

International Partnership of Pittsburgh Presbytery

MISSION

The International Partnership Ministry Team of Pittsburgh Presbytery exists in order to help strengthen and encourage the church for faithful and fruitful discipleship in Pittsburgh Presbytery, the Synod of Blantyre, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church and beyond. Specifically, this ministry team is charged with coordinating the relationship between the ecclesial bodies known as Pittsburgh Presbytery (Presbyterian Church USA), the Synod of Blantyre (Church of Central Africa: Presbyterian), and the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church as well as individual congregations within those expressions of the church.

ABOUT US

The partnership between Pittsburgh Presbytery and the Synod of Blantyre has, since 1991, been an opportunity for hundreds of people and dozens of congregations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean to grow in their faith and learn to serve God patiently, obediently, and passionately.

During the past twenty-five years, hundreds of Pittsburghers have traveled to Malawi, and we have hosted an equal number of Malawians. The visits have involved relationship building, education events, pastoral exchange, evangelism rallies, medical mission work, and building construction. Thirty-five churches of Pittsburgh Presbytery are twinned with partner churches in the Blantyre Synod. The partnership has caused deep personal friendships to grow both overseas and within Pittsburgh Presbytery.

In 2013, this partnership was expanded to include South Sudan and to become a tripartite partnership where each member can share fruit with each of its two neighbors.



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*"...a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
Ecclesiastes 4:12*

An Invitation to Partnership



"I believe our congregation has been particularly struck by the spirituality of our partners and has benefited greatly from gaining an understanding of the strengths and gifts each congregation brings to the partnership."



WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?

Partnership is about face-to-face and faith-to-faith encounters with brothers and sisters in Christ who live in different cultures, but who share the call to walk with Jesus.

Partnership is a vehicle for mutually encouraging one another in faith, mutually growing in faith and in trust of God and one another, and mutually looking at strengths and weaknesses and then encouraging one another to risk and to follow.

- **Building Relationships**—with a church body beyond U.S. boundaries, but connected to the PC (USA). These partnerships are individual to individual, congregation to congregation and church to church.
- **Sharing Spiritual Gifts**—gifts of teaching and preaching, of hospitality and caring, of administration and faith. The gifts are endless.
- **Strengthening Faith**—as people share experiences and life struggles, gain understanding, worship together, partner in ministry opportunities and watch God provide.
- **Joining in Ministry**—as God meets needs on both sides of the partnership through the gifts given to all the partners.



ABOUT OUR PARTNERS

The Church of Central Africa: Presbyterian in Malawi

The CCAP is one of the largest denominations in the beautiful land known as "the Warm Heart of Africa." Malawi is roughly the size of Pennsylvania (about 46,000 sq miles), with half again as many people (there are 18 million Malawians, compared with 12 million in the Keystone State). There are five Synods in the CCAP, and Blantyre Synod estimates a membership of nearly two million Christians. These believers are spread throughout the southern region of the country, with approximately 800 congregations and hundreds more sub-congregations called Prayer Houses. Like Pittsburgh Presbytery, Blantyre Synod contains a very diverse array of congregations, worship styles, and communities.

The South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church

The SSPEC is, like the nation in which it serves, a very new entity. When South Sudan achieved its independence from Sudan in 2011, a massive migration occurred as many thousands of historically southern Sudanese left the north. South Sudan is about five times the size of its partners, although it is much more sparsely populated (there are about 14 million people spread across 240,000 square miles). The SSPEC was born with six congregations in Juba, which later expanded to 23 congregations by the end of 2013. In spite of the intense conflict that nation has faced since December 2013, they have added 37 additional congregations across the nation. There are more than 80 ordained pastors in the SSPEC, although nearly all of these men have been forced to adopt a bivocational approach to ministry because the nature of the conflict has all but eliminated the congregation's ability to support the clergy.

The official language of both nations is English, although each is comprised of communities and groups speaking a vast number of local languages and dialects.

Our Foundational Covenant of Partnership calls us, among other things...

- To encourage all Christians, ordained and lay, to visit, meet, and get to know each other in their everyday contexts so as to allow each to learn the unique circumstances of the other.
- To recognize, encourage and strengthen the role of women in the member churches.
- To disciple and nurture the faith of our children, allowing them to maintain a Christian identity in a multi-cultural world.
- To learn innovative and creative ways to worship and evangelize.
- To have each member of the partnership become both a sender and receiver of support and encouragement.

What Pittsburghers are saying about the gift of partnership...

"This experience has deepened, broadened, and heightened my faith and joy in the Lord. I have been changed forever by my experiences in Malawi and in hosting those who have come here."

"The International Partnership has helped me immensely to be able to see the church globally, not just in my neighborhood, which then helps me to understand more about my place in the world among its people."

The Partnership has "helped our little congregation to realize the big impact it can have on lives half way around the world by knowing them, being aware of their situation and more importantly, praying for them."

