Chapter 20: From Missionary Work to Fellowship

20.1 Decolonisation and Partnership

During the second half of the 20th century, major changes in both Africa and Europe changed the position of European missionary projects in Africa: Colonial Empires fell apart; former colonies established their own governments;[1] Europe started developing into an economic and political unit. The Cold War between capitalist Western European and communistic Eastern European countries ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall, on 9th November 1989, and the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the 1990's. The European Union, established in 1992, incorporated several former communist countries and increasingly closed its borders to countries in the southern hemisphere, which were seen as economic competitors, markets, suppliers of minerals and tourist destinations. In relationship with developing countries, European countries became lenders or donors of development projects without accepting direct responsibilities for their management. Alternative destinations for aid were found in former communist countries. As African countries effectively closed their borders to foreign aid in kind, truckloads of second-hand furniture, clothes, engines etcetera were transported from Western Europe to Eastern European countries.[2] In the wake of growing interest in East European countries, Western European focus has shifted away from Africa. At the same time, the relationships between churches in different continents were re-established on a more equal basis. Generally, missionary involvement in Africa was transferred into various forms of partnerships, whilst the principal motivation for missionary work was increasingly questioned.[3]

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[1] The process of decolonization was marked, in 1947, with the independence of the first two British colonies in Asia, India and Pakistan and with the independence, in 1957, of the first sub-Saharan colony, Gold Coast, from then on 'Ghana'. By 1957, there were only 6 independent countries in Africa: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya (since 1951) and South Africa (G. Arnold, 2005, p.xiii).

[2] In 2003, the last box with clothes was sent from Kampen to eNkumane (RMMA: 2004b#). The box was impounded by the South African Customs because it contained textiles. It cost the Reformed Mission R.650.00 custom fees, numerous telephone calls and two trips to Durban to trace the box and have it cleared. A year after it had been impounded, it was released and brought to eNkumane. It contained handmade socks for babies born at the Enkumane Clinic and handmade Bible covers.
Since about 1970, the Netherlands Reformed Church in Kampen maintains contacts with Christians in, especially, Hungary and Rumania. It has a partnership relationship with a church in Hodgya, a Hungarian congregation of about 100 members. Over the years, the Church in Kampen assisted the Hodgya congregation with secondhand clothes, food parcels, an agricultural project, the renovation of a church and a minister's house, the building of a church hall and the extension of local gas-mains.

[3] L. Newbigin (1989, p.116): "One searches in vain through the letters of St. Paul to find any suggestion that he lays it anywhere on the conscience of his readers that they ought to be active in mission... nowhere do we find him telling his readers that they have a duty to do so." J. Vonkeman: "Dis dan ook nie nodig en wenselik om van die 'sendingsbevel' van Matteus 28 te praat nie. Dit het trouens in die sendingsgeskiedenis nouliks 'n rol gespeel... Kerk IS sending, uitbeweeg na buiten toe" (Die Redakteur, 2007, p.16). Yet, writing from an African perspective, J. Kapolyo (2006, p.1170) states: "This is a message that the African church needs to hear clearly. For too long we have been recipients of the benefits of the gospel... We do not see it as our duty to go and spread the good news... This is disobedience to the words of the Lord... We must repent of this sin and take up his call... Jesus commands us to make disciples."

20.2   International Missionary Conferences

As early as 1928, at the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council, the adequacy of notions such as 'sending churches' and 'receiving churches' was questioned. Attempts were made to redefine their relationships as 'partnerships'.[4] In 1938, at the Tambaran Conference of the International Missionary Council the word partnership was used as the term for new forms of co-operation between churches on different continents.[5] In 1947, at the Whitby Conference of the International Missionary Council, the equality of churches in different continents in their co-operation was captured in the phrase 'Partnership in Obedience'.[6] In 1948, at the establishment of the World Council of Churches, all national and provincial churches were accepted as equal members. In 1958, at the Ghana Conference of the International Missionary Council, the distinction between 'older' and 'younger' churches was rejected as no longer valid or helpful. Subsequently, in 1963, at the Mexico City Conference of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, with the phrase 'Mission in six Continents', mission was redefined as a common concern of all churches in all continents.[7] At this Conference, instead of the word partnership, the term 'Joint Action for Mission' was used to

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[4] According to L. Bauerochse (1996, p. 156-160), before the formation of the Commonwealth, the word 'Partnership' became the common political term to rephrase the relationship between the British Empire and its colonies after being granted independence: "Dabei bestätigt sich die Vermutung, dass der Begriff Partnershaft in seiner spezifischen Verwendung im Zusammenhang mit Nord-Süd-Beziehungen zu einem nicht unwesentlichen Teil aus der britischen Kolonialpolitik stammt... Sie wurde schon gefürt seit den nordamerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskriegen und dem Herausbrechen der Vereinigten Staaten aus dem Britischen Empire 1776... Zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhundert und verstärkt nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg kam... die Diskussion um das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung auch für die sogenannten Kolonialvölker auf. Schon 1905 wurde in diesem Zusammenhang erstmal der Begriff 'partnership' verwendet... Im Juni 1942 - fünf Jahre vor der Weltmissionkonferenze in Whitby - erklärte die Britische Regierung das Prinzip der Partnershaft zum 'governing principle of the Colonial Empire'." Although not clearly defined, probably, 'partnership' stood for 'independence within the British Empire'.

