

An emerging vision for a radical new commitment to global Christian community

We believe that God is taking us on a journey toward a deeper understanding of partnership among God's people. We pledge to God and to each other to pursue what partnership means and to practice it as God gives us strength.

A COVENANT OF PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is God's mandate.

In giving us the Great Commission, God calls us to partner with him in global mission. Our God is a missionary God and we are to be a missionary people. Jesus prayed that God's people "be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me" (John 17:23). The oneness of the global Christian community (enhanced by working in partnership) is a powerful testimony to Jesus as God's anointed one. Partnership describes both our relationship with God in mission and our relationship with others as a means of accomplishing that mission.

God Himself (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the perfect model of partnership: one essence of three distinct persons of equal importance, each with different roles performed for a common purpose.

Therefore, we do not engage in partnership simply because it is cost-effective or pragmatic. We do so because partnership reflects God's nature, demonstrates Christian unity, and draws people to God. It is how all mission should be done everywhere.

Partnership is mutual.

True partnership embraces the reality that every partner has something to give and something to gain. What they give, they do so sacrificially. What they gain, they receive humbly. No partner is greater than another in what it contributes.

Therefore, we acknowledge every partner's contributions, large or small, according to God's gifts. If we are perceived as the giver, we also receive something valuable in the partnership. If we are perceived as the receiver, we also have something valuable to give. It is the partnership that, by God's grace, achieves the vision.

Partnership is diverse and dynamic.

No partnership is static or exactly the same as another. Partnership can range from a single focus, such as funding, or it can be more full-bodied. It can happen once, intermittently, or be long-term. Relationships change over time depending on the vision, maturity, size, and capacity of the partners. Therefore, we celebrate the various expressions of healthy partnership and reject a "one-size-fits-all" mentality. The various levels, forms, and stages of partnership reflect the diversity of God's people as well as the diversity of needs in the world.

Partnership is most effective through multiple relationships.

No single church entity can bring all the resources necessary to meet the needs of God's people and of the world. God values humility over pride and collaboration over isolation.

Therefore, multiple relationships are often the best way to serve God's Church and to meet the world's needs. In almost every case, at least one of the partners in the relationship will have a physical presence where God's people are manifesting the love of Christ.

Partnership is measurable.

Healthy partnership is not afraid to measure the benefits of partnership. We will not shy away from setting goals and measuring results. We affirm the value of asking questions and acknowledge the need for mutual transparency and accountability. Therefore, while we reject excessive quantifying, we affirm that mutual evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative results of a partnership is important if we are to be good and faithful stewards of the resources of God's people

Partnership is relational—and messy.

Partnership is as much about relationship as it is about strategic outcomes. It is done with others, and those others matter. But we live in a fallen world where personalities and cultures clash. Unmet expectations lead to misunderstanding and disappointment. Forgiveness is infrequent. Speaking the truth in love is seldom practiced. We must live the Great Commandment. God created us to live in communion with Him, to participate in His nature, and to imitate His character. When the Apostle Paul described his partners in the gospel, he used language such as “I have you in my heart” and “how I long for you with the affection of Christ Jesus.” We are called to pray for one another, to suffer with one another, to rejoice with one another.

The best partnerships arise out of rich relationships based on shared passion, mutual goals, and much time spent together. There is no greater work of partnership than the building of relationships in love by which all peoples will see Christ.

Navigate by Biblical Principles

Should Christians share resources in the global community of Christ? Yes. The Bible is very clear about how Christians are to care for one another. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Galatians to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (6:10). This was not merely a nice sentiment. It took Paul nearly ten years to organize a large collection of funds from the Greco-Roman cities where he evangelized to be sent back to Jerusalem. The event reveals many important principles for sharing resources in the Body of Christ (Acts 21:17-19; 24:17; 2 Cor. 8-9).

The Apostle John wrote, If anyone of you has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in you? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:17-18). The answer to the question is clearly that the love of God cannot be in a person who has the ability to help and is aware of acute human need, particularly within the Christian community, but refuses to act in any way whatsoever. These passages ought to be enough to guide us, but there is more, much more, in the Scriptures.

