

## Forming Effective Ministry Partnerships

As you assess a potential ministry partnership, begin by considering these guiding questions to ask both of yourself and the other organization:

- What can we accomplish together that we could not as effectively accomplish independently?
- In what way would partnering benefit you? Us?
- Can this mutual goal/purpose be achieved in any other way?
- Is this compelling enough to be worth the extra effort true partnering would entail? What makes it compelling to you? To Us?

If the 'WHY?' is established and compelling, then it's worth the next level of designing a partnership agreement. Bias should lean to NOT establish something that everyone has to be ready to commit to for years. That level of commitment is perhaps more necessary for a merger agreement, but not a partnership. Because partnerships are a mutual agreement to working together and not a marriage, they can proceed with more ambiguity and flexibility to adapt along the way. Thus a good initial approach may be to establish a 1 year commitment regarding the 'how'. No one knows how it will actually work until they enter a commitment to make it work.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Effective partnerships need a **facilitator** – someone who believes in the long-term vision of the united effort and a clear process to keep the partnership vitalized and focused.
2. Effective partnerships need a **purpose** – a focus on the “why” (motivation) & “what” (goal/outcome) rather than the “how” (strategy). Expect that you will not know how to fully make this work at the beginning and that the only way to know is to first commit to walk together as equals.
3. Effective partnerships are built on **trusting relationships** – this takes time and intentional effort, and involves openness, trust, and mutual respect. These are your brothers and sisters in Christ; your equals in the eyes of Christ. It involves some learning concerning culture, worldview and even the partners' view on theology & Christian practice.

4. Effective partnerships are made up of ministries with **clear identities and vision**. A partner individual or organization must know who it is, what it does best, and how it will contribute to the partnership.
5. Effective partnerships **define expectations**, specific organizational contributions and goals. Don't get too complicated with this or you will overwhelm each other. Seek simplicity in defining a short set of commitments that ensure clarity of roles and resources.
6. Effective partnerships focus on what they have **in common**, rather than how they are different (eg. vision, values, ministry objectives). You will be very different in multiple respects ~ find and build upon the common ground (where there is overlap in commitments, values, & desires).
7. Effective partnerships believe in the power of **leveraged resources**. 1+1=3 (or more)
8. Effective partnerships are not concerned with **who gets the credit**, but focus instead on the realization of the mutually defined outcome.
9. Effective partnerships see **prayer and community** as binding them together. They are refreshed and empowered by frequently praying for each other and expressing concern for personal needs. Shared life through common meals and experiences is also a powerful connecting force. Invest in building community.

*Harv Matchullis, Executive Director:*

