



Presbyterian Mission
World Mission

Called as Partners

Serving Together in God's Mission

International Partnership Manual



Presbyterian World Mission
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY

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“As children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ, we are invited to partner through God’s global mission. We may have different gifts and outlooks, but we have the same goal — to work for God and achieve what God has put on our hearts — for God’s glory.”

*– The Rev. Sevatt Kabaghe, General Secretary
Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Synod of Zambia*



Photo by Kathy Francis



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The PC(USA) in partnership

For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

— Romans 1:11–12

God invites all people to “feast at God’s table” through fullness of life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10)! We come to this table where “God is host, and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God’s mission.”² Presbyterians yearn to join in partnership with the global church, coming together as one body in Christ. Within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), believers are seeking to reach beyond their home communities and engage in a worldwide and shared ministry. They find themselves humbled, strengthened and encouraged in their faithful living through partnerships with Christians in other contexts, countries and cultures.

It is in the spirit of partnership with our brothers and sisters in other places that the PC(USA), through an action of the 212th General Assembly in 2000, encouraged congregations, presbyteries, synods and other church bodies to “do mission in partnership.” In 2003, the 215th General Assembly issued a new partnership policy for the PC(USA) to “do mission in partnership” within and outside the United States. (See page 9 for a summary.)



Photo by Cathy Chang

A partnership with another church body (congregation, presbytery, institution, agency, etc.) in another country provides opportunities for U.S. Presbyterians to express the unity of the church of Jesus Christ throughout the world, to engage in the global mission of the church and to experience mission alongside people in other parts of the world. It also provides an opportunity to witness what God is doing in this world and to expand our understanding of God through the insights of others with different world views and life experiences. Partnership has at its heart mutuality: giving and receiving, teaching and learning, listening and speaking.

Various church bodies may undertake partnerships, whether at the national or denominational level, or regionally by a presbytery or synod, or locally by congregations. Many congregational partnerships arise within presbytery or synod

partnerships (and this is an especially helpful way of strengthening our own church). Others may develop through independent initiatives of local church sessions. Worshiping communities comprised of immigrants or diaspora members from partner churches often reach out to churches in their home countries to establish mission partnerships. Groups within the PC(USA), such as Presbyterian Women or church agencies, may also seek to establish mission partnerships.

Whatever the form, the focus of a partnership is primarily on the building of a reciprocal relationship that enables each partner to respond more faithfully to the challenges of the gospel in their context. Thus, the ministries of the PC(USA) and the ministries of the partner may be mutually strengthened as offerings of love within the body of Christ.

¹ “Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,” World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Sept. 5, 2012, 40.

² Ibid., 26.

Ecumenical relationships

International mission partnerships, such as synod, presbytery or “sister church” partnerships, are part of a broader web of relationships within the universal church of Jesus Christ. Most international partners of the PC(USA) belong to global and, often, regional ecumenical bodies in which the PC(USA) also participates. It may be helpful to those developing or already in an international mission partnership to understand some of the other “partners” within the broader church relationships. While we sometimes think of “our” partners as having a relationship only with us, it is important and helpful to recognize that they — and we — are relating and partnering with several other denominations through ecumenical bodies toward common goals. The witness of the church universal as one body throughout the world is strengthened, extended and enriched through ecumenical participation. But this ecumenical participation means that our partners are also relating to other partners, are likely receiving delegations from other partners, and may be planning with and visiting other partners.



Photo by Shelly Dawson

Denominational mission relationships

While the PC(USA) and its international partners are part of the broader web of relationships within the ecumenical world, we also maintain one-on-one partnerships with many denominations and organizations around the globe or participate side by side with others as members of larger mission bodies. Within these partnerships there may be a variety of giving and receiving activities at the national, synod, presbytery and congregational levels.

Here are just a few examples of how denominational relationships may work:

- **Mission Co-workers** are sent from the PC(USA) via World Mission to countries around the world to serve for three or more years. They serve at the

request — and as colleagues — of global partners. pcusa.org/missionconnections

- **The Young Adult Volunteer (YAV)** program in World Mission sends young adults ages 19 to 30 to serve for a year at sites in the U.S. and around the world. YAVs are placed with mission partners in ministries that work for reconciliation and that address root causes of poverty. They explore the meaning and motivation of their faith in intentional Christian community with peers and mentors. pcusa.org/yav

- **The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program** works with mission partners in countries around the world. The purpose of the program is to nurture and equip God’s people as peacemakers. Through the program, Presbyterians participate in short-term travel study seminars to learn about peace and justice concerns in other countries, and International Peacemakers are received in the U.S. yearly to speak in churches. pcusa.org/peacemaking

- **Joining Hands**, part of the **Presbyterian Hunger Program**, partners with networks in the U.S. and other countries, working together to find solutions to poverty in the communities served by the networks. Joining Hands follows an accompaniment model — approaching relationships with mutuality, respect and solidarity among equals involved in a common struggle for justice and against hunger around the world, across continents, races, religions and cultural contexts. pcusa.org/joininghands

Additionally, the following page shows a few examples of how the PC(USA) partners locally, nationally and internationally to respond to disasters or to address other social and spiritual needs.



Photo by Rick Jones

- **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)**

(PDA) is a member of multiple national and international bodies and forums to coordinate disaster response. Nationally, PDA works through presbyteries and synods of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and with organizations such as National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Internationally, PDA works with ecumenical partners such as ACT Alliance, Church World Service and others. PDA responds to natural, human-caused and refugee crises.

pcusa.org/pda

- With a more than 50-year legacy of service the **Jinishian Memorial Program (JMP)** partners with Apostolic, Catholic and Evangelical churches in Syria, Lebanon, Armenia, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Georgia and Artsakh to serve Armenian communities socially, economically and spiritually. JMP partners locally and internationally, developing and implementing programs to bring self-sufficiency and hope. Ministries include caring for a vulnerable Christian minority trapped in Syria's violence, scarcity and inflation; helping the increasingly strained population in Lebanon while aiding an influx of refugees; and renewing the faith and promise of post-communist Armenia by focusing on long-term, community-based social and economic development.

pcusa.org/jinishian

- **Presbyterian Women Inc. (PW)** is in covenant relationship with the Presbyterian Mission Agency. PW partners through mission and ministry with World Mission, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries and the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, as well as other PMA offices and ministry



Photo by Kathy Francis

areas. PW also works in affiliation with international women's and ecumenical organizations on issues of faith and social justice, including peace-building, advocacy for women and children, gender equity, human trafficking and food security. pcusa.org/pw

- **Self-Development of People (SDOP)** enters into partnerships with community groups of low-income people in the U.S. and other nations who want to change their lives and communities.

