



WELCOMING IMMIGRANT & INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy

- adopted September 18, 2004

As people of faith we are invited to share in the increasing diversity of the places and communities in which we live. “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God,” (Romans 15:5-7).

PRINCIPLES

“The following principles will guide the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy policy and practice as we work in partnership with immigrant and international Christian groups.

Definitions: Immigrant Group – those who are recent arrivals in this country
International Group – those who have racial, ethnic or cultural bonds with countries outside the United States

The Presbytery will be 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 Christian communities.

We will:

- **Develop** intentional strategies for identifying and encouraging immigrant and international Christian communities 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 will provide flexibility as well as mutual exchange and support among the partners in ministry.

We will:

- **Commit** adequate resources, including funding and support from Presbytery staff and volunteers
- **Explore** new criteria for measuring success
- **Make** mutually agreed upon commitments based on realistic expectations

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

We will:

- **Develop** new models of pastoral calls through the Committee on Ministry which will set guidelines for pastors, mentors and commissioned lay pastors on a case by case basis, with flexibility in the area of compensation
- **Engage** in pro-active preparation, recruitment, and continuing training of leaders who demonstrate a commitment to the Reformed faith
- **Affirm** a sense of vocation and different styles of leadership for different contexts

POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy to develop intentional strategies for supporting communities of faith in different cultural contexts and to seek opportunities to reach out to Christian Immigrants and Internationals, to identify and overcome barriers within our Presbytery to ministry in different cultures, and to encourage the development of new congregations.
- B. Under the current structure of the Presbytery, this responsibility is assigned in the standing rules to the Congregational Development Ministry Team. For the purposes of this document, the Congregational Development Ministry Team will be referred to as CDMT. The Committee on Ministry (COM), with its oversight of Pastors and established congregations, has a vested interest in the whole process.
- C. It is understood that the number of church development projects the Presbytery can undertake is limited. Any application for financial aid by an Immigrant/International Christian Community will be considered sympathetically.
- D. The Ministry Teams and staff of the Presbytery shall make themselves available to consult with Immigrant/International Christian Communities, to assist with problems that may occur, to advise on procedures and policy and to encourage the group in the process.
- E. The CDMT shall remain current with, and help groups take advantage of, every possible source of resources for approved projects. All parties should recognize that resources are limited.
- F. Each Immigrant/International Christian Community shall have a liaison to the CDMT structure through a Action team it forms to report on the status of the group and receive direction, as well as to foster a growing relationship between the group and the Presbytery.
- G. As people of faith we seek healing and reconciliation. Therefore, the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy would not encourage groups from existing congregations to seek consideration from the Presbytery as a Worshiping Community, Fellowship or New Church Development (NCD).

- H. The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy is eager to support non-English language ministries by which new immigrants can worship in the language most appropriate to them. The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy also has adopted a philosophy of placing non-English language projects in close relationship with an English language church. CDMT will work with the English language church to be welcoming and culturally sensitive to the culture.

- I. The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy will support immigrant/international Christian communities in a variety of ways. In addition to working closely with communities that are seeking to organize as a church, we will also extend our friendship and support to ecumenical gatherings of immigrant Christians.

These ecumenical gatherings are usually organized by immigrants representing a geographic region or language group. While not considered churches in the general sense of a worshiping community, they come together on a regular basis for prayer, Bible study and support. The Kerala Ecumenical Prayer Group, formed over 20 years ago by immigrant Christians from the state of Kerala in India, is an example of such a gathering. While certain members of these ecumenical gatherings may be interested in seeking membership in a local Presbyterian Church (PC(USA) church, these ecumenical communities generally are not seeking to form a church. The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, through an action team formed by CDMT, will take steps to seek out these communities with our welcome and support. In addition to inviting interested members to local PC(USA) churches for worship and community, we will also help these immigrant ecumenical gatherings with locating PC(USA) church facilities for their use.

TYPES OF COMMUNITY

The primary focus of support for immigrant/international Christian communities will be directed to those groups that wish to form as a church and are inclined to consider the PC(USA) as an option. For these communities we would provide a four-step process to become a church within the PC(USA). While this process is designed to give the immigrant/international groups a chance to experience the PC(USA) as they seek to form a fully organized church, it is also meant to give a great opportunity for us to learn from our immigrant/international brothers and sisters who live and work in our Presbytery. The steps, which will provide a gradual immersion into the requirements and privileges of a fully organized church, are as follows:

STAGE ONE: SELF-FORMING COMMUNITY

This Christian community, identified by a CDMT action team, meets on a regular basis and is most probably ecumenical in nature. The primary purpose of the community is to gather with those who share a common culture and language.

