



ALLIANCE
OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Vision, Values, Structure

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Alliance Vision

The Alliance of Reformed Churches is a broad collection of churches who have locked arms together for the sake of the gospel. The Alliance seeks to live fully under the rule, reign, and direction of our King, Jesus—he alone has the right to rule his church. Under his authority and empowerment, we desire to mutually uphold the authenticity of the gospel; fully embrace God's eternal Word; experience restoration from brokenness; and catalyze one another for the continued expanding movement that is Christianity.

The summation of these mutual desires is a small set of core biblical values, simple interconnective structures, and agile leadership teams, all of which tie the local churches of the Alliance together and mobilize them for carrying out God's mission. Along the way, we have sought to incorporate what Jesus laid out in the New Testament for the Kingdom purposes and thriving of his church.

Alliance Values

By carefully surveying the grand story of God and the life and invitations of Jesus, the Alliance of Reformed Churches has chosen to highlight three overarching and essential components of God's redemptive work. By understanding and placing utmost value on these components, our true purpose can be realized. These components, which make up our stated values, are as follows:

- Gospel
- Empowered Community
- Mission

Gospel

As a broad overview, the gospel is the good news that God has brought redemption to a broken and fallen world. Against the backdrop of the creation and fall, God has moved and is continuing to move in momentous ways through Jesus to bring about cosmic redemption. Although the scriptures refer to more than one historical event as the "gospel", these events are really all layers surrounding the same core: the dynamic activity of the Kingdom of God and its King, Jesus.

First, and often overlooked, is the gospel that Jesus preached. He proclaimed that the Kingdom of God has come near (Mark 1:14-15, Matt. 4:17, Luke 16:16). This proclamation was accompanied by signs, healings, and casting out demons. In Jesus, God's reign was breaking into human history—not in such a way that immediately enacted the cosmic judgment and restoration of all things, but rather, in a subversive manner which provided a foretaste of these future prophesied events. Those who embraced Jesus' message and God's reign in Christ entered God's Kingdom.

Jesus taught that the inbreaking Kingdom would continue to permeate the entire world until the end of the age. Not only that, but those who entered the Kingdom were now

called to be active agents in that global permeation. Jesus revealed the mystery that the Kingdom was also something that will come again in the future, at which point the Hebraic hope and expectation of universal deliverance and restoration will finally occur. All of these revealed truths and historic events uncovered an unexpected, but significant, forward movement in God's story of redemption. Something new was beginning.

A second unfolding layer of the gospel is the good news that the King of this new Kingdom, Jesus, died for our sins then rose to life victorious over death, ascending to sit enthroned at the right hand of the Father. This climactic development in God's story sheds new light on the radical, life-changing, new-covenant-forming way in which God's people are qualified to enter and eternally live in his Kingdom.

As human history progresses, the gospel works to form God's people into a community—giving all believers a place in the story of God. Without the foundation of the gospel, the other two values do not exist. This powerful gospel raises us to life, reforms us over and over, and sends us out into the world on mission with Jesus. Because we consider the gospel a core value of the Alliance, we hold to the following derivative philosophies:

- The Gospel should be central (Gospel Centrality)
- The Gospel should saturate (Gospel Saturation)
- The Gospel should reform (Gospel Reformation)

Gospel Centrality and Gospel Saturation

We want the gospel to be central to all of who we are. It should not only saturate all that we do, but it should also flow through us to saturate the surrounding culture in which we live. This centrality and saturation of the gospel was certainly the case during Jesus' ministry. The Alliance will intentionally focus on encouraging and equipping local churches to effectively live out these two gospel goals.

Gospel Reformation

The gospel transcends culture, but it is always adapting within the context of its surrounding culture. It simultaneously affirms and challenges the culture's norms, calling people to repentance and reform. Historically, heretical distortions of the gospel tend to fall along the contours of the normative belief systems of its host society, distorting the gospel in such a way that it no longer challenges culture. The missiological term for this phenomenon is "syncretism". It is a tragedy when this happens—very likely this is a strategic tactic of the ruler of darkness.

While the Alliance promotes finding bridges between the gospel and culture, it also affirms a constant expectation that the gospel always provides a fundamentally alternative way of life in all local contexts. The church is an important center for gospel reformation. The gospel calls its people to a life of continued confession, repentance, and transformation. These ongoing ethics are an important measure of health among local expressions of God's church.

