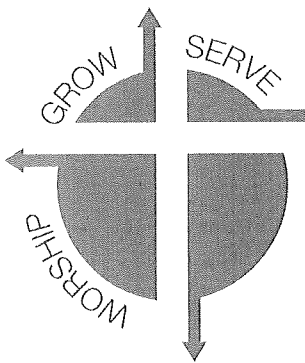




ALLIANCE OF  
REFORMED CHURCHES

# INFORMATION PACKET



**HOPKINS**  
Community Church



Jonathon VanderWall &lt;jonathonvanderwall@gmail.com&gt;

## Congregational Meeting Recap

Hopkins Community Church <inform.hcc@gmail.com>  
 To: HCC Informer <InformHCC@googlegroups.com>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 11:14 AM

Good Morning HCC,

I just wanted to talk a moment to thank everyone for your participation in our Congregational meeting yesterday, whether in-person or online, and with absentee ballots.

Here is a quick recap of what happened:

We celebrated a ton of awesome stuff that God is doing in and through HCC in the ministries and small groups that we are engaged in!

We also celebrated the great success of our work toward the Vision that God has given us. We have made contact with 86% of the Village of Hopkins and the remaining 14% is a combination of houses that are vacant and houses that we attempted to make contact with at least 3 times throughout this summer and fall!

We talked about goals for 2022 with regards to HCC's Vision as well, including a churchwide push to debt freedom in the next year!

We approved the 2020 Meeting minutes.  
 We approved an update to the HCC Bylaws.  
 We approved an update to the HCC Statement of Faith and Beliefs.

*Deacons: Dan Luarman  
 Jason Reed*

Both of these documents can be found here:  
<https://www.hopkinscommunitychurch.net/church-reports/>

*Elder: Jim Fredricks*

We approved the 2022 Budget.  
 We took a survey regarding the status of HCC's affiliation with the Reformed Church in America. We received 106 total responses to these two questions. The results were as follows:

### "I believe that Hopkins Community Church should leave the RCA"

Agree - 99 (93.4%)  
 Disagree - 3 (2.8%)  
 Unsure - 4 (3.8%)  
 Abstain - 0

### "The Alliance of Reformed Churches appears to be the best fit for the denomination HCC should affiliate with"

Agree - 88 (83%)  
 Disagree - 2 (1.9%)  
 Unsure - 13 (12.3%)  
 Abstain - 3 (2.8%)

The consistory will be taking on all of this to our meeting on Thursday evening as we discuss what the next steps are for HCC. We ask for your prayers for wisdom and continued discernment as we consider God's will for HCC.

Have a blessed Monday. Stay warm and safe out there!

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 To view this discussion on the web visit <https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/InformHCC/50ee8b79-a7bc-45ba-81b3-0408705a72a8n%40googlegroups.com>.

## Letter of Petition to leave the Reformed Church in America



**Date:** December 9, 2021

**To:** The Leadership Team of the Classis of Southwest Michigan  
The Administrative Team of the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes

**From:** the Consistory of Hopkins Community Reformed Church

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Following the report of the Vision 2020 team and the results of General Synod 2021, it has become clear to Hopkins Community Reformed Church that the RCA has strayed, theologically, from Biblical Orthodoxy and practice (Matthew 7:26; James 1:22-25). Through inaction, the RCA has made a statement that the status of homosexuality as a sin is a disputable matter, thus affirming homosexual marriages and ordinations within the denomination. This represents a burden of unequal yoking with our congregation who continues to maintain the Orthodox and traditional Biblical view of Marriage and of the status of homosexuality as being sinful before God and therefore unable to be affirmed by the Church (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Because both homosexual marriages and ordinations have been happening for sometime in several classes within the RCA despite the denomination's urge to refrain from such things, and because no disciplinary action, we also recognize that the Covenant that holds RCA churches together is broken.

Further, we recognize that these ongoing conversations have detracted from the Mission of RCA churches and the denomination as a whole and that, following General Synod 2021's decision to restructure, the primary energy of the denomination will be focused on internal structural changes rather than a focus on Gospel Ministry and Kingdom Mission (Matthew 6:33). This is, in our view, essentially an attempt to pour new wine into an old wineskin (Mark 2:22). The Polity of the RCA and its emphasis over and above Biblical Truth has allowed for the denomination to get to this point, protecting those that have strayed from Biblical Orthodoxy, and will still be used in the process of restructuring.

