

Church World Service Covenant Members

Background

Church World Service (CWS) has been in relationship with U.S. churches and church-related organizations for all of its 78 years. Founded in the aftermath of World War II, CWS was created by three ecumenical bodies and invited U.S. mainline Protestant churches to work together to respond to staggering humanitarian need. For over 50 years, as part of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, we had Protestant, Orthodox, and Historic Black Churches as Members. For 78 years, our non-profit (501c3) status and incorporation in the State of New York has required certain duties be performed by our corporate members.

Building a More Dynamic Ecumenical Space

In late 2022, the CWS Board of Directors launched a “Year of Reflection” with its Members. A representative Task Group began meeting, consulting, and gathering input from October 2022 to May 2024 and provided the basis of this document and a direction forward. The Task Group reported on its findings and progress to the October 2023 Annual Meeting of the Members which affirmed that as the ecumenical world evolves, CWS needs to transform its membership approach to include three key elements: Belonging, Convening and Governance.

The final details for this new relationship were unanimously approved by the Members of CWS at a Special Meeting on May 13-14, 2024. Together we seek to re-animate the relationship between CWS and its Member denominations in a way that is meaningful, impactful and realistic. We belong together and continue as **Covenant Members of CWS**.

Covenant Members

CWS will actively convene Covenant Members and others on key topics. Covenant Members will have a governance role in nominating people to serve on the CWS Board of Directors. We will conclude our role as “corporate members” of CWS under New York State law.

The communions, denominations and church-related organizations that have historically been corporate members of CWS, both as voting and non-voting members, will be invited to become “Covenant Members.” Those that accept this invitation and maintain their commitments to CWS, will be publicly identified as Covenant Members and will be engaged by CWS in accordance with the commitments described below.

Church World Service affirms its relationship with its Covenant Members and will:

- Create new ways for CWS and its Covenant Members, church-related mission organizations, congregations and other faith-based organizations to discern ways to increase belonging.
- Provide a context for the mutual sharing of mission and programmatic strategies and best practices.
- Create opportunities for shared action in response to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.
- Present opportunities for in-depth discussion about major public policy issues that intersect the CWS mission, and the shaping of an ecumenical response.

- Discuss strategic directions that draw on the strengths of our common interests, mission, and capacity to bear witness for the fulfillment of the Gospel.
- Seek to ensure that at least 51% of the membership of its Board of Directors is made up of individuals affiliated with its Covenant Members; and invite Covenant Members to nominate qualified individuals for the Board.
- Provide an easy and responsive point of contact with CWS for each Covenant Member.
- Organize an annual CWS Summit on topics related to our common mission.
- Honor the legacy of our Covenant Members and fulfill our mission and role as the leading US-based ecumenical organization in direct service, advocacy and witness to our faith.

Covenant Members affirm their relationship with CWS and will:

- Identify ourselves publicly as Covenant Members of CWS.
- Engage actively in and promote our relationship with CWS.
- Work together with CWS and one another where there is program alignment.
- Join in advocacy efforts to promote our shared commitments to justice.
- Provide an easy and responsive point of contact with each Covenant Member for CWS and make connections for CWS within our denominational eco-system.
- Support CWS financially each year.
- Be faithful to CWS as Covenant Members living out our shared mission through belonging, convening and governance.