STAGE TWO: WORSHIPING COMMUNITY

This community, with usually 15 or more adult participants, meets for Bible study, worship and prayer in a common culture and language. Groups approaching the Presbytery with an interest in exploring what it means to become a formal Fellowship shall first register as a Worshiping Community and be encouraged and nurtured by both the personnel and policy of the Presbytery at the request of CDMT. The purpose of this step is to provide support and encouragement for the group and its leaders and to give the group guidance on how to prepare to make the move to Step Three. Such groups will be accepted through a vote of the CDMT, and recognized as a "Worshiping Community."

The Presbytery's financial support at this level will be restricted to leadership development event scholarships for core leaders of this community who will be trained in Presbyterian polity and Reformed theology so that they might make an educated decision as to whether or not their Christian faith and their mission can best be nurtured within the PC(USA).

1. Qualified clergy shall be encouraged to labor within the bounds of the Presbytery, after passing a reference check and Personal Information Form review by the COM. Qualified commissioned lay pastors, lay missionaries, or evangelists shall be encouraged to work within the bounds of the Presbytery with the recognition of the CDMT. These leaders will:
 - a. Assess the potential for forming a Fellowship/New Church Development
 - b. Gather a group where no governing body has yet issued a call for leadership
 - c. Nurture groups toward becoming Fellowships
2. The gifts and sense of divine call of these leaders shall be celebrated by the Presbytery.
3. Pastoral Leaders (whether clergy or lay) are required to have adequate liability insurance.
4. Project leaders are encouraged to carry medical insurance.

STAGE THREE: FELLOWSHIP

An Immigrant/International Christian Community that desires to become a Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church (USA) shall follow the procedures outlined below.

The group must approach the Presbytery through CDMT and request status as a "Fellowship." Subject always to the review of and control by the Presbytery through a CDMT liaison, the Fellowship may elect its own officers, incorporate as a 501(c)3 group as an entity of the PC(USA) General Assembly, adopt its own by-laws, and be self-determined in its actions.

The fellowship, in doing its work, shall follow the Constitution of the PC(USA). It shall keep minutes of its meetings, records of members, baptisms, funerals, weddings and communion, and accounts of all monies received and disbursed. Pastoral leadership shall be a Commissioned Lay Pastor or a Minister of the Word and Sacrament who has

been received by the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy. The group will be encouraged to contribute to Presbyterian general mission. The lay leadership team shall operate as if it were a church session with the pastor moderating. All records shall be submitted annually to the Presbytery through CDMT for review and inclusion in the records of the Presbytery.

Financial support for fellowships will ordinarily not exceed three years. The first year will not exceed three times the current member giving and will then comprise of 2/3 of the first year amount in the second year, and 1/3 of that original amount the third year provided that member giving makes up the difference each year.

A group becomes designated as a Fellowship when it:

1. Requests the Presbytery to make it a Fellowship through CDMT;
2. Indicates that the leader and congregation intend to join the Presbyterian Church (USA);
3. Shows an understanding of Presbyterian belief and polity, and indicates the group's full cooperation with the supervision of the Presbytery;
4. Agrees with the Presbytery on a plan to implement the requirements of the PC(USA) including the following:
 - a. Including both women and men as officers in the Fellowship and as ordained officers in active service when the new church is chartered;
 - b. Instituting a two or three year rotation of officers;
 - c. Adjusting the size of the body of church officers to the PC(USA)'s recommendation for sessions;
 - d. Agreeing to women and men as pastoral candidates;
 - e. Having a place located and secured to gather and worship regularly;
 - f. Demonstrating through a budget and budget projections the group's ability to pay its pastoral leadership according to Presbytery guidelines. Sensitivity should be shown to immigrant/international communities which might experience conflict if a pastor receives a full professional salary.

If the International/Immigrant Christian 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. She or he shall be selected on the basis of having the necessary vision and skills, both in new church gathering and organization and the capacity to identify with and relate to people in the immigrant/international population. This person shall exercise pastoral care of the group, preach, administer sacraments and conduct regular worship, as well as organize the group to be of service in the community and participate in the Presbytery. Presbytery's COM oversees the contract or calling of pastors already ordained and oversees commissioned lay pastors and others.

The CDMT will oversee the authority to administer the sacraments on behalf of Presbytery by assigning that power to the action team or help find an existing congregation with which to partner with in regard to administration of the sacraments.

The Presbytery shall recognize formally both the role of ordained or lay leader and the existence and ministry of the Fellowship and give the Fellowship voice and vote at Stated Presbytery Meetings.

STAGE FOUR: NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

A Fellowship becomes a New Church Development (NCD) when it:

1. Applies to Presbytery, through the CDMT, for such status;
2. Has agreed with the CDMT on membership goals judged to be sufficient to maintain a viable, year-round program of worship and service;
3. Has demonstrated the ability to become financially self-supporting in keeping with its stated goals and time-line.

STAGE FIVE: CHARTERED CHURCH

To move from NCD to organized congregation, existing policies are followed.