

Partnership in Mission and Ministry Between the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa and the United Church of Christ

Foundational Affirmations

Unity

In our common confession of Jesus Christ and in our baptism, we celebrate that we are children of God, disciples of Christ, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ Responding to this shared confession and baptismal identity, obedient to Christ's prayer "that they may all be one that the world may believe," and accepting mutual responsibility to bear witness in our world to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa and the United Church of Christ enter into a Partnership in Mission and Ministry agreement, giving expression to our unity in Jesus Christ.

Sacraments

This Partnership celebrates the truth that we share a common sacramental life. We recognize the baptism of each church as baptism by water and the Holy Spirit into the One Church of Jesus Christ. We invite each other to the common Table as we celebrate Christ's presence in Holy Communion. In this shared sacramental life, we receive the grace of God and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. We covenant to seek opportunities to gather at Table and Font.

Mission

This Partnership celebrates the truth that we participate together in the one mission of God. We will support one another in this common responsibility and will extend support to one another through the ecumenical sharing of resources and people. We will encourage each other in the proclamation of the Gospel, invite people into discipleship and will work together for justice, peace and the integrity of God's creation. We covenant to identify appropriate means of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of our churches so that our partnership in mission can grow.

Ministry

This Partnership celebrates the truth that all members of the church, by virtue of baptism, are called to ministry in Christ. We recognize that lay and ordained ministries requiring authorization are full and valid ministries and we will seek to discover ordered ways by which the ministers of one church may serve effectively, when invited, in the partner church. We covenant to extend honor and respect to those our partner church has authorized for lay and ordained ministry.

Diversity

This Partnership celebrates the truth that our two churches share a common faith. We have received the faith of the Apostles through diverse histories, cultures and traditions. We each claim the responsibility to make this historic faith our own in our differing historical and cultural contexts. Through this rich variety of theological expression, liturgical style and church governance, we recognize in our Partnership that the faith that has nurtured, sustained, and challenged each of our churches is one faith in Jesus

Christ. We believe that God intends our differences to be enriching rather than dividing. We covenant to share in teaching and dialogue to encourage mutual enrichment, nurture and growth with full regard for the self-determination of our churches.

Related Recognitions

This Partnership is a way for both churches to be enriched as we share together in faithfulness to God's mission as churches in partnership with each other. It is not a merger of the two churches.

Knowledge and Appreciation

This Partnership recognizes that Partnership is advanced by greater knowledge about and appreciation for each other. Interpretive materials need to be developed by appropriate persons or units within each church. While interpretive materials can be of interest to an even wider constituency, those materials need to be distributed in such a way that the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS) and the Samoan constituency within the United Church of Christ (UCC) receive both sets of interpretive materials at the same time. The materials will help local churches and their leaders and members better understand their own church and begin to understand the partner church as descriptions of history, ecclesiology, governance, structure, mission, program and ethos are characterized.

Role of Regional Judicatories in Mission

This Partnership recognizes that, where there is significant overlap of congregations and of Districts and Sub-Districts of the CCCAS with United Church of Christ congregations comprised of Samoans within Associations and Conferences of the United Church of Christ, the need for knowledge about and appreciation for the partner church is critical for the success of the Partnership. Knowledge and appreciation of each other fosters a greater likelihood of partnerships in mission and program within overlapping judicatory boundaries and effort that is more regional or global in character. Judicatory leadership in both churches plays a crucial role in brokering and interpreting how regional, national and global mission concerns, program possibilities and resources of each church can be understood, joined and utilized.

Authorization for Ministry

This Partnership recognizes that ministries on behalf of each church for which authorization is needed have similarity and distinguishing factors. Both churches authorize persons for ordained ministry. The CCCAS also authorizes persons to serve as Lay Preachers and the United Church of Christ authorizes persons to serve as Commissioned Ministers or as Licensed Ministers. The Authorizing processes are different in that there is a single national authority for granting authorization in the CCCAS, the Committee of Elders, and that in the United Church of Christ such authority is regional with Associations granting authorization. While honor and respect must be accorded to the authorizations for ministry in each church, the Licensed Ministry of the United Church of Christ and the Ordained Ministry of the CCCAS are different, as are the Lay Preacher and the Licensed Ministry of our respective churches.

Protocol

This Partnership recognizes the need for leadership of the CCCAS and United Church of Christ, in conjunction with appropriate partners within the structures of each church, to assure the presence of appropriate and mutually-respected protocols for the temporary reception of an ordained minister of one church to serve in the other. Should an ordained minister or a local church seek relocation in the partner church, relocation or reception is not to proceed without awareness of both churches. Once relocation of a local church or ordained minister takes place, issues of covenanted ecclesial accountability and support need to be clearly understood and honored.

Ecclesial, Spiritual and Cultural Ties: Accountability for Ministry and Support

This Partnership recognizes that there are cultural and spiritual ties among local churches and authorized ministers of the CCCAS and the United Church of Christ that are Samoan by heritage. Local churches and authorized ministers are encouraged to have clear ecclesial ties, holding authorization or Standing in one or the other church while, at the same time, having spiritual and cultural ties to both churches. Spiritual and cultural ties have to do with valued heritage and partnership in mission and program. Ecclesial ties have to do with accountability and support associated with membership and standing. When ecclesial ties include dual affiliations, issues of accountability and support need to be clearly understood among all parties so as to avoid confusion.

Partnership Committee

The Partnership recognizes the need to have a Partnership committee comprised of representatives from both churches to provide leadership to our Partnership in Mission Agreement. This committee will meet at least once a year to advance the relationship and the partnership. The committee's mandate will be reviewed by the two churches after six years and may be renewed. The committee will monitor efforts on behalf of the Partnership as being faithful to the agreement and its recognitions as well as the adequacy of the Partnership as a faithful expression of life together in the Church of Jesus Christ. The committee will report its findings and offer suggestions growing out of ongoing experience to the leadership of both churches on an annual basis. The committee will also plan consultations that bring together a larger group to address issues that benefit the faithfulness of the Partnership. The Partnership Committee will be composed in equal numbers of not less than five or more than ten members from each church.