

Frequently Asked Questions About the Fellowship PC(USA)

Where Are the Names of Women/Minorities/ Small Churches/ Elders on Your Letter?

The letter distributed on February 2, 2011 is just the first public sharing of a conversation that started several months ago between pastors who had known one another for many years, and who decided to step forward in faith, inviting all who would to join them. We are deeply committed to the leadership of women in ministry. Three of the seven people on the steering team have theologically trained/ordained spouses in ministry. This commitment is part of what distinguishes us from the EPC.

A gathering in Scottsdale in January 2011 – an annual meeting of larger church senior pastors – was simply our first step toward broadening the conversation. We recognize and acknowledge the urgent and unquestioned need for the voices of younger and older leaders, men and women, small church and large church leaders, people of all races, and clergy/laity to be equal partners in the conversation and this Fellowship. Our desire is that by the time we gather in Minneapolis in August, we will have a robust conversation going, profiting from the rich diversity of the Body of Christ.

How Is This Fellowship Different Than the New Wineskins?

Many of us were part of the founding of the New Wineskins, and chose for various reasons not to depart the PC(USA) at that time. Part of our hesitation was a desire to draw together a larger group of churches rather than splintering over time. At this point, we have not decided to affiliate with any particular organization; we have a strong desire to make the boundaries of this “new thing” as broad as possible.

Why Not Go With the EPC?

We wholly respect the ministry of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and may forge some partnership down the road. For the present, we want to honor their distinctiveness rather than “swamping them” with a large group of churches that may change the DNA of their institution, especially in the sensitive area of women’s ordination. We have no desire to cause strife or step immediately into another contentious discussion over ordination. Additionally, we hope to be “radical” in our understanding of the unique needs and opportunities in the rapidly changing culture around us and to structure our organization differently than traditional denominations have been understood.

How Is This Fellowship Different than All the Other Renewal Organizations?

We commend the work that so many of these renewal groups have been doing within the PC(USA), and members of our steering committee have been involved in their efforts. We share these organizations’ commitment to faithfulness in the work of Christ. Our desire, however, is not to spend more time trying to resuscitate our denomination, but to live into a new, 21st century reality. Our energies will be focused on living in a new configuration and deciding how to accomplish that rather than expending effort on the existing PC(USA).

Dated: February 3, 2011