

# M CN

Multiplying Church Network  
Facilitator Manual

## Unit 10

### Developing a Partnering Covenant

*“Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him.”*

—Numbers 25:12, NIV

*“Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.”*

—Deuteronomy 29:9, NIV

#### **Unit synopsis**

Covenants have a historical and practical place in Christian ministry. One of the greatest benefits of having a covenant is that it clarifies the roles and commitments of each party. Rather than copying what others have done, church leaders will benefit from contextualizing partnering church covenants with the new works. In this unit, participants will receive the materials necessary to develop an effective partnering covenant.

#### **Learning expectations**

- Understand the basic elements of a church partnering covenant.
- Determine which elements of the partnering covenant are relevant to the setting.
- Become aware of the need for effective communication in the partnering relationship.
- Share positive and negative experiences in partnering relationships.
- Rate the covenant handout materials as long-term resources for developing church partnering covenants.

#### **Lesson**

Case study—When Trinity Church agreed to host the new language church plant, the pastor told the church planter, “Feel free to use the copy machine and office equipment. Just use your own paper.”

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Two months later, the church planter called to say the copier had broken down. It was then discovered that copier ceased to function after making 14,000 copies, far more copies than the mother church had made in a year's time. Within a month, the relationship between the partnering church and the church plant deteriorated to the point where the church plant had to move to a new location several miles away. This cost them about half of their membership.

### **Reflection questions:**

**What church planting issues are demonstrated in this case study?**

**Where did the church planter fail?**

**What could he have done differently?**

**Where did the partnering church pastor fail?**

**What could he have done differently?**

**Review the covenant samples included with the *Participant Worksheets* and list the parts of the covenant that may have addressed potentially serious problems in advance.**

The story of the Trinity Church is not a far-fetched example. The lack of a clear church partnership covenant opens the door to misunderstandings and conflict. Similarly, clear covenants are often the foundation of great partnerships. At the heart of most meaningful relationships is the covenant—which is an agreement, contract, promise, or pledge between two parties. Covenants clarify expectations and solidify what could otherwise be highly subjective interpretations of verbal understandings. Some famous biblical examples of partnering covenants include God and Abraham, David and Jonathan, and Jesus and all who believe in Him. Covenants answer the question, “If \_\_\_\_\_ happens, then the response will be \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Ways to develop a partnering covenant**

There are many ways to approach the development of a partnering covenant. One way is to *copy what others have done*. The appeal to this approach is that it takes only a few minutes and does not require much personal contact between the partnering church and the church planting team. One church planter noted that in fifteen years of ministry, he saw several sponsoring church agreements where the forms had been photocopied so many times that they were almost illegible. The only contextualization applied to the covenants was the changing of names.

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Another approach is the *fill-in-the-blank form* that allows some personalization and contextualization. An example of this type of form is currently available through the *Church Planting Management System* (CPMS) software. Again, this is appealing due to its simplicity and uniformity. Unlike the first approach, the fill-in-the-blank approach generally requires both groups to work together to develop a working document. One problem with these forms is that they appear to have been developed by a team of lawyers who have failed to communicate the spirit of the covenant. Such forms may be useful in more traditional church planting partnerships, where cross-cultural and philosophical differences are minimal.

Due to the shortcomings of the first two approaches, the Multiplying Church Network (MCN) may desire to use a *partnering church covenant template*. By using this tool which can be modified, the new work team and the partnering church leadership provide answers to a series of questions using a scale of one to five. By using this tool, it is possible to ascertain areas of agreement and potential conflict. Such a tool is especially useful in partnerships where linguistic and cultural barriers are an issue.

After the sponsoring church and the church planter review the results of the completed templates, a covenant can be developed that reflects the actual issues that need to be addressed. Using a template form provides a starting point for a practical covenant that communicates the heart and spirit of the agreement. Another advantage is that the time spent developing the covenant strengthens relationships between the church and new work leaders. As with the others, this method has some liabilities. The primary disadvantage of this process is that it takes more time and creative effort than the previous approaches. An originally unforeseen liability to using the template is that it often reveals differences in philosophy or ideology that might not have otherwise arisen. However, when such conflicts occur, they help the parties decide whether or not the partnership is a truly viable option. In spite of such liabilities, the time spent on covenant development will be well spent.

