

# Suggested Guidelines for Successful Church Partnerships

Prepared by the Anglican Board of Mission (ABM)  
September 2015



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As the national mission agency of the Anglican Church of Australia the Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) has a mandate from the church to 'lead, encourage and serve the Church in Christ's mission in the world by educating and stimulating the Church in the responsibility of mission'. This document has been produced with that purpose in mind. It is also a response to requests ABM has received to provide some kind of guidance for Australian Anglicans who want to form partnerships, particularly international ones.

This document examines essential questions, such as

- Who are the companions?
- How do we establish a companion relationship?
- What can we share?
- What about the potential for ecumenical or interfaith elements?
- Should there be projects and funding?
- How do we evaluate the partnership?

ABM has been engaged in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Anglicans as well as Anglicans overseas since 1850 and along the way we have learned a lot from our partners.

The case studies in the boxes are all based on things that have happened but names and places have been changed for the sake of privacy.



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So, if you want to form a companion relationship, and are looking for some guidance based on our real life experiences, then this document has been put together for you, no matter who you are – a bishop or a parish priest, a school chaplain or a youth group leader, a parish councillor or a churchwarden, a parish mission secretary or any other interested person.

About a decade ago a parish in New South Wales was really keen to be in a relationship with a partner in South Asia. The parish was helped to find a partner by some ex-missionaries who had worked in the area in the late 1960s. At first things went fairly slowly, but communications became far more regular and meaningful after a visit by the Australian parish priest and a couple of parishioners. Soon after the initial visit a funding request came through to the Australians which was seeking financial support for medical supplies for their local clinic. The Australians thought that this was a great idea and had some fundraising events which were successful. In the end, they were able to send over

around \$47,000 over a five-year period. In the sixth year the Australians made a second trip to South Asia and were looking forward to hearing from the nurse in charge of the clinic how their funds had been spent. However, when they arrived they found that the nurse in charge had not seen any of the funds. After much discussion and investigation it turned out that a former leader in the parish had unilaterally decided that the parish youths should be given half of the funds for musical instruments, and that the rest should be spent on a new car, of which he was the sole driver. The youths had all gone from the parish to study in a larger town, taking their instruments with them, and the former leader had

driven off in the car when he retired.

The Australians were very upset that no medical supplies had been purchased and they wondered how they would break the news to the others back home, many of whom were retired nurses. They felt duped that they'd been fundraising for things they didn't think were of any value to the sick who attended the medical clinic.

What the Australians discovered ruined their relationship with the overseas parish and left the health clinic staff there feeling angry and depressed.

If you want to avoid scenarios like this, then read on...

We hope that a wide range of people within the Anglican Church of Australia find that these guidelines are useful. You might be...

- someone who holds the position of mission secretary in your parish, or who is on a diocesan mission committee, and who wants to know more
- a parish that has lots of experience with local mission and is keen to see how local know-how might be used in a global context
- a parish that has had a good ecumenical relationship with Christians of Middle Eastern churches in Australia and is now looking to see how this experience can be broadened into a relationship with Christians overseas
- a parish youth group leader who's looking to link with another youth group overseas
- a parish that has had a good interfaith relationship with a local Muslim community and are now looking to see how this experience can be broadened into a relationship with Christians in the Middle East

- a school which has been wondering how to have a deeper relationship with a partner school overseas that is based on something more substantial than just sending them a percentage of your school's annual Lenten appeal
- a cathedral dean whose congregation has been enthused by a visit from an overseas guest preacher and who now want to form a relationship with the visitor's own cathedral church
- a diocesan ministry officer who is looking for information about mission to help form ordination candidates
- a bishop wanting to begin exploring a companion relationship with another diocese but not knowing just where to begin

If this is you, then read on...



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For many reasons, Anglican churches and schools want to reach out and be in some kind of relationship with others. Often they have a desire to learn more, or want to help out of a feeling of gratitude for all the gifts that God has given them.

## Biblical Foundations for Partnerships

The Bible tells us a lot about partnerships. For example, we learn from St Paul that each part of the church is joined together just as the parts of the body are and that we are vital to one another. He writes (1 Corinthians 12.11-21):

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free– and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

*Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'*

In verse 26 he tells the Corinthians that our lives as church are so intimately bound that ...

*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.*

That is a compelling reason to want to be involved with other parts of the church.

St Paul tells us how important prayer is as the basis for a relationship. He writes in his second letter to the Corinthians (1.8-11):

*We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted to us through the prayers of many.*

*St Luke reminds us that partnerships are not only about prayer but about mutual help to achieve a common goal. Here we see that innovation leads to a request for help from partners (Luke 5.1-11):*

*Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.*

## What does ABM believe about mission?

ABM believes that God's mission is to transform humanity in its entirety. We take a holistic view and believe that God calls the church to help others to grow in every dimension of their lives. We use the Five Marks of Mission as a way of focussing our work. The marks describe five different, but related, missional paths. They are:

- Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving and reconciling love for all people
- Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith
- Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy
- Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation
- Protect, care for and renew life on our planet

If you want to engage in a relationship based on any or all of those paths, then be prepared to be transformed. Our experience is that in our partnerships we are more blessed than we can ever imagine.



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## What ABM can and cannot do

As every relationship is different, having its own circumstances and personalities, ABM cannot offer prescriptive rules. However, the following guidelines have been put together by ABM to help those who want to enter into a companion relationship in order to stimulate their thinking and to make them aware of some of the difficulties that might arise.

