

**RECOMMENDATION XI:  
PARTNERSHIP COVENANT**

***A Covenant of Shared Values, Mission, and Vision Agreement Between  
BAPTIST GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA  
&  
NORTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY***

**I. PROLOGUE**

This Covenant is established by the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary for the purpose of clarifying and affirming the relationship between each as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission through shared commitments and cooperative ministry while at the same time maintaining the independence and distinct character of each.

A brief history of the relationship...

Second Baptist Church of Chicago, Illinois, started Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1914. The seminary has worked with BGAV partners such as V3 and Missio Alliance to share the gospel of Jesus Christ personally, biblically, and missionally. Northern affiliates with the American Baptist Convention, U.S.A. and works with the National Missionary Baptist Convention, and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. The seminary and its board of trustees welcome the opportunity to foster a partnership with the BGAV as we seek the mutual advance of our Lord's Kingdom.

This Partnership Mission Covenant is birthed out of a desire to work together to fulfill the Great Commission and because of the mutual and supportive benefit gained by establishing a relationship between the BGAV and Northern Seminary. It is important that this Covenant establish the intersection of the values, mission, and vision of each entity as the foundation for partnering together through more specific means. This is accomplished first by each entity stating its values, mission, and vision, and secondly by the entities working together to build their covenant around the values, mission, and vision shared in common.

For the purpose of this Covenant, values or "statement of faith" are defined as those guiding principles established by an organization that help frame major decision-making processes, the formation of strategic direction, and the development of human and financial resources. Mission is a unique and succinct statement of purpose that frames the actions of the organization around several key components. Vision is that driving, motivating, God-given view of the future that moves an organization toward specific goals and that seeks to bring others along on the journey. Vision can be described through a delineation of major emphases, new strategic initiatives, and/or the development and targeting of key resources.

**II. THE VALUES, MISSION, AND VISION OF THE BAPTIST GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA**

**Values**

In November, 1995 during annual session the Baptist General Association of Virginia adopted the following values:

- Centrality of Christ
- Authority of Holy Scripture
- Priesthood of Believers
- Soul Competency
- Religious Liberty
- Separation of Church and State
- Autonomy of the Local Church
- Believers Baptism
- Respect for Persons
- Intellectual Integrity
- Cooperative Spirit
- Compassion for Unbelievers
- Responsiveness to a Changing World

## **Mission**

Since 1823 the Baptist General Association of Virginia has pursued its mission as stated in the purpose statement of the BGAV Constitution and Bylaws:

*The object of the General Association shall be to furnish the Baptist churches of Virginia a medium of cooperation for the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom by all methods in accord with the Word of God. There shall be full recognition of the autonomy of the local churches.*

## **Vision**

In a special called meeting in May, 2002 and in the annual meeting of November, 2002, the Baptist General Association of Virginia adopted a challenging new vision for the future. "Kingdom Advance: Partners in a New Vision" is a comprehensive strategy of the churches of the Baptist General Association of Virginia in cooperation with Kingdom partners in Virginia, the United States, and around the world. Unlike many visions and associated strategies from the past, "Kingdom Advance" goes beyond the ministry and work of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and seeks to involve all Virginia ministry partners in advancing the Redeemer's Kingdom.

"Kingdom Advance" outlines four major goals:

BGAV will emphasize the matching of ministers and churches so that they might serve boldly the cause of Christ; the modeling of wellness for the church, its ministers, and Christian families; and developing leaders, both lay and clergy, for the church. Key strategies include developing assessment and placement tools in order to better match ministers and churches; intensified efforts to assimilate new ministers to BGAV life, leadership development cooperatives that provide specialized training and continuing education in multiple locations through linkages with ministry partners; and supportive ministries to prevent "burn-out" among ministers and their families.

