



Mission Network Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) works intentionally in “communities of practice,” where PC(USA) members, global partners and PC(USA) staff (including mission personnel) commit to interact regularly to learn and grow as a community; come together to share an identity derived from a common mission calling; and be guided and shaped by the practices of prayer, Bible study, reflection and worship. Mission networks are one example of a community of practice.

PC(USA)-related mission networks, while not official bodies representing the PC(USA), are formed for the primary purpose of enhancing communication, understanding and coordination among PC(USA) constituencies and global partners. Mission networks share the denomination’s core values and have a common partnership connection with one or more of the PC(USA)’s international partner churches or organizations.

Mission networks are collegial, collaborative spaces where various entities, governing bodies and associations work together around a specific region, people group or thematic area of international mission. Gathering together in this manner, mission networks allow the development of a body of shared knowledge that can resource faithful mission practice and enable effective action to address common concerns in the midst of a globalized world.

MEMBERS AND LEADERSHIP

Mission networks are composed of (but not limited to) representatives of congregations and/or mid councils that have entered into partnerships consistent with PC(USA) missiology. They may or may not have formal membership requirements. They seek to work in synergy with PC(USA) staff and global or ecumenical partners to address partner priority concerns.

Mission networks determine their own conveners and other leadership roles in a democratic manner, following Presbyterian norms. Network conveners or co-conveners should be drawn from participants who are members of the PC(USA) or its global partners. Individuals and representatives of non-PC(USA) groups (such as nonprofit or non-governmental organizations) may participate in a mission network in a non-leadership capacity (except where a network has been created as a result of an explicit ecumenical agreement, in which case a convener or co-convener may come from any of the denominations that are party to that agreement).

FINANCE

Mission networks are primarily self-supporting. Although PC(USA) entities may be able to make funds available from time to time for specific needs, network costs — such as travel, accommodations and meal expenses for network meetings — should be covered by mission network members.

As mission networks are typically networks rather than organizations with independent legal personas, they are not advised to establish bank accounts or enter into contracts in the name of the mission network. Often, a congregation or mid council that is a member of a network will offer to manage financial transactions on the network’s behalf. On request, the PC(USA) can assist networks by establishing a meeting account at the PC(USA) to receive and disburse funds. (Please note that deposits to such an account incur the usual mission support charge, currently 17%.)

Mission is primarily about mutual accompaniment and deepening relationships, and mission networks are encouraged to prioritize faithful and reciprocal relationships. However, there may be occasions when it is appropriate to provide financial support for joint and collaborative ministries. In such situations, mission networks are invited to familiarize their members with PC(USA) international financial transfer policies and protocols and to make use of PC(USA) channels to the extent practical.



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ROLE AND PURPOSE OF PC(USA) STAFF

PC(USA) national staff members are available to resource and participate in mission networks, normally in a non-leadership capacity. National staff must abide by General Assembly policies and actions in their role as representatives of the PC(USA). PC(USA) staff will engage mission networks according to the networks' needs and staff roles and capacities. Therefore, mission networks are encouraged to invite the participation of relevant PC(USA) staff in the planning and implementation of network meetings and activities.

As staffing, resources and PC(USA) policies allow, national staff may provide the following:

- Inspiration, invitation and introduction of interested participants in joining or forming a network (i.e., mission committees, individuals and congregations).
- Space for the leaders of each mission network to come together regularly as a learning community. However, typically, staff do not provide administrative, clerical, moderating, agenda-setting or other core leadership roles in an individual network.
- Information about and interpretation of partner context, issues and programs.
- Information about PC(USA) policies, practices or activities.
- Facilitation of connections with other PC(USA) and global partner entities.
- Assistance in the production of educational resources for the larger church.

The following are network roles in relation to the PC(USA):

- Networks are uniquely placed to provide input to relevant PC(USA) staff members and to facilitate the development of overtures to the General Assembly.
- Mission or partnership networks may not take actions on behalf of the PC(USA) or represent their actions, decisions or communications to other groups, entities or international church partners as actions, policies or communications of the PC(USA).
- PC(USA)-related networks should be familiar with General Assembly policies and actions relevant to their work, cite and highlight such actions where appropriate, and refrain from making statements or taking actions that might be perceived as inconsistent with these policies.

PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES

PC(USA)-related mission networks are encouraged to:

- Agree on a vision and broad goals for the network.
- Enhance communication, understanding and collaboration among participants by sharing information, experience and wisdom.
- Regularly and appropriately include the perspective of global or ecumenical partners.
- Listen to and learn from local communities, allowing the global partner to take the lead in developing initiatives.
- Discuss and identify best strategies for mission engagement.
- Promote coordination of efforts among the partnerships represented in the mission network and with PC(USA) programs and staff.
- Resolve any differences or difficulties among participants.
- Hold common work and particular members' mission involvement accountable to the network.
- Identify and invite new members for participation.
- Provide spiritual support for all partners engaged in the work.
- Encourage collaboration with other networks around common partner issues or network interests.
- Build relationships with and support mission personnel related to the region or programmatic interests of the network.

Learn more about mission and partnership networks and find a schedule of meetings at pcusa.org/missionnetworks.