[5] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.64), "Das Jerusalemer Verständniss [für Partnershaft] betonte stärker die neue Qualität der Beziejung des Vertrauens und der Gemeinschaft (confidence, fellowship). In Tambaram dagegen rückt aussliesslich das Ziel der Partnershaft ins Blickfeld, die missionarische Aufgabe: Partnershaft werd hier Synonym für wirksame Zusammenarbeit (co-operation)."

[6] Already in 1928, during the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council, the term 'partnership' was used to indicate a change in relationship between a mission and a mission area after the establishment of a church in that mission area: "In Jerusalem 1928 wird somit erstmals auch vom Begriff her eine 'Partnerschaft' zwischen Missionen und örtlichen Kirchen gefordert" (J. Bauerochse, 1996, p.49). At the this Conference attention was given to the problems inherent to such a relationship, for example, "die Stellung der Missionare und die Formen finanzieller und materieller Hilfe" (idem, p.50).
Subsequently in 1938, at the Conference of the International Missionary Council in Tambaram, the term 'partnership' was used to indicate co-operation: "Partnerschaft wurde hier als eine Zweckgemeinschaft zur Bewältigung einer Aufgabe verstanden; eine Form möglichst effektiver Zusammenarbeit." (idem, p.61).
According to D.J. Bosch (1991, p.379), "The Whitby Conference (1947) coined the phrase 'Partnership in Obedience' in an attempt to give expression to the conviction that it was theologically preposterous to distinguish between 'autonomous' and 'dependent' churches."

[7] In 1961, the International Missionary Council integrated with the World Council of Churches and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism was established.

indicate the relationship between churches in different continents.[8] However, in 1973, at the Bangkok Conference of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, it became clear that there was little agreement about what type of partnership or what type of joint action was intended.[9] The suspicion was raised that partnership had become a term to justify the continuous presence of missionary societies in former mission areas.[10] During this Conference, the call was made for a moratorium on missionaries in order to give the churches the opportunity to come to real ecumenical relationships as equal partners.[11] During the following year, 1974, the Lusaka All African Council of Churches elaborated the call for a moratorium on missionaries.[12] In 1981, at the Melbourne Conference of the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, much consideration was given to the poor, not only as a target group for special care, but also as the carriers of the Gospel about God's Kingdom.[13] At the Conference, instead of the word partnership, the term '*kononia*' was used as the expression for witnessing and sharing together.[14] Yet, in the meantime, it had become common practice to use the term partnership for inter-church help projects involving churches or local congregations in different continents.[15]

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[8] L. Bauerochse, 1996, p.108.

[9] According to L. Bauerochse (1996, p.120), at the Bangkok Conference in 1973, serious questions were raised about the mere possibility of a partnership between equal church partners in the North and in the South: "Unter den gegenwartigen Bedingungen... kann diese Partnershaft nur eine Partnershaft zwischen den Schwachen und den Mächtigen sein."

[10] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.123): "So wurde Umfeld der Konferenz von Bangkok der Begriff [Partnershaft] eher dazu genutzt, das bleibende Recht von Missiongesellschaften bzw. der nördlichen Kirchen zum missionarischen Einsate in den Ländern des Südens zu rechtfertigen."

[11] Already in 1967, the idea of a moratorium on missionaries was launched: "The question of a moratorium was first launched by Ivan Illich in an article in the Jesuit magazine, America -January 1967" (J.A. Kirk, 1999, 185). In 1971, during a Mission Festival in the USA, it was defended by Rev. John Gatu, President of the Presbyterian Church in Kenya: "In his address to the Reformed Church in America, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he challenged the mission in the West and did so in words of prophetic seriousness: 'I am going to argue that the time has come for the withdrawal or foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the Churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church'" (B. Sundkler & C. Steed, 2000, p.1027).

[12] A. Wind, 1988, p.255. According to J. Verkuyl (1981, p.344-345), in 1975, in Lusaka, the idea of a moratorium on missionaries was specified as a call for self-reliance and as a call for re-organisation of the international assistance and co-operation between churches: "Het gaat volgens [de voorzitter van de A.AC.C., ds. John Gatu] om een nieuwe koers, die leiden zal tot meer 'mature relationships'... Het debat rondom het moratorium is o.a. bedoeld om de 'self-reliance' te stimuleren en via de 'self-reliance' de katholiciteit van de kerk als geheel... De bedoeling van het gesprek over het moratorium is een koers uit te zetten en te komen tot reoriëntatie in de kerkelijke hulpverlening."