There are many ways in which you can enter into a partnership with others. You can:

- pray for each other;
- learn about each other;
- donate to help your partner to achieve one of their goals
- donate to help your partner in an emergency situation
- go on pilgrimage to your partner;
- host a pilgrimage from your partner; and
- do all of these things.

You will read how ABM can help you to achieve what you set out to do. We want to encourage all those who want to reach out in partnership to others.



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All good companion relationships are a response to God's love for us:

*We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. (1 John 4.19-21)*

We invite you to join us as we seek to spread God's love throughout the world.

Our understanding of the church can be varied. We may think first of a local parish, congregation or community of faith. We may think next of the structures and systems of the church such as a diocese or a synod. We may think of the church as a global movement either in denominational or ecumenical terms and even more broadly and theologically as the Body of Christ on earth. All of these understandings of church have their validity as they move from the local to the diocesan to a global view.

The notion of an Anglican Community can be helpful in drawing together a broader understanding of the church and its various manifestations. While parish and diocesan structures are often clear in our minds, there are a whole range of other manifestations of church which connect both within and beyond these structures which need to be acknowledged.

Across the Anglican Church for example the notion of an Anglican Community includes, but is not limited to:

- various diverse organisations connected with the wider Anglican Church such as theological colleges, Mothers' Union, Church Army or the Bush Church Aid Society;
- chaplaincies in institutions such as hospitals, prisons, among seafarers and others;
- overseas aid and development organisations such as the Anglican Board of Mission and others;
- Anglicare organisations providing a range of services to people across local communities;
- Anglican schools providing education for primary and/or secondary students.
- parish youth groups and other in-parish groups

All these Anglican Communities are as much a part of the church (however it might be defined) as a parish itself.

Such organizations may have a diocesan, national or even international focus and may form part of the life at the church at the local level (parish, congregation and faith community). There are also ecumenical organizations which may be manifest in local, state, national or international forms. Consider then the wider nature of the church, both within and beyond our own denomination can so broaden our horizons that it does seem to relate well to the notion of the church as the mystical body of Christ on earth! In this context it is helpful to remember that the church is people.

When we begin with this notion that the church is people, we can focus on their purpose. The primary role of individual Christians drawn into a community of faith is to engage in life together for the continuation of God's mission. It is from this notion that the principle of subsidiarity can also be a useful way of describing how the church can best engage in God's mission. Subsidiarity as a principle recognises the value of the most competent local manifestation of the church as the most appropriate means of undertaking God's mission.

This local manifestation could be a smaller or larger group of leaders within a local congregation who combine their commitment and effort with the wider structures of the church such as a diocese working with an overseas aid and development organisations such as ABM. Subsidiarity ensures that as much local activity, initiative, motivation and ownership of the practice and outcomes of any engagement in mission is possible by those directly engaged in this mission. The role of a diocese or ABM in this context is significant and even essential yet secondary to direct engagement in mission on the ground.

While the significance of the wider structures of the church such as the worldwide Anglican Communion, provincial or diocesan structures or the role of organizations such as ABM is recognised, the day to day expression of mission happens primarily at the local level among the people of God in the places where God's mission is evident and where God's people are sent.

When thinking about 'the church', these guidelines envisage like-to-like partnerships such as parish to parish or diocese to diocese links. However, bear in mind that you may be able to tap into the expertise from the likes of Anglicare or Anglican schools as you form your partnership. Moreover, if your parish already has a link, for example with Anglicare, you might also like to partner with an overseas parish with a similar link to an Anglican welfare organisation. If your diocese has Anglican schools within it, you might like to partner with an overseas diocese that has Anglican schools.

As you plan your partnership, think about who it is overseas that has the most competent local authority in a particular sphere. Is it the diocese? Is it the parish? Is it the social service agency? Is it the Anglican school system? Finding out will need some time dedicated to research. You will need to ask yourself, who do you go to to find out? Also think about whether your group has competent local authority in the particular sphere you want to work in. It may be that you do not have enough expertise or authority at a local level to be useful. For example, a parish might decide it is a good idea to get involved with healthcare in rural communities in, for example, Africa. Unless your parish has had significant on-the-ground experience of running healthcare in rural communities in Australia, and/or working with communities on the ground in Africa to do other things (such as educational work) then you may not be the right people for that kind of partnership.

It is out of this broader understanding of the nature of the church and the principle of subsidiarity that the understanding of our partnership in God's mission develops. Partnerships may exist with two or more of the manifestations of church described above, depending on the nature of the mission task which has been identified. Nonetheless, it is essential that any partnership recognises the primary significance of those who are directly engaged in the mission task on the ground as well as those who support this mission through the gift of partnership.

## Suggestions for understanding partnerships

A parish in New South Wales is active and thriving. When its parishioners first partnered with a South East Asian parish they thought they would be able to give them everything they needed. What surprised the people in NSW was the way in which they received much more than they ever thought in return from their South East Asian counterparts: a sense of solidarity, the knowledge that they were being prayed for regularly, fond memories of the trip they made to South East Asia. Now the Australian parishioners are looking forward to a reciprocal visit by their partners.

