



The Synod of the Covenant  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



## **A Covenant Agreement Synod of the Covenant and Samaritas January 2021**

**Samaritas** is a social service agency in Michigan that serves over 20,000 people annually throughout the Lower Peninsula. Samaritas' mission statement is "Serving people as an expression of the love of Christ." They live that out through varied service lines such as adoption, foster care, refugee resettlement, shelters, and affordable housing.

**The Synod of the Covenant**, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), includes the eleven presbyteries, almost 700 churches, and more than 100,000 members throughout most of Ohio and all of Michigan. Among its commitments are the denomination's Matthew 25 Initiative, which prioritizes ministries addressing congregational vitality, structural racism, and systemic poverty.

The Synod's mission statement is "We, the Synod of the Covenant, in partnership with our presbyteries, congregations, the General Assembly, and other faith communions, are called and sent by God to be a living, active, and inclusive witness to the love of Christ."

### **Our Joint Hopes for this Covenant**

This covenant offers an understanding of the ongoing relationship between the Synod of the Covenant and Samaritas as agents of Christ's body engaged in mutual mission partnerships to serve vulnerable neighbors in our society and neighborhoods within Michigan in particular. Wherever possible, we will work together to address systemic poverty, focusing in particular on refugees and people who are unhoused or need affordable housing.

### **Samaritas' History**

The rich history of Samaritas is one of growing and diverse service to our neighbors in need. The story began with immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia making their way to Detroit at the end of the 19th Century. They followed the Scriptural imperative to help others in need, especially fellow immigrants, by providing food, clothing, and jobs. Congregational outreach efforts came

together in 1909, and then in 1934, *Lutheran Inner Mission League of Greater Detroit* was incorporated, changing its name soon afterward to *Lutheran Charities*. In 1959, the organization merged with a similar group in Saginaw and was renamed *Lutheran Social Services of Michigan*.

We were founded by Lutheran congregations, but our ecumenical strive to serve and partner with a diverse group of people has grown Samaritas into one of the largest faith-based nonprofits in Michigan. This passion also inspired us on April 5, 2016, to rename ourselves after the Good Samaritan, since this person helped and healed the other one beside the road despite the difference between them. We serve through foster care, adoption, refugee resettlement and support, services for person with disabilities, senior services, support for homeless families, survivors of human trafficking, formerly incarcerated women, impoverished children, and many others. Today, Samaritas spans Michigan's Lower Peninsula with more than 70 program sites in 40 cities. Samaritas's diverse staff shares a dedication to serving their fellow human beings by doing the right thing, for the right reasons, every day.

Partnering with Presbyterian congregations and individuals began far before our renaming as Samaritas in 2016, but since being clearer that we are a diverse organization dedicated to serving the beautiful mosaic of fellow children of God no matter who they are, no matter how they got in their challenging circumstances, the number of relationships has blossomed. Moving into a more formalized relationship as two aspects of the same Body of Christ will serve to strengthen the foundation that already exists, and will expand the number of people we serve in mutual mission.

### **The Synod's History**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) created its sixteen synods, including the Synod of the Covenant, in 1973. Although originally including presbyteries and churches in the commonwealth of Kentucky, its current boundaries approximating Ohio and Michigan were established in 1988.

From its beginning, the purpose of the Synod has been to support and resource the presbyteries and churches within its bounds. Some of the ministries which have been particularly significant over the life of the Synod are (1) the Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs, which has lifted up and prioritized the ministries of churches and their members who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; (2) Mission to the USA, which has annually brought Christian leaders from around the world to spend time with congregation within the Synod; (3) Mobile Health Fair, which has provided health screening and education to underserved and often uninsured individual throughout the Synod, (4) higher education scholarships, given to students pursuing undergraduate, associates, vocational, and theology degrees, (5) grants, awarded to churches and ministries for projects particularly consistent with the Synod's priorities, (6) multicultural programs, which have encouraged a vision of a diverse, just church, and (7) the Covenant Gathering, which has provided discipleship opportunities in a camp/retreat environment.

By 2019, the Synod had affirmed the denomination's commitment to the Matthew 25 initiative, which calls churches and middle governing bodies to build congregational vitality, dismantle structural racism, and eradicate systemic poverty. In 2020, the Synod began a fresh start, giving the opportunity to re-establish its range of ministries in order to live further into the Matthew 25 initiative. This covenant with Samaritas, with its emphasis on eradicating systemic poverty, is a significant step.

### **Commitments of Samaritas**

1. Encourage constituents of Samaritas to pray regularly and publicly for the churches, presbyteries, and ministries of the Synod of the Covenant.
2. Cooperate with Synod of the Covenant and leaders of congregations, committees, and other organizational structures within the Synod concerning common issues of concern that are related to systemic poverty, specifically in the Child and Family areas (including New Americans and housing for those in need).
3. Serve as a resource for the Synod of the Covenant and its various constituents on issues and concerns for vulnerable populations through providing presentations, seminars, up-to-date public policy information, and other helpful data for pastors, church leaders, and other church members.
4. Communicate with the Synod of the Covenant the work of Samaritas in general through Samaritas's multiple forms of print and electronic media.
5. Provide a space for at least one person, recommended in conversation between the Synod of the Covenant Executive and Samaritas's CEO and CAO, on the Samaritas Foundation Board.
6. Explore ways to share core competencies, areas of particular knowledge, and wisdom with the Synod of the Covenant as distinct and related parts of the body of Christ.

### **Commitments of the Synod of the Covenant**

1. Encourage presbyteries and congregations within the Synod of the Covenant to pray regularly and publicly for the people served by Samaritas, as well as for the many team members delivering that support.
2. Encourage presbyteries and congregations within the Synod of the Covenant to assist the ministry of Samaritas within their communities, develop mutually supportive relationships, and consider shared projects, programs, and partnerships, particularly as they address issues of systemic poverty
3. Encourage presbyteries and congregations within the Synod of the Covenant to partner with Samaritas in its ministries and services to support financially Samaritas's various services through congregational budgets and special appeals.
4. Assist Samaritas in communicating with presbyteries and congregations within the Synod of the Covenant by periodically providing Samaritas with up-to-date contact information.

5. Assist in finding at least one person to serve on the Samaritas Foundation Board in conversation with the Samaritas CEO and CAO.
6. Explore ways to share core competencies, areas of particular knowledge, and wisdom with Samaritas as distinct and related parts of the body of Christ.

This Covenant requires approval by the Chief Executive Officer of Samaritas, the Board of Directors of Samaritas, and the Synod of the Covenant Assembly. It will be reviewed every five years or earlier if requested by either party.

In Faithful Partnership,

Rev. Dr. Charles B Hardwick  
Synod Executive  
Synod of the Covenant

Sam Beals  
Chief Executive Officer  
Samaritas