

Presbytery of Philadelphia
Commission on Ministry (COM)
Guidelines for Welcoming Immigrant Faith Communities

Introduction

Biblical Mandate - Matthew 28: 19a "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." For over a century the church has sent out missionaries to "all the nations". The reality of the new century is that "all the nations" are part of our everyday life. The neighborhoods of the greater Philadelphia metro area is no longer several generations of European immigrants but immigrants from all over the world. We don't have to "go" far to meet up with "all the nations".

We are blessed and challenged with the opportunity to learn from, minister to and with the growing racial/ethnic, cultural and international diversity in the Philadelphia metro area. The following will guide the presbytery as we work in partnership with immigrant and international groups seeking affiliations with the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The Role of the Presbytery

The presbytery through its Commission on Ministry (COM) is open to creating new ways of doing ministry and new options for church development based on the specific needs of persons in immigrant and international communities wishing to be part of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The presbytery will continue working to:

- Develop intentional strategies for supporting communities of faith in different cultural contexts.
- Listen to the needs of the people and their circumstances.
- Support designs for ministry that will be an effective response to those needs.
- Identify and overcome the barriers within our Presbytery to ministry in different cultures.

The presbytery is flexible in considering and encouraging mutual exchange and support among the partners in ministry and COM will:

- Make adequate resources commitments including funding and support from presbytery staff and volunteers.
- Explore new criteria for measuring success.
- Make mutually agreed upon commitments based on realistic expectations.
- Will encourage established congregations to partner with immigrant or language specific faith communities and fellowships.

The presbytery will support pastoral and lay leadership development appropriate to the needs of international and immigrant groups

- Develop new models of pastoral calls and recognition with flexibility in the area of compensation.
- Engage in pro-active preparation, recruitment, and continuing education training of leaders who demonstrate a commitment to Reformed faith.
- Affirm a sense of vocation and different styles of leadership for different contexts.
- Consider declaring worshipping communities and fellowships "validated ministries" and whenever possible recognize their pastors as minister members serving validated ministries.

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The presbytery will take into account and be sensitive to the cultural, social, and language differences of pastor and lay people in groups affiliated with the presbytery. This is a time in the life of Presbyterian Church (USA) to be creative, flexible, and willing to take risks in order to become a truly inclusive denomination by welcoming immigrant groups and others with special needs into the fellowship of the Presbyterian Church.

GUIDELINES

In keeping with the great ends of the Church (6 -1.0200), the mandates to share the good news of God's love (Matthew 9: 37 -38), to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28....) and to respond to this call, it is the policy of the Presbytery of Philadelphia to seek opportunities to reach out to immigrants and international people and encourage the development of new congregations. Under the current structure of the Presbytery, this responsibility is with the Commission on Ministry (COM).

It is understood that the number of church development projects the presbytery can undertake is limited. Any application for financial aid by a recognized immigrant/international faith community will be considered sympathetically.

The commissions and presbytery's Executive Staff shall make themselves available to consult with Immigrant Faith Communities, to assist with problems, which may occur, to advise on procedures and policy, and to encourage them in the process.

Presbytery of Philadelphia provides the following process for Immigrant Faith Communities to become recognized as chartered congregations. The process is designed to give the group a chance to "try on" the PC (USA) before committing totally to it. It is also designed to provide a gradual immersion into the requirements and privileges of a fully organized church. The steps, outlined below, are as follows:

- Worshipping Community
- Immigrant Fellowship Group
- Immigrant Ministry Church
- Organized or Chartered Church

PROCESS

Worshipping Community

A worshipping Community is a group of individuals joining together for worship, Bible study, fellowship, support and evangelism willing to explore and pursue belief and practice of the Presbyterian Church (USA). They have come together because of language and/or cultural traditions. They do not necessarily have "pastoral leadership" in the traditional sense but have some leadership that is leading the group in worship and Bible Study. Groups approaching the presbytery with an interest in exploring what it means to become a formal Fellowship normally should first be recognized as a Worshipping Community and be encouraged and nurtured by COM. The purpose of the step is to provide support and encouragement for the group and its leaders. They may or may not express a desire to move toward status as a congregation, but they will be nurtured by the presbytery and enjoy the fellowship of the body of Christ as expressed through the Presbytery of Philadelphia. COM will give the group guidance on how to prepare to be recognized as a Fellowship Community.

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Characteristic/criteria for a Worshiping Community

- Such groups can be self-forming, initiated by the Presbytery or sponsored by another Presbyterian congregation and will be accepted through a vote of the Presbytery and recognized as a "worshipping community".
- COM will work with this Community on what it means to be part of the PC (USA) and enter into dialogue about the interest of the group to move forward into the next phase.
- After initial recognition by Presbytery, a Worshiping Community will submit an annual report and letter of request each year to COM for continuation of its recognized status.

Immigrant Fellowship Community

A Fellowship is a community of believers with regular worship, that has an identifiable and recognized leader, in process of developing a mission plan that includes leadership training, goals for growth and evangelism, opportunities for Christian Education for everyone, and financially viable budget. They may at this time have a contract or covenant with a particular person (clergy or lay) to be the spiritual and worship leader of the group. A fellowship group may not have the ability to contract or covenant with a "full time" leader.