BGAV will identify new leaders for church leadership, both lay and clergy, young and old, on campuses and at places of employment; equipping them for service through special training experiences and through mentoring relationships; and deploying them to places of service for "hands-on" learning of practical skills. Key strategies include "call-out" events at church, associational, and statewide levels; the ongoing program of campus ministry on college campuses; the creation of "greenhouse" events where emerging leaders are challenged to grow through intense learning experiences; the development of coaching and mentoring networks for new leaders; and the creating of internships in local church and denominational ministry.

BGAV has an overall mission strategy of going to places where the Gospel is needed, both locally and globally, caring for emotional, social, physical, and spiritual needs; and educating future generations of mission leaders. Key strategies include the deployment of missions volunteers to serve alongside our missions partners locally and around the world; the deployment of Kingdom Advance Ambassadors and a flexible, mobile missions force, supporting caring ministry at the local church level and through joint efforts of ministry on a larger scale; and providing missions education opportunities through classroom and "hands-on" experiences.

BGAV will seek to create a movement where Christians and churches go beyond being healthy to being courageous in evangelizing the lost through church planting and evangelistic outreach; discipling believers to become bold Christians; and visioning a new future for the church and its ministry as often as a changing community and God demands. Key strategies include the provision of resources and supportive networks for church planters and new congregations; training in evangelism, Bible study, discipleship development, worship leadership, and church growth; concentrated efforts at church revitalization and community transformation through an intensive covenant process; financial partnering with churches seeking to become courageous; and through matching assistance for significant discipleship and outreach projects.

## **III. THE VALUES, MISSION, AND VISION OF NORTHERN SEMINARY**

Northern has a Statement of Faith to promote unity and cooperation within the Seminary, akin to the spirit which was proclaimed by the New Testament Church, and to make known to others the tone and substance which is to be expected in public pronouncements. This statement is a revision of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith.

All of Northern's full-time faculty, administrators and trustees have affirmed this statement as a testimony of their common commitment to Christ and to the advancement of His Church. While students need not sign the statement, they are encouraged to give special heed to the biblical teachings which form its foundation. Our life of worship, instruction, prayer and fellowship together centers on the shared commitment to Christ.

The doctrinal basis of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary is and shall be:

The Bible is the revealed Word of God, given by the Holy Spirit, and so is fully inspired, authoritative, and the sufficient rule of faith and practice for the believer.

God exists eternally in three persons who are revealed in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While these three are one, each has a special office and activity: God, the Father, is the source, support, and end of all things; God, the virgin-born Son, is the medium of revelation and redemption by virtue of his incarnation, life and death; God, the Holy Spirit, is the one who inspires divinely chosen persons, reproves the world because of sin, regenerates and sanctifies the believer, and now represents the Son on earth.

Creation is the act by which God brought the universe and all that it contains into existence; the universe is preserved by natural law which is an expression of God's will; at the same time, God's miraculous working is not excluded from nature, as a means of making known God's plan and purpose according to the pleasure of God's will.

Humanity was made in the image of God and originally sinless. Men and women are fallen in Adam, the head of the race, and are now by nature and choice sinners, living in revolt against their Creator, and are unable to escape from their sinful state on their own.

The only way of reconciling sinful humanity to God is provided in the work of Christ, the incarnate Son, fully human and fully divine; in his sinless life, sacrificial death on the cross, resurrection, ascension, and present intercession he reveals at the same time God's grace and loving provisions for all creatures. Humans are reconciled unto God only as they by faith appropriate for themselves the salvation provided in Christ.

The Church is that universal and spiritual body which includes all the redeemed of which Christ the Redeemer is the head; the church in the local and visible sense is a group of believers, immersed on profession of faith in Christ, united under the direct, personal, undelegated lordship of Christ, voluntarily joined together for worship of God, service to others, and for carrying out the work of the Great Commission as given by Christ. Each local church is an autonomous body under Christ, cooperating with other churches of like faith and order in the work of evangelizing the world and advancing the Kingdom of God.