[13] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.129): "Die Armen selbst werden in ihrem Befreiungskampf als Träger der Mission, als Verkündiger des Evangeliums angesehen."

[14] Reference to 1 Corinthians 1:9.

[15] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.135): "Der Begriff der Partnershaft hatte sich spätestens im Verlauf den siebziger Jahre zu einer allgemein gebräuglichen Chiffre im Bezug auf jegliche Form zwischenkirchlicher Hilfe und Zusammenarbeit entwickelt."

20.3 Imbalanced Partnerships

A partnership between churches may have different connotations which can be illustrated with examples from the Bible.[16] The word partnership may refer to the sharing in a common project (Philippians 1:5; 4:15), it may refer to the sharing of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7) and it may refer to the sharing in suffering (2 Corinthians 1:7). However, in most cases a partnership between churches in different continents refers to the sharing of financial resources.[17] Sometimes, Paul's collection for Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8-9) is used as a guiding example for this type of relationship.[18] The confusing danger resulting from this is that the word partnership stands for an imbalanced relationship between a donor-church and a recipient-church. The imbalance might be a serious threat for the development of a recipient church. Accordingly, around 1970, the idea of a moratorium on missionaries from the northern hemisphere found an increasing number of supporters, especially in the southern hemisphere (par.19.5). Ironically, however, "the fact of the matter... is that without at least a token number of missionaries going overseas from the West it would have been hard for Churches and agencies [in the South] to maintain financial support at acceptable levels."[19]

The relationship between a donor church and a recipient church may be seriously disturbed by insufficient or unclear decision procedures or by a lack of accountability. The relationship may take the form of a mutual pleasing, which undermines an open and honest

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[16] J.A. Kirk, 1999, 188-191.

[17] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.362): "In der theoretischen Diskussion über Partnerschaften wird dies ambivalent beurteilt. Partnerschaften, so heisst es, sollten eigentlich vorrangig ein geistliches Ziel verfolgen. Die matietierelle und finanzielle Hilfe sei demgegenüber zweitrangig. Es ist schon deutlich geworden, dass diese Vorderung keinen Anahalt an der Realität hat."

[18] C.J. Haak (1995, p.12-13), Professor in "Zendingswetenschap, Godsdienstwetenschap en Evangelistiek" at the *Theologische Hoogeschool* of the Free Reformed Churches in Kampen: "Op de manier waarop we omgingen met onze vroegere zusterkerken moeten we nu ook omgaan met de kerken op het voormalige zendingsveld... Dan is het geen schande om hulp te vragen, personeel en financieel, in de lijn van 2 Kor.8-9... Dan komt de beoefening van het oecumenisch kerkverband in zicht."

Yet, the use of 2 Corinthians 8-9 in the context of a partnership between churches is an underestimation of the uniqueness of Paul's collection for Jerusalem. This collection was, what J.C. Beker (1980, p.74) calls: "Paul's basic apostolic effort - to establish the one church of Jews and Gentiles." This specific unique collection for Jerusalem, if accepted, would mark the fulfilment of eschatological promises (Isaiah 60:4-9) and the establishment of a common church of Jews and Gentiles (Romans 15:7-12). "The collection visit [Romans 15:25] is the fulfilment of Paul's pledge to the apostolic council (Gal.2:10), but its meaning transcends the issue of economic support for the 'poor among the saints' (Rom.15:26) in Jerusalem. [Possibly, the poverty problem in Jerusalem was aggravated by the conversion of priests who, because of their conversion, had lost their position in the temple; Acts 6:7.] It expresses symbolically the eschatological unity of the church of 'Jews' and 'Gentiles'... as the fulfilment of Paul's apostolic mission... it... also expresses the salvation-historical priority of Israel and Jewish Christianity over the Gentiles (Rom.15:27; cf. 15:18)... Paul's anxiety about the collection is evident: he has doubts about its reception by the pillars in Jerusalem... and he fears the Jews in Judea (Rom.15:30[-31])... It is interesting that Galatia - prominently mentioned in 1 Cor.16:1 as a contributor to the collection - is absent from the list in Romans 15, where only Macedonia and Achaia are named (15:26)... The omission of Galatia in the collection list could point to the fact that just prior to the writing of Romans, Paul had not only written Galatians but had lost his case with the Galatian churches as well" (idem; p.72-73).

