

“A Coalition of Commitment:
Cooperation Challenges for Contemporary Pentecostal Missions”

“...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man
for the faith of the gospel.”
(Philippians 1.28)

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I. PWF Cooperation Story: Who? What? Where? When? Why?

1. *Who are the [cooperation] mentors in the “Great Commission” community?*

a. Biblical examples and instruction

- i. Psalm 133.1, “How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”
- ii. Jesus – John 17.11 “...that they may be one...”
- iii. Early church
 1. Acts 1.6, “...they met together”
 2. Acts 2.1, “...they were all together in one place.”
 3. Acts 2.14, “Peter, stood up with the Eleven...”
 4. Acts 4.23, “...they raised their voices *together in prayer* to God.”
 5. Acts 13.2 “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting [together], the Holy Spirit said....”
 6. Ephesians 4.1 – 5.2 = “together”
 - Together... We belong to Christ
 - Together... We belong to each other
 - Together... We exercise our ministry gifts
 - Together... We grow into fullness of Christ
 7. “Together” mentioned 400 times in scripture
 8. “one another” commands of scripture

- “love, forgive, pray for, confess your faults to, be kind to, show hospitality to...one another.”

9. PWC 2010 Conference Theme:

- “Equip Yourself...Others...The Church”
- Ephesians 4.12-13, “...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that he body of Christ may be built up *until we all reach unity in the faith* and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

10. Hebrews 10.22 – 25, “Let us...”

- “draw near to God” (10.22)
- “hold...to the hope we profess...(10.23)
- “consider...one another” (10.24)
- “not give up meeting together” (10.25)
- “encourage one another...” (10.25)

b. Examples from modern Pentecostal history

- i. “The Apostolic Faith,” publication from Azusa Street Revival stated in the first issue, “The Apostolic Faith Movement – Stands for the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints – the old time religion, camp meetings, revivals, missions, street and prison work and *Christian unity everywhere*” (Volume 1, No.1 September 1906).
- ii. The first Pentecostal World Conference was convened in Zurich, Switzerland in 1947 under the theme, “By One Spirit We Are All Baptized Into One Body.”
- iii. Donald Gee, first editor of “Pentecost” (a quarterly publication from the Pentecostal World Conference) noted that one of the central attractions to the movement was not a system of doctrine or church government but, “...a powerful individual spiritual experience” producing a, “...new, deep fundamental unity in spirit” (The Pentecostal Movement. London, England: Elim Press 1949, p. 30).

- iv. “Mr. Pentecost,” David J. Du Plessis, looked back at a mid-twentieth century review and took note of early manifestos and resolutions on Pentecostal unity and cooperation (“Golden Jubilees of 20th Century Pentecostal Movements,” in International Review of Missions, April 1958).
 - v. Other examples of “early Pentecostal ecumenism, ecumenism of the spirit,” are found in Grant McClung, Azusa Street and Beyond: 100 Years of Commentary on the Global Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (Bridge-Logos Publishing 2006; details at www.MissionsResourceGroup.org).
- c. The global “Great Commission” community
- i. Edinburgh 1910 – 2010
 - ii. World Evangelical Alliance
 - iii. The Lausanne Movement
 - iv. A.D. 2000 and Beyond
 - v. Youth With a Mission
 - vi. Billion Souls Movement
 - vii. Call2All
 - viii. “Ethne”
 - ix. Acts 1.8
 - x. A proliferation of networks and alliances
- d. **Question– Are we in the Pentecostal World Fellowship living out a twenty-first century cooperation lifestyle in harmony with (a) Biblical models and commands, (b) consistent with the historical origins and stories of the Pentecostal movement, and (c) in fellowship with the global “Great Commission” community?**

2. *What does the PWF state about cooperation?*

(From www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org):

- a. Who We Are: “The Pentecostal World Fellowship is a **cooperative** body of Pentecostal churches and groups worldwide of approved standing. It is not a legislative body to any national entity, but it is rather *a coalition of commitment* for the furtherance of the gospel to the ends of the world...”
- b. Our Mission and Purpose: Historically, the purpose of the Pentecostal World Fellowship has been to create an opportunity for the triennial

gathering of Pentecostal groups to **share in mutual information, support and edification** called the Pentecostal World Conference.

