

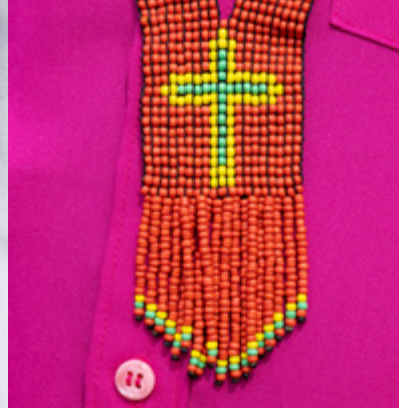


ANGLICAN  
COMMUNION  
IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES



# YOUR GUIDE TO COMPANION LINKS

WALKING TOGETHER,  
SHOULDER TO SHOULDER



An Anglican Communion guide to growing Companion Links  
between Anglican church communities around the world.



# Walking Together

The Anglican Communion is a global family of churches, present in over 165 countries and diverse in culture, language and Christian tradition.

Companion Links are one of the important ways in which Anglicans in different communities around the world seek to walk together through prayer, fellowship and living the Five Marks of Mission.

This resource provides guidance on how Companion Links work and how your diocese or parish can set one up.

***“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”***

1 Thessalonians 5: 11



# What is a Companion Link?

Companion Links are bonds of friendship and support. They are established between dioceses and parishes of the Anglican Communion to walk together in prayer, mission and community.

Companion Links provide opportunities for:

- Prayer support for each partner
- In-person visits, mission and exchange programmes
- Resource sharing and peer support
- Short- or longer-term partnership on mission or a particular project
- Responding to common opportunities or challenges

## Benefits of a Companion Link



### **Mission and social justice:**

Companion Links facilitate dioceses working together on mission and ministry projects, leveraging resources and expertise to address common challenges like poverty, education, healthcare and social justice.



### **Learning and theological dialogue:**

Companion links facilitate respectful and constructive theological dialogue, addressing important themes in Communion life. Dialogue fosters a deeper understanding of Anglican belief and a deeper appreciation for different perspectives.



### **Cultural exchange:**

Companion Links enrich a wider understanding of the Communion's rich diversity, especially as dioceses share their distinctive faith practices, traditions and experiences. This can deepen the spirituality of Anglicans worldwide.



### **Solidarity:**

Companion links foster a sense of solidarity and support among a global Anglican Communion. In times of crisis or need, knowing that other dioceses stand with them, they provide comfort and assistance. They provide a network of support during times of crisis, whether due to natural disasters, social unrest, or public health emergencies. Companion dioceses offer prayers, financial assistance and other aid.



### **Strengthening unity:**

Companion Links help people in different contexts grow connections, deepen relationships and bridge differences, to strengthen Christian unity.



# Getting Started: What's the Best Model for Your Setting?

Companion Links have been active across the Anglican Communion for many years. Dioceses and parishes often establish Companion Links and may choose to express their Link in different ways. There are no set instructions on how to set up a Link, although creating links more formally should be discussed at a council or synod. Here are some different models for how you might choose to establish a Companion Link.

## Model 1

### The bishop-led approach

Two or more bishops decide to have regular contact and to pray for each other. They visit each other's diocese and gradually draw other colleagues into the relationship, *deciding further down the road* to put their link onto a more formal basis through a decision at a council or synod. Key facilitators are recruited to oversee and support the link, instilling a sense of purpose and direction.

## Model 2

### The local church-led grassroots approach

Parish churches develop their own links with churches in another diocese. As these grow and strengthen, they decide to widen the net and invite other churches in both places to join the link. Connections between schools, health projects and other community organisations may be part of this. At some point the decision is made to incorporate all these into a diocesan link with a memorandum of understanding or covenant put in place.

## Model 3

### The diocesan-led organisational approach

The nature and scope of a link is proposed, discussed and agreed by the diocesan synods of both dioceses. This happens through convening a steering group which produces a plan for a link. When agreed in both places, a formal commissioning of the link takes place, with the bishops signing a memorandum of understanding or covenant and a well-planned series of visits and other exchanges begins to take place.

# Companion Links Matching: Support from the Anglican Communion Office

Establishing a Companion Link is up to dioceses or parishes, but the Anglican Communion Office can provide some matching support and guidance in the process.

Such matching will be based on the wishes and readiness of respective dioceses eg. are there structures in place to turn aspirations for a link into the reality of a sustainable link of equals?

The team maintains a list of dioceses that are in Companion Links or seeking one. For matching advice, fill in the Data Form in this resource.

## Testimonies



### Archbishop Linda Nicholls of Canada

“...Companion diocese relationships help us to understand different contexts and different ways of responding to the gospel that can both inform and challenge and do not require us to be in exactly the same place at the same time on everything.

....Holding a space where things are slightly different is a good thing – it’s one of the things that the Christian Church can offer to the world in a time when polarization is being pushed in every direction.

It is the ability to come together, to listen deeply to one another, to be able to come to the Eucharistic table and to any table of food and fellowship. This is a witness to another way of living that the world desperately needs.”



