



COVENANT
AFFIRMATIONS

A commitment to the whole mission of the church. The Covenant Church has always been characterized by its involvement in mission. The earliest name attributed to Covenanters was “Mission Friends,” people who covenanted together for the purpose of common mission both far and near. They understood the work of mission to be evangelism and Christian formation, as well as the benevolent ministries of compassion and justice in the face of suffering and oppression. This is the legacy of Pietism, which was instrumental in pioneering the Protestant missionary movement. An early Pietist, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), described this when he said that the Christian lives for God’s glory and the good of one’s neighbor. At Halle in Germany, Francke was instrumental in developing a Pietist university that educated pastors, teachers, and missionaries. Pietists there founded orphanages, a hospital, a pharmacy, a printing press, and a great library devoted to a global vision of Christian service. We remain a community of friends committed to

this whole mission of the church.

Jesus made it clear that if his followers were to love him, they must keep his commandments. He said, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). This is the great commandment.

The Covenant Church is also committed to the great commission of Jesus Christ: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Established by the gospel and grace of Jesus Christ, the church exists by doing mission—the great commission and the great commandment—as fire exists by burning. The church’s mission is faith active in love, and the two cannot be separated without diminishing the gospel. As Christ’s representative in the world, the church is to be an agent of grace, entrusted with the message of reconciliation, hope, justice, and peace. At the end of his life, Jesus declared his disciples his friends, meaning they shared with him a common passion for his mission in the world (John 15:13-15). Covenanters as Mission Friends have broadly understood mission to be the befriending of others, and all that God has created, in the name of the One who first befriended us.

Covenanters, like all Christians, are called to proclaim this good news with their lives and words, and by the love and integrity of their communities. In faithful witness, the lost are found in Christ. In acts of generosity and compassion, people are ministered to and justice is proclaimed. In the work of evangelism and mission, we seek to embody the presence of Jesus Christ with head, hands, voice, and heart. Jesus called on his disciples to carry their own crosses, and in this joyful way of suffering and service we embody his ministry of reconciliation and proclaim the reality of the kingdom, which extends to every person in every land and to the whole of creation. The Covenant Church, therefore, is “committed to reaching across boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, and status in the cultivation of communities of life and service.”⁵ This mission belongs to the whole church, the spiritual priesthood of all believers—women and men, young and old, laity and clergy.

⁵From the Preamble to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

The Covenant Church seeks to hold together proclamation and compassion, personal witness and social justice, service and stewardship in all areas of life. God makes all things new and calls God's followers to share this mission. Those who neither know nor love the Lord Jesus as well as those enduring poverty, suffering, inequality, and injustice cannot be ignored. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, "God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19-20). This bears witness to God's boundless passion for both the souls and earthly lives of all people, and for all that God has made. When we address not only the consequences but also the causes of suffering, we live out what it means to be the body of Christ in the world.