

### **Covenant Between Chapelwood UMC and Fair Haven UMC for Adoption Merger (BOD, ¶12546.1)**

Our lives are driven by the contractual. Every aspect of our life is rooted in contract language where we agree to give an amount of money and in return we receive a product or service that is agreed upon.

Covenant is the opposite of that. In the Latin, covenant is “con venire” which literally means “a coming together”. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to join in a lifelong familial or friendship agreement, such as marriage or adoption. The preferred meaning of the word covenant in the Old Testament is ‘a bond’; a covenant refers to two or more parties bound together. Covenant language is “for better or for worse”.

This covenant between Chapelwood United Methodist Church and Fair Haven United Methodist Church is one we make before God and one another. This is a covenant of adoption where Chapelwood adopts Fair Haven as a full member of the Chapelwood family. We bond together as one to better accomplish our mission of making disciples.

Chapelwood and Fair Haven are agreeing to enter into an adoption merger. In the days of the Apostle Paul, Romans often adopted children. The adopted son would become a full member of the new family with all rights and privileges. Interestingly, they were not expected to cut ties to their previous families. They were part of a new family while retaining aspects of their former identity. In Galatians 4:4-6, Paul writes, “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*” This adoption covenant is an agreement between two redeemed communities who share one Father.

This adoption merger embraces the belief that Fair Haven and Chapelwood can better accomplish our mission by joining together. Fair Haven recognizes that by merging with Chapelwood they can multiply their impact beyond what they could do by remaining solo. Chapelwood recognizes that greater ministry can happen in Spring Branch with Fair Haven as a member of our family. Chapelwood and Fair Haven both bring gifts to this relationship. The central strength of Chapelwood and Fair Haven’s adoption model is that Fair Haven becomes a part of the larger Chapelwood family *without losing their unique heritage and identity*.

As a covenantal family we commit to the following vows:

1. We commit to pray. We are both communities of prayer. We covenant to pray for one another regularly and for our mission in the world.
2. We commit our presence. We are both presenting all that we are to be one in ministry. We bring all of ourselves into this relationship and covenant ourselves to do everything we can to make this relationship successful – for better or worse.
3. We commit our gifts. Chapelwood and Fair Haven both bring gifts to this relationship. We covenant to sharing our gifts with each other to make God’s kingdom a reality in our sphere of influence.
4. We commit our service. Chapelwood and Fair Haven have great histories of service in our neighborhood. We covenant to serve one another and our communities for Christ.
5. We commit our witness. We promise to be witnesses for Christ and for each other. We covenant to speak words of encouragement and we covenant to commit ourselves to a relationship of love and trust with each other.

### **Our Mutual Covenant**

***By agreement of the Charge/Church Conference, we vote to merge Fair Haven United Methodist Church with Chapelwood United Methodist Church. The terms of the covenant are agreed to as stated below:***

- The Transition Process
  - Approval of this covenant by both churches as spelled out in this covenant will merge Fair Haven UMC into Chapelwood UMC. The approval will allow the Senior Pastor of Chapelwood to create a transition team made up of members of both Chapelwood and Fair Haven. The transition would outline the timeline and stages of transition going forward and report regularly to both churches. The transition will begin once both churches have agreed to the covenant and the District Superintendent has given approval.

- Our Philosophy of Ministry
  - We covenant to join in ministry together with Fair Haven retaining their name as a worship community of Chapelwood.
  - We covenant together to share one mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
  - We covenant to share one way of accomplishing that mission: to embody God’s grace as we receive it to those who need it.
  - We covenant to share one purpose: to make the kingdom of God a reality in our sphere of influence.
  - We covenant to teach an intentional Discipleship Pathway that invites people to:
    - Experience God’s Grace in Worship
    - Grow in God’s Grace in Relationships
    - Share in God’s Grace in Ministry to the World
- Our Covenant for Members and Staff
  - We covenant that all members and records of Fair Haven UMC will become members and records of Chapelwood UMC (BOD ¶12546.5).
  - We covenant together that employees of Fair Haven will become employees of Chapelwood. The transition team will work with all staff to determine their passion for this new ministry and find the best places for them to continue their work for the kingdom – whether that is in their current position or a new position that leverages their strengths and skillsets. All of the employees of our family are treated with the same respect, love, and benefits. All staff agrees to live faithfully in support of the mission of our church and encourage one another in our work.
- Our Organization
  - We covenant together that as one body, we will have single governance – the governance of Chapelwood UMC. Fair Haven UMC will become a part of Chapelwood UMC. Fair Haven will be a worship community of Chapelwood UMC with their own pastor and Core Team charged with direction of mission and ministry for the community.
  - We covenant together that members of Fair Haven who desire the success of this adoption merger will have opportunities to use their gifts across Chapelwood’s governance having opportunities to serve on administrative committees and the Board of Stewards (Administrative Board) of Chapelwood. The members of Fair Haven’s Core Team will become members of the Board of Stewards and a representative of the Core Team will be a member of the Ministry Council of Chapelwood.
- Our Property and Assets
  - All Fair Haven property and assets will become property and assets of Chapelwood UMC. (per United Methodist Book of Discipline and Texas Conference of the UMC). Since all United Methodist Church property is held in trust and owned by the Annual Conference, the execution of these assets will occur under the guidance of the District Superintendent.
  - The property on 1330 Gessner will not be sold. It will be used for effective ministry to reach people for Christ. The Fair Haven worship community, the Hispanic congregation, and other vital ministries/worship communities will utilize this campus.
  - Chapelwood will engage in property and facility study to determine maintenance needs and commit to significant upgrades.
  - The parsonage (1718 Peer Drive, Houston, 77043) and the rental house (10407 Mayfield, Houston, 77043) of Fair Haven will become assets of Chapelwood. If sold, assets will be used to invest in the Gessner Road campus.
  - All endowments and designated funds of Fair Haven will be committed to their intended purpose and dedicated to the Gessner Road campus improvements.
- Our Finances
  - We covenant that the Finance Office/Operations of Chapelwood will take and manage all finances and financial procedures of Fair Haven UMC. The Finance Office will process all payroll, income, tuition, tithes, fees, benefits, etc. This includes the Fair Haven worship community, Hispanic congregation, and the Fair Haven Day School.

- Our Missions
  - We covenant that the transition team will study all missions and or missionaries supported by Fair Haven and recommendations will be made to add them to the Local Serving Ministry of Chapelwood. Chapelwood and Chapelwood members already support many of the current Fair Haven missions and ministries.
- Our Ministries
  - The transition team will engage in a study of all ministries and make recommendation to the Fair Haven worship community (which includes the Hispanic ministry) and the Chapelwood Lead Team. Just as we do with all of our worship communities, effective ministries are expected to continue while other ministries may combine with existing Chapelwood ministries if appropriate. We will prayerfully determine how to transition ministries that are not effectively serving their purpose.

This covenant is agreed to by Church Conference vote by Chapelwood United Methodist Church and Fair Haven United Methodist Church on the dates listed below.

**Chapelwood United Methodist Church**  
**Church Conference voted to approve this covenant on February 21, 2017**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Board of Stewards, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Senior Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
 District Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Church Conference Recording Secretary

**Fair Haven United Methodist Church**  
**Church Conference voted to approve this covenant on March 5, 2017**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Board of Governors, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Senior Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
 District Superintendent

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 Church Conference Recording Secretary