



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

U.S. Operations

Parish Partnership Manual

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Principles of Solidarity-based Partnerships	2
From Helping to Solidarity	4

LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Partnership Committee Basics	6
Responsibilities of the Committee	8

COMMUNICATION IN PARTNERSHIP

Establishing a Communication Protocol	10
---------------------------------------	----

VISIONING, PLANNING & ASSESSING PARTNERSHIP

Visioning & Planning for Partnership	12
Partnership Annual Check-In	15

PROJECTS AND MATERIAL SUPPORT

Principles of Good Stewardship	18
The Project Cycle in Partnership	21
What about Material Gifts?	22
Project Proposal Template	23

OUTREACH

Sharing the Good News: Ideas for Engagement	24
CRS Justice Education Resources	26

ADVOCACY IN PARTNERSHIP

How to do Advocacy in Partnership	31
CRS Resources for Advocacy	32

RECIPROCAL DELEGATIONS

Planning Delegations	35
Work Teams/Service Trips	38
Hosting Delegations	39

DELEGATION ORIENTATION MATERIALS

Delegation Orientation Basics	44
-------------------------------	----

Expectations & Responsibilities

Expectations & Ground rules	46
-----------------------------	----

Roles & Responsibilities	47
--------------------------	----

Cultural Resources

Vocabulary Worksheet	48
----------------------	----

Articles for Reflection

To Give or Not to Give... gifts	49
---------------------------------	----

The Cost of Short Term Missions	51
---------------------------------	----

Travel Information

Checklist of Health & Safety Actions	55
--------------------------------------	----

Packing List	57
--------------	----

Top 10 Tips for Travelers	59
---------------------------	----

Helpful Forms

Delegate Profile & Application	60
--------------------------------	----

Mandatory Information Form	63
----------------------------	----

LIST OF RESOURCES	66
--------------------------	-----------

Introduction

Welcome to the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Parish Partnership Manual! This manual is intended to accompany the CRS Parish Partnership Training, a participatory one-day training which delves into the principles and practices of solidarity-based parish partnerships, offering an opportunity for learning, networking and sharing best practices. The training and manual are offered as a resource to Catholic parishes in the U.S. who are involved in some type of sister parish or twinning relationship with a parish in another country, particularly in the Global South. For the purposes of this manual, we will call them parish partnerships. Many of the principles and practices outlined here could equally apply to a partnership between two parishes in the United States, or between two parishes of relatively similar socio-economic circumstances in different countries. However, the tools and suggestions in this manual are geared specifically to those partnerships that involve two parishes from different cultures with a disparity of material wealth.

In this resource, Catholic Relief Services puts forth a very specific model of partnership between two parishes, which we have called “solidarity-based partnership”. This model is rooted in the belief that we all have much to give and receive by being in a relationship with a parish with a reality very different from our own, and that our relationship offers the whole parish an opportunity to grow deeper in faith and solidarity with our sisters and brothers in another country, and by extension with all God’s children around the world, as a response to our Gospel call to be One in Christ.. It offers tools and suggestions for fostering partnerships that are truly mutual in nature, and challenges us to deeper levels of reflection, commitment and action in these partnerships.

In this introductory chapter you will find a brief description of eight principles of solidarity-based partnerships, which have been drawn from experience with and careful analysis of church-based relationships in different faith traditions and particularly in the Catholic Church, at both the parish and diocesan level. These principles were adopted by the Haitian Bishops Conference in September 2010 as guidelines for groups wishing to develop solidarity partnerships in Haiti. Following the description of the principles is a segment of an article entitled “From Helping to Solidarity,” written by Mike Haasl of the Center for Mission in the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, which expounds beautifully on the idea of partnership based in solidarity. The remaining chapters cover various topics that arise in partnership, providing concrete tools and suggestions for putting into practice the principles of solidarity-based partnerships.

We hope you find this resource helpful as you engage with your parish partner and work together to build a world where all have a place at the table. With your contribution, solidarity truly may transform the world!

Principles of solidarity-based partnerships:

Solidarity-based partnerships:

I. Emphasize Relationships As Well As Resources

A true partnership implies the building and nurturing of a relationship over a period of time that transcends one act of working together (such as a project), or of sending a series of checks. If the partnership is based solely on resources, then the partner with few material resources is excluded from full and mutual participation. When the relationship itself is highly valued, it allows for mutual participation and transformation, and all are invited to participate equally, as we all have the ability to love and pray and be present to one another. Partners learn from one another and should be based in a spirit of mutuality and equality

Each particular church must be generous and open to the needs of the other churches. Cooperation between the churches, in an authentic reciprocity that prepares them both to give and to receive, is a source of enrichment for all of them and touches the various spheres of ecclesial life. In this respect, the declaration of the bishops at Puebla is exemplary: "The hour has finally come for Latin America...to be projected beyond her frontiers, *ad gentes*. Certainly we have need of missionaries ourselves, nevertheless we must give from our own poverty."¹

II. Respect Local Church Organization and Planning

The Church's efforts to rebuild its own structures and programs will be more effective if there is more cooperation and less fragmentation among Church organizations and programs. Parishes and other groups around the world that are engaged in partnering relationships are urged to keep their local bishops informed about these initiatives and ensure coherence with the pastoral plan for the local Church. No building activity should be undertaken by Church partners without the approval of the local bishop and, if applicable, the religious superior.

III. Practice Mutuality and Equality

Ongoing and mutual giving and receiving, learning and teaching are essential for global solidarity partnerships. True mutuality allows each of the partners to function from a place of strength. Each must acknowledge the valued role of the other. It is important to intentionally incorporate opportunities for ongoing dialogue, planning, assessing, challenging, and reflecting together. Indeed, solidarity partnering is a form of mission that has been long recognized by the Church.² As a form of mission of the local Church in both countries, such partnerships should come under the supervision and organization of the diocesan mission office or other appropriate diocesan body.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 64.

² The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. (1999). *Cooperatio Missionalis*: Instruction on Missionary Cooperation, n. 18.

IV. Support Responsible Local Leadership

The true measure of success of any global solidarity partnership is not how many wells were dug or clinics held, but whether the capacity of the local community to lead its own development is strengthened. The goal of any partnership should lead to sustainable development, according to needs of the local Church, and should be designed to reduce the need for outside help.

V. Promote Transparency and Accountability

Implicit in these principles is the expectation that leaders of both partners will carry out their roles in an honest, transparent and responsible way. Transparency and accountability are essential for strong global partnership relationships. All partnerships should be characterized by open sharing of information so that mutual trust can be developed. Funds provided to Church partners should be used in a manner consistent with donor intent and should be reported both to the local mission office or diocesan authority in the sending country as well as the local bishop. The results of the project should also be reported to the donors. It is our strong desire that a monthly report on building projects funded by Church entities from around the world be drafted and made available on the appropriate website.

VI. Work to Promote Greater Justice and Peace

Global solidarity partnerships can provide the experience and the understanding of challenges facing a country. Partnerships can enable local partners to participate in their own country's decision-making, and to enable those in other parts of the world to participate in donor government policy-making in ways that promote the best interests of the people in their partner's country and meet their needs most effectively. Participation in efforts to promote more just policies is a valuable dimension of the partnership experience. All of these activities should be undertaken in consultation and collaboration with local partners and should promote integral human development.

VII. Seek to Give and Receive, Learn and Teach

True relationship is a constant give and take. We all bring something to the table and we all have poverties that need to be addressed. In fact, our poverties are an invitation to another to share their gift, affirming their value and contribution. Above all, this requires a spirit of humility, recognizing that we are mutually interdependent and in need of each other.

Nobody is so poor that he has nothing to give, and nobody is so rich that he has nothing to receive.
– Pope John Paul II

VIII. Deepen Our Faith by Experiencing the Universal Catholic Church

Our partnership calls us more fully into St. Paul's image of the Church as one Body of Christ, with many unique parts offering different gifts, but possessing unity in Christ. We are challenged by our partner's witness of faith amidst adversity. As we come to know brothers and sisters of faith from a culture other than our own, we learn new ways of understanding the Scriptures and we see new models of being a parish community. We concretely experience our oneness in Christ, and are encouraged to enlarge our tent, and expand our sense of shared humanity, not only with our parish partner, but with all God's people in the universal church.

From Helping to Solidarity

Most “sister parish” or “parish twinning” relationships are born of a beautiful impulse: to help other human beings who are struggling or more economically disadvantaged than themselves, to help those who are in need. It is an impulse that is generated in significant part by the gospel mandate to love, especially as revealed in Matthew 25:31-46: “When I was hungry you gave me food...”

The parish twinning phenomena is a wonderful church movement that stands in sharp contrast to certain forces present within U.S. culture.

The contribution of the Church and of evangelization to the development of peoples concerns not only the struggle against material poverty and underdevelopment in the South of the world, but also concerns the North, which is prone to a moral and spiritual poverty caused by overdevelopment. A certain way of thinking, uninfluenced by a religious outlook and widespread in some parts of today's world, is based on the idea that increasing wealth and the promotion of economic and technical growth is enough for people to develop on the human level. But a soulless development cannot suffice for human beings, and an excess of affluence is as harmful as excessive poverty. This is a "development model" which the North has constructed and is now spreading to the South, where a sense of religion as well as human values are in danger of being overwhelmed by a wave of consumerism.³

Thus, the true beauty and unique opportunity of parish twinning goes far beyond “helping others.” Sister parishes create **the opportunity to build and engender real and even long-term relationships** with people who are of another culture and often are often terribly economically disenfranchised--- and to begin to see and understand the world through their eyes. That experience will call into question many of the assumptions about wealth, economic development, and affluence that we in the United States are taught from a very young age.

Through relationship we genuinely and experientially adopt the truth that we are all called to *oneness*, to become one Body in Christ. We can then more readily recognize that the current reality and the systems that created it are unacceptably unjust. We are beckoned to change those systems for the sake of the one we have come to know and love (and those others who share their same plight)....

Sister parishes and solidarity twinning relationships are an invitation to a relationship whereby people from opposite sides of the divide between rich and poor, or between two different cultures, come together and get to know one another more fully as human persons, the joys as well as the struggles, the gifts as well as the needs. The hope is that people on each side of the divide will be seen as multi-dimensional and partners will learn to appreciate the various aspects of the things that shape the other—their history (personal, community, and national), their culture, their family life, their faith and the varied cultural expressions of their faith.

³ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 59.

PARISH PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

Like two people moving towards marriage, as relationships are established and trust is built, talk may turn toward hopes, goals, and ideas for building a lasting, healthy partnership.⁴ As with planning for marriage vows, both sides of the partnership should participate in envisioning their future. We encourage parish partnerships to create together a common Vision Statement and Mission Statement, from which their various activities can be mutually developed.

Furthermore, by honestly addressing questions of power and historic attitudes of superiority and inferiority in the relationship, strong and healthy parish partnerships can be built and sustained---and a new world in the image of the reign of God, in what Pope John Paul II referred to as the globalization of solidarity, can be possible.

⁴ Marriage is a fairly apt image for a parish twinning relationship. Like pre-Cana courses, twinning relationships require some formation and preparation before entering them. Like marriage, we enter it not “to fix” the other’s problems, but to enter into the place of mystery where love draws us in unknown directions. We are present to the other and engage with them, not on our terms, not on totally their terms, but on open, negotiated, prayer-directed terms. Within this mystery we grow closer, we come to learn more about the other, about ourselves and about the depths of God’s love.

Adapted from an article written by Mike Haas, Center for Mission in the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, for use in the From Mission to Mission publication “What About Short-Term Mission?”

Leadership & Organizational Development

It is important that both the U.S. and the overseas parish encourage lay leadership and create an organizational structure (e.g. committee, task force, working group) to guide and lead the partnership. If the responsibility lies only with the pastors, or the general parish council, the partnership becomes very vulnerable to leadership changes, the pastor's priorities, and other parish commitments. To ensure mutuality and joint decision-making, it is helpful to establish a representative body in each parish who can interact with each other as equals to set priorities, create plans, mobilize people and resources to implement activities, and occasionally assess the progress and direction of the partnership. This group of people should not only represent the larger parish community, but also reach out to different members and groups in the parish, inviting them to become involved in the partnership according to their interests and gifts.

