

PMEJC October 1-4 2009

Session 3: Applying Principles of Partnership to **Global Relations** Program Work

Background: The following 2 summaries provide an overview of the current context of the Global Relations Program, and of the program's theological underpinning. The summaries briefly attempt to position our current context within developments in Partnerships over the past 12 years and the 10 Principles of Partnership. A short list of the joys and challenges of work in the current context is offered.

Part 1: Global Relations Program

Recent History: In 1997, *Partners in Mission (PIM)*, a historic program of Partnerships, General Synod, employed 5 Full Time people with responsibilities for sustaining, nurturing, developing relationships with overseas Anglican Provinces and their institutions, ecumenical councils and organizations, and others, in three regional groupings: Asia/ Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, and Latin America Caribbean. (Two other historic Partnerships programs primarily involving intentional relationships with international church partners were, and are *Volunteers in Mission (VIM)* and *Theological Students International Internship Program (TSIIP)*).

The purpose of PIM historically, with other programs, was to continue strengthening the church's commitment to and interest in serving with others in God's mission around the world. The Anglican Communion's 10 Principles of Partnership were used to frame and nurture the health of these relationships. PIM's commitment to companionship with mission partners included:

- i) financial grants to partner churches and organizations for local mission priorities, including Provincial infrastructure, theological education and training for church leadership, peace and reconciliation initiatives, national church gatherings of women, youth, etc. ;
- ii) regular PIM staff visits (2-3 times annually) with partners for mutual sharing of information, planning ways of developing and strengthening relationship. Partners also visited the Anglican Church of Canada with PIM support/hospitality. Staff and partner visits often but not only coincided with local gatherings, events, synods; and
- iii) sharing the stories of partners' priorities and programs of mission with Canadian Anglicans via church media, mission education resources, verbal presentations, etc.

In 1997, the PIM program budget was @ CDN 2 million, disbursed to more than 50 partners in more than 60 countries. Not all 50 relationships were of equal intensity, but a majority involved regular correspondence, financial management, visiting, and reporting.

Since 1997, *Partnerships* has experienced a substantial reduction of staffing and program funding due to declining General Synod revenue and a reorganization of program components. In May 2006, the Global Relations program was created through amalgamation of PIM's 3 regional programs, arriving at its current level of 2 full time staff. An intentional effort was made, in the interests of careful transition, to maintain the historic breadth and depth of partnerships globally. There has been much joy and meaning in taking this approach to date. A measure of breadth and depth of relationship has eroded since 2006 however, due to budget reductions, new financial management standards and limited staff capacity. Since 2007, *Partnerships* changed further, by the resolve of General Synod 2007, to an

integrated national Partners in Mission and Ecojustice Standing Committee. A more intentionally integrated mission and ecojustice program has also emerged.

Current Situation: In 2009, Global Relations has an annual operating program/grants budget of @ \$600,000 (including staff travel and two trust accounts). In 2009, the Global Relations program will administer grants to a total of 45 churches/organisations in more than 50 countries: 18 Anglican Provinces/dioceses and 15 ecumenical organizations, 12 international scholarship students, and a small number of miscellaneous other organizations. In addition to the abovementioned, Global Relations also works with denominational and ecumenical solidarity partners.

The Global Relations Coordinator continues to travel internationally 3-4 times per year to meet with partners, and partners continue to visit Canada, though less often than in the past. Global Relations staff continue to provide information resources to departmental and other mission and ecojustice education initiatives, such as Praying with Our Partners, Anglican Appeal calendars and campaigns, web-based news, etc., to speak about Partnerships' work in Canadian parishes, Synods and other gathering. Staff collaborate with personnel and ecojustice program colleagues.

The global church-to-church partnerships situation has also changed over the past 10+ years as a result of widespread decline in funding and staff resources within northern denominational churches and ecumenical organisations. Various responses within these groups have resulted in restructuring and reduction of partnership program resources. In a number of cases, denominational programs have ceased and/or radically reduced their staffing and grants component by reducing the size of grants and/or number of partners. Considered, strategic criteria are sometimes applied in this process i.e. thematic areas are identified in consultation with partners. Yet, programs are also reviewed and reshaped primarily within budget considerations without substantive consultation with affected partners or constituents.

Developments in Provincial capacity for autonomy, self-reliance, community development programs and projects within majority world partners have also led to stronger relationships between Provinces and Christian development agencies. Such agencies, though not without funding challenges, continue to broker considerable financial support and will accept church partners where project management capacity is demonstrated. Churches without such capacities are unfortunately eliminated from a partner pool, largely because of agencies' back donor requirements.

In sum, historic church-to-church mission and personnel programs are currently in flux. Minority world churches struggle to honour the legacy of their relationships in a time of radically reduced capacities and majority world churches continue to seek financial support towards self-reliance and autonomy. A number of partnership consultations within this focus have taken place over the past several years in aid of more mutually respectful, responsible, equitable decision-making, strategic planning and program implementation eg. *Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire*, The United Church of Canada, 2009. The principle of mutuality has never been more important for Partnerships and for Global Relations than it is now. All 10 principles call us to a renewed mutual responsibility and interdependence in the body of Christ for the purpose of together fulfilling the mission of God in the world.

The joys inherent to working as Global Relations staff in the current situation include:

- i. continuing to be a part of the Anglican Church of Canada's historical commitment (of more than a century) to relationships for mission and justice with Anglicans and others around the world;
- ii. opportunities to participate in the sharing of stories and resources for mission locally in Canada and elsewhere in the world;
- iii. opportunities to work with deeply committed and skilled colleagues and partners, voluntary and staff, in Canada and globally.

The challenges inherent to the current situation include:

- i. discerning the vision of the leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada for the national church's global relationships for mission and ecojustice;
- ii. identifying effective, sustainable ways and means of integrating Partnerships' mission and ecojustice program priorities;
- iii. keeping up with the day-to-day work of maintaining and strengthening relationships with historic and new partners amidst ongoing financial cutbacks and reduced staffing levels ie. of maintaining principles of mutuality, interdependence, transparency, solidarity in every aspect of our work;
- iv. energy and creativity to lift our heads and renew vision;

Part 2: Theological Underpinning

The Global Relations program tries to work in ways which reflect:

- i) The incarnational grace and love of God, inspiring human prayer, relationship and enterprise constantly, mysteriously, abundantly toward healing, reconciliation and peace with justice for all and creation;
- ii) The love and courage of Jesus Christ, inspiration of faithful Christian witness;
- iii) The deeply relational essence of God, three in one, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer

Discussion questions:

- a. Given what we have heard, where do you feel God is calling us?
- b. How is God's mission apparent?
- c. With whom should the Anglican Church of Canada be in solidarity?
- d. Whose voices should we be listening to?

References

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