



The LAURC Covenant

&

Study Guide

The *LAURC Covenant* is an agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran and Anglican churches and the Ukrainian and Roman Catholic churches in Saskatchewan.

Introduction

Ten Lutheran, Anglican, and Ukrainian and Roman Catholic bishops from across Saskatchewan signed a covenant on April 2, 2020, encouraging their churches to work together in common witness and service. “Covenant” is religious language that signals a connection to the Biblical covenants between God and Israel. A covenant is a contract solemnly agreed between people of faith and in the sight of God.

The *LAURC Covenant* is a renewal of an earlier 2011 covenant between Anglicans and Roman Catholics in southern Saskatchewan. These covenants are a local manifestation of a broader movement between Christian churches seeking visible expressions of our unity in the one body of Christ.

This pamphlet consists of the full text of the *LAURC Covenant* and a study guide for use in congregational and ecumenical groups throughout the covenant churches. This brief study guide is intended to encourage reflection on the *LAURC Covenant* and the commitments made by our bishops.

Participants are encouraged to read the covenant text together and to discuss its meaning. The study guide poses some questions for group discussion and individual reflection; however, groups are encouraged to raise additional questions for discussion.

The study guide is intended to be used with a mixed group of Christians from the four covenant churches as well as friends from other churches. A study leader is not required, and no specialized historical or theological knowledge is presumed.

Following your study, we encourage you to send a brief report to your LAURC bishops or the LAURC Committee. For further information about the covenant, contact:

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The LAURC Covenant

April 2, 2020

We believe in a God whose life is communion and pure love, and that we ourselves share God's life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. All that we do ... and, in particular, all that we seek to do together, should therefore be done in communion, with grace and generosity so that we do not obstruct the proclamation of the Good News.¹

In thanksgiving to God for closer relations between Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans over the past decades, our churches continue to pray for our growth towards the full visible unity of the Church of Christ for which our Lord prayed, “that all may be one” (Jn. 17:21). Our ecumenical relations are deep-rooted through more than a century of cultivation – at first tentative but now confident – in common witness, study, and service. May God continue to bless our endeavours with a rich harvest in our mission together.

Expanding our covenantal vision

Since 2011, the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina have shared a covenant which continues to call us to “a new stage in jointly building up the body of Christ in our dioceses.” Certainly, our covenantal relationship is not our only ecumenical or ecclesial relationship. Our partnerships in local ministerials, regional ecumenical projects, interchurch coalitions, councils of churches, and shared ministries have contributed to a rich ecumenical life across Saskatchewan. We are therefore enthused to incorporate the Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses of central and northern Saskatchewan within the covenant.

The Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada have been full communion partners since 2001. The union between the Ukrainian Catholic and the Roman Catholic churches occurred in 1595-96 and has enjoyed a renaissance in mutual sharing and

¹ IARCCUM, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, para. 97.
<https://iarccum.org/doc/?d=32>

learning since Vatican II and the end of the Soviet occupation of Ukraine. The 2011 Anglican-Roman Catholic covenant envisioned a time when the Lutheran and Ukrainian Catholic communities would join us in this renewed covenant. Now is the opportune time to broaden our covenantal promises and to invite our communion partners to share together in work for visible unity.

As we enter into this renewed covenant we must attend to the new facets of this relationship. Lutherans and Roman Catholics have been active ecumenical partners in Canada for 50 years, so we must ask how the covenant can enrich this relationship? Ukrainian Catholics have been ecumenically engaged throughout these years, but many of the concerns, perspectives, and gifts of the Eastern churches have not been the focus of ecumenical life in Canada. How might this covenant encourage the mutual enrichment of East and West, so that the church, in the words of Pope John Paul II, might “breathe with two lungs”?