### Definitions: What is a partnership?

#### What is a partner?

1. The idea of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the body of Christ for the purpose of fulfilling the great commission is at the heart of New Testament missiology and practice.
2. A partnership is a continuing process by which dioceses or parishes or institutions of the Anglican Communion contribute to each other's local mission.
3. Both partners can share their resources and experiences – for example, the experience of poverty and weakness; the experience of acting for justice; spirituality and prayer; friendship; enthusiasm; patterns of development; liturgy; dance and song; human resources; and money.
4. Either partner will receive from the resources of the other.
5. In so doing all participate in God's mission in the world.

#### What is the Purpose of Partnerships?

The purpose of partnerships is to help strengthen the Anglican Communion through the direct experience of interdependence across cultural and geographical boundaries within the Body of Christ; and to strengthen one another for mission, by building a relationship in which each partner is both giver and receiver.

Let us examine how these purposes might be worked towards:

#### To help strengthen the Anglican Communion:

1. Develop the identity of each partner, together with the potential for each one to carry out its mission in the context of its community.
2. Promote greater cooperation between each partner's members and apply mission in partnership at all levels of the church's life.

3. Help the partner under a variety of constraints, build confidence through the experience of knowing that partners can and do lend support.

#### To strengthen one another:

1. Reflect on mission strategy together.
2. Clarify goals and priorities in planning each partner's programs, based upon the perceived mission of the church in each place, and the willingness to redefine that mission in light of the partnership experience.
3. Establish a new pattern of relationship between partners, born of their respective strengths and weaknesses, so that resources can be used and shared more creatively in the mission of the Church.
4. Encourage openness, so that full disclosure of information and resources can be made with each other.

One of the concrete outcomes of a relationship between a South Australian parish and a Middle Eastern one is the Sunday Schools are working together. The Australians are helping their Middle Eastern counterparts to develop a Sunday School curriculum. The Arabic-speaking congregation is making colourful T-shirts for the kids in the Australian parish's Sunday School. Each parish is excited about what the other is doing to help them.



## What is not a Partnership?

Since the 1960s the Anglican Communion has gone from being the English Church Overseas to being a vibrant collection of forty-four national and trans-national Churches, each with its own distinctive flavour.<sup>1</sup> Yet, sometimes colonial-era attitudes can creep in to partnerships. For example, sending used electric blankets and corsets to tropical countries sends a subtle yet clear message that the recipients ought to be grateful for anything that is sent, no matter how unsuitable. (Regrettably, this has actually happened.)

Another obvious trap is paternalism, where one partner becomes dominant, wanting to do things for, or on behalf of, their partner. It is very easy to do this unknowingly.

Sometimes it is easy for a materially poorer partner to see their counterpart merely as a financial saviour or an endless source of cash. Of course, neither of these colonial-era attitudes are healthy. Either can quickly lead to resentment and will degrade the partnership. A real partnership is based on bonds of affection. We strongly advise against partnerships where the funding of projects is rushed into before a real relationship has been formed. Indeed it may be best to leave funding out of the equation entirely, or leave dealing with it to a mission agency on your behalf.

**When members of a parish in Queensland began their partnership with a parish in Africa they wanted to learn about how their African counterparts were helping those in need. The African parish is an integral part of its community and if others are in need then the parish rallies around to support them. This led the Queenslanders to ask themselves how they could be better connected to their own community. This year they have budgeted to employ a social worker who will help the homeless in and around their suburb to find temporary and permanent accommodation, a real need in their community since the closure of a large manufacturing plant in the area.**

## Ten Principles for Partnerships

1. **Priority of the Local Church:** 'The responsibility for mission in any place belongs primarily to the church in that place.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, the initiative for establishing a new missionary venture in any given place belongs to the local church. Partnership therefore implies respect for the authority of the local church. Partnership also ties into the notion of subsidiarity noted in Part 1 of this document. It is important to realise that your partnership has the potential to impact on every aspect of the Church in your area and in your partner's area – either positively or negatively.
2. **Mutuality:** Mutuality in partnership affirms the oneness of the people of God, their unity and interrelatedness as the children of one Father. In this relationship each person and community is recognised, valued, affirmed and respected.

Mutuality is expressed by a deep sense of open and joint accountability.

In decision making, mutuality means sharing power. For example, major decisions affecting partners should not be taken without their participation in the decision whether by their presence when it is made or by prior consultation.

A mutual partnership is one where the partners are '...open to one another as friends on the basis of common commitment, mutual trust, confession and forgiveness, keeping one another informed of all plans and programmes and submitting ourselves to mutual accountability and correction'.<sup>3</sup>

3. **Responsible Stewardship:** God's gifts to any one part of the universal church are given in trust for the mission of the whole church. No mission agency, diocese, province or national church owns its resources.

Responsible stewardship in partnership means that partners see their resources as jointly owned and held in trust by each member for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). The giving, receiving and use of resources must be controlled by judiciousness, selflessness, maturity and responsibility (2 Cor 8:9).

4. **Interdependence:** 'Interdependence means to represent to one another our needs and problems in relationships where there are no absolute donors, or absolute recipients, but all have needs to be met and gifts to give.'<sup>4</sup>

We need each other. We are incomplete and cannot be called the Church of God if the diversity implicit in our catholicity is over taken by a parochial, cultural or racial, homogeneity. In practice, three consequences follow:

- a) every cultural group has something to give or something others can learn from them;
- b) all cultures need redeeming and therefore no culture

<sup>1</sup> See ABM's companion document, From Paternalism to Partnership for a fuller explanation of the changes over time.