Community

As previously stated, the gospel naturally creates a community, which is then sent out together to join in God's mission. God's community of the gospel, also known as the church, should be a sent, hyper-relational community of love. It is also a family, the actual household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-21).

This value of gospel-formed community leads to the following priorities of the Alliance:

- Loving relationships
- Supernatural empowerment
- Five-fold equipping
- Multicultural mosaic

Loving Relationships

Jesus' community call to "remain in my love" and "love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:9,12) should thoroughly shape the Alliance staff, intra-church, and inter-church relationships. Living out the "one another" commands of Scripture is non-negotiable if we are to be a community living under the rule and reign of Jesus. Forgiving one another, honoring one another above oneself, and stirring up one another to love and good deeds are a few examples of these biblical commands.

The relational life within the structures of the Alliance is not meant to deteriorate into stale business-type meetings or competitive attitudes. God is relational, therefore relationship matters. Our relational health goal is to exemplify the self-giving love shown within the Trinity and demonstrated toward us by Jesus. We desire to walk humbly together, yoked to him as he restores us, shepherds our souls, and restores us to health. The leadership/equipping teams of the Alliance should model and motivate relational health for all.

Supernatural Empowerment

Jesus' church is a supernaturally empowered community. God does not send his people into the world to fulfill his mission on their own. Rather, the Father and Son send the church into the world with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. God's beautiful design is for every locality of the church to live out its purpose in participation with the Trinity, with the full backing of the person, presence, and power of God's Spirit.

Our embrace of this empowerment is not driven by human preference, nor a desire to be unnecessarily charismatic. Rather, we recognize that biblical community empowerment by the Spirit is the great strategy of heaven between the first and second coming of Jesus. It is God's way for us to build ourselves up into the full maturity of Christ, and to most powerfully proclaim and embody the gospel in a desperately broken world.

The New Testament repeatedly stresses the need for the participation of every single member of the body of Christ, each of whom has been uniquely gifted and empowered. Not only does every member have direct relational access to God in the new covenant,

but every member also has an important role to play in its collective maturing process and Kingdom impact in the world.

The Alliance of Reformed Churches desires to demonstrate a lifelong posture of humility and teachability toward the ministry and works of the Holy Spirit. This posture includes honing skills for weighing and testing for authenticity and avoiding error.

Five-Fold Equipping

One important way that God empowers his church is through the five gift ministries of Jesus, commonly called “equippers”, or referred to by the acronym APEST.

The scriptures teach that when Jesus ascended on high, he gave supernaturally gifted individuals as gifts to the church—that is, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers (APEST) (Eph. 4:7-15). Jesus' purpose for these empowered individuals is to equip and build up the body so that we can all reach maturity, being fully like Jesus and fully restored for the work of ministry.

These five types of gifted individuals are keys to unlocking the church's full potential in Christ. This biblical reality has been seen in practice—one of the distinguishing marks of genuine, exponential, missional movements in church history has been the presence of APEST ministry. This is also recorded in accounts of the first-century church in the book of Acts. Therefore, the Alliance embraces Jesus' genius intention of APEST equipping ministry by encouraging the full range of APEST representation within its leadership structure. The Alliance seeks to bring these giftings together to catalyze the church for wholeness, maturity, and mission.

Multicultural Mosaic

Especially after the ascension of Jesus, it was revealed by the Spirit that the community created by the gospel would be a multicultural one (Eph. 3:4-6). Revelation 7:9 depicts a great multitude of the redeemed in heaven “from every nation, tribe, people and language”, standing before the throne and worshiping God for their salvation. This passion for all people groups has always been God's heart. The covenant with Abraham included Abraham being blessed to be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:2-3). Jesus' great commission with us in the world is to make disciples of all nations. So, the relational structures of the Alliance are inclusive of all people groups, winsome in our love and respect for differing human cultures and languages, and empowering for the salvation and discipleship of all people in Christ. We desire to grow in our cultural intelligence, showing an awareness and intentionality toward others in the family of God to the end that “all nations” as disciples in Christ can reach their full gospel potential.

Mission

As outlined earlier, the gospel is the good news that, in Jesus, God is taking vigorous initiative (past, present, and future) to bring restoration to the world. The full restoration of all things is the end goal of the mission of God.

Since the fall of man, universal tension has been building for God to complete his mission. Through the Patriarchs, the Covenants, the Kings, and the Prophets, longing has grown for this final completion--with the pattern of God taking one step forward, and humanity taking one step back.

