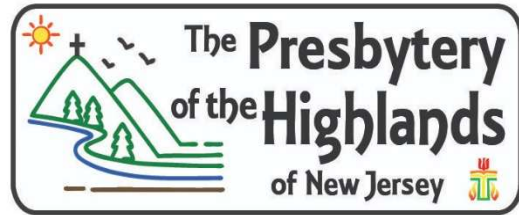


# Covenant Agreement Between Sanctuary + Seed (S+S) and the Presbytery of the Highlands



## INTRODUCTION

This covenant agreement between *Sanctuary + Seed (S+S)* and the Presbytery of the Highlands is established to affirm and strengthen the relationship between this emerging worshipping community and the governing body that supports and oversees its ministry. Rooted in the Reformed tradition and guided by the principles of mutual accountability, pastoral care, and collaborative mission, this covenant seeks to provide clarity, encouragement, and shared direction for our life together in Christ.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this covenant is twofold:

1. To articulate the theological, missional, and relational commitments that ground the ministry of S+S within the life and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), under the care of the Presbytery of the Highlands.
2. To define the structures of support, accountability, and partnership that will enable both S+S and the Presbytery to faithfully live out their call to proclaim the gospel, nurture discipleship, and participate in God's work of justice, reconciliation, and care for creation.

By entering into this covenant, both S+S and the Presbytery acknowledge their shared responsibility to honor Christ's call, to walk together in trust, and to cultivate practices that embody hope, creativity, and faithful stewardship of God's good earth.

## THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Sanctuary + Seed (S+S) is a validated ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), formally recognized as a 1001 New Worshipping Community under the care and jurisdiction of the Presbytery of the Highlands. As an innovative ministry rooted in eco-theology, land stewardship, and creative worship, S+S embodies an alternative yet faithful expression of Christian discipleship and witness, grounded in a theological commitment to the tending and care of the earth as entrusted by God in Genesis 2:15. This commitment includes care for soil, water, plants, people, and more-than-human creation, reflecting a symbiotic relationship that is mutually beneficial and offered as an act of worship to the Lord, honoring the interconnectedness woven into the creation story.

This covenant affirms the Presbytery of the Highlands' role as the ecclesial body providing oversight, care, and support for S+S as a ministry of Word and Sacrament within its geographic bounds and under its governance.

#### STATEMENT OF RELATIONSHIP

This covenant formalizes the relationship between S+S and the Presbytery of the Highlands as one of mutual accountability, pastoral care, and collaborative mission. The Presbytery serves as the mid-council overseeing S+S's standing as a validated ministry while affirming its operational and programmatic independence.

#### PRESBYTERY LIASON

The Church Development Team of the Presbytery of the Highlands will appoint a liaison or team of liaisons who will:

- Serve as the primary point of contact between the Presbytery and S+S.
- Provide guidance on matters of polity, governance, and compliance.
- Offer pastoral care, counsel, and support to S+S leadership.
- Facilitate access to denominational and Presbytery resources.

#### PRESBYTERY SUPPORT AND SHARED RESOURCES

The Presbytery of the Highlands commits to exploring and clarifying ways it can assist S+S's ministry through:

- Offering guidance on Presbyterian polity, governance, and best practices for validated ministries.
- Providing access to Presbytery communications channels (website, newsletter, social media) for promotion of S+S events and programs.
- Invitations to Presbytery-led trainings and workshops relevant to ministry and leadership development.
- Facilitating connections to committees, resources, and congregational networks.
- Providing introductions to denominational and Presbytery grant opportunities that could sustain S+S's financial viability.
- The Presbytery will consider requests for financial support related to specific needs and potential grant opportunities.

#### SHARED COMMITMENT TO CREATION CARE

In mutual recognition of the church's call to care for God's creation, this covenant affirms a shared commitment to address the urgent realities of climate change and ecological justice. The Presbytery of the Highlands and S+S will:

- Foster opportunities for learning, dialogue, and collaboration about the health

and well-being of all creation, especially the land and watersheds in our region.

- Explore joint initiatives that help congregations and ministries become better stewards of the earth.
- Encourage faithful action by the broader Presbytery to contribute to ecological restoration, sustainability practices, and education.
- Promote participation and advocacy for the health of soil, the earth, water, more-than-human creatures, and humanity as interconnected parts of God's creation.

#### REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

S+S will provide regular updates to the Church Development Team to ensure transparent communication and mutual trust. The frequency and format of these reports will be determined in consultation with the Church Development Team liaison. Options may include:

- quarterly written reports summarizing key ministry activities, financial status, partnerships, and emerging needs. Report levels of engagement, ministry impact.
- An annual presentation to the Presbytery gathered body.

#### MUTUAL PARTICIPATION

S+S ecclesial representative commits to participating as appropriate in the life and mission of the Presbytery of the Highlands, including:

- Attendance at Presbytery meetings.
- Offering workshops, retreats, or presentations that highlight the ministry of S+S and its contributions to the Presbytery's wider mission.

The Presbytery encourages its members and leaders to attend S+S events and worship gatherings as a sign of mutual support and connection.

#### REVIEW AND RENEWAL

This covenant will be reviewed annually to reflect on the relationship, clarify expectations, and address any changes in circumstances. Either party may propose amendments at any time.