It is important to remember that most parishes in the United States already have functioning committees to manage many of their programs and ministries. An overseas parish may or may not have this experience, and so the U.S. partner will need to be careful about imposing the development of this committee on a parish that has no understanding of the role it might play. In this case, the U.S. parish can lead the way through example, by showing the overseas pastor the advantages of forming such a structure. However, the final decision about whether and how to form a committee is in the hands of the local pastor.

Partnership Committee Basics

The following are some guidelines to help in the formation of a partnership committee in a U.S. parish.

What is a partnership committee?

- ➡ A group of individuals who have been given a mandate to guide and lead the partnership within the parish.
- ➡ A committee that will make the partnership a reality by generously giving their time to engage the parish in all aspects of a partnership including planning, outreach, fundraising, and promotion.

Who to invite?

- People who are committed to global solidarity and justice
- People with networking, advocacy, organizational, language, and/or fundraising skills.
- People who have cross-cultural and/or overseas experience, particularly in the region you are partnering with

- People from the country or region of your partner
- People that reflect the interests, age, and ethnic diversity of the parish
- People with time and enthusiasm
- People who represent other key ministries in the parish



Remember: In recruiting partnership committee members, people are most likely to commit to something when the time commitments and expectations are clearly defined. Make sure people know what you are asking for and what they are committing to when you invite their participation. Are you asking them to use their professional fundraising skills, to use their personal contacts to increase participation and raise awareness for the GSP, or to serve as the web master/tech guru? Are you asking them for a monthly two-hour meeting or a weekly commitment? Make it clear and have a plan for rotating in new members and any leadership positions.

While not all parish ministries may be represented on the partnership committee, it will be important to find ways to keep them informed, involved and engaged. This will be key to getting the word out throughout the parish, in addition to bringing a richness and holistic outreach to the partnership.

Defining the committee

The committee will need to determine the basic organizational structure and make some key decisions to get started. For example:

- What positions do we want to create on the committee (e.g. chair, secretary, treasurer)?
- How often do we meet? Who will convene meetings?
- How will decisions be made?
- How will we communicate with our partner?
- Do we want to appoint a contact person in each parish (preferably one that speaks the language of the partner) who will be responsible for communication with our partner?
- How long will people serve on the committee?
- How will we recruit new members?
- Will we need to establish sub-committees or task forces?
- If so, how will information from the sub-committees be shared with the steering committee and other sub-committees?
- Be sure to keep the pastor fully involved.

It is important to define roles and responsibilities among committee members, to ensure an effective and efficient structure. The creation of sub-committees, working groups, or task forces can be extremely helpful to ensuring that the multitude of tasks is accomplished.

Responsibilities of the Committee

The committee's duties and activities may include the following. Depending on the needs of the partnership, you might think of creating sub-committees or ad hoc working groups along the lines of these categories.

Communicating with the partner

- Finding translators when necessary
- Maintaining consistent lines of communication with a dedicated person or committee in the partner parish
- Exchanging updates on ongoing activities (through newsletters, e-mails, etc.)
- Sharing prayer requests

Outreach to parish

- Educating congregation about the relationship
- Inviting parish-wide participation through various types of activities
- Sharing news and communications from partner parish
- Planning special events (e.g. fund-raiser, annual partnership day, delegation send-off or welcome)

Joint planning and assessment with partner parish

- Creating a mission statement, covenant agreement and/or partnership plan
- Establishing specific goals and objectives of the partnership
- Maintaining the covenant and implementing partnership plans
- Envisioning and creating activities and strategies for implementing the goals
- Outlining budgets, timelines, and individuals responsible for activities and strategies
- Periodically assessing the partnership together with partner

Facilitating delegation visits

- Coordinating with partner parish to plan overseas visits
- Selecting and preparing delegates
- Planning and supporting partner parish in preparing for visits to US
- Hosting visitors from partner parish
- Arranging other exchanges (e.g. priests, sisters, students, professionals, etc.)

Integrating partnership into faith life

- Devising creative ways to incorporate partnership and partner's culture into liturgy
- Including the parish partner in the prayers of the faithful
- Sharing faith expressions from partner with parishioners
- Considering how partners can share catechetical materials, pastoral outreach models, small faith communities, etc. with partner

Managing support of projects

- Work with partner committee for prioritization and selection of project
- Promote project to parish
- Create and implement fundraising strategy for project
- Provide information on project to parish and send thank you letters to contributors

Education and advocacy

- Develop and distribute materials about partner to religious education classes and/or schools, or in parish bulletins or newsletters
- Monitor global issues affecting partner and opportunities for advocacy (utilize organizations focusing on justice issues in partner country)
- Educate the parish community about the economic justice issues that affect the partner community, and host a fair trade sale of handicrafts or food items from the region of the overseas partner
- Invite parishioners to take action through letter-writing, e-mail, phone calls, or visits to legislators

Finance/stewardship oversight

- Understand overall expenses associated with partnership (projects, delegations, events, communication, etc.)
- Determine plan for mobilizing resources
- Track and monitor partnership expenses

Communication in Partnership

Like in any relationship, open, honest and consistent communication is key. Partners should openly discuss expectations regarding communication, and mutually commit to a consistent pattern of communication. One way to do this is to establish a communication protocol during a joint meeting or workshop. Again, this should be mutually agreed upon and take into account the cultural and technological differences affecting communication – frequency, mode, content, etc. Many overseas rural parishes do not have regular access to telephones or internet. Most importantly, communication needs to be between two communities, extending beyond one individual in the parish. The following offers some ideas to define and improve communication with your partner.

Establishing a Communication Protocol

Who will do the communicating?

Establishing a primary contact is important. You could appoint a secretary for communications which could be a regular or a rotating position. Another route is to set up a communications subcommittee to be responsible for communication with your partner and your own parishioners. Others have chosen to put the partnership committee chair in charge of communications. It is critical to ensure that communication is between the two communities, not simply individuals. There must be an agreed-upon mechanism for sharing information with other partnership leaders, as well as with the wider parish. It is important to remember that linguistic and cultural misconceptions/misunderstandings are bound to occur. The only way to overcome them is to be vigilant and patient and address them as they occur. Look for people and resources in your parish or diocese to help with the translation

How will you communicate?

You and your partner will decide if email, fax, letters, or phone would be most appropriate. Try and choose communications that are expedient and low-cost. Possible modes of communication include:

Electronic means	Mailings	Direct Means
E-mail	Snail mail and hand-carried letters	Telephone
Digital camera	Postcards	Delegation visits
Videos	Pen friends	Joint reflection on visits
Partnership website	Newsletters	Conferences
Fax		

Keep in mind that in many cases, an overseas parish will have to travel to an urban center for access to internet or telephone service.

What will you communicate?

Do you want to share the minutes from your meetings? Or would you rather commit to regular progress reports that cover a few categories? The categories of a progress report could include: upcoming delegations, prayer, advocacy, fundraising, project, educational activities, etc. Another good way to keep your partner updated is to share parish newsletters and/or bulletins.

How often will you communicate?

While this might be determined by what you are communicating, it is important to spell this out, as partners may have very different expectations of frequency of communication. Here, it might be wise to put the question to the overseas parish first, as they may be likely to simply agree with what the US parish suggests, even if it is not realistic for them. Communication both within their community and with an international partner is nearly always more challenging for the overseas parish than the US parish. Having mutually defined and committed to a communications protocol, partners will be able to hold themselves and each other accountable when communication falters.

A note on culture

Different cultures have different expectations regarding length of time between communications, planning, and implementing activities; also, keep in mind that sporadic communications access, long distances between villages and unstable political situations can cause disruptions in communications. Be understanding of your partner and patient with their needs.

Visioning, Planning and Assessing Partnership

The first step for any partnership is to learn about the culture and context of the partner community. We encourage the leadership in U.S. partnerships to provide educational materials and to research opportunities for speakers and presentations about the overseas partner's context. This understanding will be invaluable as the U.S. partner enters into conversations about the vision and future of the partnership.

It is important to take the time to plan together and develop a shared vision with your partner. If your partnership is young, you may consider creating time during the next delegation to intentionally learn about the structure, challenges, strengths and hopes of your partner parish, and vice versa. Even with well-established partnerships it is important to occasionally assess the progress and direction of the partnership. We suggest doing this in the context of one or a series of planned meetings or workshops during delegations, which both parishes will prepare for and participate in. This implies that at least a few of the participants on delegations must be able to represent the parish, and specifically the partnership committee, and have the ability and authority to make plans and commitments during a planning exercise. Taking the time to jointly engage in visioning, planning, and assessment with your partner ensures that the partnership becomes more than a series of trips, but rather a long-term, dynamic and mutual relationship between the two communities that strengthens our faith and challenges us to cooperative action.

Visioning and Planning for Partnership

Ideally, any joint visioning and planning process will result in some type of written document that can be shared with parish leadership and members, and guide the partnership even as leaders and delegates move on. Many parish and diocesan partnerships have found it most helpful to develop two different documents: a *Covenant Agreement* and a *Partnership Plan*. These types of agreements or plans set the stage for all future interactions and ensure that both parties are participating equally in the development and implementation of the partnership.

What is a Covenant Agreement?

A Covenant Agreement represents the commitment of the partners toward each other and the people they serve. It outlines why the two parishes have chosen to come together to form a partnership and the shared values that have brought them together and that they wish to uphold in their partnership. It should be approved by both parishes and signed by the respective pastors. Some groups have chosen instead to develop a vision and mission

statement. Whatever the title, such a foundational document should address the points outlined below:

Vision: What kind of world do we wish to see?

Commitment: What are we committing to? (type of relationship, duration, periodic evaluation; provisions for re-covenant or renewal of agreement)

Long-term goal: What do we want to accomplish together in partnership?

Values: What values do we want to preserve in getting there together? (e.g. self-determination, transparency, mutuality)

What is a Partnership Plan?

From the Covenant Agreement or Mission Statement flows the Partnership Plan or work plan. This document sets out short- to medium-term objectives and activities for the partnership. These activities reflect the priority issues chosen by both partners. This plan should be realistic and based on available resources – both human and financial. For each objective, the partners should lay out the respective activities, responsibilities, and timeframes. It is a dynamic document that will change with the partnership as it grows – learning what is feasible and what is not. It is a way to operationalize the vision of the partnership, and ensure that both partners are contributing equally to it. Clearly defined objectives and responsibilities will help both partners avoid misunderstanding and frustration. Below is a suggested process for developing the partnership plan within the context of a joint partnership meeting:

Step 1: Partners reflect on the question, what can we do together now to accomplish our vision/mission?

Step 2: Brainstorm ideas.

You may want to consider the following categories:

Sharing resources

Deepening faith

Building relationships

Education and advocacy

Step 3: Narrow down and clarify ideas in each category

Step 4: Prioritize ideas (can vote on ideas in each category to create a ranking)

Step 5: Select the top 1-3 ideas in each category to jointly implement over the next 1-2 years.

Step 6: Determine who, with what resources, and by when each activity will be completed.

Keep in mind that your overseas partner may have little or no experience with planning and visioning exercises. The U.S. partner may need to prepare them by drafting an agenda and by providing questions in advance. In addition, in many cases the overseas partner may not have any idea of what is possible in a partnership. It will be helpful to let them know in advance what kinds of activities are possible, and to give them examples of what other partnerships have done.

The results of steps 5 and 6 should provide the content of partnership plan.

A note on culture

In the United States agreements are often determined by literal meanings of words and specific provisions of a contract. In many other cultures it is the meaning and spirit of an agreement and one's commitment to it that is more important. These realities may be operative as you plan with another culture for this experience. You need not change your own concepts, but you should consider the implications of conceptual differences for others and yourself. (*Center for Global Education and the United Methodist Church*)

Partnership Annual Check-In

Below is a sample tool that can be used as a regular assessment mechanism for your partnership. It can be done separately or in conjunction with your partner as a way to foster open dialogue about how the partnership is going. If completed on a regular basis from year to year, it can effectively measure change in the partnership.

Instructions: Please take a moment to reflect on your parish's partnership/sister relationship/twinning experience in light of the principles of solidarity-based partnership and any foundational documents for your specific partnership.

