Partnership, Solidarity, and Friendship:
Transforming Structures in Mission

A Study Paper for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Introduction

Why at the beginning of the twenty-first century are we still talking about partnership in mission? The idea that churches in the East and West and in the North and South have an equal share in God's mission (the *missio dei*), that relationships among churches should be based on trust, mutual respect, and reciprocity, is not new. Partnership in mission, an expression of what it means to be united in Christ in mission, was central to the emerging understanding of world mission in the twentieth century and has been the subject of ecumenical discussion for at least seventy-five years. During that time, a huge body of literature was amassed, many conferences were held, and several bilateral and ecumenical initiatives seeking to make authentic partnership a reality were launched.[1] Why, then, has the discussion reemerged today?

J. Andrew Kirk suggests that partnership has again become a fashionable idea in mission circles in recent years because it has "a positive and reassuring ring about it, denoting a sense of equality, collaboration and a public commitment to share in common endeavors."[2] Democratic liberalism reigns triumphant in Western (or Northern) political, economic, and social theory and has influenced the revived discussion of partnership in mission among Western churches and mission agencies. Something in the spirit of the times suggests that partnership and mutuality should be the norm in international mission relationships, as well as in international relations. But there is also the realization that we are not yet there. Unfortunately, many North American mission organizations are not sufficiently aware of the historic concern of the ecumenical movement with partnership in mission. In the ecumenical experience, the idea emerged more from biblical and theological considerations than from democratic liberalism. There is, therefore, need for a review of the discussions of the last century as we begin our consideration of the issue.

A second reason for the revived interest in partnership in mission comes from the churches of the South. Precisely because "we are not there yet," churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have argued that discussions with their European and North American counterparts have not produced significant results. They are demanding a more equitable sharing of resources and more democratic patterns of

decision making. The discussion of partnership has been going on since the 1928 Jerusalem mission conference, but little progress has been made. Today, globalization has exacerbated the problem by putting increasing pressure on the peoples of the South and increasing the gap between rich and poor. Despite the rhetoric of democratic liberalism, Third World theologians charge that patterns of sharing continue to be undemocratic and patronizing. In other areas, churches are speaking out about the debt crisis and economic imbalance between nations. Continuing patterns of domination and dependency affect not only relationships among countries but relationships among churches and mission organizations as well.

A third reason for the renewed interest in partnership has to do with globalization itself. Globalization provides the means for increased communication around the world and greater interaction among peoples. The Internet, new patterns of immigration, greater ease of international travel, and networked styles of organization have important implications for church mission programs all over the world. Globalization has led to increased South–South sharing, but it has had a more direct impact on new patterns of North–South and West–East interaction. Many local churches and mid-level governing bodies in Europe and North America have established their own mission programs in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Orthodox world of the former Soviet Union. They desire a hands-on style of mission and have sent funds and supplies, volunteers and missionaries to work with local churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some of these initiatives have led to creative new forms of reciprocal mission partnerships. By and large, however, these new initiatives have resulted in a one-way traffic—from North to South and West to East—completely outside of historic church-based mission relationships.[3] Such new mission programs have caused concern about neocolonial patterns of mission in churches in the South and the North, and have given additional stimulus to the revived discussion of partnership in mission.

The formative period for the ecumenical understanding of partnership in mission ended some fifty years ago, but the present discussion of partnership continues to be important in all sectors of the Protestant community. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been a major participant in and contributor to twentieth-century discussions of partnership in the world Christian movement, and its historic commitment was reaffirmed as the 215th General Assembly (2003) adopted a policy statement titled "Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership."[4] Addressed to Presbyterian congregations and governing bodies in the United States, the statement is a reaffirmation of the policy that has

been the goal of ecumenical mission practice for at least fifty years. "Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership" is a good statement, advancing a perspective of giving and receiving in mission that summarizes the ecumenical understanding of mission for a new era. At the same time, it is a statement that has an aura of the past about it. As we shall see below, Philip Potter said the same thing about the whole ecumenical discussion of partnership thirty years ago!

Although reaffirming the importance of partnership in mission may be instructive for the church, it does not necessarily push the discussion forward. Almost twelve years ago a group of concerned Presbyterians put together a paper claiming that there was no agreed-upon definition of *mutuality* and *partnership* in the Presbyterian Church, and as a result, the terms had become vague and without real meaning.[5]

"Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership" is an attempt to articulate an agreed-upon meaning, but it does not address the ways in which both the theology and the practice of mission partnership have fallen short in the past, nor does it chart a path for what is needed in the future. Without a critical perspective on existing mission practices, structures, and working styles, any statement on partnership in mission lacks a prophetic cutting edge.

This paper is about partnership in mission relationships. But not everything in mission is encompassed by this term; the *missio dei* includes much more. The important 1982 World Council of Churches (WCC) statement "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation" does not even mention the term *partnership,* although the idea of equal sharing among member churches is implied. As Andrew Williams has rightly observed,

> Let us be clear. Partnership is not the gospel, nor is it the aim of the gospel. Jesus envisaged and prayed for one church. Interchurch relationships by whatever name are an exciting and necessary stage toward that. However, partnerships are only a stage, which will one day be out of date. They must not be idolized or treated as the goal.[6]

Partnership in mission may one day be out of date, but that day has not yet come, and so we must continue to engage one another in dialogue about mission relationships. The discussion of partnership, solidarity, and transforming mission structures is needed not because partnership has been tried and found wanting, but because churches have not been willing to follow through with the radical demands of what partnership and working together in God's mission requires.[7]

This paper is an effort to critically assess where we have been in order to move the discussion forward.

I will begin with a review of the ecumenical discussion of partnership in mission from the last century to help develop a better understanding of the structural and theological problems and possibilities for partnership in mission today. Whose partnership, solidarity, and friendship are we talking about? Can there be a vision of partnership that builds on what has been said before but that also helps churches in the North and the South move toward a more equitable sharing of resources? Are there examples that embody such a new understanding? What new structures might be needed for this purpose?

These questions are approached from a particular context. Today, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is one of the richest churches in the world, and in terms of the per capita income of its members, the wealthiest church in the United States. At the same time, our national church agencies are in decline. Our individual wealth and church resources pose particular obligations and burdens on Presbyterians,[8] even in a time of downsizing at the national level. But they also offer significant opportunities. Given its historic commitment to global mission, the PC(USA) has enormous possibilities to test out new ideas in practice as we enter more deeply into conversation with local congregations and judicatories as well as with churches and mission organizations both here and overseas.

I also write at a time when my country is at war in Iraq and in a world where the United States sees itself as the guarantor of world justice and peace. I believe that this war and this posture are wrong. There is a new national assertiveness in America's foreign policy, partly a result of 9/11, but also related to an ideology designed to assure American power and influence in the new century. In the present situation, U.S. emphasis on unilateralism in the frontier spirit of "going it alone" may be discouraging to those in the churches concerned with international cooperation and partnership in mission, but it can also be a call to action. In many other churches and mission agencies in North America, the extension of American global power is seen as a new opportunity for mission without partnership.[9] As Presbyterians we must ask ourselves, how do we engage churches in our country that have an alternative understanding of global mission? As I shall argue below, we have a particular responsibility as American Presbyterians to speak truth to power in our own situation, especially as we seek to engage our own constituency. Partnership in mission sometimes means resistance and going against the tide in our own

communities and country, in solidarity and in friendship with partner churches overseas.