More recently a change of name and purpose was approved from one of simply chairing a Pentecostal World Conference every three years to a new set of purposes. These purposes are to:

1. **Encourage missions partnerships** among participating Pentecostal groups.
 2. Speak to governments and nations on behalf of Pentecostal believers everywhere and especially in countries where persecution exists or where individual rights and freedoms are compromised for the sake of the gospel.
 3. Share as a Pentecostal World Fellowship in humanitarian aid through its various Pentecostal members by sharing information of assistance given and where possible to **cooperate** in humanitarian efforts worldwide.
 4. Serve as **a cooperative fellowship** whereby educational institutions approved by individual Pentecostal members of the Pentecostal World Fellowship would be recognized by other member groups.
 5. Pursue the fulfillment of the Lord's command to evangelize the lost in the shortest possible time, providing them the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in all of its fullness, by **encouraging and assisting one another, promoting harmonious relationships**, and seeking the most effective means of its accomplishment under the dynamic leadership of the Holy Spirit.
 6. Emphasize worldwide prayer networks and **coordinated** prayer.
- c. **Question: Is the global Pentecostal World Fellowship living out a commitment to the definitions of our identity ("Who We Are") and the statements of "Our Mission and Purpose"?**

d. 2010 PWC conference theme provides additional questions:

- i. “Equip yourself” – Am I personally living it out?**
- ii. “Equip others” – Am I fulfilling it together with others?**
- iii. “Equip the church” – Are we in our local churches and national movements a “coalition of commitment,” a “cooperative fellowship”?**

3. *Where are the models to be celebrated and cultivated?*

Contemporary models to be emulated and expanded. Sample responses [and twenty lessons] from Pentecostal missions leaders:

a. *“Our practice is to cooperate where we can with indigenous Pentecostal fellowships as well as other church or para-church bodies to accomplish our mission.”*

Lessons:

- (1) Respect indigenous movements.
- (2) Work with church and parachurch groups.
- (3) Cooperate in a common mission and vision.

b. *“We have a team thing going in (country “A”) that includes multiple agencies, and in (country “B”) there are 14 different entities working on the same team.”*

Lessons

- (4) Multiple agencies and ministry can work together on a common team.

c. *“We have a clearly stated policy of ‘cooperating with the whole Body of Christ around the world.’ We institutionally do this via membership in the Pentecostal World Fellowship, PCCNA, NAE, etc. We second our missionaries to work with other Christian groups, such as YWAM, Evangelical Bible Translators, Wycliffe, medical opportunities. We encourage our missionaries to develop friendships and good working relationships with other Christian missionaries on the field.”*

Lessons:

- (5) Have a clearly stated policy and commitment.

- (6) Do something about it: join cooperative initiatives/associations/fellowships.
- (7) Allow your personnel to work with other groups.
- (8) Encourage your missionaries to develop friendships/good working relationships.

d. *“We are partnering with World Vision in several countries relating to food, agricultural, and orphanages. We cooperate with World Relief in many projects.”*

Lessons:

- (9) Partner with and cooperate with relief/development ministries that are specialists.

e. *“We are involved in Pentecostal regional cooperation through regional Pentecostal associations. We are a member of the national Evangelical Alliance – having seminars, youth conferences, and prayer efforts together. We are also a member of a broader Christian Missionary Council (Ecumenical) that provides joint information, organizes seminars, and keeps contacts with government authorities.”*

Lessons:

- (10) Cooperate with fellow Pentecostals.
- (11) Work together with evangelicals.
- (12) Connect ecumenically to broader mission agendas.