But this pattern was dramatically altered with Jesus' arrival on earth. The Kingdom of God came near, and with it came present preliminary experiences of the prophetic promises of restoration. At the same time, Jesus continually called people to participate with him in God's mission in specific ways. He chose followers. He anointed his followers with the missionary identity of being salt and light to the world. He sent his followers into the world with the message and powers of the Kingdom. He himself embodied and practiced Kingdom justice, love, service, and good deeds with the expectation that his followers imitate him and multiply. His climactic acts were to die for the sins of the world, rise again from the dead, and give his Spirit of empowerment to his people. Then, he sent them into the world as witnesses and disciple-makers until his Kingly return to complete the mission of God entirely.

These extraordinary events all illustrate an important reality: God has called us into exciting participation on the frontlines of his mission. Put otherwise: God has a mission, and his mission has a church. Living on mission involves a lot more than evangelism. It involves a full display of Kingdom life and good deeds to the world, expressing the love of Christ to the world, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, and multiplying disciples. Living on mission also involves a complete reorientation of our life as we take on the missional character of the King. Jesus is the perfect model for ministry for every disciple, embodying our high calling of Christlikeness down to the core.

Multiplication Mindset

Our God is a God of multiplication. From the dawn of creation, he commanded people, as well as plants and animals, to multiply through generations of reproduction (Gen. 1:22,28). Likewise, Jesus challenges and empowers the citizens of his kingdom to multiply exponentially over spiritual generations of disciples. A simple addition-mindset, rather than an exponential one, can never accomplish the kind of gospel permeation that Jesus wants for all nations.

While Jesus ministered to the multitudes, he relied primarily on multipliers to reach all the nations with the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. On the way to the cross, Jesus compassionately proclaimed and demonstrated the Kingdom of heaven with the multitudes. But he also chose a smaller set to be deeply formed as his disciple-making harvest workers (Matt. 9:35-38).

It is our strong intention that Alliance Networks and Hubs develop this multiplication mindset among our churches and disciples of Jesus. Returning to the pattern and blueprint of Jesus and his new creation work will be challenging, but it is a high and holy invitation as well. It will require asking questions like: "How do we master the content of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) in our own lives with the Holy Spirit's help so that we can train the next three or four generations to obey everything Jesus commanded us?"

Practically, Alliance Networks and Hubs can emphasize an ongoing habit of every leader bringing along an apprentice leader for what has been called “life-on-life” and “in-ministry” formation and mutual discipleship. This pattern of intentional apprenticing and co-discipleship can be applied throughout the churches as well, so that every disciple and leader participates in the increasing scalability of the coming Kingdom of God.

Movemental Dynamics

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:15

Jesus didn't come to start an organization, he started a movement. He brought a dynamic Kingdom, which has been sweeping people into it ever since. As we have discussed above, he catalyzed momentum for the gospel through groups of people. Jesus' Kingdom work and confusing parables generated great surprise and controversy among witnesses, and the testimonies of transformed people from all walks of life became somewhat like walking billboards for the gospel message. Jesus taught that this movement was meant to spread throughout the whole world, and this outward spread is radically displayed in the book of Acts.

Just like Jesus, Alliance Networks and Hubs can be attentive to the kinds of “people dynamics” that support gospel movement. Gospel infusion is encouraged across multiple avenues of cultural influence. Additionally, deliverance, healing, and signs and wonders of the Kingdom are always a relevant tool of gospel momentum, and they are inherently linked with the gospel itself.

Church systems and structures can also play a big role in either supporting or impeding the radical movement of Christianity. Church structures with high complexity, cost, or control can hinder, or even halt, gospel momentum and multiplication. Effective movement requires clarity and unity of conviction; it also requires simple, reproducible, adaptable, and agile structures which empower the greatest number of people possible to the complete work of disciple-making.

