

**Covenant**  
**Between Shenandoah Presbytery and Illubabor Bethel Synod**

**Revised, January 2002**

Approved by Shenandoah Presbytery \_\_\_\_\_(date)

Approved by Illubabor Bethel Synod \_\_\_\_\_

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## Vision/Mission/Objectives

### Vision

Our shared vision for this covenant is the development of Christian relationships by together experiencing the unity, oneness, equality and blessedness of “koinonia” Christian community. We express that vision even in understanding our relationship as a *fellowship*.

### Mission

We reaffirm, as stated in our original Memorandum of Understanding, that the church of Jesus Christ is one Body in spite of physical and cultural differences (1 Cor. 12:13). Within our fellowship, each is equally valued and each receives God-given grace and love for enriching the Body. Standing together, we are enabled to live out our God-given life in the world to bring into this Body the many that do not yet belong to Christ’s church (John 10:16). In this relationship, mission is “two-way” in all aspects—each mutually and equally sharing and receiving. We strive for the Biblical justice seen in the Holy Communion that invites all to partake in the Body.

### Objectives

1. to grow together in quantity and quality
2. to witness and bear suffering together in the world for the sake of our faith.
3. to encourage and motivate one another to reach out to the unreached people with the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ
4. to encourage one another to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, committed to sacrifice all to minister to God's people, and the world, as called ordained leaders and laity
5. to understand and embody our ministry to one another and to the world in a holistic manner, as in the motto of the EECMY: “*The whole gospel for the whole person in the whole world.*”

## Needs Within Each Partner Church

### ***Illubabor Bethel Synod***

- the training of church workers and the equipping of the laity in the knowledge of the word of God to take care of and nurture their respective congregations
- persons with specialized nursing and agro-mechanical skills and with deep commitments of faith
- short-term exchanges and visits of people to equip and build up the laity and to express the international nature of the Christian Church
- reaching the unreached through evangelism outreach in targeted areas
- church building projects
- prayers and relationship with other churches including the above-mentioned exchange of people and expression of solidarity and oneness with each church’s special mission and situation
- funding for development and evangelistic work of the synod

- financial support for integrated development projects currently pending funding
- funding for specific evangelistic outreach, church development and leadership training projects.

**Shenandoah Presbytery:**

- spiritual renewal and formation
- to experience the vitality, depth and richness of faith found among Christians in Ethiopia
- to challenge our young people with the gospel and the call to Christian discipleship
- to experience more directly the global nature of the church of Jesus Christ and the call to tell the story of God's love in Jesus Christ to all people
- to understand how our denomination is involved in mission around the world by participating more concretely in its mission in one part of the world
- to experience a more concrete involvement of Christian sharing and discipleship through direct relationships and communication with partners in mission
- to experience the solidarity we share with brothers and sisters in Christ across all language, cultural and national boundaries as we sit at tables, pray, worship, talk, play and work with our Ethiopian brothers and sisters
- to discover a stronger desire to share our faith in our own communities
- to call people to turn and move toward God
- to invite and encourage people's participation in the Church of Jesus Christ
- to grow in our willingness and ability to share our abundant monetary, talent and faith resources
- to enlarge our view of the world and human life through direct experiences of other cultures, political and economic situations and the development of relationships with people of those cultures.

**Specific Commitments of our Fellowship**

**Shenandoah Presbytery:**

1. We will pray fervently for one another. We will promote the first Sunday on odd-numbered months (Jan., Mar., May, July, Sept., Nov.) and the last Sunday in September as days for prayers for our respective partner church.
2. We will communicate regularly through letters, phone calls, faxes, emails and personal visits.
3. We will allocate at least \$6,000 annually from Shenandoah Presbytery's budget to support the evangelistic work of the Illubabor Bethel Synod.
4. We will encourage church-to-church partnerships and mission community to IBS presbytery partnerships within the larger partnership between Shenandoah Presbytery and IBS.

5. We will continue to build relationships through yearly exchange visits. Shenandoah Presbytery will encourage visits by pastors and representatives of churches in the presbytery, in response to the needs and requests of IBS, giving priority to first-time visitors from as wide a representation from mission communities as possible. We will attempt to send first-time visitors in February, when the IBS annual convention occurs.
6. We will seek to recruit committed Christians from Shenandoah Presbytery with useful skills and training for longer-term work within the Illubabor Bethel Synod, as per specific requests from IBS.
7. We will explore supporting an extended visit of a leader from the Illubabor Bethel Synod as a missionary within the Shenandoah Presbytery.
8. We will respond to opportunities to assist in the training of leaders for the Illubabor Bethel Synod by supporting scholarships to the Mekane Yesus Seminary, sending useful books to the Synod, and sending qualified teachers for short-term leadership training seminars.
9. We will encourage churches and individuals to consider responding to special opportunities for the support of projects and ministries of our respective churches.
10. We will continue to promote and support the ministry of the iCARE program.

#### **Illubabor Bethel Synod:**

1. We will pray fervently for one another, distributing prayer requests to presbytery leaders on a regular basis.
2. We will communicate as regularly as possible given our technological restraints.
3. We will both receive visitors from Shenandoah Presbytery and send visitors from IBS on a regular basis.
4. We will inform Shenandoah Presbytery of specific requests for individuals to come for short-term training events.
5. We will encourage church-to-church partnerships.
6. We will notify Shenandoah Presbytery of special projects that need financial assistance.