For most of its history, the Presbyterian Church has had a distinguished record of ecumenical and missionary involvement all over the world. I write as one who believes that we have to reclaim that history, for, as I will argue below, we may be in danger of moving backward. I have spent most of my working life in Asia as a Presbyterian mission co-worker and mission volunteer. During that time I came to understand the perspective of those who see partnership "from below." For more than twenty-five years, I have been working with the church in China, a church that upholds the principles of self-support, self-government, and self-propagation in order to maintain a sense of dignity and identity in relation to churches in other parts of the world. The China Christian Council (CCC) also seeks authentic partnership with churches overseas, relationships established on the basis of friendship and mutual respect.[10] My experience with Chinese Christians has had a lasting and formative impact on me, as will be evident to those who read these pages.

Partnership in Mission:
A Historical Perspective from
Jerusalem (1928) to San Salvador (1996)

> We ought to be willing to learn from one another and to help one another. Through all the ages to come, the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest to the heroism and self-denying labors of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We ask also for *love*. Give us FRIENDS.[11]

V. S. Azariah's words at the end of his short speech at the 1910 World Missionary Conference were very moving for the delegates who assembled in Edinburgh. He spoke about the problem of cooperation between "foreign" and "native" workers in Asian churches. There were only seventeen delegates from the "younger churches" at this missionary meeting that also marks the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. Other delegates from Asia, including Cheng Ching-yi from China, spoke along the same lines, but the issue of partnership in mission could not be taken up in Edinburgh.

The International Missionary Council (IMC) was founded at Lake Mohonk, New York, in 1921, and its founding itself was symbolic of the cooperative worldwide character of the mission of the church. But it was only at Jerusalem (1928), where almost half of the delegates were from the so-called "younger churches," that Asian, African, and Latin American Christian leaders began to talk about the need for action, and not just words, on the issue of relationships among the churches. Even John R. Mott spoke at Jerusalem of the need to end the idea of "sending" and "receiving" churches.[12] The word *partnership* emerged at Jerusalem as a reaction against the dominance of the Western churches. It meant that mission belongs to the whole church, as was affirmed in the conference statement:

> This partnership enables the older and younger churches to face the unfinished task of world evangelization with greater hope than ever before. The undertaking demands the fullest participation of both groups.[13]

It is important to bear in mind in the discussion that follows that the idea of North–South partnership in mission emerged "from below" as a challenge to colonialism and the dominance of the Euro-American missionary movement. When Jerusalem declared, "Our message is Jesus Christ," the "our" included the witness of both the "younger" and the "older" churches. This was a significant step forward.

The theme was further developed at Tambaram (India, 1938) as the clouds of war loomed on the horizon in Europe and in Asia. Meeting in South Asia for the first time, the IMC was primarily concerned with the challenge of other faiths and ideologies. But the Tambaram conference also affirmed the importance of changing relationships in mission, proclaiming that the "unfinished evangelistic task is the responsibility of the whole church" for the whole world. This task would have to be undertaken "by a partnership between the older and the younger churches" working together and responsible to one another in ways that they had not been before.[14] There were more pressing issues on the agenda at Tambaram, but the language of mission of the whole church for the whole world was introduced for the first time.

Nine years later, the war was over and the dismantling of colonialism had begun. Over the next twenty years, almost all the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would win or regain their independence. With decolonization came the devolution of missions, and the call for partnership became even more urgent. A thematic focus of the IMC meeting at Whitby (Canada, 1947) thus became "partners in mission." Gone was the triumphalism of the past, and conference delegates were explicit in

their assertion that mission cannot come *sui generis* out of New York, London, or Geneva. Discussion proceeded in practical ways, in terms of partnership in personnel, finance, the development of mission policy, and administration. Still, partnership meant more than a response to the practical considerations of international mission. It was also central to the demands of the gospel, which at Whitby was understood to include the grace of giving as well as the grace of receiving. Beyond the urgent need for greater equality among the churches in the sharing of resources there was the rediscovery of the biblical witness for social justice, and social justice demanded partnership in mission. The best remembered phrase that came out of Whitby was "partnership in obedience."

> Progress in partnership depends in a measure on human insights and adjustments, but its origin is not found in these. Its source is in a common obedience to the living Word of God, given once and for all in Jesus Christ, yet given anew through the Holy Spirit in every generation.[15]

The idea of "partnership in obedience" was more fully elaborated at Willingen (Federal Republic of Germany, 1952), where the ideas of mission under the cross and the *missio dei* were given new emphasis. Willingen emphasized the missionary obligation of the church, but many at the conference attacked the church-centered view of mission. The *missio dei* theme was developed in different ways over the next decade, with radical implications for the churches. If mission was God's and not ours, then true partnership meant partnership with God in building up the kingdom. The church had a role to play in this, but the planting or expansion of churches could not be its primary object. Not all churches agreed with this viewpoint, but it was to have tremendous impact on the changes that were to come over the next two decades.

At the final meeting of the IMC in Accra (Ghana, 1958), the main concern was the integration of the IMC and the WCC. Integration of mission and unity became a new way of speaking of partnership. But even here, the Whitby and Willingen themes of partnership in obedience were forcefully reaffirmed:

> Mission belongs to Christ—not us, and Christ came as a servant; we are fellow workers with Christ; each church has a primary responsibility for mission in its place; all our organizations come under the judgment and mercy of Christ. The conference declared its conviction that the missionary task remained central and urgent, and called for new relationships between missions and local churches to carry out this task.[16]

The integration of the IMC and the WCC in New Delhi in 1961 was an expression of the ecumenical conviction that mission and unity belonged together. New Delhi asserted that there should be "joint action for mission" and used the language of "all in each place" to embrace both the priority of the local church and the need for mission in unity. The WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) took over the work of the IMC, and at its first conference in Mexico City (1963) emphasized that partnership should mean the internationalization of mission, coining the phrase "mission from six continents to six continents." Over the next decade, international, regional, national, and local initiatives would push the idea of international cooperation in mission further, particularly the idea of "joint action for mission," which came from the CWME.

An important American Presbyterian contribution on the eve of the New Delhi Assembly was the publication of a working paper titled *An Advisory Study*.[17] This was not a policy statement, but a document drawn up by fifteen persons from around the world to advise the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR) of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. on the direction it should take in its international mission programs and relationships. A groundbreaking assessment, it spoke of a "multilateral approach to mission, within a wider context than that of a single church, country or confession" (p. 81). *An Advisory Study* was translated into several languages and became an important study document on questions of partnership in mission for churches in many parts of the world. For the Presbyterian Church and many other historic churches in the ecumenical movement, the prospects for genuine partnership in mission seemed good in the early 1960s.

At least this was the perspective of churches of the North. The Third World was becoming increasingly impatient with the unequal power relationships between churches in the North and the South. Despite the many discussions of partnership, the pattern of domination and dependency continued. A "moratorium" on the sending of foreign mission personnel was introduced in the 1970s in response to what was seen as a crisis of inequality. The moratorium was a development of the partnership idea. Its intent was not that churches should live in isolation from one another, but that a more just and mature Christian relationship, which might require the departure of foreign missionaries in some situations, should be developed. This idea never really took off, despite significant experiments in the Philippines and Tanzania.

The Bangkok Assembly of the CWME (1972) debated questions concerning the structure of missionary relationships that would reflect

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partnership and North–South cooperation, but it did not endorse a movement toward a missionary moratorium. Instead, the assembly recommended that the CWME "urge, and where possible, assist, mission agencies to examine critically their involvement as part of patterns of political and economic domination." But an increasing frustration about partnership in mission now came to the fore. In his report to the assembly, then CWME director Philip Potter suggested that the partnership idea had become little more than an empty slogan.

