



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. What is a New Worshiping Community (NWC)?

A1. New Worshiping Community (NWC) is a term used for a group of individuals who worship together or otherwise share Christian fellowship, but are not an organized congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The brief definition of a NWC is:

New

Taking on varied forms of church for our changing
Culture Seeking to make and form new disciples of Jesus
Christ

Worshiping

Gathered by the Spirit to meet Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament
Sent by the Spirit to join God's mission for the transformation of the world

Community

Practicing mutual care and accountability
Developing sustainability in leadership and
finances

1001 New Worshiping Communities (NWCs) seek to create the conditions that will allow existing worshipping communities in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to flourish and to give birth to over 1,001 more in the next ten years.

In short, 1001 NWCs is a movement, not a definition.

2. Can a group of people meeting in a home or a coffee house or elsewhere for Bible study or worship constitute a NWC?

A2. Certainly. If they fit the definition of a NWC.

Q3. And a group of people in a casual Bible study or who engage in informal worship might not be a NWC?

A3. Correct. If they do not fit the definition of a NWC.

Q4. What does the *Book of Order* say about NWCs?

A4. The *Book of Order* does not define NWCs. It does, however, speak of “other forms of corporate witness” (G-1.0103) as well as “fellowship groups,” “new church developments,” and “other non-congregational entities” (see G-3.0301(b)). None of these entities are defined in the *Book of Order* but when they are developed and if they include worship they may be a NWC.

Q5. How does a NWC differ from a congregation?

A5. The *Book of Order* defines a congregation as a formally organized community chartered and recognized by a presbytery as provided by our Constitution. (G-1.0103)
A NWC is not a congregation as defined by the *Book of Order*. Even if a NWC is designated by a presbytery as a fellowship group or a non-congregational entity, it is still not a congregation.

Q6. How does a NWC differ from a New Church Development (NCD)?

A6. Every NCD is a NWC, but not every NWC is necessarily a NCD. A NCD is more intentional about becoming a chartered congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). With the advent of 1001 NWCs, NCDs have become a subset of the NWC movement. NCDs typically are on a more traditional path toward membership and may end up looking more like existing churches. This does not mean they are not innovative and won't reach new people; it simply means they have more of a traditional arc to them and may require a higher level of funding if they have a full time organizing Pastor/Evangelist. From the outside, it may be hard to tell which NWCs are NCDs and which ones are not.

Q7. Are NWCs subject to the authority of the local presbytery or the *Book of Order*?

A7. This will vary with each NWC. Some NWCs may have no official connection with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and, therefore, are not necessarily subject to the authority of the local presbytery or the *Book of Order*. However, many will be connected to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through a particular congregation or presbytery, all with varying degrees of connection and oversight.

Session of a Congregation

The session of a congregation has a responsibility to engage in “planning and leading regular efforts to reach into the community and the world with the message of salvation and the invitation to enter into committed discipleship” (G-3.0201a). Such responsibility may lead the session to create, launch, adopt, and/or support one or more NWCs.

Presbytery

A presbytery has a responsibility to “develop strategy for the mission of the church in its district” (G-3.0303a). Such responsibility may lead a presbytery to create, launch, adopt, and/or support one or more NWCs. A presbytery might also partner with the session of a congregation to support a NWC.

Q8. Are teaching elders, ruling elders and members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) subject to the authority of their local presbytery or congregation if they are part of a NWC?

A8. Individual teaching elders or ruling elders may be identified by a session or presbytery as someone to provide leadership in a NWC and, therefore, will have the approval of a session or presbytery to do so. All ruling elders and teaching elders, who provide leadership to a NWC, with or without the permission of a session or presbytery, are under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) council where their membership lies. Even if a NWC has no connection to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), individuals involved in a NWC who are members of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation, are under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of their congregation of membership.

Q9. Does the *Book of Order* map out the way a NWC to move toward becoming a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation, if desired?

A9. No. Presbyteries are empowered under the *Book of Order* to determine the mission of Jesus Christ within a geographic region and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives presbyteries the creative power to determine their own processes and procedures for organizing individuals into a congregation. If a NWC wishes to become a formally organized congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA), it should consult with the presbytery where the NWC is located.

Q10. Can individuals be baptized and receive the Lord's Supper as part of the worship life of a NWC?

A10. If a NWC is affiliated in any way with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the NWC could be authorized by local session or presbytery to administer the sacraments.

The *Book of Order* notes that the session of a congregation has the responsibility to authorize baptisms and communion. (W-2.3011a. and W-2.4012). It also lists one of the responsibilities of a presbytery to authorize the celebration of the Lord's Supper...for "other forms of corporate witness established by the presbytery," (G-1.0103), as well to authorized the celebration of the Lord's Supper for "fellowship groups, new church developments, and other non-congregational entities meeting within its bounds" (G-3.0301b).

A non-Presbyterian affiliated NWC meeting in a Presbyterian Church (USA) church building must request permission of the Session as a part of the Session's responsibility for the use of the building in furthering the mission of the congregation. (G-3.0201c.)

A NWC wishing to administer the sacraments in worship should contact the presbytery for assistance.

Q11. Our congregation has been approached by a non-Presbyterian NWC that wishes to affiliate with the congregation in order to borrow or rent space and facilities, but we are concerned about potential liabilities issues. What issues do we need to consider?

