

## **The Fellowship of Presbyterians**

A Brief Overview of Options for Consideration  
from the Gathering, Edina, MN  
August 25,26, 2011

1. Forming an association called the Fellowship of Presbyterians  
(To be done in Orlando January 2012)

[www.fellowship-pres.org](http://www.fellowship-pres.org)

Purpose: connect like minded churches united for mission and ministry.

- To be a place of mutual support and encouragement for pastors and churches.
- Need to create theological identity and missional action.
- Essential theological statements will be drawn up.  
Need to be clear in the essentials and not as worried about boundaries.  
Need clear center- Christology for example
- Mutual support and sharing of best practices.

It will be very easy to get in to or out of.

The Gathering in Minneapolis presented different options or ways to relate to the fellowship based on the context of the individual church's setting. They are:

### **Tier 1- Status Quo.**

Join the fellowship while maintaining current ties to presbytery and denomination.

Some churches have excellent working relationships with their governing bodies and this allows them to continue to maximize their ministry while being a part of the fellowship.

### **Tier 2- Parallel Presbyteries.**

Creation of presbyteries within presbyteries

The idea is to have one presbytery overlay a current presbytery.

There would be a duplication of the presbytery functions and then churches within that presbytery would need to self select which presbytery they would associate with.

If 10 churches within a current presbytery were to seek a relief of conscience, it is an option that could be possible with our current polity. However, it would need approval of higher governing bodies.

This option is born out of a desire to stay in PCUSA but where some differentiation is needed.

### **Tier 3- Intra-Presbytery.**

Create separate affiliations and councils within the current presbytery.

This option would require staying in presbytery but creating two different elements (commissions) within presbytery.

This option is already available within our new Book of Order.

For example, there would be two Committees on Ministry, two Committees on Preparation, two judicial commissions.

This option would allow presbyteries to share more relational aspects while allowing much of the work to flow along two parallel tracks.

### **Tier 4- Align with the new reformed body.**

There could be a number of ways to join the new reformed body and still have some connections with the PCUSA. The option used would depend on the context of each church. Here are four different options:

#### **Option 1- Seek to be dismissed to another existing denomination.**

If the presbytery has created a clean exit path, you could be part of another denomination and also join the fellowship.

Creation of a gracious dismissal agreement would need to happen on the Presbytery or GA level if you want to avoid litigation.

#### **Option 2- Become a union church.**

A church could have membership in two different denominations; one PCUSA, other the new reformed body.

This is a viable option within our current polity, but does require the new reformed body be recognized as a body in communion with other denominations, including the PCUSA.

A union church would still have property issues to resolve.

#### **Option 3- Create an affiliate membership status for churches in the PCUSA.**

This would allow churches to become affiliate members of either the PCUSA while joining the new reformed body or becoming affiliate members in the new reformed body while maintaining membership in the PCUSA.

This is not currently available in our polity and would require action by the GA to create a new status.

This option does not resolve the property issues.

#### **Option 4- Solely join the new reformed body.**

Much like option 1, but the church would be solely associated with the new reformed body.