The ordinances are two in number. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, following the confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; baptism symbolizes the death of the old life and the rising of the new. The Lord's Supper is a memorial instituted by Christ to be kept by believers as a symbol of atoning death, and of himself as the Bread of Life, the one through whom believers have spiritual life and vitality.

The second advent of Christ is his personal return by which the present age will be terminated. The ultimate hope of the believer is not in history but in the great eschatological event by which the present age is brought to its conclusion. The culmination of history takes place in the final judgment in which the unredeemed will be punished through eternal separation from God, and the redeemed will enter into a state of eternal peace and righteousness with God.

Approved by NBTS Board of Trustees at annual meeting September 2002

### **STATEMENT OF VISION**

*Our vision is to prepare leaders who will  
faithfully serve Jesus Christ with evangelical passion and missionary skills  
in Biblically grounded and culturally relevant ministries.*

Adopted by the Board of Trustees June 4, 1999.

## **IV. OUR COVENANT TOGETHER**

The Baptist General Association of Virginia and Northern Seminary therefore affirm their voluntary, mutual and supportive relationship by means of the following shared values, mission, and vision. We do this as partners in a new vision seeking to fulfill the Great Commission and to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom.

### **Shared Values**

As Covenant Partners our shared values include the following:

- Centrality of Christ
- Authority of Holy Scripture
- Priesthood of Believers
- Soul Competency
- Religious Liberty
- Respect for Persons
- Intellectual Integrity
- Compassion for Unbelievers
- Responsiveness to a Changing World

Together we affirm the significance of the local church and the need for theological education that equips the church for the work of ministry. We recognize the need for intentional work in racial reconciliation where "in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Galatians 3:28).

### **Shared Mission**

Northern Baptist Theological Seminary offers an educational context that is international, interracial, and intercultural for the preparation of men and women who are called by God. The strategic role of the Seminary is to educate leaders for the churches who will be personally whole and spiritually mature, biblically grounded and theologically competent, pastoral, evangelistic, and prophetic. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the BGAV and with the Baptists of Virginia for the spreading of the Gospel and for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

### **Shared Vision**

As a Christian, Baptist-related, free standing seminary and as a Covenant Partner with the BGAV, Northern Seminary shares the vision of "Kingdom Advance." Together, we will work to accomplish these priorities of the BGAV.

#### *Developing*

We will offer training to BGAV pastors and leaders to support their preaching and provide continuing education, Doctor of Ministry degrees, and distance learning that strengthen ministers. Through the "New Kind of Preacher" and similar programs, we can offer clergy cluster groups that will support the development and formation of preachers. Through distance learning such as "Northern Live," we can offer training for persons so that they do not need to relocate to attend seminary.

Through our cohort model of education, new students and ministers join groups of students that support them throughout their seminary life and beyond graduation. Our supervised ministry program provides the formation and practice that students need for hands-on experience. We will provide a network for Virginia Baptist students to have hands on experience in urban ministry in Chicagoland and develop a "Master of Urban Ministry Leadership" degree program. We will give Northern graduates a chance to connect to BGAV churches through placement and internships.

#### *Sending*

Through cross cultural experiences with the Christian Community Development Association and the Mission and Theology program, we will train ministers to reach the world and other cultures for Jesus. We will commit together to continue the work of racial reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

#### *Planting*

We will support church planters and provide training through our Master of Mission and Theology program and work to bring more partners to help start new churches that are focused on incarnational ministry. Through our distance learning seminars, partnerships with Missio Alliance, and other programs, we will provide training to churches to continue to strengthen their work in the community.

## **V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES**

This agreement does not create a contractual relationship or financial obligation, nor does it imply that Northern Baptist Theological Seminar is an agency, institution, or shared ministry of the General Association.

## **VI. TERM**

These shared values, mission, and vision frame our relationship as Covenant Partners effective November 15, 2016. With six months' notice, either party to this Covenant of Shared Values, Mission, and Vision may request that it be renegotiated or terminated. This Covenant shall be reviewed every five years.