

Summary of Expectations for CFI Congregational Partnership

Over the past several years, The Ekklesia Project has developed and piloted a process and a number of resources for nurturing congregational formation. The most deliberate and formal way of engaging in this process is what we call Congregational Partnership. Here is a brief outline of what we imagine participation in a CFI Congregational Partnership cohort would look like for most congregations. The following summary of expectations is divided into two sections: what support you could expect from EP, and what would be expected from you and your congregation.

What kind of support you could expect from The Ekklesia Project:

- 1) The Ekklesia Project would work with you to create a pastor-scholar team from within the ranks of EP who would support the work of the CFI in your context. Typically, the pastor-scholar team consists of one person from within your ecclesial tradition and one person from a different ecclesial tradition. When possible, we take advantage of existing friendships and connections within EP, but we also want to work toward relative geographic proximity in order both to hold down travel costs and to increase the likelihood of long-term relationships.
- 2) EP would cover the cost of your registration and room and board (around \$200) for the Summer Gathering prior to your beginning this process as a way of facilitating your participation in the required orientation session and as a small thank-you for committing to this process.
- 3) EP would cover the transportation costs of getting both members of your pastor-scholar team to your congregation for a weekend visit during the fall of the first year, as well as pay them a modest stipend for their efforts that weekend.
- 4) EP would cover the transportation costs of getting both members of your pastor-scholar team to your weekend retreat (typically in the fall of the second year), as well as pay them a modest stipend for their leadership in this retreat.
- 5) EP would provide you access to a private blog that would connect you with other CFI participants within your cohort for mutual support and encouragement.
- 6) EP would make available to you and your congregation all necessary written resources for your study group at minimal cost.
- 7) EP would consider itself a partner with you all along the way in this process and our hope would be that we would continue to walk with you after the (admittedly arbitrary) two-year time frame is complete. This would include discerning with you whether or not to continue this partnership and, if so, what such a partnership would look like moving forward. We are, for example, developing resources for use beyond the initial two-year start-up process that could be made available if deemed potentially beneficial.

What would be expected from the pastor and his or her congregation:

- 1) If accepted into the next cohort, which typically begin in the fall, the pastor or minister of the congregation would attend the EP Summer Gathering immediately prior to commencing. This gathering normally takes place over a three-day period in July at DePaul University in Chicago. An orientation session will be held for the next cohort during the summer gathering.
- 2) Each congregation would convene a study group within the congregation that would be engaged in the CFI process for two years. (Typically this involves concentrated study during the fall and spring of two consecutive years.) Our hope would be that the initiative would continue after that point, but each congregation would determine at that time if it wanted to continue and what continuing would entail in its context. The size and make-up of the group would be determined by the local leadership of the congregation.
- 3) Each congregation would take up the two “Getting Your Feet Wet” studies—“The Shape of Our Lives” (7-9 weeks minimum) and “The Shape of God’s Reign” (7-9 weeks minimum)—during the first year, with the first typically taking place in the fall and the second the following spring. These studies are published by Wipf and Stock Publishers for a minimal cost and are made available to cohort congregations at a significant discount.
- 4) Sometime during the process (typically in the fall of the second year), the study group would take a weekend retreat together, led by a two-person pastor-scholar team working with each congregation. Ideally this team would also visit the local congregation sometime during the fall of the first year for a weekend visit so that they could connect personally with the study team and vice-versa. Except for the EP-funded expenses associated with the pastor-scholar team noted above, the local congregation would be expected to fund this retreat from its own resources.
- 5) The study groups would typically take up two additional studies of their choice during the second year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Congregations may choose to use one of the many CFI resources available through the EP website or another study of its own choosing.
- 6) The pastor or minister leading the study would be expected to participate regularly in a private online blog with other CFI participants to share ideas and offer support to other congregations going through the process. This would also serve as a primary feedback loop for ways to improve the resources and processes.
- 7) In addition to the summer orientation session prior to beginning the process, the cohort of pastors would meet together during the EP Summer Gathering of the following year to discuss progress and concerns.
- 8) We would ask that your congregation, at the end of the second year (which is really just the beginning!), make a gift to a restricted EP fund set up exclusively for the purposes of supporting future CFI cohorts. Our hope and prayer is that by this point you will sense that you and your congregation have been the recipient of an important gift for your life together and that you will desire to help make this gift possible for others.