[19] J.A. Kirk, 1999, p.186.

communication. If it is clear that a donor church favours financial applications for specific projects, for example, 'mission projects', 'water projects', 'orphans projects' or 'projects for HIV & AIDS', then recipient churches will be tempted to formulate their applications in those terms, no matter how they see their real needs. Furthermore, donor churches may alienate recipient churches by being demanding in terms of, for example, accountability or church structures, thereby running the risk that the recipients start to look for other donors.

In practice, the word partnership has paradoxical connotations: the intention of the term is to define a relationship of mutuality while in many cases it is an indication of at least material dependence.[20] The term is intended to suggest a spiritual relationship between churches but often, it indicates a practical form of co-operation in the form of projects sponsored by one partner and realized by the other.[21] However, the use of the word 'partnership' is a recognition of the fact that the term 'mission' is not a proper characterization of the relationship between churches in different continents, which during the second half of the 20th century, was increasingly defined as an inherent aspect of every local church, a recognition that the church itself is sent into the world.[22]

20.4   The Concept of a Common Para-Church Organisation

The word 'partnership' suggests that both partners are equal contributors and beneficiaries and enjoy an equal influence on the relationship.[23] Structurally, this might suggest that partner churches should run common projects, 'para-church agencies', independent of their church structures. "Their main objective should be to facilitate co-operation between local churches and across denominational boundaries."[24] For a para-church agency to be a good expression of a partnership several preconditions must be met, such as the commitment of the partners, and their consensus about the aim and the strategies of the agency, about evaluation procedures and accountability, and about the appointment of staff and volunteers who will

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[20] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.396-397): "Nach wie for erweist sich die Behauptung, der einseitige Finanztransfer werde durch einen 'Transfer von Spiritualität', von Glaubensstärke oder Lebendiger Frömmigkeit zu einem wechselseitigen Geber-Nehmer-Verhältnis als Illusion... Der einseitige Finanztranfer lässt aus Partnerschaften immer wieder Patenschaften werden."

[21] Often, the term 'partnership' indicates that one partner is supported by the other, without much reflection on the effects of the support: "Wiederholt haben die Kirchen darauf hingewiesen, dass das Problem von Armut und Ungerechtigkeit nicht durch den Transfer von Geld und materieller Hilfe zu überwinden ist, weil daraus neue Abhängigkeiten und Unfreiheit erwachsen" (1996, p.165).

[22] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.164): "Mission nimmt Teil an der Sendung Gottes, an seiner Bewegung auf die Welt zu. Sie is nicht Aufgabe von Spezialisten oder Spezialagenturen, sondern gehört zur Lebensäusserung jeder örtlicher Gemeinde."

[23] J.A. Kirk, 1999, p.192: "The ideal would be for resources to be pooled and mutual decisions taken about how they are used."

[24] J.A. Kirk, 1999, p.199; according to Kirk (idem, p.198), "One particular aspect of partnership is the position occupied by agencies within the Church which are not directly linked to the Churches' formal structures. Many of these are ecumenical or interdenominational in constitution. Most of them are recognised by the churches, but some may be operating rather as a law unto themselves." Common examples of para-church organisations are the Bible Societies established in many countries.

constitute the agency.

When at the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, missionary work became a matter of interest in The Netherlands, several Dutch para-church organisations were established to organize the work (par.15.10; 15.14). In the tradition of the Free Reformed Churches, missionary work was seen as the prerogative of local Church Councils, but by the end of the 20th century, ecumenical contacts were again centrally maintained by the Synod Deputies for Relationships with Foreign Churches (*Deputaten voor Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken*) and training was centrally organized by the Institute of Reformed Theological Training, in Zwolle. In 2001, the Netherlands Reformed Churches in Bunschoten-Spakenburg, Den Haag and Leerdam, the three Netherlands Reformed local churches with missionary projects in northern KwaZulu-Natal, decided to concentrate their missionary work in a Dutch para-church organisation in order to improve their communication and co-operation, to formulate common aims and to improve the training and selection of new mission workers.[25] However, the new para-church organisation was not established as a combined project of local churches in The Netherlands and local churches in KwaZulu-Natal. Missionary work was simply redefined as: assistance by churches in the Netherlands on request of churches in KwaZulu-Natal.[26] In this way, the formal independence of the local churches in KwaZulu-Natal was guaranteed at the cost of a dual imbalance: as relatively poor churches, they are dependent on rich foreign donors and, as relatively rich churches, they are detached from the socio-economic background of their own church members in KwaZulu-Natal.[27]

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[25] RMA: 2001a#.

