

Planting Hope: Accompaniment 1 Peter 4:10-11

Paul Gauche

The new Mission Outpost and Dental Clinic spaces along with the buffed and shined Child Care area on our first level are absolutely spectacular. I am confident in saying that the whole thing is just world-class. Just over a month ago, as the final touches were being completed for the Grand Opening, I did a quick walk-through with Eric Elton, our Mission Outreach Director and was immediately drawn to the murals covering the walls in the new lobby. Several hundred pictures featuring individuals who have become part of the global partnership that's touched more lives – maybe even saved more lives than we can imagine are constant reminders of the importance of our ministry. CDLC, the Child Development and Learning Center, and the Dental Clinic, on a local level, and Mission Outpost on a global level are the very pictures of what it means to be in partnership for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

The word often used to describe this kind of partnership in the context of the ELCA (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) is "Accompaniment." Accompaniment means walking together in a kind of solidarity that produces interdependence and mutuality. The word "Accompaniment" carries with it a deep sense of connectedness, unity, and collaboration. Accompaniment is at the core of what it means to partner with faith communities on a local, national, and or global level. Prince of Peace has been called to two specific global partnerships that have borne fruit in the lives of our partners and so many people connected to this congregation: Doulos Discovery School in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic and the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania, Africa.

We've been in a series entitled "Planting Hope..." because that's what we're called to do. That is our mission. The call of Jesus to plant hope, to speak hope, to embody hope locally, nationally, and globally is the work – it's the mission that we get to do together, wherever we are. When each of us finds our "sweet spot" of this work, well, that's where the real joy is!

Today, I want us to explore and celebrate what God is up to in each of these "OUT...for the World" expressions of our mission together, and then challenge us – everyone of us – to take one step deeper into either or both of these partnerships.

Our global mission partnerships with Doulos Discovery School and the Iringa Diocese and our responsibilities for these ministries are rooted deeply in scripture. A passage from 1 Peter 4:10-11 gives us some context. Let me read that for us.

¹⁰ God has given each of you a gift from God's great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹ Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

Bringing together all of our varied gifts on a global, national, and local level is connected to some core principles that help us work together effectively. Those core principles include having a sense of mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment, and sustainability. Let me describe why those core elements are so essential, and then have you hear from two of our important ministry partners, and then offer some practical ways of discovering your next best step into "Accompaniment," into partnership.

We're called to Mutuality. Mutuality reminds us that we are all in this together. We have a mutual responsibility to one another and those we serve. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "*If one member [of the Body of Christ] suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*" God is calling us to use our gifts and resources to serve others. There are a number of congregations in the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania that depend on us for materials and resources and we rely on them to remind us of our responsibility to the wider church. In just a few moments you'll be hearing from Pastor Lusunga Msigwa who serves a number of rural village churches in Tanzania. Two summers ago, I had the opportunity to travel with Eric Elton and a group of disciples from Prince of Peace to these communities, to meet our brothers and sisters, to play with the kids and bring them school supplies and sporting equipment. We also had a chance to worship in several locations and I had the opportunity to preach and

bring the good news of Jesus Christ. Our congregation shares a commitment to grow in faith together. That's mutuality.

We're called to Inclusivity. Prince of Peace has a mission to build relationships across boundaries that exclude and divide people. By its very nature, there is "No Room in the Inn" for exclusion and division in the Kingdom of God. I love how Eugene Peterson translated 1 Peter 4:10 in the Message Bible: "*Be generous with the different things [gifts] God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it.*" Did you catch it? Did you notice the scope of the responsibility for this kind of "Partnering" and "Accompaniment"? "So everyone gets in on it!" Everyone. Period. No exceptions. The writer didn't write, "Just Lutherans, or just those who join the church, or only those who agree with us on everything." Paul said, and I'm paraphrasing: "Hey, you have gifts. Use them to serve others. Don't get picky. Include everyone. No exceptions."

We're called to Vulnerability. Now, I know that for some, this will feel risky. And it is. Doing this will put us in touch with our vulnerability. The model here is Jesus. Jesus was vulnerable, opening himself up to risk. Jesus told his followers that following him would be risky, costly, vulnerable. But here's the thing: vulnerability is the new strength. It's a new year. Acknowledge the risk, embrace vulnerability. Brené Brown reminds us that "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path." You have a gift. Use it.

Becoming vulnerable leads to Empowerment. Every time I've been to Doulos Discovery School in the Dominican Republic, I've seen the kind of empowerment that happens when the Body of Christ partners together to make God-sized things happen. When I went to Tanzania two years ago, not only did I see lives changed right before my eyes, my life was shifted, altered, changed. Normally cautious people embracing the risks of travel and entering other countries always come back empowered to continue to make God-sized things happen. Creating friendships with people from a different culture, who speak a different language, who have different traditions, customs, and practices, set them loose in ways that nothing else can. Seeing the Body of Christ in other cultures is deeply empowering.

