



# LAUSANNE STANDARDS

## ***... affirmations and agreements for giving and receiving money in mission***

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### **I. Purpose**

The Lord frequently calls disciples in one place to contribute funds for ministry by disciples elsewhere. *(Luke 8:1–3, Phil. 4:15–16)* The biblical record of the early church testifies that such relationships are necessary in the Body of Christ, but also warns us that the possession and sharing of wealth is fraught with opportunities for misunderstanding and sin. *(Acts 5:1–11, 6:1–7)* These Standards provide guidance for dialogue that will lead us to connect with each other and go about God’s work in God’s way. They are designed to equip us to:

- Respect each other as fellow stewards of the gifts given to each of us as signs of the arriving Kingdom of God. *(Ro. 12:3, 10)*
- Honor and embrace God-given cultural differences, finding strength in them as interdependent members of the Body of Christ, dependent together on God. *(Eph. 2:19–22)*
- Communicate effectively with integrity, together discovering the Lord’s vision for our common task. *(Jas. 3:17–18)*
- Learn from each other, growing in flexibility, maturity, and unity in Christ as we listen to him together and watch him at work in our partnership. *(1 Cor. 12:18–21)*
- Learn to trust God and each other, and at the same time to be accountable to God and to each other, taking care to understand trust and accountability within each other’s cultural context. *(2 Cor. 5:9–11)*

When we do these things, especially across differences of culture and material wealth, we can hope to demonstrate the transforming, unifying power of the Holy Spirit, glorifying God’s name among the nations through our lives and deeds. *(1 Peter 2:9–12)*

### **II. How To Use The Standards**

The Standards have been developed for stewards of God’s grace to use in the development of any partnership that will involve funding. The Standards describe a healthy process of mutual discovery that can lead to a deeper participation in the love and mission of Christ, especially in cross-cultural relationships.



- In many cultures a healthy relationship begins with friendship and fellowship, not with a formal discussion of business. Consider both partners' expectations for getting acquainted before beginning this process.
- Each partner should examine the Standards and note items that are especially important to them as well as anything that raises questions or doubts.
- The partners then should compare their initial thoughts about the Standards. They may select a few Standards to discuss in depth or to emphasize in their own partnership agreement.
- They especially should discuss the "Definitions Seen Differently," (LausanneStandards.org) giving examples from their experience and trying to understand what the others means when they say they agree to these Standards.
- They should spend as much time as necessary going through the Standards point by point to see where they may be reading them differently.
- They may discuss some of the Standards again later, since as they work together they will usually discover that their partners had some expectations they were not aware of.

At each of the above steps the partners should keep in mind the goal of building mutual trust and mutual accountability.

## III. Affirmations

### 1. Respect and Giftedness

**WE AFFIRM** we are equals in Christ. We are called to be wise and gracious stewards of the gifts God has given each of us, not dominating or ignoring the other. We are willing to grant, earn, and appreciate respect rather than withhold it from others or demand it for ourselves.

### 2. Cultural-Differences and Interdependency

**WE AFFIRM** that we need each other to fulfill our callings and accomplish our purposes. Some of our cultural differences may seem to divide us, especially differing attitudes toward tasks and goals. But deliberately and prayerfully working through those differences in Christ can bring us into healthy interdependence and enrich our understanding of our Creator.

### 3. Vision and Communication

**WE AFFIRM** that our God-given vision and calling is only part of God's greater plan. He intends for each of us to cooperate with the other parts of Christ's Body, not dominate, undermine, or manipulate them. So we are free to communicate freely and clearly without half-truths or hidden agendas.



## 4. Learning and Flexibility

WE AFFIRM that each partner will need to be flexible and have a learner's attitude. We are not just learning to partner for the sake of efficient accomplishment of our vision, but learning to love each other and to submit to the lordship of Christ.

## 5. Trust and Accountability

WE AFFIRM that we are accountable to Christ and to each other. Under his lordship we nurture our trust and mutual accountability, which are the inseparable essentials of our relationship.

