

Knox and Govans Covenant Agreement

The Sessions of Knox Presbyterian Church and Govans Presbyterian Church desire to follow God's call to a greater unity in Christ. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity." - Psalm 133:1 "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." - Romans 14:19 In seeking to respond to this call we first acknowledge the powerful forces and realities which divide us and which we must intentionally work to overcome:

- Knox is a predominantly Black Church and Govans is a predominantly White Church. This reality is not an accident but the result of forces in society that have segregated most American churches, turning worship into what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called "the most segregated hour in America."
- In Baltimore, as in many American cities, the racial segregation of our churches reflects the historical racial segregation of our neighborhoods created by racist, anti-Black practices such as red-lining, white flight, and racial steering.
- In our white supremacist society these same forces that have divided us along racial lines have also divided us economically. Centuries of public policy and racist practices have allowed white people to accumulate wealth and pass it down through generations while simultaneously inhibiting or prohibiting Black people from accumulating wealth. Though individual white people may be poor and individual Black people may be wealthy, the anti-Black racism and white supremacy of our society has created an economic divide which is reflected in the financial resources available to our two churches.
- Therefore, we recognize that this disparity in wealth must be addressed in repayment of debt that results from slavery, Jim Crow and the ongoing white supremacist systems that exist to this day. The opportunity exists for us, as Christians, to play a leading role in reforming our congregational cultures to understand and actively repair harms, both historical and currently embedded in the very fiber of our Presbyterian life. Our hopes and goals are to move mountains of public opinion and inequity grounded in centuries of racism by moving together in the direction of righteousness and peace.
- Finally, all of these factors have been and continue to be reinforced by conscious and unconscious negative biases held by individual members of our congregations toward one another. To seek reconciliation and unity in the face of such division will be no easy task. We recognize that reconciliation must be preceded by the difficult, and sometimes painful, work of repentance and repair. However, God's call in our lives is clear and unequivocal.

"...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:

4 there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." - Ephesians 4:2-6 Despite those forces which seek to divide us, we name and celebrate tremendous goodwill, benevolence, and love, drawing our churches together.

Therefore, we the Sessions of Knox and Govans Presbyterian Churches covenant to seek truth, reconciliation, accountability, and unity in the following ways:

- We will commit to brave and honest dialogue about white supremacy, historical harm, and reparations in both our local and national contexts.
- We will remain open to the Holy Spirit's prompting and guidance as we seek greater love, understanding and transformation between our two congregations.
- We will respect the gifts and leadership that God has given to members of both congregations. We affirm that equal partnership does not value Whiteness as a superior or idealized way of being.
- We will share the history of race and racism in our churches, the Presbytery of Baltimore, the City of Baltimore, and the PC(USA) in order to seek mutual understanding, truth and reconciliation.
- We will intentionally seek ways to cooperate in ministry, study, care, fellowship, and partnerships with each other and the communities beyond the walls of our churches.
- We will establish a working group, which includes leadership from both congregations, to explore and suggest opportunities for collaboration.
- We will pray for each other. We believe in the power of prayer, while we know that "thoughts and prayers" alone will not be enough. Every Sunday we will lift up one another's church in prayer. We will ask God's blessing upon one another and pray for God's Spirit of love to continue breaking down that which divides us and build up strong relationships grounded in love.
- We will come together in worship at least twice a year alternating locations and sharing leadership.
- Our Sessions will meet together biannually for prayer and discernment as we seek to deepen this partnership.
- Acknowledging that as a result of decades of economic injustice our two congregations have very different amounts of wealth and human resources at our disposal, and as evidence of our joint commitment to restorative justice and commitment to the truth, reconciliation and accountability that are required if a true partnership is to succeed, Govans will provide significant, unencumbered financial contributions to Knox.

Signed by the Clerks of Session – April 28, 2024

Karen Garrett, Knox Presbyterian Church Eric Johnson, Govans Presbyterian Church