The relationships within this renewed covenant are asymmetrical. The Anglican-Lutheran full communion and the communion of the Roman and Ukrainian Catholic churches are analogous, in the sense that each preserves the unique theological, liturgical, and spiritual traditions of each partner while allowing for an exchange of sacraments and ministry. This covenant is not intended to change the relationship between these communion pairs, although it is hoped that it might be an enrichment. Nor can the covenantal relationship extend the provisions of the communion partnership to the new partners. In particular, the covenant does not change the disciplines of our churches regarding sacramental life or recognition of ministry.

International and national dialogues between Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans have led to many agreed statements on important matters of theological dispute arising from five centuries of separation. Many 20th-century reforms of the churches and their liturgies have drawn us closer in faith and witness. Working together in social justice, care for the poor, chaplaincies, and other aspects of the church’s life and work has allowed us to grow together and increasingly to reveal the oneness of the body of Christ.

The framework of covenant: a real but incomplete communion

The fundamental unity of the church of Christ is expressed in our common baptism into the one body of Christ. We confess one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4). Christ is not divided! (1 Cor. 1). However, the ecclesial communion that is real and true in Christ is incompletely realized in the life of the churches and therefore in their relationships during the course of history. Through the ecumenical movement we catch sight of that full, visible unity which is God's will for the Church, and to which we are called as Christian communities. In this covenant, we seek to grow together in this real but incomplete communion.

Among the many ways that churches have found to express our growth in communion, covenants have a particular place. Beyond the most basic sense as a mutual agreement or contract, the biblical understanding of covenant is of a relationship initiated by God; a promise to which God remains faithful despite the failures and transgressions of the people. A covenant serves to sustain and nurture an established ecumenical partnership. It requires a fundamental commitment to working, praying, and acting together in response to God's call, yet it is not the final stage of life in communion. We engage in this covenant as a pledge of faithfulness and in hope of the full visible unity to which we are called.

Ecumenical covenants are framed in such a way as to encourage our communities to grow in understanding and knowledge of one another. The asymmetry of this covenant reflects the degree to which our communities are already moving beyond basic ecumenical encounter into various forms of common life together. We invite our communities to find additional ways to engage together in prayer, study, action, social life, and ecumenical leadership.

The elements of covenantal life together

As churches together we commit to finding ways to celebrate and to effectively live out our real but incomplete communion.

Prayer together – Prayer is central to our communal experience as Christians. Our communities are formed in and around the worship of Jesus Christ, worship which expresses our hope and faith. As churches committed to the Gospel imperative of unity, we desire to worship together wherever possible. We commit our churches to seek further

opportunities to share our common faith in Christ through prayer with one another.

Study together – Our faith is nourished by reflection upon Scripture, the theology and history of our faith communities, and the conditions of our own day. As Christian churches, we have for many decades undertaken this reflection together, and we have enjoyed the benefits of diverse experiences and views. We commit our churches to seek further opportunities for common reflection, consultation, and study.

Action together – Christian faith impels us to action. In Christ's name, we proclaim liberty to captives and good news to the poor. We commit our churches to give visible witness and to join in common cause to further the Gospel. We encourage our parishes and congregations to share in ministry to the poor, evangelism, hospital and home visiting, and social advocacy.

Social life together – Christian community, nourished in prayer and Scripture, blossoms into a community of social concern and personal support. Building this community supports the living experience of unity. Gathering to celebrate our life together contributes to a greater sense of communion. Social media and other technology can maintain and strengthen connections between churches across the vast landscape of Saskatchewan. We encourage our congregations to invite neighbouring churches to participate in significant celebrations within the life of the community.

Ecumenical leadership – As churches committed to the visible unity of the one body of Christ, and enriched by many experiences of ecumenical encounter, the covenant partners are uniquely situated to be catalysts for new ecumenical ideas, projects, and relationships. As artisans of unity, we commit our churches, while remaining faithful to our respective traditions, to be laboratories of ecumenical experimentation towards deeper participation in the mystery of Christ. We will invite other Christian communities to share in local ecumenical projects and we will invite them to share our covenantal life.