### **Drafting a covenant**

Using the resources in the handout, prepare a rough draft of a covenant for a new work in your MCN. Organize the covenant with the sponsoring church and new work in mind. Divide into small groups, and be prepared to share the elements of the covenant that are included and why they are warranted.



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Unit 10: Developing a Partnering Covenant - Participant Worksheet

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**Learning area**

**Expectations**

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Knowledge and understanding	Understand the basic elements of a church partnering covenant.
Thinking and inquiry	Determine which elements of the partnering covenant are relevant to the setting.
Feeling and appreciation	Become aware of the need for effective communication in the partnering relationship.
Communication	Share positive and negative experiences in partnering relationships.
Application	Rate the covenant handout materials as long-term resources for developing church partnering covenants.

1. Analyze the differences between the three covenant methods. Which one seems best suited to your partnering church relationship?
2. Have you personally experienced the negative effects of a poorly written church partnership covenant? When? What happened? What role did poor communication play in your negative experience?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the covenant samples as long-term planning and design resources (1=poor, 5=excellent).

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## Covenant Resources

### Partnering covenant template

Instructions: Respond to each of the questions using the 1 to 5 scale—with 1 being the new work and 5 being the partnering church.

#### Examples:

The person completing this form feels that the selection of the church planter is completely the new work's responsibility. He or she would circle 1.

(Sample) Which group should be responsible for the selection of the church planter? ① 2 3 4 5

However, if the person completing this form feels that the selection of the church planter is the responsibility of the sponsoring church, with some input from the new work congregation, he or she would circle 4.

(Sample) Which group should be responsible for the selection of the church planter? 1 2 3 ④ 5

#### Please complete the following:

- Which group should be responsible for the selection of the church planter, if applicable? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group should decide supervision issues for the church planter? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group should select meeting places and times? 1 2 3 4 5
- To which group are the church plant members accountable? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group is responsible for the financial needs of the new work? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group is responsible for the financial accounting of the new work? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will determine the polity, or governing organization, of the new work for issues such as baptism, Lord's Supper, and receiving members? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will take care of taxes and legal issues? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will determine the name of the new work? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will take care of the Annual Church Profile (ACP)? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group is responsible for the development of goals and action plans for the new work? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will be responsible for the enlistment and selection of leaders and workers for the new work? 1 2 3 4 5
- Should the church planter be considered a staff member of the new work or of the sponsoring church? 1 2 3 4 5
- Who should determine when the new work should constitute as a church? 1 2 3 4 5
- Which group will be responsible for sending in the Cooperative Program and associational offerings each month? 1 2 3 4 5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sponsoring church worksheet

To assist in development of your partnering covenant, please have the pastor, minister of missions, or missions committee chairperson complete this worksheet and share it with the director of missions or church planting missionary.

1. Does the sponsoring church have a missions committee?     Yes     No

If yes, what is the role of the committee in relationship to the new work?

2. Who will the church planter report to at the partnering church?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long will this partnering covenant be in effect?

One year

One year, renewable annually

Two years

Three years

Five years

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Can the sponsoring church provide liability insurance for the new work?     Yes     No

If yes, what is the name of the insurance company covering the new work?

5. What is the projected financial support, if any, that the partnering church is prepared to provide?

Is this negotiable following the first year?     Yes     No

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_ yearly

6. What other benefits—such as use of a copier, phones, an office—can the sponsoring church provide the new work?

7. What responsibilities does the sponsoring church expect the church planting team to assume that are not addressed above?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Unit 10: Developing a Partnering Covenant - Participant Worksheet

Each state convention, association, MCN, and local church should develop its own contextualized partnering covenant. The following are sample covenants.

### **New work and sponsoring church covenant**

This covenant has been adopted by the members of First Baptist Church, Anytown, Calif., and the members of First Baptist Church's new work, church plant name, Anytown, Calif.

The provisions of this covenant shall serve as the administrative, doctrinal, and logistical guide between the sponsoring church and the new work until such time as amended by mutual consent, or until such time as the new work becomes an organized sister Baptist church.

