Northwest University

Building Local Church Partnerships for Cross-Cultural Development

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Introduction

I knew I wanted a career connected to my faith since I was in middle school. I dreamed of working globally for a nonprofit in a remote location living meagerly, enjoying the local culture, and helping the local community. During my religious undergrad studies, I was never taught the importance of partnering with others, instead I was told I would make it to the "mission field" by grit and determination. Graduating from college changed the trajectory of my life and I got a job at a local church. While I was working in this context, I began noticing other churches in the same city leading community development but was discouraged from attending their church service or serving with them. It was as if my church was competing with other churches to stay the most relevant and most appealing. It was only when I started working for Dave Hall at a different church that I was encouraged to "get off the reservation," go see what other churches were doing, and explore if there was a way to accomplish more together than on our own. A spirit of partnership was forming, and it was compelling me to join.

Since the 1800s, the Western Christian Church has been a leading force in missionary service. Missionary service including building hospitals, schools, and general proselytizing has been an important cornerstone for Christian churches. However, the best intentions in bringing religion to those that did not share their beliefs is woven with paternalism, creating codependent systems and structures. At the Edinburgh conference in 1910 an Anglican from South India said, "Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned." Witnessing the missionaries' good deeds made their altruistic beliefs evident. The missionaries were focusing on providing aid to the community, but they missed what the Indians were truly desiring. The Anglican continued, " We also ask for

love. Give us friends" (Robert and Robert 100). This plea from an Indian Christian highlights the rugged individualism the Global North Evangelical Church continues to operate from as they serve the vulnerable. The lack of friendship and partnership missing from the Global North Church is most stark when compared to countries that are highly relational and highly dependent on one another. It is generally recognized that this rugged individualism has led to the erosion of social bonds and loyalty to churches (Davis 121). Organizational differences, theological conflicts, or denominational bylaws often prohibit churches from working together.

Successful local church partnerships in the Global North lead with vulnerability to build a foundation of trust and shared values, which promote local and global partnerships. Forged in friendship, Global North and Global South church leaders build the foundational values of partnership. However, friendship and partnership are not synonymous. In order to successfully partner with stakeholders, each leader must have a clear understanding of their unique church culture, the assets they have to share, and areas of improvement that other churches could assist with.

This qualitative study is formulated around the question, how do Global North local churches partner together for cross-cultural development? The research questions that help formulate this study are:

1. What barriers exist for churches to partner with other local churches?

2. How are relationships developed between churches in multi-church partnerships?

3. What is the quality of the relationship between churches and those they serve?

4. What does success look like in a church partnership?

Drawing on lessons learned through a case study of the Middle East Collaborative, a partnership of four San Diego churches focusing on development in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon,

this thesis will explore trust-building experiences, the significance of shared values, and the impact these processes have on cross-cultural development. A case is made that Global North churches partnering together is vital to the personal development of stakeholders as well as necessary for the growth of their community. Finally, this thesis includes a workbook entitled "Cielo," a guide for churches that want to lead their local community in partnering with others for greater impact.

Context

The fieldwork for this thesis focuses on a group of churches known as the Middle East Collaborative located in San Diego. The founding Outreach Pastors are Dave Hall from Emmanuel Faith Community Church (EFCC), Mike Goulet from Mission Hills Church, John Cook from Maranatha Chapel and Nic Gilmour from North Coast Calvary Chapel (NCCC). There is only one executive pastor who helped initiate the Collaborative, Assad Saif, who leads the Orchard, a church located in Escondido. Kalani Jones and Todd Hoyt help lead the efforts for EFCC and David Englemen, affectionately referred to as "Coach" helps lead the partnership for North Coast Calvary Chapel. These churches are all considered evangelical churches and three (EFCC, NCCC, Maranatha) are considered mega-churches with having over 3,200 in weekly attendance. Both the Orchard and Mission Hills are small churches defined as under 200 people in weekly attendance. Over the last three years, the Collaborative has provided over $100,000 to churches in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as sent over 100 people to complete projects or provide summer camps for children during two-week trips to the Middle East.

From the golden shorelines to the inland orange groves, North County San Diego is as diverse as it's landscape. Each church involved in the Middle East Collaborative has rich histories that lead to unique cultures. The Calvary Chapel denomination is large in San Diego

due to the founder, Chuck Smith, starting the denomination locally in the '70s. The Calvary's bring charisma and understanding of holding dynamic group gatherings, where EFCC and Mission Hills bring steadiness and deep commitment to global causes and the Church. I have both an emic and etic knowledge of these churches; I grew up in the Calvary Chapel denomination and led the Outreach Ministries at EFCC.

Each church in the Collaborative was working with local churches or non-profit organizations in the Middle East before the refugee crises in 2017, and prior to the inception of the Collaborative. Their involvement in supporting Lebanese organizations like Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) and Cedars Network, as well as churches like Resurrection Church Beirut, paved the way for them to partner with the Lebanese organizations as a collection of churches. The San Diego Collaborative was focusing on providing education to refugees and found partners with Lebanese and Jordanian organizations that were already fulfilling this development goal.

Theological Framework for Partnership

There are no two churches exactly alike; each has a unique culture and, more importantly, its own theological framework. Since this study evaluates the Church, it is necessary to mention the Bible, as Christians view it as being inspired by God and an authoritative text (Wu 316). Many Middle East Collaborative pastors refer to 1 Corinthians 12:25 as the motivation to partner with the other churches, which reads, "so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another" (*New American Standard Bible*). The pastors of the Middle East Collaborative pointed to this verse because of a personal conviction that working together was more honoring to their faith than working independently.

Theological differences surface as stakeholders come together for the work of the partnership. The Middle East Collaborative's differences were minimal when considering the array of theological perspectives that exist. Cook shared that his theological framework compelled him to partner with other churches because of what he believed to fulfill Biblical prophecy (Cook). While no other pastors mentioned a similar framework, they also did not suggest that Cook's exclude him from the Collaborative. Similarity in core doctrinal beliefs makes partnering easier, but church leaders should consider what core doctrinal beliefs they need to see reflected in partner's frameworks and what they are willing to be of tertiary importance.

Understanding Church Structure

Organizations have structures that allow them to successfully operate and serve their intended audience. Much like heads of organizations, church leaders are often externally focused on the programs they manage, the staff they oversee, and daily requirements. While helping to lead a church, pastors also need to be attuned to the fact that church structures are rooted in history as well as theology (Swarat 85). Denominations, advisory boards, or staff organizational charts all provide different governing structures that affect the extent to which a pastor can openly offer partnership to others. Understanding church leaders and how they lead their church is necessary to evaluate as churches approach one another for partnership.

Faith Background. Individuals bring with them life experiences that contribute to their perspectives and opinions. Likewise, church leaders have experiences that contribute to their faith. These experiences shape how they perceive the world and those in it. In discussions, church leaders offer titles of books they have read, theologians who have shaped their ministry, or names of leaders that they admire as a way of sharing who they are influenced by. These tokens of information are a means for leaders to establish connections with others. In the work of

partnership, those involved must honor their own background to honestly move forward with others.

