

# **Emerging Ministries**

## **Purpose**

The Boston Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA) is delighted to welcome congregations who are interested in establishing a relationship with the PCUSA. The Presbytery provides a three-step process for congregations to become inquiring faith communities and then fellowships, and eventually Chartered Churches within the PCUSA. This process is designed to give the group a chance to “try on” the PCUSA before committing totally to it. It is also designed to provide a gradual immersion into the requirements and privileges of a fully organized PCUSA church, as well as recognizing non-traditional worshipping groups that may never take the form of a “traditional” church.

The steps, outlined below, for the traditional process, are as follows:

1. Inquiring faith community
2. Fellowship
3. Chartered Church

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a clear and specific process for the Presbytery and inquiring congregations or groups to follow that will enable a vital and sustainable ministry. Emerging Ministries are to be guided and mentored in the virtues of being responsible and accountable to the councils of the church.

An Emerging Ministry (EM) is defined as a ministry that has approached the Presbytery to be shepherded in the process of becoming a chartered church or other worshipping entity. This congregation may have the formal designation of “inquiring faith community,” “fellowship” or other designation approved by Council. These will include immigrant and non-traditional Ministries. An inquiring faith community may eventually become a fellowship when certain criteria are met and then a fellowship may eventually become a chartered church.

Come EM entities may never intend to become a chartered church. These may take the form of a multi-faith worshipping community, coffee house, or other non-traditional form. Such entities will be handled within the context of this policy with exception made as needed.

All EM's shall come under the umbrella of the Committee on Church Support and Development. CCS&D has the following responsibilities:

1. Provide support to each EM as needed and prudent. This include ensuring that the Liaison Group is aware of financial support opportunities, training resources and other problem solving resources.

2. Provide oversight to each EM to ensure each group is operating properly and moving toward the next phase of its life. (e.g. fellowship moving toward becoming chartered church.
3. Keep Council informed of the activities of the EMs and each EM through regular reporting.
4. Appoint liaison groups of usually four members to each EM.
5. Maintain minutes of each EM and its Liaison Group that are kept in the custody of the CCS&D chair and passed to successive chairs.

### **Process to Become an Emerging Ministry**

A congregation may become an EM by the following methods.

1. An existing congregation or group of worshippers may request this status from CCS&D who then sends recommendations to Council for approval.
2. A person or persons may request permission from CCS&D to start an AM. CCS&D then send a recommendation to Council for approval.

When accepted CCS&D will appoint a Liaison Group to work with the EM.

### **Liaison Group**

The Liaison Group will be appointed by CCS&D. The Liaison will consist of at least four members. The responsibilities of the Liaison Group will be as follows:

1. To act as a resource and support for the EM
2. To make sure the EM understands what it means to be part of the PCUSA.
3. To provide training to the EM leadership in PCUSA polity, including, but not limited to the Book of Confessions, the Book of Order, The Clerk of Session Handbook and Robert's Rules of Order.
4. To provide guidance, evaluation and assistance in the development of the EM.
5. Get to know the EM's faith background and get to know the EM's leadership personally, including their education, immigration status (if applicable) and church experience.
6. To understand the EM's purpose for seeking to be a PCUSA congregation.
7. To determine if any financial assistance is available from PCUSA or other resources.
8. To be advocate and ombudsman for the EM
9. To assist the EM in producing a Mission Statement that includes its goals and its planned activities for achieving those goals.

10. To keep CCS&D informed of the activities and status of the AM through regular reporting.

When fellowship status is achieved:

11. Assist the fellowship in securing pastoral leadership or obtaining PCUSA recognition of current leadership.
12. Ensure the sacraments are properly administered in the fellowship.

### **Process to Become an Inquiring Faith Community**

An inquiring faith community (IFC) is an EM that is investigating whether to become associated with the PCUSA through Boston Presbytery. When an inquiry is made that CCS&D judges to be worthy of pursuit, CCS&D will appoint a Liaison Group to work with the EM to determine if such relationship makes sense for all parties.

The purpose of this step is to provide support, to introduce ourselves, to get to know each one another and to provide encouragement for the community and its leaders. It is also a time to give the group guidance on how to prepare to make the move to the next step.

To be approved as an inquiring faith community, an EM must meet the following criteria.

1. An EM must have a stated purpose and identity.
2. The EM must understand what it means to be part of the PCUSA.
3. The EM must receive and understand this process and may present a modified plan to the CCS&D for approval.
4. An EM petitions CCS&D to become an Inquiring Faith Community. Upon approval CCS&D takes the recommendation to Council for final approval.

### **Process to Become a Fellowship**

A fellowship is a Boston Presbytery ministry that does not meet all the criteria for a chartered church. A fellowship may or may not be moving toward becoming a chartered church. A fellowship is governed by a steering committee that functions in a similar way to a session.

To become a fellowship, an Inquiring Faith Community (IFC) must meet the following criteria.

