

Parish to Parish links provide an opportunity at a local level to engage in a meaningful way with our Companion Dioceses. These are: Qu'Appelle, Canada; Matlosane, South Africa; West Malaysia, Singapore, Kuching and Sabah in the Province of S.E Asia and our ecumenical link with the Nordkirche, the Church of Northern Germany. We are in a covenant relationship with each of these churches. We have agreed to involve the people of our Dioceses in:

1. The offering of mutual encouragement, love and prayer.
2. The development of friendships between individuals and groups within our dioceses, so as to deepen our understanding of each other.
3. A sharing of information, insights, experience and concerns at all levels of the life of our dioceses, so as to deepen our commitment to Christ and equip us better to serve in God's mission.

What is the value of Parish to Parish Links?

- Paul refers to his thankfulness to the Philippian church for their '*partnership in the Gospel*'. (Phil 4:5). Partnership is a key word in this relationship as it speaks of a mutuality and shared commitment to each other as we seek to follow Christ in our different contexts.
- Such links refresh and invigorate mission in our own contexts as Phil Groves underlines in his Grove Booklet, '*Global Partnerships for Local Mission*' (www.grovebooks.co.uk).
- These links can be especially enriching to a congregation which feels it lacks cultural diversity. For this is a means of preparing ourselves for participation in that '*great multitude which no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb*'. (Rev 7:9).
- Our links with the church in other countries and cultures can challenge our parochialism and help us to see the bigger picture.

How do Parish to Parish links work?

- Parish links are really very simple to set up but can require patience and faithfulness to maintain. In practice whilst the full support of an incumbent is needed often the leadership and coordination of such a link might be best done by a committed lay person, ideally with one or two others including a younger person.
- It is important for such a link to be owned by the church and it can be helpful to have a launch service which enables all members to grasp what the nature of the link will be.
- There can be a trial period to begin with and a subsequent agreement to commit to the link for a given period of time – say three years after which there can be a review

and the choice made either to continue for a further period of time or to agree to end the link.

- There are no significant cost issues to the PCC, but for the link to flourish it will depend on people being willing to offer occasional home hospitality

What else is involved?

- Praying for each other on a regular basis is vital. This might involve on at least a monthly basis naming the link parish and praying in an informed way for issues which they have identified.
- Meeting face to face is essential if the link is to flourish. A small group of church members can visit their link one year and the next year the parish or benefice could welcome a similar team from their link and offer hospitality.
- It can be helpful to have some artefacts from your link such as some material, or a cross or a symbol. Music from the link and the world church can enrich our worship in a profound way.
- Communication with each other through e mail and social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook.
- Regular articles in your magazine or on your parish web site indicate that this link is alive and flourishing. Exchanging weekly notice and service sheets helps to keep people informed – easy to do by e mail. References to the link in the notices show that this is being taken seriously.
- Try to have a photograph and a notice board where the link can be highlighted so that visitors see that this is a church that is not only concerned with its own needs.

What support is available?

- Financial gifts are particular complex and issues around the giving of money and the World Mission Dept. will advise on this if it should arise.
- It may be that it is possible to develop links between the schools in your parishes. Within the Diocese we have considerable expertise and can offer guidance on this.
- Parishes developing such links with our Companion Dioceses do so in accordance with the values and procedures agreed by the World Mission Dept. within the Diocese of Lichfield. Participating parishes will be expected to both feedback their experience to the World Mission Dept. as well as to make use of the opportunities during the course of a year to meet with other parishes or benefices within the Diocese which are developing their links, to share experience and to pray together.
- You will be invited to events celebrating our World Mission links and you will receive copies of the quarterly World Mission News.

If you are interested please contact me to discuss possibilities and to put you in touch with others who have experienced the blessings of Parish to Parish links.

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