

U.S., Canadian denominations sign full communion agreement

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [November 11, 2015](#) issue

Two of North America's most liberal Protestant church groups have agreed to recognize each other's members, ministers, and sacraments.

The United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada celebrated their full communion agreement October 17 at a church in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Leaders from the two denominations signed the agreement during the service.

Karen Georgia A. Thompson, ecumenical and interfaith officer of the United Church of Christ, said the ceremony's location near the Canadian-U.S. border symbolizes the groups' desire to work together.

"It shows unity through international lines," she said.

Full communion also means the two denominations will share a commitment to mission. Both church groups have supported social justice work, ordination of women, and inclusion of LGBT people.

Bruce Gregersen, senior adviser of theology and faith for the United Church of Canada, told the United Church of Christ news service that the agreement "has touched something of deep significance in the church and we're excited about what it will mean into the future. We are not alone, as our Creed says."

The United Church of Canada, the country's largest Protestant denomination, has recently been embroiled in a controversy over a suburban Toronto pastor who is an atheist. Leaders of the Canadian church are reviewing the ordination of Gretta Vosper, author of *With or Without God*, and her supporters have mounted a letter-writing and fund-raising campaign.

The United Church of Canada has about 3 million members in more than 3,500 congregations. The United Church of Christ has close to 1 million members, with 5,100 U.S. churches.

The United Church of Christ has full communion agreements with three other denominations; this is the first for the United Church of Canada. —Religion News Ser-

vice; added sources

*This article was edited on October 27, 2015.*