



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

LETTER OF WELCOME

Welcome Packet – Document 1 March 2024

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church! We believe the Church's faithful witness to Jesus is the hope of the world!

We are thankful to God for your interest in the Alliance of Reformed Churches. We are a growing community of congregations who desire to live in intentional covenant relationships. We believe that through this partnership in the Gospel, the Alliance of Reformed Churches provides us with an opportunity to spur one another on in faith and mission.

We invite you to consider whether the Alliance would be a faithful partner for your local congregation as we journey through the 21st century. We exist to encourage and equip congregations to:

- Make disciples: who make other disciples to the third and fourth generation.
- Equip leaders: Gifted people for Kingdom work (personally, locally, regionally, and globally).
- Multiply ministries: Bring new initiatives and churches to life that share the gospel in their context.

The Alliance is a young organization and it is, in many ways, experimental. Yet often the churches in our partnership have long and faithful legacies, and many of our leaders have been Kingdom ambassadors in ministry for decades. We seek to follow Christ alone and Scripture alone, the universal Person and universal Book, in a 21st century global Christian movement in the same ways as the 1st century blueprint for gospel expansion. Because of who the resurrected Jesus is today, yesterday, and forever, we can exhibit to every nation and generation the most relevant, enduring, and empowering life in Christ.

You can learn much more about the Alliance at www.arc21.org and explore our churches, leaders, and regional Networks. At <https://pathways.arc21.org/> you will see our innovative approach to raising up and equipping ordained leaders to serve in the local church with high character, competency, compassion, and courage.

When your packet is complete, please return electronic responses via email to info@arc21.org.

If you would prefer to mail a hard copy of the packet and forms, please mail to:

Alliance of Reformed Churches
100 Pine St., Suite 155
Zeeland, MI 49464

May God bless you as you consider your future with the Alliance of Reformed Churches.



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
CONGREGATIONAL PATHWAY TO PARTNERSHIP IN THE ALLIANCE

Welcome Packet – Document 2 March 2024

Congregations are received as Alliance partners at any of the monthly global Alliance Board meetings. Leading up to that point, we invite you into a journey of conversation and discernment.

1. An initial conversation is held between representatives of the Alliance of Reformed Churches (the Alliance) and representatives of the congregation. This may be with an Alliance Director or staff member (see <https://arc21.org/leadership>), regional Network leader (more info at <https://arc21.org/networks>), or perhaps a pastor/elder in one of our Alliance churches. The Alliance encourages churches to gain a personal connection and orientation. Specialized information can be shared to fit your context, beyond what is available at www.arc21.org.
2. Frequently, a desire for a deeper dialogue with the congregation's leaders comes from the initial conversations. An electronic Zoom or in-person meeting can be scheduled for an hour or so, including lots of Q & A.
3. Congregational leadership examines the following foundational statements of the Alliance which draw their content and clarity from Scripture alone.
 - Alliance Theological Statements (<https://arc21.org/creeds-confessions>)
 - a. Christian Creeds: Gospel summaries in the Apostles'; Athanasian; and Nicene Creeds.
 - b. Reformed Confessions: Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort: with addendums of the Belhar Confession and Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality.
 - Alliance Unifying Beliefs <https://arc21.org/unifying-beliefs>
 - Alliance Strategic Priorities <https://arc21.org/strategic-priorities>
 - Alliance Covenant Partners Renewal Statement (see page ##)
 - Alliance Relational Matrix (see page ##)
4. Depending on the congregation's affiliation or if independent, non-denominational or a church plant, the governing body of the church/ministry can communicate in a letter their official intention to join the Alliance of Reformed Churches. In the case of RCA churches, they file according to the Book of Church Order (<https://rca.org/bco>) a "Petition to Withdraw" with their classis clerk, stating the reasons for requesting a transfer from the RCA to the Alliance, how they will not be as effective as a Kingdom ministry by staying and will be more effective in the future in the Alliance. The church also requests a "Letter of Intent to Receive" this church into the Alliance from a Director or Alliance staff member.
5. In a letter, the governing body informs their congregation of its intention to join the Alliance of Reformed Churches and sets a date for a congregational meeting to which an Alliance representative(s) is/may be invited. The letter should reference the Alliance Unifying Beliefs and Strategic Priorities (<https://arc21.org/who-we-are>). It is encouraged at this stage to think through the best partnership as well with one of our regional Networks in the Alliance (<https://arc21.org/networks>).

6. At the congregational meeting, the governing body explains its reasons for desiring to join the Alliance. The Alliance representatives (if present) explain the Alliance's commitments and Covenant Renewal approach to congregational partnership. The leadership body provides time for congregational discussion. The Alliance representative(s) (if present) is available to answer questions and observe the health of the interactions between leadership and congregation. Final votes of the governing body or congregation occur and are communicated to the Alliance leadership. Signatures of the leadership and the congregational profile is submitted as part of completing the Welcome Packet (info@arc21.org).