The ongoing administration of this covenant is assigned to the missions committee, First Baptist Church, Anytown, Calif., and elected representatives of the new work, including the new work pastor. The following provisions are expressly addressed as part of this covenant and shall be observed as herein agreed:

#### **Membership**

- A. Members of the church plant name, hereafter referred to as the "new work," shall be considered to be members of First Baptist Church, Anytown, Calif., hereafter referred to as "the sponsoring church."
- B. Members may be received by the new work at any regular service. When received by the new work, their names are submitted to the sponsoring church secretary to be added to the church membership rolls.
- C. When members of the new work are removed or transferred, a written notification will be sent to the sponsoring church secretary.
- D. People received into membership by the new work must meet the essential membership requirements of the sponsoring church, with the exception that membership orientation will be given by the new work pastor.

#### **Pastor**

- A. The new work pastor will be recommended by the new work, and called jointly by the sponsoring church and the new work.
- B. Dismissal of the new work pastor requires joint action by the new work and the sponsoring church.
- C. The new work pastor must subscribe to the articles contained in the *Baptist Faith and Message*.
- D. The new work pastor will be a full member of the church council and will be expected to attend council meetings.
- E. Guest preachers or interim pastors must be approved by the sponsoring church in advance, unless they are ordained Southern Baptist ministers.
- F. The new work pastor will be authorized to perform all of the routine pastoral ministries to the new work congregation, including, but not restricted to, serving the Lord's Supper, baptizing candidates for membership, and conducting weddings and funerals.

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**Other new work officers and ministers**

- A. The new work is encouraged to elect members to perform the routine duties of treasurer, secretary, Sunday school director, Women's Missionary Union (WMU) director, and Brotherhood director for the new work.
- B. The new work is authorized to recommend the calling or ordination of deacons to the sponsoring church. Deacons will not be called or ordained without approval of the sponsoring church. Deacons who are members of the new work, will function as deacons for the new work when approved by the sponsoring church. The chairman of the new work's deacon body shall be designated as a member of the deacon body of the sponsoring church and expected to attend meetings of the sponsoring church's deacon body.

**Doctrines**

The pastor and members of the new work must be in agreement with the doctrines contained in the *Baptist Faith and Message* and with the expressed doctrinal position of the sponsoring church as contained in the articles of faith of the sponsoring church.

**Use of church property**

The new work will be assigned the following space for their use on the days and hours indicated.

- A. The main auditorium or sanctuary may be used each Sunday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., on a regular basis. All other usage of the main auditorium or sanctuary, or other space not assigned to the new work by this covenant, will be prearranged with the pastor of the sponsoring church at least two days in advance.
- B. Rooms 6, 9, 11, and 14 are assigned to the new work for regular use at all times, until a mutually agreed upon change is made.
- C. Keys to the rooms assigned the new work will be issued to the new work pastor and are restricted to his use.
- D. Care, clean up, and maintenance of rooms assigned the new work are the responsibility of the new work. It is expected that the new work congregation will maintain the rooms assigned to its use in the same general condition as other church property.
- E. There will be times when the sponsoring church will need to use the rooms assigned the new work. Arrangements will be made with the new work pastor at least two days in advance.
- F. Other articles of sponsoring church property or equipment may be used by the new work when authorized by the pastor of the sponsoring church at least two days in advance.
- G. The new work will not be expected to pay a rental fee for the use of buildings or equipment belonging to the sponsoring church. However, the new work will be expected to pay a percentage of utilities and general maintenance expenses, the amount to be agreed upon by the sponsoring church and the new work. The amount will be reviewed every six months and mutually agreed upon.

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**New work finances**

- A. The new work will collect, bank, and manage its own finances in a separate account.
- B. The new work will not incur any financial indebtedness without the approval of the sponsoring church.
- C. The new work is responsible to pay the new work pastor a salary and allowances. The new work is also responsible for all of its operating expenses.
- D. The new work will elect a treasurer who will be assigned the administrative duty of maintaining an accurate record of all income, expenses, and bank accounts.
- E. The new work will submit a monthly financial report to the sponsoring church. This report must include income, new work giving, expenses paid, expenses awaiting payment, and bank balances. The report will be submitted in writing at the sponsoring church business meeting.

