

## **Guidelines to Building a Covenant for Your Haiti Twinning Ministry**

### **Introduction:**

Before we dive into the particulars of how to formulate a covenant between two twinning parishes, it is imperative to lay down a fundamental rule that will guide all our actions and inform the final product. That is: unlike legal contracts, a covenant is based on relationships which transcend the legalistic nature of contracts. However, the essence of mutual agreement that is binding on both parties is not lost to a covenant either. We encourage you to carefully read and meditate on the 7 principles of solidarity-based partnerships found in the document *principles of solidarity-based partnerships* before developing your covenant: <http://uspartners.crs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/manual-for-partnerships.pdf>

From this document, we learn that *“A true partnership implies the building and nurturing of a relationship over a period of time that transcends one act of working together (such as a project), or of sending a series of checks. If the partnership is based solely on resources, then the partner with few material resources is excluded from full and mutual participation. When the relationship itself is highly valued, it allows for mutual participation and transformation, and all are invited to participate equally, as we all have the ability to love and pray and be present to one another. Partners learn from one another and should be based in a spirit of mutuality and equality” (Parish Partnership Manual - CRS).*

### **Definition: what is a covenant?**

A covenant is a pledge or understanding agreed upon by 2 or more parties for their mutual benefit. It is not a legal contract. It is best exemplified in the Old Testament Covenant between God and his Chosen People. The Sacrament of Marriage is another example of covenant. For a covenant to work, there must be a relationship and the stronger the relationship, the stronger the covenant. Other important qualities of a covenant include the following:

- Honesty
- Communication
- Shared goals
- Transparency
- Mutual respect for cultural differences
- Sacrifice: A willingness to sacrifice for the growth and wellbeing of the other party

### **The Covenant Process:**

The process is simply based on this definition and the principles spelled out in the *solidarity-based partnerships* manual. From this understanding, a parish should formulate a document to be signed by representatives (pastors) of both parish/organization communities defining expectations for each other in the relationship. Following is a step by step process. While this allows you to brainstorm and come up with the different aspects of the covenant, the final draft should be typed in a format that is clear using full sentences and paragraphs.

### **Step 1: History**

Write down a brief history of the twinning relationship. (paragraph one)

- What are the twins (U.S and Haiti)?
- When did the twinning relationship start?
- How did the relationship start?
- Brief over the year's reflection

**Step 2: Brainstorming what the U.S parish understands the relationship and the needs to be vs. how the Hinche’s parish understands the same.**

Consider the following questions in small groups. Write down the answers in the small groups and share these with the entire group. The person taking the minutes or the facilitator can record key points from each group. (This step is a brainstorming step which helps to clearly define the expectation which goes into the covenant as covered in the next step). Do not skip this step.

- A. Building a Covenant. What we know.
  - Our understanding of what the relationship entails vs. the Haiti understanding of the same
  - Our understanding of Haitian Parish Needs
  - Our understanding of Haitian Parish Wants
  - Our understanding of Haitian Parish Capacity
  - Our understanding of US Parish Capacity
- B. Building a Covenant: Clarifying the above.
  - Actual expectation of the relationship from the U.S vs. the Haiti twin
  - Actual Haitian Partner Needs
  - Actual Haitian Partner Wants
  - Actual Haitian Capacity
  - Actual US Partner Capacity

**Step 3: Put down all the expectation clearly defined between the two twins**

This step allows you to put down what is expected from both parties and is the heart of the covenant. We’ve categorized it to cover certain principles discussed in the introduction.

Objectives: Understanding Expectations

1. Clearly define each other’s expectations on the various aspects of the twinning partnership
2. Clearly define project goals
  - a. Timeline
  - b. Budget
  - c. Funding sources

**U. S and Haiti TWIN COMMITMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

Defining expectations that each twin should commit to fulfilling is paramount to the success of the twinning partnership. As you go through each of the following categories, make sure to clearly define what is expected of each party.

**Relationship**

Recognizing the importance of relationship in the partnership, a face to face communication should be sought in order to develop friendships, trust and understanding. However, due to distance, this is not always possible. In this piece, try to define how often communication or visits should be held for both parties. You can answer some of the questions below to help you as a guide.

**In personal communication and visit**

- How many times a year will representatives of the U.S twin go to Haiti?
- At least how many representatives will travel to Haiti each time within that year?

