

Policy Statement
Worshipping Fellowship Groups
Presbytery of Riverside

BACKGROUND and DEFINITION

Within the Presbytery of Riverside are self-forming, worshipping groups, who approach the presbytery or a local church for assistance with housing, administration, spiritual and/or financial support. With rare exception, these fellowships are primarily immigrant groups having an identified leader who may or may not be ordained and sometimes having a reformed theological heritage from their country of origin. Some groups are interested in becoming chartered as a church with full participation in PCUSA and others choose to maintain status as a fellowship under the umbrella of the presbytery.

PROCESS FOR BECOMING A RECOGNIZED FELLOWSHIP

A. Relationship with Local Church

1. Fellowships commonly share a local Presbyterian Church facility. Where that is the case, a local church representative should attend fellowship steering committee meetings and a fellowship representative should be invited to attend Session meetings.
2. Both the church and the fellowship should participate in multicultural training and should be encouraged to develop the spirit of shared ministry in their community.

B. Relationship with Presbytery

1. A self-forming worshipping fellowship shall establish a working relationship with the presbytery through the Congregational Nurture Team (CNT). Over time the Presbytery through its representatives shall observe the characteristics of the fellowship and its leadership. The Fellowship shall complete an application to become a recognized worshipping group. CNT shall review the application and when appropriate, recommend it to Presbytery for approval.
2. The Committee on Ministry (COM) shall be notified of the credentials of the fellowship leader with respect to ordination or transfer as a Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Commissioned Lay Pastor. COM shall establish Terms of Call and take a recommendation to Presbytery. It shall be understood that the need to do ministry and to provide just compensation must be held in tension on a case by case basis. Not all fellowships will be able to meet Presbytery minimum salary requirements and compensation package. . Part-time leadership and tent-making shall be allowed. Presbytery is not responsible to underwrite the package.

STATUS

1. Once a group has been recognized by the Presbytery as a worshipping fellowship, it becomes part of the ministry of the Presbytery. The leader shall be identified and accepted into membership of the Presbytery if appropriate, and shall have a voice and vote at Presbytery meetings.

2. The Fellowship shall be self-sustaining unless the Presbytery or local church chooses to offer support through Extra Commitment Opportunity (ECO) mission funds beyond their general PCUSA mission pledge.
3. The ultimate goal of most worshipping fellowships should be to become Presbyterians and to participate actively in all phases of ministry of the PCUSA; however, some fellowships may choose to remain indefinitely in their original status. Fellowships may become a ministry of a multicultural church or may become a chartered church.
4. At any point in the process, the fellowship may elect to have its relationship with the Presbytery dissolved. This request and/or any other change in status (e.g. church chartering, NCD)should be processed through Committee on Ministry with notification to Congregational Nurture Team and a joint recommendation made to Presbytery.

GOVERNANCE

1. There should be a written covenant agreement of use and responsibility for the shared facility. The covenant is to be reviewed annually and amended as needed or required. A copy of the covenant shall be given to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery with copies distributed to Property & Finance, CNT and COM as appropriate.
2. A representative of CNT should be involved in fellowship events including Steering Committee meetings, worship and joint activities with the host church. The liaison should provide timely updates, in writing and shared with the host church, fellowship group and CNT, noting the relationship with the host church, average weekly attendance, financial status, progress and concerns of the group.
3. CNT and COM shall meet with the leaders of all fellowships annually in a setting conducive to deepening relationships. Representatives of additional Presbytery committees along with the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk and pastors of host churches shall be included whenever possible and appropriate to the purpose of the meeting. Representatives of CNT, COM and LDT shall work together to provide annual training for fellowship leaders.
4. Requests for change in the fellowship leader's ecclesiastical status, e.g. becoming ordained clergy or a CLP, shall be communicated to COM for guidance and resolution.