

**COVENANT RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
THE KOREAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
AND  
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA**

*“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”*  
*Ephesians 4: 1 – 6(NRSV)*

**I. History of Relationship**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) [PC (U.S.A.)] and the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA) are denominations with common roots and commitments in the Reformed tradition. The emotional ties are the legacy of their mission history. Protestant Christianity in Korea began through the sending of U.S. Presbyterian missionaries to Korea in 1885. Over the past century, Presbyterians in Korea have demonstrated phenomenal growth despite their difficult experiences of suffering. They have become genuine partners in mission and ecumenical engagement not only in Korea and Asia but also throughout the world.

In the middle of the 1960’s the U.S. immigration law changed, opening the doors for many Koreans to immigrate to the United States. This started a new page in the history of Korean Presbyterians. Unfortunately, the PC (USA) was unprepared to welcome and accept the large number of Korean Presbyterians into its life. While some Koreans joined the PCUSA, some felt the need to establish an independent Korean Presbyterian Church in the United States. Each of these organized groupings of Korean-American Presbyterian churches has contributed to the growth and development of the Presbyterian witness in the United States through its unique gifts and calling.

After many years of informal cooperation between leadership of the two churches, the 204<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the PC (USA) and the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1992) of the KPCA authorized the establishment of the Joint Committee on Presbyterian Cooperation between the PC (U.S.A.) and the KPCA. Over the past thirty years, the Joint Committee has focused its work in the areas of ministries and education, global mission, peace, justice, reconciliation, and church polity. Of particular note, is the opportunity that Korean-Americans born and raised in the United States present for our churches to move from immigrant-focused ministries to ministries directed toward future generations. The work of the Joint Committee has been important in shaping the relationship between the PC (U.S.A.) and the KPCA.

The Joint Committee believes that God is calling us to move to a deeper relationship between the KPCA and the PC (U.S.A.) and to request our General Assemblies to declare

Covenant Relationship between the two churches. Covenant relationship establishes a formal mutual commitment in our ecclesial and missional life together. The nature of covenant relationship is a call to mutuality based upon core theological principles.

## **II. Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation**

A. As churches within the Reformed tradition, each holding membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, we recognize each other as churches in which the gospel is preached, sacraments are rightly administered according to the Word of God, and the mission of Jesus Christ is lived out.

B. Baptism marks us as belonging to Christ and Christ' church. According to scripture, "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism." To that end, we recognize the baptism of each of our churches and welcome one another's members as brothers and sisters in Christ. We recognize that it is Christ that has showed us the way of self-sacrificing love and given to us the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to remember this love and to be fed with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. We encourage the sharing in the Lord's Supper together in all arenas of the church.

C. Christ has entrusted the ministry of the gospel to all of his disciples, calling us to follow him in the way of love, righteousness, peace and justice. Ordination is the act by which men and women are set aside for particular ministries of the Church. We identify and name these ministries as deacon, elder and minister of Word and Sacrament. We recognize that the calling and setting aside of persons for service in the church and the world is for the sake of the mission of Christ. We recognize the authenticity of one another's ordination of ministers, elders and deacons.

D. The Church lives to fulfill the mission of God in the world. The church does not live for its own sake, but seeks to witness to the saving work of Jesus Christ, the transformative power of the gospel, justice and reconciliation in all areas of its life and witness. God's gift of unity strengthens the witness of the church. While divisions within the church cannot destroy the mission of the church, they do serve as distractions to the message and the mission of the church. We recognize that the mission of our churches is strengthened by commitment to work cooperatively in the areas of congregational support, resource and leadership development, national and global mission.

## **III. Covenant Commitments**

A. We covenant to support one another through prayer, dialogue and continued cooperative work. Through mutual affirmation and admonition, we covenant to an honest relationship in which our joys are celebrated, our trials are shared and disagreements are addressed with the goal of strengthening this covenant. We will seek to affirm the witness of our churches and when necessary speak loving words of correction for the edification of the body of Christ.

B. While we recognize each other's ministries as authentic, we covenant to develop a process of orderly exchange of ministers. This provision will be governed by the principle that the presbyteries decide who shall be members and approves calls for service in churches. This process will allow for ministers to share in the ministry of each of other's churches, identify processes for transferring ministers and the procedures for ministers to be dually affiliated. This process will only apply to ministers who are in good standing and include processes for discipline in accordance with our individual polities.

C. We recognize that we are one family and our congregations have common roots. Many Koreans within the PCUSA and in the KPCA have shared roots in Korea. We covenant to develop a process of orderly transfer of congregations. This process will encourage where feasible congregations to share together in ministry and to be dually affiliated. We covenant to develop a process that seeks to strengthen the witness our churches and not to contribute to divisions within the body of Christ. This process will be developed in a way that respects our individual polities.

D. We recognize that there is much we share in mission together. We covenant to continue to work together in the following areas of mission and pray that other areas may also emerge-- Curriculum Development; Second Generation and Youth and Young Adult Ministry; Congregational Support and Leadership Development; Women's Leadership and Resource Development; Global Mission and Justice and Reconciliation in the world.

#### **IV. Enabling Acts**

A. This Covenant will be forwarded to our General Assemblies through the appropriate channels in each of our churches for action by 2008.

B. Our assemblies will be asked to enter into Covenant Relationship, make the necessary constitutional amendments to enable this covenant and to forward it to presbyteries for ratification.

C. Upon the ratification by presbyteries, Covenant Relationship will be established and a Service of Worship celebrating and formally entering into Covenant Relationship will be held by 2010.

D. A Covenant Implementation Committee will be established to shape and support the covenanting process and to make recommendations that enable us to live fully into this covenant.

#### **V. Prayer for the Future**

We offer thanksgiving to you O God, Creator of the Universe, Lord of all peoples. You sent the gospel to Korea through the work of Presbyterian missionaries. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you have nurtured the faith of Koreans in the midst of difficult sufferings and we witnessed the growth of the church in Korea and amongst Korean Presbyterians in the United States. We recognize that while there has been a separation

because of human limitations, you have continued to work in and through each of our churches. You have taken our differences in culture, custom and language and made us one family in Christ. We are grateful that you are bringing us to this time of deeper relationship and seek your guidance and blessing as we make this covenant between the Korean Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for now and generations to come.

*“Now to him who by the power at work at within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*  
*Ephesians 3: 20-21 (NRSV)*