- Will there be anyone travelling to Richmond from Haiti for the year? If so, how many people and how many times? (keep in mind limitation of resources and travel visa limitations)
- What is expected during the visitation? i.e. meet with the pastor, local leadership, twinning committee, entire community etc.?

#### **Not in person communication**

- How many times per month will there be communication between the twins?
- What mode of communication will be used phone, email or a combination of both?
- What should be discussed during communications. Parish wellbeing (relationship), finances etc.

#### **Mutual Sharing of Spiritual and Physical Resources**

Fulfilling the shared mission, vision and values of the partnered community is important. This can be accomplished by sharing spiritual gifts and resources. This section discusses ways in which the partners plan on fulfilling these goals for the year. These questions are to help you think about this and set expectations.

- In what ways will the partners share spiritual gifts? Some examples might be; offering mass for each other, including prayer intentions for twinning community etc.
- For the financial piece, what are the expectations? (revisit the needs and wants brainstorm question at this point
  - What is the budget and what are the budgeted items?
  - What happens if there are other needs not budgeted for within the fiscal year?
- What are the major sources of fund for US twin? to consider as well is there are any other funders for the twin that the U.S twin should be aware of and what kind of financial support they give
- When will the agreed upon budget be completed by? Both Haiti and U.S twin should have the budget request for the coming year in by what time?
- How and when will the funds be transferred? Also to consider is what timeframe between funds request and expected transfer completion?
- What are the terms for emergency funds? Should using dedicated funds in case of emergency be approved? Clearly define what emergency situations entail

### **Accountability and Transparency**

Accountability and transparency especially when it comes to finances is of utmost importance. Clearly define what is expected of both parties. The discussion should be done until both parties are on the same page. (Please keep in mind the cultural differences between the two communities and be patient with each other without compromising on what is expected)

- How often and when should the financial reports (receipts) be submitted to the Richmond twin from the Haiti twin? (every month, every two months etc)
- Should receipts be expected before the next payment or at the end of the fiscal year
- If these agreement is not met, what should be the consequence (holding funds until receive etc.)

### **Sustainability**

Both twins should be committed to the goal of sustainability and the development of local Haitian leadership. The ultimate goal should be decreasing the Haitians need for outside (financial) help. This section brings this to the forefront and allows the conversations to be actively pursued of how this should happen.

- What plans should the twins have to increase sustainability for ongoing projects or new ones? What active roles and steps will each partner take during the fiscal year? (an example could be: during this fiscal year, we hope to make teachers' salary 10% sustainable from the current rate of 0% sustainable or 100% dependent. Do accomplish this, the Haiti twin will: (a) ask the parents to pay 5% of their children's tuition (b) develop a garden and sell the produce to supplement the teacher's salary etc.
- What is everyone's role in this?

### **New Projects and Peer Review**

Any new project with a cost of \$5,000 or 10% of our annual budget, must be submitted and go through the Peer Review process at the Diocesan level for evaluation and approval.

### **Annual Evaluations**

Following the development of the covenant and it's completion, it is important to review it and update it every year. The expectation for when this happens and how should be spelled out in the working covenant. This section addresses annual evaluation and update of the covenant. Each party must signify their willingness to renew the Covenant, including amendments, changes and clarifications by the agreed time for the next year.

- When is the yearly evaluation and updating of the covenant be held for the next year?
- Will it be held with a face to face discussion (this can be included in one of the visits either to Haiti for the U.S twin or to U.S for the Hinche twin
- During this evaluation process, you should consider if expectations were met to the satisfaction of both parties and if not, what should be adjusted, are both parties willing to continue etc.

## **Conclusion**

This part should be a conclusion which should include the framework of the covenant and any other conclusion statements that you wish to have in your covenant.

## **Step 5: Finalizing the covenant**

Engagement of your parish priest and the Haitian priest involvement is key to every step. Submit the draft for a cross review between both US/Haiti partners independently. You should keep the following in mind.

- Make sure that the covenant was created **together**.
- Make suggestions as Parish Committee and not just an individual or two (remember this represent the entire community)

## **Step 6: Finalize and sign**

The pastors of both twins should sign the covenant which should be kept for as a record by the Haiti Committee chair or other parish contact in U.S and an appropriate party in Hinche

## **Step 7: Ongoing renewal and evaluation**

The renewed covenant should be adapted and kept for the record on an yearly basis or as agreed upon by the twins.