It would be challenging to find two evangelical Christians whose faith construct is exactly the same. Even scholars have a difficult time defining evangelicalism. Assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Molly Worthen defines evangelicalism through three elemental concerns that unite Protestants, "…how to repair the fracture between spiritual and rational knowledge; how to assure salvation and a true relationship with God, or "meet and know Jesus," as some evangelicals say; and how to resolve the tension between the demands of personal belief and the constraints of a secularized public square" (84). While there are certainly core doctrinal beliefs, like the death and resurrection of Jesus, there are many differences in the auxiliary beliefs of the Christian faith. Christianity has adapted to new contexts throughout history and has proven to be flexible and elastic (Cornille 10). It is in this spirit of flexibility that partnership must be created. Many times, faith differences in evangelicalism cause greater divides than they build bridges. It is not uncommon for pastors to judge other pastors on their theological framework instead of honoring these differences. Judgment, however, does not create a sense of true belonging in partnership. It brews shame which, like vulnerability expert Brene Brown explains, can be understood as the fear of disconnection ("The Power of Vulnerability"). Dr. Brown defines belonging as, "the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us" (Braving the Wilderness 42). For pastors to feel that they truly belong to the partnership, they need to be exactly who they are and resist the temptation to change to fit the predominant thought. Likewise, partnership is built on shared trust, respect, and love (45).

San Diego is largely made up of individuals that have moved to the city during their life; few are considered native. Pastors that serve in San Diego come with diverse backgrounds, carrying with them the experiences from elsewhere in the country and world. In particular, those that are tasked with

global and local community development employed by churches as Outreach Pastors, are quite

diverse as many churches want to hire staff that have global experiences, like the pastors that are a part

of the Middle East Collaborative. Nic Gilmour is from Australia, having been ordained by the

Pentecostal church that also ordained his wife, an accomplishment that he proudly shared (Gilmour).

His faith background is very different from that of Hall who is from a conservative background,

having grown up in the Independent Baptist denomination (Hall). While Hall no longer identifies as

an Independent Baptist, he does consider himself more conservative or reformed. Even though Hall

and Gilmour find aspects of their faith at odds with one another, they find similarity in the core

doctrinal values of Christianity, like the inerrancy of Scripture and the death and resurrection of

Christ. These differences are important to respect. A person's faith provides a framework for other

Christians to understand, but not to judge as if a person has arrived at a final destination.

Denominations. Denominations afford local assemblies' alignment in theological viewpoints as

well as financial assurances. Most require membership, a formal process for people to go through

to officially be recognized as a church member. Church membership can come with benefits like

financial aid if in duress, use of church facilities, even financial scholarships to colleges or

seminaries to which the church belongs. For pastors, church denominations can afford them

networking opportunities with other pastors in the denomination at conferences, ordination, or

additional education.

While the history of denominations is riddled with schisms due to political and

theological differences, it is important to note the denomination of churches when engaging

partnerships (Taylor 55). Executive denominational leadership, who are located at the

denominational headquarters and not in the local community, often direct the local and global

partnerships of their denominational churches (Haasl 411). In contrast, churches that do not have

denominational affiliations are independent and do not consider working with other churches. Denominations can provide a guiding hand that independent churches would benefit from.

Churches that are a part of denominations with more hierarchial structures have lower rates of congregational participation than denominations that delegate more governing responsibilities to their local congregations (Karaçuka 62). This was true of the Middle East Collaborative. Kalani Jones and Todd Hoyt are members of EFCC, a non-denominational church, who both help lead the Collaborative efforts. David Engleman, known as Coach, helps lead the efforts for North Coast Calvary. Cook noted that while Maranatha is a Calvary Chapel, the denomination is largely independent and does not require or often work with other churches (Cook). Fewer churches in San Diego have denominational allegiances that one might see in the southern states of the United States. Large denominations like the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) were formed before many cities in San Diego were founded, SBC's founding in 1859 (Greene 48). Working with differing denominations can pose challenges such as navigating other denominations; it is vital to note if the denominational structure hinders or promote partnership.

Building Partnerships

Partnership requires interdependency that brings about change in the positions and assumptions held by those involved (Morse and McNamara 68). Developing partnerships requires personal proximity, standing in solidarity, and entering the social world of one another (Haasl 42). Individuals bring with them assets and carry challenges that they have not been able to overcome on their own. Journeying together means meeting these challenges alongside one another.

Building Community for Pastors. Men and women become pastors because of a view that "God is inviting or 'calling' an individual to join with God in overseeing the church" (Strunk et al. 540). They are not concerned with the challenges set in front of them; rather they look at the

challenge as an opportunity. Determinism and resiliency are guiding characteristics of pastors and lay volunteers due to the nature of their work. There are not systems or structures for them to rely on, so many Outreach Pastors create them as they go. The determinism can create isolation as it creates a sense that others are not needed since the pastor is excelling in what they are doing by themselves.

While pastors are resilient people, challenges arise from those they are trying to lead within their church. Pastoral leadership comes with it a specific set of challenges and burdens. Community members elevate pastors while judging them on an acute level. Critiques negatively impact a pastor's psyche, leading to a general distrust for others. In *Relational Principles for Effective Church Leadership,* Willis Watt writes, "Just as important, church leaders must be prepared to emphasize and demonstrate ethical leadership, personal responsibility, and community service through the initiation, development, and maintenance of positive functioning relationships" (125). Functioning relationships require clear communication, in-person meetings, and a commitment to one another.

Existing relationships and networks contributed to the Middle East Collaborative's inception. Hall's relationships with the individuals allowed him to invite his network to partner together. The quality of Hall's relationships with the others was apparent when they shared about him in our interviews. Gilmour recounted when he was new to the San Diego area and Hall was the only pastor from a different church that asked him to lunch (Gilmour). He and his family were new from Australia, not knowing anyone except those at the church he was hired. Gilmour was a foreigner in a strange land and as Gilmour shared, it was as if Hall's invitation was not only for lunch, but also an acceptance into the local community. As Saif shared about Hall it was as if he was talking about a mentor and close friend (Saif). Hall was once his supervisor, but they

maintained a relationship once that job came to an end for Saif. Goulet mentioned that Hall visited him in the hospital while he had bouts of illnesses. It was at an informal meeting that Hall shared with Goulet about the Middle East Collaborative and how his "small church" could get involved (Goulet). Through extended invitations from Hall, many felt like they had evidence of their belonging to the group, which is understood as a key element in the art of building community (Vogl 46). Hall treated these men like friends, which is what made all the difference.

These individuals started to meet together to formulate a way to work together in other countries. The pastors began engaging in relational leadership involving others in decision making, demonstrating care towards each other, adhering to ethical behavior, and seeking success and improvement in the Collaborative (Watt 127). Meeting together face-to-face, discussing the focus of the Collaborative, and simply spending more time together started to build a sense of community and collective direction for the pastors. Being known and knowing others benefits mental health, which is a positive byproduct of partnerships. These preliminary meetings paved the way for their first global exploratory trip.

Building Trust amongst Vulnerability. Time together establishes connection and familiarity amongst individuals. Meaningful rituals that mark a time or event as unique or important that involve understanding one's self beyond present time or space is important in the work of partnership and community building (Vogl 49). Crises within a pastor's denomination or church causes paralysis in outside or existing relationships, impacting their ability to invest in external relationships. (LeBarre and Hy 46).

Creating an initiation ritual for pastors interested in joining a collaborative helps pastors feel like they belong. The ritual includes extending focus outwards to a greater vision and a global cause, enabling pastors to think about things that exist outside of their sphere of influence

and reminds them why they chose to become a pastor. Creating a sense of belonging helps pastors set aside fear. As Mennonite activist Parker Palmer states in his book *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, "we stand on ground that will support us, ground from which we can lead others toward more trustworthy, more hopeful, more faithful way of being in the world" (Loc 862).

When asked when the Middle East Collaborative started, many of the participants referenced a trip to the Middle East to connect with and explore possible partnerships with potential beneficiaries in Lebanon and Jordan. The trip consisted of multiple long flights sitting next to each other, sleeping at hotels in areas of the world not all were familiar with, and sharing meals. These pastors spent the majority of their day together as they met and talked with national leaders. While Hall invited the pastors to the trip, it was largely under the direction of Jones, an overseer and volunteer of EFCC. Jones purposefully assigned pastors and leaders in hotel rooms with others they were not familiar with (Jones). He hoped that this extended time together, where they would debrief after a long day and spend ample time together as a pairing, would create stronger bonds and connections amongst the pastors. Jones was the grand coordinator behind the scenes of this trip. The Collaborative returned with a clearer focus and stronger bonds, achieving Jones's goals.

Another way for partners to foster trust and vulnerability is the adherence to the rules set out by the partnership. These rules could center around distributing funds, the communication channels with overseas partners, even the importance of meetings, and who needs to be present. The more a partnership can stay in alignment with their stated rules and values, the greater trust and vulnerability pastors will have with others. The quickest way for vulnerability, trust, and

relationships to disintegrate is through the sensitivities surrounding assets of any church organization.

Asset Management

Once partners complete establishing trust, creating community, and sharing vulnerabilities, they are ready to share assets. Every church cannot have everything they need to effectively partner with potential beneficiaries. The premise of partnership is that individuals extend their resources, whether personal contacts, expertise, or financial assets, to others to create a more significant impact. Identifying, sharing, and managing assets are all required when working with other partners. A biblical principle called stewardship reminds Christians that all talents and abilities are God's gift to man to work with including energies and talent (Adewunmiju 7).

Churches often judge the potential impact they can create, by assessing the existing assets within their church. A church's vision can be limited in unhelpful ways when a pastor is basing it only on the assets it has, instead of dreaming about the changed future and partnering with others to accomplish it (Hall). Having a vision beyond the capacity of a singular pastor also draws out the gifts in the local body of believers to support the casted vision (Hall). Outreach visions must be greater than what any church can accomplish on its own to push pastors and churches to survey the local church community and see how they can partner together to achieve such dreams. Partnerships help pastors and congregations dream about creating the community locally, and globally they wish to see.

Recognizing assets. The first step in partnership is clarifying the intended goal of the partnership. After establishing the vision or goal, each church needs to take stock of what they have and what they are willing to share. Asset-based Community Development draws from the best of what a community offers and provides a sustainable way for the community to stay involved (Wilke 4).

While the most easily recognizable asset in the stakeholder's community is financial, other assets like personnel, who are willing to give their time or facility space to hold meetings, can be equally valuable. Other assets include expertise in an area of the world or relationships with key culture brokers or gatekeepers in a community. Assets can also be unique church cultures, ideas, or spirituality specific to a geographical location (Saif). Creating opportunities to share assets allows everyone to be contributing members to a partnership, which empowers one another. Every person and church has personal gifts and tangible assets that are vital when engaging in the work of partnership. Recognizing assets can lead to gratitude and thankfulness as leaders take stock of what has been gifted to them and what has been cultivated in their church.

Often non-profit organizations can have what other organizations consider resources, but those possessing them do not realize they are. This could be because the church has had an asset for so many years that they have lost sight of its worth or that they have never considered the resource. Assets go unrecognized because of the lack of relationship amongst churches (Schroeder). A pastor will not know what another church in the local community needs unless they are in a relationship. Likewise, a local pastor does not know who to call in in their time of need if they do not have established relationships with other pastors. If pastors do not recognize the assets available in their local congregation, they will take on more work, burn out, and not empower their community.

Sharing assets. World Relief has decades of experience in mobilizing churches to work together for the cause of the vulnerable and marginalized. US Mobilization Director for World Relief, Damon Schroeder, helps American churches engage with each other. Schroeder said that resources are already in the community but are often not connected (Schroeder). Damon uses a simple exercise to help bring mega-churches, neighborhood churches, and immigrant/minority

churches together by first getting all the pastors together. He assigns seats so that people sit next to others that they would not usually sit next to. After offering them something to write on, he asks the pastors to write their community's primary needs, identify the gaps in their local community, and then conclude by asking what assets they have that could fill those gaps (Schroeder). Using a whiteboard, he asks the participants to report the gaps and he writes them above a line drawn on the board and, similarly, he writes the assets below the line. He then connects needs to assets and finds that everything is covered by the people present in the room at the end of the exercise.

In the Middle East Collaborative, the main assets were threefold: personnel resources, partner networks, and financial contributions. When Jones from EFCC followed up with Mission Hills regarding entering the partnership, Goulet knew that his small church would not financially contribute the same way that the mega-churches in the Collaborative could (Goulet). He could offer the personnel to send to the Middle East on short-term projects that would make a team fuller and help accomplish the goal of the Middle East Collaborative and benefit his church. He shared that his church members would not have been able to go on similar trips had it not been for the Middle East Collaborative because their simply would not have been enough of them to make it beneficial to their Lebanese partners.

Sharing resources comes with a shared sense of pride. Early on, the Collaborative decided that a guiding principle they would adhere to was sending financial gifts overseas as a group. There would not be one church's name on any financial gift; it would come from the Middle East Collaborative. Goulet noted that this enabled his small church to feel like they were a part of something bigger (Goulet). By sending over funds together, every church was able to take pride in the financial gifts that were being given.

Assets, if misused, can shift power dynamics within a partnership, which was the experience of Saif. He shared that the overseas partners knew which churches were giving the most money and they had the privilege to host the Lebanese or Jordanian partners when they visited the United States. Due to the global partners responsibilities, they had strict schedules that did not allow them to go to every partner church when they were stateside. During the visit, the overseas partner would share about their country and the development occurring in their country because of the church's partnership, but only to one or two churches in the Collaborative. This increased the momentum and visibility of the church that had the guest speaker but left the smaller churches feeling forgotten and overlooked. The financial management of the Collaborative overshadowed the unique assets that each of the churches offered.

Finance Management in Collaboration Paying particular attention to the financial management of any collaboration is essential. While economic capital can contribute to creating ideal conditions for effective collaboration, the temptation to wield the power of financial contribution is great (Bouchamma, et. al 95). From a biblical perspective, the Bible warns rich Christians that it is harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:24). This metaphor reveals a warning that applies to churches that are rich in resources. With money comes assumed power, temptation, and influence, making the ability to remain impartial to other partners challenging. Financial mismanagement of finances can erode trust amongst stakeholders, which is the foundation of relationships amongst leaders (Wei-Skillern and Silver 122).

Assad Saif is the Senior Pastor of the Orchard Community Church, founded in 2014 by Emmanuel Faith Community Church. He is ethnically Yemini and Mexican, which results in a brown complexion. His responsibilities include preaching on Sunday mornings, overseeing the

leadership and training of an elder board (a group of individuals that help guide the church on an executive level) that he then submits to, counseling church members, and recruiting volunteers. Saif shared what assets he initially brought to the Collaborative: ideas, relationships, perspective, network, trust, competency, and experience (Saif).

While Saif was initially part of the Middle East Collaborative, participating in the exploratory trip and meetings, he eventually withdrew. When I interviewed Saif in his office on the second floor of a business building where his church's offices are, he shared that the monthly meeting required four hours to attend a meeting with a group of people that was not asking him for input. They were interested in his participation in projects dictated by the churches with the most significant financial involvement (Saif). He felt that the major power brokers in the Collaborative were the ones with the most financial backing, which then determined who the partners were. Saif expressed that he did not have any agency to pick the overseas partners or build relationships with the overseas partner. The assets he could extend to the Collaborative, the relationships, the ideas, the networks were not received or utilized by the Collaborative, so he decided to walk away. While the integrity of the opinion expressed needs to be maintained, it is worth noting that Saif was the pastor with the least amount of experience cross-culturally, which could have contributed to the lack of recognition from the group.

Every stateside partner must feel like they are contributing to their partners overseas. Knowing that a large part of the Middle East Collaborative was funding overseas partners, the stateside churches decided that their financial gifts would be given as a group. They established how much churches were going to give to their overseas partners and exchanged money between churches stateside to wire the respective partners from the group of churches. This practice spoke

to the value of partnership and collectivism instead of being seen as individual churches. This way of giving would continue until the explosion in Beirut on August 4, 2020.

The Middle East Collaborative received word of the Beirut explosion from news sources while at work at each respective church. The group mobilized into action, and at their next meeting only a week later, they discussed how each was able to help. Some pastors decided to take a special offering, and others chose to utilize special funds in their existing budget. Due to the intensity of the explosion, it needed immediate attention and the churches decided to give to their global partners individually, not as a whole. While the means of the financial collection were harmless, the distribution of the funds acted against their stated values. Every church was not able to participate in the collective pride of sending over a significant financial gift. The Collaborative became a group of individual churches. The Collaborative did not address this breach of value as a group and as reconciliation expert Brenda Salter McNeil states, "a wrong must be acknowledged and the cause for the lack of unity identified" (25). The partnership could have only strengthened if the Collaborative had engaged in dialogue about the breach of values after the money was sent separately.

Partnering in Crises

Like those in Lebanon during the Beirut explosion, Global South partners experiencing crises and disasters require a niche set of skills from their stateside partners. Social psychologists have shown that group decisions do not necessarily compensate for the shortcomings of a stressed individual's decision-making (Boin and Sanneke 25). Members of a collaborative will feel the psychological burden of the disasters their overseas partners are experiencing and need to be aware of how it impacts their decision-making process. Process-related resilience is a goal for any stateside collaborative, including "continual learning and taking responsibility for

making better decisions to improve the capacity to handle hazards" (Cutter et al. 600). Better

decisions and better processes to make decisions will yield dividends of help for any Global

South partner.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability set out nine standards

for organizations and individuals to improve the assistance they provide. Of particular note is the

sixth standard, "communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary

assistance" (Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability). By using this as a

guiding standard, collaborations acknowledge the other stakeholders the Global South partner is

working with and understand that the partner has the best knowledge on what will help their

community the best. When the Beirut explosion occurred, the Collaborative did not dictate their

partner's response. Instead, they asked what the best assistance would be to receive and then

successfully launched campaigns to raise money from within their churches.

As collaboratives look to the future for their partners, their partners will be directing the

work. Collaboratives carry the responsibility of ensuring that the development they are helping

with increases the communities' capacity to respond to onset stresses like crises and disasters

(IFRC). By centering the local partner in the work, they can make appropriate choices within the

context of their environment and within the complication that disasters bring (Manyena 436).

Global South partners bring with them local knowledge and the ability to build on capacities that

have been developed over generations (Venton & Hansford 25). If done correctly, collaboratives

can help partners continue to develop on the generational foundation.

Partnering with Minority Churches

Minority churches are a needed part of the Christian community and have the same calling as

Caucasian-dominant churches, to make Christ known and to glorify God forever. The aim of

relationships between minority churches and Caucasian-dominated churches is, like Christian ethicist Miguel de la Torre explains, "to enable relationships where all people can live full abundant lives, able to become all that God has called them to be" (Moe-Lobeda 17). How they go about this in outreach is different from Caucasian predominant churches, but no less critical. Religious associations reflect exclusionary social bonding, relying on strong ties that work against weaker ties like those bridging across racial lines (Weisinger and Salipante 30). Partnerships that place a great value on racial diversity do not necessarily create racially bridging social capital because of a lack of shared experiences and interethnic interaction skills (30). Saif shared that in his experience as a pastor of color, he would not be where he is without the help of a Caucasian pastor (Saif). His experience is that all pastors of color cannot get far on their own without a Caucasian pastor lending them support. He has needed someone else to promote him or give him a chance, or in other words, share their assets with him. He was the only pastor of color at the Collaborative, but his inclusion in the partnership was no different from the other pastors' personal invitation from Hall. The other pastors in the Collaborative could have been encouraged to invite pastors of color, but the invitation needed to be built on existing friendships. Partnering with minority churches will not occur solely based on will but by careful thought and attention.

Minority churches will not have the same financial capital as Caucasian-dominant churches. Studies prove that individuals embed themselves within social networks similar to race, socioeconomic status, religion, and other social characteristics (Perry 161). The homogeneity of a minority church will restrict them from being a leader of the financial contribution of any partnership, so instead, finding other meaningful ways to contribute will be necessary. While Saif has an expansive personal network that contributes to the church's

financial undergirding, the same is not necessarily true of the members of the church he leads, which is predominantly minorities.

Saif mentioned the Collaborative churches who commit to overseas trips were essentially different from his church. As we talked, he noted that the prominent churches, like EFCC, were sending two teams every summer. Meanwhile, he could only contribute one maybe two individuals per summer (Saif). This seemed like an impossible task to Saif because of the size of his church. Minority churches are also often smaller than Caucasian dominant churches, and sending team members to join short-term trips is not feasible or realistic given it's size.

With a smaller congregation comes a smaller church staff. A minority church pastor will need to train a leader from within their community to help lead a church collaboration because of the number of responsibilities a lead pastor has. Saif felt like the Middle East Collaborative was asking him as a senior pastor to give up at least four hours each month to attend the monthly meeting. He felt that it was a seemingly small sacrifice to the others in the Collaborative, but he could not afford such a luxury since he was a senior pastor. While there was no spoken or written expectation of meeting attendance, Saif carried great weight. Many of the churches in the Collaborative did not have their pastor present at each meeting. Instead, they chose to send a lay leader. Saif could have mitigated this issue by identifying a leader from his congregation to attend the meetings on behalf of the church. During the interview, Saif mentioned that he could not find a lay leader to represent OCC, which speaks to the readiness of his church to partner with others.

Identifying the readiness of a church is not for others to determine, but only for the pastor who wants to engage in partnership. Personnel, financial resources, and experience contribute to a church's readiness to partner with others. There must be at least one person who has the ability

and desire to help lead their church. It would be easy to assume that the size of a church indicates their readiness, but that is not so. While Mission Hills and the Orchard were both smaller churches, Mission Hills had a readiness to join the Collaborative that the Orchard did not. Goulet had extensive experience in cross-cultural partnerships and could commit regular time to the Collaborative, though he was not present for every meeting. Lead Pastor of The Orchard, Assad Saif, did not have personnel, financial, or experience to offer and could not find personnel to dedicate to the Collaborative. Once Saif realized his personal and church limitations, he should have had an honest conversation with the Collaborative and honestly share his concerns regarding the Orchard's readiness to partner. This conversation would have required vulnerability, which only comes from trust, a value that Saif had not fully developed with the group of leaders.