> Partnership has long been conceived as the proper method of carrying out mission and evangelism. This was given full expression at Whitby in 1947, and again at Willingen in 1952, but it has continued to have an aura of the past about it. The partners are uneven. The partner who has the funds, knowledge and skills, mainly the Western partner, still wields power. The partner who lacks these things, who is at the receiving end, is so often in a position of dependence, which he is loathe to give up for fear of losing the much needed resources.[18]

After Bangkok, the partnership idea had little meaning because, despite all the theoretical efforts toward a relationship of equals, domination by churches in the North and dependency of churches in the South continued in practice. There has been no real development of the idea of partnership in mission since Bangkok. At Melbourne (1980), partnership was discussed in terms of Jesus Christ's movement toward the periphery and the centrality of the poor in the reign of God and the *missio dei*. But at the same time, it was admitted that churches had not gone very far in the ecumenical sharing of resources. San Antonio (1989) voiced the same frustration, that "many excellent ideas have been expressed, but not a great deal has happened."[19] At the most recent CWME conference in San Salvador (1996), partnership in mission was not on the agenda at all, not because all the issues had been resolved, but because there was little chance of any progress being made. The fragmentation of mission structures and a declining commitment to unity and common witness meant that the discussion of partnership within the WCC had no way of moving forward.

Many have suggested that the problem with partnership is a problem of language. In the 1970s "mutuality in mission" began to be used in some English-speaking churches (including the Presbyterian Church) because it had less patronizing connotations. Partners are not necessarily equals, but mutuality suggested an understanding of give-and-take, a two-way traffic, and it was seen to be a term more respectful of the other. The term *mutuality* involves (1) dialogue (i.e., mission does not always mean what the more powerful party expects); (2) the centrality of

social justice; (3) reverse mission and thus mutual witness; (4) consciousness-raising and education for both sides, according to the ideas of Paolo Friere; and (5) joint action for change.[20] Others have proposed that we should speak of *accompaniment* rather than partnership. This term has been popular in Roman Catholic circles. It conveys the image of churches walking together, side by side, not one leading and another following; of churches supporting and encouraging one another; of churches sharing experience and practicing mutual respect.[21] The term *complementarity* has also been suggested instead of partnership, emphasizing different functions and the variety of gifts that churches share as they give and receive in mission.[22]

All of these terms have their uses, but the problem is not really about language, except in the sense that our language both reveals and masks a deeper reality. The term *partnership* has indeed been used too easily and uncritically, especially among churches and mission executives in the Northern Hemisphere. As Andrew Kirk observed, partnership has become a fashionable idea because it has a positive and reassuring ring about it. But this does not mean it is being practiced. Huibert van Beek has urged caution in the use of the term, because partnership is always "incomplete and tentative" and at its best, "it remains something to be constructed." Nothing can be taken for granted in partnership.[23] The use of the term may make churches in the North feel that they are in collaborative and reciprocal relationships in mission, but it can also hide the stubborn reality of inequality, dependency, domination, and the sense that "we" are in control of the *missio dei.*

This has not been easy for churches in the North to accept, because partnership in mission is in part related to their uneasy conscience about their missionary past.[24] It should be recalled that the term *partnership* was borrowed from the business world. Later, *partnership* was used to describe the relationship of former British colonies to the postcolonial motherland and became a way of glossing over the problems that had been brought on by colonialism. Similarly, partnership in mission, which emerged in the 1920s as a challenge to Euro-American domination, became an idea that churches in the North could wrestle with in the world of ideas without surrendering positions of power in practice. Churches in the South could sometimes exploit this discussion for their own benefit, while parachurch agencies could use the language of partnership to describe anything and everything that they were doing.

Today, partnership in mission may in some sense be seen as a liberal theological counterpart to Western liberal democracy. This is the view of Thai theologian Koson Srisang, who argues that the theory of

partnership covers up vast inequalities of wealth and power with high-sounding rhetoric.

> The theory (of partnership) was uplifting, even inspiring, but the facts proved otherwise . . . The actual reality in the world was one of domination and inequality. Those who controlled wealth and power had taken the upper hand . . . there could be no real partnership, let alone mutuality of relationships. The result was that the ethic of equality became hollow, not substantiated by reality. For example, leaders of churches in the third world who were not quite capable were lifted up as though they were equal and expected to do more than they were actually capable of. On the other hand, representatives of mother churches tried to "stoop down" to the level of some of these third world leaders. Neither approach was authentic.

Srisang endorsed the concept of "incarnational solidarity" to describe a more authentic way of looking at relationships among churches than partnership. Solidarity meant a willingness to "share the cup of suffering with the poor and oppressed," a stance which has both personal and structural dimensions. According to Srisang, relationships of solidarity lead to "true friendship based on mutual respect and care for the other."[25]

And so we come full circle. Friendship is what V. S. Azariah had been talking about at Edinburgh in 1910. Friendship then and now describes a relationship in which love does not insist on its own way. Friendship is what the China Christian Council has said it wanted in relationship with churches overseas. Friendship between churches and Christian communities has been spoken of as partnership by many churches. We need to give more attention to the reality behind the words and look for concrete ways of moving toward more faithful and just relationships in mission.

Beyond Partnership to
Solidarity and Friendship

There are many ways of being partners, and not all of them involve friendship. One can be a business partner, a junior or a senior partner in a firm, or even a partner in crime, and none of these mean what we are speaking of by partnership in mission. The word *partner* or its cognate appears nineteen times in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.[26] In Proverbs, people are warned against being

partners with a thug or a thief (Prov. 28:24; 29:24). Paul tells the Corinthians that there can be no partnership between the faithful and idol worshipers (1 Cor. 10:17, 20) or between righteousness and lawlessness (2 Cor. 6:14). The Greek words usually translated as "partner" (or co-worker) are *koinonos* and *synkoinonos,* which have the same root as the term *koinonia.* In the New International Version of the Bible, *koinonia* is translated as "partnership." The term *koinonia* suggests the way in which partnership can be reinterpreted as solidarity and friendship today. *Koinonia* describes both the relationship of Christ with his disciples and their relationship with one another.

In the Letter of Paul to Philemon, Paul speaks of his friendship and affection for the escaped slave Onesimus, with whom he shared a prison cell. He writes that Onesimus should be received "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother" (16). He urges his friend Philemon, "So if you would consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account" (17). Onesimus is still a slave in the eyes of the state, and his relationship with Philemon is unequal, but Paul is urging a transformed understanding of how Christians should relate to one another. The relationship Paul describes is more than one of partnership; it is what we would call solidarity in friendship.

Solidarity, as Srisang reminds us, means "sharing the cup of suffering with the poor and oppressed." This is also how the author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes partnership, where the followers of Christ are described as "sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated" (Heb. 10:33). "Being partners with those so treated" is solidarity with the marginalized, the poor, and the oppressed, and it suggests part of what is needed for a contextual reinterpretation of the term *partnership.*

This understanding of partnership as solidarity is further suggested by Walter Brueggemann's interpretation of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh in the Old Testament. Brueggemann speaks of all the parties in any way connected with Yahweh (Israel, the human person, the nations, creation) as "Yahweh's partners." He uses the term *partner* in a neutral way, but his point throughout is that all of Israel's testimony is about the relationship that Israel has with Yahweh. Yahweh is described as self-givingly engaged with Yahweh's partner Israel. Israel is not permitted to see itself as autonomous or separate from Yahweh. Israel can address Yahweh in despair and powerlessness, and Yahweh always responds. Within the relationship, which is never completely broken, Yahweh continues to make all things new. For Brueggemann,

the relationship of Yahweh and Yahweh's partners, particularly Israel, reveals the limitless generosity that is at the root of reality and the continual renewal of hope despite the brokenness of our world.[27] Yahweh's relationship with Israel, and indeed with all of "Yahweh's partners," suggests the kind of relationship that the partners should have with one another, relationships characterized by generosity, and by justice, courtesy, and love.[28] Generosity, in other words, means relationships of sharing, solidarity, and friendship.