Finally, Hopkins Community Reformed Church desires to move past these conversations, to maintain our Reformed Theology that emphasizes *Sola Scriptura*, to engage in true Kingdom Ministry and Gospel Mission, and to do so within a covenant of Churches that are dedicated first and foremost to Jesus Christ and therefore God's Kingdom Mission. HCRC cannot function or focus effectively and completely on Kingdom Mission and ministry while continuing to be hindered by the climate of the Reformed Church in America. The ongoing uncertainty of denominational stances on cultural issues raises constant and continuing questions about our alignment with the RCA as a denomination, drawing resources such as time, mental energy, etc. away from the Mission and Vision to which HCRC has been called.

Therefore, the Consistory of Hopkins Community Reformed Church, having worked through a process of discernment with our congregation that has spanned several years, multiple informational meetings, and a myriad of opportunities for updates through digital and written content, and having received an overwhelmingly affirmative response (94%) from the congregation on the question of transferring out of the RCA, write this

letter to petition to withdraw from the Reformed Church in America for the purpose of affiliating with another denomination. We also send this as information to the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes.

We hereby petition the Leadership Team of the Classis of Southwest Michigan that our congregation be transferred out of the Reformed Church in America with all our financial assets and liabilities, as well as all of our real and personal property whether physical, digital, and/or intellectual. We will work with the Classis in regard to the final assessments that need to be fulfilled in accordance with the rules and regulations laid out at General Synod 2021.

It is our intent, upon the approval of the Classis of Southwest Michigan, to join in mission and ministry with the Alliance of Reformed Churches. We offer the following explanation as to why the ARC will enhance the effectiveness of our congregation, ministry, mission and vision.

We feel that the Alliance of Reformed Churches aligns very closely with the Beliefs and Values that Hopkins Community Reformed Church holds to in our Statement of Faith and Beliefs. ARC's intention to partner with and empower the local church to serve within its specific contexts with the best practices that seek to amplify local missional engagement. These convictions that the ARC demonstrates will, we feel, enhance the effectiveness of HCRC's ministry to the greater Hopkins community.

Further, we feel that the structure of accountability that the ARC is committed to will further push HCRC forward in Mission and Vision, adding to the momentum that we already have. The ARC's accountability structure for our Theological convictions will continue to encourage us to examine ourselves and dig deeper into God's Word to further Spiritual growth and maturity as a congregation. We also applaud the ARC's specific accountability structure for Pastors as a great tool to encourage further Spiritual and Professional development for our leaders which, we believe, will have a profound impact on our ministry team leaders and volunteers across our ministries. To that end, we are also encouraged by the ARC's emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the giftedness of all those who are in Christ, seeking to draw that out not only in pastors and leaders, but from among all those who are in Christ and make up the local church. We believe that this emphasis, and the accountability that accompanies it, along with the priority of multiplication of leaders and churches will be a catalyst for great Kingdom expansion through the ARC and among its local congregations, of which we desire to be a partner.

Finally, we are encouraged by the ARC's expressed intention to encourage local missional and ecumenical partnerships with other like-minded local churches for the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom expansion and impact at the local level.

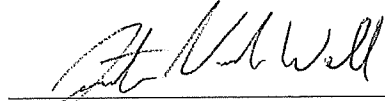
The Consistory of Hopkins Community Reformed Church wishes to thank the Leadership Team of the Southwest Michigan Classis for its time and consideration in this matter. We look forward to working with the team designated to work with local churches seeking to transfer out of the RCA and help clarify the specific pathway and steps need to be taken so that this team, and the Classis as a whole, can work as effectively and efficiently as it can to carry out this mandate in this difficult time of transition.

