

## A COVENANT BETWEEN WESTMINSTER COLLEGE AND THE SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA

### I. THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT

#### 1. The Parties Involved

This covenant is a voluntary agreement between Westminster College and the Synod of Mid-America of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to make explicit a historic and continuing relationship between the two bodies. We choose the term “covenant” as a way of indicating the seriousness of our intentions and hopes. Both the College and the Synod recognize that upon adoption and ratification this will become a written affirmation of our relationship.

#### 2. Rationale for the Covenant

The Synod affirms the following statement as a basis for entering into this relationship:

Because God calls all to worship and study God’s word, to commit our lives to His obedience, to belong to one another in Christian community and in service to others; because God calls the church into ministries of justice and compassion wherever people are gathered; because people who spend time in activities on college and university campuses are involved in significant changes affecting their lives and the future of the whole society; and because Presbyterians have been involved in Christian higher education in college and university campus communities, we as Presbyterians choose to minister within the higher education scene in proclaiming Christ, meeting needs and affecting the transition of people and institutions.

The Synod of Mid-America therefore believes that the church related colleges have a unique contribution to make to the nation and to the church in the field of higher education. Many colleges present the opportunity for good academic challenge and achievement and a campus experience that seeks to equip young people for decision and action in the realm of personal, social, economic and political life in a pluralistic society, and a world that hungers for justice and dignity for all persons, and nations. The Synod believes that the unique experience which church related colleges can contribute to a Christian conviction about the nature and meaning of human existence is vital to the ministry. This belief rests upon the following principles:

- A. That the human being does not have the option of living without a faith. The only option available to a person is by which faith he or she will live.
- B. That God is the absolute source, ground, and goal of all truth and of the most meaningful, responsible and fruitful life.
- C. That in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord and Savior, God presents to all persons the opportunity for discovering the central truth of all life and for

entering into an enduring and growing personal relationship of faithfulness, service and joy with God in God's world

- D. That this truth and life can be discovered and experienced most effectively in the context of a consciously Christian community.
- E. That commitment and relationship to God result in the renewal of genuine community and true humanity, and the urgent quest for a world which embodies God's will and desire for love and justice.
- F. That the Christian should be open to dialogue with all academic disciplines and other faiths.

The Synod believes that church related colleges can and must offer the opportunity for vigorously exploring the Christian option for life with intellectual honesty and personal involvement in a way that secular institutions of higher education cannot. We believe that this should be done in an atmosphere of genuine academic and personal freedom which encourages the active exploration of all avenues of approach to rational and existential truth and clearly leaves the individual free to make his or her own decisions as to what or to whom he or she will commit his or her life. The Synod affirms that the church related colleges can assist students in developing their values and the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith.

The Synod believes that the provision of the colleges with this unique difference is an essential in the health and future of the total enterprise of higher education itself, the nation, the church and this small planet.

(Adopted by the Synod of Mid-America, June, 1981).

Westminster College affirms the following statement as a basis for entering this relationship:

Throughout its history Westminster College has been committed to the free and open pursuit of knowledge in a campus setting which encourages the development of Christian faith and values. Westminster College seeks to educate students in the traditional liberal arts, to prepare them for positions of responsibility and leadership in a changing world, and to challenge them to think critically and to integrate knowledge with positive personal and social values. Westminster College seeks faculty who are committed to these objectives.

Westminster College seeks to promote academic freedom and respect for the divergent perspectives of people in our pluralistic society and world. For that reason no religious tests or requirements are imposed on any members of the college community. At the same time, the institution endorses, through its Board of Trustees, the basic convictions about the nature and meaning of human existence inherent in the Christian tradition, and seeks to provide opportunities for exploration of these convictions. No effort is made to impose these convictions, but rather to present them as an option for life in honest, open ways.