The following charts identify twenty principles that can help us think biblically about the giving and receiving of money. These are organized into two lists: ten laws of receiving, and ten laws of giving. Admittedly these are cursory lists. For a comprehensive study I recommend the work of Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*.(1)

In these lists you will see a tension between generosity and responsibility, between what we should do for others and what they should do for themselves. This tension is epitomized in Galatians 6 with regard to spiritual matters. On the one hand, believers are admonished to carry each other's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ (vs. 2). On the other hand, it is said that each one should carry his own load (vs. 5). What appears to be a contradiction intentionally sets up the tension between doing for others and others doing for themselves. Those who would share resources in the work of the Gospel must learn to navigate between the need to care for others and the need of others to care for themselves.

Ten Laws of Receiving

General Principle Key Text

1. It is better to trust in God than in money.	Psalms 34:9-10; 107:9; 111:5; 127:2; Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 13:5
2. It is more blessed to give than to receive.	Acts 20:34-35
3. Christians are to work to provide for themselves and their families and to have something to share.	Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:8
4. Christians are to manage their resources as stewards of what belongs to God.	14:28-30; 16:10-12; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 14:12; 24:1-2; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 Peter 4:10
5. Christian workers have the right of support.	1 Corinthians 9:3-14; 1 Timothy 5:18
6. Christian workers should be grateful for financial support but not depend on it.	Acts 18:3; 20:33-35; 1 Corinthians 9:15-18; 2 Corinthians 11:7-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9
7. It is important not only to keep financial integrity before God but also to be perceived as doing so by others.	Deuteronomy 25:13-15; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24
8. Christians can be content and thankful for God's supply.	Philippians 4:10-19
9. Some Christians may be more impoverished than others, but that gives them no right to be idle, and depend solely on "welfare" from others.	1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:14
10. Improper motives for getting money can lead to all sorts of trouble.	1 Timothy 6:9-10

Ten Laws of Giving

General Principle Key Text

1. The Lord honors the generous and withholds from the miserly.	Deuteronomy 15:10-11; Proverbs 19:17; 22:9; Isaiah 58:7, 10-11
2. Christians should beware of giving with mixed motives.	Luke 14:12-14
3. Christians should give according to what they have, and not according to what they do not have.	2 Corinthians 8:12
4. The surplus that some Christians have should be used to make up for the deficiency of others.	2 Corinthians 8:13-15
5. Whoever sows generously will also reap generously.	2 Corinthians 9:6-11
6. Christians are to do good to all people, especially to fellow believers.	Galatians 6:10
7. Christians are to have Christ's attitude of self-sacrificing humility and love for others.	Philippians 2:1-5
8. Inappropriate giving can excuse others from taking responsibility.	1 Timothy 5:4, 8, 11-13, 16
9. Christians should beware of favoritism in their giving.	James 2:1-10
10. Love demands that a Christian never deny a brother in need when it is in his power to help.	1 John 3:16-20

This quick survey reveals that the giving and receiving of money in ministry is full of hazards. Whenever the tension between generosity and responsibility is ignored, there will be problems. As often as pride, selfish ambition, or greed, rather than the Holy Spirit is in control, there will be problems. If we err let us err on the side of generosity. Let it be said that we are too loving, not controlling; too generous, not stingy; too sacrificial, not self-serving. Let it be said by the people of the world, "look how they love one another."

Learn from History and Experience

Should local ministry be funded from the outside? History and experience answer with a definite maybe. It all depends. In some cases it might be the right thing to do. In other cases it might be the wrong thing to do. There is no formula that will work in every situation. One thing is clear, giving and receiving foreign funds in the work of the Gospel requires careful attention and much prayer.

ENTER YOUR OWN EXAMPLES

Know the Warning Signs

When is it wrong for outsiders to fund local ministry? It might be wrong when a few of the following questions are answered in the affirmative. It is almost certainly wrong when several of the questions are answered affirmatively. A "yes" answer to any of the questions may indicate a problem. To evaluate a particular situation, work through the following checklists. Have the local ministry work through Checklist A, and the outside agency work through Checklist B. Having identified potential problems or uncertainties, find a culturally appropriate manner in which to address the issues.

Checklist A: Local Ministry

	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Does the outsider set up programs without consulting or relying upon the local Christian community?			
2. Does the outsider insist that he knows best what needs to be done and expects local Christians to follow his lead?			
3. Is the outsider's ministry strategy characterized by dependence upon expensive technology and ended for hand-off to local Christians?			
4. Does the relative of affluence of the outsider tend to distort the effective communications of the Gospel?			
5. Does the outsider exploit the local situation to promote his own ministry?			
6. Does the outsider launch funding programs without establishing the trustworthiness and capability of a local ministry to receive and handle outside funds?			
7. Is the outsider unaware of the potential of outside support to destroy the selfhood of the recipients?			
8. Does the outside support dampen reliance on local funding?			
9. Does the outsider recruit local Christians and pay them salaries far above local standards?			
10. Has the outsider taken on too many projects to provide satisfactory attention and accountability?			

