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Guidelines for Companion Relationships

INTRODUCTION

Partnership in mission is at the heart of relationships within the Anglican Communion and throughout the wider church. The Companion Relationship Program offers domestic dioceses in the United States opportunities to engage in mission activity with dioceses beyond the United States, as part of the **Partners In Mission** process.

Companion Relationships exist to strengthen each participant in ministry and mission. Ideally, such relationships will involve the partners in increased awareness of the single mission to which each is called. That mission includes:

**Mutual encouragement and prayer
for one another**

**Intensified knowledge of and concern
for one another**

**The exchange of resources,
both spiritual and material**

Companion Relationships are formally recognized by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, on the basis of resolutions from both partners to enter into a relationship. The initial period can be as long as five years, with mutually agreed upon periods of extension.

Guidelines for Companion Relationships provides material based upon guidelines developed by the Anglican Consultative Council, (ACC) and adopted by the General Convention in 1991. It also draws upon the experience of Companion Diocese Relationships throughout the Anglican Communion.

PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION

At its 1973 meeting in Dublin, Ireland, the ACC noted that while the responsibility for mission in one place belongs primarily to the Church in that place, each part of the worldwide Church also carries responsibility for mission in every other place. This concept is called ***Partners In Mission***.

Partners In Mission puts into effect “mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ.” It enables local churches to analyze their own situation, develop their own priorities and decide their own strategies of implementation. Key to this process is consultation between the local Church and its partners worldwide, who bring valuable resources and different insights into ministry and mission from their own cultures, nations and economic situations.

Companion Relationships (companion dioceses, companion linkages) are a growing and important part of ***Partners In Mission***. Companion Relationships are people-oriented, that exist for the purpose of face-to-face mutual support and the strengthening of mission in the companions’ own churches. Companion Relationships can increase awareness of the single mission to which all are called by God and solidarity in the cause of Christ.

Recognizing the growing popularity and importance of Companion Relationships, the 1987 meeting, in Singapore, of the ACC, called for the development of Anglican Communion guidelines, as a necessary discipline in advancing partnership both locally and globally.

MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP

It is in the mutual sharing of God’s gifts to the Church that Mission in Partnership occurs. Mission in Partnership calls for discussion of goals and problems in a process which enables the local church to tackle the real and sometimes painful issues, drawing upon the spiritual, theological, personal and material resources of the church as a whole.

Putting Mission in Partnership into effect calls for openness between different churches about what each has, gives and receives. As in any human relationship, such openness is only achieved by persistent disclosing and patient probing that gradually builds trust.

Establishing a Relationship

ROLE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER

Prior to taking any action, it is recommended that the Partnership Services Officer at the Episcopal Church Center's Office of Anglican and Global Relations be contacted. That office maintains information about dioceses seeking Companion Relationships, together with detailed information about the Provinces and regions of the Anglican Communion.

The Episcopal Church has a network of Companion Diocese Consultants (one in each province) available to assist dioceses in exploring possible relationships. The Consultant can meet with the exploratory committee, and facilitate discussion of mutual hopes, organization, timing and financial planning. Names and the means of contacting consultants are available from the Anglican and Global Relations Office.

(Note: expenses related for the activity of the consultant are covered by specific agreement of the diocese, the consultant and the Church Center.)

PURPOSE OF A COMPANION RELATIONSHIP

- (a) *To help strengthen the Anglican Communion* through the direct experience of interdependence across cultural and geographical boundaries within the Body of Christ.
- (b) *To strengthen one another* for mission, by building a relationship in which each partner is both giver and receiver.

TO HELP STRENGTHEN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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

- (a) Reflect on mission strategy together.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.
- (d) Encourage openness, so that full disclosure of information and resources can be made with each other.

PRINCIPLES OF A RELATIONSHIP

I THE TOTAL COMMITMENT OF THE BISHOP AND THE DIOCESE

Planning for a Companion Relationship should involve all sectors of the local church, the bishop's support being crucial, as well as that of the diocesan convention. The focus is on the Whole People of God, not simply church leadership.

II MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING; MUTUAL DECISIONMAKING

The proposed companions must have the opportunity to understand clearly what is being proposed and why, as well as to know each other's expectations. A process of self-analysis would be appreciated.

The decision to enter a Companion Relationship 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.

III AGREEMENT OR COVENANT

An agreement or covenant, whether formal or informal, should be drafted between the companions, with particular reference to 1) length of the relationship; 2) program activities; 3) financial arrangements; 4) an evaluation process.

IV LENGTH OF A RELATIONSHIP

Friendships formed during the relationship know no time limits. However, the length of time for the initial Companion Relationship should be fixed at five years, with mutually agreed upon periods of extension.

V BE PREPARED FOR:

- (a) Different ways of doing things
- (b) Different attitudes about what is and is not important
- (c) Different concepts and approaches to:
 - Time
 - Ministry
 - Organization
 - Communications
 - Stewardship
 - Issues
 - Responsibilities in the church
- (d) Different language and language dialects

WHO ARE THE COMPANIONS?

Companions should normally be of comparable levels and size within the church structure. In recent years, large USA dioceses have linked themselves with Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

While most Companion Relationships reflect traditional mission relationships (e.g., "North" – "South" linkages) different pairings should be encouraged. For example:

- a) "South" – "South"
- b) One companion from the "North" and two from the "South" or vice-versa
- c) One companion from the "West", one from the "East" and one from the South

THE COMPANION EXPLORATION COMMITTEE

Formation

An exploration committee should be established to search for and negotiate the formation of a Companion Relationship. Such a committee may even be formed to respond to a partner beyond the USA seeking to form a relationship with a domestic diocese.

The committee needs to be carefully chosen to represent a good cross-section of the diocese, including:

- a) The bishop (but not necessarily as chair)
- b) Persons involved or exposed to mission life beyond the diocese
- c) Persons who have traveled
- d) Persons from major program areas within the diocese such as:
 - World Mission Youth
 - Episcopal Church Women United Thank Offering
 - Communications Education
 - Financial Development
- e) Liaison with the domestic province

The person who chairs the committee needs to:

- (a) understand and be committed to **Partners In Mission**;
- (b) have leadership abilities;
- (c) have time to coordinate (communicate);
- (d) be available to visit the partner.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE IDENTIFYING A PARTNER

What is OUR mission? Our mission goals?

What needs of ours can come from a Companion Relationship?

How willing – and able – are we to RECEIVE what our partner can give?

What do we have to give?

ESTABLISH A TIMETABLE

A timeline from which items may be added or deleted, should detail the preliminary work to be done before the formation of the Companion Relationship.

- (a) Which convention will require action?
- (b) When should goals and expectations be identified?
- (c) When should the potential companion be identified?
- (d) When should a preliminary exchange occur?
- (e) When (approximately) will the formal relationship begin?

Other timetable considerations:

1. Periodic reports to diocesan council
2. Diocesan schedule for budget development
3. Deadlines for diocesan publications

ALLOW TIME FOR COMMUNICATION WITH AN INTENDED COMPANION TO OCCUR

AREAS OF SHARING

The emphasis of a Companion Relationship is on the personal and spiritual sharing within the concrete life situations of the partners. Face-to-face encounter are particularly important, and may include:

1. proclamation and application of the Gospel;
2. Bible study and theological reflections;
3. intercession and worship;
4. exchanges about issues of common concern;
5. exchange of ecumenical and interfaith experiences;
6. exchange of lifestyles in Christian witness;
7. pastoral visits to demonstrate solidarity.

Other types of sharing include:

8. exchange of leadership resources and training;
9. exchange of personnel.

Companionship should grow towards standing with and for the partner in its witness and action.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH ELEMENTS

Whenever possible, ecumenical and interfaith dimensions need to be present from the beginning of the Companion Relationship. Local ecu-

menical and interfaith participants should be involved with both partners, especially when receiving visitors from the companion church.

BUDGET PLANNING

The Companion Relationship requires adequate financial resources from the domestic side, although it should be emphasized that THE RELATIONSHIP SHOULD NEITHER BEGIN WITH A FUNDING PROJECT NOR DEVELOP INTO A PROJECT-ORIENTED RELATIONSHIP

The Exploratory Budget

Consider financial provisions for:

- (a) Committee meetings
- (b) Promotion and education materials
(e.g., presentation to convention or diocesan council)
- (c) Visit to the potential partner and visit by the potential partner
- (d) Correspondence and other communication
- (e) Contingencies

The Relationship's Operating Budget

- (a) Committee expense (mailings, minutes, etc.)
- (b) Exchange visits (travel costs for USA travelers and possibly underwriting travel costs for the partner)
- (c) Educational materials
- (d) Promotional materials (slides, videos, etc.)
- (e) Communications with the partner

Small Projects Budget (May Require Extra Fund Raising)

- (a) Gift Exchanges (small basic materials)
- (b) Group Visit (e.g., Youth)

Capital Venture (Special Fund Raising Campaign)

If, in the process of a Companion Relationship, funding projects are developed, the partners may, in consultation with their own national or (Anglican Church) provincial bodies, decide together on the validity of any proposed project. Priorities established at **Partners In Mission** Consultations are to be respected.

