

THE LUND PRINCIPLE

The members of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society (churches, denominations, and ecclesial communities) have put to themselves the question that has come to be known as “The Lund Principle” [The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden, 1952]:

We have now reached a crucial point in our ecumenical discussions. As we have come to know one another better, our eyes have been opened to the depth and pain of our separations and also to our fundamental unity. The measure of unity which has been given to the Churches to experience together must now find clearer manifestation. A faith in the one Church of Christ which is not implemented by acts of obedience is dead. There are truths about the nature of God and His Church which will remain forever closed to us unless we act together in obedience to the unity which is already ours. We would, therefore, earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?

We members of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society now consider that we are ready to answer this question in the affirmative. Now each and all, we covenant with one another to pursue, with God’s help, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, full visible unity (Cf. our Bylaws Article II) by acting together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately. Here and now we pledge our persons and resources to act toward fuller unity and urge the authorities and members of our churches, denominations, and ecclesial bodies to do the same.

This Covenant is adopted with a Codicil that is inseparable from the Covenant and which will be understood as integral to the Covenant as an elucidation of the purpose of the Covenant as contained in the purpose of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society and as one of the essential means to achieve the Council’s purpose.

The Covenant is proposed to the member churches, denominations, and ecclesial communities for their reception and is subject to further and future development, as may be adopted by the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society.

Vermont Ecumenical Council & Bible Society Trustees revised and approved this Covenant on March 29, 2006. The Rev. Frederick K. Neu, President

Codicil to the Covenant

This Covenant is adopted to further express and implement the basic purposes of the VEC & BS (Cf. Bylaws, Article II) by subscribing to the “Lund Principle” [Third World Conference of Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden, 1952, the World Council of Churches]:

“Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.”

1. **GOAL:** We continue to recognize that the VEC & BS is a representative body of Christian churches, denominations and ecclesial communities which seeks to respond to God’s love for us, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to give us being and inspire our actions.

Further, we acknowledge and celebrate God’s gift to us, the unity already present among those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and what is revealed to us in Sacred Scripture. Furthermore, we seek the fullness of unity which the Apostle Paul affirmed, “there is one body and one Spirit, as there is one hope held out in God’s call to you; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, Who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). This will be a visible unity, Christ’s body, which is one, but encompasses a diversity of Christian traditions.

We regret our sins against this unity and understand our present imperfect unity as contrary to the Gospel. It is a source of sorrow for all who proclaim themselves as Christians. We pray that our relationships in the movement toward full unity may deepen and expand toward the day when all Christians will be united as God wills it, visibly loving one another and all God’s children even as Christ has loved us.

2. **MEANS:** We now express the means to attain this goal.
 1. **Internal Renewal:** Each church, denomination, ecclesial body is summoned by the Holy Spirit to its own internal renewal and change of heart. Wounded by sin that causes our divisions and separation, there is continual need for personal and social reform and purification. We must “repent and believe in the Good News” (Mark 1:15). We must not only know well the faith-principles of our own church or denomination, we must live out our faith and celebrate the gifts God has given us. Furthermore, we must know our weaknesses and deepen our concern for full Christian unity.
 2. **Prayer:** We will increase our private and public prayer for unity. We will pray for one another. Our love for one another and for unity finds its most complete expression in common prayer. Christ is present with us when we

We are a diverse network of Christians in Vermont working together to serve the common good through public worship and prayer; acts of mercy and care; and loving prophetic witness for peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

unite to pray (Matthew 18: 20). The closer we come to Christ in our own communities, the closer we will come to one another.

3. Dialogue: We will engage in dialogue with one another. Ecumenical dialogue is indispensable. It is the communication of one's Christian experience in Christ, both speaking and listening to one another in love. It is not merely an exchange of ideas. It is a process by which together we seek to transcend our divisions by clarification of the elements of our faith, the removal of past misunderstandings, the discovery of new language or categories by which we express our unity in faith. Through dialogue we discern the faith, the context, the life and worship of partners. It presupposes prayer and healing of memories through repentance and mutual forgiveness. It requires patience and humility. It is an essential part of the preparation for action together (Lund Principle).
 4. Collaboration: We will engage in practical cooperation with one another. Practical cooperation among all Christians vividly expresses the bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the servant. Unity in faith, though imperfect, leads to unity of action, and unity of action leads to the full unity of faith. Through this cooperation, all believers in Christ are able to learn how to understand and respect each other better. In the eyes of the world, cooperation among Christians becomes a form of Christian witness and a means of evangelization which benefits all involved.
3. CONCLUSION: The "Lund Principle" which endorses this practical cooperation is essential for our ecumenical life. Yet it does not stand alone in ecumenism. It is the outward sign and effect of renewal, prayer and dialogue. It is the sign and test of our love for all God's children, Christian and non-Christian.

Implementing the "Lund Principle" may not be easy. We beg God's help to give us the wisdom and conviction to do it. We firmly disagree that "action unites and doctrine divides." We must take great care not to abandon our Christian faith in favor of action. Truly effective social action must have a religious center. It must be rooted in the affirmation of God, centered on the Gospel and radiate from a deep life of prayer. It must be rooted in a spirituality that not only sustains the worker, but also is grounded in true social concern. Guided always by Christian principles, we pledge ourselves to plan and initiate Christian service whenever and wherever our members can, and to reach out our hand in cooperation to all those of good will for the common good.

This is our covenant. God bless our work together. Adopted by the members of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society December 14, 2005.