That kind of empowerment creates a willingness to do what is necessary to sustain the mission that God has placed into our hands. When we express our gratitude through our generosity at Prince of Peace, creating partnerships will ensure the sustainability of the local, national and global ministries that we've committed to. It's all comes back to this in 1 Peter 4:

God has given each of you a gift from God's great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

I want you to hear from two of our global partners today. First, I want you to hear from Josh Griffin, the executive Director of Doulos Discovery School. Josh is a friend, a faithful follower of Jesus who has a remarkable heart for partnering for the sake of God's movement in the Dominican Republic. Then I want you to hear from Pastor Lusungu Msigwa, currently a pastor in the Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Msigwa is currently studying at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, and we're happy to hear from him today.

[We do not have a transcript for Josh Griffin's message. However, you can hear this sermon and Josh's message on our website. The transcript of Pastor Msigwa's message follows...]

"I am Lusungu Msigwa, one of the pastors from Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). For 11 years I worked as a lead pastor in different parishes, and for another 11 years as a Coordinator of the so-called "Bega kwa Bega" (Shoulder to Shoulder), which is a partnership between Iringa Diocese and the Saint Paul Area Synod. Since 2020, I am a student at Luther Seminary studying MA in Leadership and Innovation for Ministry. I am lucky that one of my professors is from Prince of Peace (Prof. Terry Elton). By June 2022, I will be done with my studies and go back to Tanzania.

Receive many greetings from Ilambo, your partner parish, from a new BKB Coordinator Pastor Jiskaka Lwila, scholarship clerk Frank Mkocho, my bishop Blastone Gavile, and the entire diocese of Iringa. We love you and we pray for you always.

Working with BKB I learned many things concerning this partnership. I am proud to tell you that BKB

is among the powerful partnership in the ELCT because of its setting, this is a partnership that is at the grassroots of the church, it is about the people. It brings people together, regardless of our cultural differences and distance. The partnership is very important due to many factors, to mention just a few:

Prayers: Ilambo people value prayers, so for them having someone who is a prayer partner adds value in their belief and their wellbeing. So, I know for sure that those people pray for you, in Sunday worship services, at their bible studies, and in their families. I am sure even some individuals pray for you. They do that because they have experienced the impact of this partnership, so they value it and they want God to make it sustainable.

Visitation: Ilambo community, as other Tanzanians, are very generous people, they love other people, so when Prince of Peace gets a chance to visit them it is a big gift and blessing because they feel like they have exercised what Jesus said we need to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Those who visited Ilambo will agree with me that Ilambo is far from the city, therefore few people visit there. So when they get a visitor, not just from Tanzania but from the US, it adds value to their village.

Presence: Through your gifts, you have touched the lives of many people, so you have been God's hand for that community. Think of giving them clean and safe water, medicines, scholarships, funds for church constructions, and others. I am sure you touched not only Christians but the whole Ilambo community. That is why when Prince of Peace visits Ilambo, you are welcomed by the whole community, not only church members.

This partnership needs to continue because: It is the way of God to show us that we are one body in Jesus Christ. This is very true because, in heaven, we will not be identified by our colors, culture, or what we own, but because we believed in Jesus Christ. The distance should not be the argment of separating you and Ilambo people, rather the same distance should be the way of showing how deep our friendship is. That, one can travel a lot of miles, spend a lot of money and time so as to meet the one he/she loves. This is biblical, think of Jesus coming from heaven to earth, just to meet and spend time with his friends.

Your contributions for clean and safe water are saving people's lives because before those wells some people died due to water bone diseases. Think of the medicines, how many lives have been saved. Through the scholarships, so many orphans and poor children

who could not go to school now some are done with schools and had employed so they are making their life and helping their families. All those are impacts from the partnership. To me, that is God's mission that needs to continue." [End of transcript...]

Friends, the question is not "Will" you participate in the mission partnerships, accompaniments that this community of faith is investing in. The question is, "How" will you participate? So let me challenge you in the form of a small, medium and/or large step.

Small Step: Take some time to consider how you will step into one of the partnerships we support through Prince of Peace: Doulos Discovery School in the Dominican Republic or Lutheran churches of the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania, Africa. Then pray and ask the Spirit to lead you to make a specific decision about how you will play your part in our mission partnerships.

Medium Step: Perhaps you've already invested in Mission Outpost, the Dental Clinic, or Feed My Starving Children. That's wonderful; it is, but there is a next step for you. I want to challenge you to commit to supporting either Doulos Discovery School by sponsoring a child, helping them with tuition for a year, or by making a financial commitment through Prince of Peace to the churches in Tanzania.

Large Step: Friends, your large step could be to enter this partnership by traveling with one of our teams to the DR (like the team leaving today!) to meet the young girl or boy who needs your financial support to receive an education.

Or your next Large Step could be to commit to traveling to Tanzania. And while you're considering how you'll change someone's life by bringing school supplies, sports equipment, medical resources, I've got this message for you. When I went almost two years ago, I was so excited to make an impact in someone's life. What happened was that I was the one who was changed. My life was altered.

Once again, it comes back to this: God has given each of you a gift from God's great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

You have a call to partnership. Do you hear it? How will you respond?