

Fundamentals of Mission Partnerships

DRAFT (4-11-2007)

- Characteristics of Mission Partnerships
- Phases of Mission Partnership Development
- Benefits of Mission Partnerships
- Pitfalls of Mission Partnerships

Introduction

The Church is the Body of Christ with many members, each part having a role and function. The cooperation of the whole comes from direction from the head of the Body, Jesus. The many members can be individual people, small groups with particular ministry functions, or congregations with particular callings for ministry in particular contexts. At times, ministry is better achieved through a cooperative effort of several congregations working together in a particular context. In any context, the Body is more effective as all the parts exercise their ministries toward the mission and vision given by Jesus, the Head.

Characteristics of Mission Partnerships

- Two or more congregations of any size may form a Mission Partnership.
- Congregations and/or special ministries must be in the same geographic region.
- The congregations and/or special ministries covenant together to work cooperatively and collegially to share ministry, resources, and projects.

- Financial resources for the cooperative ministry come from the congregations with possible grants for other sources.
- Each individual congregation maintains their own identity, budget, and sends their own delegates to the Region and Diocesan Convention.
- If there are three or more congregations, a Mission Partnership Council consists of 2 or 3 representatives from each congregation. The Council develops programs, events, hires staff, and provides for necessary training to support the ministry and mission of the congregations and cooperative vision of the Mission Partnership. When there are only two congregations in the Partnership, the wardens from the congregations draw up a letter of agreement between the congregations and the Partnership Vicar outlining the vision, fiscal responsibilities, and ministry expectations for each congregation and a job description for the Partnership Vicar.
- When there is a Partnership Council the officers will be as follows:
 - Lay President – elected by the Council. Convener and communicator for the Council.
 - Treasurer – elected by the Council. Receives money from congregations and other sources. Pays stipends and benefits of the Clergy & Staff for the Mission Partnership Ministry Team. Pays program expenses of the Mission Partnership as established by the Council.
 - Secretary – elected by the Council. Keeps a record of the minutes of the Council.
- Mission Partnership Ministry Team may consist of:
 - Partnership Vicar** – full time priest appointed by the Bishop
 - Oversight of the Mission Partnership and Ministry Team
 - Assist the Ministry Team in implementing policy and mission strategy
 - Oversight of training of licensed lay ministries

Mutual Ministry Review annually

Ministry Team Clergy – full or part time priests or deacons serving in the Mission Partnership

Ministry Team Lay Members – administrative or program staff (Youth, Christian Formation, Parish Nurse, etc.), and/or licensed lay ministries serving in the Mission Partnership under the direction of the Partnership Vicar (preachers, pastoral leaders, worship leaders, Eucharistic visitors, Eucharistic ministers, and catechists)

Benefits of Mission Partnerships

- Offers potential for maintaining integrity of the local congregation
- Maintains ministry in areas where resources for ministry are diminishing
- Offers potential for greater mission impact in a geographic context
- Promotes collegiality, networking, associations, and relational bonds for accomplishing God's mission
- Pools resources for program, staff, and training opportunities
- Intentionally equips laity for the work of ministry
- Renews congregations in mission in interdependent relationships with other congregations and the local community contexts

Pitfalls of Mission Partnerships

- Falling back into old patterns, methods, or modes (i.e. self protection and isolation) instead of working to learn new ways of being the church in a wider context of vision for the partnership
- Falling back into old images of church structures and expectations of the ordained

- Poor communication and accountability, thus losing sight of larger vision and mission
- Competition instead of cooperation (valuing part of each congregation in the mission strategy of the partnership)