The sharing of oneself and the sharing of resources is an important aspect of the biblical understanding of relationships within the human community. Both the year of Jubliee (Lev. 25) and the covenant (Lev. 26:9–13) link sharing with social justice. New Testament models of sharing include Jesus' feeding of the multitudes (John 6:1–14); Jesus' sharing his own life for others (Mark 10:45); the primitive socialism of the early church (Acts 2:43–47); and the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8—9). There has been a wealth of recent studies on the biblical understanding of sharing,[29] and there is no need to enter further into that discussion here. Partnership reinterpreted as solidarity in friendship involves a recovery of this concept of sharing that is central to the biblical witness. Another way of saying this is that sharing in solidarity is an expression of the justice, courtesy, and love that partners (*synkoinonoi*) have for one another.

The church itself is a community of sharing.[30] The best biblical term to describe this understanding of church is *koinonia,* a term which has been central to the Christian conception of the nature of the church since its inception.[31] Sharing is implied in the concept of *koinonia,* and it is related in Greek to terms for household, economy, and the world. *Koinonia* is not a concept of agency or efficiency, but a term that describes what the church is as an expression of the indivisible common life we share in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9; 12:13; Eph. 4:4–5). *Koinonia* means (literally) "taking part together" in a community of love that shares a common meal (the Eucharist) and a common rite of initiation (baptism) for a common purpose (mission).[32] *Koinonia* is itself sharing in community.

Koinonia is embodied in different ways in different contexts. The relationship among these contexts is not hierarchical but intercontextual and characterized by solidarity and friendship. *Solidarity* in this sense describes the shape of an ecumenicity in which the *koinoniae* are committed to one another in the sharing of gifts, material resources, and the cup of suffering. Sharing is not a concession to politics or economics but an expression of the very nature of the New Testament understanding of the church. Being the church commits us

to one another in the struggle for justice, and so mission and unity belong together.[33] In this way, mission becomes a global movement for the fulfillment of God's reign (partnership with Yahweh), and the churches as we know them are the by-products of this mission (the *missio dei*) in the world.

All this sounds very good, you may say. But the missionary in me continues to ask, what does it really mean in practice? Are we not again using new words to describe a reality of inequality? Can a discussion of partnership as solidarity in friendship move us any further along in embodying the idea of authentic partnership in mission? Or do we not find ourselves stumbling once again on the level of action and implementation? Partnership as we know it is almost always among unequals,[34] but a commitment to partnership still requires some movement in the direction of reducing inequality and power sharing in mission initiatives and decision making.

The one ecumenical gathering that squarely faced the question of inequality in the sharing of resources was the El Escorial World Consultation in Spain on "Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community," in 1987.[35] El Escorial was not a mission conference but a development conference organized by the WCC Programme on the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources. The culmination of a ten-year discussion of resource sharing introduced at the Nairobi Assembly (1975), it introduced a conceptual framework for new ecumenical relationships that would free churches from patterns of dependency and paternalism. The questions raised in El Escorial about world development could easily be applied to mission, but then as now these two categories have tended to be kept separate in the world Christian movement. El Escorial affirmed that the resources to be shared are not only material wealth but also theological and spiritual contributions that come from all cultures. In this way, the mission dimension was always implicit. But El Escorial went further than earlier and later conferences in highlighting the importance of structures and disciplines for the common life of our churches.

In his opening address to the conference, WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser expressed his own frustration in the history of discussions about partnership and sharing.

> The challenge to reflect critically on the conditions of ecumenical partnership [in light of the moratorium debate of the seventies] was not taken up by the churches.
>
> Everything that needs to be said has in fact long since been said. We do not need new statements of principle. Our theology is

right, at least in theory. Why, then, have all these good and forceful statements produced so few results?

Is "ecumenical sharing" then simply another word for the much-demanded, but little practiced ecumenical solidarity in the struggle for justice, especially in the conflict between rich and poor? Could it be that precisely by attempting to make "sharing" into an all-encompassing tool for interpretation, we have blunted the cutting edge of the challenge to the churches?

He goes on to identify the reason for this frustration: Churches are trapped by the conflict between power and powerlessness, and this conflict represents a spiritual challenge to the churches, challenging them to go "beyond the articulation of political strategies to change systems and structures."[36] Churches need to confront this spiritual challenge, but they must also make a more sober use of the language of sharing. High-sounding statements are no longer useful. Instead, Raiser calls for a more practical commitment to sharing among churches by suggesting the need for "a few basic rules designating the points at which the special quality of the relations between churches is being infringed." Such rules would be analogous to the Old Testament covenant order and would be principally concerned with the exchange of material resources. In sharing, the priority still lies in the meeting between peoples who share their own experiences and spiritual testimonies, but the impetus for material sharing grows out of such encounters.[37]

El Escorial produced a series of "Guidelines for Sharing" that were approved at the consultation and have since been used and/or adapted by churches all over the world. These guidelines are a step in the direction of solidarity, but they by no means provide a solution or suggest a perfect system. El Escorial has not been taken seriously enough by mission agencies and churches in North America. This is in part because of the separation between mission and development spoken of above, but it is also because the El Escorial recommendations and rules present fundamental challenges to existing structures and patterns of sharing. The guidelines are now almost fifteen years old and are in need of revision. Still, they deserve to be studied in our discussions of partnership and solidarity, and for this purpose, the thirteen basic commitments are reproduced in Appendix I of this paper.

Solidarity in friendship is not simply a new way of speaking about partnership in mission. It has a structural dimension for which a renewed commitment to the gospel message and new disciplines of thought and action are required. This was clear after El Escorial. And yet, solidarity, partnership with Yahweh, and a *koinonia* of sharing are

not ultimately about rules and guidelines. They are about people responding to the *missio dei*. Rules and guidelines may help us move in the right direction, but to go further, we need to consider some examples of new structures and discover how the encounter of peoples can lead to transforming structures of mission.

Transforming Structures of Mission

I am using "transforming structures" in the two deliberately ambiguous ways that David Bosch speaks of in *Transforming Mission*.[38] The word *transforming* can be an adjective describing structures of mission, in which case the structures of mission are doing the transforming. But *transforming* can also be a participle, meaning "the activity of transforming." In this case, it is the structures of mission themselves that need to be transformed. The meaning of the phrase is deliberately ambiguous, but commitment to changing and challenging existing structures of mission is very clear.

For those writing out of the Reformed tradition (*semper reformanda*), church and mission structures always need to be transformed so that they can more fully participate in the transformation of the world in light of the coming of the reign of God. There have been any number of structural changes in church and mission organizations over the last several decades, but for the most part these have been a result of economic necessity rather than conscious decisions to change structures so that they could be more fully a part of the *missio dei*. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is going through a painful process of structural adjustment (another ambiguous term) even as I write. The question that we need to ask is whether such downsizing might not also encourage efforts to rethink transforming structures of mission in response to God's word for us in these times.