# IV. Agreements

In order to put these affirmations into practice we commit ourselves to the following:

## 1. Respect and Giftedness

Together we agree to respect each other's God-given callings, resources, strengths, and influence. (1 Cor. 14:26–33)

- 1.1** We agree to discuss the gifts and abilities we believe God wants each of us to bring to our joint effort, and to thank God for our partner's strengths.
- 1.2** We agree to seek ways to build and maintain respect, recognizing that this will be a process that may require the help of a trusted bicultural friend.
  - 1.2.1** When misunderstandings occur we respectfully seek explanations from each other. We forgive quickly.
  - 1.2.2** If we must criticize, we do it gently and in culturally appropriate ways.
  - 1.2.3** If we are criticized, we try to hear the Lord's wisdom in it. (Eph. 4:31–32)
- 1.3** We agree never to show disrespect by trying to manipulate our partners, that is, getting our way by pressuring them or misleading them.
  - 1.3.1** As donors we do not force our agenda onto our partners, especially not any hidden agenda.
  - 1.3.2** As project directors, we do not do manipulative things like padding a budget or exaggerating a project's results.
- 1.4** We agree that either of us is just as able as the other to be guided by God, and we reject the idea that either of us could go into the other's world and do their job better than they do. (Mk. 10:42–43)
- 1.5** We agree to try to understand our partners' sensitivities about being treated disrespectfully, since they and their friends may have scars from previous partnerships.



**1.6** If our respect for a partner is damaged, we agree to make every effort to resolve the matter. If our efforts fail, we will respectfully end the partnership rather than continue to accept money from the partner or fund his or her activities.

## 2. Cultural-Differences and Interdependency

We agree to pursue intercultural partnerships that show the world how Jesus Christ unites all peoples and nations. We therefore commit to become more aware of our own cultural biases and to be patient, prayerful, and non-judgmental about the cultural biases of our partner. We desire to grow by the power of the Spirit into healthy interdependence in Christ. (*Rev. 7:9, Eph. 4:3–6*)

**2.1** We agree to discuss whether to invite a trusted third party who knows both our cultures to facilitate our relationship. (*Prov. 11:14*)

**2.2** We agree to discuss cultural perspectives and organizational styles whenever we realize they are affecting our working relationship.

**2.2.1** We share stories of our experiences in partnership, successes and failures, believing this is one of the best ways to learn from each other.

**2.3** We agree that before putting foreign funds into a project, we will try together to anticipate their possible negative effects as well as their desirable effects.

**2.3.1** We explore with our partners where and how to draw the line between healthy interdependency and unhealthy dependency, drawing on the best current wisdom from scholars and practitioners of mission.

**2.4** We agree that interpreting and applying these Standards requires humble cross-cultural dialogue and negotiation, not the imposition of either culture's assumptions. (*Phil. 2:1–5*)

**2.5** We agree to frequently test our assumptions about our partners' working knowledge of our cultural situation and our knowledge of theirs, lest we assume too much or too little.

**2.6** We agree that we do not own our partner and do not have to jealously protect our relationship; thus others are not feared as competitors but welcomed as fellow-servants of the Lord.

**2.6.1** We never regard other members of the body of Christ as competitors, for that is a form of rebellion against the Head who unites us in his purpose. (*Col. 1:15–20*)

**2.6.2** We do not excuse any forms of jealousy or covetousness in ourselves or overlook them in others; they are toxic to the body of Christ and the life of a Christian. (*Jas. 4:1–3*)

## 3. Vision and Communication

We agree to seek a clear understanding of how our joint activity fits into the larger calling of our partners. We agree to find ways of communicating that will carry our mutual vision through to the end.



**3.1** We agree to discuss our mutual mission carefully, seeking the Spirit's clarity about what God is calling us to do together.

**3.2** We agree to communicate in a kind, gracious manner, seeking to build up the other person.

*(Eph. 4:15–16)*

**3.2.1** We take our partner's expectations seriously as we decide how much time to invest in our communications with each other and how promptly we should respond.

**3.2.2** We always try to anticipate the context in which a message will be received, lest we thoughtlessly hurt our partners.

**3.2.3** When communicating with anyone else about our partnership, we protect our partner's security, reputation, and future ministry.

**3.3** We agree to listen carefully to our partners, asking questions and seeking to understand both what they are saying and what they are implying. We assume the best about the other when communication is unclear or inadequate.

**3.4** We agree to make neither unrealistic promises nor loose statements that our partner may easily interpret as promises even though we do not intend them that way.

**3.4.1** We are specific about what each of us is agreeing to do and what we are expecting the other to do.

**3.4.2** We are exceedingly careful about the translations of our commitments, and avoid vague statements like, "We will do what we can."

**3.5** We agree to search for other explanations before we judge our partner guilty of breaking a promise. *(Jas. 1:19–20)*

**3.6** As people with a vision that requires funding, we agree not to give up our vision in favor of a different one that a donor prefers.

