

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 



Global Mission Digital Toolkit

**Companion Relationship
Guidelines**

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INTRODUCTION

Partnership in mission is at the heart of relationships within the Anglican Communion and throughout the wider church. Companion Relationships offer opportunities to engage in mission activity with partners in other provinces to work towards “Becoming a World Where Love is the Way.”

Companion Relationships exist to strengthen each participant in ministry and mission. They can take shape in a variety of ways. Companion Relationships can be formal or informal. Formalized relationships are passed through resolutions at Executive Council. All relationships should be built upon mutual understanding and a shared vision. They can exist between congregations, dioceses, provinces, institutions, or any combination thereof.

These Companion Relationship Guidelines provide material based upon the *Guiding Principles for World Mission* from the Standing Commission on World Mission along with the experience of The Episcopal Church’s Office of Global Partnerships. GO as a Way of Love practice invites us all to cross boundaries, listen deeply, and to live like Jesus.

BECOMING A WORLD WHERE LOVE IS THE WAY

This message to the church was developed by the Standing Commission on World Mission and is awaiting official approval at General Convention in 2022. ([LINK TO MESSAGE](#))

GUIDING PRINCIPLES for WORLD MISSION

The Guiding Principles for World Mission were developed by the Standing Commission for World Mission and are awaiting approval at General Convention in 2022. ([LINK TO PRINCIPLES](#))

ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP

ROLE OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS IN COMPANION RELATIONSHIPS

The ministry of Global Partnerships is to be a resource for those interested in building new relationships across the Anglican Communion and those already engaged with their partners. The office maintains information about who is seeking new relationships and can help make connections to existing global ministries or others also seeking new relationships.

Global Partnerships has Partnership Officers in four different regions of the Anglican Communion, Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean, Asia and the South Pacific, and Jerusalem and the Middle East. The Partnership Officers are very knowledgeable about their regions and are happy to talk to you about specific partners. The Officer for Global Relations and Networking [contact information listed below] can provide you with more information about Companion Relationships and putting your relationships on the [Episcopal Asset Map](#).

Contact information: globalpartnerships@episcopalchurch.org

PURPOSE OF A COMPANION RELATIONSHIP

1. *To help strengthen the Anglican Communion* through the direct experience of interdependence across cultural and geographical boundaries within the Body of Christ
2. *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

- Develop the identity of each partner, together with the potential for each one to carry out its mission in the context of its community.
- Promote greater cooperation between each partner's members and apply mission in partnership at all levels of the church's life.
- Support each other under a variety of constraints, build confidence through the experience of knowing that partners have been and will be present.

TO STRENGTHEN ONE ANOTHER

- Reflect on mission together.
- Clarify goals and priorities in partnership, based upon the perceived mission of the church in each place, and the willingness to redefine that mission in light of the partnership experience.
- Establish a mutual understanding of gifts so that they can be used and shared creatively in God's mission.
- Encourage openness, so that full disclosure of information and resources can be made with each other.

PRINCIPLES OF A RELATIONSHIP

THE COMMITMENT OF BOTH PARTNERS

Planning for a Companion Relationship should involve all sectors of the local church. The focus is on the Whole People of God, not simply church leadership.

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.

OPEN MINDS AND OPEN HEARTS

In developing any new relationship expectations and assumptions should not be made. It is important to enter a relationship with an open mind and an open heart and allow the Spirit to move. We all bring our own particularities to a relationship. It is important to celebrate the unique gifts along with the commonalities.

AGREEMENT OR COVENANT

An agreement or covenant can be drafted between the companions to outline the relationship. This is a piece that can be used if the companions desire to formalize their relationship through executive council. The Global Partnerships Department can provide examples and guidance for those interested in drafting an agreement or covenant.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Why do we desire to enter into a companion relationship?
- How can we seek and serve Christ in each other?
- What do we hope to learn from each other?

DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

BEGINNING THE RELATIONSHIP

As the relationship begins, consider the following:

- Mutual Expectations
- Mutually Agreed Upon Activities
- Financial Relationship
- A 'Check In' Process

It is recommended that both partners engage in a learning process about the other. Each partner has a unique history that informs their story and current context.

ASSET MAPPING AND GIFTS DISCERNMENT

Many resources are available for mutual learning and exploration about each partner. Consider the following options below in order to strengthen the companion relationship:

1. *Global Mission Digital Toolkit*
2. *Books and articles* on history and culture of your partner's country
3. *Local newspapers* from your partner's country
4. *Embassy, Consulate or Mission to the United Nations*
5. *People* from your congregation or diocese who have traveled to or are from your partner's country for first-hand story sharing
6. *Newsletters from missionaries* serving in the USA or in the partner's country
7. *Internet* – research online about the history and culture of your partner's country

LANGUAGE

Where languages differ, it would be beneficial to have all correspondence translated into each language of the partners. 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.

PRAYER

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

PARTNERSHIP VISITS IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

One of the ways of entering into “a world where love is the way” is to GO by crossing boundaries to 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 recommendations are offered to assist individuals, dioceses, organizations, and agencies around the world as they plan either to send or receive people from another part of the Communion.

PLANNING

Visits should be in response to an invitation. In cases where one seeks an invitation, it should be done with sensitivity so that the either partner is able to say ‘no’ without embarrassment or is able 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.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Think through the visit.
 - o What are the expectations?
 - o What is to be seen or learned?
 - o What does each partner wish to include and share?
 - o What work of preparation needs to be done?
- 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.
- Do not arrange the schedule so tightly that anyone spends all their time speaking, preaching, and working. Plan time for rest and relaxation.
- Have a conversation with your partner as you develop your budget. Be as transparent as possible about expectations.
- Contact appropriate embassies or consulates for visas, health shots, the availability of medical care and local regulations or customs.
- Please remember that these visits are to foster relationships. Go as a pilgrim, not a tourist.

Provide small group conversations with church or diocesan leaders to discuss the Guiding Principles for World Mission to help build trust and a place where everyone feels comfortable sharing.

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.

How will your visit be used as a tool for evangelism—to seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' loving presence in the stories of all people and then inviting everyone to more?

FOSTERING THE RELATIONSHIP

A Companion Relationship requires intentional communication and active participation by both partners on a regular basis. The active participation of the people will help weave the relationship into the pattern of life for each partner.

PARISH TO PARISH RELATIONSHIP

One of the most direct ways for parish to parish involvement in a Companion Relationship is through communicating by letter or email exchanges, instant messaging, video calls, and personal visits.

It is not intended that this relationship be based upon financial support of one congregation for the other. It is intended to provide needed support and cultural understanding, together with spiritual support for each partner's needs.

Parish to parish relationships often survive the conclusion of diocesan relationships or are the product of prior missionary experience or other personal connection. It is helpful if bishops in both dioceses of a parish to parish relationship are aware of the relationship and can be supportive.

COMMUNICATION

It is important to keep up regular communication between each parish and throughout the congregations on not only the status of the relationship but provide events for greater understanding of each parish.

Ideas for communication outlets:

- Diocesan newspapers and parish newsletters
- Audio and video exchanges
- Art show/exchange
- Invite local speakers knowledgeable about your partner's country and culture
- Skyping (video calling) for meetings and/or discussion groups

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 should be considered from the beginning of a Companion Relationship.

THE CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP

EVALUATING THE RELATIONSHIP

Companion Relationships are a dynamic force for mission that require regular theological and missiological evaluation. Clear communication should be established at the beginning of the relationship to prevent any misunderstanding. Allow time for evaluation and time to discuss whether this relationship is right for each partner.

Questions to be considered while evaluating:

- How has each partner been enriched through this relationship? What have we each learned?
- What have we done together?
- Have our expectations been met?
- What problems arose?
- What are our hopes and dreams?
- What stories do we want to share?
- How has our understanding of mission changed or been shaped by the relationship?

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

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.

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