

**THE REPORT OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY CORPORATION
AND
BETHEL UNIVERSITY**

The 181st General Assembly named a committee consisting of Dewana Latimer, Chris Fleming, Steve Delashmit, Bobby Garrett, and Pat Huff to work with an additional five persons named by Bethel University for a review of the covenant relationship between Bethel University and the General Assembly Corporation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The joint committee met on the Bethel University Campus in November and submits the following report.

The committee discussed how the Covenant has made for a stronger and closer bond between the university and church. The committee observed that the university has flourished under this covenant relationship. The Committee members noted that Bethel University is, in fact, fulfilling its mission as stated in its Mission Statement. Dr. Robert Prosser, President of Bethel University, and the University Trustees in attendance demonstrated that Bethel is and affirmed that Bethel will always remain a Cumberland Presbyterian university and that they desire that the General Assembly Corporation join in that effort. They also affirmed that Bethel will continue to report to the General Assembly Corporation. Great appreciation for the support of the church, its congregations, and members was expressed and the university's support of the Cumberland Presbyterian students was detailed.

The Committee made primarily editorial changes to the current covenant relationship document. The document updates the history of Bethel. Additionally, the committee adopted the definition of a covenant relationship as found in the Cumberland Presbyterian Children's Home covenant relationship document with the General Assembly Corporation.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Joint Committee on the Covenant Relationship recommends the adoption of the following document:

THE COVENANT BETWEEN BETHEL UNIVERSITY AND
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**I. HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BETHEL UNIVERSITY
AND THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Bethel University was established in McMoresville, Tennessee in 1842 as a Cumberland Presbyterian School, under the auspices of the Synod of West Tennessee. The initial purpose was the education and training of ministers, but the school was open to anyone who wanted an education in a moral and religious environment. The school was chartered under the laws of the State of Tennessee in 1847. Bethel College came into being in 1850 under a new state charter granting the college all the rights and privileges of a full collegiate institution.

The Civil War brought hard times to Bethel College and McMoresville. The area was equally divided between Union and Confederate forces and the college was occasionally occupied by each army. The structures and equipment were damaged, but the greater loss was the student body who served on both sides of the conflict. Bethel College was re-organized at McMoresville after the Civil War and in 1872 it was relocated to McKenzie, Tennessee, to take advantage of the crossroads between North Carolina and St. Louis and the L & N Railways. J.M. McKenzie deeded the land for Bethel to the Board of Trustees on February 2, 1872.

The Synod of West Tennessee ceded Bethel College to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1919. McKenzie, Tennessee was voted as the permanent location for the college at the General Assembly of 1922 in Greenville, Tennessee.

Bethel College was thoroughly re-organized and standardized in 1923. Bethel College became a four-year liberal arts college, chartered by the State of Tennessee and accredited by the Commission on Colleges of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In light of Bethel's growth, complexity and impact, the Board of Trustees recognized the need for Bethel College to become Bethel University which occurred in 2009. The University is chartered by the State of Tennessee and accredited by the Commission on Colleges of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

II. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

The relationship that exists between Bethel University and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is defined and characterized by the word "covenant." The term "covenant" is rooted in biblical and theological understanding and has found its highest expression among God's people. Thus, covenant within the family of God implies the deepest level of trust between covenanting parties and of commitment to one another. A Christian covenant is a living agreement that offers both parties opportunities for creative adaptation to meet the ever-changing conditions of our world. This covenant, moreover, frees each party from being controlled or ultimately responsible for or to each other, but unites the two parties through their common vision and missions. It seeks to honor the legal independence of each party while retaining an ongoing, mutual moral responsibility.

This covenant relationship does not preclude the university from forming other covenant relationships with other Church bodies.

III. THE ONGOING MISSION OF EACH COVENANT PARTY

A. THE MISSION OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Bethel's mission is to create opportunities for members of the learning community to develop to their highest potential as whole persons – intellectually, spiritually, socially and physically – in a Christian environment.

