

Questions for Your Group to Consider in Identifying a Mission Partner

1. Do we already have contacts or connections with a potential partner or country or region of the world?

- an existing presbytery or synod international partnership?
- financial support of PC(USA) mission workers in a particular country or type of ministry?
- the presence of persons from another country in our home communities?
- acquaintance with a particular individual or church in another country through a mission trip or other encounter?

2. Have there been any prior contacts between our denomination and our potential partner?

If there is already a relationship between the PC(USA) and the partner you are considering, the Equipping for Mission Involvement Office will be able to offer you valuable information about the history and current situation as you pursue a partnership.

3. What sort of church body, church-related agency or institution would be appropriate for us?

Consider such factors as socio-economic status, agricultural versus rural setting, the stance your congregation or presbytery takes regarding social and political issues, ability to converse in each other's language. Also, consider size. A large congregation, for example, could overwhelm a tiny congregation in another country. It can be a bit like a bear dancing with a butterfly. Consider the primary types of ministries you are engaged in at home and your need for growth in ministry and your gifts to share.

4. For a congregation: What can we do to honor the partnership that our own presbytery or synod has already established?

Over 60% of the presbyteries and synods in the PC(USA) have ongoing international partnerships with other denominational bodies or institutions. One of the most useful and affirming means of establishing a congregation-to-congregation partnership is to establish one within this existing framework, which strengthens ties among all parties, as all the partners work together in Christian cooperation in joint mission. Another consideration is whether your church could become a leader in establishing a partnership for the whole presbytery, if one does not already exist. Part of our Reformed/Presbyterian understanding is that we are a "connectional" church. How can we honor and strengthen our connectionalism and our joint witness through an international partnership?

5. Are we open to going where the Spirit leads, even if that partnership may be further away than we had hoped or in a conflicted part of the world?

Regions that are physically close to the U.S. tend to be more popular than other regions for partnerships and mission trips, because they are easier and sometimes less expensive to visit. Some partner churches in close proximity to the U.S. face more partnerships with North Americans than they have the membership to accommodate. Meanwhile, there are partner churches and institutions in countries all over the world who eagerly seek out partnerships. Your national staff can provide much up-to-date

information on institutions and church bodies that are looking for your friendship and can also help you avoid some situations that might impede a relationship.

Suggested Process for Identifying a Potential Partner

Whether you are already in conversation with a potential partner or are open to exploring different opportunities, the following process is suggested.

1. Consult. Through the Equipping for Mission Involvement office, consult with the area coordinator for the regions of the world with which you hope to be in partnership. They can provide information about those seeking partnerships and valuable insights about the regions, forward useful materials and, if you have not already done so, help you to identify a potential partner. They may also be able to connect you with other PC(USA) groups who have a partnership in your place of interest and who can mentor you through the process.

2. Communicate. Communicate with the potential church partner. Your profile and partnership proposal may serve as a basis for the initial conversations or exchanges. Ask them to send their own profile and partnership proposal, based on their own policy for carrying out relationships with international groups. This type of exchange establishes an atmosphere of mutuality early in the process. Discuss with your partner other ways to share about each other.

3. Learn.

Learn about the country and region of a potential partner. What is the culture like? What languages are spoken? What are current issues and challenges in that place? Are there similar challenges in your own area?

Learn about the church in that place and the history of PC(USA) relationship with it. If there is a Covenant between the PC(USA) and the national church body, ask an EMP team member for a copy of it.

5. Pray. Pray for the people of the potential partnership. Pray for yourselves as you seek God's leading. Pray for the future relationship.

6. Visit. Plan exchange visits with a potential partner. Being together, companions in Christ around God's table of grace, is primary to the relationship.

7. Prepare. Prepare the individuals who will be part of any exchange visits. (See resources for "People Exchanges" in the Mission in Partnership Resource List to help you.)

As the first contacts are made, it is important that no premature commitments be made, especially to large projects that require major funding. Let the relationship develop over time before taking the step of creating a covenant agreement.

Throughout this process it is important to listen for, and be mindful of, the larger priorities of the partner church. This attentiveness helps both you and your international partner sustain the integrity of existing mission relationships between the PC(USA) and the national church or institution in the other country, and also helps to avoid possible misunderstandings as your relationship develops.