The University Covenant

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Policy Content

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

Preamble

The Church affirms that the creating and redeeming God sustains all of life. That same God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ, calls humanity to love God and neighbor with heart, soul, strength, and mind. Taking seriously the life of the mind, the Reformed tradition continuously seeks to express this aspect of God's call in encouragement of and support for education. From the beginning of its presence on the North American continent, the Presbyterian branch of the Reformed tradition has committed itself to establishing church-related colleges and universities. Changing circumstances may call for new forms of relationship between the Church and its related colleges and universities, but the commitment itself remains consistent.

Historical Context

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church established Trinity University in 1869 in Tehuacana, Texas, to serve and witness in the field of higher education. The Church called its educational enterprise "Trinity" because of the joint work of the three founding Synods, in the name of the Holy Trinity. Trustees were elected to operate the University. These Trustees were granted the direct control and management of the institution in accordance with the legislative act of August 13, 1870, adopting the original charter. The University was moved to Waxahachie, Texas, in 1902, and in 1906, with the union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the University became related to that united church. In 1942 Trinity was moved to San Antonio. The legal relationship between the Church and the University continued, through the Synod's authority to elect the Trustees, until the Board of Trustees became a self-perpetuating body in 1969 and entered a covenant relationship with the Synod of Texas of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. In 1983, with the reunion of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the Presbyterian Church U.S., the University retained its vital covenantal relationship with the reunited Church called the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a larger reorganized Synod of the Sun. The Synod and Trinity University are intimately bound to one another in common heritage and in contemporary witness. Each institution should express in structure its own integrity and its own distinctive mission. As each understands its own unique role, the mission of the other will be enriched and strengthened. The mission of each to the other will be hindered if the distinctive role of either is blurred or absorbed in that of the other. Trinity University and the Synod of the Sun of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

with the dissolving of legal ties, in 1969, declared themselves bound in a covenant of trust and mutual obligation, to which were added in 1983 and 1989 supplemental Statements of Understanding, further interpreting the Covenant Affirmation. The following is a revision of that Covenant and Statements of Understanding approved by the Trinity University Board of Trustees on September 13, 2019 and by the Synod of the Sun on October 31, 2019.

The Covenant Affirmations

I. The Trustees of Trinity University, affirming their covenant relationship with God, enter into a covenant with their predecessors in office, with the Synod of the Sun of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and with each other to pursue the purpose for which Trinity University was founded and the mission for which it endures. This Covenant commits the Board of Trustees to the following:

A. That Trinity University shall recognize its birth and origin in the concern of the Presbyterian Church for the intellectual and spiritual growth of all people.

B. That Trinity University shall continue to express this concern of the Church in higher education by offering quality education committed to the wholeness of life interpreted and illumined by the Reformed tradition. And continue to be an institution in the tradition of the liberal arts and sciences with a balance between the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and natural sciences, with the addition of limited and carefully selected professional degree programs, and with such other academic offerings as may seem to the Board of Trustees wise and proper in accordance with a continued goal for academic excellence.

C. That Trinity University shall continue to recognize its opportunity to provide leadership for the various aspects of the Church's life, to make available its facilities for meetings of the Synod, Presbyteries, and other church activities; encouraging University personnel to participate as their time permits and seek to provide to the Synod informational materials for the Synod's use in supporting Trinity University throughout the region.

D. That Trinity University shall administer faithfully funds given in trust for purposes related to the training of leadership for the Church and other specified or related purposes.

E. That Trinity University shall be nondiscriminatory and shall actively seek in all its policies diversity, equity, and intentional inclusion admitting qualified students and employing faculty and staff without restrictions as to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, military/veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

F. That Trinity University, through its Board of Trustees, shall nominate and elect its own trustees and shall continue its commitment to diversity, equity, and intentional inclusion without restrictions as to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, military/veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

G. That Trinity University shall be maintained and perpetuated to merit regional and national recognition for quality and leadership as it represents open and responsible education, an essential resource in a free society as well as a particular commitment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

H. That Trinity University shall seek to instill in its students the ideals of rigorous pursuit of truth, freedom of thought and investigation, and respect for differing opinions, including differences in religious beliefs and practices.

II. The Synod of the Sun of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recognizing its covenant relationship with God, enters into a covenant with its predecessors and with the Trustees of Trinity University to pursue the purposes for which Trinity University was founded and for which it continues. This covenant commits the Synod to the following:

A. That the Synod and the appropriate General Assembly agencies shall continue their interest in and support of Trinity University, and that Trinity University shall continue to be listed as a college related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

B. That the Synod may provide appropriate resource persons to confer and to consult with representatives of Trinity University, including an advisor to serve as an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. And may provide as desired by the Board of Trustees a report on the current work and ministry of the Synod of the Sun.

C. That the Synod shall encourage financial support from individuals, churches, and presbyteries to Trinity University.

D. That the Synod shall continue to support the University, its faculty, students and administration with its prayers; and through its presbyteries and churches shall provide opportunities for Presbyterian youth to learn of the educational opportunities available at Trinity University, and that particular encouragement will be extended to persons interested in church-related professions.

Statements of Understanding

I. Trinity University's understanding of its commitment to the Covenant is expressed through the following intentions:

A. Persons elected to Trinity University's Board of Trustees shall support the University's covenantal relationship with the Synod as represented by this Covenant and the Board shall include concern for church relations and religious life in the work of one of its committees.

B. Trinity University shall make an annual report available to the Synod of the Sun furnishing the Synod with materials relating to its mission and progress.

C. There shall be a report, review, and, if necessary, revision of this Covenant every six years.

D. The University through its programs and services will continue to show concern for the Church and religious life. This will occur in numerous ways including its ongoing contact with the Synod and other parts of the Presbyterian Church; the maintenance of a full-time endowed University Chaplain; a robust and diverse religious studies department; opportunities for vocational discernment; lectures for the enrichment of the spiritual life of the campus and broader community; active involvement in the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities; and further cultivation of relationships with individuals, and where appropriate, with congregations and governance structures of other expressions of faith and also with other denominations closely linked by historical and ecumenical relationships to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

II. The Synod of the Sun of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) understands its commitment to the Covenant through the following intentions:

A. The Synod of the Sun, through its appropriate representatives, may suggest the names of persons who could ably serve on the Board of Trustees who would be supportive of the covenant relationship.

B. The Synod of the Sun will seek to continue to find ways to support the University as it articulates its vision, mission, interests and concerns, and provide shared reporting about Trinity University to its constituencies.

C. The clergy and members of the Synod shall be urged to be advocates for church-related colleges and universities to high school students and their parents, and will especially make known the resources of the University for those interested in religious studies and pre-seminary education.

D. The Synod shall serve as a resource to the University for the recruitment of minority members to the University community (student body, faculty, staff, and the Board) and shall encourage the University in its striving towards diversity, equity, and intentional inclusion.

E. The Synod shall work with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Trinity University to support mutually beneficial efforts to utilize the Presbyterian scholarship program.

Nothing in this statement or generally in the relationship of the University and Synod shall be interpreted so as to infringe upon the integrity and freedom of the faculty and administration in the pursuit of truth, nor shall the autonomy of the University's internal policies and procedures be compromised by any religious requirement or restriction.

This covenant was reviewed in 2019 and shall be reviewed again in the year 2025 by a covenant review team of representatives from the University and the Synod.

Revision Management

Revision History Log:

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Revision #:	Date:	Recorded By:
v1.0	8/14/2019 2:20 PM	Rachel Rolf

Vice President Approval:

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