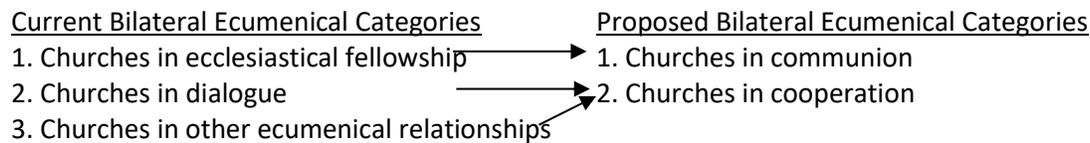




Summary of Proposed Ecumenical Categories

Synod 2016 mandated an ad hoc group to “consider creation of a new category of affiliation by which a (non-Canadian and United States) congregation or groups of congregations could associate with the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 838). The report of the ad hoc group was brought to Synod 2019 and adopted *in principle*, with opportunity for overtures and communications to be brought to Synod 2020 for final adoption and Church Order modifications.

The proposed changes would affect our current bilateral (i.e., denomination to denomination) ecumenical categorization system, as found in the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA. The intent is that this revision of bilateral categories should effect a cultural shift in the way that the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) and denominational agencies and ministries communicate and collaborate around partnerships formed with churches outside the CRCNA, with the hope of reduced separation between ecumenical relationships and ministry/programmatic relationships. It is also hoped that this cultural shift would inspire local congregations and classes to continue to engage ever more critically and deeply with non-CRCNA churches in their communities, regions, and around the world. Following is an abbreviated graphic of the proposal:



Churches in communion, the closest category of relationship proposed, would replace the current category of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*. No changes are proposed to this category of relationship, aside from the change in name.

The other proposed category, *churches in cooperation*, represents the combining of the two current categories of *churches in dialogue* and *churches in other ecumenical relationships* into a single category. All of the church relationships categorized as either *churches in dialogue* or *churches in other ecumenical relationships* would fall into this new category, together with any *church* partnership held by a denominational agency (Back to God Ministries International, Resonate Global Mission, World Renew) or ministry (e.g., Disability Concerns, Faith Formation Ministries, Safe Church Ministry, etc.). The responsibility for managing relationships formed by the EIRC would remain with the EIRC, and the responsibility for managing denominational agency and ministry relationships would remain with the denominational agencies and ministries who formed them via their approved policies for doing so. Recognizing all of these ecclesiastical relationships within the category of *churches in cooperation* serves to affirm them as relationships that the CRCNA has with fellow churches of Jesus Christ.

Synodical approval would not be required for a church to be added to this category of *churches in cooperation*, because the category is intended simply to be a reflection of the current reality of relationships engaged at the national or binational expression of the CRCNA, which is far broader than that recognized by our current bilateral categories (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 480). Synod will, however, be informed via the EIRC of all relationships, as has been the case regarding the current category of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*.

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