B. THE MISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CORPORATION

Vision of Ministry of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Biblically based and Christ-centered

Born out of specific sense of mission,

the Cumberland Presbyterian Church strives to be true to its heritage:

To be open to God's reforming Spirit,

To work cooperatively with the larger Body of Christ,

and to nurture the connectional bonds that make us one,

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church seeks to be the hands and feet of Christ in witness and service to the world and above all the Cumberland Presbyterian Church lives out the love of God to the glory of Jesus Christ.

IV. THE CORPORATE INTEGRITY OF EACH COVENANT PARTY

A. Bethel University and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church are separate, legally independent and individually responsible entities.

B. Bethel University will be governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees, with no less than a majority of its total membership as active members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

C. All trustees of the university will be elected by the Board of Trustees of Bethel University and reported to the General Assembly Corporation.

D. Neither the General Assembly Corporation nor any of the General Assembly's councils, boards, agents, officers, or employees shall be liable for any of the debts of Bethel University. In similar fashion, Bethel University is not liable for any of the debts of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church or its agencies, nor does it have a claim on any of the assets of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church or its agencies.

V. COMMITMENT OF EACH PARTY TO THE COVENANT

Both Bethel University and the General Assembly Corporation will demonstrate mutual concern and support for one another. The primary expression of mutual concern and support will involve relationships between the two parties that provide services for each other.

A. THE COMMITMENTS OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Bethel University will be a resource to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and its constituencies for educational purposes related to the Church's mission.

Bethel University is free to solicit funds for both capital and operating expenses from individual Cumberland Presbyterian and other persons, congregations, presbyteries, trustees, foundations, estates, and any other sources. Any major capital campaign initiated by Bethel University which targets primarily presbyteries, synods, and congregations of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church will be scheduled by mutual consent of Bethel University and the General Assembly Corporation through the Office of the Stated Clerk.

B. THE COMMITMENTS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CORPORATION

The General Assembly Corporation will provide financial support for the university by regular benevolent giving in accordance with an objective funding formula developed by the General Assembly Corporation.

The General Assembly Corporation will encourage support of Bethel University by synods, presbyteries, sessions and individual Cumberland Presbyterians through planned giving programs.

The General Assembly Corporation pledges programmatic support to the university by encouraging use of personnel and facilities of the university for denominational events, emphasizing the opportunities afforded by church-related higher education in its youth ministry programs, and providing the specialized services of the denominational Board of Stewardship, Foundation and Benefits.

VI. REVIEW AND REAFFIRMATION OF THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP

There will be a review, and if necessary, revision of the covenant relationship every five years. The General Assembly Corporation and the Board of Trustees of Bethel University will see that such a review is accomplished through appropriate committees. These committees will be appointed by the respective entities.

The review process will be initiated by the administration of the university and the review/reaffirmation process shall consist of an in-depth review of all aspects of the university. The review process will be designed by the administration of the university and a review committee elected by the General Assembly Corporation. The review shall include consideration of changes and/or amendments to the Covenant relationship, as well as any suggestions to the university and the General Assembly resulting from the review. The administration of the university and the General Assembly Corporation committee shall produce a joint written report of the review process to be signed by the General Assembly Corporation Committee and the President of the university and submitted to both the Board of Trustees and the General Assembly Corporation.

Responsibility for approval of any change in the covenant resides with the Board of Trustees of Bethel University and the General Assembly Corporation. This agreement may be modified or altered prior to the reaffirmation process only with the consent of both parties.

VII. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COVENANT PARTNERS

Bethel University and the Church will communicate concerning the affairs of the university and the strength of the relationship at least every five years during the reaffirmation and renewal of the covenant. However, Bethel University is encouraged to submit information-only reports through the Stated Clerk to any meeting of the General Assembly Corporation.

VIII. APPROVAL OF THE COVENANT

This document establishes and contains the terms of the covenant relationship between the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Bethel University. By formal action, the Board of Trustees of Bethel University and the General Assembly Corporation adopt this Covenant and pledge themselves to carry out its provisions.

Approved by the Board of Trustees
Bethel University

President, Bethel University
Board of Trustees

President, Bethel University

Approved by the 182nd General Assembly
of the Cumberland Presbyterian

General Assembly Stated Clerk

Date

Respectfully Submitted,
The Bethel University Covenant Review Committee