

Section 4: Gift-Giving and Monetary Protocols

Purpose:

“If you gave us a million dollars tomorrow, we couldn’t handle it. What we need are the skills you have so we can build our own lives and carry out what God has called us to do.”

— Rev. Ernest Mahoro, Kibungo Diocese

Any true partnership is balanced. Both parties make valuable contributions to the other through their respective blessings and gifts. Likewise, both parties receive and are encouraged, enjoying the fact that they are each members of the household of God and of the one Body of Christ. We strive then to a common call to glorify God and make Him known. Once at the stage of a strong, time-tested relationship of trust, then consider sponsoring projects or giving and receiving of money and material goods in sister partnerships **always with the bishop’s knowledge and approval**. Once your partnership reaches this stage, you must use good judgment and responsible stewardship in doing this slowly, mutually and prayerfully. This chapter will:

1. Cover parameters for churches who are partnered
2. Cover parameters for initial visits to Rwanda
3. Cover parameters for Rwandan visitors to the United States

Matched Churches

It is natural for us to want to give gifts to demonstrate our excitement and commitment. However, the crucial aspect to keep in mind is this: the foundational focus is to be on relationships! We highly recommend that you read [African Friends and Money Matters](#) by David Maranz to gain even further understanding. Here are a few ideas for your consideration:

1. Start Small

- **Begin with emails** or any other way of viable communication with the Rwandan sister parish and its pastor. The gift of one’s self, sharing stories and interest in one another, prayer requests, etc. are great ways to begin... and the costs are relatively low for both partners.

- **Photographs:** Digital pictures can be sent via email. Another idea is one team left an extra memory card and the sister parish in Rwanda took pictures and sent the “card” back with a subsequent visiting team. Send a group photo of the members of the church; you could have it made into large, photo postcards. These ideas are easy to send or distribute and the sister parish can begin to know the faces of those with whom they are in partnership.
- **Gifts for the Pastor/Congregation:** If you have not been to your Rwandan sister parish before, and find that you would like to send a small gift to your sister parish via someone who is traveling to Rwanda, then you might ask the Diocesan bishop to suggest an appropriate gift for the pastor and his family and/or the congregation. (See the suggestions below entitled “Gifts for the Rwandan Parish)

Remember, gifts do not always have to be purchased. At the recommendation of a Rwandan bishop, the members of Living Faith Anglican Church in Tempe, AZ conducted a very successful “Adopt-a-Stole” campaign. Congregation members paid an “adoption” fee to fund the creation of stoles by resident quilters. Each Anglican Mission sponsor then wrote a card to the Rwandan clergy member who would receive the gift. This was a relatively inexpensive plan to carry out, the need was great and the appreciation was overwhelming.

2. **Sponsoring/Financial expenditures:** Some thoughts to consider:

- **Relationships First:** Relationships are much more important than projects! So take the time to follow the steps discussed throughout this Manual. Make sure that you have developed open communication and mutual understanding of the partnership BEFORE you embark on projects or offer any form of financial support. This will most likely take time, even years. Walking together provides the opportunities to discover one another’s similarities and differences while building mutual respect and love. It is relatively easy to travel the 12,000 miles; it is harder to walk the last several feet and become a part of each other’s hearts.
- **Begin the discussion:** Although you may see many needs on a visit to Rwanda, your perception of needs and the perception of the Rwanda sister parish can be very different. And you will probably prioritize those needs very differently. You may be presented with many requests from various sources. It is very important that individuals do **not** make any promises apart from their Anglican Mission church and wait upon the return to formalize

any requests. Make no commitments and don't offer suggestions while on the initial visit. Enter each discussion with a 'blank sheet' (no assumptions). Ask what the priority need is of the Rwandan parish (and/or diocese) and have the Rwandan partner identify the resources available within their culture. Some of these needs you may be able to meet and many more you will not. It is best to under-promise and to be open about the limits of your abilities to assist. Your Rwandan partners may assume that any suggestions of possible assistance come as a final commitment with the full authority of your church and are not just an expression of personal hopes.

- **Proposals (when you get to that point):** Request a written proposal as to any project, indicating with appropriate specificity its cost, clear definitions of what will be financed by the Anglican Mission partner church and what will be supplied by the Rwandan partner parish. Please make it very clear that by submitting a proposal it **does not guarantee financing**; it simply provides a guide to the Anglican Mission church as to the extent of the project, what is proposed and how the sister churches could partner together. Evaluate how sustainable the project is without the assistance from outside resources.
- **Involve the Rwandan bishop:** ALWAYS copy and involve the Rwandan bishop in these discussions. The respective bishop may ask the Sister-to-Sister Partnership Team to assist as is deemed appropriate or needed.
- **Consider the appropriateness/sustainability of the project/gift.** Will there be a requirement of training/instruction for those involved? Who will do it and how much will it cost? Do the resources exist to handle maintenance, including both costs and expertise? Are there more appropriate resources within the local area of the recipient?

