

THE COVENANT BETWEEN UNIVERSITY OF THE OZARKS AND THE SYNOD OF THE SUN, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Historical Relationship

University of the Ozarks is a successor to Cane Hill School, which was founded by Cumberland Presbyterians at Cane Hill, Arkansas, in 1834. In 1891, within a year of the closing of Cane Hill College, Arkansas Cumberland College was established in Clarksville, Arkansas, by the Arkansas Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

In 1920, after the Cumberland Presbyterians relinquished control of the College, the Oklahoma-Arkansas Synod voted to rename Arkansas Cumberland College as The College of the Ozarks. In 1953, the Oklahoma-Arkansas Synod of the United Presbyterian Church (USA) assumed full support of the College. In 1960, the Board of National Missions of the United Presbyterian Church (USA) assumed ownership and operating responsibility for the College. In 1973, an elected board of trustees assumed administrative responsibility and ownership of the college, which in 1987 became University of the Ozarks. The University continues its long association with the Presbyterian Church through its covenant relationship with the Synod of the Sun, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The University's Presbyterian heritage has been preserved throughout its history through its dedication to Christian values and service. The first institution of higher learning in the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma, the University was the first west of the Mississippi to graduate a woman (1872), the first traditionally white college in Arkansas to admit an African-American (1957), and the first to have an African-American compete athletically (1963). The University also established the first program in America to educate college students with learning disabilities through its Jones Learning Center established in 1971.

The Nature and Purpose of The Covenant

A covenant is a voluntary agreement between parties for a shared purpose, the scope of which transcends everyday matters. It is entered into with deep commitment, with the intent of permanence, and with a foundation of shared beliefs, values, and goals. A covenant is an opportunity as well as a commitment. It requires mutual accountability between the covenant parties.

This covenant reminds the Church and University of the Ozarks of God's promises to God's people. It defines the nature and scope of the relationship between University of the Ozarks and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as represented by the Synod of the Sun or its successor. The University and the Synod enter this covenant to search for excellence and to deal with the question of the role a church-related University plays in a changing world.

This covenant joins the Synod and the University in the spirit of Jesus Christ to strive toward academic excellence and God's vision for all creation.

The Covenant Affirmations and Commitments

A. Joint Affirmation

In affirmation of our covenant relationship, University of the Ozarks and the Synod of the Sun recognize our joint commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, spiritual growth, and service to others in an atmosphere of free exploration of ideas. We share a dedication to education that encourages people to seek God with their hearts, souls, and minds.

The church is committed to the nurturing of institutions of higher learning which challenge people to grow in intellect, faith, and service in an ever-changing world. Presbyterians believe that higher education can be a powerful force for transforming society. The Synod of Sun and the University of the Ozarks jointly affirm our shared commitment to promoting responsible applications of knowledge in order to strive against inhumanity and to seek reconciliation of the differences and enmities which separate people from God and from one another.

B. University of the Ozarks' Commitment

University of the Ozarks renews its covenant with the Synod of the Sun to reaffirm our shared values. In doing so, the University commits itself to the fulfillment of our Mission Statement: *“True to our Christian heritage, we prepare students from diverse religious, cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds to live life fully.”*

This covenant also commits the University to the following:

1. The University will inform the churches throughout the Synod about its mission and services. This information may include an annual report.
2. The University will encourage the use of its facilities by the churches, the Presbyteries, and the Synod.
3. The University will work with the Synod to offer educational and human resources for the benefit of the Church and the University.
4. The University recognizes its responsibility to embody Christian values in a secular world.
5. In keeping with its Presbyterian heritage, the University will continue to interpret its role as reformed, always reforming.
6. The University will articulate to its students and employees its Presbyterian identity.
7. The University will seek the grace of openness in extending the fellowship of Christ to all persons.
8. Embracing the grace of openness in extending the fellowship of Christ to all persons, the University will maintain a plurality of members of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., on its Board of Trustees.

C. The Synod of the Sun’s Commitment

“The Synod seeks to be an agent of mutual ministry among the presbyteries, Presbyterian colleges and seminaries, institutions, agencies, and ministries within the region of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. The goal of the Synod is to facilitate these components to harmonize in ministry. The Synod seeks to proclaim and promote the reign of God in a spirit of ecumenicity.” (From the Synod of the Sun Mission Statement.)

The Synod, recognizing its covenant relationship with God, renews its covenant with the Board of Trustees of University of the Ozarks to pursue the purposes for which the University was founded and for which it continues. This covenant commits the Synod to the following:

1. The Synod will encourage the University in its mission in developing leaders for the Church.
2. The Synod will continue interest in and support of the University by the Church, through the Synod, the Presbyteries of the Synod, and appropriate General Assembly agencies.
3. The Synod will continue to list the University as an institution of higher education related to the Church.
4. The Synod will encourage prospective students in the Synod’s churches to consider enrollment at University of the Ozarks.
5. The Synod will promote the University in the following ways:
 - a. Publish articles and press releases about the University in Synod publications and the Synod website.
 - b. Encourage the use of the Ozarks’ campus for Synod and Presbytery-sponsored events.
6. The Synod will provide financial assistance as follows:
 - a. Welcoming grant applications within the Synod Budget Process.
 - b. Encouraging the University to seek individual gifts and support from particular churches and presbyteries of the Synod in whatever manner the University deems fitting and proper.
7. The Synod will encourage the University to continue in its efforts to promote diversity.
8. The Synod will support the University with the church’s prayers, concern, and interest.

The Rev. Dr. Dan Hignight
Moderator

Richard L. Dunsworth, J.D.
President

Synod of the Sun

University of the Ozarks

Date

Date

Covenant Renewal in 2020.

ADDENDUM

A. THE MISSION OF THE SYNOD OF THE SUN

The purpose of God is fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. As Christ's body, the Church is called to proclaim the gospel and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to make disciples, inviting and encouraging people to become followers of Jesus, to grow spiritually, emotionally, and theologically on the journey of faith and faithfulness.

All expressions of the Church called Presbyterian are called to be instruments of God's will. To each there is a particular role with accompanying responsibilities. The vision of the Synod is to be a regional community of Christians who work together across geographic boundaries.

Being a living expression of the Great Ends of the Church is the primary task of all entities of the Church beginning at the congregational level. Presbyteries exist to create and encourage such congregations and to motivate, develop, and support lay and clergy leadership. The presbytery is meant to be a community of interdependent congregations.

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B. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S HISTORICAL ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The oldest continuous mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States beyond the congregation is mission in higher education. For the past 270 years (since a Presbyterian minister established Log College in 1735), Presbyterians have been engaged in continuous and uninterrupted mission in higher education establishing colleges, academies and universities.

Presbyterians care about education because we are admonished to love God with our minds. Thus, the Church's responsibility is to nurture and equip people of God to do this. The church is involved in higher education to assure education that assists people in becoming faithful persons and responsible citizens.

A basic philosophy of education permeates Presbyterian understanding of a responsible educating community: (1) conviction is an indispensable element in any learning that makes a difference in peoples' lives; and (2) spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of life as well as encouragement of service to others are necessary components of education. The mission of the Church is to call higher education communities to provide education which addresses the spiritual as well as intellectual needs of persons, and prepares them to be caring citizens in a complex world.

Presbyterians are committed to the transformation of people and societies. Higher education today is a powerful influence in the lives of persons from diverse backgrounds who throughout their lives must learn to cope with a rapidly changing and highly technical world. It is the conviction of Presbyterians that the church engages in higher education to influence responsible uses of knowledge.

Excerpts from Loving God with Our Minds, 203rd General Assembly, 1991, PC (USA).