

Partner Parishes

By Dennis Mahaney

Start by considering some...

COOPERATIVE IDEAS

Exchange Pastors – Why not build relationships through regular exchanges? Start with the pastor. Many parishes find great success in an initial series of pulpit exchanges (perhaps once a month at first) - where the pastor along with servers and processional cross of one parish visit the other parish on a quarterly basis. This can be followed by a choir exchange in subsequent months. Currently Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Harris Hill and St. Martin de Porres have enjoyed these occasions for exchange.

Share Ministry Talents - One parish may be welcoming while another is rich in generosity. Another parish can be vibrant in worship while another is expert in sharing faith. Still another parish might be heroic in their care for the poor and advocacy for the marginalized. While yet another is gifted in compassion for those grieving the loss of a loved one.

Share Your Best Experiences - Consider the session outline for Sharing Best Practices – Toward Parish Cooperation. This is a way to celebrate your strengths and share creative ideas that can enhance both parishes.

Support Each Other - Pray for each other. Arrange for representation from the partner parish at each parish's major events. We are all rich in some way and needy in others. Despite significant differences, St. Paul gathered goods for the needs of the poor in Jerusalem. Hospitality and Christian charity is the glue of communities.

Co-sponsor an Event – The event can be: Mass, faith formation session, forum on job search skills for the unemployed, resource night for families in crisis, retreat for people living with cancer, night of Christmas carols, youth tutoring, hot meals for grieving families, game night for teens of both parishes, or a parish retreat. Co-sponsor activities that is too ambitious for one alone (e.g. a concert, picnic or pilgrimage). A rural parish can share produce with an urban parish that returns the favor with the gift of music.

Create a Skills Bank – Members from either parish can volunteer professional or personal skills for people in need from either parish. This service can include anything from simple home renovation to a tax preparation.

Conduct More Exchanges – Consider supporting each other's significant events and programs (e.g. supply volunteer leaders to summer vacation bible study, staff a habitat build or staff a community dining room together). Invite leaders of corresponding parish organizations or ministries to sit-in at each other's meetings.

More cooperative ideas can be found in “Best Practices in Inter-parish Cooperation”.

BENEFITS

Among the many benefits, partner parishes are blessed with:

- growing in appreciation for the gifts of one'sr own parish, its identity and purpose
- learning new ways of thinking about what it means to be parish
- forming friendships across diverse backgrounds
- discovering new ways of doing things
- having an experience of solidarity in the larger church
- growing in a spirit of hospitality
- sharing new ideas and resources in ministry groupings (e.g. methods of organization, enrichment activities, etc.)
- gaining a broader outlook on the diversity of life – ethnic, suburban, urban or rural

Review Partnership Planning for a process and Guiding Principles for Rewarding Partnerships [for](#) helpful tips and attitudes.

If you are interested in establishing a sister-parish with an international partner consider reading: *Bridges of Faith: Building a Relationship With a Sister Parish* by Dennis P. O'Connor (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007)

Parish vitality does not just happen. It is enhanced by intentional collaboration between parishes. If this is your goal, contact the Office for Evangelization and Parish Life or call 716-847-8393.