Alliance Structure

Covenant

All deacons, elders and pastors/equipping leaders of our local churches commit as partners to a Covenant of the Ordained, holding one another's leadership role in mutual trust. The Alliance's Covenant of the Ordained (<https://arc21.org/s/English-pbdc.zip>) expresses our allegiance to Christ and his Kingdom; our submission to the veracity, authority, sufficiency and clarity of the Word of God, the Bible; and our core convictions as a gospel movement of redeemed people, leaders and churches together. All leaders at the Network and Global levels of the Alliance are chosen from elders, deacons and

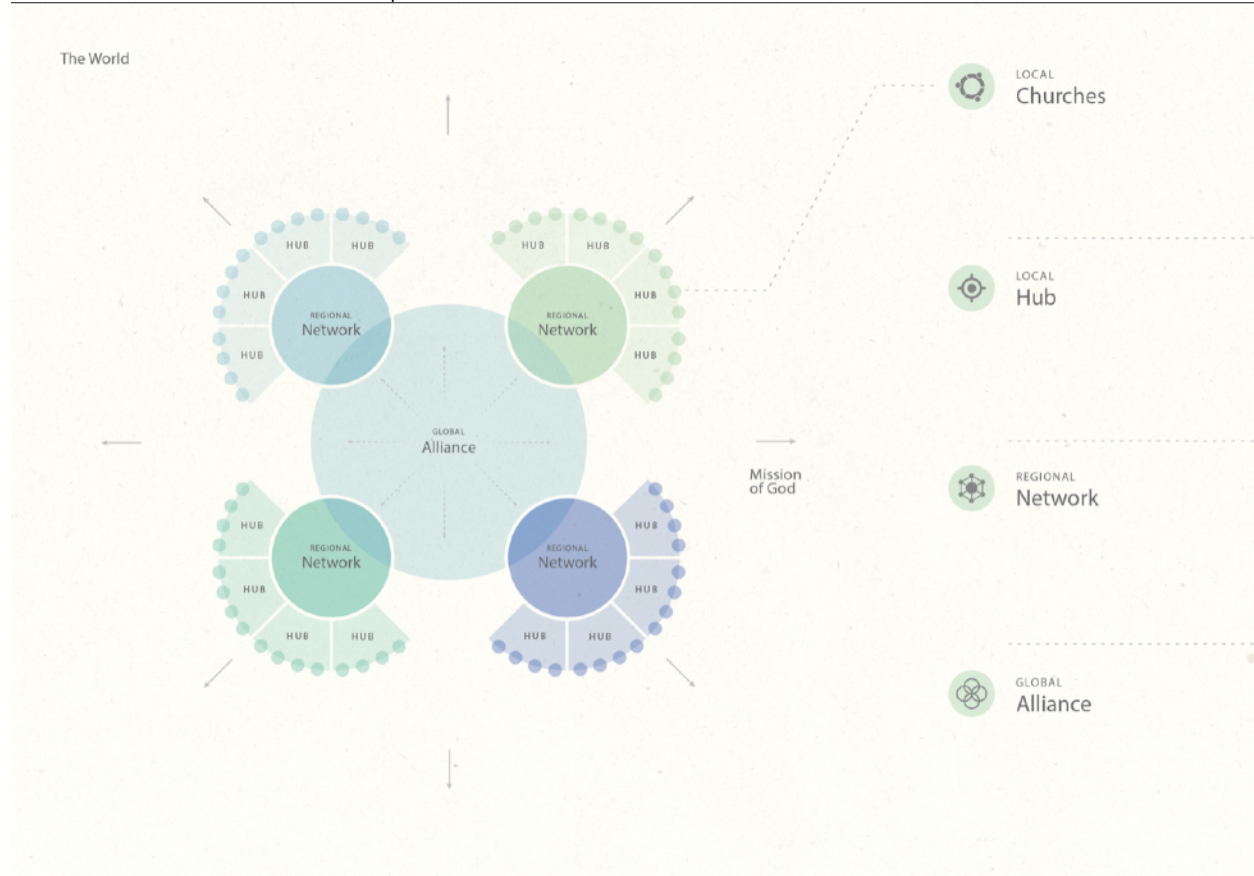
equipping leaders of the local churches who have the biblical qualifications for leadership (Acts 6:1-8, 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1, Eph. 4, etc.).

Structural Overview

Mindful of the shaping power of structures, the Alliance has sought to structure itself, in congruence with its its values, to enable the accomplishment of the following:

- The advancement of God's work
- The equipping and support of the local church
- The formation of meaningful gospel partnerships among churches
- The continuing integrity of the gospel

Shown below is the overall picture of the structure of the Alliance of Reformed Churches:



Local Church

The starting point for understanding the structure of the Alliance is the local church level. The Alliance of Reformed Churches, in its essence, is an alliance of local churches. Therefore, the local church is the most important focal point. They are at the front lines of God's mission, where the gospel and world tangibly meet. The local churches make up the outermost ring in the diagram above. As God's Kingdom comes, renewal will come as well,

the reach of the gospel will grow, disciples will be made, and this outermost ring will expand.