Community groups define needs and manage life-giving projects in partnership with local SDOP volunteers and national staff.

pcusa.org/sdop

The PC(USA) is in partnership with congregations, mid councils, new worshipping communities, immigrant and diaspora worshipping communities, racial/ethnic caucuses and networks to provide resources, training, networking opportunities and other forms of mutual learning and accompaniment.

***Mission Engagement & Support** staff work with mid councils, congregations and individuals to discuss mission priorities and giving. Mission Engagement advisors can provide access to resources, workshop leaders, preachers and advice. Gifts to Presbyterian Mission provide foundational support for ministry areas and programs.*

If you have questions about Mission Engagement & Support, contact:

Nicole Gerkins
nicole.gerkins@pcusa.org
 800-728-7228, ext. 5611

'Presbyterians do mission in partnership' policy statement

The following is a summary of a policy statement approved by the 215th General Assembly (2003). This statement provides a partnership framework for PC(USA) engagement. The statement applies to mission partnerships at home and abroad, to other governing bodies of our own church and to governing bodies of our international partners. It has great relevance to all of us as we seek to enter into or maintain healthy mission partnerships. Visit pcusa.org/partnership to find the

paraphrased version of the policy statement, updated with language from the *Book of Order*.

Summary

As heirs to God's grace in Jesus Christ, and joint heirs with all who confess him Lord, we affirm our place as Presbyterians in the whole body of Christ, the church.

We understand "mission" to be God's work for the sake of the world God loves. We understand this work to be centered in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and made real through the active and leading power of the Holy Spirit. Recognizing our human limitations and because of our fundamental unity in Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to mission through the discipline of partnership.

The practice of partnership guides our whole connectional church. It guides us individually as members, officers and pastors. It guides us collectively as congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly ministries and related institutions.

In doing mission in partnership, we seek to be guided by certain principles:

- Shared grace and thanksgiving;
- Mutuality and interdependence;
- Recognition and respect;
- Open dialogue and transparency;
- Sharing of resources.

International mission partnerships

The international mission partnerships undertaken by various PC(USA) bodies (synods, presbyteries, congregations, seminaries, colleges, etc.) are part of the broader covenant relationships that exist within the web of ecumenical relationships. One of the fundamental characteristics of Presbyterians is that they understand the church to be a connectional church, not only among our own governing bodies but also in the international arena.

Partnering with World Mission

Recognizing the potential mutual benefits of international mission partnerships, World Mission offers support and resources to all PC(USA) groups who are considering, or are already in, such a relationship. World Mission offers this assistance primarily through its

Equipping for Mission Involvement office in collaboration with area offices and mission co-workers. Guided by General Assembly policy, World Mission assists PC(USA) groups in establishing partnerships with our global partner churches, institutions and organizations in 70 countries around the world, often facilitated by mission co-workers.

Area offices

World Mission's area offices are responsible for building and maintaining relationships with Presbyterian, Reformed and other churches and organizations around the world. Working with World Mission provides the context and overall view of our partners within the region and specific countries. Their knowledge of the history of the PC(USA) with a given partner provides much-needed background and perspective about our church partners.

Cooperation with World Mission, and specifically the area offices, is important with regard to project requests that may come directly to a PC(USA) individual, congregation, presbytery or synod from an international partner. In most cases, there are already existing channels of communication for receiving requests from overseas partner churches; these channels and the proper decision-making process within the overseas partner church need to be recognized and honored.

Equipping for Mission Involvement

The Equipping for Mission Involvement (EMI) office helps connect congregations, presbyteries and individuals to the work of our global partners in collaboration with the area offices and mission co-workers. The EMI team is committed to best practices for partnerships, providing resources for mission committees, short-term mission trips, and mission and partnership networks.

How World Mission can help

In the process of developing a international mission partnership, and in carrying out partnership activities, it is helpful to work closely with World Mission. With respect to PC(USA) mission work in many countries, there are prior, existing relationships and working agreements that will in large measure determine what is helpful to the international partner. Every effort needs to be made to respect existing relationships and to honor the agreements for mission work that the PC(USA) has made with global partners. To do otherwise can be disruptive to the life and work of the global partner.

World Mission assists international mission partnerships by:

- encouraging mission partnerships with congregations and existing World Mission partners;
- assisting with communication between partnerships, as needed;
- providing networking opportunities for congregations and individuals;
- organizing mission education events and providing mission education resources;
- sharing experiences from other partnerships;
- providing programmatic support for the partnerships (e.g., evangelism, peacemaking, health, social justice, development, disaster assistance, etc.).



Photo by Bernie and Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta

People choose to work with World Mission to:

Connect with established partners.

World Mission nurtures relationships with mission partners in 70 countries. These partner relationships can guide and greatly enrich your mission involvement.

Ensure good relations. When you connect with your denomination's partners, you enhance relationships that matter to other Presbyterians, including our mission co-workers serving in each partner's country, and you avoid causing unintentional problems for those relationships.

Learn from past mistakes and successes. Your mission dollars have created a core group of full-time mission staff and allow us to send mission workers around the world. These people have cross-cultural skills and other expertise on a vast array of topics that can enhance your mission involvement. Mission workers are important bridge builders between the denomination and our global partners. They can provide invaluable advice when working with partners around the world.

Be more through coordination.

World Mission has an overview of who is already doing what, and with whom, in mission. With coordination, we contribute to something that is much greater than the sum of our separate mission efforts.

Avoid needless problems. If kept "in the loop," World Mission can help avoid difficulties, and provide assistance when your mission efforts take a puzzling or negative turn.

Channel your funds. World Mission is part of the stewardship of tens of millions of dollars in donor-designated funds every year. Our system provides accountability and open books on the part of every party.

Care for and connect with mission co workers. Mission co-workers sent out by action of the Presbyterian Mission Agency are reviewed in regard to church membership, faith expression and abilities and are matched with expressed needs of partners. The mission co-workers benefit from care, supervision, insurance and a 24-hour emergency hotline.

Thousands of congregations using the online Mission Yearbook pray for them. We give full-time support to their personalized communications with you through mission letters and face-to-face visits.

Give efforts a greater chance to last.

All of your efforts in mission are more likely to have an enduring impact if there is commitment from mission colleagues beyond your congregation, including those in World Mission.

Network with others doing similar mission work.

World Mission staff can connect you with others whose mission involvement is related to yours either by region or by type of effort. Mission and partnership networks bring together brothers and sisters in Christ involved in mission in a particular country to learn from one another and to avoid duplication of efforts. Visit pcusa.org/missionnetworks to learn more.

Model Christian humility and hospitality.