### The Reverend Rana Khan

The Reverend Rana Khan is the Bishop’s Advisor for World Mission in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, The Church in Wales.

“Companion Links in the Anglican Communion offer opportunities for mutual growth, collaboration and support. They are crucial in promoting unity, addressing common challenges and fostering a global sense of community within the Anglican Communion.”





# Companion Link Essentials

## Habits

When establishing a Companion Link, you might choose to practice these habits.



**Walk together by being present:** Be prepared to encounter others with authenticity and confidence. Make time for others, dedicate your full attention to them and encounter them as they are. Notice complexity, difference and division. Dare to find unexpected points of connection.



**Listen together by being curious:** Hold a curiosity about what God is doing. Listen with a deep appreciation for other people's situations, stories and contexts. Hear them with open hearts and minds. Ask what another culture can learn from them. Resist the temptation to assume or make hasty comparisons about others.



**Witness together by reimagining:** Imagine a world where healing, restoration and thriving relationships are possible. Be honest when things are not as they should be. Remember God's faithfulness. Stretch your understanding of what is possible.

## Appreciation and Respect

Anglican Churches are in diverse settings around the world. Being in a Companion Link is an opportunity to learn from your partner diocese or parish. Appreciating and respecting differences are important.

**Resource Disparities:** Be mindful that dioceses within the Communion often face significant resource disparities. Some are well funded. Others may have rich human resources with limited financial resources.. This can create challenges in maintaining equitable companion links.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** The rich cultural diversity within the Anglican Communion can lead to misunderstandings or missteps due to cultural insensitivity. Care must be taken to ensure respect for local customs and practices.

**Geopolitical Tensions:** Consider regional or geopolitical tensions or conflicts. Establishing companion links with dioceses in such areas can be challenging and may require diplomacy and sensitivity.

**Theological Differences:** Theological diversity within the Anglican Communion has led to disagreements on issues such as human sexuality and gender roles. Companion links need to navigate these differences and find common ground while respecting theological diversity.

**Logistical Challenges:** Maintaining regular communication and collaboration between dioceses spread across the globe can be logistically challenging due to differences in time zones, access to technology, visas and language barriers.



## Guidance and Principles

Here are some principles to keep in mind:

- A. **Have a clear vision for the Companion Link:** What is your hope and aim for the Companion Link? What is the focus of the relationship? It is important to align your companion link with your diocese' overarching vision. It can be very helpful to identify the major strategic areas you are focusing on and understand how your companion link could contribute to the effective implementation of your vision. Here are a few areas but you may have different priorities: Discipleship; Witness; Growing leaders; Education/schools etc; Children and Young people work; Ministry of presence; Marginalised and persecuted church etc.
- B. **Share the decision in your setting:** Planning for a companion link should involve the bishop, diocesan council or synod and local churches.
- C. **Consult each partner in the Link:** The decision to enter a companion relationship must be mutual. The proposed companions must have the opportunity to understand clearly what it is that is being proposed and why, and to know each other's expectations. Such a decision is best taken in a face-to-face encounter during which both theological and ecclesiastical issues are discussed with representatives of the proposed partnership.
- D. **Develop an agreement or covenant:** Whether formal or informal, having a written agreement that captures your aspirations and commitments for the link is important. It should consider the length of the relationship; programme activities; financial arrangements and how the impact of the Companion Link on each partner can be evaluated. You may choose to sign a memorandum of understanding or covenant.
- E. **Timeframe the Companion Link:** Friendships formed during a companion relationship know no time limits. However, it is healthy to start your Companion Link with some agreed time periods in mind. This gives time for the health and impact of the Companion Link to be reviewed periodically. You may choose to explore your Companion Link over 1-5 years, with additional periods of extension if mutually agreed upon.
- F. **Communicate and share learning:** The impact of your companion link on the mission and community of your church/churches may be encouraging to others. Share regular stories and updates with the Anglican Communion Office, so that other dioceses may learn about the benefits of establishing a link.

# Sign Up to the Companion Link Community

The Anglican Communion Office maintains a list of Dioceses that are in Companion Links or seeking one. To obtain support from the ACO in setting up a Companion Link, fill in this form or complete it online at: <https://lambethconference.org/companionlinksupport>

**Fill in this form online or complete the form below and send it to:**  
**[CompanionLinks@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:CompanionLinks@anglicancommunion.org)**

Name:	<input type="text"/>	Surname:	<input type="text"/>
Email:	<input type="text"/>		
Phone:	<input type="text"/>		
I am contacting on behalf of:	<input type="text"/>		
Diocese:	<input type="text"/>		
Parish:	<input type="text"/>		
Other Anglican organisation:	<input type="text"/>		

*Tick as relevant:*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to be in a Companion Link and would like the ACO to contact me to support me with their matching service.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> I am happy for my Link to be named on the Anglican Communion Office web site and other communication tools.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am happy for the Anglican Communion Office to share my details with other Parishes/Dioceses/Organisations that are exploring a link. | <input type="checkbox"/> By filling in this form I understand that you will keep me up to date with Companion Link information and resources. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am already in a link and want to join the Companion Link community to benefit from resources and learning opportunities.             |   |