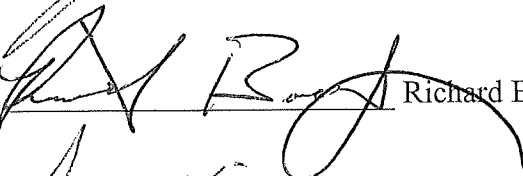
We commit to prayer for the process of discernment that the Classis Leadership needs as it now embarks upon

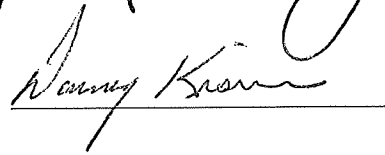
to work that it needs to in response to our petition. We offer the prayer of Paul in the book of Philippians to close this letter,


“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”


The Consistory and Leadership of Hopkins Community Reformed Church


  
Rev. Jonathon VanderWall, Senior Pastor


  
Richard Boverhof, Elder, Vice President


  
Dan Kisner, Elder, Clerk

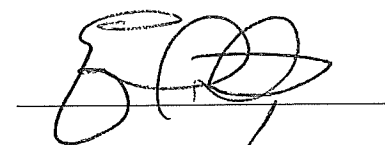
  
Sally Burgess, Elder


  
Curt Leep, Elder


  
Kyle Hoffmaster, Elder

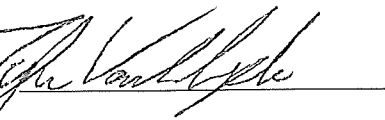
  
Troy Clement, Deacon, Head of Deacons

  
Joel Eding, Deacon [ABSENT]

  
Eric Porter, Deacon

  
Richard Huizinga, Deacon

  
Michael Maule, Deacon

  
Tyler VanderSyde, Deacon

James S. Harrison Rev. James Harrison, Pastor of Prayer and Discipleship

Caleb Nykamp Rev. Caleb Nykamp, Pastor of Youth and Families

James Fredricks James Fredricks, Elder elect

Jason Reed Jason Reed, Deacon elect

Daniel Laarman Daniel Laarman, Deacon elect

# ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

## INTRODUCTORY CONVICTIONS

Denominations and other multi-congregational systems are tools given to the Church by the Spirit for the good of the Kingdom. In different seasons, they provide new and exciting modes of ministry for local communities of faith.

They are not, however, Biblically mandated. While unity is the hope of the global church (John 17) and of individual congregations (1 Corinthians 1, 12), and while covenants among believers are important (1 Samuel 20), structural adjustments to the ways that Christian communities interrelate are essential to health and mission (Acts 15).

With this in mind, we return to consider a number of essential questions in today's climate: What role should an organization of churches serve? What theology, history, polity, or calling should unite them? How does covenant – a clear biblical value – inform relationships among churches?

# **ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

## **THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS**

### **BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND UNDERSTANDING**

- We affirm the Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We affirm that we are living within God's redemptive-historical story that is constructed and governed by God's covenants and promises.
- We affirm that understanding the Bible correctly requires use of consistent exegetical principles that include the grammatical/literary, historical, language, and theological dimensions.
- We affirm the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the author, who sits with us every time we open his best-selling book.

### **REFORMED CONFSSIONAL THEOLOGY**

- We affirm the Apostles', Athanasian, and Nicene Creeds as a member of the global Church.
- Because their doctrines align with our understanding of God's Word, we affirm the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith. These doctrinal standards help us to understand the Bible, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.
- We affirm the Belhar Confession as an appendix to the Belgic Confession so that the Belhar's contemporary declaration of unity, justice, and equality is framed within the context of the Belgic's view of humanity, Scripture, and God's saving work through Jesus Christ. Founded on these Biblical truths, the Belhar Confession adds its prophetic call for unity and reconciliation to the Church's witness to the world. Christ himself is our peace, tearing down the dividing wall of hostility among all peoples.
- We affirm the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality as a confessional appendix to the Heidelberg Catechism so that its affirmations regarding human sexuality are read within the context of the Heidelberg Catechism's teachings on sin, salvation, and service.
- We affirm that future confessional statements may be adopted as confessional addendums to the Heidelberg Catechism or the Belgic Confessions.



# ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

## THE CHURCH

- We affirm that the church is a sent people, founded and inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm that the church is the heart of God's mission for the world.
- We affirm that as a sent community, the church is called to multiply. From the earliest days of the church's founding, groups of believers sent out planters to establish new communities of Christian faith where people's lives were transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- We affirm the mission of multiplication as the core mission of every church and will prioritize our resources to continue planting new communities of Christian faith in our generation.

## PERSONAL SPIRITUAL MATURITY

- We affirm that the call of every relationship, person and leader is to live as a spirit-filled Christian who is growing in spiritual maturity (becoming more like Christ every day).
- We affirm that our primary family of faith is not our family of origin, but rather the body of Christ with whom we "are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:19-21).

# **ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

## **RELATIONAL CONVICTIONS**

*Living Together in Christ*

**We are friends and partners in Christ, seeking first the Kingdom of God with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.**

Unity in Jesus – our only hope for salvation – implies praying for one another, celebrating together, encouraging one another, and holding each other accountable

**We are unrelentingly innovative.**

In order to remain relevant and engaged with a changing world, we will practice active listening, careful discernment, global attentiveness, and confident creativity in our lives and ministry.

**We embrace the diversity of the human experience under obedience to Christ our King.**

In doing so, we respond with compassion to the oppressed, we lead with justice in the face of injustice, and we seek in all situations to live out the presence of Christ in people's lives.

# **ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

### **MAKE DISCIPLES WHO FOLLOW JESUS**

We will equip collaboratives/classes and congregations to multiply disciples who are Christ-formed and gracious.

### **BRING NEW MINISTRIES TO LIFE THAT SHARE THE GOSPEL IN THEIR CONTEXT**

We will encourage, equip, and empower collaboratives/classes and congregations to intentionally and continually multiply ministries that share the gospel with the people God has called them to reach, now and in the future.

### **EQUIP LEADERS FOR KINGDOM WORK**

*Personally, locally, regionally, and globally,* We will help collaboratives/classes and congregations identify, encourage, and equip servant leaders who lead people to follow Christ personally, in their communities, and throughout the world.

# **ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

## **STRUCTURAL CONVICTIONS**

### **CONGREGATIONAL AUTHORITY**

- An organization of churches exists to encourage, equip, and empower the local congregation. To that end, an organization of churches should always be working in a way that develops healthier missional congregations, limits its own ministry reach, and steps in only when there is no local option. Alliance of Reformed Churches 6 Welcome Packet, June 2021.
- Congregations will have full ownership and authority over their local property with the single exception that if a congregation closes, the future use of the property and its assets reverts to the organization.
- The core belief of the organization is that men and women are created in God's image and are gifted by the Spirit to equip and lead God's people for ministry.
- We maintain that there are two theologically acceptable positions regarding the interpretation of ordained offices. One position ordains women into the ordained offices of the church. The other limits the ordained offices in which women can serve. We respect each other and each other's congregational choices regarding the nature of ordained leadership

### **THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION – PASTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY THEOLOGY**

- We are committed to theological education that is Biblical, Reformed, and that develops leaders who will "equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4).
- The credentials of Congregational/Specialized Pastors, Commissioned Pastors and Teaching Elders will be granted, held, and supervised by a single ordained ministry oversight board for the purpose of professional/theological accountability.
- People who hold ordination will hold personal membership in a local congregation for the purpose of personal spiritual accountability.

### **MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

- We are committed to local congregations as the primary place to enhance and grow missional effectiveness through local congregational partnerships and relationships.
- This requires the organization to equip, empower, and encourage congregations to find and develop healthy partnerships in ministry.

## **ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

- There are seasons when congregations can be strengthened utilizing external trainers and coaches. The organization will develop transitional pastors, conflict resolution specialists, vocational coaches, and other ministry resource providers whose core outcome is to increase missional effectiveness in congregations.

### **SAFE CONGREGATIONS**

- We are committed to carrying out congregationally-based ministry in the context of emotional and physical safety.
- Congregations of the organization are accountable for utilizing training, policies, and safety procedures that will ensure safe ministry for all.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL LIMITS**

- Guiding Principles will be established for the organization, but the Guiding Principles will not be elevated to a standard of belief.
- Organizational funding will be limited to that needed for organizational leadership and for governing. The organization will intentionally limit its funding to those ministries initiated/identified for partnership support in conversation with collaborative and local congregations.