Rate the extent to which your parish's relationship reflects the principles of solidarity-based partnerships, using the bulleted questions under each principle to guide your understanding of that principle and the subsequent rating. Please place a number between zero and five in the space provided, according to the following scale:

0 = your partnership does not reflect this principle.....5 = your partnership fully integrates this principle

I. Emphasize relationship over resources

RATING _____

- Have you and your partner jointly articulated the underlying mission of your partnership?
- Have you invested as much or more effort into deepening your relationship with your partner, as you have in implementing material assistance projects?

Comments/Analysis:

II. Practice mutuality and equality.

RATING _____

- Is there a designated body in both parishes that communicates on equal terms in open dialogue about the partnership – setting priorities, selecting activities, sharing faith, challenging each other, assessing the effort, etc .
- Have all transfers of resources, delegation visits, and other activities been planned and implemented through the organizational structures in both parishes, and as a result of the mutual agreement of both partners?

Comments/Analysis:

III. Seek to give and receive, learn and teach.

RATING _____

- Can your parish clearly identify gifts, resources, and opportunities for learning that you have been able to provide for your partner?
- Can your parish clearly identify gifts, resources, and opportunities for learning that you have received from your partner?
- Is there mutual accountability in the exchange of resources, including human, cultural, financial & spiritual?

Comments/Analysis:

IV. Work to change unjust systems and structures.

RATING _____

- Is the relationship helping your parish to learn about the root causes of injustices affecting the overseas parish community---the economic and political forces and systems which are at play?
- Have you and your partner created opportunities to brainstorm ways to work together to address these systems of injustice?
- Has your parish increased its commitment to actions for *global* social justice as a result of your partnership?

Comments/Analysis:

V. Deepen our faith by experiencing the universal catholic church. RATING _____

- Have you and your partner created opportunities to reflect together on sacred scriptures and our faith?
- Have parishioners had the opportunity to learn about and grow from their parish partner's faith expressions, traditions, and celebrations?
- Has the partnership helped your community to be more outward-looking in your perspective as a parish, rather than exclusively focused on your one parish partner?

Comments/Analysis:

General Analysis

Based on your ratings:

1. Identify the primary strengths of your parish partnership.

2. Identify 2-3 key areas you want to continue to work on/improve.

If your partnership has developed any foundational documents or plans, it is important to assess the partnership in light of those:

Covenant Agreement

- Has your parish adhered to and upheld the values and the commitment outlined in the Covenant Agreement? How?

- Does the Covenant Agreement need to be re-negotiated, amended, or terminated?

Partnership Plan

- Have you and your partner been able to work towards the objectives and activities outlined in the Partnership Plan? How?

- Does the Partnership Plan need to be updated and/or amended?

Projects and Material Support

Supporting projects to promote socio-economic development in an impoverished partner community is a natural inclination in a relationship. These projects have the potential to greatly contribute to the well-being of a community. However, in the context of a parish partnership based in solidarity and mutuality, it is important to be sensitive to the dynamics that enter into any relationship where there is a disparity of wealth. The following pages provide a few suggestions and tools for respecting the self-determination of your partner parish, as well as for improving the effectiveness, transparency and impact of material assistance.

Principles of Good Stewardship

Parishes should consider the following principles of good stewardship when considering supporting a parish partner in implementing material assistance projects.

Establish the relationship first, and then consider sharing financial gifts.

Share financial assistance and gifts only *after* the relationship has been well established through mutual visits, communication, and spiritual fellowship. Prematurely sharing financial assistance can put the U.S. parish in a dominant and controlling role and destroy mutuality in the relationship.

Follow their agenda, not yours.

Projects and plans for material assistance projects should originate in the overseas parish. U.S. parishes should not decide what their partner needs. However, in the spirit of mutuality, U.S. partners should feel free to express ideas that contribute to the dialogue about how to move the community forward. In many cases, as a result of generations of poverty, overseas partners may not yet know what the possibilities are, or they may not fully understand the economic factors that could be addressed in order to improve their situation.

Benefit the community rather than individuals.

To prevent the creation of tension or division in the overseas community, give gifts or material assistance to projects working for the greater good of the community or the whole church—not to projects that only benefit one family or individual. Although a program to sponsor a child or a family may be an effective fundraising tool on the U.S. side, it creates social divisions within the overseas partner community and is not recommended.

Support development rather than dependency.

Financial gifts should empower or help develop self-sufficiency. Gifts that underwrite a pastor's salary or administrative costs of a parish or school budget will only make the parish dependent on their partner's support. It is better to invest in income-producing economic development projects that can help the overseas parish to achieve or sustain self-sufficiency. The overseas

partner should also be invested in the project by contributing something, such as money, materials, labor, or spiritual resources.

Consider sustainability of the effort.

Projects should be able to be sustained over time. Machinery that is obsolete or cannot be maintained or repaired does not serve its purpose very long. Clinics or schools that have no ability to pay ongoing staff salaries or maintenance expenses are not sustainable. Water or sanitation projects that do not provide training and an organizational plan to finance and maintain the infrastructure are also not sustainable and can soon fall into disrepair.

Preserve or improve the balance of power.

Sometimes a development project can unwittingly upset the balance of power within a community. For example, digging a well may seem like a good community project, but there are a host of questions that the overseas community must address, such as: Who will maintain the well? Who will control access to the well? Who will profit from the well? Who will lose? If a project is to change the balance of power, it should be to tilt the scales towards the marginalized in a way that will not threaten the well-being of the community.

Respect the cultural context.

Projects implemented through the partnership should make sense in the cultural context, which includes history, language, religion, economic and social situation, and the arts, of the parish partner. For this reason, as noted earlier, it is crucial for the U.S. partner to be educated about the cultural context within which they are working. Also, it is important to realize that projects may move at a different pace than they would in the United States. In many cultures, working together means socializing together first.

Work toward financial transparency.

The two parishes should agree *beforehand* on how contributions for particular projects will be accounted for. Make sure both partners understand what is being given, where it is going, what it is for, and what documentation is expected.

If you start a project, make sure you can complete it.

Starting a school but running out of money before the roof is installed is simply a waste of money. Do not get halfway through a project and abandon it due to insufficient funds. Instead, hold fundraising events and secure the money prior to beginning the project.

Address the root causes of poverty.

Good development projects take into account the wider context of policies and practices that perpetuate the situation of poverty or injustice. Projects should include a careful situational analysis which might imply necessary actions at the local, regional, national or international level to correct injustices. U.S. parish partners should be ready to support these actions at various levels, either through financial or technical assistance for local level actions or through their own advocacy actions to affect U.S. and international policies.

PARISH PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

For example, working with a partner community to improve agricultural yields in a context where prices are so low that a farmer cannot make a living from the product will not help in the long run. In this case the U.S. partner might want to investigate fair trade supply chains to insure that improvements in agriculture lead to improvements in income.

The Project Cycle in Partnership

MANY NEEDS ARE PRESENT IN OVERSEAS PARTNER (HEALTH, EDUCATION, WATER, AGRICULTURE, ETC.)

U.S. COMMITTEE COMMUNICATES PARAMETERS OF THEIR ABILITY TO PROVIDE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE CONSULTS WITH COMMUNITY TO IDENTIFY TOP PRIORITY & COMMUNICATES THIS TO U.S. COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES MUTUALLY AGREE ON PROJECT PRIORITY & DISCUSS POSSIBLE SCOPE OF PROJECT

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE CONSULTS WITH COMMUNITY, DOES ASSESSMENT & DESIGNS PROJECT

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE CREATES PROJECT PROPOSAL* & BUDGET AND SENDS TO U.S. COMMITTEE

THE TWO COMMITTEES DISCUSS & AGREE ON PROJECT DETAILS

U.S. COMMITTEE DOES FUNDRAISING & EDUCATION ABOUT THE SITUATION & PROJECT

U.S. COMMITTEE SENDS FUNDS TO OVERSEAS COMMITTEE, COPYING APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE IMPLEMENTS PROJECT & KEEPS U.S. PARTNER UPDATED ABOUT PROGRESS

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE COMMUNICATES ANY CHANGES IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES OR EXPENSES

U.S. COMMITTEE RESPONDS AS NEEDED TO ANY CHANGES IN PROJECT

OVERSEAS COMMITTEE COMPLETES PROJECT & SENDS REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, STORIES, PHOTOS & LESSONS LEARNED

U.S. COMMITTEE SHARES PROJECT RESULTS, STORIES, & PHOTOS WITH THEIR PARISH

U.S. PARISH IS MOTIVATED & ENTHUSIASTIC TO SUPPORT THE NEXT PROJECT!

What about material gifts?

In the spirit of good stewardship, before sending clothing, blankets, school supplies, books or medical supplies to your partner, consider the following questions.

- Would it be easier for your partner to buy the items in their own country, with money from the parish?
- Would sending the item undercut local businesses already producing it?
- How much will it cost to ship? Is it more expensive to ship than the value of the goods?
- Is what you are sending needed? Has your parish partner requested it?
- For clothing, is it appropriate to the climate and conditions? Is it in decent condition?
- For books, are they in a language accessible to the majority of the population? Will they make sense in the cultural context?
- For computers or other electronics, do they have regular sources of electricity or internet connections? Is the software and operating system still current or is it obsolete?
- For medical supplies, are they needed and appropriate for local health clinics or hospitals? Are medicines not expired?
- Are shipping methods reliable? Will the packages actually reach the intended recipient?
- Who will pay the customs costs to bring the items into the country?
- Who will receive, store, and distribute items?

Project Proposal Template

This form is a sample of the kinds of questions that U.S. partner might wish to ask about a project proposal from its partner.

Title of the Project: _____

Location: _____

Submitting parish, organization, or person: _____

Date of proposal submission: _____

Project Description:

- I. GOAL – What is the long-term desired change?
- II. BACKGROUND – Why is this project needed, who will it benefit?
- III. DESIGN – How have project beneficiaries been involved in planning this project?
- IV. OBJECTIVES – What specifically will this project accomplish and for whom?
- V. ACTIVITIES – What activities will be done to meet the objectives?
- VI. EVALUATION – How will this project be evaluated?
- VII. REPORTING – What reporting will you provide on the progress of this project (photos, human interest stories, final report, expense report?)

Project Calendar:

What is the anticipated timeframe for completing this project?

Project Budget:

What are the total resources required to complete this project? What will you contribute to this project? What are you requesting from your partner? Are there any other entities providing financial support to this project? Please provide a budget of expected expenses.

Outreach

Parish partnerships are between two communities, and thus ideally would involve more than just the pastor or a dedicated committee. To truly transform the parish and help it to grow deeper in faith and solidarity, the whole community must be involved. The following pages offer a range of ideas and resources for the U.S. partner to invite people to become involved.