Developing the Relationship

SELECTING A PARTNER

It is essential that the prospective partner be given the opportunity to learn what is being proposed, to identify its own expectations and to decide freely whether to enter into a relationship. If at all possible, there needs to be a preliminary meeting with representatives of the prospective partner.

An initial exchange might preferably be between the two bishops, (without actually limiting it to bishop-to-bishop exchanges). If it is a (USA) province to (Anglican) Province relationship, such exchanges would be between the USA provincial president and the leader of that Anglican Province.

It is recommended that the initial period of the relationship be five years, with the option of continuing for period of two or three years, if an extension is mutually agreed upon. **Friendships formed during a relationship know no time limits.**

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.

The Companion Relationship is established upon passage of resolutions by both partners' governing bodies. Such resolutions should be sent to the Partnership Services Officer in the Episcopal Church Center's Office of Anglican and Global Relations, who will then prepare appropriate resolutions for the Episcopal Church's Executive Council to acknowledge and provide formal recognition of the companionship.

BEGINNING THE RELATIONSHIP

It would be prudent for the partners to draft an informal covenant that outlines:

Mutual Expectations

Time Frame

Mutually Agreed Upon Activities

Financial Relationship

An Evaluation Process

(Please note that a covenant is a purely western mechanism, and the process may be quite different culturally from that of the partner.)

Both the beginning and ending of a Companion Relationship should be marked liturgically.

LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER

INFORMATION

Many resources are available to learn about your partner and to allow your partner to learn about you:

- (a) *Partners In Mission* Consultation Reports on file in the Office of Anglican and Global Relations at the Episcopal Church Center.
- (b) *Public Library* books and periodicals on the history and culture of your partner's country and geographic region.
- (c) *Newspapers* from your partner's country.
- (d) *Embassy, Consulate or Mission to the United Nations*
- (e) *People* who have traveled to and from your partner's country.
- (f) *Newsletters from missionaries* serving in the USA or in the partner's country.
- (g) *Diocesan papers, profiles and other materials.*
- (h) *Internet - web site*

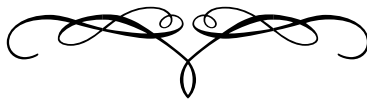
LANGUAGE

Where English is not the national language or not widely spoken, it would be beneficial to have all correspondence translated into the national language. It would also be beneficial for people in your diocese to learn common phrases and some parts of the Prayer Book and Hymnal in your companion's language.

Learning something of another language is immensely enriching. To know the Lord's Prayer, a Grace or even the Creeds can highlight the reality that within the Body of Christ, Jesus is praised in many tongues.

PRAYER

A common prayer and a prayer cycle are important aids for each companion to acknowledge partnership and mission in one another. Special intentions can be highlighted. When clergy lists are prepared for your diocese, include your partner's families.



Guidelines for Partnership Visits in the Anglican Communion

One of the ways of entering into “mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ” is to visit another region of the world for the purpose of being exposed to the life, work, faith and witness of the Church and the people of the area. These Guidelines are offered to assist dioceses, organizations and agencies around the world as they plan either to send or receive a group from another part of the Communion. They may be equally helpful to individuals planning such visits.

PLANNING

Visits should be in response to an invitation by the receiving Church. In cases where the sending group seeks an invitation, it should be done with sensitivity so that the receiving partner is able to say ‘no’ without embarrassment or to suggest a more convenient time.

Partners should agree upon the purposes, terms and duration of the visit, as well as the size and composition of the visiting delegation.

Prepare a detailed budget in advance, outlining all the expected costs and the income sources needed for the trip.

In most cases, the itinerary should be planned by the host partner, in consultation with the leaders of the visiting group.

USA TO PARTNER

In preparing for official visits:

- (a) 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?

- (b) 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.
- (c) Work out a schedule with your partner that builds in rest periods. USA visitors should be aware that local transportation could be very expensive for the local church, and be prepared to assist with local travel costs.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Please remember that these visits are to advance the mission of the church. They are neither shopping expeditions or a search for "roots." Go as a pilgrim not a tourist.

Persons who travel to the partner's country, whether for business or other reasons, should remember that their journey also contains serious mission implications affecting the Companion Relationship. Such travel can be beneficial to the relationship and such people should be contacted by the Companion Committee.