#### **Evaluation**

The Illubabor Bethel Synod/Shenandoah Presbytery Covenant will be evaluated on a regular basis.

Members of our respective bodies will meet with either the IBS Executive Committee or the Ethiopian Partnership Committee of Shenandoah Presbytery during exchange visits.

The focus of these conversations will be a “checking in” with regard to each party’s experience of the partnership. While conversations during visits may lead each body to suggest modifications in the Covenant, actual changes in the Covenant will be undertaken through the regular evaluation process. Reports from visitors will be considered when making such changes.

## **Appendix**

### **Background**

Shenandoah Presbytery and the Illubabor Bethel Synod have been in a formalized fellowship since 1989. Prior to the beginning of this period of fellowship there had been many communications and several significant exchange visits between us. Members of the original Partnership Committee of Shenandoah Presbytery felt a strong sense of the Lord's guiding in these early communications and in the establishment of our fellowship. The years of sharing and growing together since then have brought many blessings to our respective church bodies and individuals and congregations within them.

Our partnership agreement is reviewed and renewed every 5 years. This Global Partnership Covenant will extend our partnership another five years until December 2006. This Covenant will be reviewed, amended and endorsed by the leadership of the Illubabor Bethel Synod following the Synod's meeting in February 2002. The Ethiopian Partnership Committee of Shenandoah Presbytery has already approved it. Following approval of this or an amended Covenant by the Illubabor Bethel Synod, this partnership agreement will be presented to the mission council of Shenandoah Presbytery and voted on by the subsequent meeting of the Presbytery of Shenandoah. The Ethiopian Partnership Committee of Shenandoah Presbytery and the IBS Executive Committee, will work together under the guidance of the EECMY and the WMD of the PCUSA to oversee, implement and provide opportunities for education and growth of this fellowship. Members and leadership of this Committee have valued and sought the wisdom, input, resources and support of the General Assembly's Worldwide Ministries Division (formerly the Global Mission Division) in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

### **Resources Available for Carrying out Fellowship Commitments**

#### **Shenandoah Presbytery:**

The Partnership Committee has an annual budget of approximately \$12,000 (in the year 2001), which is used to cover travel costs related to exchange visits and provide an annual contribution to support the evangelistic work of the Illubabor Bethel Synod, and other IBS requests.

Communication expenses are typically covered by individuals or churches involved in various activities in the partnership.

The Partnership Committee will cover round-trip airfare for first-time visitors to IBS. The individual, or his or church, will provide in-country costs, such as ground transportation, meals, etc, (usually estimated at \$800-\$1200).

Funding for special projects is raised through over and above giving by congregations within the presbytery in response to publicity relaying the opportunity after approval by the World Wide Ministries Committee and Presbytery Council.

Funding for the support of children participating in the iCARE program will be provided by individuals and churches who have made a commitment within the parameters of the iCARE program.

Website maintained by Mike Robison <http://www.ethiopianpartnership.news-letter.com> has news, prayer requests, photos, personal accounts and a copy of the Covenant among other items.

Illubabor Bethel Synod:

1. IBS will provide transportation, food and lodging while in Mettu (Round-trip transportation from Addis Ababa/Mettu, as well as food and lodging in Addis will be covered by Shenandoah).
2. IBS will cover the cost of visas and other related expenses for IBS representatives coming to the U.S.
3. IBS has assigned one person to be responsible for communication between the Synod and Shenandoah Presbytery, in an attempt to improve our communication between parties.

*2001 S.W.O.T. Analysis*

As part of the regular evaluation of our Covenant, the IBS Executive Committee and the Shenandoah Presbytery Ethiopian Partnership Committee used a S.W.O.T. Analysis format where we examined our respective, perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats within the fellowship. The S.W.O.T. affirmations were discussed with Ato Yonas Yigezu, IBS President, and the Ethiopian Partnership Committee in November 2001. The central findings of the S.W.O.T. Analysis are presented below. Strategies for dealing with the findings are currently being developed. The full report from both parties is attached to this document.

Both parties strongly affirm the positive nature of the fellowship and the desire that we continue in it. Also jointly celebrated is the understanding that our relationship is not characterized by dependency, but by a mutual sharing of our resources in a way that builds up the body of Christ. A third affirmation is that meaningful relationships have been central to our partnership and that a deep trust exists between the two parties.

Increased opportunities for leadership and theological training are cited by IBS as a strength of the fellowship, as well as the financial support of social service efforts within the Synod. Shenandoah affirms wholeheartedly the belief that the fellowship seems to be “God-ordained.”

In examining respective areas in which growth is warranted, both Shenandoah and IBS cite the need for better communication, realizing that some of the difficulty is due to cultural factors, as well as to the lack of reliable technical support. Shenandoah acknowledges that the involvement in the fellowship is concentrated on a rather “closed circle.” IBS is experiencing a similar situation, in that knowledge of, and experience with the partnership is sometimes relegated to the top leadership within the Synod.

Many opportunities have developed out of our fellowship with one another—most notably the possibility of strengthening congregation-to-congregation or congregation-to-mission community relationships. Both parties hope for an increased emphasis on women’s ministries and opportunities for income-generating projects.

Threats to the fellowship were also acknowledged in the S.W.O.T. process. Shenandoah cites conflicts in both denominations as potentially damaging to the fellowship. Both contend that internal organizational difficulties could affect negatively the fellowship, as well as instability in the Ethiopian government. Both also acknowledge that dependency is also a threat to the mutuality for which we strive.