Electrical equipment sent where there is no electricity; cell phones that are not equipped with SIM cards are gifts that have little or no practical value for the recipient. This holds true for donated medical equipment as well. Many used items such as x-ray machines, etc. have been sent overseas with great intent (and often with great expense to the donor). Unfortunately, when no one knows how to use the items or is unable to maintain them there, these expensive items quickly find other uses—such as doorstops!

- **Define and Keep Defining:** Developing effective communication and mutual understanding is essential to building a long-term relationship. It is acceptable to say “no” until you are confident the mutual protocols are set in

place and meet the mutual agreement of both parties and the approval of the Rwandan bishop.

- **Significant Funding:** It is important that funds being sent from Anglican Mission churches to Rwandan parishes, clergy, diocese, bishops or special projects be sent through the Anglican Mission Office in Pawleys Island (often at a lesser transfer fee than your local bank) to the appropriate account in Rwanda. Contact the Anglican Mission Finance Office to provide the account information and transfer protocols (See Appendix for names and contact information). This will allow for secure transfer and the record-keeping requested by the Archbishop. The Sister-to-Sister Partnership Team is available as a resource to consult regarding potential projects and funding. The goal is not to control the Partnership, but to assist whenever and wherever possible and to provide the Archbishop with the information that he desires.

Gifts and Financial Exchange While Visiting Rwanda

The Rwandan culture is generous and welcoming. Hospitality is natural to the Rwandan people, and although Anglican Mission teams will usually be met with celebration—including meals (sacrificially prepared), church services and, often times, small gifts from different groups in the areas visited. Normally, gifts presented to Western teams consist of locally crafted items—such as baskets, pictures, cards, etc. The heart and love behind the gift giving is apparent and very moving. An attitude of humility and thankfulness is appropriate when receiving gifts from our Rwandan brothers and sisters and the team leader should be prepared to offer gratitude publicly and verbally.

Often times, there can be significant confusion on monetary arrangements during visits. Here are some general guidelines to follow:

- **Ask and agree up front:** Before any visit, it is a good idea to simply ask what the accommodation/travel expenses might include: What is the cost of accommodations and expected fuel/driver/vehicle costs? Try to get a reasonable estimate before departure. If you do not get an answer, upon arrival try to negotiate a reasonable idea of what the cost will be. Most have found it is costing anywhere from \$50-75 daily per person including lodging and food.

If you will be providing training, ask for the expectations of your costs and those of the receiving teams. Many individuals have surprisingly discovered that once they arrive, they are also expected to pay for the transportation, lodging, etc. of those attending their training; so get this agreed upon up front.

- **Individuals on the teams must not make independent promises apart from the team:** Many well-meaning team members make promises without the knowledge of the team leader and/or home pastor. This has created major problems for Anglican Mission churches upon their return. Promises have included sponsorship of schooling for students and large monetary gifts. Even suggestions that they might help can be interpreted as a “yes”. Be very careful and make it crystal clear that no commitments are being made until return to the Americas, discussion with the Anglican Mission pastor and the approval of the Rwandan bishop. Most Rwandans see a monetary commitment to education as a commitment through to the completion of the education of the individual or group, not simply a one-time gift unless this is stated several times.
- **Expect to pay:** Your team should expect to pay for guest house fees, food costs, fuel costs and most other costs accrued by hosts. If you are staying with a pastor or family and not in a guesthouse, request assistance of the bishop as to what a fair price would be to leave to cover these costs.
- **Offerings at worship:** Your team may visit a number of parishes and during worship members of the team should be prepared to make an offering from their personal finances as you would in the Americas. Paying in the Rwandan currency is highly suggested as the ability to exchange small dollar amounts can be both difficult and time consuming.

Gifts for the Rwandan Parish

When bringing gifts for the sister parishes, consider things that are personal and/or practical. They do not have to be expensive. Some suggestions are:

1. **Church photos:** The congregation from All Saints Church in North Carolina had a brilliant idea when they took a group photo of the members of their church and had it made into large, photo postcards. Rev. Steve Breedlove, the Rector, passed out these photos to the congregations visited and the people appreciated being able to see those who were praying for their land.