There are examples of transforming structures of mission in the Protestant world that have had a significant impact on partnership, solidarity, and friendship in mission. Some WCC programs, such as the ecumenical sharing of personnel in the 1970s, tried to provide a framework for structural transformation. Some of the restructuring of churches in the South and the North have involved creative responses in the direction of solidarity and *koinonia*.[39] Even when economic necessity becomes the primary driving force for restructuring, it can create possibilities for solidarity in mission relationships, providing

that such change involves genuine dialogue with partner churches and ecumenical agencies. We are not our own in the choices we make. For Reformed churches especially, the ways in which we organize or reorganize ourselves for mission reflects our basic theological convictions.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is one of the churches from the South that has acted most creatively and decisively in the area of structural change in relationships. In 1974 it adopted a moratorium on the receiving of overseas missionary personnel and funding. Structural change in the direction of relationships in solidarity across national boundaries often requires painful choices for the sake of the gospel. The decision of the UCCP did not bring an end to international relationships in mission, and in time the church modified its position in response to new challenges and new problems. In 1989 the church adopted guidelines for international partnership in mission. These guidelines provide a clear and concrete perspective on the importance of relationships of justice and solidarity in mission from the perspective of a church in the South. One section of this has been included in Appendix II, and it deserves our careful consideration.

The Amity Foundation in China is another example of structural transformation for mission partnership. As China entered into a stage of opening and reform in the late 1970s and 1980s, religious life was resumed, and the churches were reorganized. Many churches from Europe and North America were anxious to renew their relationships with the Church in China, and churches in Asia were hopeful to enter into new patterns of sharing and relationships. Chinese church leaders wanted to reaffirm their identity as a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating church, and at the same time reach out to other churches and learn from their experience. The establishment of the China Christian Council in 1980 became a means to develop international church-to-church relationships on a firm institutional footing. The Amity Foundation was initiated by Chinese Christian leaders in 1985 as a way of developing international ecumenical relationships for the sharing of material and personnel resources. Its founding General Secretary Dr. Wenzao Han liked to say that Amity was an expression of the Three-Self principle in a new era. Through Amity, Chinese Christians were able to enter into relationships with international church and mission organizations and ensure that resources would be shared that fit Chinese needs and priorities. Relationships of solidarity were established that maintained the integrity and hard-won independence of the Chinese Church. Amity is not the church, but Amity showed that a poor and weak Christian community could establish principled

relationships of solidarity with churches in the North and the South and in the process contribute to mission and development in China and the ecumenical sharing of resources.[40]

In the North, the best examples of transforming structures of mission are the three European-based communities of churches in mission: the French Community of Churches in Mission (Cevaa), a multi-confessional Protestant mission agency that came into being in 1971; the Council for World Mission (CWM), begun in 1977 out of the old London Missionary Society and the Congregational Council for World Mission; and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), created out of the German-based United Evangelical Mission (VEM).[41] Each of these communities of churches in mission is based on relationships between and among British, German, and French churches with their former "partner" churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. Cevaa, CWM, and UEM are networks of churches that meet around a common table to make decisions about mission priorities, funding, and personnel. The European churches and mission organizations have given up control of their funds. Policy is not dictated by the Europeans, and real decision making about funding and personnel is shared among all the partners. This has meant the devolution of power of the churches of the North, and thus the internationalization of decision making in mission, something that embodies the spirit of the decisions made at El Escorial. The churches in Cevaa, CWM, and UEM would be the first to admit that their new relationships of solidarity in friendship have their own problems, both old and new. Transforming structures of mission does not resolve all of the problems of power sharing, but it does carry the movement forward.

The evaluation of CWM in the *International Review of Mission* illustrates what one organization has achieved in terms of real partnerships and solidarity:

> There is no doubt that CWM has achieved a significant shift from a missionary organization characterized by donor-recipient relationships to a partnership in mission among its member churches. There is a real sharing of power; representatives of each church participate in decisions concerning the use of financial resources. Each member church contributes—as it is able—to the finances of the council. Each member church shares other gifts and riches, in terms of stories, experiences, theological insights, human resources and spirituality. There is a sharing in mission by all churches. It is recognized that mission is the responsibility and right of all churches, because all participate in the body of Christ. There is recognition that the primary locus of mission is the local congregation.[42]

Similar evaluations could be made of the experiences of Cevaa and UEM.

On a much smaller scale, the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) also represents a networked approach to mission relationships. Twelve churches from the Caribbean and North America (including the Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]) participate in this association, whose mission is "to bear common witness, to challenge and empower one another for creative involvement in mission." CANACOM is a hopeful embodiment of a new approach to mission relationships that needs to be studied and possibly developed in other regions.

The communities of churches in mission, CANACOM, the UCCP, and the Amity Foundation in China are not models for churches in other situations. They have emerged from particular histories, and the relationships among churches and mission agencies are all part of those histories. Each represents an approach to transforming structures of mission in which the context of mission is taken very seriously. For this reason, they also take the structural dimension of mission relationships very seriously. Structures involve considerations of power in the relationship, and solidarity in friendship means that more powerful partners cannot be allowed to impose themselves on other contexts. Transforming structures of mission are embedded in particular historical and cultural situations where power is shared. The experiences of the organizations introduced here can be read as parables of faithfulness in one context that can be fruitfully shared and studied in other situations.

Transforming structures of mission requires genuine dialogue among all parties in the relationship—dialogue about mission and dialogue about power. Relationships within the *koinonia* are based upon dialogue, the free give-and-take of ideas that allows for a meeting of people on equal footing. In dialogue, partnership cannot mean whatever one side wants it to mean. Some American church leaders today speak of "donor-driven" mission, but there is no donor-driven mission in the Bible. "Donor-driven" mission is mission initiated by those with more resources. It is mission in monologue, not mission in dialogue. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of "donor-driven" mission partnerships. Dialogue means that mission activity is not dictated by the party with the greater material resources, no matter how well-meaning or persuasive his or her proposal may be.

Beyond dialogue, relationships of solidarity in friendship involve what Jamaican theologian Maitland Evans has called "co-praxis," a radical kind of partnership in which people work together despite

inequalities and potentially disruptive differences, because of their common commitment to unity with one another in Jesus Christ.[43] Questions of power are brought to the table in dialogue and co-praxis, but differences and inequality do not mean that churches cannot work together. Co-praxis helps to make transforming structures of mission possible by making small, tentative, and experimental steps in the direction of God's reign. Personal encounters are essential for co-praxis. The sharing of experiences in such encounters becomes a motivating force for authentic partnerships and serves as an inspiration for mission.

Dialogue and co-praxis underscore the importance of intercontextuality in transforming structures of mission. A strong aspect of the communities of churches in mission is their networked character. Through such networks, churches participate in the *missio dei* in relationship to one another. CWM, UEM, Cevaa, Amity, and the UCCP all operate with relatively small national (or international) staffs, and instead rely on local, regional, or national decision making. Networks are typical of new organizational patterns in NGOs all over the world, and they make good use of computer-based communications technology to stay in touch with one another.[44] But the adept use of technology is not enough. The communities must also stay in touch with one another through exchange visits and regular meetings. The more we use electronic communication, the more we need face-to-face contact to keep the communication real.[45] Networked organizations offer an alternative to both the centralized decision making of an earlier generation of ecumenical organizations on the one hand, and bilateral church-to-church relationships of most Protestant churches and denominations on the other. The former tend to become bureaucratic and thereby inhibit the development of personal relationships in mission; the latter inevitably give the stronger partner the louder voice. Networks may be a structural way of understanding the ecumenical principle of "all in each place" (New Delhi) in the present age.