Cross-Cultural Partners

While building local stateside church partnerships, the work of identifying global partners needs to begin concurrently. The international nonprofit sector understands that working with churches can be problematic. Global partners would be remiss to only focus on the challenges, as religious organizations can have innovative delivery mechanisms for increased aid budgets (Clarke 1465). Churches can deliver quickly to overseas partners, whereas NGOs take longer to provide aid. Churches also have means of delivering aid, like missionary aviation or on-ground networks, that deliver quicker than government or other agencies can. Matthew Clarke states, "Partnering with religious groups can assist in shortening the length of time it would take to achieve positive development outcomes as religious groups have already made many community connections…" (1465). Establishing sophisticated teams like the creation of Global South and Global North partners helps establish a new world, one where poverty gaps are reduced and

people worldwide are helped (Drayton). There are benefits for both the local church partners and those overseas to engage in partnership, but not without a thorough selection process, defining expectations, and accountability measures.

Establishing Criteria. Before churches in the Global North explore partners overseas that they want to develop relationships with, they will first need to decide on the kind of work they wish to engage. When selecting cross-cultural partners, considering factors like the length of the partnership, causal focus, faith orientation, experience in cross-cultural partnership, and geographic location is essential. The criteria created should be a framework to explore partnerships, not as a rigid set of rules, but rather a guiding framework that will help the leaders ask better questions and seek better understanding while meeting various organizations.

Selecting. Just like identifying churches with collaborative spirits is important for church partnerships, the same is valid for selecting global partners. Emergency management collaboration experts Curnin and O'Hara define collaboration as "relationships between organizations when partners need to work towards a common goal to solve complex societal problems" (278). Church partnerships exist because of the desire to address a complex social problem that no one church can handle on its own. The complexity of the issue should not be exacerbated by the partners overseas but rather alleviate and contribute to finding a solution because of their unique perspective, availability, and desire for an answer. Global partners that have expertise in the focus area of the church partnerships and cross-cultural collaboration are key to the success of collaboration and, subsequently, development.

Building trust with cross-cultural partners will significantly improve any partnership. Trust in partnerships is defined as "the intentional, behavioral willingness to be vulnerable by a trustor on the basis of positive expectations about a trustee" (Oomsels and Bouckaert 558).

Themes that emerged from the Middle East Collaborative reflect themes in other studies that show that trustworthiness between church partners and organizations is often made easier due to preexisting relationships (Curnin and O'Hara 287). Many pastors come with an extensive network of contacts within nonprofit organizations, the public sector, and the local churches in their area of focus

Partnering with global non-profit partners is tempting to stateside churches because of government requirements to establish a non-profit. But just like local stateside churches know their community best, so do overseas churches who are providing relief and aid. Many churches exist in disaster-prone environments and uniquely position themselves to help their local community (Venton and Hansford 10). Churches have buildings, land, and people, which are three valuable resources. Using the Asset-Based Community Development approach, local churches in the Global South are extraordinary partners for Global North partnerships to engage with. A potential benefit of using this community-centered approach is that stateside church collaboration helps build the capacity of the overseas church members and the church itself and allow it to analyze their situation and implement relevant activities to strengthen resilience (Pasteur 7). By partnering with local Global South churches, Global South church can assure stateside churches that aid will remain in the local community. Many large non-profits leave after a local community has achieved normalcy after the main disaster occurs. Churches stay.

The Middle East Collaborative decided to partner with both non-profits and local churches. Hall shared his organizational contacts with the other stateside church leaders at the onset of the Collaborative meetings. He had the trust of the group because of his relationships with each church leader. They extended that same trust to the cross-cultural partners and then decided to make an exploratory trip to Jordan and Lebanon to meet them. When they got back

stateside, the church partners discussed the potential Lebanese partners, their apprehensions, and excitement, and then selected those that aligned best with the purpose of the Collaborative. While the Collaborative dedicated two weeks to traveling overseas and away from their church responsibilities, they saved a great deal of time not having to vet new organizations.

While the selection process can resemble paternalism, it is important to note that overseas partners have equal power in selecting church collaboratives to work with. During the initial phase of introductions, cross-cultural partners should focus their attention on building friendships and genuine relationships. Money shortchanges the development of relationships, only ever becoming as deep as the initial discussions were before the money is offered. The cross-cultural partner should be encouraged to explore if the offered relationship aligns with their organization's strategic values and explore if they could foresee a robust and trusting relationship existing. When only one side of a cross-cultural partnership selects whom to work with, the power dynamics shift, and the partners can form the beginnings of a patriarchal partnership.

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Defining partnership requirements. When multi-organizations come together, confusion on roles and requirements quickly occurs. There is too much at stake to let poor communication or organizational structure slow down partnerships. They need to communicate to organizations and stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and coordination of tasks (Curnin and O'Hara 285). All of the roles and responsibilities may not be apparent at the beginning of the partnership. Still, as issues develop or new opportunities are faced, the communication channels need to be fortified. Hence, each partner knows who should direct communication to resolve issues.

This is ultimately the goal of development: coempowerment that does not create dependent systems and structures but elevates the skills and expertise of those that they are assisting. This copowerment starts in stateside partnerships. Stateside partners work with those that have similar cultures, theological perspectives, and faith backgrounds. They have the greatest possibility of successfully copowering one another. It can be argued that if the stateside partnership is not healthy and does not exhibit coempowerment, then it will be nearly impossible for them to copower their global partners.

The best partnerships will be those working towards the objective to help individuals, groups, and communities become sustainable and self-reliant (Fee et all. 2037). A crucial goal is that a time would come when the affected people solve the complex issues the partnership addresses. Churches must ensure that the impact they are trying to have on a context is the impact that they are intending (Wallace 15). They may not know that the system they are hoping to establish creates dependency, so the knowledge and expertise of the cross-cultural partner are important. Establishing open communication only exists on trust. As was mentioned previously in this paper, trust and communication take considerable time to develop. Western churches need

to be willing to devote significant time to this phase, more time than they are comfortable in giving.

Accountability. Mentioning accountability stokes resistance, or worse, disdain. Instead, people should view accountability as an opportunity to take stock of the resources entrusted to both church and cross-cultural partners. Metrics help cross-cultural partners show funding partners progress, which allows them to continue to receive financial resources. Likewise, each church leader represents many stakeholders in the local church that have given their resources that enable any collaborative. Church leaders are held accountable by church members to steward well the resources entrusted to them.

Establishing a reporting system and mechanism for cross-cultural partners to use in reporting their organization's progress will help both parties understand what the cross-cultural partner has been doing with the resources allocated to them. While nonprofits might be more familiar with project monitoring frameworks or GANTT charts, the reporting mechanism does not matter so much as the significance of the quality of the report. The partner needs to communicate progress or hindrances they have experienced. The reports will only be as meaningful as the relationship between the stateside and global partners. The ability to be vulnerable and honest rests on the quality of the relationship. Western partners must lead with the relationship when discussing reports and accountability.

Accountability also exists for the church partners. If financial resources have been committed to overseas partners, then each church must obtain the financial goals to fulfill their commitment to the overseas partners. Every effort needs to keep that commitment, unless, of course, the church has fallen on difficult financial times. Church partners are also committed to raising awareness about their partners overseas and the cause they are addressing through the

partnership. There is also typically a commitment to spiritual resources like prayer that needs to be taken just as seriously as the economic or personnel resources. Accountability is both for the cross-cultural partner as well as the church collaborative.

