

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Purpose:

The purpose of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society (VECBS) is to seek and celebrate the full unity which Jesus intended and for which he prayed (John 17: 21) and which the Apostle Paul affirmed (Ephesians 4: 4 – 6). This visible unity of Christ's Body will be rich, as it encompasses a variety of religious and church traditions. We affirm and embrace the spirit of the Lund Principle – that Christians are called to cooperate in all things where conscience does not dictate otherwise. To that end, we commit ourselves to common prayer, dialogue, and practical collaboration, and to serve Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in mutual discipleship and service.

VECBS seeks to live its mission in a new and different time, understanding that the Church must now lead from the margins of this broken, hurting world. Yet the voice of the Church has never been more relevant and vital. We believe Christians are called to exercise their voice, and have a responsibility to act in the public square (Luke 4, Matthew 25). Our voice and actions are grounded in scripture and informed by the broad Christian tradition, human reason, and experience. They are expressed in public statements approved by the VECBS Board of Trustees.

Ministries:

1. To pray and worship together.
2. To listen to, have dialogue with, and study with other Christians.
3. To bring Christians together to speak and act on our common faith in the public square.
4. To participate in occasions for interfaith prayer and worship.
5. To engage in interfaith dialogue and study for mutual understanding and appreciation and to collaborate in areas of common concern.
6. To work in practical collaboration with other groups.
7. To distribute Bibles, free of charge, to Vermont ministries that request them.

One important ministry of VECBS is to bring together Christians and other faith communities for shared prayer, worship, and conversation. In today's polarized society, VECBS can play an important role in offering opportunities for diverse groups to come together to listen, learn and better understand each other. We also provide a place of listening, study, and conversation for our members, where we can find common ground to speak out on Christian values we share. Surely there will continue to be matters on which we will pray and work together to offer the community our common clarity.

Another ministry of VECBS is to bring our clarity on the Christian perspective into the public square – to broaden and deepen the conversations about critical issues that face us as Vermonters. Over the years, we have invested significant time in developing statements upon which we could all agree. Many of the

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statements are pertinent to current concerns. Our challenge is to disseminate, in engaging ways, the words we have written – for them to be put to work in creating an environment in Vermont where all are valued, respected, and heard. One way to do this may be through community forums with speakers responding to our statements.

Membership:

Membership in VECBS involves financial and/or other resource support. We ask each member group to provide at least \$500 per year. We also accept and honor the gifts of members which are beyond the financial. We are committed to seeking the membership of other Christian bodies in Vermont, in addition to the existing denominational structures.

Representation on the VECBS Board of Trustees will include, along with judicatory leaders or their representatives, lay members of congregations. The Board of Trustees may have up to a total of 25 members.

We welcome into membership other faith-based organizations that choose to join if they agree with the Purpose and Ministries of VECBS. These Member Organizations may have up to two representatives with voice and vote on the VECBS Board.

Other organizations that support VECBS Ministries and want to work in concert around one or more Ministries may, if they choose, become Partners. These Partner Organizations have voice in deliberations, but no vote.

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