Shortly before he left his work with the CWME, Christopher Duraisingh wrote that "the spirit of the free market seems to have overcome and destroyed the spirit of unity and common witness among the churches."[46] This may be even more true of our situation today. The spirit of the free market results in an entrepreneurial approach to mission in which everything goes. Rules (such as those from El Escorial), principles (such as partnership or solidarity in friendship), and discussions of power relationships do not matter. The ends justify the means. There are more North American missionaries in the world today than there have ever been, but most of them pursue some version of a "free-market" approach to mission without

partnership. They may sometimes use the rhetoric of partnership, but their approach lacks serious engagement around questions of power and control in the missionary relationship. There are partnerships in the world of international business and finance that do the same thing in the name of the free market.

Today, many North American mainline churches are seeking to engage those in their constituency around the issues of mission and partnership. This is an important effort to present a vision of mission relationships that is consistent with what I have been arguing for on the foregoing pages, and it represents an attempt to reclaim our heritage in ecumenical mission and relationships. At the same time, there is the temptation in such encounters to respond positively to initiatives of congregations and parachurch agencies that have never accepted the partnership idea in an effort to win back adherents or attract new resources for mission. This temptation must be avoided, for it would represent a paradigm shift backward.

In the name of authentic partnership or solidarity in friendship, it is necessary to stand behind our affirmations about how we relate to others in mission. Yet it may also be necessary to resist inappropriate or oppressive relationships in mission, with a willingness to say no to certain initiatives. At a mission roundtable organized by the Council for World Mission and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in November 1999, the final statement included a listing of mission approaches that are affirmed and those that are rejected. Approaches to mission that are affirmed are consistent with the mission practices and policies that have developed in the ecumenical movement over the last fifty years. The approaches that are rejected bear repeating here, because not many mission statements include such a list. In the CCA/CWM statement, approaches to mission that are rejected include the following:

1. Missions aimed primarily at increasing numbers and the power of the church;
2. Missions that rely on an alliance between churches and political power;
3. Missions that collude with economic powers that impoverish peoples' lives;
4. Missions that make peoples who respond to the message into an exclusive and alienated people within their larger religious community;
5. Missions that target particular groups and use unethical practices for conversions;
6. Missions that ignore the well-being of the total community;

7. Missions that alienate peoples from their cultures and religions, and thus isolate the transforming power of the gospel from the context into which it is brought;
8. Missions that ignore or deny the presence and activity of God among all people;
9. Missions that refuse to recognize the witness given by people to their life in God before their contact with the message of the gospel;
10. Missions that concentrate on the individuals over against their community;
11. Missions that refuse to admit the power of the gospel to address and transform oppressive structures and practices;
12. Missions that refuse cooperation and dialogue with other religious traditions.[47]

To each of these points, we could append a detailed commentary. We could also identify examples of each point among mission programs of North American churches and parachurch agencies, and no doubt from churches in all other parts of the world as well. It is not enough for churches simply to ignore the problematic aspects of mission among their constituency and say positive and uplifting things. Transforming structures of mission means that it is important to stand up for what the church believes about partnership and solidarity in friendship and to name those patterns of mission that oppress and dehumanize. In following the mission of Jesus, ours is a costly discipleship. The cost for a particular church or mission program that says no may be high, but solidarity in friendship demands commitment to justice in mission regardless of the cost.

Conclusion

Thirty years ago, in his speech at the Bangkok Assembly of the CWME, Philip Potter concluded his report with these words:

When we compare the context in which our mission takes place and our actual practice of mission and evangelism, we may be tempted to despair. But God's saving act in Christ liberates us from our fears, and enables us to be free to experiment, to be mobile and contextual in our approaches, to sustain each other in love and prayer, and to leave the issue in his hands.[48]

As we continue to sustain one another in love and prayer, we too must leave the issue in God's hands, firm in our belief that we are not

our own in partnership, solidarity, and friendship in transforming structures of mission. But we will have to continue to struggle with what forms of experimentation and mobility are appropriate.

And so, we inevitably return to our contexts. We are entering a time of new national assertiveness in the United States, which is leading to a new missionary assertiveness as well. Last year, a student interested in mission service told me that the new American involvement in Afghanistan means that God is opening up new opportunities for Christian witness in that country! Similarly, Lesslie Newbigin once recalled that when India invaded Bangladesh in 1982, some in the Church of South India wanted to send missionaries into the country, whether they were wanted there or not.[49] Today, there are those in Christian circles who are urging the American government to give more attention to safeguarding the interests of Christian missionaries in "sensitive" parts of the globe.[50] They see Christian mission as following military and political power. Unfortunately, mission has often followed power in the last two centuries. A renewed North American missionary assertiveness suggests a return to this power-centered approach to mission. We must ask ourselves: What is the future of Christian mission in light of the war in Iraq? And what will such Christian mission mean for our Muslim neighbors?

Clearly, the Bible teaches that there can be no power-centered approach to partnership, solidarity, or friendship. Jesus and the early Christian movement never followed power; they contested power. In a recent address, D. Preman Niles, former General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, described mission as contestation. He asked,

> How would it then be if we speak of the challenge for mission today as resisting the powers and structures that deny abundant life to the people and as removing the barriers and hindrances that prevent the offer of abundant life reaching the people? In brief, may we speak of mission as contestation?

As we move from partnership to solidarity in friendship, and as we in the North consider the possibility of transforming structures of mission in an age of downsizing, churches can also speak of mission as contestation. In so doing, we can explore new occasions for creativity.

In North America we need to discover that there is an *apophatic* dimension of mission, a *via negativa* of witness, alongside the more activist approach that has dominated the American missionary enterprise for the past two centuries. *Via negativa* and *apophatic* are terms borrowed from Christian spirituality. They are not "negative" terms, but they do suggest something quite different from missionary assertiveness. A *via negativa* of witness and an *apophatic* mission

describes an approach that begins with listening to God and opening ourselves up to an understanding of the *missio dei* in which we are receivers before we are givers.

This is what I call a kenosis missiology, *missio dei* in a receptive mode, mission in which emptying and empowerment, negation and affirmation, belong together.[51] For churches in the North and the West, mission sometimes means decreasing self-assertion for the sake of the gospel. This inevitably has a structural dimension, as was implied in the 1970s and 1980s when mission sharing was described as laying our gifts on a common altar and embracing one another with "empty hands." Our hands had to become empty before we could talk with partner churches about specific programs and policies. The structures for how we would do things became part of the discussion.

In our new century, a kenosis missiology does not mean that North American churches should in any way decrease their commitment to international mission. On the contrary, we must increase our commitment to global mission and to relationships with churches around the world. This will help our churches become less self-centered and more Christ-centered. To be Christ-centered means to be people-centered and thus relational. And to be more relational, especially in the present international situation, we, churches in North America, will have to position ourselves in more of a listening and receptive mode. In turn, this will allow us to be more responsive to the *missio dei* today as we participate in transforming structures of mission for tomorrow.

Guidelines for Sharing WCC World Consultation on Koinonia, El Escorial, 1987

We commit ourselves:

1. To a fundamentally new value system based on justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It will be a system that recognizes the rich resources of human communities, their cultural and spiritual contributions, and the wealth of nature. It will be radically different from the value system on which the present economic and political orders are based and which lies behind the current crises like those of nuclear threat and industrial pollution.