Conclusion

Rugged individualism is tearing at the seams of local churches because goals like cross-cultural development can be accomplished alone. Evangelical churches have been operating independently for decades, but there is a better way for global community development. Leaders who have a clear understanding of their theological framework, faith backgrounds, church cultures, and assets are ready for the work of partnership. Coming alongside other churches who share core values, rely on relationships, and exemplify readiness will be the most successful in partnering. While growth and success take a longer time to develop in partnership so as to avoid the pitfalls of relying on financial contributions, they will have a greater and longer lasting impact. These partnerships are only possible by leaders exemplifying vulnerability, building trust, and ensuring equity in partnerships both locally and globally. Above any financial or personnel resource investment, partnerships require time as friendships develop on love and mutual respect foundations.

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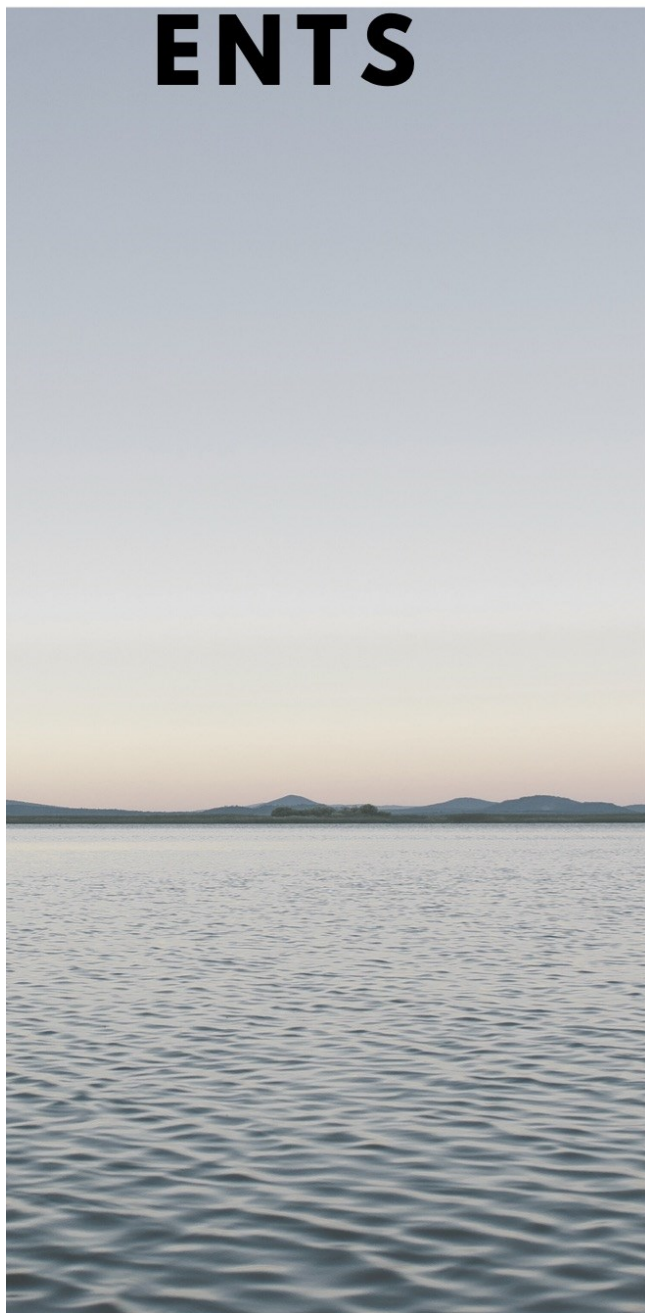authtype=sso&custid=nwcoll&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Appendix: Workbook

A COLLABORATIVE

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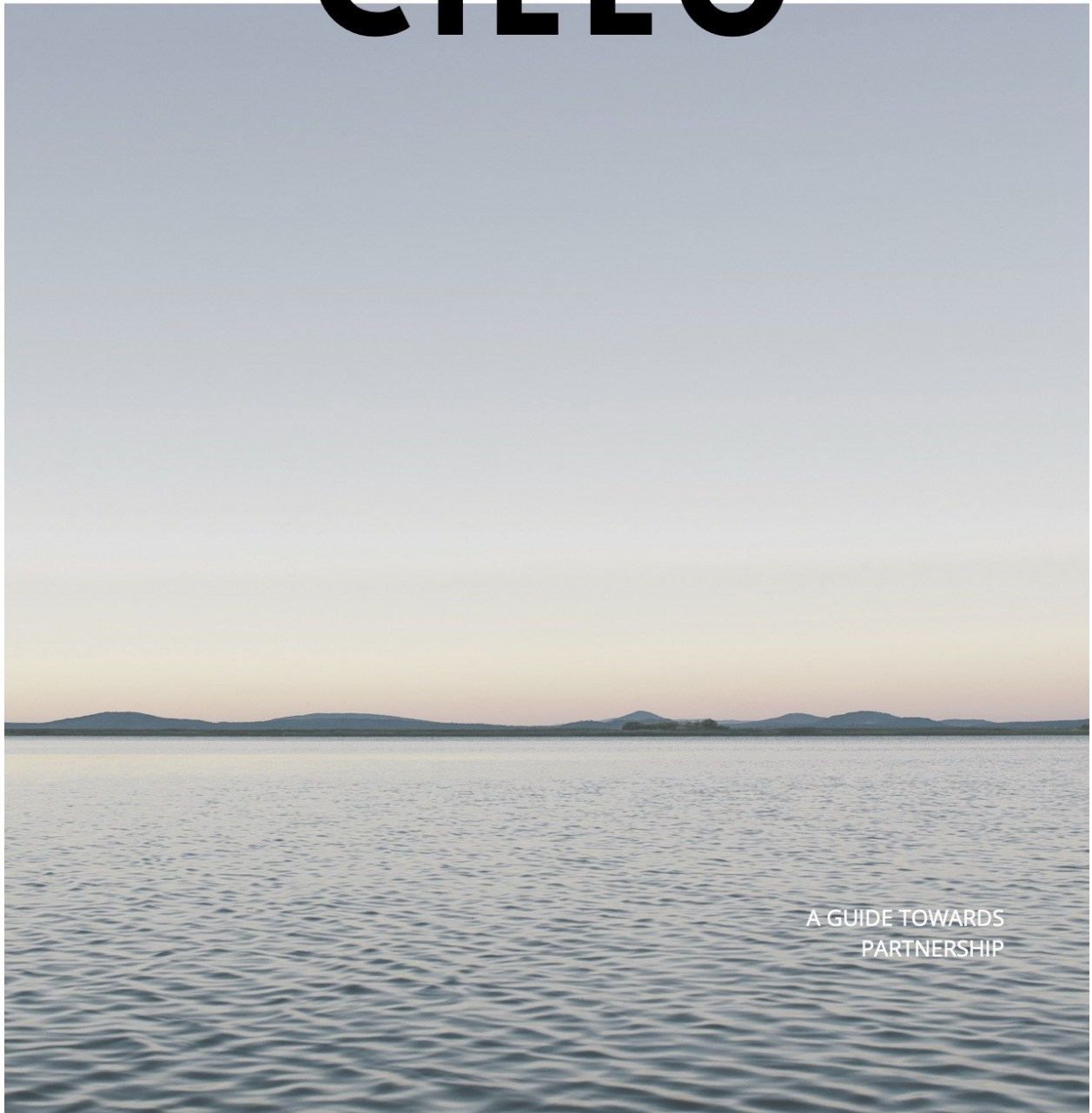
A GUIDE TOWARDS
PARTNERSHIP

CONT
ENTS

PART 1
FOUNDATION

Establishing a Biblical framework for church partnerships

PART 2
STARTING LINE

Taking inventory of the places you've come from and the culture you've been impacted by will help create positive pathways forward.