Everything about the Alliance is intended to help engage, equip and empower local churches to their full Kingdom potential under the direct leadership and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. In both starting and strengthening churches, the Alliance wants to see the local church be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating—multiplying disciples, leaders, ministries and churches.

Local churches contribute Alliance partnership shares of 2% of total income monthly or quarterly to their Regional Network, and 1% to the Global Alliance as a whole (Regional Network and Global Alliance explained below).

Local Hubs

Every local church in the Alliance of Reformed Churches is part of a Local Hub. A Local Hub is a group of roughly three to nine churches in the same city or area. The purpose of Hubs is to create a partnership among local churches to advance the cause of the gospel within the community/city. Hubs form a commitment to mutual mission and are influencers and encouragers to one another as like-minded churches of the city or area, but not necessarily part of the Alliance accountability structure directly. In some areas, the churches may all be part of the Alliance, but more often these churches will come from several denominations or even non-denominational backgrounds who form a spiritual and relational bond for the sake of God’s mission locally.

The organizing structure of Hubs is drawn from the way believers in the first-century church were bonded across entire cities/areas in the first century. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus addressed churches at this city-wide scope saying, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Churches at this wider geographical level had a common reputation in their host city (Rev. 3:1), and were commended by Jesus for their collective hard work, service, perseverance in the midst of suffering (Rev. 2:2-3,19). Churches at this level were also unified enough to share common issues (Rev. 2-3; more references in most epistles).

Decision-making and funding of the collaborative missional goals happen at the Hub level. Churches combine their strengths synergistically and are empowered as missionary agents in the church of the city/locality. A local Alliance church may join an existing Hub, or start a new one. Alternatively, cities and areas may have pre-existing interchurch collaborative structures which could act as a Hub.

Regional Networks

Regional Networks typically consist of 30-60 Alliance local churches. Within the Alliance, Regional Networks bear the primary responsibility for the encouragement and equipping of local churches to their full Kingdom potential through partnership with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Regional Networks host several teams to help realize this full potential.

Churches within Regional Networks are also active in offering relationship and support to one another. Leaders from each church meet all together at least once annually to connect, debrief, be refreshed, and stoke the fire among each other with the spark of God's gospel. These meetings may include: worship, reviewing God's workings across the Network, mutually processing theology, discussing challenges that the local churches are facing, rest, focused praying, and training. Regional Networks are formally named, and they may be formed around geography or a particular ministry focus.

Board

Each Regional Network has its own dedicated board. The Network Board is a leadership team which is chiefly responsible for overseeing and supporting the Network's health and development as a whole. The Board also does the following:

- Establishes, oversees and empowers the other teams in the network (Equipping Team/Staff; Ordination Team, Covenant Keeper Team, Church Health Team, Multiplication Team, etc.)
- Sets Network-wide goals in sensitivity to the Spirit, in sensitivity to the specific churches that uniquely make up the Network, in sensitivity to what God is actively doing in the local churches, and in sensitivity to the actual issues the Network local churches are facing in their respective local contexts.
- Oversees and empowers the Equipping Team in their implementation of these goals.
- Plans and facilitates the annual gathering of all local churches.
- Celebrates disciple-making, growing health, and multiplication of the local churches.
- Celebrates missional progress of the Hub churches, shares learnings and testimonies of the gospel work, and encourages local churches in ways that maximize their engagement and effectiveness in their Hub.
- Carries out 5-Year Alliance Evaluations for each local church. These evaluations are focused assessments of the life, health, doctrine, and mission of the local churches and their ordained leaders in the Regional Network. This process, which should be full of grace and truth, is designed to test the mutual Kingdom benefit and alignment of the church with the Alliance Network, discern any adjustments to be made, and affirm or discontinue the covenant relationship of the local church with the Alliance for the next five years.
- Sends one Godly, called and capable leader to be a one, two, or three year member of the global Alliance Board when the Network has at least 10 member churches, as well as a leader to the Alliance Ordination Team.

The Board meets monthly, or as needed. While the Board members function in a management capacity, their essential identity is to be Godly, relational, overseeing servants. They pray, they work to remove barriers for the gospel, they strive to ensure that all other teams have everything they need to function, and they seek to create safe and ample space for the leaders under their care to creatively implement.