<sup>2</sup> ACC-2, p. 53

<sup>3</sup> Huibert Van Beek: Sharing Life in a World Community – Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia (1987), p. 29

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

can be said to be fundamentally Christian and thus superior to others;

c) every one has needs that can only be met by others. There is an African saying addressed to arrogant and wealthy people: 'No one buries himself. If he does, one of his hands will be outside the grave.'

5. **Cross-Fertilisation:** Cross fertilization requires a willingness to learn from one another. It produces an enrichment that results from being open to one another's ideas, experiences and respecting one another's cultural and contextual peculiarities in a process of give and take. 'If we once acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must now make us both givers and receivers.'<sup>5</sup>
6. **Integrity:** A healthy partnership calls for integrity at all levels. It involves a recognition that all partners are essentially equal. This implies a commitment to be real and honest. We do not always have to say 'yes' to everything the other partner says for fear of offending or out of a false sense of guilt. A healthy partnership requires that we take each other seriously, raise creative and loving challenges that could lead to positive re-evaluation of long held traditions and assumptions. The result is a healthier and more enriching relationship. This includes both listening to each other and being willing to repent and change where we have been in error.
7. **Transparency:** Transparency involves openness and honesty with one another. It also involves risks. The risk of being hurt. The risk of being misunderstood and the risk of being taken advantage of.  
  
Information needs to be fully shared with one another; not only information connected with our specific relationship with one another but information about all of our relationships. Full disclosure of financial information to one another is one of the marks of a transparent relationship.
8. **Solidarity:** We are part of each other. We are committed to one another in Christ's body. What touches one member touches the others. Thus no one member must be left to suffer alone. In many non-western cultures, group cohesion and solidarity are thought to be central to existence and crucial to the progress and survival of society. In spite of their strong belief in the rights and individuality of the individual, the Igbo of Nigeria, for example, argue that 'igwe bu ike' ('our strength has its source and sustenance in group solidarity'). In parts of East Africa, the Harambee motif has been successfully harnessed in political, social and religious spheres to achieve astounding results. Missiologically speaking, the church needs to act in solidarity 'so that the world may see and believe' (John 17:21),<sup>6</sup>

9. **Meeting together:** The concept of mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ implies that the Church in every place should find a forum for periodic evaluation, self-assessment and cross-cultural fertilization. Thus while a Consultation is not the fulfilment of a partnership vision, it is essential to it.<sup>7</sup> Partners need to meet together.
10. **Acting ecumenically:** Our mission relationships as Anglicans must be seen as part of the wider mission relationships of all Christians. We need the stimulation, the critique and the encouragement of sisters and brothers in Christ of other traditions. A constant question before us must be, to what extent are those of other traditions invited to participate in advising and working with us in our outreach.



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Even though the chaplain and some students from a Western Australian Anglican school and their partners in Central Africa had emailed and phoned and even skyped together on occasions, it was only when they finally met that their school-to-school link began to feel really real. Since that first face-to-face meeting, they have communicated with each other more regularly and at a deeper level. Their partnership has transformed from one of genuine interest to one of genuine concern for each other.

<sup>5</sup> ACC-2, p. 53

<sup>6</sup> Harambee is a Kenyan tradition of community self-help events, eg. fundraising or development activities. Harambee literally means 'all pull together' in Swahili.

<sup>7</sup> ACC-2, p. 53

Sometimes partnerships begin in unforeseen, serendipitous ways. For example, a number of Australian parishes have seen numbers of people from refugee and immigrant communities come and join them. Some of these parishes have successfully integrated communities of new members into the wider parish. Often the parishes have found that the new-comers have brought a vitality which they were lacking. In such circumstances, members of the new community may be keen on setting up a partnership between their Australian parish or diocese and the church in the country from which they came. Often it is seen as a way of helping their church back home. If the new members come from a different areas within a particular country there can sometimes be tensions over the question of which diocese/parish is the right one with whom to partner. In such an instance it would be wise to seek the guidance of the provincial (General Synod) office in the community's home country to see which diocese/parish would benefit from a partnership link the most.

## Suggested Practical Guidelines for Establishing Partnerships

**NB:** In this section, the word Entity refers to a diocese, a parish or an institution such as a theological college. It is envisaged that partnerships are between entities at a similar level, e.g. parish to parish, diocese to diocese, Anglican school to Anglican school.

### (Pre-) Conditions for Successful Partnerships

1. Planning for a diocese to diocese partnership should involve all sectors of the local church, the bishop's support being crucial, as well as that of the diocesan synod. The focus is on the whole people of God, not simply church leadership. The need for broad-based support is necessary no matter what the Entities.
2. The leadership and people in each Entity are curious about and eager to encounter people from the other.
3. The decision to enter a partnership must be mutual. Such a decision is best taken in face-to-face encounter, during which both theological and ecclesiastical issues are discussed with representatives of the proposed partnership.
4. The participants agree that each entity has particular charisma, vitality, and wisdom that offers the other a chance for spiritual growth.
5. The leadership of each Entity is receiving encouragement for the partnership from a higher level (i.e. the diocesan bishops are supportive of the link)
6. The provincial mission boards of both partners have been informed of the proposed partnership and are supportive (they may be able, for example, to point out that one Entity in a particular province has many partnerships whereas other entities have none)

7. The two Entities are different in culture and, perhaps, theological viewpoints, while sharing a yearning for Christian fellowship that transcends those differences.