f. *“We prefer to be invited to an area by the Evangelical Alliance of the nation, a regional ministerial alliance, or a similar cooperative group. We are unapologetically both evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic. We do not convene around doctrinal distinctives. We convene around a shared commitment to help fulfill the Great Commission”*

Lessons:

- (13) Enter by invitation of a group that is cooperative.
- (14) Avoid doctrinal disputes and prioritize cooperation around a commitment to the Great Commission.

g. *“Within our denomination, the greatest challenge (or competition) we would face is with the local church and the interests they have. So how do we respond to that. I have taken the approach that I need to celebrate what the local church is doing and look for opportunities to collaborate and guide. I stay very positive and as I do that, I break down the anti-denominational attitude and often I have seen a synergy that can grow from the work of the local church.”*

Lessons

- (15) Celebrate what the local church is doing.

- (16) Be available to collaborate and guide.
- (17) Stay positive and connected.
- (18) Affirm the synergy that grows from local church leadership in missions.

h. "It has been and continues to be our desire to network with as much of the body of Christ as possible for the global advancement of the Lord's kingdom worldwide. This has caused us to form many ministry partnerships/joint ventures through the years. Some of these have been extremely formal while others have been extremely loose in nature and application."

Lessons:

- (19) Partnerships/joint ventures are sometimes very formal; sometimes very informal.
- (20) When developing a written formal agreement, follow clear, agreed upon, issues and guidelines.

Question: From the various models we can mention, what are the marks of success to be noted, lessons to be learned, principles to be applied, and actions to be taken? As we find models, examples, templates, and prototypes of cooperation, use them for (1) Exegesis – Find them, (2) Exposition – Focus on them, (3) Example – Follow them.

4. *When do we find opportunities for cooperation?*

(In times of):

- a. Conversation – seeking understanding/implementing of such terms/concepts as: “cooperation,” “collaboration,” “covenant,” “partnership,” “networking,” “strategic alliances,” etc.
- b. Conflict – standing together to face opposition/persecution.
- c. Crisis – working together in humanitarian efforts.
- d. Convergence – toward fulfilling world evangelization through a “cooperation quadrilogue:” (1) *Assembly* (local church based); (2) *Agency* (denominational/ parachurch); (3) *Academy* (missions training, missiologists); (4) *Agora* – laity in marketplace ministry.
- e. **Question: How can we build on these opportunities and create new times for cooperation?**

5. *Why work together in a “coalition of commitment?”*

From the Philippians pattern, cooperation flows out of:

- a. Our Calling (1.6)
- b. Our Conduct (1.27)
- c. Our Citizenship (3.20)
- d. Our Cause (1.4,7,28; 4.3)
- e. Christ (1.1; 4.23)

II. Cooperation Resources:

www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org

World Evangelical Alliance (www.worldevangelicals.org)

“Cooperating in World Evangelization: A Handbook on Church/Para-Church Relationships,” Lausanne Occasional Paper 24 (“Documents” www.lausanne.org)
Article 7 “Cooperation in Evangelism” and Article 8 “Churches in Evangelistic Partnership,” of The Lausanne Covenant at www.lausanne.org.

Butler, Phill. Well Connected: Releasing Power, Restoring Hope Through Kingdom Partnerships (2005 www.authenticbooks.com). See also www.connectedbook.net and www.powerofconnecting.net.

“Partnership and Christian Missions” www.globalmissiology.org (online missions journal, Volume 3, No. 7 April 2010). In the same issue, see Enoch Wan and Kevin P. Penman, “The ‘Why,’ ‘How’ and ‘Who’ of Partnership in Christian Missions” for excellent/current listing of cooperation/partnership resources.

McClung, Grant “A Coalition of Commitment: Cooperation Challenges for Contemporary Pentecostal Missions” (and other resource documents) posted at www.MissionsResourceGroup.org

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