

OPC Ecumenicity

Principles of Biblical Unity

Having previously considered the ecumenicity of the Church, the following principles are our guide for seeking unity with faithful Presbyterian and Reformed churches:

1. There should be mutual agreement on what the gospel is. The churches must confess in their official documents of faith and life the same gospel.
2. There should be a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship established in which official interchange may take place including the exchange of delegates at the meetings of the ruling bodies of the church.
3. There will be fellowship and cooperation in organizations, both domestic and international, which give expression to oneness of faith and life.
4. There then may take place the actual steps toward uniting.
5. There would then be the actual uniting into one organization.
6. There is also responsibility to call all churches, including our own, to faithfulness in order to seek the unity of the whole church.

OPC Sister Church of the Week

Église réformée du Québec (ERQ) - Reformed Church of Quebec

The Église réformée du Québec (ERQ), is an association of French-speaking Reformed churches spread throughout the province of Quebec, Canada. The ERQ recognize the supreme authority of the infallible and inspired Word of God, and accepts the great classic creeds and the confessions of the Reformation as faithful Christian doctrine. The Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith have been

officially adopted as their confessional statements. All ERQ office bearers must subscribe to these confessions.

The ERQ was officially established on November 6th, 1988, under a common confession and church order. Nine founding local churches joined together, having been established by mission efforts of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). While the PCC refused to support the formation of the ERQ, the PCA and the CRC recognized the need for an independent French-speaking Reformed Church in Canada and agreed to support the us. Today the ERQ maintains missional and ecclesiastical ties with the PCA, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the United Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches.



With roots in the great Reformation of the 16th century and a sparse Huguenot heritage, they proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the French-speaking people of Quebec. Often in Quebec, francophones are considered to be Roman Catholics, and anglophones to be Protestants. In the ERQ it is now possible to be both francophone and Reformed. This vision for a single, French-speaking Reformed Church is one of the driving forces in establishment and maintaining the ERQ.

1. According to the ERQ church order, the basic principles of the church recognizes that:
2. Jesus Christ is head of the church and no one else has the right to take this position
3. The Bible is the only rule for the faith and life of the church

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4. Other rules established by the church may be useful and important, but must always be evaluated and if necessary, reformed in the light of Scripture.
5. Jesus Christ gathers and directs his church through the ministry of the elders and the ministers of the Word, while the ministry of the deacons makes the love of Christ visible and real to the needy.
6. The elders and the minister of the Word of the congregation form the local councils (sessions or consistories).

The ERQ synod, the assembly of delegated elders and ministers, meets three times a year.

The weekly ERQ worship service on Sunday morning is centered on the preaching of the Word, the sacraments and prayers, including songs. The worship style, while more or less formal than other Reformed or Presbyterian Churches, reflects the constant desire to do everything in good order, for the glory of God and for the edification of his people. Most congregations have Bible studies and prayers groups meeting on different days of the week.



Education is key to developing ERQ congregations in maturity and stability. Since few Reformed resources exist in French, the ERQ congregations and office-bearers have been involved in producing education material: Sunday School, Bible studies, Catechism, evangelism, liturgical forms, public profession of faith, baptism, marriage, elder and deacon training, etc. There are however no Reformed Christian day schools for the children. Farel Reformed

Theological Seminary (Montreal) seeks to train men for the ministry, new office bearers for serving the church, and members for their respective ministries in ERQ churches.

The ERQ exists as a mission church. This is reflected in the small size of our congregations, the absence of local elders, deacons or pastors, and ongoing financial needs. Evangelism is essential to the ERQ mission. The French population in the Province of Québec is a huge mission field because of the post-Roman Catholic, secularized and hedonistic culture. Less than one per cent of French-speaking Quebecers identify with an Evangelical church. Each ERQ church is an active mission, bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard.

