

**A COVENANT BETWEEN
THE REV. DAVID REED AND THE REV. LINDA WHITWORTH-REED,
CO-PASTORS,
AND
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MCALLEN, TEXAS**

Called as partners in Christ's Service ...

... a covenant between the Rev. David Reed and the Rev. Linda Whitworth-Reed,
Co-Pastors, and First Presbyterian Church of McAllen, Texas

The relationship between pastors and the church is sacred. Pastors are called by a congregation to preach and teach, to serve the sacraments, to visit the sick and the dying, and to equip the saints. As a priesthood of all believers, we are all called to be imitators of Christ, sharing the load of the church's ministry trusting each other and agreeing to disagree in mutual forbearance, trusting in the following:

There are different ways of serving God,
But it is the same Lord who is served.
God works through different people in different ways,
But it is the same God whose will is brought about through them all.
Each one is given a gift by the Spirit,
To use it for the common good.
Together we are the body of Christ,

And in all things. . . to God be the Glory.

These are the questions asked of Ministers of Word and Sacrament at their ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

- a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
- c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- d. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
- e. Will you be governed by our church's polity and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
- f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
- h. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
- i. (3) (For minister of the Word and Sacrament) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Having answered in the affirmation, the congregation answers these questions at the installation their co-pastors-elect:

1. Do we, the members of the church, accept the Rev. David Reed and the Rev. Linda Whitworth-Reed as our co-pastors, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to guide us in the way of Jesus Christ?
2. Do we agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?
3. Do we promise to pay them fairly and provide for their welfare as they work among us; to stand by them in trouble and share their joys? Will we listen to the word they preach, welcome their pastoral care, and honor their authority as they seek to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?

These are the Specific Responsibilities of pastors [teaching elders and ruling elders] as outlined in the Book of Order G-6.0202b & c.

- b. The permanent pastoral offices of ministers of the Word and Sacrament are pastors and associate pastors. When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice. The pastor is

- responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for praying with and for the congregation. With the elders, the pastor is to encourage the people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision making of the church, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons the pastor is to share in the ministries of compassion, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, he or she is responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in the governing bodies above the session and in ecumenical relationships.
- c. A particular church, with the consent of presbytery, may elect pastors to serve as co-pastors in exercising the responsibility of minister of the Word and Sacrament for the congregation.

Recognizing Presbyterian governing principles as defined in the Book of Order, we adopt this covenant as evidence of our commitment to each other and to the mission of First Presbyterian Church of McAllen; and, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we promise to support this commitment with our thoughts, prayers and actions.

The Co-Pastors Expect the Church

1. To TRUST them as persons of integrity, dedicated to the work of the ministry and as competent professional persons who manage their use of time wisely.
2. To CONSULT with them about church affairs before decisions are made so that the church can benefit from their training and experience and so that the work of the church can be mutually coordinated.
3. To be CONCERNED about their welfare as evidenced by prayer support and an annual review of total compensation within the budget process.
4. To accept their AUTHORITY to approve or disapprove the coming of guest ministers and religious groups to the church, and to collaborate with the session to supervise the paid employees of the church.

The Church Expects the Co-Pastors

1. To show COMPETENCY in ministry through well-prepared sermons, regular visitation where there is a need, pastoral care in crisis situations, administrative and organizational leadership, and the improvement of pastoral skills through continued study.
2. To maintain AVAILABILITY by an established schedule of office hours and a reliable procedure for contact when not in the church so that they can be reached immediately in emergencies and within a reasonable time for routine matters.

3. To exhibit LEADERSHIP in worship, outreach, Christian education, congregational care, stewardship and administration of the church in cooperation with the Session and the Session's designated Callings and Ministries.
4. To be LOYAL to the governing principles found in the Presbyterian *Book of Order*, to attend Presbytery meetings and other meetings of the Wider Church as appropriate, and to support denominational programs.