1. The IFC must produce a mission statement approved by CCS&D. This mission statement must include the EM's purpose as well as its goals and its planned activities for achieving those goals.
2. The IFC leadership must understand what it means to be a PCUSA and have an understanding of PCUSA polity.
3. The IFC leadership must demonstrate sound financial management.
4. The IFC must be providing regular worship services or other faith based activities.

5. Upon becoming a fellowship, the IFC must have pastoral leadership approved by the Presbytery Committee on Ministry.
6. The IFC shall, by a vote of the whole community, and after the Liaison Group has presented to all the members what it means to be a fellowship in the PCUSA, indicate its desire to become a fellowship by approving the following petition”

“We the undersigned, in response to the grace of God, desire to be constituted and organized as a fellowship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to be known as \_\_\_\_\_. We promised and covenant to live together in unity and to work together in ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ, bound to him and to one another as a part of the body of Christ in this place according to the principles of faith, mission, and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

“(Signatures)”

7. The steering committee must petition the Presbytery Council through the CCS&D to become a fellowship
8. If approved, the Council will take the matter to the Presbytery Meeting for approval.
9. Presbytery shall formally recognize the new fellowship with an appropriate service of recognition.

## **Steering Committee**

Each fellowship shall have a steering committee that acts as the governing body for the fellowship (similar to a session.) The steering committee shall be composed of at least three members selected by the fellowship congregation and is representative of the fellowship. The moderator of the steering committee shall be a member of Presbytery qualified to moderate a session as approved by the Committee on Ministry. Normally, this will be the pastor of the fellowship, if the pastor is a member of Boston Presbytery. Otherwise the Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator.

The Presbytery Liaison Group will continue to function during the fellowship stage. The Liaison Group (in whole or part) appointed by CCS&D shall be allowed to attend all steering committee and congregational meetings of the fellowship, including executive sessions, and shall be allowed access to all minutes, roll books, financial and other records of the fellowship.

The steering committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Manage the affairs of the fellowship similar to that done by the session.

2. Produce and maintain a written plan showing how the fellowship will progress to a chartered church, if that is its intention. Annually report progress to CCS&D on this plan
3. Keep minutes of all meetings in English, copies of which are sent to CCS&D and Liaison chair as they are approved/
4. A fellowship is expected to follow the rules of the PCUSA Constitution and Presbytery except where specifically exempted by the Presbytery Council as recommended by CCS&D. Any exemption must be for a specific period of time and reported to Presbytery.
5. 5. Keep complete and accurate financial records, including the production of a budget prior to each year for the subsequent year(s) and conduct annual financial reviews.
6. 6. Send the membership statistics of the fellowship to the Presbytery Stated Clerk each year when requested.
7. Participate in the financial support of the Presbytery and denomination through per capita and general mission giving. A newly established fellowship will determine in conversation with their Liaison Group the appropriate level of financial participation, taking into consideration their available resources and levels of participation will be approved annually in consultation with CCS&D. Full payment of per capita and a general mission pledge must be in place before a fellowship may be chartered as a church.
8. Keep accurate membership records in English, including the recording of all members, baptisms, deaths, and wedding.
9. Elect a clerk to maintain the records of the fellowship and minutes of the steering committee in English. The clerk or other representative shall attend a records review/training meeting annually with the Presbytery Stated Clerk.
10. Send representatives to Presbytery meetings on a regular basis. Voting status may be granted a fellowship when approved by Presbytery.
11. Provide appropriate compensation to the pastoral leadership and staff.
12. Maintain liability and property insurance coverage.

### **Process to Become a Chartered Church**

To become a chartered church, the following criteria must be met.

1. All responsibilities of a fellowship must be met.
2. The fellowship must have a viable year-round program of worship and service.
3. The fellowship must be financially self-supporting. If financial support is present (such as grants), a reasonable financial plan must be provided that shows the ability to continue past the expiration of any financial assistance.
4. The fellowship must have demonstrated stable leadership within PCUSA polity.

5. The fellowship will nominate elders and the Liaison Group will ensure the elders elect are prepared for office.
6. The fellowship steering committee must petition the Presbytery Council through CCS&D to become a church. The petition will have the following form.

“We, the undersigned, in response to the grace of God, desire to be constituted and organized as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be known as \_\_\_\_\_. We promise and covenant to live together in unity and to work together in ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ, bound to him and to one another as a part of the body of Christ in this place according to the principles of faith, mission, and order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). “(Signatures)”

7. If approved, the Council will take the matter to the Presbytery Meeting for a vote to approve the chartering of the new church of the PCUSA and arrange to actually charter the new church at a worship service of the Presbytery.
8. The new congregation shall then elect ruling elders, and if they so decide, deacons. The Presbytery shall prepare, examine, ordain and install these newly elected persons at the chartering service.
9. As for all of its churches, Presbytery shall continue to work closely with the congregation in securing pastoral leadership, in plans for the service and witness of the congregation, in coordinating its work with other congregations, in counseling concerning incorporation and bylaws for the congregation, conforming to the Constitution of the PCUSA and in giving other forms of support and encouragement that will strengthen the mission of the congregation in the larger life of the denomination.