

Dear Holyrood Family,

As your elders and pastors, we want to maintain open communication with you regarding the unfolding of our church vision. Therefore we encourage you to read the following correspondence between Holyrood and the Liberian churches regarding our developing partnership. The first letter highlights Holyrood's proposal for partnership. The second letter is the response from the Free Pentecostal Global Mission, a denomination of about 30 churches. The third letter is the response from God's Glory Free Pentecostal Church, a denomination of about 6 churches. Both denominations work closely together.

Holyrood's Proposal for Partnership:

Dear leaders of the Free Pentecostal Global Mission and God's Glory Free Pentecostal Church,

Greetings from your brothers and sisters at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, Canada. Grace and peace to you and your churches in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My wife Joanne and I remember the warm kindness and hospitality that you showed us when we visited Liberia in February. Thank you for opening your hearts, your homes, and your churches to us. We are grateful for the time you took to be with us and to show us your different ministries. The visit was very rewarding and meaningful for us.

While we were visiting you, you approached us and asked if our church would consider forming a partnership with both of your denominations. We have taken your request seriously. We brought it home to our church leaders, and we have been talking and praying about it. This year our church has also gone through a process of seeking new vision and direction from God. As part of this process, we have been discussing the possibility of becoming partners with you.

The end result of this process is that our church adopted a new vision in September. God is leading us into new ministries here in Edmonton. But we also believe God is calling us to work more on an international level. In particular, we have now arrived at a place where we are eager and excited to explore what a church partnership with you might look like.

Two weeks ago we had a meeting of our church leaders to consider what we would like to see in a church partnership. In this e-mail I will share with you our proposal for partnership. But we also want to hear from you. What do you think of our proposal? Is there anything you would like to change, or to add to it? As equal partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we want to develop a vision for partnership that is mutually agreeable to all of us.

Here is our proposal:

1. We believe the most important part of a partnership is building relationships in Christ, relationships in which we are able to support, challenge and encourage one another to greater faithfulness to our Lord.
2. We each have many gifts that we can share with each other. These gifts include:
 - a. The gift of prayer: We can exchange prayer requests and remember one another in prayer.
 - b. The gift of discernment: As we walk in solidarity with one another, we can ask each other for advice and understanding.
 - c. The gift of understanding the Bible: Our different cultural backgrounds help us read the Bible from different perspectives. We can enrich our understanding by hearing God's word together. For example, I believe you have much you can teach us about the Holy Spirit. And we have much we can teach about peacemaking, which is a very important emphasis in the Mennonite Church.

d. The gift of finances. If we do form a partnership with you, we are interested in offering financial help for your projects, like the school and health clinic you are building. But we don't want to raise false hopes in this area. The difficulty we have is that the Canadian government has strict rules about how Canadian churches can send money overseas. It is a complicated issue. It has to do with our government not taxing us on the part of the money that we earn and use for charitable purposes. At the present, we are trying to work this out. It would be much easier if our national church body, Mennonite Church Canada, worked in Liberia. But it doesn't. Therefore it will take some time to figure things out. But please know that if we are able, our heart is to share our financial blessings. Again, we don't want to raise false hopes. We are trying our best. We will let you know how things develop in this area.

(Update to Holyrood members: After consulting with both Mennonite Church Canada and the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, the elders have decided it is too difficult and complicated to issue tax receipts, in an ethical manner, for any giving to the Liberia partnership. We would have to agree to be the controlling partner of the work in Liberia, and to be fully accountable for the work to the Canada Revenue Agency, which we do not believe is the right approach to partnership. We have decided instead to ask our members to pledge to give whatever God places on our hearts, in the full knowledge that no tax receipts will be given. Pledge forms will be made available some time during the coming year).

3. If we do form a partnership, we believe there are many ways in which we can nourish a relationship with each other:
- a. Exchange Visits: As we are able, we can visit one another.
 - b. E-mail or letter writing: We can encourage individuals in our churches to communicate with each other.
 - c. Contact persons: We can designate contact persons to receive official correspondence from one another, and to share it with our churches.
 - d. Mission trips: If we are able to work it out in a way that works well for you, we might be able to send some of our people on occasional mission trips to help with things like building projects, or to teach, etc...
 - e. Exchanging symbols of friendship: We can exchange symbols of our friendship like photographs, wall hangings, banners, cards, etc...

