

This Spring, Samaritas and the Synod of the Covenant, Presbyterian Church are entering into an official covenant relationship. Signing the paper to make this official are the Rev. Dr. Chip Hardwick, Interim Executive for the Synod of the Covenant, and Sam Beals, CEO of Samaritas.

“God is a covenantal God,” said the Rev. Dr. Hardwick. This theme is present in the life of Presbyterians worldwide, and Samaritas is honored to be a part of this important relationship. “Covenants are not a contract, but a promise, according to Rev.

Dr. Hardwick. “In covenants like these, the Synod promises things to another group, and they promise things to us.”

The Presbyterian Church is encouraging churches to become part of the Matthew 25 movement from Jesus’ words in that gospel: “Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it unto me.” Therefore, Samaritas is a wonderful partner for service in

this way, since Presbyterians are called to work on eradicating systemic poverty in Jesus’ name. There are about 100,000 Presbyterians in the Synod of the Covenant (largely the states of Ohio and Michigan), so Samaritas is thrilled about these new possibilities for partnership. Rev. Dr. Hardwick is hopeful that Samaritas will be one of the first calls that Presbyterians make when they are seeking to do ministry according to Matthew 25.

This covenant is an expansion on an original document worked on by Hardwick’s predecessor, and it focused on refugee welcome and resettlement. The new covenant that was signed in 2021 expands that partnership to all of Samaritas’ child and family services, which in addition to refugee resettlement, include foster care and adoption, family reunification, and our shelters for houseless families and formerly incarcerated women.

Reverend Julie Delezenne, pastor of First Presbyterian in Warren, whose name might be familiar to Lutherans from her longtime work with Living Waters Camp, has been very involved with Samaritas for years. She, along with her family and her church, have welcomed a family of asylees into their midst with Samaritas’ help. First Presbyterian also hosted the Samaritas’ backpack drive, allowing volunteers and staff to

use their empty sanctuary to fill up with backpacks for children we serve all over Michigan. Rev. Delezenne, whose name might be familiar to Lutherans from her former work with Living Waters Ministries, has been very involved with Samaritas for years. She, along with her family and her church, have welcomed a family of asylees into their midst with Samaritas’ help. First Presbyterian also hosted the Samaritas’ backpack drive, allowing volunteers and staff to use their empty sanctuary to fill up with backpacks for children we serve all over Michigan.

“Coming together to bring this family to America was a great example of covenant,” Rev. Delezenne said. “Different Presbyterian churches donated living space, a church van to pick up this family, and money for plane tickets to reunite this family. Samaritas was there whenever we had questions about how to best support this family, and together we learned a lot.”

Her husband, Elder Adam Delezenne, works for the Southwest Detroit Immigrant and Refugee Center, which also has a covenant relationship with Samaritas. He says “that living out/embodying covenant with one another is kind of a “proxy” to living in relationship with God. It’s a visible sign of that covenant.” To make things even MORE Presbyterian, the Executive Director of the Center is also a Presbyterian Church pastor, the Reverend Kevin Piecuh. He and the SWIRC were instrumental in helping the Delezennes to connect with the family who they have welcomed to First in Warren and into their lives.

Rev. Delezenne and First Presbyterian hope to welcome a second family from the DRC later this year with Samaritas’ help, and to practice what they learned in the process.

What I’ve learned as a pastor is that Covenant is powerful! I am so excited to live into this covenant with these pastors and leaders, and to meet many more. We can do amazing work to serve Christ together, and to see his face in the faces of those whom we serve.

*“Everything comes back to Covenant, in the Bible and in life.”*

*~ Rev. Julie Delezenne*



*Please let me know if your congregation would like to receive my monthly updates. We also have many opportunities for engagement and outreach. I’m here to help connect Samaritas with Good Samaritans! Beth Birkholz, Congregational Engagement Director, Beth.Birkholz@samaritas.org*