

# Macalester and the Presbyterian Church

Statement of Covenant between Macalester College and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
May 2021

## THE COVENANT

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Macalester College reaffirm their covenant together to support education that leads to growth in scholarship, faithfulness in character, and preparation to serve the common good. This is an historic and continuing relationship that both the church and the college value, dating from the launch of our common history in 1874. The covenant carries forward this intentional relationship and is maintained for the respective institutions by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Board of Trustees of Macalester College. This document's purpose is to reaffirm and renew this relationship as together we seek to honor our common history and shared values.

## COMMON CONVICTIONS

This covenant is based on our historically shared conviction that the human capacity to seek knowledge and discover truth is a precious gift. Four core values reflecting historic Presbyterian commitments define Macalester's educational experience: academic rigor, internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society. That mission is threaded throughout the academic program, and into the vibrant internship and civic engagement experiences our students explore in the Twin Cities. Our alumni carry those lessons with them long after graduation, including into faith communities around the world.

From its inception the college was both Presbyterian and nonsectarian, an alignment that continues today. The traditions and roles of church and the academy have evolved in both complementary and divergent ways since John Calvin and others of the Reformed tradition laid the foundation for what would become the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The college and the Synod continue to share commitment to open inquiry, serious study, and unflagging support for informed engagement within a pluralistic, broadly diverse global society. This covenant reaffirms these shared convictions.

Macalester's Peace Prayer, ingrained into the ritual life of the college through recitation at events, is one expression of these convictions. Offered by students from diverse homelands and in a multitude of languages, this inclusive prayer succinctly articulates core Macalester values. It reads:

*As we continue together in our journey at Macalester, may we be nourished along the way by our years of friendship and learning. May we draw upon them to create a more just and peaceful world, a world filled with fellowship and kinship, with respect and kindness for one another and with the hope of a better tomorrow. Amen.*

## FOUNDING AND PLACE

From its earliest days, Macalester has relied upon Presbyterian leaders and congregations to provide financial and moral support to secure the college's future as an institution of higher learning. In 1880 the newly chartered college asked that the Presbyterian Church establish a formal relationship between the Synod and the college. The Synod agreed. In 1885 the Synod established an endowment of funds and

gave land for the college, reflecting the church's commitment during that era to create educational institutions.

In addition to founding Macalester, the Rev. Edward Duffield Neill served as a chaplain in the Union Army during the Civil War, and helped shape Minnesota in significant ways, including establishing two Presbyterian congregations and serving as the University of Minnesota's first chancellor. He was also a historian whose published views of Indigenous People echoed the white settler-colonial prejudices of his time that resulted in ethnic cleansing of Native People in Minnesota. Today Macalester acknowledges the history of the land on which it is located and the displacement of Indigenous People in a statement read at college events, as a step toward reckoning with the college's history:

*The college acknowledges that Macalester is situated on the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, who were forcibly exiled from the land by aggressive and persistent settler colonialism. The college makes this acknowledgement to honor the Dakota people and their ancestors and descendants, as well as the land itself.*

## THE CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP

Today the college's Presbyterian roots are affirmed by relationships with The House of Hope Presbyterian Church (St. Paul), Westminster Presbyterian Church (Minneapolis) and Macalester Plymouth United Church (St. Paul) in the Twin Cities Presbytery, and other congregations in the Synod. The college is also supported by The Friedrich Weyerhaeuser Family Chaplaincy Endowment as well as the Margaret W. Harmon and Arnold Lowe Chairs in Religious Studies. These endowments ensure the longevity of the Chaplaincy and the Religious Studies Department. The Sarah Elizabeth Bloedel Trust (held by the Presbyterian Foundation) has contributed to the college's financial health. Over the years many students have benefited from scholarship funds given by local congregations. In addition, many Presbyterian pastors and individuals have served as Trustees of the college.

As the college and Synod renew this covenant, we agree to live in a relationship of mutual respect, honoring each other's work in the world. The college proposes the following recommendations to enrich our ongoing covenant:

- Engage in religious and social issues of the day.
- Retain membership and participation in the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities (APCU); Presbyterian College Chaplains Association (PCCA).
- Engage in a rigorous examination and acknowledgement of the truth about the college's founder and the nineteenth-century Presbyterian church in Minnesota.
- Promote religious diversity and pluralism and understanding within the campus and beyond, through the college's multifaith Chaplaincy (The Center for Religious and Spiritual Life).
- Work toward an honest, inclusive, and equitable future.

## REVIEW OF THE COVENANT

- Each party shall be free to take initiatives at any time to discuss problems related to this covenant that may arise.
- Approximately every five years, this covenant shall be reviewed by an ad hoc committee appointed for that purpose by the President of the college and the Synod Executive to determine if the covenant should be reaffirmed and/or modified.

*Executed at Saint Paul, Minnesota, the 14th day of May 2021.*

Macalester College:

Mr. Jerry Crawford, Chair of the Board of Trustees;

Dr. Suzanne Rivera, President of the College;

Rev. Kelly J. Stone, Chaplain

Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

Rev. Janice Palmer, Miller SD, Presbytery of South Dakota, Moderator of Synod of Lakes and Prairies;

Ms. Elona Street-Stewart, Synod Executive;

Ms. Pam Prouty, Stated Clerk.