Checklist B: Outside Agency

	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Are local Christian leaders generally opposed to the idea?			
2. Does the outside support undermine or hinder the recipient's capacity to make its own decisions and chart its own course?			
3. Does the outside support limit the recipient's ability to collaborate with other local Christian communities?			
4. Does the outside support chip away at the recipients' sense of selfhood and dignity as co laborers in the work of the Gospel?			
5. Does the recipient ministry constantly act as if the only thing they need is more money?			
6. Does the proportion of outside support far exceed the level of support from within the region?			
7. Does the recipient ministry show partiality in their stewardship of outside support? Do they favor certain ethnic groups, churches, or individuals?			
8. Does the alliance implied by the outside support alienate Christians from their local community?			
9. Does the recipient insist on sending money directly to an individual rather than to the overseeing body of a church of mission?			
10. Are the program and the money for the program both from outside? To put it another way, if the outside program were not in use would the flow of outside money stop?			
11. Does your church entity support other partnerships? Will adding this ministry compromise other ministries either financially, physically and/or spiritually?			
12. Do we have the resources to do this without AGMP or other mission agencies?			
13. Will the program continue if outside funding stops?			

Good partners use the resources of other partners. Have you explored resources available to you through AGMP, www.agmp.org?

The giving and receiving of money in missions partnerships requires judgment in changing circumstances. But there are constants, such as the doctrine of love, the unity of all believers, the fact that we are members of the same household of God and of the one Body of Christ, and that we share a common call to glorify God and make him known. In Christ we have all we need to build relationships of mutual respect and trust. The Body of Christ is designed so that each part has something to give and something to receive. When we respect the giftedness of each part and the responsibility of every believer to steward what God has given, we will have partnerships that are complementary and mutually beneficial in proclaiming Christ, growing up in faith, hope and love, and putting God on display.

Serve One Another

I will long remember the first global conference hosted by Partners International. It was 1987, the week following the ground breaking COMIBAM conference in São Paulo, Brazil. Ministry leaders gathered from all over the world to discuss the nuts and bolts of partnership. The most enduring result of the meeting was a covenant drafted by the leaders of partner ministries. The purpose of the

statement was to establish the common ground on which our partnerships would stand. Here is what they said.

As those who share in God's grace with each other (Philippians 1:7), who have been qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:12), who share in the heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1), who share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10), and who will share in the glory to be revealed (1 Peter 5:1), we as partners in the work of God affirm:

- We are called to invest our lives and resources in Christ's ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18);
- God has given his church a variety of gifts to complement each other in the ministry of equipping it to fulfill its mandate for the glory of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13);
- In seeking to fulfill this mandate, we recognize that our ability does not depend on human criteria such as wealth, education, experience, and so on, but on the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6);
- It is both an honor and an obligation for Christians to assist one another in the work of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:1-15);
- Any God-honoring service should be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect, trust and submission in the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24; Galatians 5:13);
- Mutual accountability is an integral aspect of Christian stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:2; Romans 14:12); and
- Our motivation should be that of a servant in keeping with the example of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11).

If in our partnering relationships we take the time to pray and reflect together on our standing in Christ and on our common call to the work of the Gospel, we will have the discernment and the courage to act like true brothers and sisters. Let us be done with the debate over dependency. Let us instead give our time and energy to advancing the Gospel while also being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (Philippians 2:2). Let us pledge to serve one another.

An Example - The Ugandan Model of Mission Partnership. This is a hierarchical model.

Mission Partnerships in The Church of Uganda

A mission partnership is a kind of covenant whereby two Christian bodies recognize kindred spirits in one another and desire to assist one another in their respective mission emphases.

The focus is first on relationships -- recognizing that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, praying for one another, hearing one another's hearts about our visions for ministry and the things that make us cry, etc. Out of that grows a sense of where God is calling the other to join in advancing the mission.

The Church of Uganda has many gifts to offer American congregations, and an American congregation has a lot to offer the Church of Uganda. We usually encourage an American congregation and a Ugandan diocese to "meet" and explore the potential for a partnership.