7. The Alliance Board acts upon the recommendation from its representative(s) at a scheduled Board meeting just prior to the congregation's release from its present denomination. The Alliance Board provides a letter of reception to the congregation within 10 days. Further public celebrations can be planned with the Alliance staff or regional Network staff.

RELATIONAL MATRIX*

Organizational Dimension	Relationship To Congregations	Insight Provided To Congregations	Economic Position Related To Ministry With Congregations	Funding Boundaries
Global Alliance Board Leadership; Director and Staff	Allies together of Christ and His Kingdom: for oversight & accountability (organizational design as a 21 st century gospel movement; structured limitations and larger perspective)	Kingdom vision under Jesus as Lord; common language and communication to build a strong identity; theological standards; ordination best practices	Broader scale actions for added value like Alliance-wide gatherings, Ordination standards and systems (Pathways), pastoral benefits programs for health care and retirement	1% of income as Partnership Offerings from the local churches means Alliance funding is limited to organizational unity, plus leadership development for governing and equipping capacity.
Regional Network Board Leadership; Equipping and Administrative Staff; (Typical size is 15 to 60 congregations when beyond the apprenticing stage of development)	Colleague - Partner: accountability for theological identity and character; frequent relational connection and frontline support	Broader equipping leader gifts among the staff (Eph. 4:11) to edify the local churches; ministry grant funding and church planting support; ordination team training and accountability; wisdom and inspiration through testimonies and sharing of best practices	Encourage, equip and empower congregations; provide Network gatherings for ministry development and relational support; assist in pastoral transitions; deploy Covenant Keeper Teams when needed; strong partner in ordination and leadership development as well as Covenant renewals for pastors and churches every five years.	2% of income as Partnership Offerings from the member churches means the Networks are the backbone of the equipping staff in the Alliance and catalyze church health, accountability, and mission initiatives with the churches.
Local Hubs 3 to 10 like-minded congregations and ministries pursuing Kingdom advances together (not just Alliance congregations)	Family: missional living collaboration for higher ground impact	Wisdom and truth by hearing in unity what the Spirit is saying to the churches (Rev. 2-3)	Common purse and implementation of local initiatives	Local congregation budget extension and work staffing supports this level.



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
COVENANT PARTNERS RENEWAL STATEMENT
Welcome Packet – Document 6 March 2024

The Alliance of Reformed Churches (the Alliance) is a covenanted community of congregations. We are formed around our covenant-keeping Triune God, the Word of God, the sacraments of grace given to the Church (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and reformed theology. As Reformed believers, we understand God’s sovereignty over all of creation and history through the gospel and Kingdom work, God’s individual calling of people to salvation and new life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God’s loving passion for the transformation of every tongue and tribe and people group throughout the world. God’s desire for Christian relationships to be formed in terms of covenant.

The Alliance engages with its partner congregations through the language of covenant keeping and covenant renewal. In covenant keeping, we agree to be in relationship and conversation with each other in difficult and joyful times. In covenant renewal, we agree that covenants are between partners for a period of time and in order to remain healthy should be intentionally renewed.

THE COVENANT

The Alliance and its partner congregations covenant together to empower the mission of each local congregation to its full Kingdom potential. We seek together to live into the Alliance Unifying Beliefs, Relational Matrix and Strategic Initiatives. We will do this with God’s love, accountability, honesty, and integrity as children of God and His Church.

COVENANT PARTNERSHIP

The Covenant Partnership between the Alliance and a partner congregation is overseen by Network leadership on behalf of the Board of Directors (the “Board”). Healthy Covenant Partnerships require transparency of theological convictions, in addition to faithful witness and practice by both parties. As a result, there will be mutual conversations providing accountability and support: the Network will engage with congregations regarding their theology, ministry, and ministry impact. The congregation will engage with the Network regarding the effectiveness of its theology, equipping of congregations, and ministry impact.

COVENANT PARTNERSHIP RENEWAL

The Alliance is an organization of affiliated congregations that regularly requires its partner congregations and Networks to discern together whether the congregation is being equipped by the Alliance and whether the congregation desires to remain affiliated with the Alliance.

Partnership Term (5 years)

During the 5th year of each term, the Alliance Network engages the congregation in a conversation to determine whether the church remains theologically and missionally aligned with the Alliance. This conversation is intended to be characterized by mutual encouragement and engagement. Upon conclusion of the conversation, the congregation and the Network must each arrive at their decision to recommend renewal of the Covenant Partnership for approval by the Alliance Board.



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
CONGREGATIONAL REQUEST FOR AFFILIATION WITH THE ALLIANCE
Welcome Packet – Document 7 March 2024

The _____ Church [legal name of church] requests permission to affiliate with the Alliance of Reformed Churches. By making this request, we acknowledge that it is our desire to affiliate with like-minded congregations as partners in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We also acknowledge the responsibilities that are required as we journey forward in our common faith, life, and mission in Jesus Christ. These include active involvement in a local ministry Hub and regional Network with whom we have chosen affiliation, respect for the Network and Alliance Ordination Teams and Board decisions, and financial support of the governance and leadership of the Alliance (1% of budget).