[26] The document 'Commissie Bestuurlijke Ordening Zending' (The Document) of the Netherlands Reformed Churches in Bunschoten, Den Haag and Leerdam (RMA: 2001a#, p.6), redefining the tasks of the Dutch 'sending churches', refers to the articles 8 and 31.1 of the Church Orderly agreement between the Netherlands Reformed Churches (*Akkoord van Kerkelijk Samenleven*, RMA: 2008#):
Article 8: "Niemand vervult het ambt van predikant zonder verbonden te zijn aan een bepaalde gemeente, noch verricht hij in een andere gemeente enig ambtelijk werk zonder daartoe een verzoek te hebben ontvangen van of namens de kerkenraad van die gemeente."
Article 31.1"De kerken, die van Christus zijn, werken eendrachtig samen. Zij wekken elkaar op Gods Woord te bewaren en te blijven bij de leer van de kerk naar de drie Formulieren van Enigheid. Zij helpen en dienen elkaar en behartigen in reginaal en landelijk verband zaken die zij gemeenschappelijk hebben. Zij heersen daarbij niet over elkaar, maar hebben geduld met elkaar en verwachten samen de tijd van God waarin Hij de weg duidelijk zal maken."
Remarkably, the words "in regionaal en landelijk verband" restricting the applicability of art.31.1 to The Netherlands, are left out in The Document suggesting that this article for mutual co-operation within the national denomination is made directly applicable to ecumenical contacts with foreign local churches. No mention is made of the *Commissie voor Contact en Samenspreking* (= committee for contact and communication) appointed by the Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Churches for the relationship with foreign churches such as *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* (RMA: 2008#, p.88). By implication, the contradictory conclusion can be made that, in the Netherlands Reformed Churches, 'mission' has become a matter of local Church Councils, while 'contact and communication' with foreign churches is a matter of national Synods.

[27] About the imbalance between the donating and the receiving partner in a partnership relation between churches in different continents, L. Bauerochse (1996, p.394) states: "An keiner anderen Stelle wird in der partnerschaftlichen Beziehung die grosse Kluft zwischen den Partnern so offensichtlich wie in der Frage der Finanzkraft... Zugespitzt sei hier die These formuliert: Es wird über Beträge gesprochen, aber nicht über die Rolle des Geldes in der Partnershaft." About the imbalance between the receiving church and its own socio-economic background, he

20.5   The Concept of Fellowship

In ideology, partnerships between churches in the West and churches in the South are spiritual relationships, however in practice, they often stand for projects entailing material and financial aid. The envisaged partnerships between materially rich churches in the West and spiritually rich churches in the South contributes to the experience of a worldwide church, to the revival of the churches in the West, to the survival of the churches in the South and to a new missionary or ecumenical engagement.[28] However, criticism that this type of partnership leads to an increased dependency on the side of the materially weak partners, is often ignored, especially, where the materially weak partner is seen as socially upwardly mobile, as is usually the case in many evangelical churches.[29] In addition, the criticism that, in practice, the relationship is dictated by the materially donating partner, is often also denied.[30]

An alternative concept for the relationship between foreign churches might be the term 'fellowship'.[31] L. Bauerochse, using the word *Konvivenz*, emphasizes three aspects of existing partnerships to be retained for a real form of international fellowship between churches: the willingness to help each other; the willingness to learn from each other; the willingness to celebrate together.[32] However, as many partnerships in which one partner disproportionately helps the other, inevitably deteriorate, Bauerochse strongly suggests separating fellowship from material help.[33] International material aid should be channelled via independent aid

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remarks (idem, p.375): "Die Durchführung eines Projektes ist immer ein Eingriff in die Lebenswelt der Partner [= des Empfängers], was sich viele Spender nicht bewusst machen." About individual receivers, for example school children in a partner-church, he remarks (idem, p. 386): "Die Erfahrung hatte... gelehrt, dass eine derartige Hilfe die Kinder ihrer Umgebung entfremdet, sie letzlich entwurzelt und ihnen mehr schadet als nützt."

[28] L. Bauerochse, 1996, pp.198, 352.

[29] L. Bauerochse, 1996, p.387-388: "Fragte man die Partnerschaft-Mitarbeiter danach, so lauten die meisten spontanen Antworten, die Projekte sollen der 'Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe' dienen... Fast alle Partnerschaften wollen die Entscheidungsbefugnis über die Finanzhilfe ihren Partner überlassen, und damit Machtverzicht zu üben... Dieser Vorsatz... gerät jedoch in Konflikt mit... die Betonung... dass die Hilfe unmittelbar ankommt." Idem (p.449): "Es ist mir... kein in Partnerschaften gefördertes Projekt begegnet, das nachweislich zur Selbständigkeit der Partner geführt oder beigetragen hätte. Mir sind... zahllose Fälle des Scheiterns begegnet oder Projekte, die zu fortgesetzter und verstärkter Abhängigkeit der afrikanischen Partner aufgrund der Folgekosten geführt haben."

