

Principles of Kingdom Collaboration

Why and how Emmanuel Faith Community Church partners with other organizations

OVERVIEW

Jesus said that *I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18, ESV). He later said to His disciples that *as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you* (John 20:21). Shortly before His ascension, He made it clear that they would *go and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19, ESV). From the eternal perspective of God, it is a future reality toward which history is pointed. One day there will be *a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb* (Revelation 7:9).

These expressions of God's intent were not given to any one local church, but to the church universal. They represent the longstanding global vision of God that *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea* (Habakkuk 2:14). It is a God-sized vision, one that calls for the obedient participation of all parts of His global church. And since it calls for something far beyond the grasp of any one local congregation, it is a vision that calls for the collaborative effort of the Body of Christ working together.

This is the reason for the inclusion of a guiding principle labeled *Partnership* in the *Global Outreach Policy Manual* of EFCC. It states...

We believe that God is most glorified when His church seeks to work together in partnership with others in the fulfillment of His plan for world evangelization. We seek to model this on corporate and personal levels of teamwork that display reciprocal relationships.

Furthermore, the same policy manual states that in the allocation of resources in world evangelization EFCC is most highly committed to providing such resources that allow for...

Kingdom collaboration that models biblical partnerships honoring to God and that leverage resources for maximum ministry impact.

These principles have not only been affirmed as providing guidance on the international level, but also the local level. The same policy manual lists among EFCC's guiding principles one labeled *integration* that states...

We believe there is a seamless connection between our local and global responsibilities in world evangelization. We want to be and value the same things in our own neighborhoods as we do in distant parts of the world.

For these reasons, EFCC will seek to model and practice partnerships in our local and global arenas of ministry. But how will such partnerships be guided in their formation and implementation? We must have clear goals in mind and consistency in application.

PRIMARY GOALS

There are two primary reasons (goals) that drive EFCC to seek working partnerships that advance world evangelization on local and international levels.

1. **Model biblical unity** – Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed for his disciples that his Father *would keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one* (John 17:11, ESV). Later in this same prayer Jesus indicated that such unity has a role in authenticating Jesus'

ministry in the world. Jesus prayed, *that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:21, ESV). This theme is repeated when Jesus prayed *that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me* (John 17:22-23). It is likely that a lack of biblical unity in the Body of Christ has been limiting its evangelistic impact in an unbelieving world. EFCC seeks opportunities to partner with others in order to model such unity before a watching and skeptical world.

2. **Exercise godly influence** – Jesus revealed that his intent for the church is that it have influence and impact on the world. He told his disciples that *you are the salt of the earth...and that you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is heaven.* (Matthew 5: 13-16). In Jesus prayer referenced in the previous paragraph, he assumes that his followers will be active influencers in the world when he prays, *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one* (John 17:15, ESV). Jesus knew theirs would be a dangerous task, to proclaim the Gospel to the world as residents of it while keeping their dedication to God alone. Paul later picks up on this theme when he writes to the church at Philippi that they are to *be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life* (Philippians 2:15-16, ESV)..

Consequently, EFCC will seek to partner with other organizations if by so doing it increases the church's potential to **model biblical unity** or **exercise godly influence**. These are the two primary motivations for such partnerships. Partnership can be difficult work, challenging to develop and maintain. The investment of church resources is not called upon for such a task because it is a contemporary trend (it is in fact a historical one) or because it is always easy or popular (in fact they are difficult and can sometimes be misunderstood). We do so because we believe it is the pathway Jesus desires his church to follow and by which God receives the greatest glory.

We refer to this value and practice as *kingdom collaboration* – collaborative efforts with organizations outside EFCC for the extension of Christ's Kingdom and the glory of God.

APPLICATION

Obviously, there are a variety of avenues in which kingdom collaboration can and should occur. They basically fall into two broad categories.

1. With Christian organizations – These partnerships will tend to be focused on both goals of *modeling biblical unity* and *seeking godly influence*. Such partnerships will be sought to advance the work of world evangelization in a variety of ministry activities that result in greater impact for the Kingdom than could be achieved by working apart from one another. An appropriate level of doctrinal compatibility will be essential, depending on the nature of the collaboration. Such compatibility will be gauged by common adherence to an externally recognized evangelical doctrinal statement, such as the Lausanne Covenant.
2. With non-Christian or secular organizations – These partnerships will focus on the goal of *seeking godly influence*. Such partnerships will be sought that allow the EFCC body to serve the needs of people and societies in such a way that Jesus is revealed by words and deeds. As residents of the world (and citizens of heaven) we will penetrate the fabric of society (as does salt) for the purpose of shining His light. We will love and care for people in Jesus name.

There are at least three dynamics that will influence the formation of partnerships.

1. Purpose – What is the stated purpose of the partnership? This is perhaps the foremost issue to be addressed. The relationship between agreed **purpose** and organizational **similarity** must be evaluated. In simple terms it can be stated thus: *Certain purposes require higher degrees of organizational similarity than do others. In other words, the stated purpose of the partnership will determine the level of similarity required of the participating organizations.* Such a hierarchy of purposes could have as the lowest threshold *the common public good* (e.g. repairing and beautifying schools, replenishing blood banks, feeding the hungry, etc) to the other extreme of *planting churches locally*. The former requires a modest level of organizational similarity while focused on a common goal. The latter requires much more organizational similarity. EFCC has partnered with a variety of organizations over the years with which it has most likely had differences in operational practice and/or belief. A healthy partnership can focus on a specific area of mutual commitment while respecting and allowing for differences between the partners in others areas of operation.
2. Duration – Does the partnership’s purpose call for a long-term relationship or is focused on the achievement of a project or short-term goal? Long-term partnerships look and feel different than those of a short life span. Long-term partnerships will likely require a higher level of scrutiny before entering into them.
3. Reputation – What is the reputation of the potential partner, either locally or internationally? Will association with the partner in pursuit of the purpose damage the testimony of the church? (Note: While we must give consideration to reputation, there are other factors to be considered. No potential partner is void of flaws and deficiencies, including EFCC.)
4. Funding – It is likely that the investment of funding from EFCC will require higher levels of organizational similarity between the church and the potential partner receiving the funding.

OUTCOMES

1. EFCC will increasingly ask, *with whom could we partner in pursuit of this Kingdom goal*, before embarking on a plan to address it alone.
2. EFCC will focus on stated purposes of a potential partnership, allowing for differences between partners outside the area of focus for the partnership.
3. EFCC will increasingly be known as a church that welcomes interdependent relations with other bodies in the Church universal for the sake of world evangelization (local and global)
4. EFCC will increasingly be known as a local congregation that connects with and partners with organizations in the community in order to serve and love people as would Jesus.

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