Sharing the Good News: Ideas for Engagement

Promote the partnership:

- Have a Partnership Day which is simultaneously celebrated in both parishes
- Use an email list serve to provide regular updates to those interested in the partnership
- Develop your own partnership website or page on the parish website
- Consider developing brochures, power-points or videos about the partnership, as a tool to spread the news about the partnership
- Designate a space in the parish for partnership news and updates, including photos, reflections, cultural items, project information, etc.
- Create one-pagers for parish bulletins
- Invite people who have returned from delegations to the overseas partner to reflect on their experience, and share those reflections in the parish bulletin, newsletter, or website
- Use recipes and foods from the partner country at parish dinners, and print the recipes for distribution
- Include fair trade items from the partner country in annual bazaars and Christmas sales. Catholic Relief Services' *Work of Human Hands* catalogue is one source for fair trade items, but you may also be able to purchase and sell items, such as crafts or coffee, produced directly by the overseas partner community

Educate about the partner parish and country:

- Make use of special days to highlight issues in your partnership (e.g. *World AIDS Day*, *Earth Day*, *National Migration Week*, etc.)
- Keep up with the news to see what is happening in your partnership region, and keep your partnership committee, and the whole parish if possible, informed of any major events there
- Sponsor lectures, seminars and prayer vigils with guest speakers from missionary groups or from the partner country
- Organize letter-writing campaigns on legislative issues that impact the partner country, and use these as opportunities to educate the parish about the larger context of global economic injustice

- Visit your elected representatives to voice your concerns about global issues affecting your partner community and that region of the world
- Invite visitors from your parish partner to address parish groups, school classes, and talk at masses. This will have the greatest impact of all as people see and hear first hand from your partner!
- Plan an event to share photos and videos taken during a delegation to your overseas partner, and invite the entire community to attend. Feature food and music from the overseas partner's culture

Share and deepen faith through partnership:

- ◆ Hold simultaneous Bible studies in both parishes on the same passages for scripture and share notes later
- ◆ Deepen your understanding of scriptures by studying through the lens of the marginalized. Resources for reflection include Ernesto Cardenal's *Gospel of Solentiname*, Robert MacAfee Brown's *Reading Scriptures with Third World Eyes* and Ched Meyers' *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*.
- ◆ Compose standardized prayers of the faithful to remember the needs of your partner in mass
- ◆ Jointly create a partnership prayer with your partner and pray it at Sunday masses
- ◆ Teach songs and hymns of the partner country to parish choirs
- ◆ Record the choir and send to your partner and vice versa
- ◆ Connect groups (e.g. catechists with catechists, teachers with teachers, women's groups to women's groups, etc.), especially during delegation visits
- ◆ Exchange descriptions of how each partner celebrates Easter, Christmas, etc.
- ◆ Share Catechetical materials
- ◆ Celebrate your parish partner's feast day, and vice versa

Engage children and youth:

- ⊕ Hold a Global Solidarity Week or Day at middle or secondary school (see education.crs.org for a ready-made resource)
- ⊕ Encourage teachers and DREs to incorporate the partner country into their lesson plans
- ⊕ Teach the art and music of the partner country
- ⊕ Exchange children's drawings
- ⊕ Invite people who have gone on delegations to the partner or invite a visiting delegation to give presentations to students
- ⊕ Plan a youth retreat to raise awareness of the issue of hunger, and supplement with information about hunger in your partner parish or country (CRS' *Food Fast* program is one resource)
- ⊕ Subsidize the participation of youth from your partner parish in youth conventions or World Youth Day, and then meet up with the sponsored youth at the event
- ⊕ Use the sale of fair trade items as a fundraiser for partnership activities and as a way to educate about the role of fair trade in the global economic system
- ⊕ Engage in creative fundraising activities that allow youth to learn about the partner country or to compete with other classrooms

CRS Justice Education Resources

As CRS works in other countries to ease poverty, hunger and injustice, we also work with Catholics in the U.S. to learn about and uproot the very causes of those challenges.

Prayer, education, action and advocacy are at the heart of our programs in the United States. You can get involved by: fighting hunger, shopping responsibly, engaging youth and young adults, enriching leadership in faith communities and advocating for change.

Fighting Hunger



Operation Rice Bowl

Every Lent, Operation Rice Bowl invites parishes, schools, families and individuals to make deeper connections with the poor and vulnerable overseas. Operation Rice Bowl helps you reach out to our brothers and sisters in need around the world through the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, while learning about their lives.

Seventy-five percent of the money raised through Operation Rice Bowl supports CRS projects that ensure tens of thousands of hungry people in more than 40 countries have enough to eat. The remaining 25% support hunger and poverty alleviation efforts in dioceses across the United States. Find out more at <http://orb.crs.org/>.

Foods Resource Bank

American farming communities can plant the seeds of hope for the poor overseas by doing what they're already doing: farming. This ecumenical program helps fight hunger overseas by inviting U.S. farmers to donate a portion of their land for one year. The proceeds from the crops on that land provide poor farmers overseas with the seeds, livestock and agriculture training they need to feed themselves and their families.

Shopping Responsibly



The daily decisions we make as consumers can make a real, positive difference in the world. The CRS Fair Trade Programs gives you a concrete way to ensure poor artisans, farmers and workers overseas receive fair wages. Find out more about our projects at www.crsfairtrade.org.

Fair Trade Coffee

CRS established partnerships with over a dozen U.S. coffee companies that are committed to paying fair prices to coffee growers overseas and to sustaining direct, long-term relationships with them. When you and other American consumers buy coffee from these partners, you get a quality product and help build a more just world.

Raise Money Right

What school, club or parish community doesn't need to raise money for its worthy activities? CRS' Raise Money Right program offers you a way to raise the money your organization needs by selling Fair Trade chocolate. With Raise Money Right, you can sell Divine chocolate through SERRV or Equal Exchange chocolate.

Work of Human Hands

Work of Human Hands gives Catholics in the United States the opportunity to buy high-quality, fairly traded handcrafts and gourmet food items from poor producers around the world. Host a Work of Human Hands sale as a community event or buy directly for yourself and your loved ones.

Fair Trade Ambassadors

Do you have the potential to be a Fair Trade superstar- someone who works tirelessly to promote the values of Fair Trade and Catholic Social Teaching? Then become a Fair Trade Ambassador. This program gives individuals intensive training in the principles of Fair Trade and the practices of word-of-mouth marketing in order to promote and expand CRS Fair Trade programs in their communities and parishes.

Engaging Youth and Young Adults

Connecting personally with people who live with hunger and poverty around the world requires more than classroom learning. CRS' youth and young adult programs help open young hearts and minds to social injustices around the world while encouraging them to live in solidarity with the poor and less fortunate.



CRS Education: Going Global With Youth

Going Global with Youth is a gateway to lesson plans, simulation activities, prayer services, stories, links to other resources and opportunities that explore global issues through the lens of solidarity and Catholic social teaching. Use these resources to invite young people to see the world with new eyes and to challenge them to respond to our faith call to global solidarity. Visit the CRS Education site at <http://education.crs.org/>.



Food Fast is CRS' 24-hour hunger awareness retreat for Catholic youth. Focusing on global poverty and hunger, Food Fast offers a journey of solidarity with our brothers and sisters overseas, as a way of living out our Catholic faith.

Food Fast:

- teaches youth about issues faced by their peers in the developing world;
- fosters the spiritual growth of young people through Catholic social teaching;
- empowers youth to participate in the Church's mission to assist the poor and hungry.

To find out more, visit <http://www.foodfast.org/>.



CRSCollege.org connects key global issues such as hunger, migration, HIV & AIDS and international poverty to the university classroom and campus. The CRSCollege.org website is your source for innovative approaches to help college students, faculty, staff and campus ministers serve the world. Find out more at <http://crscollege.org>.

Enriching Leadership In Faith Communities

Priests, educators and youth ministers are often looked upon to guide faith communities in their spiritual and educational development. That's why we developed programs to give them opportunities to witness our relief and development work firsthand. These immersion visits, as well as other leadership enrichment programs, help deepen faith communities' commitment to advocate for peace and justice in the world.



The Global Fellows program invites priests, deacons and seminarians to travel to CRS development projects overseas to gain a deeper perspective on poverty, conflict, injustice — as well as hope. These Global Fellows give witness to the global humanitarian work of the Catholic Church as guest speakers in parishes around the country. For more information, visit <http://crs.org/global-fellows/>.

Frontiers of Justice

In partnership with the National Catholic Educational Association, CRS offers an experience of global solidarity for a small group of Catholic high school teachers each summer. Participants in Frontiers of Justice will gain first-hand knowledge of CRS' work around the world by visiting development projects and meeting with community leaders. Participants also work together to develop strategies to bring the lessons learned back to their students in the United States. Learn more at <http://education.crs.org/>.

Called to Witness

In partnership with the [National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry](#), CRS offers adults serving in Catholic youth ministry the opportunity to visit CRS country programs and learn about the work of CRS and our partners. Through Called to Witness, participants can enhance their ministry to young people, to promote global justice and to strengthen their ability to call and empower young people to an active commitment to working for justice and peace. Learn more at <http://education.crs.org/>.

Advocating For Change

Bring your faith to bear in the public square. The root causes of world poverty are often connected to international and U.S. policies that profoundly affect the lives of poor people around the globe. CRS complements its humanitarian and development activities overseas with policy analysis and advocacy at home. Get involved in the political process and bring about changes that uproot the causes of poverty, conflict and injustice. [Visit our Action Center now](#) to find out what issues you can influence today.



Catholics Confront Global Poverty

Catholics Confront Global Poverty encourages Catholics in the United States to pray, learn, share, and advocate on key issues affecting poor and vulnerable people in developing countries. Join this exciting initiative and be one in a million Catholics raising your voice for peace and justice worldwide. Sign up online at www.crs.org/ccgp.

Speaker Tours

Experience the issues that impact your world from a perspective you've never encountered before. Visiting Catholic schools, universities and dioceses throughout the United States, CRS staff and partners share their personal stories of working day-by-day, bringing care and support to our brothers and sisters overseas. Find out more at <http://crs.org/act/speaker-tour.cfm>.

Advocacy in Partnership

Your parish partnership is a vehicle for societal transformation. Both you and your parish partner will enter into a rich relationship which brings many gifts with it, among them the opportunity to witness with your own eyes and hear directly from your partner their daily reality. Through this unique opportunity, you will gain knowledge of each other's personal, economic and social realities, and begin to understand the injustices that your partner confronts daily both on a personal and structural level. This leads to an acute awareness of how unjust structures are leaving some people with barely the means to survive, while others have more than they will ever need.

When I give bread to the poor, they call me a saint; but when I ask why people are poor, they call me a communist.

- Dom Helder Camara,
Bishop of Recife, Brazil

It is this awareness that leaves all of us, especially as Catholics, with a tremendous responsibility to work to change those systems and structures. We are called to advocate with and in support of our sisters and brothers around the world to remove the structural impediments to justice. U.S. citizens especially, have a tremendous opportunity to dramatically impact international policy issues affecting our brothers and sisters overseas because of our nation's influence on the world's stage. Solidarity clearly involves advocacy for justice for our sisters and brothers in our partner community and in other parts of the world.

The Catholic Bishops of the United States in their statement *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizens: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, state:

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions and requires us to eradicate racism and address the extreme poverty and disease plaguing so much of the world. Solidarity also includes the Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work, a safe home, education for their children, and a decent life for their families. In light of the Gospel's invitation to be peacemakers, our commitment to solidarity with our neighbors—at home and abroad—also demands that we promote peace and pursue justice in a world marred by terrible violence and conflict.

And they go on to state:

Building a world of respect for human life and dignity, where justice and peace prevail, requires more than just political commitment. Individuals, families, businesses, Community organizations, and governments all have a role to play. Participation in political life in light of fundamental moral principles is an essential duty for every Catholic and all people of good will.

There are many ways to transform unjust social and economic structures. Promoting fair trade and buying fair trade items is one way to ensure that subsistence farmers and workers receive fair compensation for their labor. Promoting fair trade could include joining local organizations that work to establish fair trade retail outlets in your community, or encouraging your office or parish to serve fair trade coffee. It can also include connecting farmers and craftspeople from your overseas partner to fair trade suppliers or markets in the U.S.

Another way that U.S. Catholics can support global justice movements is through legislative advocacy. The following pages offer a few ideas and resources for responding within the context of your parish partnership.

How to do legislative advocacy in partnership

1. Choose the issue.

- Mutually define an issue(s) of concern with your partner

2. Educate your parish.

- Communicate with a designated person in your partner parish who knows the issue and can provide information about their lived reality of that issue
- Sign up with legislative networks to receive action alerts and information on global, regional and local issues such as *Catholics Confront Global Poverty*, a joint advocacy initiative by Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Research who in your diocese is responsible for social justice/advocacy (Social Action Office, Office for Peace & Justice, etc.) for possible training, resources, and action opportunities
- Use special events – World AIDS Day, Earth Day, National Migration Week – to highlight the issue in your partner parish and on a global scale

3. Act!

- Hold a letter-writing campaign after mass about an issue that affects your partner
- Create an e-mail listserv of people ready to respond when urgent issues arise that need action
- Develop relationships with your members of Congress to become trusted source of information for them
- Take visiting delegates to visit your members of Congress in their home offices

Catholic Relief Services Resources for Advocacy

Below are some of the resources and services CRS can offer in your advocacy efforts. There are also a host of resources and websites which can easily be found on the internet that are dedicated to specific countries or regions, providing information and opportunities for engagement.

Working to Create a Just World

Working from the perspective of Catholic social teaching, CRS collaborates with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), to develop and advocate for U.S. policies and practices that promote justice and social responsibility worldwide.