Westminster College has maintained since its inception a relationship with the Presbyterian Church. The College was founded on February 18, 1851, by the Fulton Presbyterian Church, as Fulton College. In 1853, the Synod of Missouri assumed responsibility for the College and named it Westminster. After the separation in the Presbyterian Church during the Civil War, Westminster was one of the first institutions to be jointly sponsored by both Presbyterian

denominations. Westminster continued to be under the legal control of the Presbyterian Church until May 5, 1972, when the charter was amended, severing legal ties. At that time the College was placed under the care and control of a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. On October 23, 1972, the College's Board of Trustees adopted a "Statement of Mutual Understanding" as the basis of its Presbyterian relationship. The statement describes "the essential basis of what can and should be a dynamic relationship" and recognizes that covenants between Church and College may go beyond the general nature of the statement. After a year-long study of its relationship to the Presbyterian Church, the Board of Trustees on May 19, 1980, reaffirmed this Statement as a basis for a continuing relationship and charged the College administration" to increase constructive interaction between the College and the Presbyterian Church." Since this action the College has participated in the Synod's process which has led to the proposal of this covenant as a new statement of the College's relationship with the Synod.

Therefore, in keeping with its purpose and mission, and in keeping with the historical development of its relationship with the Presbyterian Church, Westminster College enters into this covenant, viewing it as a voluntary agreement between independent, mutually concerned partners.

## **II. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER COVENANT**

1. This covenant does not alter the corporate identity of either party. Westminster College is chartered by the State of Missouri as an independent college and is not an agency of the Church. The members of the Board of Trustees of the College are chosen by the Board's own procedures.

The Synod of Mid-America is incorporated in the States of Kansas and Missouri. The officers of the Synod are nominated and elected according to its own Standing Rules.

Nothing herein shall be construed to indicate approval, disapproval, endorsement of, or acquiescence in any programs or policies of either party, except those specifically addressed in this section or approved by each party's governing body.

2. Operating Procedure at the Institutional Level

The Synod designates the Church-related College Committee of Synod's Ministries Division as its agent for fulfilling the relational expectations of this covenant. This Committee will meet with the colleges individually and through an annual Collegium. In doing so the Synod will not violate the procedures of Westminster College which are relevant to the relationship. Westminster College will designate a Church Relations Committee as its agent for fulfilling the relational expectations of this covenant. Westminster College will not violate any policies or procedures of the Synod which may be relevant to this relationship.

### 3. Responsibilities of the Synod

As a covenant partner, the Synod of Mid-America of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will:

- A. Seek by all means at its disposal to support the security, development and growth of Westminster College as a related but independent and important dimension of its ministry in the world.
- B. Through the Church-related College Committee receive from Westminster College an annual report that highlights its purpose, objectives, problems and needs.
- C. Provide Westminster College with an annual report of the Synod mission activities, and particular work of the higher education programmatic ministry within the Synod. Provide the College with all regular mailings regarding the life and work of the Synod and its presbyteries.
- D. Actively and regularly inform the constituency of the Synod of the opportunity for higher education through Westminster College and encourage the enrollment of Presbyterians.
- E. Recognize the urgency of adequate financial support of Westminster College and vigorously seek to increase measurably that support. It will also encourage the support of Westminster College by individuals, and urge its churches to make known to the College potential donors.
- F. Be the judicatory through which the General Assemblies and their agencies can furnish forms of support (including financial) for the continuation, growth, and development of Westminster College.
- G. Review the covenantal relationship with the Board of Trustees of Westminster College at least every three years.
- H. Provide the adequate Synod representation in a collegium of the Presbyterian-related colleges and the Synod. The collegium will meet at least annually.
- I. Assist Westminster College in developing working relationships as appropriate with Missouri Union Presbytery and other Presbyterian governing bodies.

