

## **Covenant Between North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church and Methodist Hospitals of Dallas**

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Ministry in the name of Jesus Christ is the purpose of The United Methodist congregations of any conference. The Annual Conference and its agencies and affiliated institutions exist to serve as an extension of the ministry of outreach to persons. United Methodists serve in local health care institutions through hospitals, and caring and outreach are extended beyond the scope of local congregations.

The covenant statement exists to articulate the relationship of Methodist Hospital of Dallas (Hospitals) and the North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church (Conference) in this particular ministry of caring and healing. The assumptions of the covenant include the following:

**First**, each party to the covenant relationship must have something of value to offer the other, and something to gain from the other. A covenant implies that a sharing process is to take place in which each party is to give of itself and, in turn, to be enriched by what the other has to offer.

**Second**, Hospitals and Conference hold in common a mutuality of goals, objectives and purpose which relates to the specific functions and areas of expertise of Hospitals symbolized in the healing arts, pastoral care, post-secondary education for health careers and community services in preventive and rehabilitative medicine.

**Third**, Hospitals and Conference recognize each other as mature and independent entities. Hospitals has its own governing board. While the charter statement of Hospitals

"In the event the corporation is dissolved, all of its liabilities and obligations shall be paid, satisfied and discharged and all of its assets and property then remaining shall be distributed to the North Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church or such other entity as may be entitled to hold property for the benefit of The United Methodist Church."

indicates a relationship with Conference, Conference cannot make decisions of governance for Hospitals. Hospitals recognizes that Conference is not legally responsible for liabilities and indebtedness.

**Fourth**, Hospitals and Conference both recognize high standards of care and administration.

**Fifth**, the objectives of Hospitals and Conference generally complement one another. Hospitals provides direct services on behalf of Conference, such as pastoral care, education opportunities and the rendering of charity services to the indigent. In turn, financial support of some of Hospitals' programs is a direct evidence of support by the Church of the Hospitals and their objectives. The Hospitals are interlaced with persons who bring to their work in all capacities the concerns and commitments of their religious faith.

The foregoing is to be carried out through a mutual covenant relationship between Conference and Hospitals.

This covenant, as approved by Conference and Hospitals, affirms that the care of the sick and injured and the education of persons to care for them is a ministry of the Church and that Hospitals covenants to serve as an extension of that ministry as outlined in the following four areas:

**Ministry.** In the name of Christ the area of function and expertise of Hospitals is in touching the lives of persons in need of healing, comfort, and education in the healing arts. This implies that the policies and personnel of Hospitals exhibit the characteristics of the Christian faith.

**Influence.** While Hospitals and Conference are autonomous organizations, there are areas of their life in which they influence each other. Influence allows each party to receive the insights and concerns of the other party without the threat of sanction. While attempts to influence may at times be uncomfortable for either or both parties, the hope is for a growth in ministry and increased understanding of needs and issues.

**Communication.** For any covenant to have vitality, it seems apparent that there should be established and used links of communication. The links of communication need to be both formal and informal. The formal links are those administrative channels provided for the fulfillment of responsibilities and liaison. The informal links are those which exist between persons in both organizations to share concerns, information and issues but are not authorized for making decisions.

**Support.** Support is felt by both Hospitals and Conference as they work together in areas of ministry. The expression of support may be both tangible and intangible. Within the covenant relationship, the tangible support between Hospitals and Conference are those actions which sustain specific policies or acts of ministry. The specific policy or act is identified as an area of mutual concern to both Hospitals and Conference. The support may be personal participation, financial or material resource. The decision as to what is supported and the extent of support is a mutual or negotiated decision for each item and may not be assumed. The intangible support could be identified as the encouragement of persons who speak in favor of the mutual

ministry endeavors and offer their good will and volunteer help. Each organization in support of the mutual aims and objectives and the activities of the other in furtherance of such aims and objectives undertake and have undertaken:

**Hospitals:**

- to develop basic goals and purposes which reflect a commitment to Christian life and learning, and when seeking to bring about a change in a position held by Conference, will do so without force or direct authority;
- to assume responsibility for the fiscal operations of hospitals;
- to use funds given and accepted in trust for designated purposes in full compliance with the wishes of the donor;
- to assist Conference and the local churches to meet the health care and educational needs of disadvantaged patients and students;
- to commit to the fullest extent possible the resources of Hospitals in the provision of educational, religious and health care programs and services for both ministers and lay people;
- to provide opportunity for members of the hospital community to serve the Conference and local churches on a released time or nominal fee basis (speakers, committee, and special project assignments, counseling service for parsonage families, etc.);
- to provide the physical facilities and services of the Hospitals to Conference for meeting on an "at cost" basis; and
- to acknowledge affiliation with, and support from, Conference in published documents and statements.

**Conference:**

- to respect the integrity of Hospitals as places of health and pastoral care, medical education, research and community services and to support their need for and the right to carry out these functions with the freedom to act in accord with the most enlightened scientific and moral leadership and judgment available to the governing board of each institution. When Conference seeks to influence these activities and decisions, it will do so without force or direct authority;

- to recognize that Conference budget support holds meaningful significance to Hospitals as an indication of relationship as a voluntary supporting body, although Conference does not bear the legal and financial responsibility of the Hospitals. Any major financial assistance in the future is open to mutual decision of Hospitals and Conference;
- to encourage the churches and United Methodist families to provide ways in which Hospitals may freely and acceptably recruit United Methodist students for health and related careers;
- to encourage local churches and United Methodist Church members to support Hospitals with their gifts, bequests, prayers, influence and voluntary service;
- to work with the Hospitals in helping to meet the health care and educational needs of disadvantaged students and patients;
- to utilize the resources of Hospitals in joint development of continuing education programs for both ministers and lay persons;
- to encourage local church and Conference groups to make use of Hospitals' physical facilities and services for seminars, meetings and conferences of all kinds;
- to encourage local churches to provide physical facilities and services to Hospitals for use on an "at cost" basis and to assure Hospitals that the Conference office and facilities are available for use on an "at cost" basis; and
- to acknowledge the relationships of Conference to Hospitals in published documents and statements.

The covenant relationship herein designated is best described as an interdependent one in which Methodist Hospitals of Dallas and the North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church each do that for which it is best equipped to do in the corporate ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Approved by Methodist Hospitals of Dallas  
Board of Trustees on October 27, 1980*