**Although the priest in a Victorian parish was keen on partnering with a parish in Wales, there was little support from the parishioners because many of them had family and friends in the Philippines and that was where their sphere of interest lay.**

8. Neither Entity shall be considered the 'donor' or 'recipient'. Both Entities should enter the relationship understanding that the relationship will become a source of grace and spiritual growth for both.
9. The partnership requires adequate internal financial resources from each side, although it should be emphasised that the relationship should neither begin with a funding project nor develop into a project-oriented relationship. In order for a partnership to be firmly based on bonds of affection, it may be best for project funding to be avoided until the initial phase of the partnership has been completed (usually five years). If by mutual agreement the partnership rolls over into a renewal phase (usually three years) then funding of a project or two as a part of the broader relationship could prove to be mutually beneficial.
10. The two entities will seek opportunities to join together in mission towards the realization of agreed goals (e.g. the MDGs).

**The partnership between an Australian diocese and a Scandinavian diocese was unlikely to succeed in the long term because nobody had really thought about communications. Quite soon after a partnership document was signed, the Australian bishop was forced to retire following a stroke. A couple of months later, the bishop of the Scandinavian diocese was elected to be the archbishop of the province and so left the diocese. Because the bishops had been at theological college together, most of the communications side of the partnership had been between them. When the bishops' circumstances changed, the Australian diocese and the Scandinavian diocese suddenly found themselves unable to sustain the partnership because no one on either side had been delegated to keep the lines of communication open.**



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11. Before entering a formal partnership with a signed partnership agreement, ordained and lay representatives of both Entities shall fully discuss the assumptions and expectations they bring to the relationship, and shall agree on guidelines for:
- a process for ensuring consent to visits and projects
  - standards of behaviour for delegations appropriate use of money and technology transfer (in either direction)
  - a process for regular reflection and feedback
- If you need help with designing a partnership agreement, contact ABM for some examples.
12. Communication between the partners is the most critical element of a relationship. Before the formal relationship is initiated, a system of communication needs to be agreed upon, including someone whose specific responsibility is to take charge of the communication process.

13. The two Entities agree to an initial relationship of three to five years with the opportunity to extend or to terminate the relationship at the end of this period.
14. The two Entities agree to an annual review of the relationship.

**Additional conditions that may help to bring about Successful Partnerships**

While these secondary criteria are important, they may not be necessary for a vital relationship:

1. It would be helpful in initiating a diocese to diocese partnership if one or more relationships already existed between other Entities within the two dioceses.
2. It would be more cost effective if travel costs are not unreasonably high between Entities.

## Suggested Practical Guidelines for Visiting Partners

The mission team at a church in rural Australia were really excited about the visit of a deacon from their parish partner, based in Eastern Europe. They wanted him to experience everything their parish had to offer, and they wanted him to feel at home. When Deacon Alexei arrived he discovered an exhausting schedule and that his hosts wanted to talk to him till late in the evenings. As English isn't his first language this was a gruelling experience for him – he felt like a performing seal. Added to the non-stop activity during the days the whole visit left Deacon Alexei no time for relaxation, let alone reflection. At the end of the two-week visit he felt utterly exhausted.

### Australia to Partner:

In preparing for official visits:

1. **Think through the visit.** What are the expectations? What is to be seen or learned? What does the partner church wish to include? What time will be required to meet our partner's priorities? Determine mutually acceptable dates for the visit. Consider climatic conditions to determine the best time for all concerned. Discuss the size of the visiting group with your partner.
2. **Meet with groups from other parishes or dioceses who have undertaken similar ventures** to ascertain what they have learned, the joys and the pitfalls
3. **Issues of travel safety** are very real in many places. Make sure you register with DFAT before you leave and read their briefings. Contact danger zone specialists if appropriate. Make sure you have travel insurance.
4. **Culture shock** can be a presenting issue for Australians.
5. **Work out a schedule** with your partner that builds in rest periods and a debriefing session at the end of each day.
6. **Local transportation** can be very expensive for the local church. Overseas visitors should be aware of that and be prepared to assist with costs.
7. **Contact appropriate embassies or consulates** for visas, health shots, the availability of medical care and local regulations or customs, such as restrictions on taking photographs.
8. **Please remember that these visits are to advance the mission of the Church.** They are neither shopping expeditions nor a search for roots. Go as a pilgrim not a tourist.
9. **Persons who travel to the partner's country**, whether for business or other reasons, should remember that their journey also contains serious mission implications



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**Briefing your team for a visit is crucial.** It allows people to ask questions and learn about what they will experience and is helpful in the planning process for everyone. A South Australian school recently took students overseas on a partnership visit. They had pre-visit briefings once a week for six months before departing Australia, and on their return there were weekly debriefing and reflection workshops for a month.

Anglican school materials could be integrated into the regular curriculum.

These might include:

- a. the way in which similar age groups live, study and worship;
- b. the nature of the family, the culture and hopes of young people;
- c. the experiences of faith in their daily lives;
- d. the questions and issues that most concern them.

Questions should be raised about how young people can enter into real partnership with each other in the Body of Christ, and how they can strengthen one another for mission and ministry. Without the emphasis on partnership, understanding and respect for people of different cultures an attempt to form a companion relationship may deteriorate into meaningless curiosity.

affecting the partnership. Such travel can be beneficial to the relationship and such people should contact ABM.

## Partner to Australia:

1. **When preparing to host a partner**, the Australian Entity needs to give serious consideration to:
  - What are their hopes and desires (as well as ours)?
  - What do they want – and what do we want them – to learn and see?

**Briefing your visitors and their hosts is vital. Often things that we consider to be entirely obvious can flummox people from overseas. For example, people who are used to sleeping in tropical climates on flax mats may need to be shown how to turn down the quilt and top sheet on a bed so that they can sleep comfortably during an Australian winter. It is also important to ensure that visitors understand how to use things like electric blankets or heaters safely.**

**Culture shock can occur unexpectedly too. For example, the scantily-clad people featured in Australian advertising can cause a degree of offence that is not usual in Australia.**

**If you have any queries about briefing your visitors, ABM can advise you.**

- What are each partner's expectations?
  - How do we prepare ourselves (in attitude and behaviour) to be looked at, learned from and listened to?
2. **Provide small group conversations** with diocesan leaders to discuss the partnership. Help create an environment in which the visitors feel so at ease that sharing will take place comfortably.
  3. **Do not arrange the schedule so tightly** that the visitors spend all their time speaking, preaching and working. Plan time for rest and relaxation.
  4. Where possible, **arrange the schedule so that guests experience not only life in the local church but also have an opportunity to experience the social and cultural life** in which the church exists, so that they gain a full picture of the world context in which the mission and ministry of the host church is exercised.
  5. **Remember that your guest may be suffering from culture shock.** Things we take for granted can cause confusion or offence to visitors. Other practical things, like making sure your guest has appropriate clothing are important. Remember, for example, people in tropical countries cannot easily buy thermal underwear to keep warm during an Australian winter. Without such a purchase being made in Australia, your guest may feel the cold for days or weeks.

## Partner to Partner:

A debriefing session should occur before a visiting group leaves the partner's country. Plan some post visit educational events in advance of the trip.

### Parish to Parish relationships

The most direct involvement in a partnership is by the people in a congregation communicating with the people in one of the partner's congregations (or institution). Such relationships often take the form of letter writing exchanges and occasional personal visits. It is not intended that

**The parishioners at a Queensland parish and their counterparts in the Anglican Church of Korea developed a Facebook page where they could exchange information and photos. This helped younger and older members of each parish and friendships were maintained using social media.**

this relationship be based upon financial support of one congregation for the other, nor should it interfere with the partner church's mission and fiscal priorities. It is intended to provide needed support and cultural understanding, together with spiritual support for each other's needs.

Parish to parish relationships often survive the conclusion of diocesan relationships or are the product of prior missionary experience. It is important that bishops in both dioceses of a parish to parish relationship be fully aware of the ongoing projects.

### Communication

Diocesan newspapers and parish newsletters are good channels of information, not only in drawing together what is occurring within the relationship, but also in publicizing special events. Feature articles (with photographs) about people can provide a clearer picture of life and mission for each partner.

Audio and videotapes could be exchanged (be certain that the partner has the equipment and capacity to develop and use electronic reproductions), including liturgies, music and material for discussion groups.

Art communicates a great deal. Is art from your partner's culture available in your diocese? Does each partner have artists who could share some of their work for a display or be commissioned to design vestments or other art objects?

Invite local speakers who have knowledge or insight about your partner's country and culture or about issues that affect the church in that place. If you have any queries you can contact ABM for help.

Computer technology now makes it possible to communicate through the internet on a one-to-one basis. This will require a clear understanding of who the primary contact persons are between the Entities. One of the most effective means of communication is through the creation of a companion web site, such as a Facebook page.



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### **Ecumenical and Interfaith Considerations**

Growing partnerships within the Anglican Communion can also serve the wider cause of Christian unity and respect among religions. Whenever possible, potential ecumenical and interfaith activities within the boarder context of an Anglican-to-Anglican partnership need to be considered from the beginning.

Local ecumenical and interfaith participants are most appropriately involved where each Entity receives visitors from its partner. Planning could consider inclusion of ecumenical and interfaith representatives on the visiting teams.

Ecumenical and interfaith groups working together on social, economic and other peace and justice issues are themselves valid partners.

**The mission team at a Tasmanian parish were thrilled that fifty-seven people wanted to travel to visit their partner in the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean for a week. What they didn't realise was that such a large group would force the islanders into either taking far more visitors that they were able to deal with or into an admission (for them one that would be extremely shameful) that they were unable to take such a big group. The islanders felt caught between a rock and a hard place.**

## Reviewing the Partnership

Partnerships are a dynamic force for mission that require regular theological and missiological evaluation. Clear time limits for the relationship need to be set from the beginning to prevent any misunderstanding. If there is an agreement to have a five-year relationship, then in the fourth year, progress will need to be reviewed. This will allow time for a decision to be made whether or not to continue the relationship for a further period.

Among the areas that could be explored:

- How has each companion been enriched through this relationship?
- What changes in mission and ministry occurred because of the relationship?
- How have our expectations been met?
- What problems arose?
- What remains to be done?

## Renewing the Partnership

Partnerships are renewed by mutual agreement from each partner. The normal extension is three years, and the relationship may be renewed as many times as both partners consider mutually beneficial. The evaluation process should help determine whether or not the relationship is to be continued.