**3.7** As donors we agree not to use money to tempt anyone to go along with (or pretend to go along with) our vision and methods when he or she does not believe the Lord will use them effectively in the local situation.

## 4. Learning and Flexibility

We agree to learn together from the Lord and each other, continuously listening in prayer and remaining flexible in practice as he knits us together in his purpose or guides us to go our separate ways. *(2 Cor. 4:5)*

**4.1** We agree to learn genuinely about each new partner, not prejudge them based on our experience with others.

**4.2** We agree to pray faithfully and communicate well in order to build an environment where the partners feel safe enough to describe their difficulties, admit their mistakes and speak their



minds, always with respect and without fear. (*Jas. 5:16*)

**4.2.1** We ask each other what the other is sensing or hearing from God.

**4.2.2** We learn from our working relationship by talking about our successes and failures, seeking culturally appropriate ways to preserve one another's honor and dignity.

**4.3** We agree to be flexible in our working relationship, for rigidity does not lead to unity in Christ or reveal the fruit of the Spirit. (*Gal. 5:22–26*)

4.3.1 If a project or funding setback occurs, we discuss it openly and seek ways to adapt to it together, aiming to bring God glory and improve our mutual trust.

**4.4** We agree to attempt to understand and accommodate our partner's cultural preference for direct or indirect communication.

**4.4.1** We discuss how our partners would normally handle sensitive matters, such as expressing criticism or receiving criticism. We recognize the value of calling on a trusted third party to prevent and handle conflict.

**4.5** We agree to be guided in our actions by an attitude of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love, and recognize that our partners may express these qualities differently than we expect. (*Col. 3:12–14*)

**4.6** We agree to help our partner understand any government regulations or organizational policies that require strict compliance.

## 5. Trust and Accountability

We agree to minister in a trustworthy manner and implement the kind of accountability that deepens trust.

**5.1** We agree to do the extra work required to be seen as trustworthy in the eyes of our partner, which is often harder than being trustworthy in our own eyes or even the eyes of the Lord. (*2 Cor. 8:21*)

**5.2** We agree to state clearly a mutually acceptable plan for ministry activity. We realize that if the plan is written, some cultures will take it more seriously than a spoken agreement and others will take it less seriously.

**5.2.1** We make sure that the local organization's vision for the project is clear to both partners.

**5.2.2** We state clear objectives, always acknowledging that God brings the increase.

**5.2.3** We discuss how long we expect it will take to see the results desired from a ministry project.

**5.3** We agree to be faithful to the activities of the ministry plan and, before we begin the ministry, to discuss the circumstances that could cause us to depart from the plan.

**5.3.1** We work according to the project plan as closely as possible, discussing any possible changes with our partner before we make them.



**5.3.2** As donors, we communicate promptly with our partner if funding capacity or timing has changed.

**5.3.3** As donors, we express our concerns openly and honestly if funds appear to be used for unexpected purposes. We listen respectfully to our partner's explanations.

**5.4** We agree to use the measurement of faithfulness to the Lord, his Word, and the partnership as the primary way to hold each other accountable. We are accountable for our responsibilities according to our plan, not for the results that only the Lord of the harvest can give. *(1 Cor. 3:6–8)*

**5.4.1** We speak from a pure heart about the progress of the project, including updates on the measurements and timing in the project plan. We never attempt to mislead a partner.

**5.4.2** We do not assume that a failed or unfruitful project means that a partner broke a promise. There may be other explanations beyond our partner's control.

**5.5** We agree to state clearly a mutually acceptable plan for regular, adequate reports on the ministry activity.

**5.5.1** We discuss at the beginning how the differences between "planning" cultures and "coping" cultures are likely to affect our reporting process. (See "Definitions Seen Differently" on [LausanneStandards.org](http://LausanneStandards.org))

**5.5.2** For example, we discuss how strictly or loosely we expect the deadlines and details of the reporting plan to be followed.

**5.5.3** We discuss how to reconcile possible conflicts between our organizational calendars and timetables and our partner's.

**5.5.4** We discuss how to handle any difference between the information donors need and the information their partners can readily provide.

## V. Pledge

We make these affirmations and agreements, pledging ourselves to be guided by them on the path of integrity, to learn them humbly by experience, and to grow in love as Christ commanded. Then we believe that by God's grace our relationship will be sound, our service fruitful, our vision accomplished, and our God honored.

## VI. Prayer

May the Lord bring this document to life in conversations and relationships. May his Spirit perfect us all, making us more and more like him as we partner in mission. *(Col. 1:27–28)*