

**A Covenant  
for the Shared Constellation Ministry of  
Calvary Episcopal Church, Underhill, VT  
and  
St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction, VT**

Seeking to build up one another in Christ and move forward in mission together in a constellation ministry St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction, VT and Calvary Episcopal Church, Underhill, VT covenant to engage in shared ministry together in the following ways. We can do more as churches together.

**1. Continuity of Identity**

Although we are joined together as one in the Body of Christ, this ministry respects the distinct identities of each congregation. This shared ministry partnership is not a merger, consolidation, nor a dissolution of either congregation. Each parish will maintain its own constitution, budget, Vestry, and team structure.

**2. Term of Shared Ministry Partnership**

Following approval of both parish Vestries on behalf of their respective congregations, this ministry partnership officially will begin Jan 1, 2026. Following approval of this shared ministry partnership by both parish Vestries on behalf of their respective congregations, the Wardens will present this agreement to the Diocese for review and approval. With approval from the Bishop, the agreement will become effective on that date. Both congregations agree to continue to engage in this shared ministry partnership for at least three (3) years following the joint hiring of a priest, after which the shared ministry will continue as mutually agreed upon. Dissolution of the shared ministry partnership requires consultation with and approval of the Bishop.

**3. Sharing a Lead Priest**

Calvary and St. James agree to share priestly leadership. The lead priest will serve the two congregations based on a percentage of time in a work week as outlined in the letter of agreement. Calvary and St. James agree to a combined position of at least 75% time (average of 30 hours/week). This time is to include duties devoted to developing and maintaining the constellation as well as to the Diocese and greater church. Both congregations covenant to be understanding and flexible toward this percentage of time functioning as a *guideline* due to the nature of the office and duties of a priest. As part of this time, the Lead Priest will agree to be present for Vestry meetings and annual meetings at each parish.

**4. Financially Supporting a Priest**

Each parish agrees to adhere to the negotiated Letter of Agreement with the Lead Priest. Each parish will pay the portion of the costs based on the hours allocated in the letter of agreement.

**5. Worship**

Worship of God is at the center of congregational ministry. Each parish will maintain its own service schedule, and may choose to conduct joint worship services from time to time, especially those involving dates listed in the Seasons and Major Holy Days portion of the Calendar in the Book of Common Prayer. The Vestries of each parish (informed by recommendations of a Joint Vision Team) and the Lead Priest will approve the joint service schedule as far in advance as possible. Other than for Christmas or Christmas Eve and Easter, the priest will not be expected to lead services on the same day at both parishes.

**6. Parishes Discernments**

During the time of this agreement each parish will have a defined process for discerning individual parish goals in the context of the joint relationship and common goals for the constellation.

**7 Joint Vision Council Meetings**

Joint meetings will take place at least four times a year (quarterly). The agenda for these meetings will include a time of devotion/spiritual growth, a time of deepening our relationships with one another,

review of the progress of our shared ministry, discussion of ways to expand our shared ministry, and any additional items proposed by members of either parish Vestry or the Lead Priest. Location of these meetings can alternate between each parish. Minutes of these meetings will be taken by the secretary of the Vestry who is “hosting” that particular meeting at their parish.

### **8. Communication and Conflict Resolution**

The Vision Council and Vestries covenant to practice healthy communication and conflict resolution with one another and the Lead Priest. As Christians, we understand this to take the form of Matthew 18 when we are in community with one another. Matthew 18 outlines the importance of addressing issues directly and compassionately, while uplifting the values of transparency, truth-telling in love, integrity, forgiveness, reconciliation, and prayer. In the event there is a conflict between the parishes that cannot be resolved at the Constellation level, the Sr. Wardens may jointly petition the Bishop, in writing, to assist in resolution

### **9. Shared Ministry**

Both congregations will continue to explore ways to expand their shared ministry and mission together for the sake of God’s world, as well as ways to deepen relationships with one another in both communities. This may take the form of youth activities, children’s offerings, Christian formation, worship, newsletters, outreach activities, etc.

### **10. Review of Shared Ministry**

The parishes agree to conduct a joint Vestry meeting each year to evaluate the effectiveness of this shared ministry partnership. The Vestries will also assess this agreement and amend it, as needed and mutually agreed upon.

### **11. Search process for a new priest**

The parishes agree to form a joint search committee and together define the criteria for selecting a new priest.

Signature of Sr. Warden

Date

12/16/2025

Brian Garland, Sr. Warden on behalf of the Vestry  
St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction, VT

Signature of Sr. Warden

Date

12/16/2025

Jack Manning, Sr. Warden on behalf of the Vestry  
Calvary Episcopal Church, Underhill, VT

Signature of Priest

Date

12/16/2025

The Rev. Kim Hardy, Rector, St. James Episcopal Church, Essex Junction, VT  
Priest-in-Charge, Calvary Episcopal Church, Underhill, VT

Signature of Transition Officer

Date

Reviewed by: The Rev. Canon Linda Grenz, Transition Officer  
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

Signature of the Bishop

Date

Approved by: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Shannon MacVean-Brown, Bishop