Friendship Mission

Typically, this would involve the rector and/or other clergy and several key lay leaders from the American congregation making a trip to Uganda for a Friendship Mission. The Ugandan bishop and other diocesan leaders would host the team and share their lives and how God is working in their diocese. It is a program that introduces the Americans to the key leadership of the diocese and

the breadth of ministry in the diocese. The purpose of the visit is primarily to build relationships – friendships that are rooted in Christ and a common commitment to the Great Commission of Jesus. At the end of the trip, the American team and the Bishop and staff members of his choosing will 'debrief' together and begin discerning how the partnership might develop in the future.

Here is a sampling of some of the kinds of things a visiting team from the US might do in a Ugandan diocese on a Friendship Mission:

- Share with them how the diocese does evangelism, and if there is a short evangelistic outreach planned during the time they are with you, then let them attend the outreach. Even something as simple as an afternoon of preaching at a well would be very meaningful for them. If you are using the Jesus Film, let them go out with the group who is using the Jesus Film.
- Let them meet with some key pastors in your diocese and hear stories about how they go about their pastoral ministry, including the challenges and opportunities they face in their ministry.
- Let them visit a school the diocese runs and meet some of the students, as well as the Head Teacher, teachers, and administration. Assume the visitors know nothing about how education works in Uganda. Introduce them to UPE, school fees, boarding and day schools, exam systems, etc., etc.
- Do you have a diocesan training centre for lay readers and/or clergy? Let them visit the centre and meet the students and teachers.
- Do you have medical clinics? Or, is there a district hospital the diocese works with? Let them see how the diocese is engaged in health ministry. Let them tour the facilities and talk with the clinic administrator.
- What kinds of development and economic empowerment projects is the diocese involved in? Let them visit some of those projects and hear from participants and project managers.
- Are you involved in orphan or HIV/AIDS ministry? Introduce them to what you are doing in this area.
- What kinds of things are Mother's Union and the Women's Worker in the diocese doing? Let them see some adult literacy projects, vocational training projects, etc.
- What about youth ministry? If there is a way to share with them about youth ministry in the diocese, that would be very good.

And, of course, include them in worship on Sunday. You can have them all worship together at the same church, or divide them up in groups of two or three and go to several different churches in the diocese. Some visitors may even feel comfortable preaching.

Preaching Mission

What typically happens next is that the American congregation invites the bishop and one or two other people of his choosing to come to the US for one to two weeks for a Preaching Mission. The Ugandan team would minister the Word of God in the congregation in a variety of ways:

- large, plenary Bible studies (daytime for those who can make it) and evening for those who work during the day (these should be several times a week, if possible)
- visit small group Bible studies/fellowships
- visit men's groups and women's groups
- an overnight with the youth
- visit Sunday school classes, etc.

It is a saturation of the American parish with the Ugandan team, giving them an opportunity to share their testimonies, their lives, and the Word of God. The aim is that at the end of their visit, they would know people in the American congregation by name and something about their lives,

and the Americans in the church would know three Ugandans by name and something about their lives. The Americans would have more than a distant relationship with a public figure -- they would actually know them....such that when they hear the occasional piece of news about Uganda, they perk up inside and follow the story with interest because it may affect someone they know!

By the end of these two kinds of visits, both partners will have a strong sense from the Lord about the next steps in mission together. The idea is that because you have a compatibility with one another in the Lord that as you visit one another you will automatically assist and strengthen the other in their mission.

Recommended Steps in developing a mission partnership

Correspond with one another via e-mail and share some of the vital statistics about your church/diocese – church or diocese’s vision and mission, number of people, number of clergy/staff, program areas of ministry, current and future goals and plans, etc.

The Ugandan Diocese should invite the rector and/or other clergy staff at the church to bring a team of 3 – 7 people from the US to the diocese on a “Friendship Mission.” This could include the Diocesan Synod meeting, but doesn’t have to.

The American church invites the Bishop and one or two other members of the diocese of his choosing to come to the US and visit the church for a ten to fourteen day Preaching Mission.

After these first two visits, both partners sit down together and discuss how they will mutually assist the other in the advancement of their local mission. In other words, mission planning that includes the participation of the partner is done together. The discussion of money and financial support should be saved until after the completion of the Friendship Mission and the Preaching Mission.

The Archbishop’s Office for International Relations is available for consultation and logistical planning.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Alison L. Barfoot, Assistant to the Archbishop for International Relations
+256 (0)78 321 027 or alisonbarfoot@yahoo.com