[30] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.400) states, "dass es fielfach gar erlaubt, von 'Einbahn-Partnerschaften' zu sprechen... Es kommt kaum etwas zurück!" Sometimes, attempts are made to replace the term Partnership and metaphorically obscure or excuse the practical inequality: "Vielfach wird der Begriff Partnerschaft wegen seiner fehlenden biblischen bzw. Theologischen Qualifikation kritisiert. Versuche, den Begriff entweder theologisch zu füllen oder ihn durch andere biblische oder theologisch stärker geprägte Begriffe zu ersetzen (z.B. Koinonia, Geschwisterschaft), haben sich nicht durchsetzen können" (idem, p.404).

[31] Reference to 2 Corinthians 13:13, often used as a blessing at the end of church services; eventually to be extended into 'Reformed Ecumenical Fellowship'; Dutch: *Gereformeerde Oecumenische Gemeenschap*; isiZulu: *uBudlelwane obuReformed*. The term '*ubudlelwane*' has a stronger connotation of actively striving for unity than, for example, the term '*ubuntu*', which supposes unity as an inherently human characteristic.

[32] L. Bauerochse, 1996, p.406, referring to Th. Sundermeier: "Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenze heute", in: Huber, Ritschl, Sundermeier: Ökumenische Existenz heute, Bd.1, München 1986, p.49-100.

[33] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.439): "Wo direkte Kontakte zwischen Gemeinden aufgebaut werden, müssen sie deshalb unbedingt freigehalten werden von jeglicher Finanz- und Projekthilfe."

organizations. Congregations involved in a fellowship should work together on projects in which they are not materially benefiting themselves. Bauerochse emphasizes that the fellowship should be a learning community of congregations taking part in each other's lives, learning from each other's differences and learning to live together.[34] An even more important aspect of fellowship, according to Bauerochse, is celebrating together which gives the opportunity to honour God and to accept each other.[35]

20.6   Changing Focus of the Reformed Mission

As described in Chapter 16, an important element in the context of the missionary project of the Free Reformed Church in Kampen was a church schism in 1944. The then newly established Free Reformed Churches rebuilt their church life which included several Free Reformed organisations. For them, a central point in the schism was the conviction that a local church is a full representation of the Church and so, in 1951, when their Synod decided that missionary work was the responsibility of local Churches, several local Free Reformed Churches took the initiative for mission work under the direct responsibility of their respective Church Councils. One of these local Churches was the Free Reformed Church in Kampen. A missionary project under the direct responsibility of a local Church Council would more or less be proof that the 1944 schism was justified and that the proclamation of the Gospel by a local Church was the way in which Christ ruled and blessed his Church.[36]

When, in 1954, the Free Reformed Church in Kampen started its own missionary project, it motivated this project with reference to Matthew 28:19-20, which was interpreted as a command given by God to local Churches to reveal the Gospel to people who had not yet heard about it. Mission was seen as the proclamation of the Gospel to people outside the church who had not yet been reached with it. The Kampen Mission was established as a home church orientated missionary project. Yet working as the Reformed Mission in present day KwaZulu-Natal, it became more and more target group orientated. Almost from the start it moved from a Sender-motivated approach to a more receiver-based approach (par.16.13). The shift did not so much affect the notion of the receivers who were still seen as the centre, or as potential centres, of new local churches in their own areas, as independent local churches and reliable witnesses of Biblical principles, with their own ministers and Church Councils. However, it did affect the

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[34] L. Bauerochse (1996, p.440): "Entscheidend ist, dass die Partnerschaft [= Konvivenz] als Lernaufgabe begriffend wird und dass sie stärker als bisher von den Gemeinden her und auf die Gemeinden hin gedacht wird."

[35] Mutual acceptance as one of the main characteristics of fellowship is stressed by L. Bauerochse (1996, p.434) referring to René Descartes' premises *Cogito ergo sum* (= I think so I am) which to be meaningful in a concrete African situation, should be transposed into *Cognatus ergo sum* (= I am accepted so I am; isiZulu: *Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu*).
For the idea of 'mission' as the celebration of God's honour see par.15.7; L. Newbigin (1989, p.127): "Mission is an acted out doxology... Its purpose is that God may be glorified."

[36] About the importance of its missionary project for the Free / Netherlands Reformed Church in Kampen both during its formation period in the 1950's and during the schism period in the 1960's, A.H. Reitsema (RMA: 2009c#, p.4) states: "Feit is, dat het enthousiasme van plaatselijke kerken voor zending een prachtige bloem was in de dorre woestijn van twisten op kerkelijke vergaderingen. Daarzonder zou het werk niet van de grond zijn gekomen. Het hielp ook velen om geestelijk het hoofd boven water te houden in die tijd."

relationship between the Church in Kampen and the receivers. Initially, the Church in Kampen felt the calling to spread the Gospel but during the course of its development its missionary project increasingly became a church planting project creating local churches dependent on the home church in Kampen. 'Mission' became the name for a Church in a Zulu context dependent on a foreign church.