CRS seeks to mobilize Catholics throughout the United States to join in this effort by educating themselves and others on the issues that affect the world's poor, contacting their elected officials on important pieces of legislation and incorporating these concerns into prayer and liturgy.

The following resources are available for you to become a CRS advocate:

Catholics Confront Global Poverty

The *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* initiative is inspired by Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 World Day of Peace Message, *Fight Poverty to Build Peace*, in which our Holy Father declares: "Effective means to redress the marginalization of the world's poor through globalization will only be found if people everywhere feel personally outraged by the injustices in the world and by the concomitant violations of human rights."

To meet this challenge, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are recommitting to the nationwide ***Catholics Confront Global Poverty*** initiative that calls on one million Catholics to confront global poverty by defending the life and dignity of people living in poverty throughout the world, and to urge our nation to act in response to the many faces of poverty through advocacy and action.

The *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* initiative focuses its efforts on seven key areas that require more attention to effectively confront global poverty: U.S. international assistance, peace, debt relief, trade, natural resource extraction, migration, and global climate change. Learn more about each focus area and why it is one of the top priorities for this initiative at www.usccb.org/globalpoverty or www.crs.org/globalpoverty.

You and your parish can be a part of this very important initiative by:

Praying for people throughout the world seeking to rise from the indignities of poverty, for U.S. policies that can help make it happen, and for all who stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters overseas.

Learning about Catholic social teaching, what the Church is doing to confront global poverty U.S. international and economic policies, and the impact on poor people around the world.

Acting and advocating by contacting your elected officials to promote policies that promote justice, peace and prosperity for impoverished people.

Giving to the Church's mission overseas that helps people lift themselves out of poverty. Through the power of community, prayer and action, we will successfully confront global poverty.

By joining *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* members receive a quarterly newsletter, updates and action alerts that they can use to advocate for legislation that benefits the world's poor. Our web-based resources make advocacy easy. Sign up online at www.crs.org/ccgp or contact us for more information.

Advocacy resources

Our free backgrounders, prayer services and discussion guides help to raise awareness on important global issues like improving and increasing international development assistance and fighting global disease. We also have monthly webcasts, blog postings and video podcasts available on our *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* website. You can also visit <http://advocacy.crs.org> or contact us for more information.

Trainings, workshops, speakers and conferences

We provide advocacy trainings, workshops, keynote events and help plan conferences on global issues of concern to CRS. They range from a general introduction to advocacy to advanced lobbying and capacity building, media activism and issue specific briefings. We aim to tailor the trainings to fit your needs.

Below are a few ideas for using these resources in your parish:

- Include brief articles about key legislative issues in newsletters. The CCGP quarterly newsletter provides concise summaries that you are welcome to reprint.
- Distribute CCGP action alerts at meetings. These easy-to-copy, one-page handouts explain the legislation and provide tips for calling or writing officials.
- Encourage friends, family members and fellow parishioners to sign up to receive mobile text alerts from *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* – text “CCGP” to 30644
- Use CCGP information sheets to help members learn more about issues such as global migration and international assistance.

PARISH PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

- Use CCGP and other prayer resources on global poverty to open or close your gatherings.
- Invite a speaker from CRS to present at your next event.

For more information, contact:

Catholic Relief Services
Advocacy Department
228 W. Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-3443
Phone: 866-608-5978

Email: advocacy@crs.org does this address still work?

Website: <http://advocacy.crs.org> and www.crs.org/globalpoverty

Reciprocal Delegations

Delegations are the glue that holds a relationship together. It is important to take advantage of these face-to-face interactions as opportunities to deepen not only individual relationships between community members and visiting delegates, but the relationship between the two communities. The following pages provide suggestions and tips for planning delegations overseas, as well as hosting delegations from your parish partner. In a mutual partnership, it is important that both parishes have the opportunity to learn first-hand about the parish they are in partnership with. Providing a solid orientation for parishioners before a delegation and follow-up debriefing upon return is important to ensure a more meaningful and transformative experience. Following this section are a host of resources for providing orientation to delegates.

Planning Delegations

Clarifying objectives and expectations

Before you decide to visit, you should be invited—or at least make the decision to visit in conjunction with your parish partner. Once the invitation is clear, the two parishes, through their leaders or committees, should determine the goals or objectives of the delegation for the larger partnership. This ensures a mutual planning process and sets up clear expectations on both sides as to what should be accomplished during the visit. It is vital that the parishes capitalize on the face-to-face time during delegations to plan and assess the partnership and move the partnership to deeper levels of relationship.

Partners should also clarify financial arrangements, including less evident costs that could be burdensome for the host church such as special meals for the delegation, local vehicle and fuel costs, bottled water, etc. It is important to determine beforehand who is financially responsible for what. Also, partners should clarify who is responsible for taking care of other arrangements (e.g. setting up international travel, on-the-ground transportation, housing, meals, etc.).

In addition to the objectives determined by the leadership in both parishes, individual delegates may also have their own hopes and goals for the visit. These can be communicated on their application form, or in a personal profile, to be shared with the hosting parish. It is important to be sensitive to cultural factors in this process, as many overseas partners will be eager to try to accommodate every wish of their visitors, as well as take them to see every feature of their community. This may require extensive planning and/or resources, and may also imply a packed schedule that will leave visitors so exhausted they cannot fully appreciate the experience. It is important for the visitors to be aware of this in expressing their hopes and expectations for a visit. It is also important to maintain continuous dialogue in planning the itinerary so that partners can be able to express any concerns and questions about the itinerary. Past delegates particularly may be able to provide feedback on what would be a reasonable itinerary of activities.

Choosing participants

Establish a mechanism and a committee (if not the existing partnership committee) to select participants. Determine and explain the criteria and expectations ahead of time to everyone who is interested. For example: What is the commitment to orientation and debriefing sessions? What commitment is required of delegates after the experience? What is the responsibility of delegates for fundraising?

Other qualities to consider in selecting delegates might be:

- Openness to listening and learning in a cross-cultural experience
- Ability to be gracious and flexible in new and different situations
- Openness to other political/economic/social ideas and situations
- Good physical and emotional health (the place you are visiting may not have the resources to accommodate special needs)
- Ability and time to communicate experience upon return home
- Representation of various ministries and of the age and ethnic diversity of the parish
- Willingness to participate in orientation process

A formal application process provides transparency to the process and is the best way to clarify trip requirements, understand people's motivations for traveling, and assess their ongoing commitment to the partnership. It is important that delegates be prepared to commit themselves in some way to the partnership after the delegation experience and begin to reflect on that commitment long before the actual trip.

Delegation planning timeline

9 months ahead of delegation date:

- define goals and expectations of the delegation for the partnership; think about how this will impact who should be included on this specific delegation.
- define size of the group
- establish a process for selecting delegates and invite potential delegates to apply
- determine budget and clarify financial responsibility of each parish
- develop a fundraising plan

6 months ahead of delegation date:

- select delegates and send list to host parish
- determine when the pre-trip orientation will take place
- plan and develop pre-trip orientation
- send profiles of each delegate to host parish
- begin the visa application process (where required)
- determine need for immunizations (some require a series over a few months)
- implement fund-raising plan

- coordinate with host parish to begin arranging itinerary and logistics*

3 months ahead of delegation date:

- communicate to host parish who has obtained visas
- consider special travel considerations (e.g. any delegates leaving early or staying later)
- purchase flights
- host parish should secure host families or other housing
- begin to conduct pre-trip orientation
- compile contact information of delegates & emergency contact information for delegates & hosts

1 month ahead of delegation date:

- confirm final logistics and itinerary with host parish
- continue pre-trip orientation
- host parish should orient host families
- partners determine together the agenda of joint partnership meeting to occur during the delegation
- schedule post-trip debriefing
- have a commissioning service for delegates before leaving

One note of caution: For delegations from overseas to the U.S., the application process for U.S. visas has proven very challenging in recent years. You should work closely with your partner to ensure they have the necessary letters of support and other documentation from your end. Your partner should request the appointments with the U.S. Consulate in their country with plenty of time in advance of the delegation.

***Planning the itinerary with hosts:**

- Encourage hosts not to over-plan, as people will need time to reflect on and process their experience. Also, they should take into account particular circumstances and health limitations of delegates.
- Both parishes should commit to including specific time during every delegation for a joint partnership meeting to plan and assess the partnership. One day is ideal, a minimum of half day should be allotted.
- A local orientation by the host parish upon arrival helps to prepare delegates and invites open dialogue about cultural differences, questions, or concerns. This orientation might include an overview of the detailed itinerary, an introduction to parish ministries and structures, and basic information about the country, region and local culture. This also clearly establishes the local parish as the host of the visit.

Work Teams/Service Trips

While we are often eager to “do something” when we are visiting our partners, it is important to carefully reflect on the implications of prioritizing this within a delegation visit, when trying to build a mutual relationship based on solidarity. Below are some questions that your parish committee, or whoever is planning delegations, should honestly reflect on when considering planning work teams/service trips to your partner.

- Has your partner identified the need for this type of work or professional contribution?
- Is your partner participating fully in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of this mission trip, or is it a one-sided “helping”?
- Are activities for deepening the relationship central and intentional in the trip, or are they tangential to “getting something done”?
- Is this mission trip or activity exacerbating, or breaking down, the historic feelings of superiority and inferiority?
- Are you potentially displacing local laborers in providing this service?
- Is this effort sustainable after the group departs? Will someone locally provide the necessary follow-up?
- Is this labor/professional contribution culturally appropriate?
- Are you seeking opportunities to teach and learn skills, rather than simply “doing for” your partner?
- Does the trip incorporate the opportunity to reflect together on sacred scriptures and our faith, and so deepen our understanding of our faith as when it is seen through the eyes of others?
- Is the mission trip helping both you and your partner to learn about the root causes of the injustice affecting your partner---the economic and political forces and systems which are at play? Does the trip include opportunities to brainstorm ways to work together to address these systems of injustice?
- Have participants made a commitment to continue to serve this community after the trip, in educating others, advocating for change, and promoting the partnership in their own community?

Hosting Delegations

In true partnership, it is important that both partners have the opportunity to see where the other comes from, understand their reality, and experience their hospitality. This takes the relationship to a deeper level, and reinforces the sense of mutuality and sharing. Hosting delegations from your partner can also be a great way to raise awareness in your parish about the relationship, as well as get many more people interested and involved. It is also an opportunity for your partner to share their culture and faith traditions with a much broader audience in the parish. Advance planning and consistent communication both between the two parishes and within the hosting parish are absolutely essential for all of this to happen successfully. It is often best to form a dedicated team (perhaps 3 to 5 people) to plan and coordinate the visit, which would be responsible to the parish partnership committee, or other parish leadership. Below are some suggestions and tips for preparing to host a delegation from your partner.

Checklist when hosting delegations

Orientation:

- ✓ Provide orientation to host families
- ✓ Provide information to visitors before coming about what they can expect re: itinerary, who they will meet, weather, presentations or talks to be prepared*, etc.

Visas:

- ✓ Provide letter of invitation with delegates' information to the overseas US Embassy
- ✓ Request a letter from your U.S. Congressperson in support of visas (recommended)
- ✓ Clarify who will provide for the costs associated with visa applications

Transportation:

- ✓ Flights from overseas
- ✓ To and from airport
- ✓ During their stay

Accommodation & meals:

- ✓ Secure host families
- ✓ Reserve group accommodation when not with families (e.g. retreat center)
- ✓ Provide for special group meals

Planning the itinerary => After partners have consulted each other on expectations and objectives of the visit, the following kinds of activities can be included:

- ✓ Welcome reception or other big partnership celebration event
- ✓ Orientation for delegates upon arrival
- ✓ Joint partnership meeting

PARISH PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

- ✓ Working meetings with relevant entities to move partnership activities and projects forward
- ✓ Visits to parish ministries and outreach
- ✓ Delegate talks at schools, parishes, small parish groups
- ✓ Time for delegates to reflect together
- ✓ Opportunities to share faith and/or reflect together on Scriptures
- ✓ Sightseeing
- ✓ Shopping excursions

Other details:

- ✓ Create welcome packets (including detailed itinerary)
- ✓ Provide phone cards and if appropriate small amount of cash for delegates to be able to purchase personal items, snacks, etc.
- ✓ Exchange of symbolic gifts
- ✓ Share itinerary with the parish in parish bulletins or on notice boards
- ✓ Plan for translation if necessary
- ✓ Consider purchasing temporary medical insurance for visitors. A good option is International SOS - www.internationalsos.com
- ✓ Designate emergency contact person

***Be sure to create opportunities for listening as well as “showing.”** Listening is receiving, and receiving is allowing yourself to be changed by someone else. Encourage your guests to share their personal stories. You may want to suggest that delegates prepare a short presentation to share with groups. Some topics could include: a typical day in their life; a particular tradition, ritual or saying from their culture; the meaning of life lived in their country or cultural context; the significance of community vs. the individual in their culture; how the Catholic faith is lived out in their cultural context; etc.