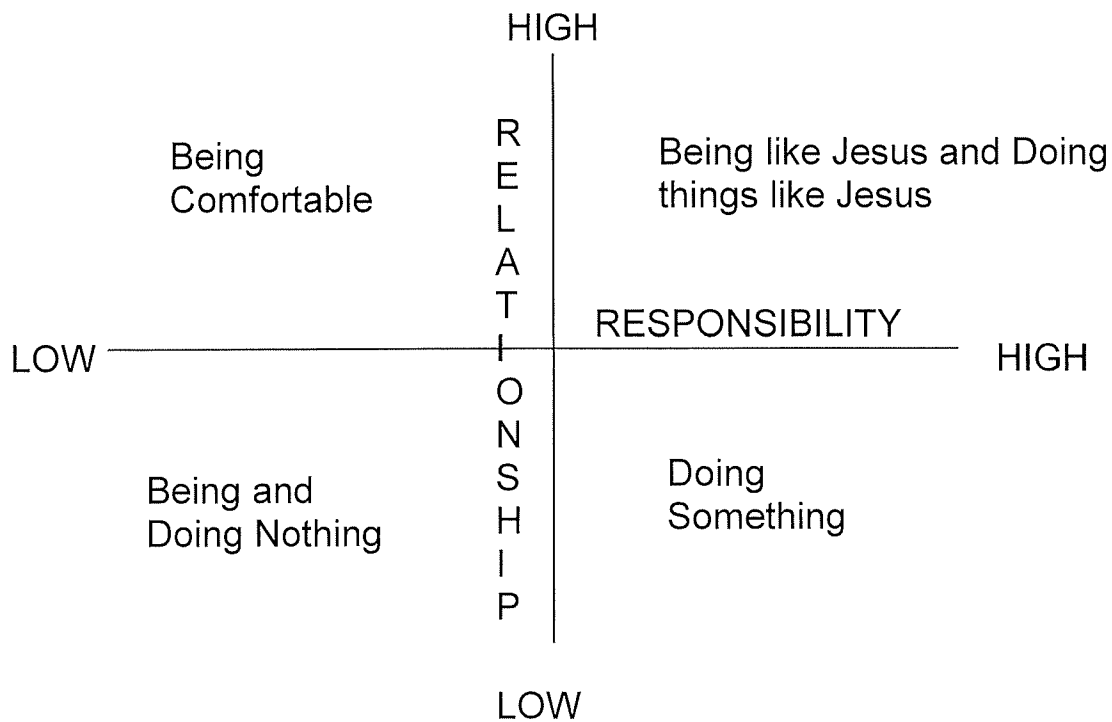
# Brief Summary of ARC Networks and Hubs

## Prologue

The Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC) is a movement of churches that seeks to look like Jesus and do the things that Jesus did. To this end ARC embraces an expectation of relentless innovation and seeks to create structures based on kingdom values rooted in the eternal nature of God, in the eternal Word of God and in the eternal Spirit of God. These structures will be based on relationship with God and each other, thus they will be more about direction and guidelines rather than rules and laws.

## Practice

The ARC seeks to engage, equip and empower local churches to their full Kingdom potential under the direct leadership and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Church in the ARC is not a place but is a group of disciples of Jesus who desire to be like Jesus and do the things Jesus did. There are four key expressions of Church in the ARC: the local church, the local surrounding area like a city, the region or nation and the global church on earth and in heaven. These disciples are on a common mission as they seek a relationship with God, with brothers and sisters in Christ and bear the responsibility of going out into the world and sharing Jesus with others.



## **Regional Networks**

Regional Networks are the ARC's expression of church in relationship as a regional or national body based on geographical proximity and/or situational affinity. They are made up of 30-60 churches and have a governing board structure of 4-8 leaders. The mission of the Network is to serve and empower the local churches.

## **Local Hubs**

Local Hubs are the ARC's expression of church in relationship in the local surrounding city or area. They are made up of 5-9 local churches that pursue a mutual mission and are influencers and encouragers to one another. The hope of this partnership is to combine the strength of the local bodies to more fully represent Christ to the world through his five equipping gifts (Eph 4:11) of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers.

## **Inter-relationships**

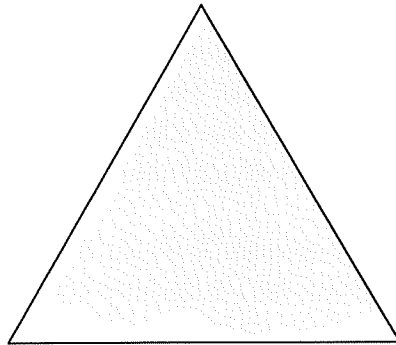
ARC recognizes that all four expressions of church will need to be in relationship to function effectively for the mission of Jesus. Shared responsibility is key in providing leadership and funding.

