Other Churches and Ministries

Who goes there—friend or foe?

No one would say his church can meet all the commands and concerns of our Lord for the city or area in which he serves, or that each individual local church can be a specialist in any need.

Of course not. We all have plenty to do in just the giant areas of worship, building up people, and evangelism. So how do we do more than talk about the homeless and the drug addicts and the special needs of others in our area?

How can two or five churches join arms to be a special force for good where we live? And are those local, special, singular ministries better trained to help in special needs?

Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto and his cousin Dan Reid!

So this month let's talk about what goes on around us, who goes there, and who could be a partner with us to serve our city or community. There are indeed some concerns of our Lord that would better be served by a team.

Isolation and separation are not called for in the body of Christ when it comes to action love.

Trying to do better with this,

Knute, with Jeff and Jim
**How close do we get and when? When is distance a fault?**

**Jeff Bogue**

- This whole question is rooted in the determination: Am I like-minded with a group in my ministry philosophies, or not? And a secondary question: Are we theologically aligned?
- If I am like-minded with a group, I may not need to be closely theologically aligned as we approach certain elements of ministry:
  - For instance, I may be able to stand together with all types of different groups when it comes to opposing abortion, human sex trafficking, drug addictions, or homelessness, etc. We may have theological variables, but we at least believe we should approach this issue, that churches should be involved, and that these programs should be “faith-based.”
  - While we would not align on the finer points of theology, we can align closely when it comes to how to approach the problem and what to do about it.
- There are other times, with groups outside my own church, in which the bigger issue is how closely we align theologically.
  - For instance, if they are bringing in a special speaker and I want that person to help train our pastors; or we are going to share a missionary and send the missionary out from both of our churches; or we are supporting a church plant in the area—we would have to align very closely theologically even though we may approach our ministries differently.
- The *ideal* time to work with other churches and ministries is when we align very closely both in our approach to ministry (like-minded in how we would tackle a problem) and in our theology. With that combination, I have a terrific partner to work with in my area, and I believe God would want us to work together, because He would be given glory and it’s a way He would advance His kingdom!
- The inverse then holds true. If we are not like-minded and not even close theologically, that is a partner I would rule out and probably should not be involved with.

**Jim Brown**

- It depends on the nature of the commitment.
- It hinges on doctrinal agreement too.
- We can support by praying but not endorsing when necessary.
- We can give them financial support without giving them stage time.
- When the mission and message and doctrine line up, we are all in.
- We can’t do everything so, “Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone!”
• We shouldn’t turn our heads away from needs in our community if we have the resources to help.

Knute Larson

• As close as necessary to improve the Christian mission in the area but not hurt the mission-ministry of our church. And I know that does not adequately answer the question, but it does imply that there are some things we can do in partnership with other churches or para-church ministries that we could not do well alone.

So we should be close enough to know if and when we should do that.

• We should also be close enough to encourage and strengthen each other since we are on the same Christ team with other ministries. May outsiders see that more.

• Distance is a fault when we preach or act like we are the only ones, or the church our Lord prefers, or the best at everything.

We are too distant when we put ourselves or our distinctives above the gospel... when part of our ministry is to attack other ministries... when we are jealous of the greater success of others... when we never give thought to the needs of the area related to injustice, poverty, family needs, and addictions of the body or spirit.

How does our success or failure in the past enter into our involvement?

Jeff Bogue

• It affects it heavily. One of the hardest things in the world to do is to get churches to work together. To be honest, a lot of times when I approach this subject it’s with a degree of cynicism because I’ve tried and tried and tried. It’s hard for a bunch of independent churches to come together and share a vision.

• In the areas I’ve had success, I value those partnerships deeply and I’m very grateful for the friendships, partnerships, and unity we have. It’s worth the effort even though it's difficult. To a healthy degree, we need to be on guard with what we’re approaching.

Jim Brown

• It greatly impacts the decision-making process when Jesus gets elevated in a cooperative ministry. When it was a win to work with a group before and another opportunity surfaces, then we seek to jump in again.

• I enjoy the ways God works out things to make churches stronger by working together.

• Our men’s ministries often have numerous men and pastors from other churches joining us in the journey.

• If someone is already doing something well there is no need to recreate it in your own church. Either do something different or join them.
It is well known that when we get burned by novel attempts and abort, it is very difficult to try it the second time. Memories are stubborn. If a church tried to work with the nearby pregnancy ministry and was disappointed by their emphasis or someone’s attitude, there will be negatives about trying again.

There is appropriate joy in a church when they see immigrants welcomed and served by a cooperative endeavor. “Let’s do it again!” comes easily.

What should be the least that we can do? What are some good ways to begin any needed connection?

Jeff Bogue

- The least we should do is grab coffee and have lunch... just be friends and know the other pastors and ministers in your area.
- Some areas have ministerial meetings, so attend those a few times a year and be a part of what's going on.
- Always take another pastor’s phone call. When a colleague calls, give them time, give them energy, and help them in any way you can.

Jim Brown

- Send an email to show interest in them.
- Sit with them over a coffee and hear them out.
- Pray for each local ministry.
- Be open to an initial conversation.
- Check in with other people to see what it was like to work with them.
- Gain as much information about their ministry on their website and research their ministries.
- Call them and begin asking questions and state your interest.
- Pray first before doing anything.
- Search social media sites to see how they are representing themselves.

Knute Larson

- Welcome new pastors to the area with coffee and prayer.
- Find out what para-church ministries in the area really do, and ask a faithful member of your church to be the manager of your involvement.
- Pray for other ministries in your morning worship prayer.
• Adopt four or five area specialty ministries as your “mercy partners,” listing them that way on your website, giving them a designated offering each year, asking to have a member on their board, and allowing them to recruit in your church.

What good can one church do alone? When does it help to be involved with other churches?

Jeff Bogue

• One church can actually do a lot of good alone. God uses His church in powerful ways and can do some extraordinary things through one church by itself. However, it is very helpful to be involved in the body of Christ.

• I believe very strongly that when God looks at the church, He sees the church of the city. He doesn’t see your local church. I’m from Akron, Ohio. When God looks at Akron, Ohio, He doesn’t see Grace Church, The Chapel, Christ Community Chapel, etc. He sees the church of Akron, and the pastors of the churches in Akron are to serve as the elders of that city.

• If you have to go alone you have to, but if you can connect and stand together as one church of the city, you can do incredible things that God will bless in great ways.

Jim Brown

• Depending upon the size of your church, one church can do some amazing God-breathed ministries.

• Look for ways regularly to strengthen other churches. We are willing to donate people, time, and resources.

• Regularly pray for local pastors and churches, and speak favorably about them.

• It always helps if all the credit goes to Jesus.

• When it requires an all-hands-on-deck moment for your community to walk through a crisis!

Knute Larson

• A church can do so much good in its people’s lives—love, acceptance, ways to serve and give, growth in understanding the daily life in combination with Christ, worship that is meaningful, and much more. We should never act like that is small—it is part of what God wants for people.

But certainly we can do some things much better together, with other churches and ministries—clothing and shelter and food needs of the poor, lobby strength to protect the unborn, prayer and support of concern for city leaders, extra source for schools and their needs. And all without taking sides politically.
Specialty ministries can get so very good serving difficult needs like drug addictions, unwanted pregnancies, jail ministries, immigrant housing, job training, and more. Is, “Do not reinvent the wheel” a verse in the Bible?

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Jeff Bogue, of Grace Church, in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of Grace Community Church in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and Knute Larson, a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by CE National. Visit cenational.org/pastorpedia for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.