A note on culture

Often our guests come from cultures that excel at hospitality. We can learn from their example. Help your parish to be demonstrative of how pleased they are to meet your visitors. Formal welcomes, personal introductions, and small token gifts can convey the importance your parish places on their visit. You may consider hosting a social event where parishioners meet, greet and eat with your guests. Nametags, with the first names in large print, can be very helpful in fostering easier communication between your guests and parishioners.

Tips for Host Families

(Developed from resources from the dioceses of St. Cloud, MN and Madison, WI)

Culture

- Often our guests come from cultures that excel at hospitality. Offering a drink upon arrival is often practiced in other cultures, and is a good way to start off with a warm welcome to our own homes.
- Americans are much more “schedule oriented” than many other cultures. Recognize that in many cases our guests will feel that the relationships with members of the community are as more important than getting to the next meeting on time. You may need to help gently shepherd your guests from activity to activity. You may also need to be patient and allow your guests the space they need to relate to people in ways that feel comfortable to them.
- In many cultures of the Global South, it is considered polite to introduce your guest to everyone in the room before anything else starts. A good way to do this is to walk around the room and introduce your guest personally to each person. In addition, before starting a long planning meeting, you may want to share personal stories about your family and community.

Food

- Familiarize yourself with the cuisine of your partner country, and try to offer them food and drink that they are comfortable with.
- Be alert to the fact that portion sizes in the U.S. may be larger and your guests may only eat a portion of what is offered to them.
- You can reassure your guest that water from the tap is safe to drink.

Hygiene

- It might be a nice courtesy to offer to wash your guest’s clothing after a few days have gone by.
- Offer the use of your iron and ironing board. You may want to ask the men if there is anything you can iron for them as they may not be used to ironing.
- As a courtesy, when your guest arrives, demonstrate how to work lights, sinks (both HOT and COLD faucets), showers, and toilets. (In many countries, pipes cannot support toilet paper, thus toilet paper is thrown in a wastebasket next to the toilet. If you notice that your guest is throwing toilet paper in the bathroom wastebasket, you might tell them that toilet paper can go into the toilet.)

Financial/Gift-giving

- It is acceptable to give token gifts to your visitors – things that will be reminders of their visit to your area, or will help them share their experience when they return home (e.g. photos of their time in your parish). Please do not make this an extravagant or expensive item, and remember that they need to pack it for the trip home.

- If your guest asks for your financial support for a personal cause, you can respond in this fashion. “I’m sorry. All the financial components of the partnership need to go through the partnership committee. I can’t give you a personal donation.”

Other

- Provide extra, warm blankets at night.
- Please provide warm outer clothing for your guest if they have none in their possession. Winter jackets may be more appropriate for them during a Northern Spring than spring jackets. You could offer them both something heavy and something a little lighter so that they can dress comfortably.
- Consider providing some reading materials (popular magazines, a local newspaper) for your guest that they could take with them when they return home.
- It can be very difficult to capture and remember lots of new names. It might be a nice courtesy to write down the names of family members and others with whom your guest will be spending time.
- As with any guest, be aware of your guest’s possible sensitivity to smoke if someone in your family smokes. Likewise, if your guest smokes and it bothers anyone in the family, feel free to ask them to step outside to smoke.
- Shopping malls and department stores can be dizzying experiences for people accustomed to open markets and small stores. To others they might be a curiosity. The important thing is to be sensitive to your guest and try to notice and understand when they are uncomfortable in any situation that we may take for granted
- Be sensitive to your guest’s energy level. It is exhausting to be in a new culture. Communication is the key to gauging if your guest needs to go to bed early, or wants to use every moment of their short visit to see everything they can.

Enjoy your visitors!

Visas for delegates to the U.S.

(adapted from the Lutheran Companion Synods Program)

Your guests need to secure non-immigrant visas in order to be admitted to the United States. For information on the overall visa process, visit the U.S. Department of State website www.unitedstatesvisas.gov.

Through their applications and in personal interviews, applicants for U.S. visas must convince consular officers that they will not overstay their visa to remain illegally in the U.S. and that they are not a threat to U.S. national security. There are a variety of reasons why people from your partner parish may have a difficult time obtaining visas:

- Church members are just as likely as non-church members to overstay a visa and remain in the U.S. illegally;
- Some countries are statistically high on the list of people who remain illegally in the U.S. and delegates from there will have a more difficult time getting visas;
- It is difficult for males, singles, or young people under 30 to get visas because consular officers feel that they are less likely to return
- It is difficult for anyone earning less than \$1,000 a month to get a visa.

To increase the likelihood of admission, guests who are young, single, and earning less than \$1000 a month can bring along these items to their interview:

- A deed to land and/or a home
- Current bank statement and a letter from the bank stating how long the person has had an account
- Letters from their own church showing that have been a member for a long time
- Letters from employers showing that they have held their job for a long time
- Anything to prove deep roots in their community such as letters from local institutions (ward, community, or district councils)

Providing your visitors with detailed itineraries can help. An interview with a U.S. consular officer lasts approximately two minutes and thirty seconds. The prospective guest must answer a series of very personal and often culturally insensitive questions very briefly and clearly. Often these questions concern where the person is going and what he or she will be doing on arrival. You can help by providing a detailed itinerary that includes where the person will go, who he/she will meet with, and the purpose of the meeting. For example, instead of writing “July 1: visit St. Paul’s Church,” write something like “July 1: Visit St. Paul’s Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to speak to the St. Paul’s women’s group about women’s ministry in Tanzania.”

Practicing ahead of time is a good idea. Ask your guests to practice the interview beforehand with someone who has gone through the process. They should practice answering rapid-fire questions like: Where are you going? What is the purpose of your journey? Who will you meet with? How much money did you make last year? Do you own a home? People who have gone through the process make very effective coaches!

Delegation Orientation

Delegation Orientation Basics

Providing thoughtful orientation to parishioners before traveling to visit your partner can greatly enhance the experience for delegates, as well as contribute to the deepening of the partnership between the two communities. A delegation orientation should include the following basic components. We recommend four to six sessions of orientation prior to departure, and at least one de-briefing session after your return.

Introduction and team-building – Provide an opportunity for delegates to get to know one another and begin to develop a sense of cohesiveness and trust as a group.

Trip objectives – Clarify trip objectives, which should have been determined between the two parishes' committees, and the delegates' roles in meeting them.

History of the partnership – Invite the partnership committee or leadership team to share the history of the relationship and any agreements or plans that have been developed with the partner.

Roles & expectations of the delegates – Some groups may wish to review and assign individual roles for each delegate and clarify basic expectations and ground rules. You may also want to address the issue of giving gifts in a way that does not create inequity or unrealistic expectations of future delegations.

Commitment – Long before going on a trip, delegates should discern and articulate what will be their ongoing commitment to the partnership once they return to their home community.

Destination and culture – Invite the partnership committee, past delegates, local immigrants, or returned missionaries to provide basic information about the country, region, and parish to be visited, as well as guidance and tips for interacting in the culture there.

Language – Create an opportunity for delegates to learn and practice basic phrases and greetings in the local language of partner.

Itinerary – Provide delegates with an overview of the general travel itinerary and offer them a chance to ask questions and voice concerns. Here it is important to remind delegates that flexibility is the most important thing to bring along on the trip. Schedules are not rigidly adhered to as they are in the U.S.

Packing, safety, health – Review with delegates the basics of what to pack, what vaccinations and medicines to get before traveling, what health precautions to take while overseas, and other general safety tips.

Paperwork – Ensure that delegates have filled out all the necessary forms and provided emergency contact information for family in the U.S. Also be sure to provide delegates with the contact information of their hosts to leave with their families.

Connect to Your Faith -- Provide time to review relevant Catholic Social Teaching, scripture, and mission theology so that the group understands how your partner relationship connects to our faith. Provide time for prayer and faith sharing as part of every orientation session.

After the delegation

After the delegation, partnership leaders should provide a designated time for delegates to debrief the experience, evaluate the trip, and re-commit to their planned activities to support the partnership upon return. Here they can also share stories and photos, and perhaps begin to craft their own group story about the trip to share with the wider parish.

The following pages include a variety of handouts and resources that you may use or adapt in preparing parishioners for a delegation to visit your parish partner. These do not represent a comprehensive orientation, they are simply provided as potential supplements to your own local resources and knowledge. They are listed below.

Expectations & Responsibilities

Expectations & Ground Rules
Roles & Responsibilities

Cultural Resources

Vocabulary worksheet to fill in before a trip

Articles for Reflection

To Give or Not to Give... gifts
The Cost of Short Term Missions

Travel Information

Checklist of Health & Safety Actions
Packing List
Top 10 Tips for Travelers

Helpful Forms

Delegate Profile & Application
Mandatory Information Form

Expectations & Ground Rules

Expectations of participants

- Be aware of each day’s agenda and do your best to always be on time
- Participate and be engaged in all group activities
- Ask questions – no question is a “dumb” question
- All ideas and input from group members will be respected
- The group leader should always know the participants’ whereabouts
- Be mindful of and open to cultural lessons and any related feedback
- Follow the decision-making process agreed upon by the group
- Participation in reflections or attendance at Mass will be predetermined by group

Group-generated Ground Rules

Offer the group the opportunity to establish any other ground rules for the trip.

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

Roles and Responsibilities

Groups may wish to assign roles and responsibilities to each participant. Based on the delegates' own gifts and talents, each person should volunteer to serve in at least one of the following capacities during all phases of the delegation – preparation & orientation, the trip itself, as well as post-trip activities. (Adapt the list as needed for your group)

Archivist: (keeps record of group's activities)

Banker:

Gift-giving coordinators:

Photographer: (note: when there are just one or two designated photographers, it creates a more comfortable climate for visiting with our hosts. The photos will be shared with the whole group.)

Videographer:

Spokesperson for home parish:

Introductions to groups/individuals visited:

Coordinate prayer/reflections during trip:

Music coordinator:

Medical resource:

Taskmaster: (keeps the group on time and on task, while being sensitive to the cultural context)

Water patrol: (ensures fellow travelers have sufficient drinking water and stay hydrated)

Attendance taker:

Vocabulary Worksheet

(Source: www.elca.org/globalmission/welcomeforward/)

Even if you can't speak the language of your hosts or guests, learning a few words can help foster communication. Below are some words and phrases that are useful to know. Try to find someone who speaks the language of the country who can help you translate the phrases. Perhaps your host, guest or a dictionary could help. Many people also find it helpful to listen to language tapes.

Please _____

Thank you _____

Hello _____

Good bye _____

I'm pleased to meet you _____

Good morning _____

Good evening _____

Good night _____

God be with you _____

Peace be with you _____

Breakfast _____

Lunch _____

Dinner/supper _____

Where is the restroom? _____

How much does this cost? _____

Very nice (general compliment) _____

Where is the church? _____

the hotel? _____ the market? _____

To Give or Not to Give... Gifts

Giving is good...isn't it? Yes, but it is complicated in a partnership relationship. U.S. partners should familiarize themselves with the gift-giving traditions of their host countries. In many cases delegates from the overseas partner will bring gifts when they visit the U.S. and will see it as way of being respectful.

There are many reasons that North American partners want to bring gifts when they travel:

- They want to help alleviate grave need in their partner community
- They want to respond to God's call to help the poor
- They want to be gracious guests and thank their hosts

If visitors are honest, however, there are other reasons, such as:

- Wanting to be accepted and liked
- Wanting to feel in control of the situation
- Wanting to be perceived as good and generous

When we are the guests of the poor, however, there are many reasons **not** to bring gifts.