PART 3
JOURNEYING

Recognizing personal strengths and inviting others to supply what is needed.

PART 4
OUTWARDS

Building partnerships requires viewing the good work that is already occuring locally and globally.

AN INVITATION

God is mobilizing His church as never before in fulfillment of His plan that people would be called into His global family from all the people groups of the world (Revelation 5:9, 7:9-10). From the very beginning it has been clear that His plan is to use His church, people like you, to make disciples of all peoples (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8).

As He mobilizes, He unifies. The Bride of Christ is to be of one accord, of One Spirit. Let these pages serve as a guide to continue that unifying work. In the journey that is ahead, you will rediscover the biblical foundations of partnership. You will be called to identify your church culture's uniqueness and how that interacts with your cultural identity. Then, you will be invited to share and address assets and vulnerabilities that you possess. Finally, when the inner work has been addressed, you will be called to look towards the horizon and see what else the Lord is doing around the world that He is calling you and your new partners towards.

At the conclusion of this guide, you will have formed a framework for your church culture, but more importantly, you will have begun the work of partnership by humbly offering your expertise to others and receiving there's as well.

The journey begins for His kingdom to come, His will to be done, on Earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).
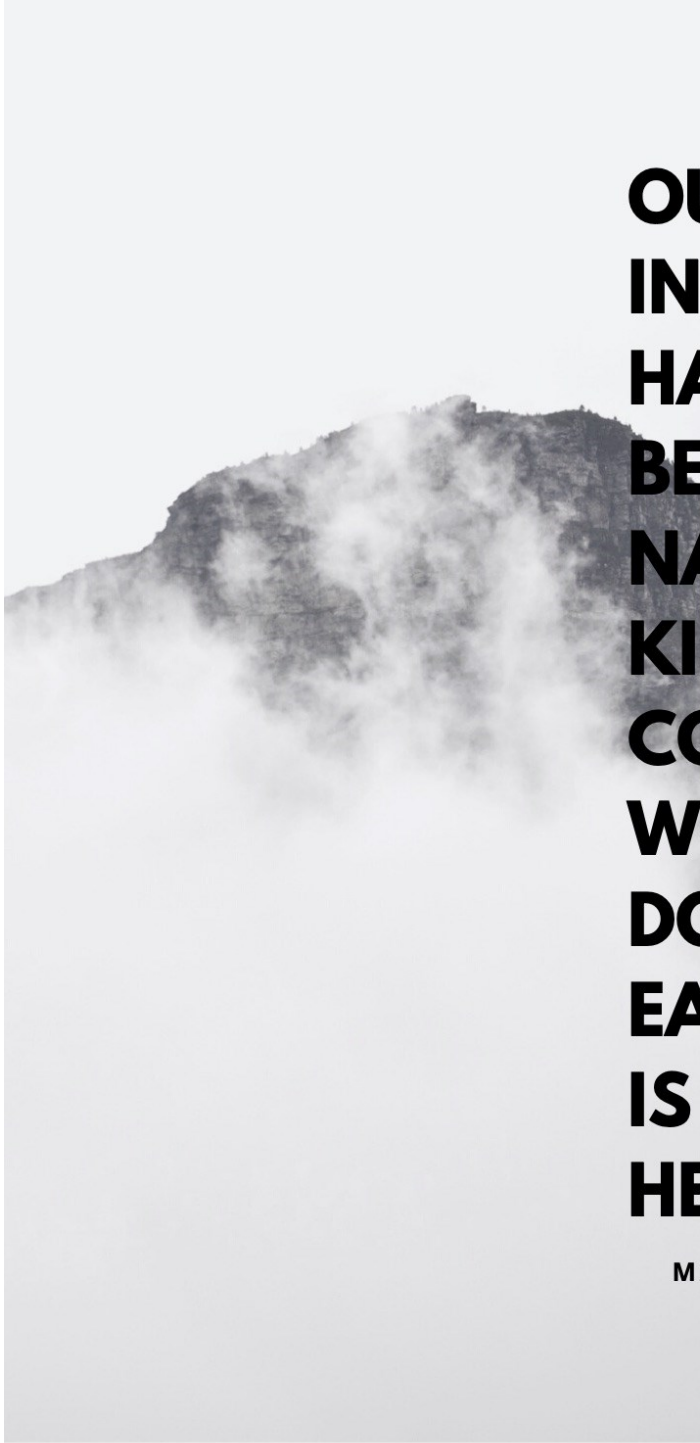
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME, YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE,ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

MATTHEW 6:9-10

FOUNDATION

At the core of outreach is the practice of going out into the world with the Good News. The essence of the Gospel mandate given by Christ to His followers is that they go to those who have yet to know Him (Mark 16:15). Theologian Karl Barth would note that, "Christ is the true missionary and in union with Christ (the Church) participates in reconciliation" (Waldemar Kohl 95).

Outreach is a piece of a larger commitment to mobilize God's people for meaningful involvement in global ministry. It affords pathways for people to connect with needs and opportunities as they offer themselves in partnership with the global church.

Outreach is a complement to the long-term ministry of those who are already actively engaged around the world.

While there is value in what short-term projects can offer in assistance, the growth in personal discipleship that can occur in the believer who commits to partnership for long-term is immense.

Long-term partnership allows us to capitalize on the participatory, communal, and service-minded nature of practice-oriented spirituality (Bakker 131). Thriving churches construct faith as a way of life in community that prioritizes worship, spiritual formation, justice, and social action (Bakker 131).

PRACTICING
CONGREGATIONS
SEEK TO OVERCOME
THE MORAL
FRAGMENTATION
OF THE
CONTEMPORARY
WORLD BY MAKING
FAITH-FILLED
MEANING
TOGETHER.

JANEL KRAGT BAKKER

STARTING LINE

Now that the theological framework for partnership has been established, it is important to take an inner account of how you approach the work of partnership. Before extending the invitation to partner, you must know what you are extending as an invitation. By doing this, you are creating a safe way to explore partnership without fully committing yourself (Vogl 33).

Sharing these values will be just as important and necessary as looking inward and naming them. Those that are alongside you in this journey will also be asked to share their values. The goal is to find alignment in values so the group can continue to journey together in the path of partnership.

You will have 5 minutes to fill out the following page. Pick the most important descriptor of each section and underline it. When the time has concluded, each person will share for 2 minutes about the descriptor they chose for each section.

STARTING LINE

FAITH BASIS
EX. DENOMINATION, INFLUENCES

CHURCH STRUCTURE
EX. ELDER LED, SHARED LEADERSHIP

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES
EX. PRAYER, FASTING, LECTIO DIVINA

ROADBLOCKS EXPERIENCED
EX. FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS, LACK OF PERSONNEL

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

LET'S DISCUSS

FAITH

What about other's faith is relatable?
What about their faith background causes pause?

