

(Ed. 10-19-09)

**GENERAL UNDERSTANDINGS**  
**FOR SISTER-TO-SISTER CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS:**  
**PROVINCE OF RWANDA & THE ANGLICAN MISSION IN THE AMERICAS**

In January 2008, the Anglican Mission in the Americas transitioned – with the unanimous approval and involvement of the Rwandan House of Bishops - from being a missionary outreach of the Anglican Province of Rwanda to becoming integrally embedded within the Province, forming “One Church, on Two Continents, on Mission Together.”

The concept of Sister-to-Sister church relationships was initially developed in 2004 to provide a unique opportunity for individual Anglican Mission churches to build relationships with local parishes in Rwanda ... for each to benefit relationally and spiritually. The over-riding and primary goal of the Sister-to-Sister Partnerships is relational!

This relationship-based concept is different from sending short term mission teams or other partners who have gone/come to Rwanda to do something, often quite meaningful in helping to revitalize this country after the genocide. It is not a NGO (non-government organization). Through these relationships, the local Rwandan and Anglican Mission parishes can be on mission together to sustain and build up the body of Christ. Hebrews 10:24 declares, *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together but let us encourage one another.”*

Thus, this is a Biblical ministry endeavor. It has the explicit authorization and support of Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini and the Rwandan House of Bishops which now consists of Bishops of the Province of Rwanda as well as Bishop Chuck Murphy and the Council of Bishops from the Anglican Mission. Canons Tim Smith and Ellis Brust were asked by both Archbishop Kolini and Bishop Murphy to lead the ‘Partnership Team’ on their behalf for this important endeavor. In June 2008, a “desk” to assist in the further development of these Partnerships was established within the Anglican Mission with Sandi Harding joining the Team on a part-time basis.

These Sister-to-Sister Church Partnerships are intended initially to be three (3) years in duration (and renewable by agreement of both the sister churches and their bishops). These Partnerships will hopefully accomplish the following goals:

**To foster and increase meaningful relationships and ongoing mutual interaction for the furtherance of the Gospel and mutual growth in Christ, acknowledging any respective cultural differences and challenges.**

The following are Guidelines to assist in establishing these goals:

1. Prayer is to be a foremost aspect of each Sister-to-Sister Church Partnership. It is suggested that each involved congregation pray regularly for its sister church, including

within its regular public corporate worship services. Toward that end, it is expected that each will develop a prayer strategy to lift up the needs of its sister church. Each congregation can seek from the other specific prayer needs and requests as to the both church and the pastor and his family.

2. Facilitate meaningful and ongoing written, electronic and/or telephone communication between the leadership of the sister churches on a regular basis, at least quarterly if not more often, e.g., monthly, if possible. Cell phones and e-mail have become available in most parts of Rwanda but mail can still take weeks/months to arrive. Take into account the means of the pastors and traveling distance to access resources and agree on the most practical means to communicate. (note: some may need to travel many miles on foot and/or seek interpreters to assist in communication)
3. Share information about your parishes with one another. It might be important to share this through pictures, include names of clergy and leadership so that prayers take on more personal meaning, what is the history of your churches, share your joys and struggles, personal information about the clergy, etc. Consider including your sister parish and anyone in their congregation who receives e-mail in your general church e-mailings (e.g., e-newsletter, announcements, new ministries, etc.) by adding them to your e-mailing lists. \*\*
4. Undertake occasional mission and exchange trips of clergy and laity between the sister churches. It is hoped that representatives of the Anglican Mission congregation could visit its sister Rwandan parish, if possible, within eighteen (18) months of the establishment of the Sister Church Partnership, but certainly before the end of the three-year initial period. Conversely, the Anglican Mission church will seek to host visitors from its Rwandan sister parish whenever feasible and practical. One of the best ways for the most number of people in an Anglican Mission church to better understand the situation in Rwanda and get glimpses of life in Rwanda is to invite the sister Rwandan church pastor and spouse to visit. This could be timed to include attendance at an Anglican Mission Winter Conference whereby they could participate in the fellowship and worship with fellow pastors from the Anglican Mission and Rwanda.
5. Initial visits to the sister church should be for the purpose of building relationships, NOT to carry out projects. This is a period of assessment and exploration of each other's cultures and the opportunity to experience how God is working in each of the regions/parishes. Walking together provides the opportunity to experience one another's similarities and differences. It is easy to go the 12,000 miles; it is harder to walk the last 12 feet and become a part of each other's hearts. \*\*\*
6. After the relationship has been established (most likely this will take at least two exchange visits, be they to the USA/Canada or to Rwanda), then projects may be discussed. At this time, it is imperative that the Bishop of the Rwandan diocese is

integrally involved in order to be assured that the projects meet the goals of the diocese and the Province.

7. Each Sister Church Partnership is – early in the relationship - to seek to articulate a brief but clear written vision and the goals of this particular partnership to help implement the mutually agreed vision, which is hoped to be accomplished jointly, through the relationship and recognition of the particular resources (spiritual, information, skills, vision, gifting, etc.) of each sister church.
8. The respective bishops of each church – PEAR or Anglican Mission - will have overall oversight authority of the particular Sister Church Partnerships and may call upon Canon Smith (RevDrDr@comcast.net)and/or who covers the Rwandan ‘desk’ to assist as is deemed appropriate.
9. Hub Churches serve in a coordinating role with the other Anglican Mission churches partnering within that same Rwandan diocese. They also facilitate a two-way communication between the Partnership Desk and the Partner churches by: (a) keeping communication avenues open between those Anglican Mission churches and the Partnership Desk; (b) keeping the focus as much as possible upon relationships (c) assisting the other Anglican Mission churches with the furtherance of the goal of the partnerships; and (d) inform one another and the Partnership Desk of any pertinent information, e.g., planned mission trips, visits to the Americas of Rwandan bishops, ministry ideas, travel alerts and discounts, etc. (The actual role has been established by the Hub churches under the guidance of the Partnership Desk and Archbishop Kolini.)

\*\* It has been suggested that a model workshop be created to prepare the leadership from both Rwanda and the Anglican Mission to understand the meaning of the Partnership, our different cultures and world views and how it impacts relationships, the history of our countries and the distinctive roles of the Church in its history, the role of the Church now, history of Anglican Mission and role of the US and Rwanda in the Partnership, etc.

\*\*\* It is important that each side of the Partnership understand the need to break the old mold of the giver/receiver dependency model. The Rwandans who think they have nothing to give and look to the West for the answers often thinking that money, education, and things will make them happy. The West, which assumes it has answers to fix the problems, often wants the Rwandans to adopt their ways of doing things, creating a superior/inferior model. Both Partners need to adopt an attitude of humility, recognizing that each has an opportunity to journey together guided by Jesus who is the answer for both. Together in Christ, we can be used by the Holy Spirit to help build up the Kingdom of God.