We discern God's will better and accomplish more when we work together thoughtfully for the greater good. The 215th General Assembly (2003) adopted a policy statement about this, "Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership." See page 9 for a summary.

To learn more about partnership or to connect with World Mission staff, contact Stephanie Caudill, mission associate for Equipping for Mission Involvement, at **800-728-7228, ext. 5279**, or stephanie.caudill@pcusa.org. You may also visit pcusa.org/missionpartnership for more resources.

Discerning God's call to mission in partnership

To be partners in God's mission does not require a written agreement. The simple act of contributing to the costs of mission co-workers' sending and support makes us partners, as does daily or weekly use of the PC(USA)'s Mission Yearbook (presbyterianmission.org/yearbook) or reading mission co-workers' letters (pcusa.org/missionconnections).

Of course, other acts have their place, too. Traveling outside the U.S. to worship God with brothers and sisters in another cultural context, welcoming those from another country within our own communities and churches, and contributing time or funds to a project supported by two or more church bodies working collaboratively are activities that can contribute to God's mission in the world.

In the spirit of long-term relationship-building, we may speak of formalized, established presbytery-to-presbytery or

congregation-to-congregation partnerships, as well as similar collaborations. Projects and activities like those previously mentioned will certainly exist within the context of such partnerships. Nevertheless, the term "partnership" implies the building and nurturing of a relationship that transcends one act of working together or the writing and sending of one or more checks. Full partnership takes time to develop and compels us to incorporate what we learn from our mission relationships into daily life. It means we will always try to see the world through the eyes of our partners yet accept that we can never do so completely. Full partnership invites us to read Scripture with a different perspective and to advocate for the interests of our partners. It causes us to be changed by the lives and witness of our partners, and to invite their prayers and acts of kindness and advocacy when we are in need.

Partnership can also teach us about our ourselves and our own cultural biases as U.S. citizens. We are all products of our culture in ways that may or may not be obvious.



Photo by Christi Boyd

We value individuality, but not necessarily communality. We want immediate results from "experts" who can identify and solve the problem quickly. When we rush into another country to attempt to fix their problems, Americans may be perceived as "saviors" or projecting an attitude of superiority. As a culture and as a church, we have much to learn from a deep cross-cultural experience. People from other countries can teach us what it means to live in Christian community, serve others and rely on God's love.

Is your group, church body or organization willing and prepared to make a deep and lasting commitment? Before moving toward a partnership, it is helpful to consider the following "10 Tough Questions." Answering them before beginning to establish a partnership will contribute to a stronger and healthier relationship because you, as a group, will have more clarity about:

- Why you want to enter into such a relationship
- Your expectations of a partnership
- Your understandings of "partnership" and "mission"



Photo by Kurt Esslinger

For materials on mission and partnership visit:
pcusa.org/missionresources

Identifying a potential mission partner

Whether you are already in conversation with a potential mission partner or are open to exploring different opportunities, the following process is suggested.

Pray. Pray for yourselves as you seek God's leading. Pray for the people of the potential partnership. Pray for the future relationship and continue praying even after the partnership has been established.

Explore. Remain open to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Learn more about different countries and cultures as you discern the work God is calling you to do. Explore who you are and what you might bring to (and seek from) a partnership by reflecting on the "10 Tough Questions" on page 13.

Consult. Through Presbyterian World Mission, consult with the area office staff for the regions of the world with which you hope to be in partnership. They can provide information about those churches or entities seeking partnerships and valuable insights about the regions, forward useful materials and, if you have not already done so, help you to identify a potential partner. They may also be able to connect you with other PC(USA) groups that have a partnership in your place of interest and that can mentor you through the process. As you proceed, seek local approval — share your ideas with your session, presbytery committee or similar body for input, blessing and support.

Learn. Learn about the country and region of a potential partner. What is the culture like? What languages are spoken? What are current issues and challenges in that place? Are there similar challenges in your own area? Learn about the church in that



Photo by Shelvis Smith-Mather

place and the history of PC(USA) relationship with it. If a covenant exists between the PC(USA) and the national church body, ask a World Mission staff team member for a copy of it.

Communicate. Communicate with the potential partner. Your answers to the "10 Tough Questions" (page 13) may serve as a basis for the initial conversations or exchanges. This type of exchange establishes an atmosphere of mutuality early in the process. Discuss with your partner other ways to share information about each other. Reach out to the mission co-worker who works with the partner and ask them to be a "bridge person" to ensure that you can communicate effectively with each other.

Visit. Plan exchange visits with a potential partner. Being together, companions in Christ around God's table of grace, is primary to the relationship. Prepare the individuals who will be part of any exchange visits. See pcusa.org/missionpartnership for materials on mission and partnership.

As the first contacts are made, avoid making premature commitments, especially to large projects that require major funding. Let the relationship develop over time before creating a covenant or agreement.

Throughout this process, it is important to listen for, and be mindful of, the larger priorities and centralized structures of the partner church. This attentiveness helps both you and your international partner sustain the integrity of existing mission relationships between the PC(USA) and the national church or institution in the other country, and helps to avoid misunderstandings as your relationship develops. If your church has already developed a partnership and has run into an issue, World Mission may be able to help.

Creating a partnership covenant or agreement together

After you and a potential mission partner have become acquainted through exchanges of communication, information and, perhaps, visits, a next step may be to consider creating a partnership agreement or covenant. Most partnerships are created for a three- to five-year period and are often renewed for subsequent periods.

It is vital that both partners have equal input into the creation of the agreement. A meaningful covenant is created or co-authored in a process that is based upon dialogue, mutual consideration and cooperation. The covenant should also include a commitment to a plan for regular evaluation of the partnership (page 17). If the agreement is written originally in English, it would also be helpful to have the agreement translated into the partner's native language. Consider having an initial agreement drafted in the partner's language, then translated into English (rather than assuming that English should come first).

"Mission in partnership is a transformational adventure. We do not realize when we initiate a partnership what kind of dynamic will be unleashed on the journey. Something new will be created which neither partner controls, which neither can anticipate nor foresee. We step out in faith with a commitment to interact in a state of release and trust, rather than control and subordination. We are not sure where the partnership will lead us, so we feel vulnerable. We leave our safe haven, edge out of our comfort zone, and make a leap of faith. There is no guarantee of what will happen along the way to God's future. A risk. A discipline. An adventure. Heirs of Christ sharing grace."

— Sherron George, *Called as Partners in Christ's Service: The Practice of God's Mission*

The purpose of this agreement or covenant is to clearly define your joint intentions and expectations for the partnership; the needs and gifts of each; the ministries and ministry activities you covenant to undertake together within the partnership; the resources that will be provided by each; and how you will communicate, make decisions and evaluate together how the relationship is going. It should be broad enough to allow room for the Holy Spirit to provide new opportunities during the life of the covenant, but specific enough that expectations are clear on both sides.