CHURCH

How is the church you currently lead similar to others?
Are there structures that could be helpful in partnering?

SPIRITUAL

What spiritual practices would you consider committing to in this partnership?
What new spiritual practice do you want to explore as a disciple of Jesus?

ROADBLOCKS

What was a surprising emotion that came up when you shared your roadblock?
Did any roadblocks seem insurmountable to you?

YOU HAVE LEFT THE STARTING LINE.

YOU HAVE HONORED YOUR BACKGROUND AND ARE COMMITTING TO EXPLORING THE FUTURE WITH FELLOW JOURNEYMEN.

LET'S CONTINUE THE JOURNEY.

JOURNEYING

Partnership requires interdependency that brings about change in the positions and assumptions held by those involved (Morse and McNamara 68). Developing this partnership requires personal proximity, standing in solidarity and entering the social world of one another (Haasl 42). Each individual brings with them assets that God has blessed them and their church with. Likewise, everyone carries with them challenges that they have not been able to overcome on their own. Journeying together means meeting these challenges together.

GOD'S MISSION CALLS US TO ECCLESIAL PARTNERSHIP IN WHICH WE ARE REMINDED THAT NO CHURCH HAS CALLED ITSELF INTO BEING OR FINDS WITHIN ITSELF ITS MISSION.
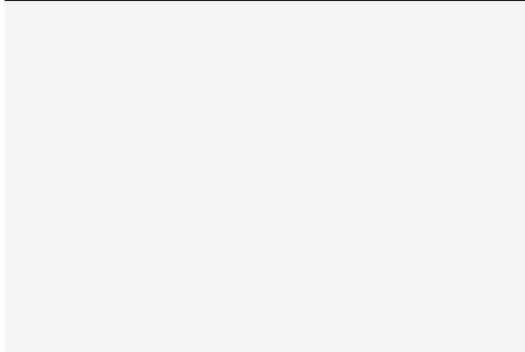
WINSTON PERSAUD

JOURNEYING

The greatest measure of success in partnerships is the depth of friendship. Sharing a cross-cultural vision of the Kingdom of God grounded in friendship can revolutionize the world (Robert 103). Some even say that the main purpose of missions is to make friends (Robert 104).

Now would be a natural time to pause as a group. Get up and stretch. Leave the room and take a breath of fresh air. While you do this, strike up a conversation with the person that you know the least. Find a point of commonality, perhaps a movie, or a book, or a favorite local hiking spot. Use this break to help you to continue to move through this journey.
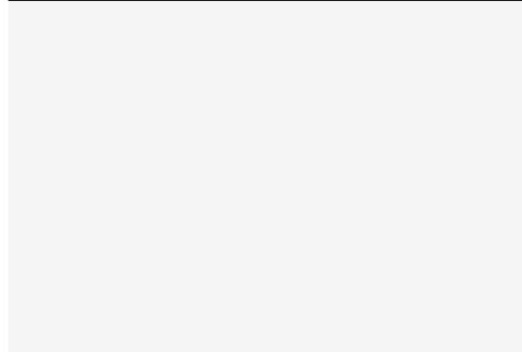

Now that you have come back together, it's time to take a look at the resources God has allocated to this group that He has brought together. Let financial resources be the last resource you consider as you work through this next exercise.

JOURNEYING

ASSETS	NEEDS

PRACTICE

1. On a whiteboard, draw a line in the middle.

2. Appoint a designated scribe. One at a time, call out your perceived needs of your church or outreach ministry. The scribe should write this below the line.

3. Then, one at a time, call out your perceived needs. The scribe should write these above the line

4. Examine the assets and needs listed on the board. Are there any needs that can be met by an existing asset in the group? If you called out a need that can be met by an asset on the whiteboard, go to the whiteboard and draw a connecting line between the two.

LET'S DISCUSS

ASSETS

How has God's faithfulness contributed to the assets you and your church experience?
How does the church's culture contribute to these assets?

NEEDS

How have you depended on God when these needs have not been fulfilled?
What did it feel like to list the needs of your ministry?

PRACTICE

Just as you drew a line between a need and an asset, share a time that the Lord was faithful to provide.
Are there needs listed on the whiteboard that stand alone? Take some time to pray as a group about these remaining needs.

L E T ' S
C O M M I T

ASSETS

I am willing to share my assets with the other churches in this collaborative as we journey together.

I am willing to communicate openly about the assets I possess and the limitations I have in sharing them.

NEEDS

I recognize that God has given His local church to help one another and that I am not expected to have it all.

I am willing to communicate openly communicate when i need the help of others in the collaborative.

PRACTICE

I commit to honoring all that churches bring to this partnership and not consider my contribution more significant than another's.

_____
Signature

OUTWARDS

You've learned about your stateside partners and now it's time to expand your vision and look across the pond.

Establishing sophisticated teams like the creation of Global South and Global North partnerships will help establish a new world, one where poverty gaps are reduced and people around the world are helped (Drayton). This will include a thorough selection process, defining expectations, and accountability measures put in place.

While this might sound daunting, this is for the benefit of you and your partners. Establishing clear expectations at the onset of any partnership is important.

As you approach this next section, take some time to pray. Pray for the Holy Spirit to unite you together with similar vision. Not for the sake of similarity, but so that you would be of one accord (Acts 4:32).

OUTWARDS

THE WORK
EX. PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS, CAUSAL FOCUS

NETWORK
EX. PREVIOUS PROJECTS, DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

GLOBAL PARTNER'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN PARTNERSHIPS
EX. CROSS-CULTURAL, IN-COUNTRY PARTNERSHIPS

EXPECTATIONS
EX. COMMUNICATION, REPORTING, VISITING

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

LET'S DISCUSS

THE WORK

Who are you most interested in serving? Is it tied to a cause, people group, and/or geographic location?
Is your answer to the first question based on a personal calling or a congregational pressure?
As you listened to others, did you hear a new perspective on a cause you want to enagage in?

NETWORK

Are there people in your network that you think could benefit from partnering with a collaborative?
How does the idea of introducing your network to these individuals feel?

EXPERIENCE

Consider the first time you partnered with someone globally. What was that experience like?
What are some things that excite you as you consider global partners and their experience?

EXPECTATIONS

How often would you like to be in communication with your overseas partner?
How do you like to receive communication? Monthly zoom? Quarterly reports?
How can you be clear with your partners about your expectations?

ONWARD

Well done. You have successfully navigated through the journey of partnership and have learned more about yourself and others. The work you just completed is no easy task and takes mental, emotional, and spiritual energy. You honored those sitting around you by exerting that energy. It will undoubtedly bring God glory as you work to join with other churches.

As your partnership is forming, remember to take with you the values you learned going through this experience and workbook. Lead with vulnerability and trust. Allow other pastors to share what they have to give and receive what you need. God will use these newly formed relationship to help supply your needs.

The work has just begun. As you explore partners overseas and solidify those relationships, know that the same values, trust and vulnerability are universal. Lead with a sense of God's calling and go with a God-sized vision. Remember that He has been at work since the beginning of time and you are simply joining Him and His people to continue on the work.

Go with God and your fellow journeyman. Go onward.

PAGE TWENTY| CIELO

...YOUR KINGDOM

COME,

YOUR WILL

BE DONE,

ON EARTH

AS IT IS

IN HEAVEN.

MATTHEW 6:10

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