, consecrated as bishop in 2007 as the first bishop of the independent Church of the Faroe Islands, following its separation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. The bishop's seat is at Tórshavn Cathedral.

For centuries part of the Danish Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands proclaims the same Christian faith, founded upon the Holy Scriptures and expressed in the Apostolic and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds, the Augsburg Confession and Martin Luther's Small Catechism. It has the two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and it is structured according to an episcopal order. Thus, its theological foundation and ecclesial ordering are both entirely compatible with the other churches of the Porvoo Communion.

Before the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark signed the Porvoo Declaration a conference was held in Copenhagen in September 2009 to explore key issues relevant for the inclusion of the Danish Church. Given its identical theological and ecclesiological basis, these discussions pertain, by extension, to the Faroese Church. Porvoo member churches were all invited to that conference and the Church in Wales was represented by the late Rev'd. Gwynn ap Gwilym. Gwynn was also present when the Danish Church signed the Porvoo Common Statement a year later, in October 2010.

Why sign the Porvoo Declaration now?

Had the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands remained as a diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark it would naturally have become incorporated into the Porvoo Communion when the Danish Church joined in 2010.

However, as it received its independence some three years prior to this it is not yet a member of the Porvoo Communion. Nevertheless, following a detailed process of consultation with its parishes and pastors, the Faroese Church is now keen to sign

the Porvoo Declaration and looks forwards to playing a full part in the life of the Porvoo Communion.

Governing Body resolution

The Governing Body is invited to adopt the following resolution to support the admission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands as part of the Porvoo Communion:

Pursuant to Section 3 of the *Porvoo Declaration Amendment Canon 2016*, the Governing Body of the Church in Wales agrees to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Faroe Islands joining with it and the Churches set out in the Second Schedule to the *Porvoo Declaration Canon 1995* in making the Declaration set out in the First Schedule to that Canon.

Ainsley Griffiths
13 August 2025

The Porvoo Declaration: part of the Porvoo Common Statement

We, [NN.], on the basis of our common understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church, fundamental agreement in faith and our agreement on episcopacy in the service of the apostolicity of the Church, contained in Chapters II-IV of The Porvoo Common Statement, make the following acknowledgements and commitments:

- a)
 - i. we acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God;
 - ii. we acknowledge that in all our churches the Word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist are duly administered;
 - iii. we acknowledge that all our churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith;
 - iv. we acknowledge that one another's ordained ministries are given by God as instruments of his grace and as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also Christ's commission through his Body, the Church;
 - v. we acknowledge that personal, collegial and communal oversight (episcopate) is embodied and exercised in all our churches in a variety of forms, in continuity of apostolic life, mission and ministry;
 - vi. we acknowledge that the episcopal office is valued and maintained in all our churches as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.

- b) We commit ourselves:
 - i. to share a common life in mission and service, to pray for and with one another, and to share resources;
 - ii. to welcome one another's members to receive sacramental and other pastoral ministrations;
 - iii. to regard baptized members of all our churches as members of our own;
 - iv. to welcome diaspora congregations into the life of the indigenous churches, to their mutual enrichment;
 - v. to welcome persons episcopally ordained in any of our churches to the office of bishop, priest or deacon to serve, by invitation and in accordance with any regulations which may from time to time be in force, in that ministry in the receiving church without re-ordination;
 - vi. to invite one another's bishops normally to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of bishops as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church;
 - vii. to work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry;

- viii. to establish appropriate forms of collegial and conciliar consultation on significant matters of faith and order, life and work;
- ix. to encourage consultations of representatives of our churches, and to facilitate learning and exchange of ideas and information in theological and pastoral matters;
- x. to establish a contact group to nurture our growth in communion and to co-ordinate the implementation of this agreement.