2. To a new understanding of sharing in which those who have been marginalized by reason of sex, age, economic and political condition, ethnic origin and disability, and those who are homeless refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants take their place at the center of all decisions and actions as equal partners.
   This means that:
   • churches, councils, and networks will establish for this purpose ecumenical mechanisms both nationally and regionally;
   • equitable representation will be provided for women and youth in decision-making structures.

3. To identify with the poor and oppressed and their organized movements in the struggle for justice and human dignity in church and society. This in turn will imply the refusal to participate, either as giver or receiver, in ways of sharing that undermine this struggle.

4. To bear witness to the mission of God by identifying, exposing and confronting at all levels the root causes, and the structures, of injustice which lead to the exploitation of the wealth and people of the third world and result in poverty and the destruction of creation. This entails working for a new economic and political order.

   This would mean, for example, that the churches of the North and South commit themselves to strengthen and participate in the various anti-nuclear movements and to bring pressure upon their governments to stop nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste. It would also mean joining with the people in their struggle against transnational corporations, militarism and foreign intervention and occupation.

5. To enable people to organize themselves and realize their potential and power as individuals and communities, working towards the kind of

self-reliance and self-determination, which are an essential condition of interdependence.

6. To be open to one another as friends on the basis of common commitment, mutual trust, confession and forgiveness, keeping one another informed of all plans and programs and submitting ourselves to mutual accountability and correction.

   This implies, for example, the implementation of mutual accountability and participation in decision-making between the South and the North.

7. To represent to one another our needs and problems in relationships where there are no absolute donors, or absolute recipients, but all have needs to be met and gifts to give, and to work for the structural changes in the institutions of the North and the South which this calls for.

8. To promote through words and deeds the holistic mission of the church in obedience to God's liberating will. We are convinced that in responding only to certain parts of the mission we distort and disrupt mission as a whole.

9. To participate in the struggles of people for justice, and thereby overcome all barriers between different faiths and ideologies which today divide the human family.

   This means, for example, churches in East and West making use of all opportunities to strengthen the process of détente and integrating the resources freed by this process for ecumenical sharing.

10. To resist international mechanisms (such as the International Monetary Fund/World Bank) which deprive the people of the South of their resources—transferring for example their hard-earned capital, which is more than the aid they receive, in payment for foreign debt, thereby putting them in a state of perpetual dependence—contributing instead to a fundamental and just redistribution of the wealth and resources of a country including the wealth of its churches.

11. To devise ways of shifting the power to set priorities and terms for the use of resources to those who are wrongfully denied both the resources and the power, such as movements for social justice.

   This would imply that participation of the South in the decision-making must not only be on a consultative basis as it is practiced today.

12. To facilitate and encourage mutual involvement among the churches and people in the South who have common concerns, for example through the sharing of human resources.

13. To promote and strengthen ecumenical sharing at all levels, national, regional, and international.

From Huibert van Beek, ed., *Sharing Life: Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community (El Escorial, Spain, 24–31 October, 1987)* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 28–30.

Basic Principals: A Synthesis Taken from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines Document "Partnership in Mission"

1. The use of the term *partnership* is an attempt by the UCCP to find a new definition of global human relationships.
2. *Partnership* is a covenant relationship entered into by two or more churches sharing common concerns, interests and perspectives based on a mutual recognition and understanding of a common missiological task.
3. *Partnership* implies a reordering of relationships so that historical experiences are transformed into new images of wholeness, mutuality, interdependence and unity among covenanting communities.
4. *Partnership* begins with a common vision of a global community and recognition of a God who breaks into the world through the lives and struggles of peoples wanting to free themselves from all forms of human bondage and injustice.
5. *Partnership* demands broader analysis that leads to shared understanding and perception of the personal and social roots of injustice. This allows for the naming of the powers and structures that perpetuate economic injustice and deny basic human rights.
6. *Partnership* demands a confession of and repentance from personal and ecclesial complicity with the powers of injustice. It implies a confrontation of those principalities and structures that hold back the full reign of God.
7. *Partnership* calls for the sharing of resources and faith-heightened life experiences where partners minister to one another, listen to one another, critique one another, and trust one another.
8. *Partnership* underscores equality in the relationship among churches where no church dominates another because of affluence, nor becomes arrogant because of experience.
9. *Partnership* is based on mutual trust and the recognition of and respect for each other's identity. It takes into consideration the indigenous cultural characteristics of the partner country and its people as well as certain structural limitations that may impede the growth of partnership relations.

10 The *partnership* recognizes mutual autonomy in which partners respect given polity and structures, programme thrusts and priorities, and the implications these bear towards a contextual praxis of the common vision.

11. The *partnership* recognizes that the emergence of people's movements can be signs of a new spirituality active and oriented to the coming of God's reign of justice, righteousness and freedom. This recognition must evolve from experiences of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

12. The *partnership* should provide opportunities for people to tell their stories of suffering and hope in the context of struggle. It should create a network of committed Christians, linked together by a shared commitment for the evolution of new ministries within the cultural ethos of the poor.

13. The *partnership* should give adequate attention to the various aspects and dimensions of God's mission. It must seek to promote evangelism and church growth by authentically involving itself in the development of new and creative programs as well as in the development of the necessary skills. It must also seek to promote the process of humanization through its genuine participation in appropriate livelihood and development programmes.

From *IRM* 86 (July 1997): 339–340.

Study Questions

Introduction

1. Why do you think partnership in mission is still being discussed in the twenty-first-century church? Of the three reasons given in this paper, which one resonates most with you?
2. What radical demands does partnership make on the church in mission? What witness can you give to how the church of Jesus Christ often falls short of these demands?

Partnership in Mission: A Historical Perspective from Jerusalem (1928) to San Salvador (1996)

1. In what ways have you experienced friendship in your cross-cultural mission relationships? Would it be fair to describe those friendships as authentic and faithful?
2. What fresh perspective does the term *obedience* bring to your understanding of partnership?
3. How would you respond now, thirty years later, to Philip Potter's words to the Bangkok Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism? (See p. 9.)
4. In what ways have you seen impossibly high or unusually low expectations placed on leaders in the global church? (See p. 11.)

Beyond Partnership to Solidarity and Friendship

1. Read and meditate on the lesson described in Philem. 1:8–21. How does Paul share the cup of suffering with Philemon? with Onesimus?
2. Is sharing the cup of suffering different from relieving suffering? If so, how would you describe the difference?
3. In your mission relationships, when have you experienced gospel sharing—*koinonia*—the very expression of the nature of the New Testament church?
4. Read the El Escorial Guidelines for sharing in Appendix I. Which one strikes you as the most practical? Which is the most challenging?

Transforming Structures of Mission

1. Of those presented, which example of transforming structures of mission in the Protestant world most holds your interest? Why?
2. What do you think of the phrase "mission-in-monologue"? Do you see this type of mission being practiced in the church? If so, where?
3. Why are personal encounters—the basic element of co-praxis and dialogue—so critical for carrying out God's mission in true partnership?
4. Do you agree that certain approaches to mission must be rejected in the interest of the gospel? Do you agree that the twelve approaches named by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) merit this rejection?

Conclusion

1. How do you respond to D. Preman Niles's question: "May we speak of mission as contestation?"
2. Reflect on the idea of kenosis missiology, or participating in God's mission in a receptive mode first and foremost. How might Christians in the West/North decrease their self-assertion for the sake of the gospel and its worldwide growth?
3. How do you think the war in Iraq affects the future of Christian mission?

