



Conversations about a theology of partnership

Some suggestions for facilitators

Ministry in adult Christian formation: Welcome to this opportunity for ministry! Serving as a facilitator as members of your parish reflect together about our calling to engage with one another about matters of faith is a service to the Church. Blessings to you in this role.

Conversations about a theology of partnership: The theme of this DVD is the theological foundation of our understanding of being engaged as partners in the faith, and the focus is upon global partnerships. Thus while the concept of partnership finds wide application, this series of programs is especially appropriate for those congregations contemplating or already engaged in mission trips overseas (or into significantly different cultural experiences in our own country), or directing their energies toward diocesan companion relationships. The third program, *Partnership and the Millennium Development Goals*, may also be used alone as part of study and action regarding the MDGs.

There are four programs to *Conversations about a theology of partnership* (with times):

- *Working Together toward Jesus' dream* (18:39)
- *The Ten Principles of Partnership* (14:05)
- *Partnership and the Millennium Development Goals* (15:30)
- *Partnership Challenges* (12:52)

Purpose of the study: Our hope is that this study will

- encourage deeper thought about global relationships;
- place those relationships in the context of our theology;
- challenge us to think of partnerships in addressing human need;
- contribute to strengthening the sense of community among ourselves and beyond our own immediate context;
- affirm the biblical foundations of our faith; and
- challenge us to relate study and reflection to action in the name of Christ.

Facilitation: Please refer to *Doing theology: DVDs for parish study – Some suggestions for facilitators*, which is included in the notebook provided each congregation in the Diocese of North Carolina, for general comments about your role as facilitator. (If a copy is not available, contact the School or visit our website, www.episdioncschool.org.)

Number of sessions: We anticipate that each of these programs could be used successfully in a Sunday morning adult forum, the basics being that you show a program or a portion of it, and then have conversations about it. While more extensive time might be beneficial, this pattern is manageable in a Sunday school setting allowing perhaps 45 minutes. If more extensive time is desired, then obviously times other than Sunday morning provide greater flexibility.

Three of the programs are broken down into sections, and if there is particular energy in your group for one aspect of the theme, you could easily expand the sessions.

Conversations: Two general approaches seem important to us: The first is to provide opportunity for people to connect with what people said on the DVD to their own lives – “what experiences have *you* had...?” The second is similar, your seeking to learn what from the DVD resonates with them – “what particular points made on the film lead you to say *yes!* or *no!*”

Comments on each of the four programs follow:

Program 1: Working together toward Jesus’ dream

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure that you have suitable equipment to show the DVD, and that you know how to operate it! Make sure, too, that seating arrangements are conducive both to viewing and to discussion.

We should simply note that the title of this first program is from the closing sentence by Bishop Monterroso: “I truly believe that working together we can bring about Jesus’ dream to transform lives.” (That alone could be the basis for a good conversation!)

This first session might look like this:

- *Prayer.*
- *Introductions:* In some of our congregations, everyone will know everyone, and introductions seem a bit silly. But for many of our parishes, that may not be the case, and especially newcomers will appreciate a reminder of who folks are. Take a minute or two for basic introductions. If you find more extended or creative introductions appealing, you could ask something about who might have been involved in mission trips or have had experiences in other cultures.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today.
- *The DVD program.* Show the entire first program or any segment of it. The segments are (1) What is partnership? (though the section title does not appear on the screen); (2) Scripture; (3) Being and doing; and (4) A theology of partnership. (Note that if after

showing it you or some in the group want to see a particular section again, you may simply choose the program you have just shown, then choose the section, and then just fast forward or stop wherever you wish.)

- *Conversations:* Two questions are provided on the DVD, so you may place them on the screen and leave them up as the conversation proceeds, but there is no reason to think that these questions are the “preferred” ones. We note some other possibilities below, or you may develop your own. The task is to stimulate conversation, and that requires your discerning where energy lies and draw out insights from throughout the group. Once the conversation gets going – and we believe it will! – your task is to keep it focused, and to shift ground when a particular subject seems to have been exhausted.

The questions on the DVD are as follows:

1. What insights about partnership named in this program seem especially helpful to you?
2. Are there experiences you or your congregation have had – mission trips, perhaps – that have influenced your thinking about our relationships with the church around the world? What are they?

Additional questions might include these:

3. What passage of Scripture comes to *your* mind as you think of a call into partnership and relationship? Why?
 4. Alternatively to question 3, which of the passages named on the DVD seem especially appropriate to you? Why?
 5. On the DVD, Dan Jones commented that partnership is really “at the core of our theology.” Do you agree? Why, or why not?
 6. On the DVD, Diane Steinhaus spoke of “the ministry of presence.” What do you understand her to mean? Do you find this a helpful way to consider ministry?
 7. When have you found yourself in situations in which, as Sarah Hollar remarked, you “experienced *your* faith in different ways?”
- *Summary, reminder of the next program, and prayer.*

Session 2: The Ten Principles of Partnership

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.
- ⇒ Photocopy the “Ten Principles of Partnership” handout which is located after the guide in the notebook. This will help participants as you discuss the principles following the showing.