Practical commitments to common mission

Our fundamental unity is in Christ but our churches remain divided on significant matters of theology and conscience. In our divided state we

cannot do all things together, but there is much that we can do together. To that end, our relationship now moves us to commit our four churches to the following:

1. Hold a prayer service each year, ideally in the Pentecost season, alternating among our churches, with our bishops present. This would take the form of an annual service of reconciliation, with participants (planning, officiants, servers, lectors, choir, etc.) from each church.
2. Regularly remember one another's churches and leaders, and our relations, in our intercessions at Sunday eucharists.
3. Join together on justice-related initiatives locally and/or sponsor a justice-related project together in the developing world.
4. Find ways in which we might work and pray together in times of great need or emergency, for the good of all people.
5. Together, hold meetings with First Nations and Métis elders and communities to promote reconciliation and healing as we strive to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *94 Calls to Action*.
6. Maintain communication among us when any new development in one of our churches has implications or challenges for the others.

We also encourage every diocese, eparchy, or synod, parish, or congregation to consider the following possible ways of implementing this covenant. Other Christian churches and their ministers could also be invited to share in these proposed activities and initiatives.

1. Shared services, Bible study, and other activities in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.
2. Common services in Advent and Lent.
3. Visiting each other's churches, particularly to share in Sunday worship, while respecting the different disciplines of our churches. This would provide opportunities for experiencing each other's eucharistic life, thereby serving both to deepen our communion and our desire for full communion.

4. Joint non-eucharistic worship, including faith-sharing celebrations, pilgrimages, processions of witness (e.g. on Good Friday), and shared public liturgies on significant occasions.
5. Making a public profession of faith together, perhaps by renewing baptismal promises at Pentecost each year.
6. Create new traditions together.
7. Shared witness in the name of Christ to people in particular spiritual need, including those who have lapsed from regular attendance at worship.
8. Parish welcome and support for interchurch couples and families.
9. Clergy sharing in the pastoral care of interchurch families (including marriage preparation).
10. Encouraging the inclusion of witnesses from other churches at baptisms and confirmations, particularly in the case of candidates from interchurch families.
11. Bishops acting together whenever possible: for example, issuing joint statements on current public pastoral concerns.
12. Inviting ordained and lay observers to attend each other's synodal and collegial gatherings and conferences.
13. Consulting one another as fully as possible when providing pastoral care to people who may have a continuing pastoral relationship with another church.
14. Clergy acting together whenever possible: for example, holding occasional study days; arranging a joint component in our programs for baptism, confirmation, and marriage preparation.
15. Youth leadership: possibility of a joint youth group forming or occasional jointly-organized events with our youth.
16. Occasional workshops on aspects of the liturgy which would allow us to learn liturgical best practices from each other (e.g. welcoming/greeting, music, lectors, servers, those preparing intercessory prayers).

17. Meetings of those with parallel ministries: pastors; deacons; lay leadership/lay ministry; musicians; healing ministry; bereavement; church councils/vestries/parish councils.
18. Exploration of common texts – for example, the study of Scripture, or study of our agreed statements, e.g. Growing Together in Unity and Mission or From Conflict to Communion.
19. Social occasions following joint liturgical events, to offer opportunities for fellowship.
20. Fostering friendly relations and regular communication between neighbouring Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Ukrainian Catholic parishes and their clergy; encouragement to enter into parish covenants and hold annual events together.
21. Justice issues – speaking out together on areas of common concern where we can act together: prison ministry; relations with First Nations communities; healing ministry, chaplaincies, nursing homes.
22. Preparation for mission: coming together to identify specific concerns in the community and to provide gracious outreach, joining together to bring relief and Christ's healing.
23. Joint participation in evangelism, shared training of lay people for evangelism, and the development of new ways of gathering faith communities.

Carrying the Covenant Forward

Relations between churches are always at the service of a broader vision of the unity of all Christ's disciples. Therefore, it is our hope that this expanded covenant will continue to widen into a covenantal relationship among all Christian communities.