Equipping Team / Staff

The Equipping Team / Staff primarily fulfills one or more of the five-fold equipping roles from Ephesians 4:11. This team works with and for the local churches to help them become fully mature, fully activated, and fully equipped for gospel service (Eph. 4:12-16). The exact form of the Equipping Team's work will vary. This could look like establishing key partnerships within the Network, organizing trainings, sending people to a church for encouragement and teaching, establishing additional Network-wide teams, or many other things. Depending on the state of a local church, the Equipping Team engagement could look like simple encouragement and maintaining relationships.

The Network Equipping Team will meet monthly or as needed for swift decision-making and depth of relationship with the Lord and one another.

The members of this team have the capacity to multiply ministry among leaders and members of the local churches in the Network. They may also employ a Team Administrator. They will give an average of ten hours per week as staff toward a regional gospel movement that stewards, protects, and maximizes the churches and leaders of the Network.

Network Ordination Team

The Ordination Team works catalytically with churches and leaders in the Network to pray for and raise up an abundance of qualified leaders to expand the gospel movement. They work with the local church to establish effective disciple-making pathways that feed the need for a high quantity and quality of Christ-like deacons, elders and equipping leaders.

This team works alongside churches and assists leaders who are raising up and multiplying leaders from and for the harvest field (Matt. 9:38). This team assists in the following:

- Recognizing leadership calls from God
- Discerning ministry giftings from God
- Developing godly character and competencies
- Ordaining leaders
- Ongoing learning in skill development of all leaders

Challenges that arise in the ministry field can be assisted by the Biblical research and training of this team, for example, the team can help with addressing controversial topics in the culture to equip God's people for works of service.

Covenant Keepers Team

A Covenant Keepers Team (CKT) comes alongside the Ordained individual(s) as needed for resolution and restoration. They meet to address matters when they arise—mainly unresolved sinful behavior, false teaching contrary to Scripture, severe conflict, or any additional calls for help from the local churches.

The CKT engages through discipline, resources, or whatever path is required to be walking in covenant with one another before Jesus. They will apply the spiritual, shepherd-like, and relational ways of Jesus and the Kingdom as evidenced in the following passages: Matthew 18:10-20, Galatians 6:1:1-10, John 21:15-22, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Hebrews 12:1-13, Romans 12:18, John 8:2-11, etc.

A CKT will comprise of three people, called by the Lord and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who are leaders with wisdom and godly character, have a track record of reconciliation and restoration among people in ministry, and are overcomers of the schemes of the kingdom of darkness. A CKT team works at critical times to help ordained leaders grow in Christlikeness, endure hardship, and overcome the enemy's schemes in their lives or churches.

Discretionary Teams

The Network Board or Network Equipping Team may choose to establish additional teams for specific discretionary purposes.

Global Alliance

The Global Alliance refers to all of the local churches within all of the Regional Networks of the Alliance. It is the entire movement. The global Alliance also has a board and equipping staff and several leadership teams that help fulfill the mission and calling of the Alliance as a whole

Board

The Board consists of one person from each Regional Network, plus one Chief Executive Officer (Staff). The CEO is currently tasked by this board in an accountable leadership/policy governance model to work within the protective boundaries set by the Board, in order to implement Christ's mission and vision for the Alliance as a whole. The Board is responsible for the following:

- Relationship
- Staffing
- Funding
- Communications
- Administration

Alliance Ordination Team

The Alliance Ordination Team consists of one leader from each Network ordination team alongside the CEO of the Alliance (and other designated staff) to steward the leadership capacity of the whole movement. The members of this team are the ultimate decision-makers in matters related to accountability and church discipline. They will work with the Network Covenant Keeper Teams and Network Ordination Teams toward promoting Christlike character and competencies among all partners of the Covenant of the

Ordained. This team may engage with local churches if a Regional Covenant Keepers Team requests additional support for resolution.

Shaking House Prayer Team

The Shaking House Prayer Team consists of a dozen or more dedicated weekly intercessors who meet with the Lord around the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). They sit at the feet of Jesus in listening prayer, exercise authority in the spiritual realms against the schemes of the devil, pray earnestly for the advancement of God's kingdom and for the full victory of the gospel to prevail. This team will help model a life of prayer and spiritual empowerment for all the Networks, Hubs and Churches, providing coaching and training as needed to raise up other "houses of prayer for all nations." This team for the Alliance took their name from Acts 4:31: "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly."