

Goal of Church to Church (C2C) Partnerships

The overall goal of Compassion's church-to-church (C2C) program is to establish mutually beneficial relationships between US churches and Compassion partner churches in countries where Compassion ministers. Currently the C2C program is operating in 8 of our 26 countries. We seek to build a bridge between churches, facilitated by Compassion's 58 years of ministry. C2C began as a pilot program with only 37 churches selected the first year. This year Compassion has added capacity for an additional 65 churches to join C2C. Because of this limitation, we need to be selective in identifying second-year participants. Compassion's initial investment is very significant, therefore it's necessary to identify churches that have high potential to impact indigenous churches' ministries and to transform our US church partners. We won't be able to accommodate every church desiring to join C2C this year, but our hope is to continue expanding Church to Church Partnerships as we move forward in the future to make C2C more accessible.

Commitments for US church-to-church partnerships

Compassion International will bring churches together through the process of collecting church 'profile' information and connecting church partners that seem to 'fit'. Compassion will be present throughout the relationship to help navigate cross cultural challenges and to facilitate communication. Partner commitments are as follows:

- Training Commitment: Church-to-church relationships have intrinsic challenges—they are not easy. An effective tool in meeting these challenges comes through education and sharing of experiences. Each participating church needs to have a teachable heart, willing to share victories and disappointments openly. Participants will be asked to attend a 3-day training/sharing seminar at Willow Creek Church, led by Compassion and two of Willow Creek's missionaries from the Dominican Republic (Tom and Dee Yacino).
- Relationship Commitment Time: C2C is all about building functional, mutually beneficial relationships. Relationship building takes time and participating churches need to join the program with a long-term mindset—committed to 2-3 years of learning about their partner church and seeking ways to jointly build His kingdom.
- Church Leadership Commitment: Each church's character is embodied in their leader's character, personal life stories and vision. Each participating church's leadership must be "on board" with the program, willing to communicate regularly with their partner through prayer and sharing their church's ministry. This involves a personal investment of time by the church leadership. Additionally, a key goal of the C2C relationship is the transformation of church members. Our experience shows a primary pathway to this transformation is the sharing of God's heart for the poor through His Word and the personal experience of the teaching/preaching pastor. We therefore seek to directly involve the teaching/preaching leadership in the C2C experience and relationship.

- Child Sponsorships: We believe that an extremely effective way to build a grassroots relationship with a Compassion church partner is to sponsor children through Compassion in the indigenous church. We have developed the capacity to invite a minimum of 50 new children into the program. Each US church partner should be willing and capable of encouraging a minimum of 50 members within their church to sponsor a child in their partner church. We believe that these sponsorships, and the relationships that follow, are an effective agent of transformation for the child and the sponsor.
- Participation Groups: We believe that transformation can come from “doing.” In a C2C relationship, an important part of the hands-on experience is physically connecting to your partner church through mission trips. We seek US church partners who are willing to assemble mission teams (we hope for a group size of 15-20 travelers) to visit and engage directly with their partner church. Compassion is able to provide a broad range of support in planning and carrying out these mission trips.
- Funding Opportunities: Since our US churches are better financially resourced than the indigenous church partners, we expect that a natural outcome of the C2C relationships will be a flow of financial resources. Compassion will offer opportunities for up to \$50k per year to grow and support the ministries of the indigenous church partners. We foresee that most US churches will have an opportunity to come along side of their partner church’s Child Survival Program (<http://rescuebabiesnow.org>). This program serves at-risk infants to increase infant survivability and to facilitate normal development and costs \$25k per year. We also will offer opportunities for US churches to invest in ministry expansion projects so their partner churches can better serve their local communities. These opportunities are not contracted or obligations but a church joining the C2C program should be encouraged by the possibility of having a significant financial impact on their partner church through Compassion’s facilitation.

We don’t ask our church-to-church program partners to sign a covenant or formally agree to these guidelines and opportunities. We seek to help your church in accomplishing what the Holy Spirit has authored in your missions program in ways you might not be able or comfortable to do on your own. If you are excited about the possibilities and comfortable with the challenges outlined here, C2C may be a useful tool for mutual transformation in your church and your church partner.

Next steps:

We hope to identify the 65 new churches to join our church-to-church program by 15 Oct so we can make arrangements for our training/sharing conference at Willow Creek Community Church from November 15th – 18th. If your church wants more information about the program and the commitments above, we invite your church’s senior leadership to contact Compassion at mpelingra@us.ci.org.