The mission in Quebec is very challenging. The ERQ began with nine churches and mission posts. Today, even after attempts to plant other churches, only five congregations remain: Montréal, Repentigny, Quebec City, Lévis and St-Georges de Beauce. Total ERQ membership hovers around 350 souls, including covenant children. New converts are regularly received, even as a second and third generation is born into the church. On the other hand, too many of our members abandon the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

As the ERQ celebrates thirty years, they are thankful to our Lord for preserving a Reformed church amongst the French-speaking people of the province of Quebec. While the ERQ is numerically small, they rejoice that their Reformed witness reaches beyond the frontiers of their congregations. Growing numbers of believers in Quebec and several French-speaking countries benefit from ERQ literature, ERQ instruction and witness.

Two Reformed literature projects are answering the need for solid, confessional instruction:

- Ressources chrétiennes
<http://www.ressourceschretiennes.com>
- Éditions La Rochelle
<https://publicationschretiennes.com/collections/editions-la-rochelle>

For more information please visit the ERQ website at:
www.erk.qc.ca

PRAYERS:

- For two local congregations that have no pastor.
- For two young men who are pursuing pastoral studies, and a third who is considering the call to the ministry.
- For two congregations that are organising summer English immersion camps with biblical instruction. Fifty to sixty children are received at each of the four camps, most coming from non-Christian homes.
- For unity and confidence of the brethren. The ERQ is an eclectic group of Reformed pastors and elders who must work shoulder to shoulder for the advancement of the Gospel ministry.
- For conversions, as well as the return of prodigal sons.
- That the ERQ may never fail to preach the Word of life and for love even as our Father has loved us.

church has been praying for older members to balance demographics since every stage of life brings its own gifts and blessings. Worship attendance has been 70-90 lately, with quite a number of regular attenders and visitors. Providence has morning and evening worship, Wednesday evening Bible study and prayer, Sunday school classes for all ages, Bible quizzing for all ages Sunday evenings, and bi-monthly meetings for men and women.

The church is located in Madison which is part of the larger Huntsville area. Huntsville is known as Rocket City USA. The Redstone Arsenal is here. The Arsenal is a garrison for a number of tenants including the United States Army Materiel Command, Army's Aviation and Missile Command, the Missile Defense Agency of the Department of Defense, and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. The men of providence are almost all engineers whose work is related to the arsenal either directly or indirectly. Providence have been holding mens'/officers' training meetings since 2011. The current on-site elder came out of that training. Other men are being prepared and may soon be ready to become officers.

Providence have had financial difficulties for a number of years in the recent past which meant digging deeply into financial reserves, but thanks be to God that reserves that had been saved during more abundant years. The last several years Providence have been in the black financially. About a year ago, Providence took a step back and thought very deeply and soberly about the vision for the church and what needed to be changed or what needed to be pursued more deliberately as part of the calling to be a faithful witness. It was concluded that the building had become a distraction, especially to visitors. The rented building has not been renovated for years.

Providence prayed and pursued what they could do, and with the help of the landlord were able to make some significant improvements at minimal cost. The labor came from their own people. They also have prayed more deliberately for visitors and ministry opportunities. Lately they have experienced a remarkable inundation of visitors. Some have come through a membership class and are planning to join

OPC Congregation of the Week

Providence Presbyterian Church (OPC), AL - was particularized in 2007, having been started as a church plant in 1999. Their first pastor/evangelist was Mark Smith. Pastor Carl Russell was a big help to the congregation during its early years and during the time of transition to the second full-time minister, Mark Winder, who pastored Providence from 2004-2010. He is currently pastoring a church plant in the Memphis, TN area.

Pastor Darren Thole been pastor of Providence since April 2011. He came from pastoring Westminster OPC in rural SD for 12 years. Providence has had its ups and downs over the years. The current makeup of the congregation includes only two families that go back to its founding days. Even the original elders are no longer here. There is currently one on-site elder and two elders (one ruling and one teaching) augmenting the session.

Providence have 3 deacons, 27 communicant members and 28 non-communicant members. The

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Providence soon. A number of covenant youth are also scheduled to make a public profession of faith.

