The Presbyterian Church affirms its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ by maintaining communion and community with other branches of the one catholic Church and engaging in shared missions. Some of Presbyterian’s earliest participation in ecumenical activities started in 1817 with the founding of organizations that were to become the American Sunday School Union and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Presbyterians also committed to international efforts, such as the Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System, founded in 1875 and now continued by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. After World War II, they participated in the founding of the World Council of Churches (1948).

Beginning in 1908 with the establishment of the Federal Council of Churches, American Protestants united in order to “express the fellowship and Catholic unity of the Christian Church” and “to bring the Christian body of America into united service for Christ and the world.” The FCC and related organizations came together to form the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America in 1951, and the work of the Consultation on Church Union (which has now become CUiC) began in 1961.

In the intervening years and still today, denominations have shared work at home and abroad. A few of these efforts include The Council for Appalachian Ministries, which supplies a variety of programs and services for the people of that region, and the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel, supporting chaplains in their ministry all over the world.
Mary Wire Ramsey, (1803–1834), and her husband, the Reverend William Ramsey (1803–1858), served with the ABCFM in India, 1830 to 1834. Artist unknown.


“This is the Sabbath, a day of rest—an emblem of that rest which remaineth for the people of God. We have had worship this morning on deck. Bro. Jones spoke from these words, if ye have not the Spirit of Christ, ye are none of his, Romans 8th, 9th… He showed us very plainly what was our duty as the proposed followers of Jesus—meekness, beneficence, patience, forbearance, always ready to forgive injuries, & above all a prayerful disposition, to pray without ceasing, & without ostentation…”

— Mary Ramsey in a letter to her sister from aboard ship, November 7, 1830, Lat. 33.40; Lon. 78.05. (Ramsey Family Papers.)

Members of an NCCC interracial group of thirty-six clergymen from eleven states visiting Clarksdale, Mississippi, enter the First Baptist Church for a prayer service, 1963. From Presbyterian Life, September 1, 1963.

"The National Council’s newly adopted official emblem is unveiled by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, president of the NCCC, and Stated Clerk of the PCUSA, and the secretary of the Division of Christian Education, Dr. Gerald E. Knoff, 1957."

— From National Council Outlook, April 1957. PCUSA and UPCUSA Stated Clerk Blake served as the president of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

Dr. Robert S. Bilheimer, executive director of the National Council of Churches’ department of international affairs, answers questions on an NCC “Policy on the Middle East” adopted at the Spring session of the General Board in New York. The policy states that the Christians’ concern over the troubled Middle East must concentrate on the element of human need without being pro-Arab or pro-Israeli. , 1969. (03-0531b, Box 2)

The Rev. Dr. Ralph Waldo Lloyd, president of Maryville College, and other delegates to the first assembly of the World Council of Churches, touring Geneva, 1948.

World Council of Churches admission and delegate tickets for PCUSA delegate Ralph Waldo Lloyd, Amsterdam, 1948.
Council on Appalachian Ministry

Bernard Taylor Papers.

Alpine, Tennessee, Vacation Bible School, 1938.
Bernard Taylor Papers.

The Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel is supported by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church; the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America; and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Reverend Dr. William Barrow Pugh (1889-1950), Stated Clerk of the PCUSA, 1938-1950, and Chairman of the General Commission on Army and Navy Chaplains, visiting a military cemetery in Iceland, 1943. (RG 414).

Florence Dianna Polham Bell, U. S. Navy, 1973, the first woman to serve as a chaplain in the armed forces.