**Joint activities and services**

- A. In the interest of developing a good relationship between the sponsoring church and the new work, it is desirable to have joint worship services and other fellowship activities periodically.
- B. As an ongoing practice, it is agreed that the new work congregation will attend the evening service of the sponsoring church on the last Sunday evening of each month. The new work pastor will participate in the service program.
- C. Other joint services or fellowship activities will be arranged by mutual agreement, at least 30 days in advance.

**Relationships and communications**

The new work pastor and congregation are encouraged to develop close communications and relationships with other Southern Baptists, both within the sponsoring church family and through other Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies. The relationships are to be fostered within the normally accepted communication channels that are available to Southern Baptist churches.

**When the new work becomes a church**

- A. The goal and desire of the sponsoring church and the new work are for the new work to grow and constitute into a sister Baptist church as rapidly as possible.
- B. The decision to constitute itself into a Baptist church rests entirely with the new work after consultation with the sponsoring church.

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**Changes**

- A. The provisions of this covenant can be changed by mutual agreement between the sponsoring church and the new work.
- B. Except for assignment of space, property, or equipment, proposed changes must be submitted in writing by the initiating group to the other party 90 days in advance of the date of the proposed change. Such changes must be voted on and accepted by the sponsoring church and the new work before the change becomes an effective part of this covenant.

**Sponsoring church**

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

Other approved member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**New work**

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

Other approved member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Partnering church and new congregation covenant

### Responsibility of the partnering church

1. The partnering church agrees to associate with the new congregation for a period of at least \_\_\_\_\_ years, during which time the partnering church will offer support in the areas of administration, finances, leadership training, and other assistance as deemed necessary by both parties.
2. The partnering church shall appoint or elect a Mission Development Council (MDC), or a sub-committee, of no less than three and no more than five members, whose primary responsibility shall be that of giving assistance to the new congregation.
3. The MDC should serve as a liaison group between the partnering church and the new congregation. The MDC,
  - A. Shall receive all reports, information, requests, and business related to the new congregation.
  - B. Shall make all recommendations relative to the new congregation to the partnering church.
4. The partnering church shall commit to maintaining a prayer support ministry for the new congregation.
5. The partnering church will form a core group to work with the pastor of the new congregation until leaders in the new congregation emerge.
6. The partnering church will select the pastor for the new congregation. If the newly established congregation loses its pastor, a search committee shall be elected and composed of two members from the new congregation, two members from the partnering church, and the partnering church pastor or his designee.
7. The partnering church shall establish guidelines to enhance the relationship between itself and the new congregation. A covenant relationship between the two pastors will be established and will include a mutual understanding of:
  - A. The lines of authority and accountability.
  - B. Goals.
    1. For the new church—The new congregation will be encouraged to express its own vision, statement of purpose, objectives, and goals. Assistance may be needed from the MDC. The partnering church will have an opportunity to review and approve the vision, statement of purpose, objectives, and goals of the new congregation.
    2. For the partnering church—The partnering church will suggest the duration of the partnering agreement and financial support. The partnering church will express its expectations and the responsibilities of each party. Also, the partnering church will set a time for regular meetings to develop a mutual relationship that would allow for counseling, planning, sharing, praying, encouraging, instructing, and evaluating. The new congregation will have an opportunity to review and approve all of the above stated conditions.

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8. The partnering church shall be responsible for the real estate, buildings, property, and financial commitments of the new work until such time as the new congregation is constituted into a church.
9. The new congregation shall follow the policies of the partnering church when:
  - A. Voting to receive people who desire to become members of the new church family. Members of the new congregation will also be listed as members of the partnering church on a separate membership roll.
  - B. Observing the ordinances of the church. The pastor of the new congregation will be authorized by the partnering church to administer the ordinances.
10. The partnering church shall assist the new congregation in the administration of its finances by:
  - A. Helping the new congregation to open its own checking accounts. The partnering church will keep accounting records during, but not limited to, the first year. This will aid in reporting procedures.
  - B. Funds from all sources related to the new congregation will be kept in a separate account from that of the partnering church.
  - C. All checks will have two signatures. Before the accounting records are presented to the partnering church, a representative from the new congregation will review accounts in order to ensure a smooth transition.
  - D. The partnering church will handle the new church pastor's salary and other remuneration, as agreed upon, with the same care and promptness as for the partnering church pastor.
11. Other responsibilities:
  - A. Prayerfully seek a vision from God.
  - B. Relating to the sponsoring church:
    1. Elect and train a missions committee.
    2. Prepare the congregation for a church planting endeavor.
    3. Provide core groups, and other volunteers for short and long-term leadership.
    4. Provide financial support.
    5. Provide supplies, equipment, and necessary resources for startup.
    6. Assist in the development and implementation of the startup strategy.
  - C. Relating to the new congregation:
    1. Agree to associate with the new church for a period of three years or more.

