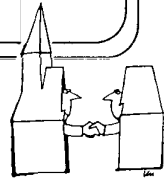


PARTNERSHIP AND TWINNING; Some guidelines for local churches



INTRODUCTION

The Board of Overseas Affairs of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC) has discussed linkages between churches and church groups with local churches and groups abroad, particularly in the 'third world' or 'two thirds world'. It was decided to produce a short leaflet with some thoughts on the matter. However as the World Church Office of the Methodist Church in Britain had already produced such a leaflet it was decided, with their agreement, to adapt their text for an inter-church audience.

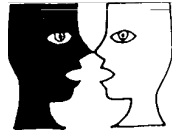
The following advice is recommended for consideration by the ICC Board of Overseas Affairs.

Before any linkage is pursued, it would be wise to make contact with appropriate bodies in your own denomination dealing with overseas churches. They may be able to offer helpful suggestions and warn of possible pitfalls

It is very important to be clear about the purpose, possible nature and outcomes of any linking scheme.

1. Purposes - good practice

- to learn from each other
- to develop understanding and friendship with Christians in a different culture
- to share faith and insights to share in prayer
- to assist each other in mission where each church is set



2. Possible problems which need to be addressed at the outset

- Money-
The main reason for setting up a partnership should never be money; overriding needs to either raise money, or receive funding for a particular project, will inevitably distort the nature of the partnership.
- Narrow focus - If a church's world focus is narrowed on one particular church link, other aspects of world mission can be excluded.
- Involvement - Everybody in the church needs to feel involved, and not just a few enthusiasts.

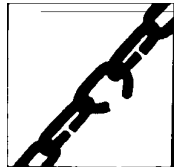
3 Some principles of partnership - good practice

- Be very clear from both sides about the purpose (see 1 above)

- Clearly state who will be responsible for the organisation - this need not be the minister
- Clearly state, at the outset, how long the proposed link will last - at least build in a review to monitor the situation.
- If exchanges are envisaged, both sides will need to be clear about:
 - how many people will be involved?
 - who would benefit most?
 - how long the exchange should be?
 - when the exchange will take place?
 - cost implications for individuals and the church?
- Budgets should be worked out in advance - for travel, correspondence, administration etc.
- A report should be submitted regularly to the partner church (denominational church offices may also welcome a copy).

4 Developing the partnership - good practice

- Personal contacts are often the reason for the partnership beginning, and friendships will certainly enable the partnership to flourish. Wide circulation of the following will help:
 - letters
 - photographs
 - exchange of cassettes or videos
 - church newsletters
- Provide up-dated displays and news
- Try and learn each other's language
- Exchange of personnel
- Remember also to build on existing local links - civic, diocesan, ecumenical etc. - and also mission partners that are known



5 Keeping a balance



- In some partnerships it may be easier for one church to raise money for an overseas visit, than for its partner church to do likewise.
 - this could distort the partnership
 - how should money be raised - and shared - by the partner churches for exchange purposes?
- Sensitivity will be needed in all financial matters
 - will one church be the 'giver'?
 - will the 'receivers' assume a junior role?
- Be prepared to see the wealth of the partnership in terms such as hospitality, enthusiasm, challenge and friendship
- The partnership should help people to share in not just each other's situations, but also raise awareness that there are many different needs in the world, all deserving our interest and prayers.

6 The review

- State at the outset when the review will take place
 - not too soon
 - allow time for the partnership to develop
- Similar questions should be asked of both partners, but allow cultural differences to enrich the review process too!
- A good review will both assess the past and look forward to future developments

Produced by the Board of Overseas Affairs, Irish Council of Churches, 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ, Phone 01232 - 663145. Adapted from the document "Partnership/Twinning - Guidelines for churches/Circuits" produced by the Methodist Church, World Church Office in Britain.

