

Best Practices for Mission Partnerships

(Based on a framework provided by the Kenya Mission Network and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa)

I. Spiritual Development

- A. Set spiritual development as a foundation
 - Begin and end meetings, gatherings, conferences and phone calls with prayer
 - Worship together
 - Exchange sermons
 - Exchange pastors
 - Share Bible study — partners can alternate writing the Bible study
 - Share devotionals — can be written by partners
 - Share prayer requests
 - Share simultaneous prayer times for specific prayers
 - Use tangible reminders for prayers between partners, such as bookmarks, wristbands, pins, etc.
 - Share partnership concerns and joys in weekly bulletin, newsletter, announcements from the pulpit or during worship
 - Hold spiritual retreats

II. Relationship Development

- A. Remember that communication is key to keeping the partnership alive
 - Establish a regular basis of communication
 - Use technology to connect with partners
 - Phone call/conference call, email, Skype, Zoom, Facebook, blog
 - Skype worship services
 - Record worship services and share by mail, CD, DVD and online
 - Practice candid communication with partners, especially when sharing what does and doesn't work
 - Include the home congregation by publicizing information about the partnership (bulletin boards, newsletters, bulletins, websites, etc.)
 - Be intentional about ways to share partnership trip experiences upon return home
- B. Be in community with partners
 - Listen, ask questions, don't just "do"
 - Facilitate partner exchange visits (both ways)
 - Have Bible study, even when apart
 - Participate in home stays when visiting one another
 - When together, worship, share meals, play games and hold discussion groups on topics of shared interest
 - When working on a project, work side by side
 - When partners visit the U.S., ensure there are opportunities for them to participate in church and community programs (meals, host homestays, participation in church gatherings and worship)
 - Learn words and phrases in your partner's language(s)
 - Recognize diversity in gifts and strengths; receive the gifts of others: hospitality, life experience, evangelism, trades, vocations, occupations
 - Include children in the partnership through VBS, pen pals, Sunday school classes
 - Share training resources on a partnership or church website
 - Promote and support partners' leadership development (lay leader, pastor, elders and evangelists)
 - Promote and support leadership development, especially for women

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- C. Learn from one another through education and orientation
 - Reverse ambassadorship and communicating the experience after a trip — make this the expectation in training before you go (give a face to the place)
 - Seek to understand and appreciate cultural/ethnic differences
 - Be intentional about setting times for trips and visits
 - Allow ample time for training and orientation
 - Include expectations of post-trip debriefing and storytelling with your church
 - When partners visit, and even through virtual means and media, provide opportunities for them to participate in worship/church school/presbytery activities/schools to share news and culture
 - Use a curriculum about mission for Sunday school, VBS, and youth group
 - Seek information:
 - National news (print, TV and web)
 - Research relevant topical material — history, biographies, mission texts
 - Use online information from PC(USA) resources, mission co-workers, universities

III. Partnership Development

- A. Be sure that there is agreement on purpose and plans
 - Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or a partnership agreement; use it as a foundation for planning and evaluation
 - Identify point of contact person(s) between partners
 - Establish accountability
 - Be sure that all voices are heard and that all “stakeholders” are on board
 - Come together periodically to listen to partners and evaluate together
 - Inform partnership leadership and seek approval when warranted
 - Plan for sustainability
 - Do reciprocal needs assessment
- B. Shape and share a common vision
 - Seek spiritual guidance — pray, wait, discern
 - Plan retreats to build the relationship and develop a common vision
 - Understand that a common vision is more than the project; use more than project language to shape vision
- C. Develop a structure that is based through channels and not individuals (see section III A)
 - Leadership will change during the life of a partnership
 - Know the community to know the channels
 - Structure should be broad, not with just a pastor
 - Share excerpts of minutes of session meetings, partnership meetings to know that you are working with an institution, community or group, not with an individual
 - Create a partnership board, partnership committee, management committee
 - Be inclusive of the whole community
 - Share responsibilities