Furthermore, we hold many common elements of faith with other Christian churches in this province, most fundamentally: a Trinitarian faith into which we are baptized and which we profess in the Apostles' Creed; a common recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour to whom we commit ourselves in discipleship; common sources of authority in the Old and New Testaments and in the witness of the early Church which shape our mission; and a common hope and prayer grounded in God's presence and action in the world and the promise of

God's Kingdom. In light of the common elements identified above, we are therefore prepared to enter into conversation with other Christian churches about the prospect of entering into a broader multilateral covenantal relationship.

Conclusion

We give our thanks to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the gifts we have received and which we have come to recognize in each other, for the joy we have come to know in our life in Jesus Christ, and for the renewed and life-giving relationship which has come to us from the Holy Spirit. To God be the glory, in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:21).

Signed:

Most Rev. Bryan Bayda, Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon

Most Rev. Donald Bolen, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina

Most Rev. Murray Chatlain, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin-
Le Pas

Most Rev. Mark Hagemoen, Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

Right Rev. Adam Halkett, Bishop of Missinippi, Anglican Diocese of
Saskatchewan

Right Rev. Robert Hardwick, Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle

Right Rev. Christopher Harper, Anglican Diocese of Saskatoon

Rev. Sid Haugen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Synod of
Saskatchewan

Right Rev. Michael Hawkins, Anglican Diocese of Saskatchewan

Most Rev. Albert Thévenot, M. Afr., Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince
Albert

Study Guide

Read aloud and slowly one or more scripture texts on unity such as those below. These texts may already be familiar to you. Pay attention to words or ideas that speak to you about unity. Pause and reflect. Imagine these words written especially for you by the Biblical authors.

Ps. 133: A Song of Ascents. ¹How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! ²It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. ³It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life for evermore.

Jn. 17:20-23: ‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

1 Cor. 1:1-11: Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

1 Cor. 12:12-27: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Eph. 2:11-22: So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by those who are called ‘the circumcision’—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to

the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Eph. 4: 1-6: I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Q. What do you hear in these texts about the unity of the church?

Q. What other texts inform your vision of Christian unity?

Q. What are the societal consequences of disunity? How does disunity affect our witness to “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”?

What is a covenant?

Covenant is a rich biblical concept rooted in God’s promises to the people of Israel, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and fulfilled in the life, person, and ministry of Jesus Christ. Simply put, a covenant is an agreement freely made between two parties in the presence of God, such that God is both a witness and a party to the agreement. Like a marriage covenant in which two people make promises of lifelong fidelity to one another, an ecumenical covenant is an enduring promise before God. In an ecumenical covenant, faithfulness to one another consists of being faithful to the shared mission given to us in Jesus Christ.

Q. How do you understand the difference between a biblical covenant and a civil contract? Why is a covenant an appropriate document for an ecumenical agreement?

Q. What do you hear the Bible say about how a Christian community resolves disputes? Consider Matt. 5:23-25, 18:15-20 or Acts 15.

With whom are we covenanting?

The divisions between Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans began in the 16th-century Reformations resulting in separated churches in Britain, Europe, and Scandinavia that continue to the present day. Discovering one another in the modern ecumenical movement, our divided churches no longer call each other heretics or schismatics, but now recognize that we share many elements of common faith and common baptism. We have found consensus in many essential aspects of church life and teaching, allowing us to share in Christ's mission.

Q. If we all get along, does that mean the Reformation is over? What is a Protestant when there is no protest? Must we define ourselves according to our differences from other Christians?

Q. What issues of the Reformation still concern you? Are these still divisive issues today?

Rejecting a bland uniformity, our covenant calls us to work towards the goal of full visible unity within the rich diversity of Christian traditions.

Q. Of what does full visible unity consist? How could this unity take expression in the real world?

Q. What does the Nicene Creed mean when it says the church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic"? What does it mean to say that the church is one?