Metaphorically speaking, the new local churches were initially envisaged to be like seedlings sprouting from seeds sown by the Reformed Mission on an empty field. However, in the South African context the missionary activities of church planting more closely resembled the process in which strawberry plants propagate through runners. The actually process resembled the growth of young strawberry plants which remained dependent on the old strawberry plant from which they originated. In a paradoxical movement, the Kampen Mission reached out as far as possible from the centre of the church (in The Netherlands), while at the same time it channelled its efforts through the centre of the church (in South Africa). Key persons in this process were South African evangelists who, via the Reformed Mission, were dependent on the Church in Kampen. They were asked directly or recruited by adverts, appointed, trained and paid by the Reformed Mission. Initially, they targeted rural families but in the course of their work, they became part of the migration process in which whole families moved to more urban, industrial areas, especially around Pietermaritzburg and Durban.[37]

Around the end of the 20th century, several attempts were made by the Reformed Mission to redefine or recapture the focus of its missionary work. In 1998, on a more theoretical level, one of the Kampen missionaries, B. Wielenga, redefined missionary work within the framework of Covenant Theology. According to Wielenga, God fulfils His promises for His creation (*missio Dei*) via a Covenant with His people who in words and deeds witness about this Covenant (*missio ecclesiae*). Part of the *missio ecclesiae* is church-based missionary work consisting of the explicit proclamation of God's promises within the context of God's broader movement in history, the outreach and witness in words and deeds.[38] In 2001, the Kampen Mission Board made a practical effort to redefine its missionary work in terms of a partnership

Furthermore, in 2001, at the Mission Post in eNkumane, the Mission Board in Kampen with the assistance of the Institute of Reformed Theological Training of the Free Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, organized a conference in order to formalize its relationship with the Church Councils of KwaMncane, Mid-Illovo, Indaleni, and Umbumbulu-Umlazi. At the conference, the decision was taken to establish a partnership between The Netherlands Reformed Church in Kampen and the four local churches in KwaZulu-Natal and to establish a Temporary Committee consisting of representatives of these four local churches to maintain the contact between the partners and to take the responsibility for all the aspects of the partnership in South

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[37] At present, two of the four ministers trained by the Reformed Mission, work in Pietermaritzburg, while three of them work in the Durban Metropole.

[38] B. Wielenga, 1998, pp.240, 270-271: "Zending als beweging van God... Zending is de beweging, verbond is wat door de beweging tot stand wordt gebracht... Zover het de kerk betreft als ambtelijk gestructureerde kern van het verbondsvolk, gaat het om getuigen in woord en daad, in kyrugma leitourgia, diakonia... en vooral marturia... van Gods verbondsbedoelingen... Heel het bestaan van het verbondsvolk heeft een missionaire dimensie... Op alle terreinen van het leven kan zo het verbond gestalte krijgen, waarbij de kerk als ambtelijke kern van het verbondsvolk als publieke getuige ervan optreedt en openlijk verwijst naar God en Zijn verbondsbedoelingen."

Africa.[39] By implication 'mission' was redefined as a relationship between a donor-church and receiving-churches. The Church Council in Kampen decided to concentrate on the 'centre' of the partner churches in KwaZulu-Natal, a committee of ministers and elders. In 2007, the Church Council in Kampen sent a new missionary, Rev. J.G. Vel Tromp, with the specific task to assist the partner churches in southern KwaZulu-Natal with the training of their leadership.

An important premise of the Institute of Reformed Theological Training is the thesis that a sending-church ceases to be a sending-church as soon as it finds a 'counterpart'.[40] The crucial element in this thesis is the word counterpart, probably meaning: the Church Council of a receiving-church recognized by a sending-church.[41] According to the Institute, a sending-church, after finding its counterpart, becomes an 'assisting-church'. By implication, the imbalance continues to exist but now, between an 'old assisting-church' and a 'young receiving-church'.[42] Another implication is that when a church ceases to be 'sending' and becomes to be 'assisting', it ceases to concentrate on the periphery of the church and instead, concentrates on its centre.[43] In effect, it can no longer maintain the ideology that it is orientating itself on the margins of God's Kingdom.

During the conference, little thought was given by the Dutch delegates to the question of how local people in South Africa defined the old relationship, or how they would define the new one. Acknowledgement was given of past shortcomings in terms of mutual love and respect, but repeated requests for 'transfer of power' were not included in the final 'Agreement' made during

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[39] RMA: 2001b#.

[40] C.J. Haak (1996, p.2-3): "Alleen dat werk dat direkt op bekering en kerkplanting gericht is, mag zendingswerk genoemd worden... Een [Zendende Kerk] houdt op [Zendende Kerk] te zijn, zodra zij een 'tegenover' haar heeft."

