

Frequently Asked Questions  
about  
Covenant Relationship with  
The Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces)  
and  
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA)

**1. What is “covenant relationship?”**

Covenant relationship is rooted in shared theological beliefs we hold about the church and how God works through the church in mission. It is a shared commitment to live in ways that respect our differences and build upon our commonalities for the sake of faithfully fulfilling our call to mission and to visibly give witness to the unity we have in Christ.

**2. How is this different from other ecumenical relationships?**

Covenant relationship is a relationship defined by mutuality. It is an ecclesial relationship between the highest levels of our churches. Currently, the Book of Order defines our ecumenical relationships as churches with which the General Assembly is “in correspondence” (G-15.0201b) and churches with which the General Assembly is “in full communion.”(G-15-0201a) Churches with which we are in correspondence is a very broad category and is a unilateral designation. (We determine who fits this category, without reciprocity or mutuality) Covenant relationship has all the elements of a “Full Communion” relationship.

**3. Is this the same as church union or merger?**

No, in covenant relationship, each church maintains its own autonomy and individual polity. However, in covenant relationship we seek to open possibilities for greater witness and mission together.

**4. Does this mean that ministers automatically become members of each others presbyteries?**

No, once we agree upon covenant agreement, representatives from our denominations will need to develop a process of orderly exchange of pastors. It is expected that for the PC(USA), the requirements in G-11.0404 will still need to be met by Moravian ministers and that each presbytery will retain the responsibility of examining for membership a Moravian minister seeking to serve within the presbytery.

**5. What about elders and commissioned lay pastors?**

This covenant agreement plans for the development of an orderly exchange process for ministers of the Word and Sacrament. At this time, commissioned lay pastors would not be included in the orderly exchange process.

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**6. What about bishops? Will we have bishops like the Moravians?**

Within the PC (USA), the title of bishop is one of the titles given to ministers of Word and Sacrament who are serving as pastors of congregations. (G-6.0202a). Within the Moravian Church, bishops are theological resources, servants at the request of the provincial elders' conferences, intercessors for the church and "pastor to pastors." They do not exercise any special ministry of administrative oversight.

This covenant does not require the PC(USA) to define its bishops in the same manner as the Moravian Church. Neither is it expected that orderly exchange of ministers would apply to bishops. However, it is our prayer that the gifts of the Moravian bishop might model for us new possibilities for spiritual and pastoral care within our presbyteries.

**7. What is the role of presbyteries in developing and implementing these processes for orderly exchange of ministers and congregations?**

First, if the covenant agreement is approved by the General Assembly, it would be sent to the presbyteries for ratification. It is expected that each presbytery would study the covenant and consider the possibilities that it offers for strengthened ministry and mission. Secondly, as with the Formula of Agreement, presbyteries would be consulted and invited to share their needs and suggestions for the development of a process for orderly exchange of ministers and congregations. The processes for orderly exchange will be reported to our General Assemblies.

**8. When will Covenant Relationship be established?**

The Synods of the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church and the General Assembly of the PC(USA) and the majority of our presbyteries must approve the covenant agreement. Once formal approvals and ratifications have occurred, Covenant Relationship will be established and a Service of Worship celebrating and formally entering into Covenant Relationship will be held by 2011.

**9. How will this impact our other ecumenical relationships and partnerships?**

This is a covenant relationship between the PC(USA) and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church. It is binding only on our two churches. While it does not change any of our other ecumenical agreements or partnerships, we pray that it becomes a constructive model for living together and sharing in the ministry of Christ for the glory of God.

**10. What can I do to help make this Covenant Relationship meaningful?**

Take time to read the report and study the section on covenant partnership. If there are Moravian congregations within the geographical bounds of your presbytery, reach out to meet the pastors and members of these congregations and learn how God is working through them. Begin to hold this covenant relationship in prayer, both personally and in the corporate prayer life of your congregation and presbytery. Share ideas for ways that we might faithfully honor this covenant with the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

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