A11. To begin with, a non-Presbyterian NWC is no different than any other informal group that seeks to use church property and buildings for meetings and events. Such groups may have no organization, no assets, and no insurance. Consider the following:

1. If you vet each group that uses your building, vet the NWC. If you have a user agreement or lease or other document which you ask other groups to sign, ask the NWC to do the same. As with any group who uses your property, it is advisable to let the group know about the rules that relate to use of your buildings. You should also discuss safety and security matters.
2. Make sure staff know who are the leaders of the NWC and make sure everyone is aware of the dates and times they plan to access your buildings. Make sure someone on staff is available to unlock doors and supervise the property when it is used by the NWC.
3. If groups who use your church space are required to pay a fee to defray the costs of maintenance and utilities, ask the NWC to pay a fee.
4. Inform your insurance company about which groups use your buildings and for what purpose and ask the insurer if it needs additional information about the NWC (or any other group). The insurer may want you to add the NWC as an entity covered by your policy.
5. Make sure you know who is supervising the NWC or its subgroups when they are on your property and ensure those leaders or supervisors know the rules of the property and who to contract and how for assistance. If the NWC programs or events include minors, ask for written confirmation that those who supervise the minors have undergone background checks.
6. Inform your session of the NWC's use of your property and allow the session to ask questions. If it is standard procedure for your session to approve the use of the property by third parties, have the session approve the NWC's use of your property.

Q12. What about the risk that someone from the non-Presbyterian NWC will get injured on our property?

A12. That risk is no greater with a NWC than with any other loosely formed group without assets or insurance. All outside groups who use your property for meetings and events should be asked to comply with your rules for use of the property and should be asked to follow your rules on safety and security. If you have not done so, speak with your insurer about safety and security rules and use of your property by non-members and outside groups. Ask a leader of the NWC to review a lease or use agreement and have it signed by the recognized leaders of the NWC on behalf of the group.

Q 13. Does a NWC automatically become a congregation by regularly using our church property for worship?

A13. No. As noted above, a NWC does not become a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation until it enters into a covenant approved by a presbytery.

Q14. Are NWCs required to keep records, such as minutes and financial reports?

A14. Once they come under the jurisdiction of a presbytery, the presbytery will inform the NWC what records it should maintain. Under the *Book of Order*, the presbytery has the right to review records of a NWC.

Q15. Can a NWC use the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) name and seal in its name, symbols, on its web site, and elsewhere in its materials?

A15. NWCs should consult with the Office of the General Assembly. The seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a registered trademark and copyrighted. Each congregation and council may use the seal without receiving prior permission. Any other use requires prior approval by the Office of the General Assembly.

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/departments/department-stated-clerk/seal/>

Q16. A NWC affiliated with our congregation meets in the homes of its members. We are concerned because a member of the NWC or one of their children could become injured at a residence during a meeting and sue our church claiming that we support the NWC and had a duty to make the house safe and prevent injury.

A16. A Presbyterian NWC made up of members of a congregation will be under the session's mission and worship responsibility and guidance including the congregation's insurance carrier.

A Presbyterian NWC organized by a presbytery as a new church development, fellowship, or non-congregational entity will need to negotiate with the presbytery over insurance coverage.

Q17. Is a NWC a tax-exempt organization?

A17. It depends.

Scenario A: If a NWC is an unincorporated mission program of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbytery or church (i.e. officially recognized and under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or session), its activities are tax-exempt and tax deductible contributions related to and for the use of this mission program may be made to the presbytery or church which is tax-exempt based on inclusion in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s federal group ruling evidencing 501(c)(3) status for included bodies.

Scenario B: If a NWC is incorporated separately from a presbytery or church but is affiliated with a presbytery or church in a manner that provides the presbytery or church with control and supervision of the NWC's programs and finances, the NWC may apply for inclusion in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s federal group exemption. If the NWC qualifies for inclusion, it will be added to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s federal group ruling and be tax-exempt for federal purposes. If an incorporated NWC does not qualify for inclusion in denomination's group ruling, it may secure tax-exempt status via the Internal Revenue Service on its own behalf if it so chooses and is deemed to qualify.

Scenario C: If a NWC does not fall into either of the scenarios above, it is not tax-exempt based on any relationship with a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) council. The NWC may secure tax-exempt status via the Internal Revenue Service on its own behalf if it so chooses and is deemed to qualify.

Q18. How do donors to a NWC get a receipt evidencing a tax-deductible contribution?

A18. Contributions made to and for the use of a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) entity may receive a receipt evidencing the donation from the body which holds the exemption. For example, if your NWC is an unincorporated mission program of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbytery or church, donations would be made to the presbytery or church and the presbytery or the church would issue the appropriate receipt. If your NWC is a tax-exempt entity, it should issue appropriate receipts to donors.

Q19. My NWC needs a federal employer identification number ("EIN") to open a bank account. May it use a church or presbytery's EIN?

A19. It depends.

Scenario A: If a NWC is an unincorporated mission program of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbytery or church (i.e., officially recognized and under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or session), any gifts made for the NWC are gifts to the presbytery or church. The presbytery or church will be the owner of the bank account and its EIN will be used. The account may be an account designated for the NWC program which holds monetary gifts restricted to the NWC program.

Scenario B: If a NWC is incorporated or formed pursuant to another legal status (i.e., association) existing in the particular state of residence, it may apply to the Internal Revenue Service for an EIN using Form SS-4 which may be found at the following link <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss4.pdf>

Q20. How can my NWC be counted as part of the 1001?

A20. The Office of the General Assembly is keeping track of New Worshiping Communities. In order to be counted, you will need to contact your presbytery. Each presbytery has established guidelines for recognizing NWCs. Once determined that you are a NWC, the stated clerk of the presbytery will fill out a Church Change Form and return to the Office of the General Assembly.