An effective covenant could include the elements of:

- A faith statement (shared beliefs and values)
- The purpose of the partnership (reflecting the needs and gifts of each)
- Mutual intentions and expectations of the partnership, including a plan for regular evaluation of the partnership
- The duration of the agreement
- A brief overview of the history of the relationship
- Ministries and ministry activities you covenant to undertake together
- Expectations for the sharing of resources (people, money, etc.)
- Agreements about the financial component of the relationship

Consider:

- What kind of accountability process is expected/should be put in place and followed
- Issues of sustainability
- Whether the covenant reflects a commitment to the larger priorities of the churches or institutions
- Channels of communication
- Concurrence by both parties (signatures of the accountable officers of both parties)



Photo by Kathy Melvin

Writing or renewing a partnership covenant or agreement

(Adapted from the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua)

For partnerships that do not yet have a written covenant . . .

For each of these questions, take five minutes to think about them individually in silence, taking note of thoughts, responses or ideas that come to mind. Then share your thoughts with the group and come up with wording for a draft covenant or agreement. Back home, this draft should then be reviewed/revise by each partnership committee before final approval together.

- Who makes up this partnership? Who are you?
- What gifts does each partner bring to the relationship?
- What needs does each partner bring to the relationship?
- What is your shared vision for the partnership?
- What kind of time frame do you want to put on this written agreement?

For partnerships that already have a written covenant . . .

- Read your covenant agreement aloud.
- Spend five minutes individually to reflect on your covenant and take note of any reactions and ideas that come to mind.
- Together with your partners discuss:

- How are we doing? Have we lived up to our written covenant?
- Does this covenant reflect our current reality?
- What do we want to take out/remove?
- What is missing? What do we want to add?
- Are there any other changes that we want to make?

For sample partnership covenants, contact the Equipping for Mission Involvement office in World Mission: Ellen Sherby, ellen.sherby@pcusa.org or **800-728-7228, ext. 5612**.



Photo by Renee Sundberg

Continuing together in God's mission

Maintaining an international mission partnership takes work, just as any relationship does. Some partnerships have a rough beginning, some develop problems down the road and some go well from day one. In any case, the work of solidifying the relationship, nurturing depth and growth in the human connection, continues. God, through the Holy Spirit, reminds us again and again of Jesus' commandment given to the disciples in John 13:34: *"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."* Like them, we, in our international mission partnerships, are called to love one another.

Expressions of love may come naturally if you find that the original partnership covenant was just right for your relationship. Despite great distance, you and your partner may find that prayer, worship and study — three essential ways of expressing Christian love — may come easily. Beyond this, you may find that visiting one another and jointly planning activities happen effortlessly. Still, rough spots often do arise in the efforts to nurture and maintain such ongoing, cross-cultural Christian relationships. Perhaps the relationship is not developing as the partners would like; perhaps there is trouble with communication; or perhaps the activities are not fulfilling for one or both partners. This section offers some ideas for maintaining a healthy relationship.

Pray together, even when apart

Prayer is one of our most important means of communication as Christians. By remaining faithful in prayer, we come closer to the living God, the Lord of all creation. Prayer allows us to listen more effectively to God and to one another. Prayer is conversation, and through

the power of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate whom Jesus promised, partners can be in communication through this life-giving activity.

Be creative and consistent in prayer

- Think of ways to draw in more people from your church organization.
- Write or call your international partner and tell them that you prayed for them, and how.
- Share your prayer concerns with them.
- Being mindful of time differences around the globe, designate a time when you can be in prayer together in the Spirit — if possible, via telephone, Skype or web platforms like WhatsApp.

Worship together, even when apart

The ideal way to worship together, as Christians, is in person. Partners can become well acquainted with one another when they visit each other's churches, sing each other's hymns, listen to each other's preaching (with interpreters if necessary), and gather around the Communion table in each cultural tradition. Indeed, much encouragement in the faith comes from cross-cultural worship. Aside from prayer, worship of the Triune God is the one activity that distinguishes Christian mission partnerships from other types of contractual or commercial partnerships.

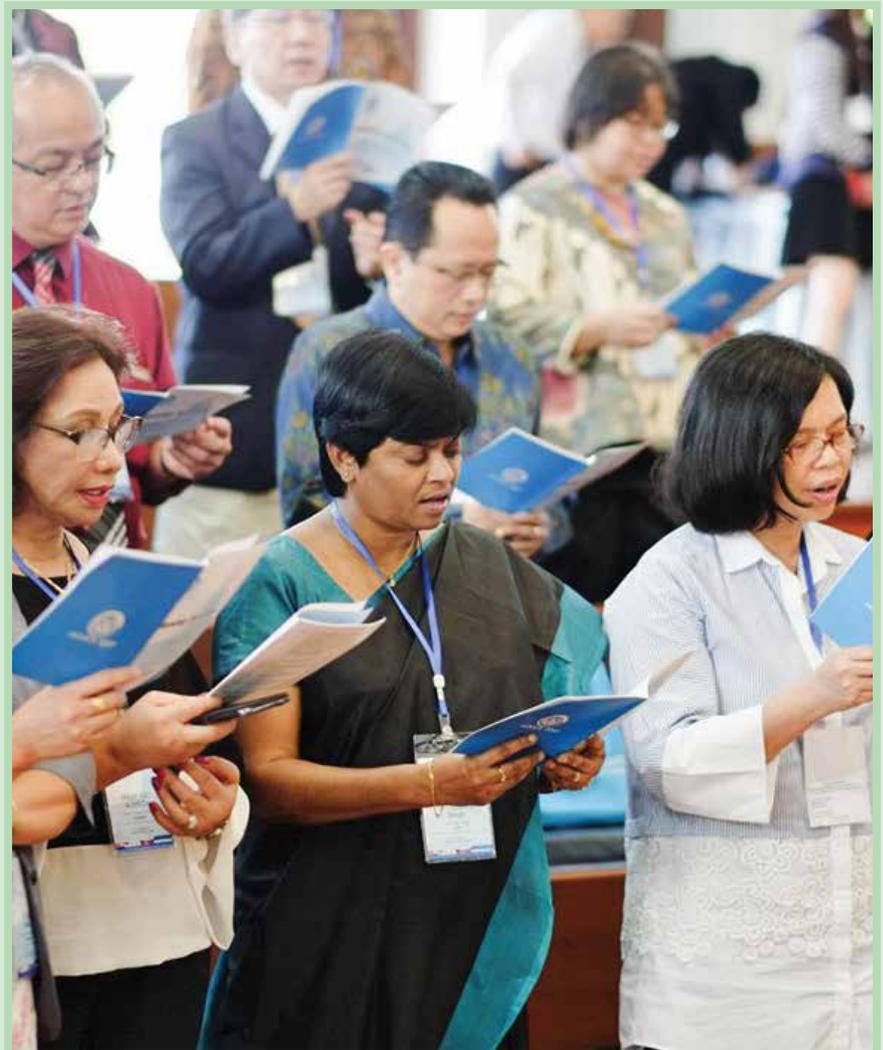


Photo by Esther Wakeman



Photo by Carol Fujii

When worship in person is impossible because of travel constraints, be creative about other ways to join in worship:

- Exchange songs, music or liturgical prayers.
- Make audio recordings or videos and share them with your partner.
- Where available, use technology, such as Skype or FaceTime, to bring images and voices from your partner into the sanctuary on Sunday morning.
- Share a video or PowerPoint presentation from your partner with your congregation.

Remember that no matter what type of church body you represent, worship is central to our Christian mission activity. Joint cross-cultural

worship is an effective way to build interest and involvement in the international mission partnership.

Study together, even when apart

Given that Christians are people of the Word, consider studying the same passage of Scripture with your partner. Even if you can't physically be together, you can choose a passage and share reflections on the meanings it has for each partner in their context. Similarly, partners might jointly study certain issues, such as peacemaking or teen problems, from their unique perspectives.

Visit one another

Human contact is essential for the health of any human relationship. Shaking hands, making eye contact, walking one another's streets,

eating in one another's homes — these simple activities, shared as consistently as possible, will help keep your international mission partnership alive and well. Of course, cost, work and time factors do limit the opportunities for international travel. Still, breaking bread together is the best way to remain companions, friends and partners on the journey. You might want to provide resources to your partner to help them prepare for their visit to the U.S. It is also useful to discuss American cultural values as you work on your own cross-cultural understanding. Learn culturally appropriate ways to engage with your partner: How do people shake hands? Does everyone shake hands? How or when is eye contact made, and with whom? What gestures are considered appropriate and respectful? Bear in mind that your partners' culture may have different standards of appropriate contact or ways of addressing one another, depending on gender, age, status and other factors.

Plan activities together

A true partnership means both parties have equal voice and shared responsibility in making the relationship happen. As joint planning brought you to the creation of a partnership covenant, so too does joint planning enter into designing the purpose, commitments and resources needed for any shared mission activity.

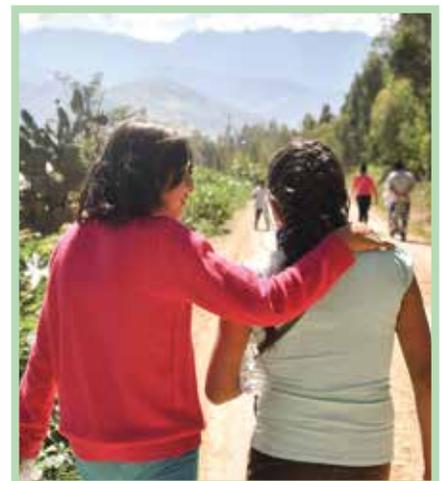


Photo by Kristen Young

Sharing resources and nurturing mutuality in partnerships

The provision of funds is the topic that engenders the most discussion and problems within partnerships. Many books and articles have been written about missions and money: the effects of money on partnerships; the way in which mission co-workers are viewed; and the proclamation of the gospel itself. Additionally, each situation has its own cultural dynamics that influence the way gifts and money are viewed. In this section, we provide some general foundations, guidelines and cautions for use by partnership representatives as they discern together appropriate gifts and ways to avoid the most common problems that partnerships experience with gift-giving.

Biblical foundations for entering into partnership

Stewardship

We begin from a basic Christian belief that the world and all that is in it belongs to God. This means that all of our resources belong to God, from financial resources to individual and community skills and characteristics, to spiritual gifts and the gifts of the earth. Our responsibility as Christians requires our stewardship of all of God's gifts to us. Sometimes we define our "gifts" too narrowly, either by including only money in our definition or by assigning a higher value to money than to other gifts we may give or receive. Everything we receive is God's gift to us to use as a blessing to others. We are accountable to God, as stewards, and to each other, as people of faith.



Photo by John McCall

Mutuality in Christian relationships

Within a partnership, we strive toward mutuality in our relationships and our practices. Our relationships are grounded in each person's place within the body of Christ, with no part of that body more important than any other. Presbyterians have traditionally understood that any one church is just one expression of the universal church of Jesus Christ in the world. Our way of being in partnership in relationship with each other is a strong testimony to the world, demonstrating unity for the sake of the gospel, not promoting or being content with division.

"Mission" as God's Mission, the Missio Dei

Until the 15th century, "mission" was thought of exclusively as God's activity: The Father sent the Son into the world; the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit; the Triune God sends the church to participate in God's mission in the world. This historic understanding of mission has been reclaimed in recent years as a corrective to our too-human tendency to claim God's work in the world as "our" mission. "We" cannot have a mission apart from God's. With gratitude and joy we

offer ourselves as God's servants for the furtherance of God's purposes for humanity and all of creation. In partnership, we mutually submit ourselves to the Triune God, who commissions all of Christ's church in the world to be about the divine task of reconciling all of creation to God and to one another. Through our relationship, we attempt to incarnate the reconciling love of God in Christ.

Sin: the human condition

"There is no one who is righteous, not even one," said the Apostle Paul (Rom. 3:10). Our human condition is one of brokenness and pain in need of healing, of sinfulness in need of forgiveness, of despair in need of divine hope. Just as our individual lives are never perfect, our relationships are also imperfect, often broken or conflicted. We rely on the mercy and grace of God to forgive us and guide us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to greater faithfulness, greater love and greater justice in our dealings with one another. In partnership, we mutually recognize our failings and our need for God's grace to make our relationship thrive.

Some lessons from mission history

Sustainable development vs. dependency

In mission history, the “three self” principle has emerged as a worthy goal or ideal for each congregation and church body, whether in the U.S. or in other countries: self-governing, self-propagating and self-sustaining. History has shown that when there is too much reliance on monetary and other resources from outside a particular church body, that body does not grow, either in numbers or in using its own God-given gifts and creativity for the sake of the gospel of Christ. Dependency is created; reliance on an outside source is difficult to change once it has begun.

At the same time, outside resources or gifts are sometimes needed as seed money for a variety of purposes—for example, training local leaders in specific skills, initiating an outreach ministry or providing immediate relief in a disaster.

