

The Federal Charter of 1291

In the name of God – Amen. Public honour and good require that peace pacts be made permanent.

For this reason, the people of the valley of Uri, the entire community of the valley of Schwyz and that of the lower valley of Unterwalden, in view of the malice of the times, have pledged to each other, for their better protection and defence, assistance, counsel and support with their lives and their goods, within the valleys and beyond, to the utmost of their abilities against anyone who inflicts violence or injustice upon their persons or their goods.

Each community has sworn, renewing the oath of the old Confederation, to come in any case at its own cost to the assistance of the others to repel and retaliate malicious attack and injustice, but in a way that everyone, according to his rank, shall duly serve his master.

We have also unanimously pledged and decided that we shall not tolerate in the valleys any judge who has obtained his office with money or money's worth or who is not our resident or countryman.

Should strife arise among Confederates, the wisest among them shall mediate and the others shall confront the party that rejects the decision.

Most of all, it is decided that whoever kills somebody maliciously and in the absence of guilt, shall lose his life unless he proves his innocence, if escaped he may never return. Whoever shelters and protects him shall be banned from the country until the Confederates call him back.

If somebody causes damage to a Confederate by arson, he shall never again be respected as countryman, and whoever in the valleys shelters and protects him will be liable to compensate the victim.

Who robs one of the Confederates or causes him damage in any way, shall be liable for the damage with his own good in the valleys.

Nobody shall impound another except a recognized debtor or bailman, and even then only with the assent of a judge.

Everyone shall obey his judge and, when necessary design the judge in the valley to whom he shall be accountable.

If somebody disobeys the court and thereby causes damage to a Confederate, all others shall oblige him to compensate.

If war or discord arises between Confederates and if one party dodges the judgement or shirks compensation, the Confederates are bound to protect the other.

God willing, this legal order shall endure forever. In testimony thereof, the present Charter has been drafted at the request of the parties and confirmed with the seals of the aforesaid communities and valleys. Done in the year of the Lord 1291 at the beginning of the month of August.