The Co-Pastors' Obligation to the Church

1. To fulfill the responsibilities of the office of co-pastor as a servant of the church.
2. To meet the reasonable expectations of the congregation while at the same time living a life that is submitted to the will of God.
3. To manage money with integrity so as not to injure the witness of the church.
4. To accept the church as an imperfect organization composed of imperfect people who must be loved and forgiven, to work with the elected leaders of the church, and to be the co-pastors of all the people in the church.
5. To acknowledge that constructive criticism from the congregation can be helpful and to be open enough to accept it and profit by it when appropriate.
6. To recognize the availability for assistance from Mission Presbytery and its designees.

The Church's Obligation to Its Co-Pastors

1. To respect the office of co-pastor and to support the co-pastors' ministries.
2. To guarantee the co-pastors freedom in the pulpit so they can preach from conviction and in a manner and style led by the Spirit of God.
3. To allow the co-pastors time and freedom to have a personal life separate from church obligations.
4. To provide for the co-pastors' support to the best of the church's ability and to review annually the co-pastors' compensation as an evidence of the church's care and concern.
5. To recognize that the co-pastors are humans who will sometimes make mistakes and need forgiveness like everyone else and, because of the limitation of time, may not be able to fulfill everybody's expectations.
6. To confer directly with the co-pastors about any concerns instead of discussing it in secret and to refrain from passing judgment, but instead to always seek opportunities for reconciliation (see *Book of Order* G-3.0200b, G-10.0102g, W-3.5302, W-6.3002, W-6.3009e, W-7.6002).

Co-Pastors' Responsibilities

Using a model of co-ministry based on teamwork, honesty, and trust, growing disciples by:

1. Proclaiming the gospel from the pulpit with integrity and conviction and bring it to bear on the changing and urgent needs of individuals, the congregation, the larger community, and the world.
2. Loving and affirming persons and families within the congregation without bias or prejudice; reaching out and getting to know active and inactive members in appropriate ways that demonstrate care and availability and their importance to the church.
3. Working with the Session and its Callings and Ministries to develop and implement ministry and mission; the co-pastors may serve as ex-officio members of these groups (except the Personnel Ministry); and ensuring that, whenever feasible, a co-pastor is available to provide advice, council and guidance.
4. Assuming an active role, with the session, in spiritual formation by teaching and interpreting the scriptures, theological concepts, history of the church and other topics as appropriate to small groups of the congregation, church officers, confirmands, and new or prospective members as requested and ***as time permits***.
5. Providing counseling to members and nonmembers and preserving confidentiality according to law (including from each other); counsel with members and prospective members about spiritual development, religious life and beliefs. (see *Book of Order* G-6.0204).
6. Conducting (and provide counseling for) weddings, funerals, memorial services, and other special commemorative services in keeping with the Book of Order.
7. Visiting with and providing Christian nurture on a regular and/or as-needed basis to members of the congregation who are ill, in a hospital or nursing home, or in other crisis situations.
8. Moderating meetings of the Session and Congregation, according to the *Book of Order*.
9. Reaching out to the community through active participation in ministerial and civic organizations; identifying and providing leadership to the church in extending Christ's presence into the wider community.
10. Maintaining a reasonable schedule of regular office hours that allows for the administration of the day to day activities of the church, meets the needs of the

staff and congregation for availability and the co-pastors' needs for flexibility.

11. Working with Personnel, to provide supervision and support to church staff members that includes weekly staff meetings, annual evaluations, team building, conflict mediation, and consideration of their needs, deadlines and the limits of their job descriptions.
12. With the session, providing coordination between the church, the Presbytery and other governing bodies of the church, and fostering the participation of the church in the PC(USA) through Mission Presbytery, Synod of the Sun, and General Assembly.
13. Maintaining an ongoing program of continuing education to stay abreast of current trends in theological development in the church and for personal development.

Matters of Mutual Agreement

1. The Session, with the help of the Personnel and the Finance Ministries will work to keep this covenant up-to-date by reviewing and recommending compensation and time arrangements, arranging for mutual evaluation sessions, listening and responding as they believe appropriate to concerns of and for the co-pastors, and being available to assist the co-pastors with personnel problems that may arise.
2. If, God forbid, there is an unresolved conflict in the church that cannot be handled locally by Personnel and session, co-pastors and the session agree to mutually seek competent help from the Committee on Ministry of Mission Presbytery.