Mission history (and current reality) is full of examples of “white elephants,” projects that seemed like good ideas at the time but executed with little thought to their sustainability. Examples include the hospitals or schools that stand empty and in disrepair because there was no forethought as to how staff would be paid or equipment maintained. Many failed projects and programs are the result of North American attempts to transplant their own models of church, or evangelism, or medical care, or education to another environment, rather than being open to methods, models and technologies that better fit the context and culture of a different place.

Abuse of power or mutual use of power?

Power is a good thing. We all need some measure of personal power to exert some influence over the course of our lives. A church body, whether a congregation or a national church, also needs power to influence its own direction. Within a partnership between a PC(USA) church body and one in

another country, we strive for mutual use of power, but it is a difficult goal to achieve. There are many obstacles to mutual use of power; they can include differences in culture, education and life experiences.

But the most common reason this goal is difficult to realize is the vast disparity in economic resources available to each side of the partnership. Whether we like it or not, money represents power—and, in a real way, money is power. The power that money brings with it can easily distort the relationship, usually unintentionally, between the partners and within the larger church body.

For these reasons, we strongly recommend that new partnerships refrain from any type of funding until both sides have time to get to know each other. Two years is a good rule of thumb. We also strongly recommend that partnerships set a limit on any annual monetary gifts given and received, considering the local economy. With these admonitions about money and power in mind, let us consider in more detail the two most common ways that money exerts power within partnerships to negative effect.

External power through money

The funding model with which many are most familiar is the model used by North American or Western philanthropic or governmental agencies. In this model, the agency providing the funds decides: (1) what types of activities it will fund, (2) the level of funding and the criteria for its use, and (3) what factors will constitute “accountability” for the funds. For North Americans, this model is a “normal” way of providing funds and is often used as a means of ensuring good stewardship of the funds.



Photo by Sharon Kandel

What attitudes about the “gift-giving” and the “gift-receiving” groups might this model communicate?

- The giving agency knows what is best, is in control, and sets the direction for the receiving group.
- The receiving organization is incapable of setting its own course or is unable to bring talents and wisdom to the enterprise, or is not to be trusted to use the funds wisely.

Research into nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in countries of the “Two-Thirds World” shines a new light on the issue of external funds. These studies indicate that as an NGO begins to attain the infrastructure and skills to apply for, receive and report on external funds, the nature of the organization itself begins to change. The focus shifts away from dynamic grassroots, local participation and leadership by many and toward increasing reliance on a limited number of professional staff. Also, the direction or goals of the organizations often change to whatever the external agencies are currently funding. Although these studies focused on NGOs, practical experience indicates that a similar phenomenon occurs with some frequency in church bodies as well.

While the philanthropic model provides for a form of stewardship or accountability, it is far from the mutuality in relationship for which we, as Christians, strive within partnerships. It is also far from our mutual desire to build up the body of Christ around the world: for self-governing, self-propagating and self-sustaining churches; for members who are treated respectfully and with dignity; for givers who give humbly, joyfully and sacrificially. This model encourages us to think of mission as “our” mission rather than God’s mission in which we participate.

Finally, at its heart, the giving and receiving of money can distort our common humanity and our relationship to each other as children of God. When an international partner becomes the object of one’s largesse, that partner becomes an object, a thing. When a partner becomes a U.S. dollar sign, then it, too, becomes an object, a thing. Our humanity, our God-given dignity, is distorted in each other’s eyes and our relationship is diminished.

The spiritual struggles for the partner that is giving funds concern pride and arrogance in an attempt to control or direct another’s church or institution. Money-giving partners also struggle with their own feelings of having “done good” and of “being good” by giving, rather than sharing in the bounty of God’s gifts to us all. The money-giving partners must often struggle to learn how in turn to receive gifts from their partner. There is an inherent vulnerability to being on the receiving end of gifts that many struggle to accept gracefully.



Internal power through money

The second most common way in which external funds negatively exert power occurs within the receiving church. Unfortunately, it is an all-too-common story of rivalries, competitions, jealousy and hard feelings that occur among various parts of a church or institution when one part of the body receives outside funds and another does not.

These situations may occur among congregations, among presbyteries, among parts of an institution, or among institutions sponsored by the same church body. For example, Presbytery A has an international presbytery partnership and receives visitors, funds for programs or projects, scholarships for children. Presbytery B does not have a partnership so it receives none of these gifts and has no opportunity to give of its own gifts. Or a health institution sponsored by an international partner church may receive regular funding for staff and equipment while an educational institution of the same church receives nothing. Such situations may break the unity of the church in that place.

A similar competitive situation may occur when a pastor of a local church or institution contacts individuals or churches in other countries, soliciting visitors, funds or partnerships based on his or her personal acquaintances or relationships. Such a pastor (or institutional director) all too often builds his or her own “kingdom,” and because of the funds pouring in, his relationship to his peers becomes off-balance, distorted, powerful and sometimes abusive of this power. Sadly, there have been several cases where such situations led to the temptation to sin, with misuse or theft of funds.

Partnerships based on individual and personal relationships tend to have more of these problems than partnerships that are based on church bodies and corporate relationships.

The challenge, in this time of drastic economic inequities in our world, is to develop new models of giving and receiving that more closely correspond to the good news of Jesus Christ. There are no easy solutions, but being aware of some of the issues and common pitfalls may help us along the way.

Minimizing the negative effects of monetary gifts: Basic guidelines

Encourage sustainable development

Faith in Action: Understanding Development Ministries from a Christian Perspective, a book (available for download at pcusa.org/faithinaction) by former PC(USA) mission worker Stephen Knisely, suggests several key questions to consider when funding a project or program through a partnership:

1. Who initiates the work?
2. Who owns and controls it?
3. Who benefits from it?
4. Are root causes being addressed?

If handled wisely, he says, the project or program can yield a variety of beneficial results over time. He summarizes these as:

- Self-confidence and development of local problem-solving capacity;
- Leadership development, empowerment and self-determination;
- Self-reliance, stewardship of resources and self-esteem; and
- Greater dignity and justice for the local community/body when root causes are being addressed.

Encourage nonmonetary gift-giving and receiving

- Pray for individuals, concerns and celebrations of your covenant partner.
- Set up a mutual Bible study to exchange reflections between your congregation and sister church committee.
- Send a list of special occasions, including your pastor's birthday,

your church's anniversary and special children's celebrations.

- Send group or individual photos, letters, drawings or banners.
- Send a video of a church service or other event in your church (especially meaningful if prayer or liturgy focuses on your partners).
- Share music.
- Share your faith journey testimonies.
- Create a "prayer partner" calendar.
- Seek God's guidance to explore new and creative ways to share your lives, your ministries and your unity in Christ.

