

## The Baltimore Covenant

*The Mission of the Presbytery of Baltimore  
is to glorify God and express God's inclusive grace*

We members of the Presbytery of Baltimore, responding to the call of God and affirming our Mission, have found that the following familiar words compel us to shape our life together as Jesus the Christ invites and the Holy Spirit inspires:

*There are different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives them.*

*There are different ways of serving God, but it is the same Lord who is served*

*God works through different people in different ways, but it is the same God who works through them all.*

*Each one is given a gift by the Spirit, to use for the common good.*

*Together we are the body of Christ, and individually members of him.*

*Though we have different gifts, together we are a ministry of reconciliation led by the risen Christ.*

*(I Corinthians 12: 4-7, 27 as quoted in the service of ordination, The Worshipbook )*

Responding to this shared vision of the nature of ministry within the Body of Christ, we make the following covenant, seeking the Spirit's guidance and support in living it faithfully:

We covenant to lift high the Presbytery of Baltimore as one portion of the Body of Christ,  
called to be a provisional demonstration of the transforming activity of God in history.

We covenant that in this part of the Body of Christ we shall seek to:

Honor the truth that God works through each member,

Listen with openness for the insight our sisters and brothers may discern about God's will  
and how they respond.

Support and pray for each other's discernment and ministries.

We covenant that in our decision making:

We shall speak openly and be transparent regarding our intentions.

When faced with actions that may tear at the body of Christ,  
we shall first seek ways to form a common mind  
before we seek votes that create winners and losers.

We shall suspend our own agendas to seek other's views as part of our meeting processes.

We believe that we are more likely to unfold the will of God when all voices are included and honored.

Therefore when the Body of Christ is not significantly of one mind,

we believe that it is better for the Body to take the time

for group discernment and then to state what it believes to be God's will.

rather than be limited to affirming what others outside of the Body ask us to affirm.

We covenant that after the Body has sought the Holy Spirit's counsel and believes it has been guided to a decision.....

We will all treat the product of the Body's discernment 'with great deference and respect,'  
even as we remember the individual conscience cannot be bound;

We all shall love one another even when we disagree,

and will seek to reconcile any breach in the Body;

We all will take the responsibility to interpret the decision accurately and respectfully  
to the constituent churches and to the world.

**This is a draft which has not yet been approved by the Presbytery. Presbytery will be asked to consider this document over three additional meetings with possible approval in June of 2009.**