At this stage it might be appropriate for funding to be contemplated as a small part of the overall relationship. See Part 6 below for a full discussion.

It might also be appropriate to ask some questions about relative cost benefits of the relationship that has developed. Sometimes the personal investment of a whole group in the travel side represents a very large amount of money. It would be worth reflecting, at least, on whether this is the best way to invest in mutuality going forward now that a relationship has been established.

Formal recognition of an extension is obtained in the same manner as the establishment of the relationship: by requests forwarded to the diocesan bishops for affirmation.

Whether the relationship is extended or concluded, please notify ABM so that records of current relationships may be kept up to date.

## Concluding a Partnership

The end of a partnership should be marked with formal correspondence between bishops. Just as the relationship began with a liturgical observance, it should conclude with a liturgy of thanksgiving in both dioceses, and perhaps a final visit or exchange. It is an excellent way to bring closure to the formal companionship – remembering always that real friendships formed know no time limits and will never be lost.

## What Next?

Since a true partnership transforms both parties, the end of one partnership could lead into another with the same partner (perhaps to work on a new goal together). It might also lead into another relationship with a different partner, bringing in all the experiences already gained.





## Assessing when and whether funding should be a part of your relationship

How many of us would begin a first date with a discussion about finances? Yet, that's what many dioceses and parishes want to do. It can be tempting at the beginning of a partnership to think that you can solve all of a partner's problems with cash. However, this we-can-fix everything-for-you attitude can be seen as being patronising and puts primacy on funding rather than on the relationship itself. Without a solid relational basis to steady things, real fractures can occur if things go wrong with finances and partners can find themselves estranged from one another. Often one partner can overestimate the financial capacity of another and this can cause significant tension.

At a recent mission conference a workshop on church partnerships was led by a priest from Kenya. He has been the CEO of an international mission agency for a number of years. He told everyone that he believed that if an approach was made to a partner from the developed world for funding without a relationship then the request should be declined. 'It's easy,' he said, 'for a partner in the developing world to think that money will solve everything, but it does not and cannot. In the end, it's only a mutual relationship that can sustain and transform – which is what partners everywhere really need.'

If a relationship enters into a renewal phase, it may be appropriate at that stage to begin to discuss funding of a project/s as a part of the broader relationship. Funding should mark a deep commitment of each partner to the other. If a relationship has turned into a strong and vibrant partnership over the initial phase, then funding of project/s may become an appropriate part of the partnership. Consideration of funding before a partnership has thoroughly been established may be considered premature.

Unless the bonds of affection are demonstrably strong, it is usually better to avoid getting into a relationship that involves monetary contributions from one partner to the other. A mere enthusiasm for funding projects that is not preceded by a solid history of working together can be a recipe for disaster.

ABM has years of experience in assessing and building partner church capacity in this area, and therefore strongly advises Australian church partners to work through ABM if contemplating a funding arrangement. ABM works also with other international partners of the various provinces in the Anglican Communion, ABM is in a good position to know who else is funding various activities, and can advise Australian dioceses or parishes on the larger picture.

In the instance where, by mutual agreement with the partner, the Australian Entity does decide to send funds for any reason without the help of a mission agency, the following should be noted:

- a) The donor partner must establish that the recipient partner has the capacity to deal with the funds in a way that is mutually agreed and understood. Not all partners have this capacity, and misunderstandings about money (and the need for things like financial acquittals and audited accounts) can often put severe stress on partner relationships. Establishing financial capacity is unlikely to be adequately assessed without face-to-face meetings with key finance people within the partner organization.
- b) When funding is involved issues can arise of unfairness, whether perceived or actual, where other dioceses or parishes who are not the recipients of funding can feel that all the funds are going to one area, to the neglect of others who may be in greater need. This can cause real difficulties for the partner church as a whole. It is unfair if a particular diocese or parish is the recipient of a disproportionate amount of funding just because the bishop speaks better English than other bishops, or is more charming than others.
- c) Australian Anglicans may find this strange as our church is far more loosely connected than overseas churches are. They tend to be much more centralized, and so partnering in one place can cause dysfunction in another without the agreement of the whole church.
- d) It is therefore vital that if you decide to work without a without the help of a mission agency, that any funding be directed through your partner's provincial (General Synod) office, or at least that the provincial office be informed of any funds being sent and their purpose, so that everyone is aware of what is happening and where.



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Remember that in whatever activities you do together with your partner, it is about doing things with them, rather than for them. Going in with a we-are-here-to-solve-your-problems-with-our-cash mentality is hardly partnership.

**Choosing a partner who is already working collaboratively with a mission agency can have real benefits: it leaves your diocese or parish free to concentrate on building up your relationship with your partner and means that if the time comes to discuss funding then it can be within a context where other projects have already been established and the financial capacity of the partner you want to work with has already been assessed and strengthened by your partner's work with the mission agency.**

**The mission agency will also know if appropriate policies are in place that deal with other issues such as child protection, disability and so on.**

## The benefits of working with a mission agency

On page 5 there is a list of ways in which you and your diocese, parish or school can engage in supporting mission through relationships of various kinds. Here is a table which outlines how ABM can help you, whatever level of engagement you wish to have.

In addition, ABM has an associates' program for committed supporters and regular events are held around the country to help them and other Australian Anglicans to engage with partners.