PARTNER TO USA

When preparing to host a partner, the USA diocese needs to give serious consideration to:

- (a) What are their hopes and desires (as well as ours)?
- (b) What do they want – and what do we want them – to learn and see?
- (c) What are each partner's expectations?
- (d) How do we prepare ourselves – in attitude and behavior – to be looked at, learned from and listened to?

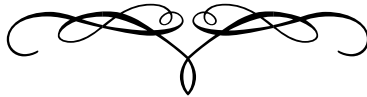
Do not arrange the schedule so tightly that the visitors spend all their time speaking, preaching and working. Plan time for rest and relaxation.

Provide small group conversations with diocesan leaders to discuss the implications of Partners In Mission. Help create an environment in which the visitors feel so at ease that sharing will take place comfortably.

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.

FOLLOW-UP

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.



Fostering the Relationship

A Companion Relationship requires involvement of people beyond the bishops and the group interested in world mission. It needs to be worked into the life of each diocesan body. An important priority of the relationship is the active participation of people, so that the relationship forms a pattern of life in each congregation.

PARISH TO PARISH RELATIONSHIP

The most direct involvement in a Companion Relationship is by the people in a domestic 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 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.

EDUCATION

Special diocesan church school materials can 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 will deteriorate into meaningless curiosity.

Special diocesan adult study material could draw on the resources of *Partners In Mission* Consultations. Assistance may be sought from the staff in the Office of Anglican and Global Relations. Curricula could focus on the comparative study of respective cultures, social and the issues facing each church.

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. Contact the Office of Anglican and Global Relations for names of former Appointed Missionaries, Volunteers for Mission or students in your diocese.

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 companions. One of the most effective means of communication is through the creation of a companion web site.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH CONSIDERATION

Growing partnerships within the Anglican Communion should also serve the wider cause of Christian unity and respect among religions. Whenever possible, ecumenical and interfaith activities need to be considered from the beginning of a Companion Relationship.

Local ecumenical and interfaith participants are most appropriately involved where each companion 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 participants in ***Partners in Mission***.



The Continuing Relationship

EVALUATING THE RELATIONSHIP

Companion Relationships 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:

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

RENEWING THE RELATIONSHIP

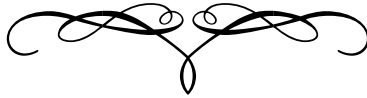
Companionships are renewed by mutual agreement from each partner. The normal extension is three years, and the relationship may be renewed as many times as both partners consider mutually beneficial. The evaluation process should help determine whether or not the relationship is to be continued.

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

Whether the relationship is extended or concluded, please notify the Partnership Services Officer so that records of existing relationships may be kept current.

CONCLUDING THE RELATIONSHIP

The end of a Companion Relationship 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 friendships formed know no time limits and will never be lost.*



Appendix A

67th GENERAL CONVENTION Meeting in New Orleans September 5-15, 1982

RESOLUTION A-128A

WHEREAS, The Standing Commission on World Mission's publication, *Mission in Global Perspective*, reminds the Church that all churches are part of one body in such a way that if one is blessed, all are blessed, of if one suffers, all suffer, and that in his mercy, God in Christ holds before the peoples of the earth a mirror in which they may see themselves in truth – both as they are and as they are meant to be, therefore be it

RESOLVED, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 67th General Convention, meeting in New Orleans, commends the participation of many Provinces, Dioceses, and Congregations in the ministry of World Mission, while at the same time acknowledging the tendency of many to view World Mission as someone else's work somewhere else and the subsequent failure of many to understand this task as a priority item on the agenda of the Church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Church reaffirms its commitment to World Mission and calls upon every Diocese to establish a Commission or Committee on World Mission to stimulate every Congregation to personalize its relationship to World Mission by involvement in one or more of the following:

- Companion Diocese relationship;
- Parish-to-Parish relationship;
- Volunteers for Mission;
- Missionary service;
- Student scholarships, exchanges and special giving;

and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Executive Council and its staff provide increasing opportunities for the personalization of mission.

Motion carried
The House concurred

Appendix B

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Approval of

A Companion Relationship

RESOLVED, that the _____ Convention of the Diocese of _____ endorses the formation of a Companion Relationship between this diocese and the Diocese of _____, beginning _____ and continuing until _____ or terminated by mutual consent; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the (bishop or World Mission Commission, department or group) be empowered to set up a representative Companion Relationship Commission to implement this relationship, including the recruitment of persons and congregations in the diocese to participate in this relationship.