An immigrant faith community that desires to become a recognized Fellowship Community of the Presbyterian Church (USA) shall follow the procedures outlined below.

- The group approaches the COM and requests status as a "fellowship." and can meet **most** of the following criteria:
 - Has a regular worship schedule and a regular place of worship
 - A theology that is compatible with the Reformed Tradition
 - Indicates the leader and congregation intend to join the Presbyterian Church (USA)
 - Shows an understanding of Presbyterian polity and belief, that the Book of Order and the Book of Confessions will be followed and indicates the group's full cooperation with the supervision of the Presbytery.
 - Demonstrates, possibly through a budget and budget projections, the group's ability to pay its pastoral leadership according to Presbytery guidelines. Sensitivity should be shown to International/Immigrant Faith communities which might experience conflict if a pastor receives a full professional salary.
- Subject always to the review of COM, the Fellowship may elect its own officers, adopt its own by-laws, and be self determined in its actions.
- All records shall be submitted annually to COM for review and inclusion in the records of the presbytery.
- The Fellowship shall keep minutes of its meetings, records of members, baptisms, funerals, weddings, and communion, and accounts of all monies received and disbursed.
- The group will be encouraged to contribute to Presbyterian general mission even though it will not be required to pay per capita as an Immigrant Fellowship Community.

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- If the Immigrant Faith Community does not already have a pastor, or commissioned lay pastor, one of its first responsibilities is to find one and form a covenant with them through a contract or a call. COM shall assist the Fellowship Community in a process of finding appropriate pastoral leadership.
- The Presbytery shall recognize formally both the role of ordained or lay leader and the existence and ministry of the fellowship.
- The Fellowship group will be encouraged to participate in presbytery meetings. The group will send one lay representative to presbytery meetings where they will be given voice but no vote.

Immigrant Ministry Church Immigrant Ministry Church is a group of immigrant believers that has pastoral leadership in accordance with G14.0513f. There is a core group of committed lay leaders, a Christian Education program for all ages; a five year proposed budget that realistically moves toward being self-sustaining and giving 10% to the denomination's mission program.

Immigrant Fellowship becomes an Immigrant Ministry Church when it:

- Applies to Presbytery, through the COM for such status.
- Has agreed with the COM on membership goals judged to be sufficient to maintain a viable, year-round program of worship and service.
- Is or has demonstrated the ability to become financially self-supporting in keeping with its stated goals and time-line.
- The Immigrant Ministry Church will participate in the Presbytery meetings with an elected lay leader in accordance of Book of Order G-3.0109(b)
- Though not required the Immigrant Ministry Church will be encouraged to participate paying their portion of the Presbytery Per Capita.
- The Immigrant Ministry Church and COM will develop an evaluation process which will determine the status of the congregation.
- The Immigrant Ministry Church will be able to apply for Mission Funding grant through the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery.

Organized or Chartered Church

This phase shall be in accordance of Book of Order G-1.02 - G-4.0102

Addendums

- A. Models for Immigrant Faith Communities
- B. Bibliography: Radical Hospitality: Partnership with New Immigrant Ministries

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Addendum A
Models for Immigrant Ministry Faith Communities

"Host Model" or "Nesting model"

People who share a common language and culture gather (with or without a pastor) for worship, Bible Study and fellowship. An existing Presbytery of Philadelphia Congregations provides a place for the group to worship and meet (with or without rent) while the immigrant congregation grows to a size where it can support its own home. The host congregation may invite the immigrant congregation to participate in Sunday School, fellowship events, special worship services, youth and other programs. Members of the immigrant congregation may or may not become baptized members of the host congregation.

"Staff Evangelist" Model

A Presbytery of Philadelphia intentionally hires staff to do outreach within a targeted immigrant group that will result in one congregation with two different languages and cultures living together side by side.

"Merger" Model or "Bilingual Bicultural" model

An immigrant group approaches an existing Presbytery of Philadelphia congregation for the purpose of merging their ministries. Initially, the relationship begins as one congregation with two different languages and cultures living together side by side. When the two groups have enough in common, a plan is developed for merging leadership, staff, memberships and programs.

"Mission Extension" Model

The three models above have the potential to result in a multi-racial, multi-cultural congregation. The "mission extension" model is an existing congregation that extends its mission to include a population of people not ordinarily a part of that church. The worship service for the immigrant group is considered one of the worship options for the church. Or, the congregation has one worship service that blends the worship styles of the two groups. As the immigrant group grows, they are invited to join the members of the existing congregation. Immigrant members are elected to the church boards, serve on committees and share in the decision making for aspects of church life.

"Multicultural" Model

A multicultural church is one congregation made up of people with many different heritages, customs and languages. There is no effort to assimilate members into one ethnic or stereotypical church. Instead, they celebrate their variety and find ways to use the many gifts offered by the people. The leadership of the church, through its staff, boards and committees, includes persons who represent the cultural and racial diversity. Worship, music, the arts, spiritual practices and theological perspectives and expressions - all reflect the many different aspects of the multicultural congregation, and their life together is enhanced by them.

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Commission on Congregations & Leadership (COM)
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Addendum B

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