What would you like to do?	What ABM can offer	The benefit to you
<b>Pray for each other</b>	ABM produces Partners in Prayer, a prayer diary, which allows you to pray for your partner and their personnel. There is a different theme for each day of the month.	Partners in Prayer is a handy way of knowing for whom to pray. It contains a wealth of informative material and prayers to guide you. Any updates are posted on the ABM website, <a href="http://www.abmission.org">www.abmission.org</a> .
<b>Pray during Lent</b>	ABM produces a Lent smartphone app that allows you to pray wherever, whenever.	Your phone can be your prayer guide at any time during Lent.
<b>Learn about each other</b>	ABM produces the e-newsletter, On a Mission, our print publication Partners Magazine, and regular articles for our website and Facebook page.	These are handy formats that give just the right amount of information – not too little, not too much.
<b>Donate to help a partner to achieve one of their goals</b>	ABM produces an annual Project Book which many parishes and individuals use to choose a project or partner to support.	The Project Book has an array of projects to choose from, and it is a great guide to what Australian Anglicans support.  Updates are sent to supporters of particular projects so they know what is happening on the ground.  Donating through an agency also means you do not have to worry about the laws concerning sending financial aid overseas.
<b>Donate to help a partner during an emergency</b>	Australians are generous and like to help in times of natural disasters and other human tragedies. ABM offers a way to respond to emergency situations.	ABM works with Anglican and ecumenical partners around the world during times of crisis to get your funds where they are needed fast.  Donating through an agency also means you do not have to worry about the laws concerning sending financial aid overseas.
<b>Go on pilgrimage to a partner</b>	Each year ABM runs a number of pilgrimages to our Overseas Partners.	ABM will take you to places where you can see how your prayers, interest and donations are making a real difference. Pilgrims return to Australia feeling transformed in their faith.
<b>Host a pilgrimage from a partner</b>	ABM organizes partners to come to Australia for up to three months through its Encounter Program.	ABM helps behind the scenes with getting your partner's visit organized. It makes it much easier for your parish or school to concentrate on the visit itself, not the visa applications.

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- 'Ten Principles of Partnership' from Towards Dynamic Mission: Renewing the Church for Mission (The Anglican Communion) [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership10.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/guidelines/partnership10.cfm)
- The National and World Mission Commission proposals for Partner Dioceses (Diocese of Southern Ohio, the Episcopal Church) [www.episcopalchurch.org/files/Criteria\(1\).doc](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/Criteria(1).doc)
- Companion Relationship Guidelines (The Anglican Communion) [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/companion/comprel.cfm)
- Companion Relationship Guidelines (The Episcopal Church) [www.episcopalchurch.org/library/page/guidelines-establishing-companion-relationship](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/page/guidelines-establishing-companion-relationship)
- Phil Groves: Global Partnerships for Local Mission (Grove Books, Cambridge, UK, 2006)
- Janice Price: World-Shaped Mission Reimagining Mission Today (Church House Publishing, London, 2012)

## Understanding Partnerships

- 1  Are we able to devote time and energy to establishing, nurturing, and maintaining a partnership?
- 2  Have we ascertained that our potential partners are able to devote time and energy to establishing, nurturing, and maintaining a partnership?
- 3  Do we want to be involved with this project just to make ourselves feel good?

## Establishing Partnerships

- 4  Do the other Anglican groups around us (e.g. the diocese, parish groups) share the same enthusiasm?
- 5  Are there others in the diocese who could help us with this partnership (e.g. schools, Anglicare)?
- 6  Is our leadership and our potential partners' leadership supportive of our plans?
- 7  Is our diocesan bishop and our potential partners' diocesan bishop supportive of our plans?
- 8  What skills and assets we can bring to the relationship?
- 9  What needs do we have that our potential partners might be able to help us with?
- 10  How will we guard against inappropriate attitudes like colonialism and paternalism in our relationship?
- 11  How will we keep communications open between ourselves and our potential partners?
- 12  Who will be responsible for communications?
- 13  What kinds of things would we seek to have in our partnership agreement?
- 14  How will we find out what our partner seeks to have in our partnership agreement?
- 15  How will we conclude the negotiations over our partnership agreement?
- 16  How will we mark the signing of our partnership agreement?
- 17  What happens if leadership changes either here or within our partner? How will it affect our relationship?

## Growing Partnerships

- 18  Once our partnership agreement has been signed by both parties, what will we do to ensure we are doing what we said we would do?
- 19  What kinds of things do we now need to do to sustain the relationship?
- 20  Is there a way we can use social media to help keep the relationship growing?
- 21  Are we remembering to pray for our partners as a regular feature of our parish's Sunday and weekday worship?
- 22  Have we asked our partners for input into materials we are producing for ourselves (e.g. Lent/Advent studies)?
- 23  At what stage should we visit our partner and is the cost justifiable? Could we express the same mutuality in a different, less expensive way?
- 24  At what stage should our partner visit us? Is the cost justifiable? Could we express the same mutuality in a different, less expensive way?

## Reviewing, Renewing and Concluding Partnerships

- 25  How will we review the partnership?
- 26  Which parts of the relationship are good and which need some work?
- 27  Should we consider extending the partnership beyond the initial five years?
- 28  How will we celebrate what we have achieved together?

## Where does money fit in?

- 29  Should we consider funding a project or will that complicate a good relationship?
- 30  Do we know if that project fits into the partner's strategic plan?
- 31  Do we know if that project fits into the partner's diocesan strategic plan?



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