Notes

1. Many mission journals have focused on the partnership theme in recent years to add to this literature. The *International Review of Mission (IRM)* dedicated a whole issue to "International Relationships in Mission." See *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 203–340. Also see the five essays published under the title "Creative Partnerships in Mission" in *Missiology*, 29:1 (January 2001): 2–82; the issue devoted to "Partnership" in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 37:3 (July 2001): 294–366; the first three essays in "Missions and Money," in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 38:1 (January 2002): 16–45; and "Church–Agency Partnerships," *Mission Frontiers*, 24:1 (January–February 2002): 6–11.

2. J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 184. Chapter 10 of this book (pp. 184–204) provides a good survey of the theological issues involved in mission partnerships.

3. For an example of North American short-term mission programs, see *Into All the World: The 2001 Great Commission Handbook,* edited by Bill Berry and published in Pasadena, California. There are literally hundreds of Web sites dealing with such locally based mission relationships.

4. See copyright page for order information.

5. William W. Rogers, "Partnership, Mutuality and Incarnational Solidarity: Towards a Definition of Certain Key Words in the Discussion of the Global Mission of the Church," (unpublished paper prepared for the Binational Service Council of the PC(USA), June 15, 1989).

6. Andrew Williams, "What Do We Mean When We Speak of 'Partnership'?" *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies* 24 (March 2001): 15.

7. I am indebted to Dr. Feliciano Carino, former General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, for this observation. He made the point in response to a PC(USA) questionnaire in 2001 about partnership. Also see Feliciano Carino, "Partnership in Obedience," *IRM* (July 1978): 320.

8. See Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

9. See Joshua Green, "God's Foreign Policy," *The Washington Monthly* (November 2001): 26–33.

10. Representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the China Christian Council (CCC) endorsed an agreement on partnership in 2000, and the CCC has approved similar agreements with other overseas church bodies.

11. V. S. Azariah, "The Problem of Co-operation Between Foreign and Native Workers," ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 330.

12. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 180.

13. As quoted in John Brown, "International Relationships in Mission: A Study Project," *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 212.

14. See *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 213, and Tambaram report.

15. C. W. Ranson, ed., *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World* (London: Edinburgh House, 1948), 173.

16. *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 214.

17. *An Advisory Study: A Working Paper for Study* (New York: United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, September 1961).

18. Philip Potter, "Christ's Mission and Ours in Today's World" (Director's Report Appendix B), *Bangkok Assembly: 1973* (Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 31, 1972, and January 9–12, 1973), 62.

19. As quoted in *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 223, and San Antonio report.

20. Rogers, "Partnership, Mutuality and Incarnational Solidarity," p. 16.

21. Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 126.

22. Charles Klagba, "Complementary Mission," *Communities of Churches in Mission: A Joint Consultation of Cevaa, Council for World Mission and UEM* (February 1–5, 2000): 55–56.

23. Huibert van Beek, "New Relationships in Mission—A Critical Evaluation," *IRM* 81, no. 323 (1992): 428.

24. See Lamin Sanneh, "Partnership, Mission and Cross-Cultural Sensitivities: Old Patterns, New Changes and Fresh Priorities," ed. Paul Varo Martinson, *Mission at the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Vision for the Church* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1999), 72–77.

25. Koson Srisang, "Issues of Mutuality and Partnership in Mission: A Thai Perspective," in Rogers, "Partnership, Mutuality and Incarnational Solidarity," 34–36.

26. In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV), the word *partner* is used in different ways. For example, woman is described as the partner for a man in Gen. 2:18, 20; Prov. 2:17; and 1 Cor. 7:14. Closer to the meaning discussed in the following paragraph is Paul's use of the term to refer to Titus, his partner and co-worker (2 Cor. 8:23). Here, the meaning is similar to that of being a (business) partner, but also a friend or traveling companion (cf. Sir. 41:18; 42:3), as it is in Luke 5:7, 10. Hebrews speaks of brothers and sisters in Christ as "holy partners in a heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). Similarly, Esther is called "the blameless partner of our kingdom" in the deuterocanonical Additions to the Book of Esther (16:13). Hebrews also speaks of the partnership in Christ to which we are called, "For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end" (Heb. 3:14). The related term *co-worker* is used nine times in the NRSV (Rom. 16:9, 21; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25, 4:3; Col. 4:11; 1 Th. 3:2; Philem. 1:1; 3 John. 1:8). All but the last of these references are from Paul, and he is referring to his co-workers in mission. The word *friend* and related terms are used 311 times in the NRSV.

27. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 408ff and 556ff.

28. The phrase is from Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions* (London: Epworth Press, 1995).

29. See, for example, Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler, *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

30. Konrad Raiser, "Towards a Sharing Community," in *Sharing Life: Official Report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community (El Escorial, Spain, 24–31 October, 1966)* ed. Huibert van Beek (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989), 13–24.

31. See *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement,* pp. 568–574.; Also Kirk, *What Is Mission?* p. 188.

32. Cf. Kirk, *What Is Mission?* pp. 191ff. He speaks of four aspects of partnership that characterize the *koinonia:* sharing in a common project; sharing of gifts; sharing of material resources; sharing in suffering.

33. My colleague Lew Mudge would add that this is why ecclesiology and ethics belong together. See his *The Church as Moral Community: Ecclesiology and Ethics in the Ecumenical Debate* (New York: World Council of Churches, 1998.)

34. See Kai Funkschmidt, "Koinonia as Mission," *Connections* 6 (2002): 5.

35. Huibert van Beek, ed., *Sharing Life.*

36. Raiser is quoting from *Comfortable Compassion: Poverty, Power and the Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), by Charles Eliot, the former director of Christian Aid.

37. Raiser, "Towards a Sharing Community,": 13, 14, 16, 23 and passim.

38. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), xv.

39. These are discussed in Brown, "International Relationships in Mission."

40. I was privileged to serve as Overseas Coordinator for the Amity Foundation from 1985–1997.

41. For an excellent study of these three mission organizations see Kai Funkschmidt, *Earthing the Vision: Strukturreformen in der Mission* (Frankfurt Am Main: Otto Lembeck, 2000). Also see, *Communities of Churches in Mission: A Joint Consultation of CEVAA, CWM and UEM* (February 1–5, 2000) and "Toward the Fullness of Life: Intercontextual Relationships in Mission" (report from a Missiology Consultation, April 14–19, 2002), available on www.cwm.org. A full report from this conference is contained in *The International Review of Mission* 91, no. 363 (October 2002).

42. *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 228.

43. Maitland Evans speaking in World Alliance of Reformed Churches Mission Consultation, July 2001.

44. See Stan Skreslet, "Impending Transformation: Mission Structures for a New Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 1 (January 1999): 2–6.

45. This observation comes from the theologian David Ford, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, U.K.

46. Christopher Duraisingh, "Editorial," *IRM* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 204

47. For the full statement see Philip L. Wickeri, ed., *The People of God Among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia and Council for World Mission, 2000), 9–57. This paragraph is in Section 5.2.

48. Potter, "Christ's Mission and Ours in Today's World," 63.

49. Quoted in William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 198.

50. See Joshua Green, "God's Foreign Policy," *The Washington Monthly* (November 2001): 26–33.

51. Philip L. Wickeri, "Toward a Kenosis of Mission," in *Scripture, Community and Mission: Essays in Honor of D. Preman Niles* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia and Council for World Mission, 2002): 332–356.