

Guidelines for Companion Link Relationships in the Anglican Communion

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Introduction

Partnership in Mission is at the heart of relationships within both the Anglican Communion and the wider Church. The Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Dublin in 1973, noted that while the responsibility for mission in any given place belongs primarily to the local church in that place, each part of the worldwide church also carries responsibility for mission in every other place.

Such an understanding of 'mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ' has led to the Partners in Mission (PIM) process within the Anglican Communion. This process enables the local church to analyze its own situation, develop its own priorities and decide upon a strategy of implementation. Key to the process, however, is consultation between the local church and its partners worldwide, who bring valuable resources and different insights into ministry and mission from their own cultures, nations and economic situations.

Companion relationships (also known as companion dioceses and link dioceses relationships) are a growing and important part of this PIM process. Companion relationships are people orientated, with the emphasis on relationship. They exist for the purpose of face.to.face mutual support and the strengthening of mission in the companions' own churches. Ideally, they are living models of partnership in mission, engaging Christians from the grass.roots in offerings of prayer, insight and expertise. The result of companion relationships can be increased awareness of the single mission to which all are called by God and solidarity in the cause of Christ.

Recognizing the growing popularity and importance of companion relationships, the Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Singapore in 1987, called for the development of Anglican Communion.wide guidelines. Such guidelines were seen as a necessary discipline in enhancing partnership both locally and globally and in honouring the PIM process with its values of mutuality, accountability and transparency. To this end, the following principles are offered.

Principles for Companion Relationships

1. Who are the Companions?

- A. Companions should normally be at comparable levels in church structures and of comparable size.
- B. While most companionships now reflect traditional mission relationships (the 'North' .'South' model), different models should be encouraged, for example:
'South' .'South'; one companion from the 'North', two from the 'South'; and vice.versa; one from the 'West', one from the 'East', one from the 'South'.

- C. All levels of the local community should participate in the relationships: youth, women, lay people, clergy. The focus must be on the Whole People of God, not simply church leadership.

2. Establishing the Companion Relationship.

- A. Planning for a companion relationship should involve all sectors of the local church, the bishop's support being crucial, as well as that of the diocesan synod or convention.
- B. The proposed companions must have the opportunity to understand clearly what it is that is being proposed and why, and to know each other's expectations. A process of self-analysis would be appreciated.
- C. The decision to enter a companion relationship must be mutual. Such a decision is best taken in a face.to.face encounter during which both theological and ecclesiastical issues are discussed with representatives of the proposed partnership.
- D. An intention to enter into companionship should be brought to the attention of or endorsed by the companion's provincial synods, as a means of promoting transparency and accountability within the PIM process.
- E. An agreement or covenant, whether formal or informal, should be drafted between the companions, with particular reference to:
 - the length of the relationship;
 - programme activities;
 - financial arrangements;
 - an evaluation process.

Particular sensitivity to cultural contexts should be shown in this covenanting process.

- F. Friendships formed during a companion relationship know no time limits. However, the length of time of an initial companion relationship should be fixed at a period of five years, with additional periods of extension if mutually agreed upon.

3. Areas of sharing

- A. The emphasis of a companion relationship should be on personal and spiritual sharing within the concrete life situations of the companions. Face.to.face encounters are particularly important, and may include:
 - proclamation and application of the Gospel;
 - Bible study and theological reflections;
 - intercession and worship;
 - Exchange of information or strategies in issues of common concern;
 - Exchange of ecumenical experiences;
 - exchange of lifestyles in Christian witness.
 - pastoral visits when there is need to demonstrate solidarity

- B. Other types of valuable sharing include:
exchange of leadership resources and mutual training of leadership; and
exchange of personnel.
- C. Companionship should grow towards standing with and for the
companion in its witness and action.
- D. The beginning and the ending of a companion relationship should be
mutually negotiated, and marked in some liturgical way.

4. Ecumenical Elements

- A. The growing unity and partnership of the Anglican Communion should
serve the wider cause of Christian unity. Whenever possible an
ecumenical dimension should be present from the beginning of
companion relationships.
- B. Local ecumenical participants should be involved in both sides of the
companionship, especially when receiving visitors from the companion
church. Thought should be given to including ecumenical representative
on visiting teams.
- C. Church-related groups dealing ecumenically with justice, peace,
inter.faith and other issues should be included in the companionship
process.

5. Projects and Funding

- A. A companion relationship should neither begin with a funding project
nor develop into a project-oriented relationship.
- B. If in the process of a companionship funding projects are developed, no
project should be dictated or imposed by one of the partners. In
consultation with their own national or provincial bodies, the
companions may decide together on the validity of any proposed project.
In all cases, priorities established at PIM Consultations should be
respected.
- C. Companionship should foster trust in the integrity of the whole Church.
Inter.dependence should avoid any tendency or temptation for the
`North' to designate, or the `South' to solicit, financial aid.

6. Evaluating the Companionship

Companion relationships are dynamic and should therefore, include regular
evaluation of theological and ecclesiastical issues. After an agreed period of
time, a major evaluation should be held, in a culturally appropriate way, during
which the future of the formal relationship is determined.