



# A CASE STUDY IN PARTNERSHIP: Xenos & World Team CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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## 1. The Church's Perspective

*Dennis McCallum, teaching elder and one of the founders of Xenos Christian Fellowship*

Xenos Christian Fellowship is a fairly large, young, independent church in Columbus, Ohio. In the 1980s we had grown very rapidly, which forced us to focus on equipping new leaders for our home groups and ministry teams. We had devoted little attention to missions in the 70s or early 80s, in spite of a heartfelt desire to do our part in other cultures. Therefore, when our leadership sat to consider where we were going to go in world missions, we had the opportunity to write on a blank chalkboard rather than one cluttered with existing alliances and commitments.

The Xenos leaders decided we wanted direct involvement with our missionaries and their ministries. We didn't want to simply have our people feel called to different fields and agencies and expect the church to give its blessing and support. We realized that Xenos had its own ministry ethos and emphases that were quite different than other churches. Xenos is very non-traditional and eager to avoid exporting a western-style church to new people groups where those forms would become a nuisance. We felt a strong desire to keep our missionaries working together in teams on the field like they were used to doing in this country.

We also wished we could find a mission agency that understood and appreciated our approach to ministry and our theological distinctives. Such an agency might be willing to place our people together in teams, perhaps with missionaries from other churches who feel compatible with our approach. Also, we felt that if we were willing to commit a good number of people to the field, an agency might be willing to include us in a partnering agreement, and share key decision-making responsibility with us.

We set out to establish a partnership, first studying and interviewing several different agencies.

We finally found a good level of compatibility with World Team. Two of their top leaders came and spent several days at Xenos, observing our meetings and talking to our leaders. They were excited about our approach to equipping and home group planting, which they felt was similar to strategies they were using on other fields. We decided to hold talks on a new kind of church-agency partnership agreement.

After months of give-and-take, we approved the final draft of our agreement. It included provisions for decision-making: who would go to what field, including screening procedures; field selection and research; missionary training and preparation; how teams would be composed and led; field supervision; financial responsibility and budget planning; visitation; and home leave arrangements.

Xenos and World Team have worked together under this agreement, with modifications from time to time, for the past eight years. Xenos leaders strongly urge those in our church who feel called to missions to consider going as a Xenos-World Team missionary. To date, we have accredited and sent nearly 30 career missionaries to five different fields under this agreement. Xenos also has missionaries working under other agencies now, and in the past. But as our experience has accumulated, we see more and more benefit to the World Team/Xenos partnership.

Some of the key benefits we see are:

- The leaders at Xenos and those at World Team have built rewarding personal relationships over these years. If we had been working with half a dozen agencies, we never would have been able to spend time and energy at the same level. The friendships we enjoy at the leadership level have been very beneficial at times of need or crisis on the field. Nothing serves better when resolving misunderstandings than trusting relationships.
- Xenos leaders have a visitation program for supporting our field operatives, and World Team visits the same missionaries for regular reporting and oversight. This is very typical of course, but with the partnership, there's a difference. Xenos



Develop New Blueprints for Partnership

and World Team leaders see themselves working together both in pastoral issues and field strategy. Therefore, the issues one group of leaders sees when on the field or interacting via email are regularly shared with the other. Nothing is more helpful than a well-informed “heads up” when visiting people we haven’t seen for some time. Likewise, Xenos leaders have been able to serve as intermediaries at times between our field teams and World Team. Overall communication has been enhanced.

- Initiative to open new ministries can come either from World Team or from Xenos leaders. Xenos enjoys extensive access to expertise from World Team in our planning. World Team enjoys a ready supply of eager, well-trained operatives from Xenos along with 70% of their financial support.
- Xenos and World Team are developing new approaches to training for missionaries. Instead of relying only on the traditional degree from a seminary, we now urge prospective missionaries to spend one or more years engaged in urban house church planting under the supervision of experienced leaders at Xenos. This field experience runs in parallel with a Bible/missiology/ministry course series suited to the kind of work missionaries can expect to do on the field. The new training approach will be compatible with more traditional approaches.
- Because of our partnership, we at Xenos are convinced that World Team leaders understand our wide-ranging problems and concerns in a way no other agency would be able. Likewise, World Team is able to request help from Xenos for specific needs in various fields.

## 2. The Agency’s Perspective

*Albert Ehmann, International Director of World Team*

**W**orld Team’s purpose – *To glorify God by working together to establish reproducing churches among unreached peoples of the world* – is being energized by a dynamic, interdependent partnership between World Team and Xenos Christian Fellowship.

World Team gets some of its best missionaries from Xenos. Why? Because Xenos church-planting teams are home-grown in a dynamic ethos of local evangelism, discipleship and home church multiplication. They are unencumbered by many evangelical institutionalized forms and traditions. They have a heartbeat for taking the Gospel to those who have never heard, even if the cost is life itself.

Many missionary teams blow apart because they are incompatible, immature, lack interpersonal skills or have different philosophies of ministries. Within the context of local ministry Xenos team members develop deep relationships and share a common approach to ministry. They are proven in ministry. World Team fields and ministries are significantly enhanced and become the beneficiaries of this proven ministry experience.

A shared vision for an unreached people group and evidences of readiness to take the Gospel cross-cultural is validated by Xenos leaders before World Team takes a Xenos team through its assessment process. Conclusions are shared and acted upon by both sending agency and church. This close partnership provides a strong platform for future ministry by the team.

From the mission agency perspective, the partnership has been well worth the effort. Sure, we’ve had to make changes. There have been issues to resolve together. We’ve had to re-evaluate some of our procedures. We’ve been stretched along with Xenos, but together we have both grown. But most importantly, people have been reached with the gospel in Asia, Eastern Bloc countries and Latin America because of this dynamic partnership.

Because World Team has been so blessed by its partnership with Xenos Christian Fellowship, we are actively seeking ten new church partnerships. A shared commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission is the life of such a partnership. Openness to God’s leading allows either the church or World Team to identify which people group is to be reached. Because we seek to glorify God, we cooperate in carrying out His purposes. 🌐



Frontiers is a church planting organization to the unreached Muslim world. We are interviewing candidates for two positions:

### Associate Director Member Care

(Barnabas Team). Provides administrative leadership to the Barnabas Team; the candidate is required to have administrative and pastoral gifting with a heart for member care and who can work well on a team. Duties include: overseeing and coaching international workers in transition, writing and reviewing secondments, tracking with international staff assignment changes, and other administrative functions for the Barnabas Team.

**Pastoral Coach:** The candidate is required to have had significant ministry experience as a pastor and/or overseas worker with a heart for member care. Position consists of debriefing international workers, providing pastoral counseling and mentoring as needed for workers returning from the field. Position also includes some teaching opportunities and limited international travel to pastor and coach international workers.

E-mail resume and inquiries to [opportunities@frontiers.org](mailto:opportunities@frontiers.org)