2. **Bring along a portable photo printer (including all needed supplies):**
Everyone loves to take pictures and usually they stay within the camera with good intentions to send them later. For less than \$100, a portable photo printer can be taken and prints made and given to the host prior to leaving in the form of a scrap book or individual prints. The printer then returns to the Americas for future use. Equipment that is taken to a location is frequently assumed that it will be left as a gift. If that is not the case, without clear communication at the outset, this can become an issue of misunderstanding and possibly lead to resentment.
3. **Frisbees / Soccer Balls:** Soccer is a well-loved sport in Rwanda and often times children are relegated to playing with balls made from rolled up banana leaves tied together with strings. Soccer balls are easy to travel with if you deflate them and place them in suitcases. However, be sure to bring along hand pumps and needles. Soccer balls are meaningless without the tools to inflate them! Other lightweight items such as Frisbees can also be a fun idea. The best part, of course, is playing with new friends! Expect heavy use after you leave; so take durable equipment and perhaps even extras.
4. **Bracelets:** A team from Living Faith Anglican Church in Tempe, AZ brought along rubber bracelets imprinted with a Rwandese praise greeting. The bracelets were well received. However, the team was surprised to learn that purple (the color of the bracelets) was actually concerning to the people because it symbolized mourning and death. Check ahead of time!
5. **Candy:** Candy is **not** a great idea, as it can lead to mayhem if not handled appropriately. If you decide to bring it, your Rwandan leader needs to be in charge of organizing the distribution!
6. **Hand-made banner or quilt from the home church:** Church of the Resurrection-Tampa presented a beautiful tapestry for their sister parish in Cyimbogo Parish-Cyangugu Diocese. Other churches have also presented nice gifts of their own banner and altar hangings.
7. **Financial gift:** The team may want to donate a financial gift to the sister parish. This may be part of a mutually agreed project. Remember a gift for the respective pastor over \$100 should be cleared through the bishop's office **prior** to donation.

Tipping Protocol: Tipping for services in Rwanda (driver, translator, and guest house staff etc.) is discouraged. It sets these individuals apart rather than simply

doing their job. If there has been an exemplary staff person, tell his/her boss. Ask the boss if there is a way to recognize them for the job well done. Often times, when we give cash, we have no concept of annual earnings in Rwanda, and hand over what they would normally receive in a whole month or even a year's wages.

Tipping for service at a local restaurant is acceptable and the amount depends on where you are eating. If in a major hotel or cafe catering to the West, the tip would be expected to be more than in a local establishment. It would still be less than Western standards.

Assume good intent: Finances can be tricky. Although the culture is changing, there is still a deep, pervasive view that all Westerners are rich. While people are learning, there are going to be mistakes. You may be asked to give beyond your comfort level, and you should feel free to say "no" or make the boundaries clear up-front. Very rarely, you may be placed in an uncomfortable situation by what feels like high pressure requests; again, assert your right to decline very tactfully and inform the ranking clergy or bishop when you deem it appropriate.

Rwandan Visits to the Anglican Mission Church

As your partnership progresses, hopefully travel will extend in both directions. Hopefully, you will want to follow the guidelines listed above as related to gift-giving, but visits from Rwanda to the Americas can offer unique challenges as well. Keep the following in mind:

- **Define Travel Expenses:**

Be sure to determine this up front before any expectations are established. If you are receiving a **bishop** who will already be in the United States for other visits, be sure to coordinate with the Anglican Missions Headquarters (or those who initiated the invitation) to gain an understanding of what expenses for which you will be responsible. Airfare within the Americas, lodging and meals are customary.

This is also an opportunity to work with other sister churches in the Anglican Mission to share expenses of traveling bishops. Keep the HUB Coordinator, the Partnership Desk Coordinator and Anglican Mission Headquarters informed of any such invitations and travel dates and request information about costs to be shared.

If you are bringing **clergy** from your Rwandan sister parish, you will likely be responsible for ALL airfare in addition to lodging, meals, gifts and any other incidental and emergency expenses. Be sure to get permission from the appropriate

Rwandan bishop **prior to** extending an invitation to the pastor. Many pastors have not had the opportunity to travel abroad and will have to secure a passport, travel visas, not only to the US/Canada but for countries that they will be traveling through and this can take many months. A letter of invitation will be required. (See Appendix for a sample)

- **Avoid General “Shopping” offers:**

Avoid general offers to take Rwandan visitors “shopping” without a definitive understanding of who will be paying for what items. There can be and have been clear and expensive misunderstandings, especially for first-time visitors, about who is paying for what. Any misinterpretations or misunderstandings should not be interpreted as an attempt to take advantage, but it is important to make provide some guidelines prior to setting out!

Again, purchased personal gifts whose total exceeds \$100 needs to be cleared by the pastor’s Rwandan bishop. Taking back expensive purchases not only creates a problem at customs, but leads to jealousy and/or division among those who are fortunate to travel and those who are not invited or unable to make such a visit.

Remember, mistakes are bound to be made on both sides, but the beauty of Sister-to-Sister Partnerships is learning and growing together in Christ. If your church or your team has an open heart, is prayerful, respectful, humble and willing to grow from mistakes, the relationship will be blessed and God will be glorified!