

# What One Can Do – Connect

## Why Connect?

*“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” – Matthew 25:40*

Ours is an incarnational faith. God could not bear to be separated from us and so dwelt among us in the most intimate way possible – by becoming flesh and living and dying with us. Jesus says as we encounter and minister to the poorest of the poor, we encounter and minister to him. The God we believe in, the Christ we follow is not a concept or a theory, but living, breathing, loving, crying ... and yearning to be in relationship with us and for us to be in relationship with each other. That’s why Christ came to draw *the whole world* to himself.

The eighth MDG is about building global partnerships. It’s a remarkable recognition that no one person, group or even nation can do this on their own ... that we need each other. But what are those relationships to look like? This is where the Church has a unique gift to offer ... a gift grounded in our Communion – not the temporal structures of Anglican Communion that we have constructed, but the cosmic bonds of Communion by which God embraces us individually and together. It is a Communion that does not fear difference but rather rejoices in it. A Communion that embraces the richness of God’s whole creation as a gift to be shared and celebrated together, not competed for, hoarded or destroyed.

What does the Church’s unique gift – building transforming relationships – look like? It can be broken down into three categories:

### **Giftedness-based development**

As Christians, we believe everyone is made in God’s image and has gifts that reflect the totality of God. Secular development sees people as economic entities. Christian development sees whole people – mind-body-spirit.

One gift the church gives is that when we go into communities of material poverty, we don’t view them as problems that need to be fixed – but gifted images of the divine, full and equal partners in mission and ministry.

We must understand the gifts and assets of poor. Together discover what we each bring to the table and work together to design programs that tap into and release their gifts and ours.

So much of secular development creates unhealthy dependency and paternalism. It turns people into beggars and strips them of the human dignity (which we are bound in baptism to respect) that comes from determining their own path and earning their own wage. Christian, giftedness-based development creates healthy dependency – interdependency in Christ, not “god complex” dependency of paternalism.

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## **Gospel-based development**

If we are treating people as whole people, that means treating them not just as body but mind and spirit. That means we must not only be concerned with feeding the body and mind (food and education) but the spirit as well.

Consider why we as Christians do this work. We do this as a church because the Gospel of Christ is transforming us – and that's a wonderful thing. If we don't share the joy of that transformation the hope that it brings for us, to the people we meet then we treat them as less than full people. Likewise, if we are not open to them sharing their faith and experience of transformation with us – not just even if it is different from ours but *especially* if it is different from ours – we treat them as less than full people and we deny ourselves the gifts God has to offer us in them.

This sharing of the Gospel must be done with honor and respect. Remember St. Francis' words: "Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words."

This gift the Church has to offer the MDGs is not just about personal spirituality and individual relationships but systems. That's because a complete living of God's love in Christ – if applied universally – becomes a new transforming justice. When we have the conversations about global poverty not just on an economic and public policy level but on a theological level, we set loose powers that can literally transform the world.

## **Church-based development**

One of the great gifts the Church has to offer to the MDGs is that we are an already-present grassroots network that stretches around the world. Working through local church communities is one of the most effective ways of making progress on the MDGs. Why work with the local church?

\*It is a ready-made grassroots system that cuts through the middlemen. If funding and other resources can go directly to the ground level in dioceses and congregations, it cuts down on the potential for fraud.

\*It is embedded in the community. In many of these places, the Church is the glue that holds these communities together. In many places it is an institution with much more trust built up than governments or even local civic structures.

\*The role of the church is transforming whole lives. The MDGs are about transformation – material and spiritual. The church is a natural place for people to go for something that is going to change their lives because the business of the church has always been changing lives.

***Remember your Companion Diocese when looking to build relationships. Also think about ministry partnerships with domestic and international churches, schools, women's groups, etc. Use the internet. And never forget the most important ingredient in all of this is PRAYER.***

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***You can find more resources for connecting on the Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation website  
[www.e4gr.org](http://www.e4gr.org)***

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*"That all might have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10*