- Giving gifts can emphasize a “donor-recipient” model of partnership that is not truly the focus of a partnership based in solidarity.
- Gift-giving can raise hopes among our partners about future delegations that may go unfulfilled, and this can weaken the partnership.
- Gifts can take the focus off of the personal connection, and introduce a material element to a relationship that can undermine it. (“I hope they bring baseball caps again when they come next year so my son can get one”)
- In the case of small gifts such as pencils, T-shirts, or candy, there are rarely, if ever, enough to go around. In a more community-centered culture than ours, such a situation can be truly destructive.
- Gift-giving distances us from the humbling experience of vulnerability that being guests of the poor offers, and the opportunity for personal transformation that goes with it.

Visitors often speak of the tremendous generosity and hospitality that they receive in their partner diocese. They find themselves in the paradoxical position of being wildly rich in comparison with their hosts, yet receiving food, shelter, and assistance from them in a thousand little daily things with which they are not familiar. Being the guest of the poor can involve uncomfortable accommodations, and daily activities that are unfamiliar and can even seem threatening. Visitors might experience feelings of uselessness, or feel as if they had returned to a state of childhood, where they are unable to function at the same level. The situations that can make us most uncomfortable overseas can be those that highlight the disparity in our income, lifestyle, or opportunities. These can affect us sometimes much more than difficulties arising from translation, an extreme climate, or strange food.

Here are some guidelines for gift giving.

1. Small gifts given as an expression of appreciation for the hospitality of your overseas partner are acceptable. This type of gift would be given to a host family, for example.
2. It is much easier to determine how appropriate it might be to give gifts once a true relationship has been established. Refrain from taking any large gifts on your first few visits to your partner.
3. Think in terms of giving gifts to the community rather than to individuals. Your delegation might decide to bring a handmade altar cloth or a beautiful cross for the church in your partner parish rather than individual T-shirts to hand out. Such gifts are symbolic and can be enjoyed by the whole community.
4. Only take gifts that the whole delegation or parish community has decided to give. Do not decide individually to bring gifts.
5. As a part of your parish partnership, you will be supporting your partner community materially in some way, usually through contributing financially to a project to benefit communities within the parish. This gift is meaningful and important, and you are assured that it will be distributed fairly and in accordance with the values of the community.
6. Your overseas partner may ask for certain supplies or items that are difficult to find locally. Once the relationship has been established, the partners can discern together what kinds of things the delegation can carry. Examples of such gifts would include school supplies or children's medicines.
7. The most valuable gift is YOU! What "gifts" can you give without bringing material things? What talents do you have that you can share? Can your delegation practice a song to sing at Mass? Spending time with people, being genuinely interested in their lives, and taking time to listen to their stories is the best gift.
8. Don't forget, the most powerful thing you can do that your partners cannot do is TELL THEIR STORY BACK HOME. Your commitment to raising awareness after you return from your trip and your work to promote the partnership is your gift to your partners. Although there is less recognition, give the gift of commitment and hard work to your partners. Share from your substance, not from your surplus.

As a guest, allow yourself to be a recipient as well as a giver. Be attentive to the gifts your partners give you. To be in the position to give is to be powerful. Let your partners be powerful – give them the gift of letting them give to you.

*Adapted from **People, Places, and Partnerships: A Workbook for Your Mission Trip Abroad**, by Sally Campbell-Evans.*

The Cost of Short Term Missions

North Americans spend millions of dollars each year on mission-related trips to developing nations. Many of these efforts do more harm than good.

By: Jo Ann Van Engen

A missionary friend just called to see if we would house a short-term mission group she was coordinating here in Honduras. While on the phone, I asked her what she thought of these groups. Her answer might surprise you: "Everyone knows," she said, "that short-term missions benefit the people who come, not the people here."

Is that true? If so, then thousands of people are raising millions of dollars each year to do something not for others, but for themselves. Are we fooling ourselves by pretending these trips help people when they are really just an excuse to see a foreign country? If our good works are not doing good, why do them?

Take this example. A group of eighteen students raised \$25,000 to fly to Honduras for spring break. They painted an orphanage, cleaned the playground, and played with the children. Everyone had a great time, and the children loved the extra attention. One student commented: "My trip to Honduras was such a blessing! It was amazing the way the staff cared for those children. I really grew as a Christian there."

The Honduran orphanage's yearly budget is \$45,000. That covers the staff's salaries, building maintenance, and food and clothes for the children. One staff member there confided, "The amount that group raised for their week here is more than half our working budget. We could have done so much with that money."

Times have changed. Missionaries used to raise small fortunes to sail to Africa and Asia, often never returning home. The decision to become a missionary was life changing and usually permanent.

Today, air travel makes even the farthest corners of the earth accessible to anyone with money for a ticket and a few days to spare. Thousands of people--students, retirees, and busy professionals--go all over the world on short-term mission trips, building schools, running medical brigades, doing street evangelism, and working in orphanages.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that everyone goes on short-term missions to get a free vacation. People usually sign up for very good reasons—a successful doctor wants to use her skills to help needy people, a young person seeks to share his faith with others, a construction worker knows that cement floors will keep poor children healthier.

But maybe you've noticed the same thing I have. When people return from their trip, they don't talk about what they did, as much as what they saw and how it changed them. They describe how amazing it was to worship with Christians in another language, or how humbling it was to encounter people who live with less than they could ever imagine. They don't often talk about the importance of what they did, but about how much they learned about themselves.

Certainly short-term mission trips can go beyond religious tourism and provide memorable experiences. My husband and I run a semester-abroad program in Honduras. The college students who study with us often have been on previous international mission trips. They say these trips awakened their interest in the third world and the poor. For most, seeing a world outside North America that they had never imagined shook their reality and made them question their own lifestyles.

Our students call those experiences "life changing." But often that "life changing" experience is based on an emotional response to a situation they do not really understand. Too often the students return home simply counting the blessings they have of being North Americans having gained little insight into the causes of poverty and what can be done to alleviate them.

I think our students' experiences are typical. Most short-term mission trips have a number of problems in common.

First, short-term missions are extremely expensive. Each member of the spring-break group I mentioned raised over \$1,000 to spend two weeks in Honduras. That is a lot of money anywhere, but in the third world, it's more than most people make in an entire year.

Second, short-term mission groups almost always do work that could be done (and usually done better) by people of the country they visit. The spring-break group spent their time and money painting and cleaning the orphanage in Honduras. That money could have paid two Honduran painters who desperately needed the work, with enough left over to hire four new teachers, build a new dormitory, and provide each child with new clothes.

Even medical brigades are difficult to justify. The millions of dollars spent to send North American physicians to third-world countries could cover the salaries of thousands of underemployed doctors in those countries--doctors who need work and already understand the culture and language of the people they would serve.

Short-term groups are also unable to do effective evangelism, which is a main goal of many groups. Since most group members do not speak the language or understand the culture, their attempts are almost always limited. I know of one group that travelled all the way to Senegal to distribute copies of a Christian video to people on the street, but could not hold even the most basic conversation with these people.

How would we feel if visitors came to the United States to spend a week volunteering at the Salvation Army, ate only the food they brought from home, talked only with each other, (because they couldn't speak English) and never left the building? Most of us would feel offended and bewildered that our visitors were not interested in learning about our country.

But I have met many short-term groups in Honduras that do just that. They take along food they are used to (or eat every night at McDonald's or Pizza Hut), stay in the best hotels, and spend all their time together. They are willing to serve as long as it's not too uncomfortable. Often, they leave without having spent any meaningful time getting to know the country's people.

Short-term missions also require a great deal of time and coordination by their hosts. A Nicaraguan doctor I know runs a health clinic for poor families. He trains community workers to promote better health and treats serious illnesses at almost no charge. The clinic can barely keep up with the demand. But the doctor spends three months each year preparing for and hosting U.S. medical brigades. He admits that the brigades accomplish very little (visiting doctors mostly hand out aspirin for headaches and back pain), but hesitates to complain since the U.S. organization that promotes the brigades also funds his clinic.

Short-term groups can also send the wrong message to third- world people. A Honduran friend is a bricklayer and was excited to help a work team build two houses in his neighborhood. After the group left, I asked him about his experience. "I found out soon enough that I was in the way. The group wanted to do things their way and made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing. I only helped the first day," he said.

Because short-term groups often want to solve problems quickly, they can make third-world Christians feel incapable of doing things on their own. Instead of working together with national Christians, many groups come with a let-the-North-Americans-do-it attitude that leaves nationals feeling frustrated and unappreciated. Since the groups are only around for about a week, the nationals end up having to pick up where they left off but without the sense of continuity and competence they might have had they been in charge from the beginning.

These problems are not just pesky details. They raise serious questions about the value of short-term mission trips.

So, what should we do? Declare a moratorium on all short-term missions and only support full-time workers? Refuse to give money to any group planning to visit a developing country?

I don't think that is the answer. Our world is becoming smaller, and global business has made us all neighbors. Our lives in North America have become inextricably linked with our brothers and sisters in the third-world. Now, more than ever, Christians need to share one another's problems and support one another.

But short-term missions as they stand are not the answer. Third-world people do not need more rich Christians coming to paint their church and make them feel inadequate. They do need more humble people willing to share in their lives and struggles.

I believe North American Christians need to start taking seriously our responsibility to the people of the third world--and visiting another country can be an appropriate place to begin. But we need to ask each other: What is the purpose of the trip? Are we going through the motions of helping the poor so we can congratulate ourselves afterwards? Or are we seeking to understand the lives of third-world people--to recognize and support their strengths and to try to understand the problems they face and our role in them? Are we ethnocentrically treating the people of the third-world as tragic objects to be rescued--or as equals to walk with and learn from?

I suggest we stop thinking about short-term missions as a service to perform and start thinking of them as a responsibility to learn. Let's raise money to send representatives to find out what our brothers and sisters are facing, what we can do to help, and how we can build long-term relationships with them.

Groups like the The Christian Commission for Development (CCD), in Honduras intentionally provide learning experiences to short-term groups. CCD accepts North Americans only if they are serious about learning. Their groups visit Christian development projects, speak with rural and urban poor, and dialogue with Honduran leaders.

The groups often spend some time working, but only on CCD's facilities, not in rural villages or poor neighborhoods. CCD recognizes that outside groups can unintentionally destroy the cohesion and sense of empowerment. Groups return to North America with a better understanding of the injustice and sin that oppresses people in developing nations, and what they can do to make a difference.

It is possible to change traditional short-term missions from religious tourism into genuine service, but it requires a better understanding of how God calls us to serve. Preparing for your trip means more than packing your suitcase and getting your shots. Read as much as you can about the people and culture. Find out what some of the problems are. Learn a little of the language you will be hearing. Find someone from the country you will be visiting who can speak to your group about its culture. Show respect for people by knowing something about their lives before you arrive.

Second, focus on learning, not doing. Most Christians don't like sitting on their hands. We like to serve by doing. But in a third-world of high unemployment and low wages, it makes little sense to spend our time painting a wall, when we could be learning about the country, its people, and problems. Ask your contact person to set up visits and speakers who will help you understand questions like these: Why is this country so poor? What problems do the people face? What has our own country done to help or harm this country? What can we do to help? These are not questions with pat answers. Struggling with them is a learning experience that can have an impact long after the trip ended.

Spend time with locals. Make sure nationals are fully involved in your visit and follow their lead. If you are working on a project together, ask your national co-workers to teach you. If you have a skill they could use, ask if they would like to learn it. Ask questions about the lives and problems of the people you meet. Learning from the people of the country you visit will give you an understanding of the country that a foreigner cannot give.

One good rule of thumb for short-term missions is to spend at least as much money supporting the projects you visit as you spend on your trip. Invest your money in people and organizations working on long-term solutions. If you are interested in evangelism, support nationals who want to share the gospel. If you are concerned about the health issues, support programs that are seeking to address those problems. Better yet, find programs that minister to people holistically by meeting their spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and economic needs.

Finally, get involved as a global Christian when you return. By asking the right questions, you will find out how the actions of rich countries affect those in the third world. Support organizations working to fight injustice and poverty. Write letters to your congressional representatives telling them what you learned and what you believe our government should do. Speak to churches, schools, and other groups and encourage them to act.

