

One-Year Covenant for
Ohio Conference Congregations,
Pastors, Conference Leaders and Staff

In the last year the Ohio Conference Leadership Team (LT) expended much energy in attempting to keep Ohio Conference together. We did not want OC to stay together just for the sake of staying together; rather, we wanted to stay together so we could, as a conference, discern the direction God is calling us. This effort has been a frustrating and painful failure. It is impossible to discern together when there is mistrust and a constant threat of leaving. For the coming year we have decided to change our approach and ask all congregations, pastors and delegates to consider covenanting together for one year in order that we can discern together. At the end of this covenant year, when a clear direction is set, there will be an appropriate time for congregations to discern if Ohio Conference will continue to be their home. Until that time, we ask all to covenant together so that we may all participate in discerning our future.

As Christians we know that a biblical covenant is a very significant and powerful undertaking — one never to be entered into lightly. Fulfilling a covenant brings great blessing. Breaking of a covenant is portrayed as breaking faith. Remember, a biblical covenant is saturated with the concept of grace! The new covenant of grace was inaugurated by the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20).

In the westernized individualistic culture in which we live we struggle to understand covenantal commitment. The best contemporary example of a covenant can be seen in marriage relationships. Keep in mind that the Bible makes no allowances that the church should be any less covenantal or committed than a healthy marriage!

All this is to say that we ask you to seriously consider the proposed one-year covenant. We will be asking congregations, pastors and delegates to indicate clearly their choice to either enter into this covenant or to decline to enter into this covenant at ACA 2016.

Blessings as you discern, and remember LT wants to hear from you with any comments, questions, suggestions or clarifications.

Please see the Covenant description in the accompanying document.

Leadership Team of Ohio Conference

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Hoping to empower truly committed and deepen relational work in the year of discernment and direction setting, Leadership Team is proposing that at ACA 2016 we enter together into a one-year covenant to guide our actions and thinking together.

The Meaning of Covenant:

When we make covenants, we remain committed to the covenant because of who we each know ourselves to be, not on the basis of another's performance.

This is the pattern of God's covenanting with His people over and over, always faithful to maintain, to pursue, to fulfill His pledge — faithful to act in harmony with His character.

The Elements of This Covenant: An "All-in" Commitment to a Year Together

A commitment to a giving of ourselves to God and to One Another. (2 Corinthians 8:5)

A commitment to a Year of Mission together as a positive companion focus during our covenant year

A commitment to be consistent in attendance at: (Hebrews 10:23-25)

cluster meetings

ACA

pastor peer groups

special discernment events

A commitment to be familiar with Ohio Conference materials (for full involvement)

A commitment to substantive financial giving to support the year's process. (2 Corinthians 8:12)

A commitment to follow the covenant until the covenant year is completed.

A commitment to share openly and to listen openly. (Ephesians 4:15)

A commitment to several elements of "self-discipline" that will help nurture our covenant relationships

- During our covenant year de-emphasizing discussions of "separation" or "leaving"
- Disciplining ourselves toward positive, respectful patterns of communicating & relating
- Keeping our discernment discussions about the discernment events within our covenant circle