When giving or receiving monetary gifts:

- Encourage mutual accountability and transparency.
- Encourage equity within partnerships and partner bodies.
- Work within World Mission-related mission networks to prevent duplication or inequities.



Photo by Cristobal Lohr Castelo

Reviewing the partnership together

Regular joint reviews should be part of your partnership covenant or agreement. A review is an important process by which you and your partner discuss how the relationship is going and how any joint projects or ministries are progressing.

Process suggestions

It is often difficult to discuss issues and concerns we have in relationships, especially those we value. Trust, safety and enough time are indispensable components of a joint review. In cross-cultural relationships, communication can be especially challenging and requires time and careful consideration of process.

Before the scheduled review

- Share the suggested set of questions (pages 27–28) with your partner and solicit their reaction. Do these questions sufficiently cover the questions you both would like to discuss at a review session? What changes or additions should be made?
- Suggest that committees from both sides of the partnership reflect on the agreed-to questions prior to the scheduled review session. Explore whether the process of discussing questions is the kind of approach your partners would like to take. Is there a different way of reviewing the partnership that your partners might suggest? Lean on your partners' culture, experience and wisdom to shape the review.
- Set a time and place for the review session. The review should be in-person and allow sufficient time to discuss the questions in depth or to engage in other ways of reviewing the partnership, if your partners suggest a different



Photo by Frank Dimmock

approach. It is ideal for review participants to be together in a retreat-style environment, grounded in worship and Bible study, and living in Christian community. Shared meals, informal “catching up” and fun activities also lead to a rich review experience.

- Jointly decide on responsibilities for leading worship and Bible study, facilitating parts of the review, and on the number of participants from each side. Try to strike a balance within the participants in number, pastoral and lay leadership, male and female, young and old. Limit the total number of participants to one manageable for the process and time constraints (approximately eight to 12 people).
- Introduce the process of “mutual invitation” for discussing the various review questions.

The “mutual invitation” process has been used successfully in numerous

and diverse cross-cultural settings. It is also effective for any situation in which some participants need to be encouraged to give their perspectives and other participants need to discipline how much they contribute. Differences in communication style and a sense of “freedom” to participate in a discussion may originate from any number of differences within the group, including differences related to cultural norms and expectations influenced by national origin, race or ethnicity, gender, age, social class or educational background. This process is slower than an American-style “free-for-all” discussion. However, the outcomes of a richer, more honest discussion and full participation by all make it well worth the time spent. A description of the “mutual invitation” process can be found in Eric Law’s book, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*.

Suggested questions for discussion at a review session

Individually and collectively, review the following aspects of your partnership. You may use the following questions as a basis for your joint review discussions.

Relational issues

1. Are you able to communicate regularly with each other? If not, what are the barriers? How might you minimize them?
2. What have you learned about cultural differences that affect your communications, visits, expectations and relationship in general?
What specific changes in behavior or expectations might each side of the partnership make to understand and communicate with each other better?
3. In what specific way(s) would you describe your relationship as:
 - a. Mutual?
 - b. Creating friendship and solidarity?
 - c. Liberating?
 - d. Trusting?
 - e. Paternalistic or dependent?
 - f. Nurturing spiritual growth and discipleship?
 - g. Joint ministry?
4. How do you and your partner feel about each of these descriptions? What would you like to change about any of them?
5. Do you or your partner have issues or concerns about the relationship that are difficult to name and address? What would be needed from each side to be able to raise those issues?

Leadership for the partnership

1. Is the membership of each side of the partnership being equipped for leadership? Does each partnership committee regularly receive new committee members? Are there youth or young adult committee members?

2. Is the partnership “personality-based” — that is, does it rely on only one or two individuals from each side, or does it have a broader commitment and participation from each side?
3. Of those who have been actively involved in the partnership, how well are the following represented in the activities and visits: Youth? Young adults? Pastors? Laity? Women? Men? Minority racial/ethnic members?

Learning and growth through the partnership

1. What have you and your partner learned about each other’s

culture, church and challenges in each place? Which experiences or insights have surprised you? Challenged you?

2. What have you and your partner learned about yourselves through this relationship? Culturally? As Christians?
3. What have you learned about God and Christian discipleship through this partnership?
4. Where do each of you see your “growing edge” — that place where you see a need to grow in understanding and practice?



Photo by Bonnie Orth

Advocacy

1. What advocacy activities has the partnership undertaken on behalf of the people or church in a particular place?
2. What other advocacy opportunities are there?
3. Have partners invited support or partnership through advocacy activities, or has the impetus to advocate come from one side of the partnership?
4. Have advocacy activities had any unintended consequences for church bodies or individuals?

Joint projects and ministries

1. What joint projects or ministries have you undertaken as a partnership?
2. How would you describe each of them (mutual, dependent, interdependent, etc.)? Why?
3. For each joint project or ministry:
 - a. Who initiated it? Who owns and who controls it? Who benefits from it? Which root causes are being addressed?
 - b. How are decisions made about the project or ministry and by whom?
 - c. What gifts does each side of the partnership contribute (e.g., time, spiritual gifts, funds, leadership, etc.)?

4. Is it sustainable over time? What factors will determine whether it is sustainable?
 - a. When were the budget, expenses and income for each joint ministry or project last reviewed? Is a more current review needed?
 - b. Are the projects in good financial shape? Is the financial documentation in order?
 - c. What changes are needed to ensure longer-term sustainability and accountability?

For an excellent discussion of project development, management and evaluation, read Daniel Rickett's book *Making Your Partnership Work*.

Partnership purposes and activities in your agreement

Review your current agreement in light of your discussion on these issues.

1. How well are your activities and communications with each other fulfilling the mutually agreed upon, stated purposes of this partnership?
2. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of your activities in relation to your stated purposes?

3. Have the purposes changed over time? If so, what new purpose statement would better reflect a deeper understanding of the relationship?
4. What changes in the document, if any, are needed?
5. What changes in activities or the way in which you engage in them together are needed?

It may be useful to the future of the partnership to document the major points of your discussion on these various aspects of partnership, the follow-up tasks to be undertaken, who is responsible for which tasks and your time frame for their completion. Decide together with your partners how and who will document your review; don't assume that your partners will have the same approach.

Once the partnership agreement is finalized, ensure that it is shared with the appropriate governing bodies for their approval and signatures.



Photo by Hannah Weinberg-Kinsey

Facing rough spots in a church partnership

The following are questions to consider if your mission partnership feels stuck. World Mission staff are always available to answer any questions you may have along the path of nurturing and maintaining healthy international partnerships.

