

COVENANT OF UMCOR AND UMVIM IN U.S. DISASTER RESPONSE

Covenant Preamble

As people called by God to be servant leaders of the church in US Disaster Response, we acknowledge the profound mystery of pain, suffering and death in the world. With Christians throughout the ages we pray for the coming of God's reign in all of Creation (Matthew 5:1-20, 6:9-13, Luke 11: 1-13).

We live in active expectancy of the time when there will be no more sound of weeping, nor cries of distress, when all children shall live beyond infancy and all old people shall live out their days, when justice shall roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, and when all the earth shall be as full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9, 65:20, Amos 5:24).

Meanwhile, we give thanks that God has raised up UMCOR and UMVIM to coordinate and strengthen the servant leadership of the church for US Disaster Response and recognize the unique and complementary gifts and graces of these two programs. We affirm that by working collaboratively in the oneness of the Body of Christ they are much more effective and responsive than either can be separately.

Since both UMCOR and UMVIM have the same goal of serving the most vulnerable people affected by disaster, we enter into this covenant in a spirit of cooperation and humility, seeking to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ as we reach out to those in need.

Nature and Purpose of the Covenant

The ministry of all Christians consists of service for the mission of God in the world. The mission of God is best expressed in the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples: Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. All Christians, therefore, are to live in active expectancy; faithful in service of God and their neighbor; faithful in waiting for the fulfillment of God's universal love, justice, and peace on earth as in heaven.

Pending this time of fulfillment, the ministry of all Christians is shaped by the teachings of Jesus. The handing on of these teachings is entrusted to leaders who are gifted and called by God to appointed offices in the church: some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). For these persons to lead the church effectively, they must embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministry and servant leadership. Through these ministries and leadership, congregations of the church are faithfully engaged in the forming of Christian disciples and vitally involved in the mission of God in the world.

The United Methodist tradition has recognized that laypersons as well as ordained persons are gifted and called by God to lead the church. The servant leadership of these persons is essential to the mission and ministry of congregations.

The privilege of servant leadership in the church is the call to share in the preparation of congregations and the whole church for the mission of God in the world. The obligation of servant leadership is the forming of Christian disciples in the covenant community of the congregation. This involves discerning and nurturing the spiritual relationship with God that is the privilege of servant ministers. It also involves instructing and guiding Christian disciples in their witness to Jesus Christ in the world through acts of worship, devotion, compassion, and justice, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. John Wesley described this as “watching over one another in love.”

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2004): 131, 132, 136, pp. 90-92.

The Covenant

With the grace of God and the support of my colleagues in UMCOR and UMVIM, I will:

Treat all people involved in a disaster as children of God and worthy of my respect,

Regard the collegiality of my fellow workers as a gift from God,

Seek to understand and support the variety of roles needed in Disaster Response.

Practice good stewardship of my own resources and those of the various disaster volunteer teams, understanding that the funding of the work of UMVIM is the responsibility of the volunteers and that General Advance funds collected by UMCOR for a disaster are distributed within an annual conference by the conference leadership,

Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in discerning my own role,

Be ready to listen as a ministry of healing,

Avoid taking sides in local dynamics that may be exacerbated in a disaster,

Hold fast as a disciple of Jesus Christ in the midst of the chaos of disaster.

Covenant Commitment

Mindful of the suffering of Christ in the suffering of others,
I hereby make my commitment, holding myself accountable to my colleagues
in Disaster Response and seeking to be mutually supportive at every opportunity.

Signed: _____ Date: _____