Short-term missions are expensive. They spend money that third-world Christians could desperately use. But short-term missions can be worth every penny if they mark the beginning of a long-term relationship. Money invested in learning about the causes of poverty in developing nations--and what can be done--is money well spent.

*This article was originally published in **The Other Side**, January/February 2000 issue.*

Questions for delegation participants to consider:

- What from this article struck you?
- What new insights do you have about your upcoming trip?
- What might you do before, during and after the delegation to respond to what the author calls the “responsibility to learn”?
- How do you hope to “get involved as global Christians” upon return?

Questions for partnership leaders to consider:

- What new insights do you have on delegations your parish has taken in the past?
- How might you structure future delegations differently?
- What would you do differently before the delegation to help delegates fulfill their “responsibility to learn”?
- How can you support delegates to “get involved as global Christians” upon return?

Checklist of Health & Safety Actions

Topic	Resources	Notes	Date completed
Passport	Follow directions for either renewal or 1 st time applicant http://travel.state.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should be valid THROUGH expected date of return to U.S. • carry it on your person at all times • bring extra passport photos • make copies of passport – pack one in suitcase, leave one at home 	
Visa	Embassy in U.S. of country to be visited, OR www.travisa.com/travelvisa.htm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research if visa is needed before or at entry into country • if visa is needed before entry into country, decide how it will be secured – as a group or individually • fill out necessary forms and send or hand-carry all documentation to closest consulate • once received, carry it on your person at all times 	
Travel medications and vaccinations	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make appt. at travel clinic 3 mo. in advance of trip • get a personal supply of antibiotic (e.g. Cipro) to treat severe infection or diarrhea • follow directions for any oral medications to be taken prior to trip • carry on your person - International Vaccination Record 	
Prescription medications (for pre-existing conditions)	Your primary care physician & pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring meds for duration of trip in your carry-on • carry a letter from your physician listing medical conditions and current medications, including generic names • see packing list for suggested everyday meds, including Tylenol, antacids, anti-diarrheal 	
Traveler's medical insurance	Your medical insurance provider, OR MEDEX www.medexassist.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • call and ask regular provider what is covered by current policy (basic care overseas, emergency care or transport, medical evacuation) • seek additional coverage through MEDEX or another travel insurer • all travelers should obtain international coverage, including medical evacuation 	

<p>Food and water</p>	<p>http://www.cdc.gov/travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drink only bottled water • avoid raw vegetables • make sure you drink enough to avoid dehydration • make sure the trip leaders are aware of any dietary needs or restrictions 	
<p>Mosquitoes & other pests</p>	<p>http://www.cdc.gov/travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wear long sleeves or pants when possible • bring bug repellent • ask if you will need/be provided with mosquito netting 	
<p>Safety & security</p>	<p>http://travel.state.gov</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the buddy system • leave valuables at home 	

Sources of Information:

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) traveler’s health print-out specific to the country to be visited - <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- The U.S. Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov>) has a helpful website for international travelers. Be sure to read their 10 tips for travelers page and print out a country specific travel page
- Another helpful website for more information about a country is the CIA factbook <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html> . Use the dropdown menu to select the name of the country you wish to research.

Packing List

This basic information applies to most countries. It is important to know your partners' cultural norms about dress. Please note that social norms for women can be stricter than for men. U.S. citizens often dress as a form of individual expression; while in other countries, dress can often be a sign of respect for others. Please consider the following:

Luggage

Try to pack no more than one moderate suitcase. Too much luggage can be a burden on your host, because they have to find a way to transport it.

- You may wish to bring a money belt, and/or a fanny pack.
- Keep everything you ABSOLUTELY need in a small carry-on, like your passport, money, prescription drugs, basic toiletries, glasses, and camera.
- Consider maintaining a copy of your passport in your checked piece of luggage and leave a secondary copy at home.
- Depending on your destination, consider packing a change of clothes in your carry-on. (Baggage may not always arrive with you!)
- Important documents to bring are your passport, your plane ticket, ID, immunization record, prescriptions for your prescription medication, possibly an eyeglasses prescription. Please leave expensive watches and jewelry at home.
- Do not pack Swiss army knives or other sharp implements in carry-on luggage. Airport Security will confiscate these items. Sometimes even nail clippers and razors are not allowed. You will probably be able to find these items in the country you are visiting.

Toiletries/Accessories

Ask your host community what kinds of item are available for purchase there. You may wish to carry with you things such as toiletries, batteries, notebooks, pens, toilet paper, etc .

- Insect repellent (with at least 30%DEET is particularly effective)
- Bring what you normally use: toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, a small towel, soap, deodorant, razor, and prescription medications. Travel sizes are best. Facecloths are not readily available overseas.
- A bandanna or handkerchief is a good idea. A small mirror can be nice to have.
- Sunglasses and a sun hat.
- A small flashlight and a small lock for your luggage (lock to be used in hotels only)
- Sunscreen (high SPF)

Clothing

In many countries shorts and jeans are acceptable only at the beach or for sports. You will be able to wash things, so take clothes that you can wash with bar soap by hand. Try to bring clothing that breathes well and dries fast.

- Short sleeved shirts and a long-sleeved shirt
- Cotton pants (not jeans or shorts).
- Lightweight sweatshirt/sweater, and a nylon windbreaker and/or a waterproof jacket

PARISH PARTNERSHIP MANUAL

- Underwear and socks
- Shoes – good for walking. Already broken in.
- One dress shirt and tie (men) – clericals for priests
- Skirts, jumpers or dresses at least knee-length (women)
- Pajamas or other comfortable bed wear

Note to women: consider long skirts, they can actually be much more comfortable and practical than pants.

Checklist for packing

Clothing

- Loose Comfortable Clothing
- Men's Dress Clothes: Slacks/Shirts/Blazer
- Women: Slacks/Skirts
- Comfortable Footwear
- Hat
- Wind Breaker/ Sweater
- Sweatshirt
- Hiking/Sturdy Boots
- Priests: Clerics

Toiletries

- Toothbrush/Paste
- Disposable Razors
- Over the Counter Pain Medicine
- Prescription Medication
- Small Shampoo
- Soap
- Small Hand Mirror
- Sunscreen
- Unscented Deodorant
- Insect Repellent(30% Deet)
- Pepto Bysmol/Imodium Tablets
- Aspirin/Tylenol
- Personal Bath/Hand Towel
- Unscented Wet Wipes
- Shower Gel Type Soap

Miscellaneous

- Camera/Film
- Sunglasses
- Batteries (if needed)
- Writing Journal/Pens
- Raincoat/Poncho
- Umbrella
- Backpack
- Combination of Cash and Travelers Checks (\$300 should be enough)
- Passport
- Ticket
- Immunization Records
- Small Suitcase lock
- Bottle of water

Top 10 Tips for Travelers

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport (and visas, if required). Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport!
2. Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for the countries you plan to visit.
3. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, the U.S. Constitution does not follow you! While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws.
4. Make 2 copies of your passport identification page. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Leave one copy at home with friends or relatives. Carry the other with you in a separate place from your passport.
5. Leave a copy of your itinerary and in-country contact information with family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency.
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas. Do not accept packages from strangers.
7. If you plan to stay abroad for more than two weeks, upon arrival you should notify by phone or register in person with the U.S. embassy in the country you are visiting. This will facilitate communication in case someone contacts the embassy looking for you.
8. Try not to wear conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money or unnecessary credit cards.
9. In order to avoid violating local laws, deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money or purchase art or antiques.
10. If you get into trouble, contact the nearest U.S. embassy.

Delegate Profile & Application

Name

Address

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ E-mail

Date of birth _____ male _____ female _____

Tell us a little bit about yourself: your personal history, your family, your occupation, your interests or hobbies.

How has your faith been expressed in your life? Also, please describe your involvement in your parish or other pertinent activities.

Describe your involvement to date with the parish partnership.

What gifts or talents do you have? (i.e., farming or gardening, musical, artist, organizer, photographer, etc.)

Why do you want to participate in this delegation? What are your hopes or objectives for the trip?

Do you have any other cross-cultural experience within or outside of the USA? Please explain.

What languages do you speak?

What do you hope to be able to tell others upon return from the trip?

Upon your return, how will you be willing to help further the partnership?

Do you have any health concerns or special needs?

Mandatory Information Form

Please answer all of the following questions. It is imperative that you complete this form in its entirety. Please be candid about food, medication, allergy and physical activity restrictions even if you do not think that they will affect your trip. Only the trip leaders will see this form.

Name of traveler:

Address:

Phone:

Email address:

Date of birth: _____

Please print name below as it appears on your passport if different than above:

Do you have a U.S. Passport? If yes, please list passport number:

If no, please explain:

Destination and travel dates:

Person to contact in case of an emergency (name and phone number):

Alternate emergency contact (name and phone number):

—

Doctor's name and phone number:

Any dietary restrictions:

Please list all medications that you take and the reason.

Medication	Reason

Any allergies (i.e. food, animals, medications):

Medication you are taking as a malaria prophylactic (if applicable):

All medical conditions (i.e.: asthma, diabetes, eye conditions, high blood pressure, heart condition, etc.):

—

Your medical insurance provider and a phone number (not an 800 number as these cannot be dialed from overseas):

—

Resources

Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith: One Church's Experiment

Pakisa K. Tshimika and Tim Lind

Good Books, 2003

Called as Partners in Christ's Service: The Practice of God's Mission

Sherron Kay George

Worldwide Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (USA), 2004

Partners in Mission: Guidelines for Solidarity and "Twinning" Relationships

Haitian Episcopal Conference, September 2010.

The "Whys" of Twinning: Rooted in the Gospel...Manifested through and in Social Justice

Fr. William Nordenbrock, CPPS

USCMA Conference Presentation, October 25, 2001

www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission/TheWhys_of_Twinning.pdf

From Helping to Solidarity: A Reflection on Short Term Mission Trips as part of Parish Twinning Relationships

Mike Haasl, Center for Mission, 2006

The Cost of Short Term Missions

JoAnn Van Engen

The Other Side, January/February 2000

www.ajshonduras.org/joannsarticle.pdf

What About Short-Term Mission? A Guide for Leaders and Participants of Short-term Mission Experiences

Julie Lupien, From Mission to Mission, 2006

www.missiontocommission.org

Partnering Relationships for Mission: An Inquiry & Overview of Diocesan and Parish Twinning

Nancy Bernhardt-Hsu for U.S. Catholic Mission Association

June 2003

www.uscatholicmission.org/go/publications

Praxis is Prior to Theology: Theological Foundations of International SCC Twinning

Joseph G. Healy, M.M.

Maryknoll Society of Priests and Brothers, Mission Awareness Committee

January 2004

www.maryknollafrika.org/ComHealeyDocs.htm

The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross

Jon Sobrino
Orbis Books, 1997.

The Values Americans Live By

L. Robert Kohls
The Washington International Center.
April 1984
<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/intext/global/americanvalues.pdf>

Handbook for International Mission Partnership

Worldwide Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (USA)
September 2001

Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership

2003 General Assembly Policy Statement, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
www.pff.net/resources/Presb_Do_Mission_in_Partnership.pdf

Companion Synods Handbook

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Global Mission
Summer 2006
www.elca.org/companionsynod/cspresources.html

Archdiocese of Cincinnati parish twinning resources

Archdiocese of Cincinnati Mission Office
www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission

Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis parish twinning resources

Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis Center for Mission
www.catholicmissionmn.org/center_for_mission/global_solidarity.htm

An Expression of Mission Today: Sister Parish Relationship

Diocese of St. Cloud Mission Office
www.stcdio.org/mission/SisterParishDoc.html

Global Solidarity in Action: A Guide for International Issue Advocacy in the United States

Catholic Relief Services Advocacy Department
advocacy.crs.org

Embracing the Call to Global Solidarity: Catholic Relief Services Global Solidarity Partnership Guidebook

Catholic Relief Services Global Solidarity Partnerships Team
www.crs.org/gsp

Global Solidarity Partnership Delegation Orientation

Catholic Relief Services Global Solidarity Partnerships Team
www.crs.org/gsp

Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

February 1998

www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalsolidarity.htm

A Call to Solidarity with Africa

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

November 2001

www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.htm

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

2003

www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm

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