[41] The thesis that a 'sending church' stops to be a 'sending church' as soon as it finds a 'counterpart' is difficult to use for the analysis of the history of the Kampen Mission. Thanks to the fact that the Free Reformed Church in Kampen found a 'counterpart' in the *Gereformeerde Kerk in Pietermaritzburg*, it was able to function as a 'sending church' in the Richmond District. The authority of the Free Reformed Church in Kampen as a 'sending church' in the Richmond District did not derive from a lack of local authority, but it was based on the explicit and written permission given by a local church, the *Gereformeerde Kerk in Pietermaritzburg*, and by the local Government (especially the Department of Bantu Affairs). Also the institution of the isiZulu speaking Reformed Regional Council Itheku in 1962, and the institution of three isiZulu speaking Reformed local churches in 1969 (par.16.12) did not stop the Reformed Church in Kampen being a 'sending church'. Instead, it facilitated the expansion of the Kampen missionary project.
Moreover, it can be doubted whether African churches are happy to be identified as 'counterparts' generated by the contact with Western churches. Speaking from a Nigerian perspective, E.B. Idowu requested recognition for the fact that God is "the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them; the God who has never left Himself without witness in any nation, age or generation; Whose creative purpose has ever been at work in this world; Who by one stupendous act of climatic self-revelation in Christ Jesus came to redeem a fallen world"; reference to Acts 10:34-35; 14:14-17 (K. Bediako, 1999, pp.280,298).

[42] About the continuing imbalance between 'assisting' and 'receiving' churches, C.J. Haak (1997, p.6) remarks: "Deze erkenning van verschil in 'soortelijk gewicht' is echter geen aanleiding om dan maar weer in 'zendingscategorieën' terug te vallen... laten we dan ook open staan dat die jonge kerken beperktheden bij ons aantreffen." In Biblical terms (1 Corinthians 4:7), it is difficult to understand how the fact that a church is a 'receiving church' can be listed as one of its shortcomings (*beperktheden*).

[43] C.J. Haak (1997, p.4): "Een assisterende... kerk is geroepen om haar zuster-kerken en/of groepen christenen... te voorzien in haar... nood en te steunen in haar taak om kerk in eigen context te zijn."

the conference. In the Agreement, church leadership is taken for granted without much consideration for the challenges it faces, partly caused by the financial dependency on a Western church.[44] The delegates laid the emphasis on the fact of the 'transfer' not so much on the authority to 'transfer' or about the object of 'transfer'. By implication, it should be understood that by this transfer, they meant the 'transfer of responsibilities to local church leadership'.[45]

The context of the Kampen Mission and the issues at stake overseas played no role for the South African people who came into contact with the missionaries from Kampen. They had their own context, the growing impact of the South African Government policy of Apartheid during the 1960's and 1970's isolating people in prescribed areas with barely any opportunity for development, effectively forcing many migrant labourers to find work in more industrial areas. The Mission entered their areas but had hardly any structural impact on their living conditions. During the 1980's, the South African political climate became increasingly emancipative and tense. In the meantime, several local isiZulu speaking Reformed congregations were established as local churches with their own Church Councils, of which four still exist. Financially, they were and remain dependent on the Netherlands Reformed Church in Kampen. In terms of Church Order, they became part of a Regional Council of the *Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*. Their relationship with the Reformed Mission became a major point of concern after the first General Elections in 1994, when not only in the South African society as a whole but also in the local churches, responsibilities irreversibly changed. Local ministers emphasized independence, order and local leadership. Accordingly, the basis for the missionary project of the Netherlands Reformed Church had to be re-evaluated and redefined.

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[44] From a European perspective, J.N. Breetveld (1989, p.176-177) tries to understand the challenges of local African leadership in a 'triangular model': "The model indicates that educated Africans have... to take a decision and make up their minds where they stand in the relationship with their African tradition, with the West and with the socio-economic and political situation of their countries - and that each of these three relations are characterized by strong ambivalent... feelings. The basic pattern in the model remains the problem of dominance vs dependency and superiority vs inferiority in the relationship between the West and African tradition." It is unlikely, that assistance based on the metaphor of Paul's collection for Jerusalem (par.17.3) helps to resolve feelings of dependency and inferiority. One of the local ministers referred to Romans 8:17 as an alternative pattern for the new relationship: as, in the past, the West was part of the cause of Africa's suffering, now it should become part of Africa's blessing. The financial dependency was not questioned and the possibilities offered in the 2001-agreement to apply for funds from the Kampen Church was gladly accepted by the four church councils in KwaZulu-Natal.

[45] Bible studies by the Dutch delegates during the 2001 Conference (e.g. about Deuteronomy 17:14-20) stressed aspects of responsible leadership.