

A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY AND THE SYNOD OF LAKES AND PRAIRIES  
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

**I. THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Buena Vista University freely covenant together to hold in force and strengthen the ongoing relationship between the synod and the university. Both institutions together, grounded in the values and ethics of the Presbyterian tradition, support educational opportunities for everyone, striving to prepare students intellectually, professionally and socially for productive and satisfying lives in the global society of today's society.

This covenant describes, affirms and strengthens the historic, present and authentic relationship that exists between the university and the synod. This document is defined as a covenant relationship to point to the seriousness with which both institutions remain steadfast in their commitments to educational excellence. Buena Vista University, in its mission statement, points out that it prepares "students for lifelong success through transformational academic, professional and co-curricular programs." So too, Buena Vista University encourages and upholds Presbyterian values noting, in its vision statement, that it strives to provide students with "opportunities to gain the multidisciplinary knowledge and skills to succeed in their professions, careers and service to their communities." The Synod of Lakes and Prairies finds these values to be congruent with its efforts to encourage intellectual curiosity and promote excellence in education. The work of Buena Vista University and the mission of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies in these regards is harmonious.

**II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In 1891 a proposal was accepted by the Fort Dodge and Sioux City presbyteries to establish a Presbyterian college in Storm Lake, Iowa. Articles of incorporation were adopted and a charter secured under the name, Buena Vista College. Since the date of its founding, Buena Vista College, continuing since 1995 as Buena Vista University, has a common heritage and relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The relationship that began with the work of two presbyteries continues today through the university's relationship with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

As it has for all these years, Buena Vista University considers its religious heritage and concern to be important and useful in the search for truth. Grounded in the basic values and ethics of the Presbyterian tradition, the university has recognized the needs and trends of society and has adapted to meet them.

**III. CURRENT CHURCH RELATIONSHIP**

Buena Vista University is within the boundaries of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and it continues in covenant with the synod. While it has been many years since the Presbyterian Church played a role in university's governance, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and Buena Vista University have maintained a relationship based on mutual appreciation and support.

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) encourages support of the university through its presbyteries and congregations across the upper Midwest, and for many years the synod has conducted its annual midsummer ministry — Synod School — on the campus of the university. Synod School draws more than 600 people to the university each year. The university's active support of Synod School has contributed greatly to its success.

Through the years, the university has continued its commitment to education and the search for knowledge. In its vision statement, the university indicates that it strives to provide “programs, disciplines and modes of delivery which are vital to preparing globally engaged and ethical citizens who contribute to the economic, intellectual and cultural development of our world.” The mission of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies regarding higher education and the vision of Buena Vista University are congruent efforts.

Therefore, because of an historical relationship and current understandings, the university and the synod find it appropriate at this time to state the covenant and reinvigorate the relationship between Buena Vista University and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

#### **IV. BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY COVENANTS**

Buena Vista University covenants with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

1. Support academic freedom because it is fundamental to the pursuit of truth.
2. Identify Buena Vista University's affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in its annual report and on its website, [www.bvu.edu](http://www.bvu.edu).
3. Continue Buena Vista University's tradition of providing an education that prepares students for lifelong success through transformational academic, professional co-curricular programs.
4. Work with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies to carry out the synod's midsummer ministry, Synod School.
5. Value the diverse national, religious and ethnic make-up of the entire university community.
6. Support a full-time chaplain to provide leadership for the practice and development of spirituality and an appreciation of differing world religions.
7. Maintain active participation in the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities.
8. Continue, as its vision statements note, to strengthen “programs, disciplines and modes of delivery which are vital to preparing globally-engaged and ethical citizens who contribute to the economic, intellectual and cultural development of our world.”
9. Continue, as its vision statements note, to offer students an “exceptional classroom and experiential learning opportunities to gain the multidisciplinary knowledge and skills to succeed in the professions, careers and service to their communities.”
10. Periodically review this covenant and suggest modifications as appropriate within the covenant review process.

## **V. SYNOD OF LAKES AND PRAIRIES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) COVENANTS**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) covenants with Buena Vista University to:

1. Pray for the ongoing success of Buena Vista University and the successful accomplishment of its educational mission.
2. Promote Buena Vista University to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its newsletters, other publications and its website.
3. Respond to questions and requests of the university relating to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), its congregations, presbyteries and synods.
4. Provide connections to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by maintaining contact to the university's chaplain and other administrators as deemed appropriate by the president of Buena Vista University.
5. Present Buena Vista University as an option in higher education to high school graduates in Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations.
6. Provide information pertaining to mission opportunities for Buena Vista University students available through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
7. Encourage moral and financial support of Buena Vista University from Presbyterian congregations, the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
8. Work with Buena Vista University to carry out the synod's midsummer ministry, Synod School.
9. Work with Buena Vista University to build on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to higher education by finding mutually agreed ways to connect the Buena Vista University and the church.
10. Periodically review this covenant and suggest modifications as appropriate within the covenant review process.

## **VI. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY AND THE SYNOD OF LAKES AND PRAIRIES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

Buena Vista University will communicate with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by:

1. Making the college's annual report and other reports as deemed appropriate available to the synod.
2. Inviting clergy and lay church leaders to campus for continuing education events.
3. Encouraging faculty and administration participation at appropriate Presbyterian events and meetings.
4. Making Buena Vista University representatives available, as deemed appropriate by the president of the university, as a liaison at meetings and events of congregations, presbytery, synod and national levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will communicate with Buena Vista University by:

1. Scheduling periodic visits to the university campus by synod officials.

2. Scheduling periodic visits to the university campus of other representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
3. Providing copies of the synod newsletter to the chaplain and other officials of the university as deemed appropriate by the president of the university.

## **VII. REVIEW OF THE COVENANT**

The covenant between Buena Vista University and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be reviewed by the participating institutions every five years.