## **Making our Kingdom Values Visible in our Structures**

### ARC's Three Kingdom Values (Luke 6:12-19):

1. Seeking Gospel Saturation
  - ARC wants to be rooted in the Gospel of Jesus. We are then called to be rooted in God's Word and through prayer be in relationship with our LORD to seek his will.
2. Creating a Culture of Heaven
  - As disciples of Jesus we are called to be brothers and sisters in Christ, holding each other accountable to God's Word, while equipping, empowering and sending one another out by the Spirit to live into our callings using our gifts.
3. Making Jesus our Model for Ministry
  - Just as Jesus was sent into this world so are we sent, as living examples modeling his life of grace and truth, seeking to go and make more disciples.

## Seeking Gospel Saturation



Making Jesus our Model for  
Ministry

Creating a Culture of  
Heaven

### **Inter-relationships, Funding and Staffing**

Understanding ARC's three kingdom values is key to keep responsibility, authority and accountability tied together with each expression of church in the ARC structure. Each of these expressions of church have responsibility to serve and strengthen in Christ their ministry teams and members and mission in the world. Hub churches will share responsibility of mission but not of accountability as in that group there is a desire to work with churches of other Christian denominations.

**Local Church:** bears primary responsibility for the advance of the gospel in their sphere of influence through partnership with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- make disciples
- raise up leaders from the disciples made
- sending disciples and leaders in mission locally, regionally and globally
  - public and private settings to teach God's word, provide pastoral care and provide church discipline
  - serve as elders and deacons in the local church leading through the local church board
- use financial resources well to help others and support ministry staff well
- steward under Christ all property and assets for the benefit of the church and her mission

Relationships and Responsibilities of the Local Church:

- The Local Church has the authority and accountability to fulfill all primary responsibilities, make decisions for contextual matters of structure and mission as led by the Word and Spirit, and uphold alignment in the shared convictions/gospel essentials of the ARC.



- The Local Church relates to their Hub by being a catalyst and covenant-keeper in serving God's kingdom in their local context
- The local church relates to their regional Network
- send 3 or more leaders to participate in the Regional Network
- as a partnership share send 2% of annual income to the Regional Network
- send 1 or more leader to participate in annual Global Alliance gathering
- as a partnership share send 1% of annual income to the Global Alliance

**Regional Network:** bears primary responsibility for the encouragement and equipping of local churches to their full kingdom potential through partnership with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- seek ARC's three kingdom values
- seek grow by planting churches with a goal to plant and build more networks
- send 1 leader to be part of the Global Alliance board and send one leader to be part of the Ministry Supervision Team, service time varies from 1-3 years
- Develop a board for the Regional Network made up of 4-8 leaders, employ at least one person as full-time staff to help fulfill ministry objectives of the Network. Board members' service time will be 1-3 years.
- train and deploy Covenant Keeper teams to provide local churches and ordained leaders of the Network with accountability and spiritual leadership
- Establish in the Network teams necessary for the mission to serve and empower local church and leaders
- Carry out an evaluation of the life, health and doctrine and mission of local churches and ordained leaders every five years. Local churches will have the ability to transfer to networks or out of ARC as they see fit while they keep property and assets/liabilities.

Relationships and Responsibilities of the regional Network:

- The regional Network has the authority and accountability to fulfill all primary responsibilities as well as become the steward of the final assets of an ARC church when it reaches the end of its life cycle and has agreed to close.
- Regional Network relates to the local Churches in an equipping and accountability capacity. The local church raises up and develops leaders. Leaders are ordained by the local Church, join the ARC covenant as a whole and confirm the readiness of leaders to join and be ordained in the local church. Covenant Keeps can be brought in during times of disagreement to discern a pathway of resolution.
- The regional Networks relate to local hubs by celebrating testimonies of God's work that come out of them and encourage them in their mission
- The regional Network relates to the global Alliance by sending leaders for service of 1-3 years, one to the Alliance board and one to the Ministry Supervision Team. The regional Network will receive one third of their staffing cost from the global Alliance for the sake of shared accountability and high alignment through all our strategies and structures.