We passed the following motion at our [governing body] meeting on _____[date].

We, the [governing body] of _____ Church endorse and embrace the foundational statements of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. [Attach minutes]

<https://arc21.org/creeds-confession>

<https://arc21.org/unifying-beliefs>

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Elder Rep: _____

Deacon Rep: _____

Mailing Address of Church:

Street: _____

City: _____ State/Prov: _____ Zip: _____



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

TO ACCOMPANY THE REQUEST FOR AFFILIATION IN THE ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Welcome Packet – Document 8 March 2024

Church Name: _____

Location (City and State): _____

Number of people attending weekend worship: _____.

Number of members age 21 and younger: _____.

Number of members age 22 and older: _____.

Please provide brief replies (1-2 paragraphs) to the following items (attaching or pasting from existing documents is fine). We would prefer this as an electronic document.

- Description of your leadership structure (Pastors; Staff; Elders & Deacons; etc.).
- Description of the community you are called to serve and reach.
- Description of your congregational journey in the last 2 decades (growth, transition, decline, impacting events).
- What effective ministries is the church currently providing that impact people’s lives and how do you determine the impact of those ministries?
- Share one story of God’s blessing on your ministry.
- Description of the facility including indebtedness and/or planned development.

What value do you see in being an affiliated congregation with the Alliance?

What gift (ministry focus, location, etc.) can you contribute to the Alliance?

What do you hope the Alliance brings to your ministry?

Which regional Network are you intending to partner with going forward? (<https://arc21.org/networks>)

Printed name(s) of person(s) (typed) submitting congregational responses

Date _____



ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ORDINATION AND SUPPORT OF PASTORS

Welcome Packet – Document 9 March 2024

ORDINATION OF PASTORS

A pastor's credentialing happens independently of their congregation's transfer into the Alliance of Reformed Churches. In fact, a pastor's ordination credential is held in trust by the Alliance Ordination Team, not the congregation or network per se.

It is important that pastors be established as trusted leaders. That's what ordination is: a declaration of *trust*.

A major advantage of the Alliance is its robust track towards ordination for pastors. We call it Pathways (pathways.arc21.org). Pathways is a high-accessibility and high-accountability approach that identifies which competencies (areas of maturity) a pastor has. The goal is to create an abundance of healthy, growing ministers for local churches and related ministries.

Through Pathways, the Alliance has made it relatively simple for pastors to obtain ordination, whether or not they have been ordained before. [The eight steps](#) can be accomplished speedily. Pathways' innovative method allows a pastor to apply, go through a prior learning assessment, and be credentialed in a matter of weeks (not years!).

The Alliance is different from other denominations in its approach. Ordination is highly accessible in that it requires only a set of core competencies (foundational knowledge, character, and skill) to be ordained. We do not require pastors to complete a seminary degree before serving as an ordained pastor. If an Alliance church wishes to hire a person as pastor, the network affirms the person, and the core competencies are demonstrated, that person can be ordained.

LIFELONG LEARNING OF PASTORS

For all its accessibility, ordination in the Alliance is highly accountable too. Pastors who are not fully formed are expected to develop and demonstrate the practitioner competencies (more advanced or professional knowledge, character, and skill) along the way. To ensure this maturity, a Guide Team helps the pastor move toward maturity. (Alternatively, some pastors complete competencies through our formal partners like [Coram Deo](#), [Western Theological Seminary](#), and [The Foundry](#)). Even pastors who have all the practitioner competencies complete are still held accountable to learning goals for continued growth as a Christ-like leader.

Moreover, ordination is renewable in the Alliance. A credential lasts for a 5-year term, at which time the pastor engages in a renewal process. He or she will attest to their continuing theological and relational alignment with the Alliance, reporting on learning, fruitfulness, and growth in Christlikeness that has taken place in the previous 5 years. All pastors are expected to renew their ordination and submit goals for future learning over the next 5-year term.

SUPPORT OF PASTORS

The Alliance also provides a strong retirement plan as part of the pastor's employment benefits (403(b)9) and has Group Life and Long-term disability insurance through the Reformed Benefits Association with the option for health insurance as well.

Local churches make the compensation decisions for ordained staff positions, but fair and even generous support is encouraged for ordained pastor roles in the Alliance. Networks provide compensation guidelines for ordained staff that Alliance congregations will commit to honor as part of their affiliation and renewal conversations.

1. Alliance congregations will provide competitive salaries as measured against comparable professions in the area of that congregation (i.e., school administrators, MSW administrative roles, public-sector jobs that involve similar responsibilities, etc.).
2. Alliance congregations will provide a minimum of \$175,000 in term life insurance.
3. Alliance congregations will make an annual contribution of 11% of compensation (salary + housing) to the individual retirement account of the pastor.
4. Alliance congregations will provide health insurance, life insurance and long-term disability plans.