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2. Offer support in areas of administration, leadership training, and encouragement for all involved in the new work. Mentor the church planter.
3. Commit to maintaining a prayer support ministry for the new work.
4. Draft a partnering church and new congregation covenant

12. Sponsorship of new churches.

A. Primary actions for the sponsoring church.

1. Elect a church Mission Development Council (MDC).
2. Assume spiritual, financial, and legal responsibility for the new church.
3. Decide the geographical focus area for the new church through consultation with the associational MDC.
4. Plan and direct survey and cultivation events.
5. Publicize the new church start.
6. Begin home Bible fellowships.
7. Plan for joint Sunday services with the emerging church group.
8. Request additional volunteers from the association, state convention, or North American Mission Board (NAMB).
9. Secure a public meeting facility and pay the rent for one year.
10. Call the first pastor. The new work pastor may be bivocational, a church planter apprentice, a Mission Service Corps (MSC) volunteer, a layman, or a sponsoring church pastor.
11. Secure the pastor's salary, travel, housing, and insurance for one year. Encourage the new church to participate in supporting him from the beginning.
12. Provide joint training and fellowship events for the new church.
13. Counsel with the new church about future constituting and building plans.

B. Sponsorship actions for assisting churches:

1. Provide weekly prayer support.
2. Supply literature, Bibles, and hymnals.
3. Enlist and send adult and youth teams to do surveys, Backyard Bible Clubs, Vacation Bible

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Schools, painting, clean-up, construction, evangelism training, revivals, and visitation.

4. Assist in providing living expenses for the new church pastor's family.
  5. Provide moving expenses for the new pastor.
  6. Make a monthly contribution to the church for the pastor's rent.
  7. Contribute to the pastor's annual vacation or renewal experience.
  8. Pay the pastor's car expenses or utilities for one year.
  9. Provide quarterly publicity for new church.
  10. Purchase a church site.
  11. Contribute a percentage to reduce the building debt for two years.
  12. Pay the pastor's salary for one year.
  13. Relocate a self-supporting family to the new church to become a core family.
- C. Responsibilities of the new congregation:
1. The new congregation will be faithful in teaching biblical doctrine. It will teach, preach, and practice sound biblical doctrine.
  2. The new congregation will be loyal to the denomination. It will establish and maintain a healthy, friendly relationship with the partnering church, local association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention.
  3. The new congregation will regularly contribute to the association, Cooperative Program, and the two special mission offerings—the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The new work will be responsible for making these contributions to the appropriate entities. Contributions for these causes will not be made through the sponsoring church.
  4. The new congregation will plan its own programs and adopt a budget which will be approved by the partnering church. The treasurer elected by the new congregation will handle the income and expenditure of all funds. A second person authorized by the new work will act as signatory with the treasurer on all checks. Both the financial records and procedures should be reviewed annually by the partnering church and the new congregation.
  5. The new congregation will establish financial maturity. It will teach biblical stewardship and move toward financial maturity and self-support.
  6. The new congregation will choose and train capable leaders. It will identify potential leaders and encourage them to accept leadership positions in the new work.

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7. The new congregation will organize its programs and ministries. As warranted by its growth, the new congregation will organize and develop the basic functions of the church—which include Bible study, discipleship development, mission education, stewardship, evangelism, and worship.
8. The new congregation will establish outreach ministries to reach unchurched people in the surrounding community. It also will begin ministries in neighboring communities that may develop into future churches.

Signatures:

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Pastor of partnering church

Date

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Pastor of new congregation

Date