

Presbytery of the Highlands  
Stated Meeting  
Church Development Team Report  
September 9, 2025

**Items for Consent Agenda:**

None.

**Items for Action:**

None.

**Items to Report:**

**CDT-1**

**June 2025**

The Church Development team met at the new church development, 1001 Worshipping Community: Sanctuary and Seed, located at the former Christ Presbyterian Church in Martinsville on Wednesday June 18.

We received a tour of the facility and grounds and discussed ways in which CDT can support this new ministry.

Goals from this gathering:

- appoint a CDT member as a liaison to S&S
- approve a covenant between S&S and Highlands Presbytery, similar to the one that S&S has with the Boundbrook Presbyterian Church.

**CDT-2**

**July 2025**

On Wednesday, July 16, CDT held their monthly meeting.

We reviewed the draft covenant that was provided to us from S&S and made a few modifications. Attached.

**Motion made and approved:** Covenant between S&S and Highlands Presbytery.

This covenant has been passed along and should be available to the ACT.

### **CDT-3**

**Sarah Green will serve as the liaison between CDT and S&S.** Merideth will also remain involved with supporting S&S. Other members of the team also expressed a willingness to support this ministry, such as providing music once of month if so desired.

### **CDT-4**

**CDT feels strongly about providing financial support** to this new church development. At one point in this history of Newton Presbytery, money from the sale of church facilities was set aside for NCD and the Church Development Team.

### **CDT-5**

CDT would like to present the following motion to the ACT  
**Motion made and approved at the CDT July 16 stated meeting: Motion to reserve 10% of funds from church closures for the purpose of supporting new worshipping communities within the presbytery.**

### **CDT-6**

#### **Other items to share:**

Ray Jones will lead a webinar on: church development trends in the post-pandemic world, evangelism, and innovation. Thursday, Oct. 2 at 7:00

### **CDT-7**

**Summer Book Study:** led by Sarah Green on Thursdays at 11:00 via zoom "[Becoming a Future-Ready Church: 8 Shifts to Encourage and Empower the Next Generation of Leaders](#)" by RNS Projects Editor and National Reporter Adelle M. Banks, Daniel Yang and Warren Bird.

### **CDT-8**

**New Grant Program:** Who is my Neighbor? Who is My Neighbor is a process of using your congregation's demographics to learn about the people in your neighborhood and ministry opportunities. Complete the Who is My Neighbor program and your session can apply for a \$1000 grant to reach out in mission and ministry to your neighbors.

### **CDT-9**

CDT provides Liaisons to congregations in transition and helps support them with their discernment studies (Turn the Page). This discernment study and additional resources can be found on the Presbytery webpage.

**CDT-10**

CDT is currently supporting five congregations that are in transition.

Submitted by:

Rev. Carie Stanely-Morgan Co-Chair of CDT

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

Approved by the Church Development Team with slight modifications: July 16, 2025

## **I. Theological Foundation**

Sanctuary + Seed (S+S) is a validated ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), formally recognized as a 1001 New Worshiping 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.

## **II. 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.

## **III. Presbytery Liaison**

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.

## **IV. Presbytery Support and Shared Resources**

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

- **Information and Insight:** Offering guidance on Presbyterian polity, governance, and best practices for validated ministries.

- **Media/Publicity:** 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.
- **Financial Support:** The Presbytery will entertain requests for financial support for specific needs and grant opportunities.

## **V. 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.

## **VI. 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.

## **VII. 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.

### **VIII. 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.