Please let me know what you think about this proposal. We want to hear your ideas. Together we want to draw up a mutually agreeable vision for partnership.

If we are able to arrive at a shared vision for partnership, our elders are thinking about sending Thomas Bumbah (an elder in our church) and I to visit you, to confirm the partnership, and to strengthen our developing relationship. If this visit works out, I am also open to doing some teaching while I am with you, perhaps on the topic of peacemaking ("Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" Matthew 5:9).

Thank you for considering this proposal for partnership. Let us all keep the matter in prayer as we explore the possibility of becoming partners.

May God richly bless you as you offer leadership in your churches. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

In Christian Love,

Rev. Werner De Jong
Pastor, Holyrood Mennonite Church

Response from the Free Pentecostal Global Mission:

Dear Pastor Werner:

We greet you with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. We wish you and the Mennonite Church in Edmonton, Canada a very happy New Year. Extend our sincere greetings to your dear wife.

We are overwhelmed by the proposal you sent us through Elder Powoe few months ago to review and get back to you. Sorry that we could not get back to you sooner than this time. Your proposal was fully discussed by the board members of the Free Pentecostal Missions (Liberia) Inc. The proposal tells us that your short visit was a remarkable one. You studied us very correctly and you presented us a proposal that we could not prepare any better. We wish to emphatically let you know that it was perfectly done with us in mind. This means that we could not do it better than this. We thank you for remembering us and desiring to partner with us in this work of kingdom building. One thing we have been yearning for is "Manpower Development". We have too many young people that are available for the work but are not prepared academically. We need scholarships to study in Liberia and else where. Pastors and church workers need to be trained. We need to train more pastors, medical doctors, administrators etc.

We returned from our Annual National Conference at the close of November 2008. This proposal was also discussed there. The National Advisory Board, the pastors and members of the FPGM whole heartedly welcome the the partnership and pray that God will make it possible for us.

We are praying that there will be a time when we all will sit together to discuss the details of the proposal.

We are prepared to receive a delegation from you at any time for further discussion of this proposal. We are praying for every step you take in the realization of this proposal. We are also praying for you and your Government that all will be well for what you need from her.

Extend our greetings to Elder Powoe, Thomas Bumbah and all the Liberians in the Mennonite Church in Edmonton, Canada.

Sincerely yours,
Rev. Joseph T. S. Menjor
General Overseer
FPGM

Response from God's Glory Free Pentecostal Church:

Dear Pastor De Jong and Leadership:

We bring you greetings in the matchless name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the soon coming King.

The Leadership of the God's Glory Free Pentecostal, upon receipt of your communication granting our request for partnership, carefully reviewed your proposed partnership agreement, and we are quite delighted with the proposal. We believe this is of God and not men, and the success of this partnership will be to the glory of God for building His Kingdom on earth. We are hopeful that the two churches will greatly contribute in this direction.

After careful deliberation, the Leadership of the above Church wishes to add the followings for your kind consideration to form part of this partnership:

(4) Kingdom building: The overall goal or objective for this partnership in our consideration is Building the Kingdom of God together.

a. Training of church workers in the wholistic approach to Ministry for capacity building as scripture says: The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few.

We want this partnership to include areas that will consider Theological Education, training for Ministry, Medical, Peace Building etc.

b. Evangelism: Since the heart beat of God is mission and evangelism, there is a need to consider training and the provision of logistics for effective outreach.

c. Partnership values: The success of any Christian partnership will depend on the following values:

- (i) Faithfulness or commitment
- (ii) Integrity (honesty and openness)
- (iii) Trust (mutual respect, confidence)
- (iv) Transparency and accountability (that enhance trust for a stronger partnership)
- (v) Humility
- (vi) forgiveness
- (vii) patience
- (viii) equality

In your implementation of this partnership, we suggest that the two proposed partner denominations be treated differently and separately as entities including communications, plans, implementations etc.

Thanks for your love expressed in your decision to partner with our Denomination. May God richly bless and enhance our newly found partnership. We love you and are praying for the success of this partnership.

Yours in His Vineyard,

Rev Joseph N.D. Bannah
Senior, GGFPC
Rev Fallah S. Boima-Cymbianoh
Associate Pastor, GGFPC

(Update to Holyrood Members: Our elders discussed the above proposed addition to our partnership agreement, and we have agreed to include it. We especially appreciate the suggested "Partnership Values.")