

EFCC PARTNERSHIPS
GLOBAL MISSION ROUNDTABLE
LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE FOR GLOBAL MINISTRIES

The Code of Best Practice for Church to Church Partnerships – 1st Edition (2009)

Introduction

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada *Code of Best Practice for Church to Church Partnerships* (C2CP) is designed to provide guidelines for churches interested in church to church partnerships.

At the historic Edinburgh Missions Conference in 1910, a young Indian believer named V.S. Azariah challenged the esteemed crowd. He thanked the missionaries for their years of investment and sacrifice, but left the largely Western crowd with this haunting call: “Give us friends!” (Bosch 1997, 54). A century later our collective challenge as the worldwide church is to respond to that call – to build effective friendships with the churches of the world in order to enable the kingdom of God to advance to the yet unreached, needy and spiritually impoverished of our world.

Friendship speaks of mutuality, a sharing of equals, a relationship that makes both parties richer. Partnership adds the dimension of purpose to the friendship. A growing number of Canadian churches are seeking to build such relationships with sister churches around the world. The sun is setting on the old paradigm of detached involvement with the mission; a new paradigm, inspired by a “postmodern” desire for relationship and experience, combined with a shrinking and readily accessible world, is taking shape. Thousands of Christians have experienced a different culture through short-term mission experiences and have been inspired by believers who serve the Lord in challenging circumstances. They return to their churches often wondering how to sustain, deepen and make a “short-term” relationship more significant.

This growing desire to build church-to-church friendships/partnerships has inspired the Global Missions Roundtable to pool ideas, experiences and research in order to craft this “best practices” document. Beyond the desire for significant relationships with churches beyond our borders, we believe that such partnerships are essential for a growing kingdom impact. We are part of the same body as are our international friends, and we want to share in the joys, pains and challenges of their circumstances. We also want them to share in ours. We believe that a synergy can be created as this relationship grows, and we are convinced that together we can see greater breakthroughs for the gospel and the kingdom.

Core Values

The *Church to Church Partnership Code* has a number of underlying core values, which include:

- *A commitment to mutuality/reciprocity.* Any church-to-church partnership is between equals, with both parties contributing to its success in complementary ways.
- *A commitment to kingdom advance.* Partnerships weigh their goals against the great and urgent task of seeing the gospel penetrate the least-reached and most needy corners of the world.
- *A commitment to avoiding dependency and encouraging self-reliance.* Partnerships must remember to guard against the danger of outside money contributing to crippling dependency.
- *A commitment to intercultural sensitivity.* The health of any partnership is built on a respect and understanding of cultural differences.
- *A commitment to integrity and accountability.* All partnerships must be founded on a commitment to full

disclosure of both the activities and the use of funds that are integral to the project. We are also committed to respecting CRA guidelines, which explain how partnership must be structured under the Income Tax Act. If the church cannot live with CRA’s guidelines, then the individual wishing to contribute funds could send the donation **directly** overseas **without** flowing the donation through the church. They will not receive an income tax receipt, but they will be supporting the work they want done.

- *A commitment to dependence on God.* Partnerships are more than “contracts”; they are crafted in a spirit of mutual dependence upon God to accomplish together that which can not be accomplished alone.

1. To prepare for entering into a partnership, churches should be careful to:

- *discover the values and passions* that motivate their own church body;
- *explore the biblical mandate* for effective partnerships,
- *explore an area of the world* where such passions can be lived out;
- *build a friendship* with potential ministry partners in a needy region of the world;
- *seek the counsel and help* of seasoned missions agencies and others who are well respected by the host culture;
- *If at all possible, find an effective bicultural person* who can facilitate the development of the partnership.

2. In full consultation with both parties, a strong and clear agreement, put into writing, should include:

- meaningful and measurable goals and inspiring vision;
- clearly expressed expectations for each party;
- a clear framework for mutual accountability and communication;
- build-in elements to ensure that the agreement encourages mutuality and reciprocity;
- a clear portrait of what success will look like and when the partnership will come to an end.

3. To keep the partnership on course, churches need clear biblical and missiological bearings, including:

- the mutuality and interdependence of the body of Christ,
- the church’s call to complete the task of seeing the church planted among the least-reached,
- a clear understanding of how the church is the “sign” of the kingdom of God,
- the importance of “sodalities,” focused missional structures that can help the church establish a healthy partnership.

4. Since mutual intercultural awareness and appreciation ensure clear communication and a deepening friendship, churches should be careful to

- come as a listener and a learner;
- recognize their key intercultural differences such as direct versus indirect communication;
- recognize important differences in decision making and problem solving;
- understand the critical component of “losing face” in shame-based cultures.

5. To chart a careful course through turbulent financial waters, churches must

- understand basic CRA rules and guidelines,
- determine whether a healthy partnership can exist under those guidelines, and, if not, be willing to have their donors use another route,
- understand how the partner culture views wealth and accountability,
- recognize the hazards of contributing to partner churches, and ensure that the financial partnership does not create unhealthy dependency
- establish clear guidelines of accountability that honour the cultural sensitivities of both parties.

Adopting the Code

The EFC Global Mission Roundtable affirms the desire of those involved in church-to-church partnerships and their quest to develop partnerships with fellow Christians around the globe. *The Code* is provided as a tool to assist churches and mission organizations in the task of developing morally responsible church-to-church partnerships.

As with any implementation procedure, the goal of the Code is to provide ongoing insights and guidelines that improve the quality of Canadian church-to-church interactions. For that to occur, the implementation process must be a meaningful in order to avoid giving mere lip service to the Code and in so doing, undermine it.

A formal adoption and implementation procedure for the *Code of Best Practice for Church-to-Church Partnerships* is described as follows:

1. An agency or church can decide to formally 'adopt' the Code, and advise the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Global Mission Roundtable to this effect. Forms to complete the process will be provided.
2. There will be *two signatories to the Code*, one being the person responsible for overseeing the partnership program (s), the other being an executive officer of the church or agency (e.g. chairman, CEO, senior pastor, etc).
3. Those who adopt the Code *are encouraged to indicate this on all publicity and materials relating to their program(s)*, and must *provide information about the Code* to all participants.
4. Implementation includes the following commitments:
 - 4.1. Adoptees will be *represented at an annual EFC Church-to-Church Mission Forum*.
 - 4.2. Before signing, *active consideration will be given to how each section and element of the Code is presently being addressed* by the church.
 - 4.3. There will be an *active commitment to benchmark in every area of the Code*. The EFC Global Mission Roundtable (or its designate) will assist in providing training opportunities to achieve said benchmarks.
 - 4.4. A *brief report will be submitted annually to the EFC Global Mission Roundtable*, describing how the Code is being implemented, with submission of current operating benchmarks. A questionnaire will be provided by the EFC for this purpose.

Church-to-Church encounters come in a variety of forms and are managed by churches in a variety of ways. The *Canadian Code of Best Practice* and the implementation process

acknowledge this reality and is designed to be as flexible as possible. The *Code* is a suggested framework that provides standards or benchmarks while recognizing organizational and contextual diversity.

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