### 4. Responsibility of the College

As a covenant partner, Westminster College will:

- A. Provide to the Synod, through Synod's Church-related College Committee an annual statement of the College's purpose, mission, and needs.
- B. Maintain a faculty committed to the maintenance and achievement of the stated purpose and mission of the College.
- C. Uphold academic excellence and freedom as appropriate to the mission of the College and provide (1) access to the disciplines necessary for knowledge of

the various options of life, and (2) stimulus to integrate all learning in the quest for ultimate meaning, purpose and commitment of life.

- D. Maintain a Department of Religion to provide a direct opportunity for students to (1) honestly explore the many faith options which human history offers; (2) be exposed to Christian faith, conviction and experience at its best; (3) participate in dialogue between the Christian faith and various academic disciplines and faiths.
- E. In collaboration with the students of the College, seek to provide a quality of campus life which enables and encourages Christian concern for wholeness, values, freedom, fulfillment and moral responsibility for the individuals and the world in which we live.
- F. Offer pastoral care for all students, faculty, and staff which will enable the development of a strong voluntary Christian community of worship, study, sharing, witness, action and service together.
- G. Seek to develop a sense of Christian vocation in students and equip them for such service in secular occupations and church professions, including a positive effort to acquaint students with the vocational opportunities within the life and ministry of the church.
- H. Clearly and accurately state in its catalog and other appropriate publications its relationship to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the college's philosophy of higher education.
- I. Seek to make its knowledge, skill and educational resources available to the judicatories and congregations of the church, and work with Synod's Program Department and other governing bodies in developing workshops, conferences, seminars on topics related to the mission of the church.
- J. Provide to the Synod's Church-related College Committee, as requested by it, an annual copy of the College's annual financial audit together with a full disclosure of funds received from all Presbyterian congregations and governing bodies, and its need of financial assistance from the Synod.
- K. Make its facilities available to presbytery, presbyterial, synod, synodical, youth conferences and other church group meetings insofar as the college's primary mission and activities permit.
- L. Provide for direct relationship between the president of the college and the executive of the Synod.
- M. Appoint four persons from the college to participate in an annual collegium of the Presbyterian-related colleges and the Synod.
- N. Review the covenantal relationship with the Board of Trustees of the College and the Synod at least every three years.
- O. Work with the Synod in developing working relationships as appropriate with Missouri Union Presbytery and other governing bodies.

## 5. Mutual Understanding and Support

Both College and the Synod shall show mutual concern and support for each other. The Synod will be a resource to the College by providing channels of communication and counsel on specific matters upon request. The Synod will provide the College with

regular mailings of publications regarding the life and work of the Synod and its Presbyteries. Through its processes of budgeting and planning, the Synods will provide financial support for the College as it is able to do so. They Synod will seek to fulfill the responsibilities for advocacy stated in the Minutes of the Synod, 1981.

The College will be a resource to the Synod in its ministry in higher education design and program. The College will make its programs and services available to the Synod and its churches as it is able to do so. The College will seek to fulfill the responsibilities which are stated in this covenant. Through the designated agents for communication, newly developed programs may be authorized.

### **III. AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Covenant may be proposed by the Synod of Mid-American's Church-related College Committee or by Westminster College's Church Relationship Committee. Amendments will become effective upon formal action by the General Council of the Synod of Mid-America and the Trustees of the College. Amendments will be formally ratified at the first meeting of the Synod following their adoption.

### **IV. TERMINATION**

This covenant may be terminated by either signatory hereto by written notice given to the other signatory, to be effective not sooner than one year after such notice is given.

### **V. FORMAL APPROVAL**

This document establishes and contains all the terms of the Covenant Relationship between Westminster College and the Synod of Mid-America. The covenant will become effective upon formal action by the Trustees of Westminster College and the General Council of the Synod of Mid-America. Formal ratification of the Covenant shall be done at the first meeting of the Synod of Mid-America following its adoption by the General Council. An appropriate ceremony celebrating ratification of the Covenant shall be held on the campus of Westminster College.

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(Title)  
Westminster College

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Chairperson, General Council  
Synod of Mid-America

Date of Adoption \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Adoption \_\_\_\_\_