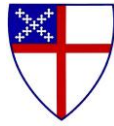


Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic & United Methodist

C O V E N A N T



PREAMBLE

We Bishops are witnesses to two powerful experiences in our time which have impelled Lutherans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and United Methodists toward church unity: the Ecumenical Movement and the Second Vatican Council. The Holy Spirit continues to use these graced events to enlighten and form God's people as we begin the Third Millennium.

Unity is a Gospel imperative for the churches, not simply an option. We are mindful that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the night before he died prayed: "... that they may all be one, Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one: I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." (John 17: 21-23)¹ The Psalmist, too, reminds us: "How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony." (Psalm 133)

Furthermore, it is our responsibility to "make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force" because "There is but one Body and one Spirit ... just as there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all and is in all." (Ephesians 4: 4-6)

We celebrate the faithful initiative of our church leaders, past and present, in fostering church unity. In our roles as pastoral leaders, we welcome Pope John Paul II's and Archbishop Runcie's challenge: "Once more, then, we call on the bishops, clergy, and faithful people ... in every country, diocese, and parish in which our faithful live side by side. We urge them all to pray for this work and to adopt every possible means of furthering it through their collaboration, in deepening their alliance to Christ and in witnessing to him before the world. Only by such collaboration and prayer can the memory of past enmities be healed and our past antagonisms overcome."²

In Virginia, we experience the call to full communion in various collaborative efforts among our four traditions: in particular, through the annual statewide Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, United Methodist (LARCUM) Conference, at regional LARCUM events for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and in local parish initiatives. We hear this call also in the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission's (ARCIC's) Final Report, in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic document, *Facing Unity*, in the Lutheran-Episcopal Niagara Report, *Sharing in the apostolic Communion* (Anglican-Methodist), "The Gift of Authority" (ARCIC), *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Lutheran-Catholic), "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ" (ARCIC), and, in the United States, in the Agreement, *Called to Common Mission* (Lutheran-Episcopal), a *Covenant of Interim Eucharistic Sharing* (Episcopal-Methodist), *Confessing Our Faith Together* and *Covenant of Interim Eucharistic Sharing* (ELCA-UMC), and *Yearning to Be One* (Catholic-United Methodist). In these joint undertakings our divisions are being healed and we become attuned to the Spirit who will make us one.

DECLARATION

We recognize that it is the Holy Spirit who bestows unity. The same Spirit calls us to uncover convergences and to achieve consensus so that we can advance toward the goal of unity willed by Christ. Through conversion, this shared commitment opens us to new possibilities under the guidance of God's Spirit as we seek to provide an effective expression of God's love in Christ.³

Four decades of dialogues have led our four traditions to establish full communion as our mutual goal. We understand that we will pursue this goal in a rich variety of ways which are consistent with the Gospel and the ordering of our four traditions.

We desire to do all things together which existing agreements permit to place no impediments to the cause of unity.

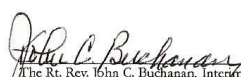
THEREFORE, relying on the faithful love of the Triune God, we commit ourselves to celebrate the unity already achieved through years of Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic-United Methodist conversations and to strengthen the visible unity of the Body of Christ in Virginia.


A CALL TO COVENANT

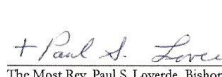
The unity of the church is the gift of the Spirit and a task of the church. We hereby CALL INTO COVENANT our respective Synods, Dioceses and Conferences and COMMIT OURSELVES to the following actions. In behalf of the unity of the church, WE WILL:

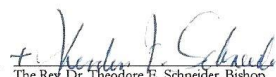
1. *pray for each other, particularly at the principal Sunday celebration;*
2. *sponsor seasonal prayer services, especially during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity;*
3. *encourage shared lectionary studies;*
4. *promote pulpit exchanges in accord with the respective guidelines of each tradition;*
5. *encourage cooperation among member churches in providing pre-marital preparation for ecumenical marriages;*
6. *encourage shared religious formational and educational events; e.g. youth ministry, vacation Bible school, living room dialogue;*
7. *develop joint efforts in evangelism and social justice;*
8. *develop covenants among our congregations, institutions and chaplaincies;*
9. *support statewide, regional and local LARCUM Conferences, and establish annually a joint meeting of our ecumenical bodies;*
10. *encourage each diocese and synod to develop supportive prayer services and covenanting models for its congregations through their respective ecumenical and liturgical committees;*
11. *urge congregations to study the existing dialogues among our churches (see appendix);*
12. *develop covenants among school and academies for shared programs;*
13. *ask congregations to develop and reflect on their cooperative ministries to discover areas of convergence among our four churches;*
14. *sponsor shared retreats and formational events for clergy and parish leadership;*
15. *develop campus ministry covenants among Catholic Campus Ministry, Canterbury Association, Lutheran Student Union, and Wesley Foundation, and support covenants at existing ecumenical ministries and with college chaplains;*
16. *seek ways to coordinate program and planning at the district/ synodal/ diocesan/ conference level;*
17. *collaborate at the judicatory level on justice issues and social concerns;*
18. *review and evaluate this Covenant annually at a meeting of the state LARCUM Committee representatives with Bishops;*
19. *establish goals annually which advance this Covenant;*
20. *celebrate the renewal of this Covenant annually at the statewide LARCUM conference.*

May the Holy Spirit, who has brought us to this moment of covenanting,
bring us to ever deepening levels of unity.
To this end we affix our names and recommend it to our respective judicatories,
this 1st day of December 2006.


The Rt. Rev. John C. Buchanan, Interim
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

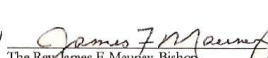

The Rt. Rev. David C. Jones, Suffragan
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

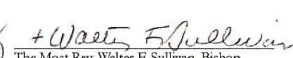

The Most Rev. Paul S. Loverde, Bishop
Catholic Diocese of Arlington

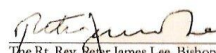

The Rev. Dr. Theodore E. Schneider, Bishop
Metropolitan Washington DC Synod, ELCA


The Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo, Bishop
Catholic Diocese of Richmond


The Rev. Charlene P. Kammerer, Resident
Bishop
Virginia Conference, UMC


The Rev. James F. Maurity, Bishop
Virginia Synod, ELCA


The Most Rev. Walter F. Sullivan, Bishop
Emeritus
Catholic Diocese of Richmond


The Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia


The Rt. Rev. F. Neff Powell, Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia

¹ The New American Bible

² Common Declaration #4, May 29, 1982.

³ see sec. II, Ecumenism: The Vision of the ELCA, adopted as working document of the 1989 ELCA Biennial Assembly.