Ukrainian Catholics are an Eastern church established in AD 988 with the baptism of St. Vladimir and the Kievan Rus. Their spiritual, theological, and liturgical roots are in the Byzantine church of Constantinople. Divided from the Orthodox Church in Ukraine in 1595 during the Polish-Lithuanian occupation, the Ukrainian Catholic Church formed due to political forces, not a theological dispute. Ukrainian Catholicism is the largest of 23 Eastern Catholic churches in union with Rome.

Q. The Eastern churches have persisted through many years of political oppression in the Ottoman Empire and later in the Soviet era. What can the Western churches learn from the Eastern churches about witness and service in a context hostile to Christian ministry?

Q. Scripture describes the Holy Spirit as a wind that brings life and inspiration. Pope John Paul II spoke of the need for the church to

breathe with two lungs, the East and the West. Which spiritual gifts of Eastern Christianity could help the church breathe with two lungs?

Why covenant?

In the 1960s, following the Second Vatican Council, both Anglicans and Lutherans began to work with Catholics. Numerous interchurch coalitions were developed in Canada in social service, justice and peace, and international development. At the same time, our local congregations and clergy have engaged in considerable common witness and service.

International and national theological dialogues have been particularly fruitful, leading to agreements on the Eucharist, ministry and ordination, church authority and the ministry of the bishop, justification by faith, the Christian moral life, Mary and the saints, and the nature and mission of the church.² Both Roman and Eastern Catholic theologians and bishops have participated in these discussions with Anglicans, Lutherans, and many other churches. Our local experience as churches is enriched by understanding our partnership as a faithful expression of our common mission in Christ and a local manifestation of the broader ecumenical movement.

***Q.** As our churches find consensus on issues that have historically divided us, at what point do we need to end our separation?*

***Q.** Think of an issue that has divided the church. What can we learn from these issues to work towards better mutual understanding and acceptance?*

What does the covenant require of us?

Our bishops have identified five elements of covenantal life: prayer, study, action, and social life together, as well as ecumenical leadership in our communities. Expanding upon these elements, they suggest a series of six practical commitments that our churches can make to one another and 23 practical recommendations for common witness and service.

² The agreed statements of over 50 years of theological dialogue are available online through the websites of the Anglican Communion (anglicancommunion.org), the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (christianunity.va), and the Lutheran World Federation (lutheranworld.org). See also iarccum.org and prounione.it.

Q. The covenant describes these commitments and recommendations as “practical”. Is there value in practical actions? Would symbolic gestures and ritual actions be as significant?

Q. The covenant is built upon a long-standing and healthy relationship between our churches. In what ways is your church already working together with other churches?

Q. Think of three things your parish or congregation could do to reach out to other churches in the covenant.

Q. The covenant is intended to be a catalyst for other ecumenical activity in local communities. How can the four covenanting churches invite other churches to work together with us?

Concluding Prayer³

You are invited to pray together this, or another prayer, for the unity of Christ’s church, to share your concerns for local ministry and mission, and to offer a blessing for your ecumenical partners and the churches in your community.

God, you call us to be the church of Jesus Christ. Increase our love for one another, we pray. Inspire our worship, work, and witness to better reflect your grace. As Jesus crossed boundaries of separation and division to heal and reconcile, empower us to cross such boundaries in our day; to breach walls of rigidity and self-righteousness within and around the church; to bridge chasms created by poverty and wealth, racism and sexism, and by fear.

Help us to receive the gifts of your Spirit revealed in others, in their cultures and traditions, liturgical practices, and theological insights. As your church, the Body of Christ in the world, help us to be a justice-seeking, peace-making, healing and reconciling people of faith, as followers of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, the Prince of Peace, our Healer and our Reconciliation. Amen.

³ Prayer composed by Rev. Ron McConnell, a minister of The United Church of Canada, included in *In God’s Reconciling Grace*, ed. by Bernard de Margerie, 2014.