1. *Is your covenant working? Are the needs you named in your covenant being met? Even if your needs have been met, has the relationship changed them? Have you gotten less or more out of the relationship than you originally expected?*

Go over the covenant and see if there are ways of returning to your original plan or rewriting the covenant — with your partner, of course — to reflect new needs and resources. Contact World Mission area office staff to see if they can provide you with insight into your current situation. Remember that this is a relationship. Sometimes the greatest learning in a partnership comes out of the struggles.

2. *Have you gotten sidetracked from building a relationship due to money issues?*

Remember that finances are just one part of the larger relationship, and as with any relationship, the greatest misunderstandings usually arise around money. Be careful, then, of making untimely financial promises or gifts, despite the most obvious and demonstrated need or the most well-meaning intentions. Given global financial disparities and the growing gap between rich and poor, it can be challenging to resist this dynamic. Still, you must struggle to preserve mutuality in the relationship, a mutuality in which respect and honor are shown and the connectional nature of the body of Christ is evident.

There are practical ways to lessen a partnership's focus on finances. One is to ensure that both partners contribute in some way to any expenses incurred; another is to include a statement in the covenant agreement placing self-imposed limits on the amount of financial gifts; still others may be discovered in conversation with the World Mission office staff and/or your international partner. In every sense, however, a relationship based on a one-way flow of money is not a healthy partnership.

Regarding the healthy transfer of funds, keep in mind security and relationship issues. U.S. church bodies are strongly encouraged to make financial contributions through World Mission. In collaboration with the partner church's national office, World Mission ensures full accountability and transparency of records.

3. *Is it possible that you have not been sufficiently sensitive to cultural differences?*

Cultural differences can play an enormous yet subtle role in partnerships — both at the individual level and at the institutional level. Seek out a “bridge person” like a mission co-worker who has lived in the partner country for a long time and knows the partner church body well to explore with both partners any underlying cultural dynamics or issues in the partnership.

Cultural differences can be barely perceptible unless you've learned about them and engaged them before. In fact, cultural differences themselves will dictate whether a partner will even wish to talk with you about any feelings, issues or conflict.

4. *Are your activities not working well? Is there limited interest in being involved in the partnership?*

Review your activities. Consider inviting already formed groups in your church organization to join the partnership activities, either old ones or new ones (women's groups, youth groups, children's programs, etc.) Ask your partner about the breadth of their interest and involvement. Note that the activities that were appropriate in year one of your partnership covenant may not be valuable in year three, four or 10. Work together with your partners on a joint review (read “*Reviewing the Partnership Together*” on page 26.)

5. *Have you scheduled a joint review or evaluation?*

Even if you have scheduled an evaluation down the road, if you are experiencing problems, consider having an evaluation meeting now with your partner to discuss the challenges you face. At this meeting, World Mission area office staff may be able to help you hear your partner's needs more clearly and to express your own concerns more effectively. (See “*Reviewing the Partnership Together*” on page 26.)

6. *What do you do about a conflict?*

For many international partners, open confrontation is not considered acceptable. If there is a problem, be respectful and restrained. Ask World Mission staff for advice; area coordinators and regional staff are experts in giving perspective on international partners' culture, including culturally appropriate ways to deal with conflict or to express concern. Learning about the standards and expectations of another society is one of the many benefits of having an international partner.

7. *If you have a presbytery partnership, are you having trouble getting people and/or congregations in the presbytery involved in the partnership?*

Consider creating a way to encourage congregational partnerships to develop within the context of the presbytery partnership. These relationships can strengthen the broader partnership by creating more opportunities for shared worship and contact between the two groups. Before doing this, however, carefully consider how such a sister church program will be set up so that inequalities do not develop among the different congregational relationships. World Mission has some helpful materials on developing sister church relationships within a presbytery partnership.

8. *Is the energy on the U.S. partnership committee waning?*

It is important to be constantly seeking new people for your partnership oversight committee. Continuity is key and it is vital that you have a broad base of people who are knowledgeable about the partnership and able to take on leadership at any time. If you have pastors on your committee, they might leave the presbytery. Lay leaders may find themselves called to a new kind of service. Advertise the work of your committee every chance you get. Create displays in your church and at presbytery or synod meetings, include information in your newsletters, hold "Minutes for Mission" and develop a resource shelf in the church library or presbytery resource center.

9. *Are you having trouble communicating?*

Trying to communicate with an international partner across time zones, cultures, languages and technological capacities can be quite challenging. You never know what will work best: phone, fax, email, Skype or apps like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Be patient and persevere. Try a combination of methods, including personal courier if that is appropriate, and do not hesitate to graciously resend your letter or redial the partner's phone number. Also, remember that in many cultures, time is viewed differently from how it is in the U.S. There is a slower pace of life in many parts of the world, one that offers a valuable cultural lesson for us Americans who so easily spend extra money on next-day delivery and then impatiently await the return reply. Encourage members of partnerships to communicate freely with one another just to keep in touch; however, be mindful to keep partnership decisions and official conversations at the level of respective partnership committees rather than between individuals.

10. *What could you do if the partnership is not developing well, particularly spiritually, even when you are abiding by the covenant agreement?*

Perhaps the best way to enliven a partnership is to make a visit. Have your partner come to the U.S. or go to the partner's country. Don't demand a work project while you are there and don't insist on filling every minute with sights. To the best of your ability, set aside time to sit and share with one another, and worship with your partner as often as possible.

11. *Are there signs that indicate the partnership has run its course and it's time to move on?*

Too often, partnerships seem to fizzle out because the champions who originally promoted them have moved on. Sometimes partners see particular objectives they want to pursue or competencies they want to develop and are interested in trying something new. If you feel that the partnership is not alive and well, first consider following a review process like the one suggested on page 26. If, after some effort and communication from both sides, it seems that the life of the partnership has come to an end, it is best to negotiate a closure, celebrating the partnership's life. It is important to take time to process the partnership so both partners feel that the relationship has ended on good terms. Each situation is unique and must be handled uniquely. World Mission staff may have advice for how best to end your partnership.

Final note on partnerships

Engaging in mission with a spirit of partnership is a never-ending journey of mutual love and learning. Establishing and nurturing a mission partnership requires years of mutual commitment, wisdom, vulnerability and listening. Wherever you are on the journey, keep your heart open to God's call to learn and grow together with mission partners.

"We ought to be willing to learn from one another and to help one another. Through all the ages to come, the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest to the heroism and self-denying labors of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We ask also for love. Give us FRIENDS."

—V.S. Azariah speaking at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh



Photo by Frances Turk

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