Two references in the DVD may not be as clear as they might be. One is to “the winds of change,” and the Bishop of Botswana, understanding that reference, mentions “Macmillan.”

What he is talking about is a famous (at the time!) speech given by Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to the parliament in South Africa in 1960. He spoke of “the winds of change” sweeping the African continent, and he suggested that in the face of these “winds” advancing independence from colonial rule, Britain was prepared to divest itself of its colonies. Not surprisingly, it outraged white minority governments and colonies.

The other reference is to “mutual responsibility and interdependence.” In fact that is explained both in our introduction and in other comments, but to be clear, it came from an Anglican Congress held in Toronto in 1963, which felt the “winds of change” blowing against the old missionary mentality in the church, and as a result they talked a lot about partnership. Surprisingly, it is hard to find many details about the Congress, but its influence continues, and the phrase is still much in use today. Indeed, the words find their way into the principles themselves.

The second session might look like this:

- *Prayer.*
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today.
- *The DVD program.* Show the entire second program or any segment of it. The sections are (1) Historical perspectives and (2) Where we are today. The “Ten Principles” appear on the screen, with narrative, at the beginning of the second section.
- *Conversations:* As the discussion begins, handing out the principles would be helpful.

Two questions are provided on the DVD:

1. Do particular principles resonate with you? Which? Why?
2. Consider [Michael Battle’s] comment, “mutuality is another word for friendship.” Is that useful to you as you think about partnership? Why, or why not?

Additional questions might include these:

3. What stories come to mind from your own experience in mission trips or companion relationships, etc., that relate to any of these principles?
 4. If your congregation is on the verge of a new partnership initiative, which of the principles seem to be the ones to which you need to address special energy, or which seem to be the ones you will find the most challenging? Why?
- *Summary, reminder of the next program, and prayer.*

Session 3: Partnership and the Millennium Development Goals

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.
- ⇒ Photocopy the “Millennium Development Goals” handout which is located after the guide in the notebook.
- ⇒ Look at *Mission and ministry through the Millennium Development Goals*, a print resource from the School of Ministry (2006). A copy is in another notebook provided each congregation in the Diocese of North Carolina, called *Resources for doing theology in parishes*. (If a copy is not available, contact the School or visit our website.) Session 4 in this resource is entitled “A vision of partnership,” and it will provide supplementary material suitable for this session.

Note that the first seven goals are the essential agenda for the MDGs. The eighth goal is a call to the rest of the world, especially the wealthier nations, into *partnership*.

The third session might look like this:

- *Prayer.*
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today.
- *The DVD program.* Show the entire third program. Although the program page on the DVD may seem to suggest segments, this program is entirely a conversation with Jay Lawlor without sections. Where “The Millennium Development Goals” appear on the program page, you will simply find the goals on the screen with narrative.
- *Conversations:* As the discussion begins, handing out the goals would be helpful.

Two questions are provided on the DVD:

1. How important is partnership when it comes to such a massive global agenda as embodied in the Millennium Development Goals? Should we “just get on with it?”
2. Is the global vs. local needs issue significant to you? Why, or why not?

Additional questions might include these:

3. What do you think the MDGs have to do with God’s mission and our calling to ministry? Is it really, as Jay Lawlor suggests, essentially a “theological issue?”
4. What among the first seven Millennium Development Goals resonates with you?
5. At one point Jay Lawlor asks, “As the Church, why are we doing this?” – “this” meaning engagement with the MDGs. What would be your answer?
6. Talk about the closing sentence in this program: “It takes the whole world to know the whole gospel.”

- *Summary, reminder of the next program, and prayer.*

Session 4: Partnership Challenges

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.
- ⇒ Photocopy the evaluation of this program which is located after the guide in the notebook.

The fourth and final session might look like this:

- *Prayer.*
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today.
- *The DVD program.* Show the entire fourth program or any segment of it. The sections are (1) Getting started; (2) Cultural challenges, and (3) Spirituality.
- *Conversations:* Two questions are provided on the DVD:
 1. What challenges do you see when you consider your congregation's programs and projects in the light of a theology of partnership?
 2. What do you find that is hopeful in this vision of partnership?

Additional questions might include these:

3. Consider the challenge of our comparative wealth. What in your experience suggests a way forward in authentic partnership?
 4. One of the frequently-mentioned cultural adjustments North Americans struggle with elsewhere in the world has to do with the concept of time. What does that say about us, and about partnership?
 5. Bishop Mwamba calls for those of us in the West to show "humility." What do you think?
 6. Elsie Alexander holds up for us a journey toward discovering what we have "in common," including needs we have in common. Is that a way forward in partnership? What has been your experience?
 7. How would you describe your own "theology of partnership?"
- *Evaluation:* Encourage participants to complete the evaluation, and provide time for it. Please share the results with us.
 - *Final summary and closing prayer.*