Providence have been praying for a revival of the churches of our land, for increased opportunities for ministry to the unchurched and underchurched and the Lord appears to be really answering those prayers.

Pastor Thole been volunteering at a Pro-life ministry (Choose Life) that has been establishing a new ministry to the men who come in. Pastor Thole has been teaching fatherhood classes there. Choose Life wants these men and their families to be implemented into the church, so this ministry has provided a good context to invite people to our church where they can continue their discipleship. These contacts have provided some of the ministry opportunities that the church has been praying for. This led to many counseling and teaching opportunities, and a hope that more connections will be made.

Many at Providence OPC homeschool and find themselves overwhelmed. Pastor Thole is currently teaching a Sunday school class on biblical parenting that is well-attended. Providence is a joyful church that enjoys spending time together, and that knows this must not be taken for granted that there are no issues of dissension. Two members who are struggling through divorces. In one of the cases, the husband was excommunicated. The deacons and session are helping the wife/mom who now needs to raise 3 young boys without a husband. Pastor Thole who will be taking a 2-week sabbatical over the first two weeks of October. He will be using the time for rest from the normal routine and for more formal training in Biblical counseling.

There is currently an openness on the part of members to seek out spiritual help and biblical guidance from the session. The Session are thankful for the humility and wisdom this attitude shows.

PRAYERS:

- Thanks for answers to prayer for visitors.
- For more visitors and increased membership.
- For blessings upon those who hear and obey the Word as it is taught and preached.

- Completion of building renovation work.
- For stamina for families to raising their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- For continued peace and joy as a body.
- For repentance, reconciliation, restoration of those under disciplinary action and counsel.
- For wisdom for the Session and Deacons as they work through the challenging task of ministering to broken families and as they carry the burden of serving the congregation as faithful servant-leaders.
- For four women at Providence who struggle with chronic pain that makes everyday activities a challenge physically and spiritually. Providence gives thanks that the Lord has granted a greater measure of health to two of these women recently.

OPC Mission Work of the Week

Trinity OPC, Waco, TX -

With the arrival of fall and return of university students, the pace is beginning to pick up again at Trinity OPC. Recently, Pastor Kirklin and three church members attended the Baylor University Church Fair. He reports that it went well, and that though they made less concerted effort to stop and talk to each person, they had many more conversations (and resulting visitors to the church this past Sunday) than they did last year.

Pastor Kirklin also shares the praise that the Lord, in a remarkable way, keeps sending believers to Trinity from all over the country to join their flock. This past spring, Jason and a retired man in the congregation did some door-to-door ministry. Afterwards the retired man said to Jason, "*I'd really like to learn to do that better. Is there a way we can work on that?*" From that blossomed the beginning of a book study on Jack Miller's Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless. Seven people are in the group, which stopped meeting over the summer but will start up again soon.



Jason and Amanda Kirklin

PRAYERS:

- For fruitful discussion and outreach.
- For the Lord to prepare hearts ready to receive His Word.

SouthWest Presbytery News

Faith OPC, Garland - Faith OPC got started 16 years ago as a result of Rev. Gary Davenport's exploratory labors as the Regional Home Missionary for the Presbytery of the Southwest.

In May 2002 the small mission work was placed under the oversight of the Presbytery Committee on Home Missions. Soon thereafter the Rev. Roger Gibbons came out of retirement (in Minnesota) to be its organizing pastor, serving from July 2002 until May 2004. Under his gifted leadership the congregation grew significantly and several officer candidates were trained.

In April 2004 the mission work voted to call the Rev. Chad Bond (the associate pastor of Calvary OPC in Glenside, PA) as its first pastor.

On July 9, 2004 the church particularized and all of its officers were installed, with John Emmett, Joe Hammond and Andrew Moody as ruling elders, and

George Osborne and James Pray as deacons. Since that time the congregation has nearly quadrupled in size as the sovereign Lord has added to their number those who were being saved.

