

**COVENANTAL AGREEMENT**  
**The Metropolitan Chicago Synod/ELCA**  
**Advocate Health Care Network**

*“Having been set free from concern for ourselves, we are free for love and service to the neighbor.”*  
*-Martin Luther*

**Preamble:**

The Advocate Health Care Network (Advocate) and the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the Synod) affirm their ministry in health care and the covenantal relationship they share with one another.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) through its Program Unit for Church in Society (ELCA-Church in Society) has affiliated Advocate as a Category II Social Ministry Organization (SMO). Advocate is also affiliated with the United Church of Christ (UCC). As a direct result of ELCA affiliation, the Synod and Advocate cooperate together in a social ministry of health and healing.

The purpose of this covenant is to describe the relationship between Advocate and the Synod and to promote a relationship marked by mutuality, cooperation, transparency, accountability, and trust.

**I. Guiding Principles**

This covenant recognizes that, in this health care ministry, the integrity and autonomy of each ministry partner is maintained, while at the same time an environment is created in which each partner recognizes and acts upon the potential of cooperative responses to human needs. It recognizes that Advocate and the Synod are each fully responsible for their own management and fiscal affairs and accountable through their governing bodies to their respective mission statements.

This covenant also recognizes that the primary expression of Advocate’s affiliation with the ELCA exists in the organization’s governance structure which is the ELCA directors who serve on the Advocate Board of Directors. The ELCA directors, therefore, assume a principal and necessary role in the relationship between Advocate and the Synod.

In conversation with the ELCA-Church in Society, Advocate and the Synod have developed this covenant within the context of *A Social Ministry Partnership (1997)*, which identifies the following Guiding Principles to which we have made specific application:

**A. A Shared Mission**

The shared health care ministry of Advocate and the Synod addresses the health needs of individuals, families, and communities. This service shall be rooted in a fundamental understanding of human beings as created in the image of God.

**B. A Ministry Relationship**

Working together in an essential ministry of service, Advocate and the Synod recognize that each possesses unique strengths and abilities. Advocate and the Synod agree to ongoing open communication and deliberation to determine how best to combine these gifts in order to most effectively carry out health care ministry.

**C. Faithful Stewardship**

Ultimately, all resources used in ministry belong to God. Both Advocate and the Synod commit to being faithful stewards of resources and to continuous growth in knowledge, effectiveness, and generosity of response.

**II. Shared Commitments**

**A. Mutual Support**

Grateful to God for our shared mission, Advocate and the Synod recognize the integral nature of each other's work. To express this recognition and to support one another's ministries:

**Advocate commits to:**

- publicly affirm its affiliation with the ELCA and the integral nature of Advocate's mission with the whole mission of the church;
- participate in and support Lutheran Services in America;
- participate with Synod congregations in health ministry activities, as resources allow, within the Advocate service areas;
- maintain an ex officio seat on the board at all times for the Bishop of the Synod
- participate with the Synod in the development of activities related to the ELCA Social Statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor (2003)*;
- work with ELCA directors to provide orientation for newly elected Synod Council members specific to the mission and vision of Advocate;
- identify open positions on the Advocate Board of Directors and the Advocate Hospital Governing Councils to the Bishop of the MCS in a timely fashion so as to invite submission of interested persons by or through the Synod to the Advocate Board of Directors Nominating Committee;
- be available to attend and present at Synod Assemblies;
- encourage prayer for the Synod throughout the organization.

**The Synod commits to:**

- publicly acknowledge Advocate as integral to the ministry of the ELCA and encourage clergy, laity, and congregations to be involved in and to celebrate Advocate’s ministries;
- share community news of Advocate activities in Synod written and electronic newsletters and maintain a link to Advocate on the Synod website;
- recommend to the Advocate Board of Directors Nominating Committee qualified candidates for the Board of Directors and Governing Councils;
- provide orientation to newly elected ELCA directors of Advocate specific to the mission and vision of the Synod;
- promote and nurture strong relationships with Advocate and other SMOs in the Synod via an annual gathering of SMO senior leaders whose organizations are located in the Synod;
- remain open and attentive to the concerns of patients and members of the communities served by Advocate;
- encourage prayer for Advocate within its congregations.

**B. Open Communication**

In order to ensure mutual accountability, the Synod commits to semi-annual meetings between the ELCA directors on the Advocate Board and the Synod Council and/or Executive Committee of the Synod Council and, together with Advocate and the ELCA-Church in Society, agrees to attend special meetings which may be called by either Advocate, ELCA-Church in Society or the Synod as significant issues arise.

The semiannual or special meetings will provide opportunity to:

- review this covenantal agreement;
- review applicable Advocate philosophy and ELCA social policy statements;
- review and address concerns regarding issues of social, racial, and economic justice;
- review financial issues and opportunities for mutual financial support;
- consider opportunities for joint advocacy for health care justice and health care legislative reform;
- review the relationships between Advocate, the Synod and the local communities they each serve;
- review the overall health of the relationship between ELCA- Church in Society, the Synod and Advocate and address areas of this relationship that may need strengthening in periodic Ministry Partnership Reviews as convened by ELCA-Church in Society.

**III. Shared Ministry**

*“He (Jesus) sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” Luke 9:2 NRSV*

Advocate and the Synod reaffirm our shared commitment to living out Christ’s command to serve the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all, especially, the “least among us” (Matthew 25:40).

Advocate and the Synod further recognize that the national health care system is in crisis. Because many problems in the provision of healthcare ministry cannot be solved in isolation from this national context, Advocate and the Synod agree to work together to provide leadership for healthcare reform in the state and nation.

In response to our shared calling and holding one another in prayer, Advocate and the Synod commit to continue to work together to explore, identify, and pursue faithful and effective ways to promote the health and vitality of ELCA congregations, health care centers, communities, families, and individuals throughout greater Chicago.

We, the undersigned, commit to this covenantal agreement on behalf of our respective organizations:

Date:

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Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod - ELCA

Date:

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President and CEO, Advocate Health Care System