

Guidelines for Missional Faith Community January 2009

approved by Presbytery of Philadelphia January 27, 2009

Because the Presbytery of Philadelphia has adopted a Missional Plan that challenges the body to foster, encourage and to be more responsive to new forms of Christian community within the Reformed tradition and...

Because the Holy Spirit is continually surprising us with its stirrings within faith communities in Philadelphia...

Because of this, a new kind of relationship is called for between these faith communities and the Presbytery of Philadelphia; a faith community that is mutually covenanted, supportive, accountable and, most of all, loving. The Presbytery can offer the gifts of stability, ecclesiastical connectionalism and a thoroughgoing faithfulness that has stood the test of time. These new communities have a vision for what the church can be and become within the diverse landscapes and contexts of Philadelphia's diverse community settings that offer energy and imagination and a passion for the Realm of God in our midst that is not merely a dream deferred but 'already' powerfully in our midst. With a trust that God will provide what is needed for these relationships to flourish, we propose the following:

A Missional Faith Community is:

- a community that exists to love, serve, challenge, pray and struggle alongside the surrounding community where it finds itself called into being by God
- a community that gathers regularly for worship, for opportunities to explore Christian discipleship and spiritual formation and to follow Jesus Christ
- a community that has an identifiable and recognized leadership and a faithful and accountable governance structure
- a community that has an ongoing commitment to mission planning and to communicating a vision for ministry that may include leadership training, growth, evangelism, and a commitment to engagement with the community in which it serves
- a community that has a realistic financial plan for sustaining its ministry
- a community that has a coherent plan for spiritual and worship leadership that is appropriately equipped for leadership and faithfully compensated

A Missional Faith Community that desires to become a recognized Missional Faith Community of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbytery of Philadelphia shall follow the procedures outlined below.

- the Missional Faith Community approaches the Presbytery through the Congregational Strategy Team and requests status as a “missional faith community or partner” and can meet the following criteria:
 - has a regular worship schedule
 - a theology that is compatible with the Reformed Tradition
 - has a regular place of worship

- has or is moving toward a ministry to their surrounding neighborhood that includes ministries of compassion and justice
 - demonstrates, possibly through a budget and budget projections, the community's capacity to sustain its ministry.
- Subject always to the review of the Presbytery, through the Congregational Strategy Team, the Community may elect its own officers and governing body, adopt its own by-laws, and be self determined in its actions as they follow the will of God
- An annual report shall be submitted to the Presbytery through the Congregational Strategy Team for review and inclusion in the records of the Presbytery. The annual report should include financial records, minutes, and reports of activities.
- The Community will be encouraged to contribute financially to Presbyterian general mission and per capita.
- The Community will be encouraged to participate in Presbytery meetings. The Community will send one representative to Presbytery meetings, where they will be given voice but no vote (This is to be officially decided by the Presbytery - a formal request is going to COMO from Congregational Strategy soon).
- Any funding (grants, etc.) from the Presbytery will require periodic reporting, as mutually agreed upon with the Committee or Team sponsoring the funding.
- The Community will work with the Congregational Strategy Team (Committee on Mission Oversight) to continually identify next steps in the relationship.

In order for the Presbytery to live into its desire to become a missional and permission-giving entity, Missional Faith Communities can expect the following from the Presbytery, as they continually discern, identify, grow and deepen their mission:

- The structures of the Presbytery will actively seek ways of encouraging innovation within these Communities as it relates to the Spirit's leadings--seeking always to discover what God is doing within new and experimental models of Christian community and remaining open to the invitations leading to the transformation of the Presbytery, itself, that may ensue
- The Presbytery will discern what is to be learned from these models that may inform the understanding of the larger body--seeking always to be open to new forms and new ways of being the Body of Christ--and being faithful to our tradition, while we seek to carry that tradition forward into the future
- The Presbytery will be creative in finding resources for these new Communities - resources that promise growth, depth and life as it relates to the articulated mission of the Community. The Presbytery will seek ways to invest in their combined futures by offering spiritual and material support to the Community, particularly if these new Communities show promise and are breathing unmistakable and measurable life into the communities where they work and serve and live
- The Presbytery will also work to be intentional in seeking to be being present to and within these new Communities--ever seeking to foster an environment of mutuality, trust and support. The structures of the Presbytery will look for ways to hold the Community and its leadership in prayer and will find ways to

offer encouragement and rest, while also prodding them toward their callings to be the church in a new way.

A Missional Faith Community, upon reception by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, shall be a recognized Validated Ministry in accordance to G- 11.0403 and all ordained ministers for the Missional Faith Community will be received as members of the Presbytery in accordance to G 11.0408 a, b & c.

Because each Missional Faith Community will be different, the Congregational Strategy Team, in consultation with the Missional Faith Community and the Committee on Ministry, will include a recommendation concerning the authorization of the sacraments when the Missional Faith Community request is brought before the presbytery for action.