In 2014 Faith OPC was finally able to terminate its rental agreement with the SDA church and purchase its own building at 418 Cashmere Drive in Garland. To this day Faith OPC stands as a testimony to God's promise to do extraordinary things through the ordinary means of grace in the context of reverent worship and mutual love.

PRAYERS:

For the Holy Spirit to fill the members of Faith OPC that it may be said of them "*they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*".

Listening In and Sounding Out

A reminder that prayer is life changing!

- **To rescue the perishing, start with prayer.**
- **If anyone does not know Jesus, pray for change of heart.**
- **If any seek to be led to Jesus, show them the way, and pray with and for them.**

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Abilene, TX

The Rev. Todd Dole was installed as the pastor of CPC, Abilene, TX, on October 5, 2018.

PRAYERS:

- For the fruit of Pastor Dole's labors in Abilene.
- For the Saints at Covenant OPC, Abilene, and their growth in grace.

News from Taiwan - Greg Huteson

It was in 1951 that the first OMF missionaries arrived in Taiwan. The agency was known then as the China Inland Mission (CIM). (The name was later changed to Overseas Missionary Fellowship and then OMF International.) CIM had been active in China for over eighty-five years, but its missionaries were forced to

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leave China along with other missionaries after the Community party takeover.

There was already a church in Taiwan—the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT). The PCT was well-established. It had its origins in the 1860s. But its leaders welcomed CIM and other evangelical mission agencies. Just half of one percent of Taiwanese were believers; there was much work to be done in proclaiming the gospel!

Worship and ministry in the PCT were done in the Taiwanese language. Coming from China, the CIM missionaries spoke Mandarin. Initially, CIM did gospel work among those who also spoke Mandarin—soldiers who had served with the Chinese Nationalists and other refugees from China. Some of CIM's early ministries in Taiwan included evangelism in the aboriginal communities, student evangelism, gospel literature distribution, short-term "Bible Schools", and a leprosy sanatorium.

By God's grace, there was slow but steady growth in the Taiwanese church. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, roughly two percent of Taiwanese were believers. But almost all of that growth was among the middle class, and few middle-class believers were sharing the gospel with the working class. After much discussion, in 2002 OMF Taiwan's leaders decided the field would focus on evangelizing the working class.

Today there are roughly 15 million working-class people in Taiwan—manual laborers, shopworkers, taxi drivers, farmers, small shop owners, etc. Sadly, just half of one percent are believers! OMF Taiwan's missionaries are engaged in various ministries with the desire of seeing the gospel spread among them and orthodox, evangelizing churches planted. Our colleagues are working among shopworkers and factory workers, high school and university students, prostitutes, prisoners and reform school students, and migrant workers. They're planting churches in villages and small towns and encouraging established congregations to evangelize and disciple their working-class neighbors.

I serve as the supervisor for OMF's new missionaries. The field requires them to study Mandarin full-time for two years and part-time for another two years. During their initial two years, I'm tasked with providing them and their families with pastoral care and assistance with daily living. Over our decades in missions, Bonnie and I have come to see missionaries need support and encouragement. Sometimes, this is as simple as a listening ear and prayer. Sometimes it's advice. Sometimes, it's assistance in resolving turmoil in the family or on the team. And sometimes there's a need for mediation between a missionary family and field leadership.

But there are also practical matters such as the initial orientation, settling them in local churches, renting and furnishing apartments, visits to government agencies, doctor visits, conversations with landlords and repairmen, and learning about Taiwan's culture. Bonnie is an invaluable help in all of this! The majority of this practical assistance falls on her shoulders.

Our hope in coming alongside younger missionaries and their families is that we'll encourage them to stay in Taiwan long-term. There's still a vast need for the gospel here, and every missionary family is needed and valuable.

Our other reason for returning to Taiwan is to share the gospel with Bonnie's family. Bonnie has a large extended family here, and very few of them are Christians. We want to share the good news of "*Jesus Christ and him crucified*" with them. Our hope is that by God's grace many of them will repent and believe!

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